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Foreword

We are very happy to bring out the second edition of Emerging Scholars, Journal of Undergraduate Research published by Jyoti Dalal School of Liberal Arts, NMIMS. The twelve papers in the second edition bring forward diverse disciplinary lenses, methodologies, social science theories and concepts. Being the journal of a liberal arts school, 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 quality research from the disciplines of Literature, Economics, Management, Marketing, Psychology, Sociology and Journalism.

By the way of bringing out the second edition of Emerging Scholars, we maintain consistency in our commitment to bring forth the voices that resonated in the classrooms and research undertaken in Independent Research Studies. We reiterate our main aim of Emerging Scholars while we bring forward the second edition. We aim 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, the papers are located at the intersectionality of various disciplines thus producing themes embedded in the questions of gender, literature, music, language, social reality, economy, consumer behaviour, and other pertinent issues.

Bringing the second edition to actuality would not have been possible without the editorial assistance, compilation and other publication related assistance of our senior students Shriya, Zahra Mithiborwala, Amisha Shinde and Nandini Nimani.

- Editors

Contents

Converging in: Fostering solidarity in Primary Education System - Sri Harshitha Polampalli	1
Impact of Neuromarketing on the FMCG, Media and Entertainment Industry: A Case Study of Metropolitan Cities in India -Shraddha Kalpathi Jaidev	15
Effect of gender role conflict on seeking professional assistance -Jahnvi Polumahanti	31
Milfs, Momagers & Yummy mummies: The Romanticisation of Pregnancy and Motherhood by Celebrities -Saachi Gupta	49
The Big, the Bad and the Queer: Analysing the Queer-Coded Villain in Selected Disney Films -Sriya Veera	62
"Effects of Financial Digitalization on Unemployment-Inflation Relationship in India -Taarak Trivedi	75
The Effect of Ecological Anxiety on Consumer Behaviour -Hiya Rupreja	92
The Patriarchal Purgatory: How “progressive” female Indian characters on Indian TV failed by their narratives- Gaurika Mathur	110
Politics of Identities in Elif Shafak’s Works -Khwahish Khan	122
The Effectiveness of Art Therapy in treating Parkinson Patients: A comparative analysis on Traditional art and Digital art as mediums used in a therapeutic setting during treatment -Amatullah Arsiwalla	134
You Won’t Feel a Thing’: A Study of the Problematic Normalisation of Rape in Selected Manhwa -Pushkar HR	148
A Study of effect of the caregiving burden on the Resilience and Burnout among Caregivers of Diabetic Family Members -Anindya Nagori	164

Converging In: Fostering Solidarity in Primary Education System

-Sri Harshitha Polampalli¹

Abstract

Our world leaders and scholars have always upheld the position of Education, emphasising the degree of its importance for first individual building and then nation building at large. Though at the outset it just seems like a physical entity, it has an immaterial factor that ties all the agents together which is 'Solidarity', which lies at the heart of the spears of Education that exists today. This research study explores the idea of 'Solidarity', given by the 19th-century sociologist Emile Durkheim, through the lens of the Indian Primary Education System, fundamentally trying to position itself in the prevailing primary education system in Mumbai. In accordance with recent times, the study also lays special emphasis on the mega event of the Covid-19 pandemic that further led to the emergence of new spaces of Solidarity. A qualitative analysis of both primary data (structured interviews and anthropological observations) and secondary data (verified data published by reputed organisations) indicates a substantial rise in the importance of Solidarity and the need to be addressed at primary levels of a child's education, and how this is being made possible by highlighting two important factors such as 'reciprocity' and 'proximity', that are facilitated and manoeuvred by the participating agents of the institution named 'School'.

Keywords: Emile Durkheim, Solidarity, Indian Primary Education, Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction

By every hour, minute and second, time is pacing rapidly like never before. With major events taking place rapidly, we today consider the world as a platform where different forces or entities function together, trying to coordinate and co-exist while marking their global presence. While we function as individual entities, inducing our intellectual and mechanical labour into the global market, there always arises a need for collectively coming together, to primarily satisfy our social, cultural and economic needs justifying our mutual ¹dependency. From having a common goal of survival and safety (primitive age) to now having common morals, values and culture, what cements these individuals together, is what the 18th-century sociologist Emile Durkheim in his book Division of Labour (1893) calls as 'Solidarity', that facilitates collective action and social order based on the normative obligations one has towards their group and the society (Mishra & Rath, 2020) Durkheim tied together the concepts of Solidarity and Education, that function cohesively in a larger society named School. This research aims to look at how Solidarity functions in the context of the Indian Education System through primary schools. Since Solidarity by definition embodies certain values and lessons such as togetherness, these can be best induced at the early stages of education being the primary education. Thus, the paper includes primary data that has been collected from primary schools in Mumbai, and from different stakeholders to obtain heterogeneous opinions

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streamlining into drawing a definitive conclusion of how Solidarity is being understood and incorporated presently.

Durkheim, also known as the ‘Father of Sociology of Education, defined ‘Schools’ as a ‘Miniature Society’, in which education does the job of transmitting shared values and imparting specialised skills, making individuals ready for the modern markets and in his words making them skilled for a ‘Specialized Division of Labour’ (Revise Sociology, 2015) But with changing dynamics of world affairs and rise in levels of vulnerability, the need for Solidarity has now increased like never before, especially in the field of Education. There is now a shift in narrative from discussing the structural aspects of education to now focusing more on intangible aspects, like knowledge and intellectual mobilisation where solidarity is being placed on the front foot for achieving targets like inclusion, cohesion, equity etc. This in turn is establishing relevance for Durkheim’s idea of Solidarity in today’s times. Addressing the same, the United Nations under its Sustainable Development Goal 4 talks about ‘Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for All’, thus placing solidarity on the top as a key to fulfilling the dream we are seeing as a world today, ‘Education for All’. Quality and Equal Education has been a priority for every country and especially for developing ones since it forms the basic right of an individual that is indispensable for the exercise of other human rights (UNESCO, 2020) Likewise, India’s National Education Policy, 2020, aims to transform India’s education system by 2030, by making it, again, equitable and accessible for all. By introducing policies like Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao², Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan³, Mid Day Meal scheme⁴ etc, India has time and again proven that *‘Padhega India, Toh Badhega India’*, and thus has always emphasised a collectivist democratic approach (NEP, 2020)

While society is collectively striving to achieve this, certain events act as a litmus that puts the progress, goals and our systems to the test. And one such global catastrophic event was the ‘Covid-19 Pandemic’, where Durkheim’s idea of Solidarity was being challenged. While everything transformed into an ‘Online Interface’, where did Solidarity find its place and what role did it play in helping the young minds to deal with the pandemic?

Thus, the objective of the paper is to study how the idea of ‘Solidarity’ takes shape in agencies called ‘School’ in today’s contemporary times, especially in the field of primary education. While reference is taken from Durkheim’s concept of Solidarity, this study mainly correlates itself with the current facets of the primary education system in Mumbai and sees its present-day functionalities. Keeping with the challenges and changing times, the study also throws some light on the emergence of a new space of imparting knowledge such as ‘Online Education’, with a special focus on the time period during and post the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the research question is, ‘How is Solidarity being embraced into the dynamic agency of primary schools in Mumbai, while keeping up with the changing times, with a special focus on the period during and post-COVID-19 pandemic?’. Moreover, the research aims to look at

²Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao- A national scheme whose overall goal is to ‘Celebrate the Girl Child and Enable her Education’

³Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan- A national scheme that aims ‘To Improve School Effectiveness in terms of Equal Opportunities for Schooling and Equitable Learning Outcomes’

⁴Mid Day Meal Scheme- A national scheme that provides cooked mid-day meal to every child at primary level under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

the present and future possibilities and why has the need for solidarity increased today like never before.

Though there is ample literature available on Durkheim's idea of Solidarity, there is a lack of research on how solidarity can be seen through the lens of school and education, specifically in the context of Indian education. But, due to close proximity of time, studying emerging institutions becomes even more relevant today where schools are being pushed to rapidly remodel themselves and where and how Solidarity is being positioned.

The study is mainly based on qualitative analysis where there is a use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data includes structured interviews as well as some anthropological observations made on the field. Some of the most important stakeholders like the headmistress, teacher, coach and parent are interviewed across different types of schools in Mumbai such as a public school, a private school, a gurukul-based school and an NGO-based school to get a broader view of where is solidarity situating itself with changing spaces and teaching systems, which add relevance and reliability to the study as they help the reader to understand examples of current times. To support the primary data, secondary data is also fundamentally used that consists of data from reliable sources and reputed organisations and websites such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

Literature Review

Durkheim, known as the father of 'Sociology of Education', emphasised education to be a part of the society where there are a set of individuals imposing authority upon other sets of individuals, who are obeying their orders, creating a 'little society' in itself. According to Ottaway, this society, named School, acts as a 'Transitional community' between the families and the outside world that functions on the rules that are formed by the adult society that the student is bound to follow and this entire functioning remains within this little society. Therefore, according to him, this obedience comes in handy to achieve desirable outcomes in it, by achieving collective morality (Ottaway, 1955) This forms a part of the community, and it goes without saying that Durkheim too emphasised that 'Morality lays in the heart of his theory of Society'. As mentioned earlier, morality basically is a set of rules, duties and obligations which is influenced by the desirability of a 'moral ideal' that according to Saha is manifested by the individuals, which then binds all its members together (Saha, 2001). We see a similar desirability today within our schools. 'Solidarity' lies at the core of this idea of 'Collectivism'. This creates a social structure in the society, that leads to cooperation and support, which also helps children to try and test their own understanding. They build their own rationale and develop a learning mechanism while coping up with the world. This, Durkheim calls it 'Autonomy', which is important in achieving morality and solidarity for any individual or group of individuals in any society. Therefore Smith mentions, under autonomy, that when children start interacting in their own ways they develop independent reciprocity which is the most important element of Solidarity, through which children learn and start forming collaborative relationships, thus leading to demonstrating solidarity in the agency of 'School' (Smith, 2012).

"Learning for solidarity is at the heart of the social and moral outcomes of education" (Berthelsen et.al, 2012). Though Durkheim gave us the idea of Solidarity, applying it into our

learning practices is essential. Solidarity means participation and forming effective relationships with society. This relationship lies within the students themselves and with the teacher too. It is about how each member of this agency acts as a model and a facilitator in this process of teaching and learning, which comes again through collective social participation in this educational community (Berthelsen et.al, 2012).

India, being a democratic country, as much as we focus on individual rights and freedom, we also focus on following religious-cultural morals like '*Dharma*' or '*Dharam*' which makes the individual an ideal person and together leads to the formation of an ideal society. Thus, the dynamism of culture is also reflected through the education that is offered in the schools. Thus, according to Durkheim, Education and Culture have a perpetual relationship that according to him education directly reflects the culture of our community which remains relevant in the Indian Context, and hence he also tries to establish this connection of relevance between the two and how they determine each other. In spite of globalisation being the aim, with modern educational institutions like International and Private schools coming up, the focus is primarily shifting from socialisation to focusing on the individual himself. And therefore, Durkheim specifies that 'Individualism' is the biggest enemy of 'Solidarity', where people instead of coming together, compartmentalise themselves as per the market needs such as meritocracy and consumerism, with the sole purpose of profit maximisation for individuals among the existing competition (Kumar, 2019) Ideas such as Collectivism, Autonomy or Individualism etc. revolving around solidarity, are now opening up avenues with newer present-day challenges.

But in spite of all that, how much are we sticking by the principle of Solidarity? This question became even more valid when the pandemic hit us, and our schools time travelled into new modes of 'Convergence' i.e 'Online Education' that was a distant from the traditional modes of physical classroom learning and spatially converted itself into a technologically driven, two-dimensional remote classroom limited to a screen of an electronic communication device such as a phone, laptop, or tablet. Selvaraj rightly says that the physical structure was demolished and the effectiveness of education was put to question. There was a rise in mental and physical discomforts that did affect the teaching and learning processes. Now classes were at home, and thus attention and involvement were mainly subjected to favourable situations at home (Selvaraj, 2021). They were isolated in the age when growing through social interaction was crucial. Our screens became the mode of sharing and collective relaxation where there was very little scope for social interaction and there was unprecedented solitude that promised not to leave us for a long time (United Nations, 2021) When we now go back to Durkheim's idea of school acting as a 'transitional community', this was compromised since lines started to blur as a 'virtual society' was now emerging. The meaning of autonomy changed to making education as flexible, accessible and remote as possible by giving control and autonomy to the hands of the learners now, as to how they will use the technology at hand (Bozkurt, 2020) In his book 'Division of Labour in Society' he has mentioned the emerging crisis in the modern world, which will, thus affect social integration, and in turn organic solidarity- that is the most important and primary form of solidarity is compromised (Mishra & Rath, 2020).

While online education dissolved the physical entity of school, it on the other hand equally opened doors for flexibility, information accessibility and global reach for individuals. But, for a collective society i.e. classroom, there was a lack of connectedness and engagement.

Network instability and technological constraints too acted as major hindrances. But yet online education is emerging as the face of 'Global Education', and as per Xie is on its way to becoming the next new normal (Xie, 2020) While India is marching towards becoming digitised and a technologically rich environment, we are at the same time combating with other challenges, that again bring us back to understanding ideas like solidarity and inclusion (Singh, 2019) Underlying this present change lies the present shift from Collectivism to Individualism that according to Wilde is ultimately a clear threat to the idea of Solidarity (Wilde, 2007) Identifying how something moulds itself according to a specific clime is in itself a process that helps position the idea better and also helps derive the relevant meaning of what it means for that particular society. Thus, the anthropological responses through experiences of participants of that society help in drawing some relevance and bring forth a renewed perspective.

Primary Data

Positioning Itself:

We are all social beings, and programmed to be in groups thus, 'Solidarity is a Need' says Ms Mittal Thakker, founder of Bodhi Vidyalaya. She says Solidarity is a child's developmental need and he/she naturally confirms it to a group. They want to work in a group and belong to a group. This process happens organically and they eventually seek group dynamics until they are 10 years of age, she says. Likewise, Ms Mini, headmistress and teacher at Holy Angels Marthoma School says that children right from their pre-primary and primary levels start developing likes and dislikes like who they want to sit with, with whom will they share their food etc. while on the other hand, the parents also instruct them to be with a particular group. That also has a significant impact on how they enter into the game of solidarity. If looked on the surface, Solidarity commences in schools, right from the start. It is predetermined even before we join school, i.e. after admissions students are put randomly into groups or divisions and have to stick with the same group for the rest of the year which naturally pushes them towards developing solidarity. Another example of solidarity is having a 'common/same uniform' and 'language' that equates everyone irrespective of wherever they come from. It puts all the children on a uniform pedestal, at least leaving no space for them to discriminate outwardly. Each one has a different understanding of how solidarity works and what meaning and onus it carries.

While we make attempts to apply solidarity in the best possible ways, it has an intangible meaning attached to it that largely depends on the outer world since it is a community within a community. Durkheim says, we are a part of the society and the society is a part of us. He describes school as a transitional community between the families and the outside world and emphasises that the learning in the school needs to be such that the children acquire a taste of the collective life by actually participating in it and this can be achieved by the help of a teacher's support (Ottaway, 1955) Ms Mittal Thakker says, the day always starts in a circular set-up. When children are seated in a circular manner it gives them a sense of community and togetherness. They eat, pray, and learn in a circular manner. Durkheim talks about how these collective actions bring about collective consciousness or collective mind where concepts and ideas represent the social realities (Ottaway, 1955) The very same term, Ms Mittal Thakker calls 'Group consciousness' that she explicitly states is a synonym of the word solidarity. She

quotes an example from Mathematics. She says all different operations come together to bring out a single solution to the problem, likewise, solidarity is about working together to achieve a common goal or a result.

This common goal leads them to understand the simple idea of 'We are all in this together' says Ms Greeva Shah who is a teacher at an NGO. In her opinion, considering the city of Mumbai and India at large, Solidarity has a deep-rooted meaning attached to it that needs to be unpacked carefully. Solidarity already exists in our society but just as a concept or a principle that when explained is very easy to understand. But it is also important to understand its offshoots since it is something that is holding our systems together, acting as a foundation just like how a chain of atoms hold each other together to form a base. Certain activities help schools to maintain this bond especially when it comes to food. 'Community Lunch' is a practice followed in Bodhi Vidyalaya, where one family each day brings lunch for all the kids and everyone eats the same food that has been provided to them, from whichever family it is coming from. In another school children are taught to be tolerant towards each other. For eg: Vegetarians and Non-vegetarians. Each group is sensitized about the food preferences of other groups and puts one in others' shoes.

Apart from this, 'Cultural events and cultural periods' in their timetable induce them to learn about each other and appreciate each other's cultures. This has been a part of the curriculum for a long time, says Ms Buella Nadar, headmistress of Mumbai Public School. Thus, solidarity talks about this very same integration and permeance of social ties that displays the level of collectivism in society and these activities help in achieving that. 'The greater the richness of the activities and interaction that the children participate in, the greater will be their understanding and knowledge This learning happens through learning in different social situations (Smith, 2012)

Since each one comes from a different background, children do carry a preordained baggage that gets affected in the practice of solidarity in the classroom. Ms. Mini, says that there are some children in the class who come from not so developed areas and who mainly belong to broken homes. Children coming from these homes, if boys, generally turn out to be violent and if girls, tend to either be cranky or be boisterous. On the other hand, Mrs Mohan, who is a mother of a 10-year-old, says that with changing times, and most children in advanced primary schools being single children, they tend to become selfish since there is a lack of practice of solidarity at home, with either no siblings or the parents fulfilling all their needs. Thus they prefer to stay isolated or are self-obsessed. It is important to make them feel included. This system of school becomes a safe space for them to formulate and express their views while developing an understanding of what solidarity is. Ms Mini says that since those years are the most 'impressionable age', students now depend on teachers for their needs and support and confide in them. They also start imitating her and thus it is the teacher's duty to show them the right way. Especially the ones coming from less developed areas are always subjected to vulnerability and abuse. Thus, the stipulated six hours that they spend in the school has to be the most impactful in terms of giving them knowledge, values and most importantly creating a sense of belonging and inclusion in them.

An activity suggested by Ms Thakker simplifies its meaning. Once, some difference arose in the classroom on the number of boys over the girls. The teacher gave a conch to all the students and asked whether the conch is a boy or a girl? They had no answer. Then she asked

with whom will the conch share the sound of the ocean with? She put it near everyone's ear and all could hear it. She then followed it up by asking who can walk on the mother earth, girl or a boy? And whom will the tree give its fruit? The children had no answer and hence she said that when the conch, the earth and the tree do not discriminate then why do we create hostility between us? She says, considering the nature of the school, such stories should be woven into the curriculum.

If we look closer, in primary education, the child has one single teacher who is constantly in touch with him/her, rather than secondary school where teachers change with every subject. Hence, this is an advantage to easily foster solidarity among children, since they can rely on the teacher, and confide in her. Also, one teacher holding all the threads in her hands, becomes easy for her to steer the class in a particular direction. Apart from this, Mr Siddharth Marchandani, a football coach says that there are other ways through which one can induce solidarity i.e. through punishments. While punishment is an integral part of sports, it is also an important part of the school. Giving everyone the same kind and degree of punishment shows the uniformity being practised on the field and that no child is different. Thus, sports is an excellent way of building solidarity, as is also believed by Ms. Nadar.

There was a difference seen as to how the meaning of solidarity was being translated into each type of school and also depended on the main stakeholder of that field as to how he/she simplified its meaning for the kids. Thus broadly, they believe that each lesson they learn and each activity they do must be relevant to them, such that they can apply it into their everyday lives. For example, values like charity, empathy, sensitivity, communication and responsibility are the top preferences of educators to inculcate solidarity into their classrooms. Ms. Nadar explicitly says that she, being a Christian strongly believes in the act of Charity. Hence, she brings solidarity and inclusion through charity. There was one such activity she made the students perform was to organise a fun fair at the school. The money collected was not kept with the school but was used for getting toys and tools for the class that had children with special needs. They bought the toys and the children themselves handed them over to them. This noble act of charity taught the children how by the act of giving, one can create solidarity between both groups and how the latter feels included. Along similar lines the National Education Policy, 2020 too, has explicitly mentioned that 'the school curriculum should include human values such as respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion and equity' (NEP, 2020) But how much coherence does solidarity have with these values and does it keep changing depending on the change in structure or spatial characteristics, the most important one being proximity i.e in-person schooling. The recent past years saw some unforeseen changes on the very same lines, the major one being the Covid-19 pandemic that brought a new tangent to the existing definition of Solidarity

A New Tangent

One catastrophic event that touched all our lives in some or the other way was the mega emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Be it any major event or humanitarian crisis in the country, closing schools and disruption of education is the first thing that takes place, thus making schools subjected to high levels of vulnerability. While Durkheim's solidarity emphasised upon the spatial proximity between individuals to attain solidarity, the pandemic

widened the gap between them for an uncertain period of time. Instead of social cohesion, social distancing, social exclusion, isolation, stigmas, prejudices, rumours, risk etc. ruptured the social integration amongst us all. Individualism emerged that was heavily contested by Durkheim as the biggest enemy of solidarity that the society needed to fight against (Misra & Rath, 2020) When Covid-19 first struck us and consequently the pandemic was declared, that not only had a larger economic impact on the country's economy but also disrupted the lives of many especially that of the children that induced an unprecedented educational emergency leading to the closure of schools. This forced almost 90% of the learners globally to shift to online or distance learning while some just fell out of school (Reuge et.al, 2021) As much as an interesting fancy term of 'Covid Generation' emerged there was some turmoil behind it that, though being acknowledged on different platforms, went little unnoticed initially. Learning spaces had become a complex question like never before. But with the quest of moving forward the human mind didn't just stop there but opened doors to another transworld that seemed far-fetched back then. With rapid technological development, the transitional community of schools transformed the most important element of space into something that could fit into a small screen and had absolute mobility. Global discussions on remote learning got established and these spaces were now called 'Virtual Learning Spaces' (Cahapay, 2020) This required the existence of some amount of digitisation taking place in the countries. In the Indian context, 'Digital India' was launched by the Government of India with an aim to transform India digitally that empowered its collective and individual knowledge and society by providing an adequate digital infrastructure. This project also aimed at providing 'universal literacy and making digital sources easily accessible and thus with the necessity of digitalisation education being on the top priority (Singh, 2019

The Pandemic put all our aspirations and goals to the test and check where do we stand? What all needs to be done? How to judiciously use the existing sources? And what changes do we need to bring about to reach a good decent standard and off all fulfil the requirements of the current times. But the first question that arises is that of 'accessibility'. The digital divide was something that first needed to be addressed. Ms Nadar mentioned how there were some children who had no decent devices to attend school online. The school had no option but to provide them with one, but the teachers stepped forward and provided their old devices to students so that there would be no hindrance in their journey of learning. While some could afford to have/buy a laptop some attended their classes through phones. Thus, now their space started to change in size, and mode and this was largely dependent on accessibility and the working conditions of the device.

The mode of imparting and receiving education itself underwent a structural change. Accessibility also stems from the ease at which the action is being performed. Even though children were all apart, first, solidarity emerged through the formation of 'Whatsapp groups'. When initially during physical classes all notes, and important messages were passed on orally or in writing, now the digital sites of WhatsApp communities, first, let everyone access the same information at the same time, second, let the information stay permanently on the platform and third, helped the parents and the students reciprocate by enabling them to ask common questions that were helpful for all. This gradually made way for solidarity to not break, since there was at least one way through which the entire class was connected. The

teachers and the school administrators made sure that the classes took place as per the normal school timings and everyone attended it in their uniforms hence instilling some discipline.

On the other side of the screen, there were other participants who helped tackle this change that is a child's Family. Families have major inputs in a child's learning as they are considered central to education (Tarkar, 2020) Being the headmistress, Ms. Mini supervised the functioning of online classes and ensured that the teachers did their job to the best of their capabilities and were totally immersed into it. They now got a peek into their homes as to how the child is being treated, who is attending to him/her etc. This displayed the relationship and solidarity they had within the family. Now even children had the opportunity to have a look of what is happening in each other's lives. Initially, there was clear bifurcation between house and school, with very less involvement of family, but it now shifted to setting up the device and making some conducive space for the child to attend his/her classes. She reminisces about certain unfortunate and shocking instances that happened at some homes while the camera was on and teachers then had to intervene since the entire class was also witnessing it. Taking from Durkhiem's idea that he calls the school being a miniature society, now due to online education both, the society named 'school' and the society named 'home' immersed into each other. Online education tested learners' motivation, satisfaction and interaction in terms of reciprocation (Selvaraj et.al, 2021)

Along with challenges, there were some brighter sides too, where certain online activities helped them rekindle solidarity in some way. Ms Mini says that her school had organised an 'Online Picnic'. Students were asked to prepare one common dish for eg. Pav Bhaji. Everyone gets it, comes together, eats and enjoys the feast. Not just this but during festivals especially like that of Eid, everyone would get Kheer and have it together while sharing stories about the festival and its culture. This displayed high levels of reciprocation amongst students such that they became active participants in the class and made adequate efforts to mark their presence virtually irrespective of the mode of education that kept them involved and interested.

While teachers and students were finding their way of handling online education, there did come a time to reopen our schools. There were an enormous amount of health apprehensions since the pandemic had not come to an end yet. Keeping in mind some factors like time, conditions and processes to guide educational systems, UNESCO raised 3 urgent questions- When can they reopen? What conditions should be accessed? And how can states organise schools on a practical level? As each country had a different system and situation, these questions were posed commonly to all so that they could guide their actions accordingly. This brought all of us to rethink and re-conceptualise the notion of what and how learning space should be in the new normal (Cahapay, 2020)

In India, especially in Maharashtra, there were rounds of lockdown and then gradually the schools reopened with necessary precautions and interventions. Mr. Marchandani says that, at the first instance they all gelled well. The primary motive then was not to learn but to first come together, socialise and have fun, to get the feel back. He says, post-pandemic when schools reopened, there was a gush of energy and relief among children and their instant reaction was that, 'Yes! There is now a place to play. Ms Nadar said that in terms of children coming together, they come together instantly and that she owes to online education that helped them to stay in constant touch in spite of restrictions. But some challenges did occur, Ms. Mini

says, especially with Standard 1st and 2nd. While all the other standards from 3rd to 5th had transitioned from offline to online, standards 1st and 2nd, directly entered online classrooms. Thus, after schools reopened, for 3 months at least, special focus was laid on containing them within the classrooms, while the teacher was now acting as the principal agent forging some solidarity between them. Therefore, explicit efforts were made to foster solidarity after the schools reopened and that largely depended on the age and level of the students.

But largely, it was easy for students and teachers to transcend from virtual to physical spaces, but there was some onus on the state and the administration too to reopen schools systematically with proper facilities like healthcare, sanitation and protection without imposing any danger to anyone. UNICEF argued that if schools were not opened on time this might have caused some catastrophic consequences for humanity. Thus, the report mentioned that opening schools were better than opening another institution in the society since there was low fatality among younger children and this was also one of the reasons for allowing children especially, the primary school to be relaxed of social distancing since they were one of the safer groups (Viner et.al, 2021) Solidarity re-installed itself through online education, where all the stakeholders tried their best to hold on the community together, in spite of their being a back and forth to open the schools or not. While some standards did bounce back easily to physical education some did struggle to establish some form of relationships, especially the younger ones, since they did not experience the space of school, especially during their primitive years of learning itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with the amalgamation of both testimonies of the stakeholders, anthropological observations and the support of the already established concept of Solidarity it can be seen that Solidarity makes itself coherent with the changing dynamics of primary schooling. Important characteristics of Solidarity like that of 'proximity' and 'reciprocity' emerged as two important elements of primary schooling. While the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be an uncertain time, Solidarity traversed along the course and proved to be the most essential factor of a classroom be it in-person or physical or online or virtual. Thus, even if the idea of solidarity emerged from the 18th century, it still stands relevant to our current scenario and especially our schools, since it is one of the most prominent sites of forging solidarity and seeing the results of its application. While solidarity is being discussed under various contexts, this study adds to the literature that specifically caters to the 'Primary Education System in India'. The study not just reflects how Solidarity operates through primary school but also makes it 'contemporary' and 'relevant' by focusing on the period Covid-19 pandemic.

It is 'important to address it at primary levels' since it is one of the most important formative years in a child's development, not just physically but mentally and emotionally too. While the teacher's role has such a big impact on the student's life, 'teachers' beliefs' also influence how solidarity is being brought into the space. Thus, the essence of solidarity lies in the reciprocity of feelings like sympathy and responsibility that fosters mutual support among the groups (Wilde, 2007). Each student comes from different socio-economic backgrounds and some from broken homes. While the teacher has the onus to guide the classroom it is also the students' background that affects the way it is taken by them. Hence, it is a 'two-way approach' and therefore, 'reciprocity' is again something that is constantly seen throughout. When this is

established, it evokes trust and positivity in their relationships, and thus they tend to bind together effectively and thus a mutual obligation emerges (Smith, 2012)

When it came to the pandemic, it was the time for the stakeholders to introspect on our current positioning and thus development. It turned out to be an opportunity to reimagine, redesign and recaliber education by now scaling it on the basis of accessibility, equitability and inclusivity, simultaneously eliminating inequality and injustice by giving the autonomy in their hands to now navigate their own ways (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020) While it opened up spaces for global education, teachers have given an ‘upvote for physical education over virtual learning’. By the end of the day, the aim is to teach and learn something that is valuable. According to them, they did get adapted to the online space but the real space of school always brings in the personal touch, thus reaffirming Durkhiem’s idea of the importance of ‘proximity’ to achieve solidarity. Also, considering the age of the children, offline education is always preferred any day. Thus, with growing complexities, in the society, Durkhiem’s ideas always come handy, since solidarity never changes its basic nature, but only gets modified as per the ideas, requirements, rules, beliefs, and backgrounds that each player has and hence its essence remains the same throughout while being valid and applicable to educational systems all over the country and the world. Primary actors such as mentors, tutors, teachers and the educational administrators, in many different ways, play their role in building solidarity amongst the students. But at the same time, Education must enable them to stand up for the right things and act in solidarity with their peers, consequently leading the change and also helping them think about the bigger picture of marching together as a unit (The Guardian, 2017) Thus, it is necessary to forge solidarity, since according to United World Schools ‘Our Future Lies on Solidarity’ (United World Schools)

Limitations

While Durkheim held the ultimate ownership of the ideas of solidarity, he campaigned for its need while addressing the French Republic and his fellow intellectuals, and citizens and pushed them to set goals towards creating a secular state (Cladis, 2005) While India stands today as the largest populated country in the world with 1,417,274,092 people, while claiming to be the largest democracy in the world, it is uniquely diverse in many aspects (United Nations, 2023) This diversity over history has not only become the face of our country but has also seen complications emerging at various levels, especially in the issue of human development and wellbeing, the most important one being education. While solidarity can be applied to any society, though many Indian scholars have written about it through various aspects, the dearth of Indian literature in terms of solidarity in education, unfortunately, pushes us to take in ideas from other foreign platforms and then leaves us with no option but to replicate in the Indian context. This study focuses only on Durkhiem’s idea of solidarity and does not consider the ideas given by different scholars like Karl Marx, Pierre Bourdieu etc. who also elaborated on the idea of solidarity post-19th century until the recent contemporary times. Mumbai is the most important metropolitan city in India and thus has people of different climes and backgrounds residing here. But this study, while solely focusing on primary education in Mumbai, does not take into account the deep socio-cultural factors such as caste, class, gender etc, that are interrelated and have a significant amount of impact on how solidarity is practised in our system.

Scope for further study

Trying to understand solidarity, while looking at the larger picture is necessary and also important to pay heed to the specificities in terms of time, space and the subjects and how it takes place at each level in the lifetime of a child's education. While this study focuses on primary education in Mumbai, it has scope to expand its purview and look at various other aspects. While the study is just focusing on one level of education of primary schooling, other levels such as the pre-primary, and secondary and higher secondary can also be studied while doing a comparative study between all the levels that will have a different implication on the research. We move one step further in learning about solidarity when we learn more about unfamiliar spaces and people and become more sensitive to their distress, while we are learning about our state (Wilde, 2007) Thus while studying different levels, there can be an expansion of horizontal study via a Pan-India focus along with some variety like either at different levels or studying the most popular comparison of urban and rural. This will leverage the study by incorporating more number of interviewees, branching from different socio-economic setups. Hence, this will also lead to the incorporation of more variables like caste, class, gender, race etc. which become prominent in studying solidarity, especially in the Indian context considering the horizontal and vertical diversity it has. While the meaning of solidarity remains unchanged, the scope of the study is widening with a rise in developments happening at each level in the country, with rapid change in social, economic and political scenarios, which is now affecting individuals at each level irrespective of their backgrounds and the stake they are carrying in the society.

Ethical Consideration and Declaration

Since the study is heavily dependent on primary data and anthropological field notes, interviews of various stakeholders play a larger part in the study. Thus, each interviewee's consent was taken and their participation was completely voluntary. They were aware of the goals, objectives and purpose of this research and their responses and views are completely personal and unintentional.

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Impact of Neuromarketing on the FMCG, Media and Entertainment Industry: A case study of metropolitan cities in India

Shraddha Kalpathi Jaidev ¹

Abstract

Over the past 3 decades, technology has reached new heights and has been able to seep into every possible field. One such upcoming method of study is neuromarketing which has transformed the way companies approach market research. The paper is an attempt to explore the different facets of neuromarketing and its overall effectiveness when it comes to market research. The data was collected by conducting interviews with 8 professionals from the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (thereafter FMCG) and Media and Entertainment living in metropolitan cities in India (i.e. Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Delhi & Kochi) who were able to present arguments that covered different aspects of neuromarketing. Based on research, neuromarketing is mostly used in the FMCG and Media and Entertainment industries and this paper has analysed the scope and impact neuromarketing has had on the two industries. Out of the several techniques of neuromarketing used in the industries, the paper has identified that eye tracking and fMRI are the most popular techniques. Through the course of the interviews, several interesting insights propped which are outlined in the paper as well. As the method is very expensive and restrictive, the data suggests that businesses have not been able to fully adopt the method and still view it with a sense of scepticism. Lastly, considering the ethical connotations attached to neuromarketing, the paper focused on the nuances that businesses need to consider before adopting such a method. The penultimate aim of the study is to shed light on the dimensions that go into getting the desired results from neuromarketing and how it is being adopted in the industry.

Keywords: Neuromarketing, FMCG, Media, Entertainment, consumer behaviours, brands, India

Introduction: Background of the study

Products are manufactured in a factory, but brands are created in the minds of the consumer. For a customer, their real desires remain unconscious and very few people are correctly able to identify them. Businesses are in constant search of a simple peak into the minds of their consumers where they can identify dimensions of their personalities that they are not fully aware of. Gaining relevant consumer insight is the first step to creating an effective marketing strategy. The insight cannot stem from an imaginative observation but must be backed with realism and rationalism. If this foundational step is not approached with seriousness, the whole structure of one's plan comes crumbling down. With no method available in the market that offers some sense of guarantee, brands are often forced to make

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many subjective decisions while shaping their marketing campaigns, spending crores and crores of money with no guarantee that it will be welcomed by the target group. There is a growing need to perfect this very step by creating a full-proof system that guarantees some form of tangible outcomes for businesses. Here is where neuromarketing offers some sort of objectivity to the decision-making process by allowing marketers to get a peep into the mindset of people. Especially with cities in India becoming the centres for growth and development, they are becoming locations that are fuelling transformation with the burst of ideas and energy of people. In our country, neuromarketing is still at a very nascent stage with the top FMCG brands and Media & Entertainment companies slowly integrating it into their marketing research stage.

People's decision-making skills are hugely influenced by unconscious mental processes. Neuroimaging methods are a non-invasive technique that helps form an image of the patient's brain, are among the most recent techniques for measuring marketing stimuli which are used to uncover information pertaining to consumer behaviour concerning commercial and markets trade. The application of neuromarketing activities has led to some debate. Researchers sceptical of the subject argue that using these methodologies obstruct the consumers' capability to reject marketed goods, leaving them vulnerable to the company's campaigns and unable to resist their attempts. Moreover, using neuromarketing requires advanced technology and substantial financial investment to precisely measure impulses which proves to be challenging. On the other hand, people who support neuromarketing believe it can be beneficial in targeting the correct customers and designing consumer centric products, facilitating better decision-making than basing judgements on guess work. They also feel that businesses would save significant portions of their budgets, which are currently wasted on ineffective campaigns that fail to cater to consumer needs (Fortunato et al., (2014). Bercea (2013) feels that because neuromarketing is a young science, it's theoretical, empirical, and practical breadth is still being explored. In this paper, I would like to explore the different facets of science and try to understand its practicalities in the field of market research within the FMCG and Media and Entertainment industry.

Need for Study

With India being such a diverse country, brands cannot make generalized decisions for consumers. Based on the economic, political, and social factors, the whole messaging has to change which is what makes it more difficult for marketers to gauge the pulse and actual buying behaviour of Indians. To add to this, talking about the FMCG and media & entertainment industry, every day the consumer is exposed to a lot of stimuli that it becomes hard for the brand to truly stand out. Mixing both reasons, neuromarketing presents a golden opportunity for brands to leverage and situate themselves in the minds of consumers more efficiently.

Currently, in India neuromarketing is at a very nascent stage and there is a lack of awareness about the field. With very few research labs performing experiments, it becomes imperative to make sense of how neuromarketing can be incorporated into daily market research as it has the scope to completely change the face of standard practices. This study aims at gaining a sense of the Indian neuromarketing market and the scope it holds while also shedding light on the challenges it poses.

Literature Review

The Role of Neuromarketing in market research

To start, we first need to understand what neuromarketing is. According to Lim (2018), the point of neuromarketing is to integrate and adapt processes and ideologies from neuroscience with theories and methods from marketing. Methods from marketing and allied disciplines, such as psychology and economics, are used to create neuro-scientifically justified explanations of the role of marketing on understanding consumer behaviour. Indeed, neuromarketing presents itself as a valuable tool as it uses neuroscientific methodologies and concepts to learn about otherwise hidden information. This information is collected through observing neurological processes as compared to individuals being questioned directly about their thoughts, emotions, memories, assessments, or decision-making processes.

The scope of neuromarketing techniques should capitalize on this variety of research in neuroscience. Studies should not be restricted to the central nervous system or the brain but should include all cognitive and physiological operations. This comprehensive approach is visible in the variety of neuromarketing techniques that must be accounted for. These include pupil movement and dilation, the electrical conductivity of the skin, physiological aspects like monitoring perspiration, muscle movements (body and face), hormonal and neurotransmitter changes. Additionally, intricate cognitive aspects are also explored such as dissecting the functional activity of specific areas of the brain through the examination of different marker molecules (Fortunato et al., (2014).

Practicalities and effectivity of the field

Hafez (2019) says that neuromarketing provides powerful techniques for measuring brand associations and the image the customer forms in their minds. The central point of neuromarketing research is how an individual's neural circuits recognize a preferred brand. McClure et al., (2004) conducted research, known as the Pepsi paradox, aimed at digging deep into the mindset of a consumer while choosing between two cold drinks brands namely Coke and Pepsi by using fMRI. The study involved him using two tests i.e., a blind test and a labelled test to calculate the brain activity of individuals. In a blind test, based on tasted most of the respondents preferred Pepsi. In the labelled test, their preference label dramatically shifted where 25% preferred Pepsi and 75% preferred Coke. This occurred because the respondents had a strong emotional association to the brand name Coke. This fMRI² results showed that when respondents were aware about the brand name, additional areas within the brain were activated specifically the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, hippocampus and midbrain. This helped demonstrate that a powerful brand image has an influence on invoking certain emotions that alters the perception of the product.

According to neurological research, the limbic system, which governs emotion, is where the brain responds to short-term riches the most. Future advantages are investigated in the prefrontal cortex, which is linked with calculation and logic. If everything else is equal, the

² fMRI: Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) is a type of imaging technique that helps conduct an indirect assessment of the influx of oxygen-rich blood into an actively function area of the brain (Cosic, 2016, 140)

limbic region's reward of immediate economic pleasure will triumph over the prefrontal cortex's rationale of deferring benefits. This is not an issue for service goods with inherent short-term incentives, such as those related to food, entertainment, and so on (Fugate, 2008).

Neurotechnology methods

There are several methods associated with the field, some of which are Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) which is a suitable technique to investigate brain activation in relation to a straightforward experimental design with minimal temporal dimension. It utilizes a combination of radio waves and magnetic field to generate a signal, enabling a detailed viewing of metabolic activity in the brain and brain structures. Positron emission tomography (PET) can produce as compared to fMRI can produce physiologic images with spatial resolution. It records the radiation emitted by a radioactive substance administered to the subject. Without pointing out the signals location, a group of detectors surrounding the subject's head traces radiation pulses. Following fMRI, within neuromarketing research electroencephalography (EEG) is one of most widely used tools. It tracks brain wave amplitudes with relation to different mental states, such as composure (alpha waves), sleep (delta waves), wakefulness (beta waves) and tranquillity (theta waves). Lastly, without studying brain activity, eye tracking helps study behaviour and cognition. It tracks aspects such as where the subject is looking, the duration of where he is looking, the path of their gaze, and changes in pupil dilation while viewing stimuli (Fortunato et al., 2014).

Bercea (2012) says that each methodology utilized in neuromarketing research has its own set of advantages and drawbacks, which provide varying degrees of utility depending on the circumstances of a given investigation. It would suggest that some technique combinations are more suited for creating more accurate neuromarketing research and, as a result, more effective. Creating a powerful research tool by combining a high degree of spatial detail (of fMRI) with a high temporal resolution is possible by using, for example, functional magnetic resonance imaging in conjunction with electroencephalography or magnetoencephalography (EEG or MEG). In the same line of investigation, combining PET and fMRI could also improve results by providing information on what happens at each instance (using PET) and where the difference takes place (with fMRI). The electroencephalogram (EEG) can be utilised in combination with physiological responses to make deductions about emotional states and areas of the brain that have greater levels of electric activity at a reduced cost. TMS is employed to investigate the causality of certain brain regions for certain thought patterns, whereas EEG and fMRI just examine connections between the data acquired and stimuli. Thus, the combination of TMS with EEG or fMRI is also ideal.

Eye tracking has become a value tool in market research to develop a better understanding of customers' responses to advertisements beyond the information gathered from self-reported metrics. In a study conducted by Zhang and Yuan (2018), an association between gaze duration and memory was found, indicating that eye tracking could assist in uncover the impact of various advertising elements on consumer feelings and cognition. According to Boshoff and Toerien (2017), there are noticeable difference in viewing patterns between smokers and non-smokers. Smokers tend to pay greater attention to (more eye fixation) to text-only messages displayed on cigarette packages, while non-smokers show more interest to

visual advertising components. This finding has remarkable consequences for leveraging effective packaging design to potentially reduce the use of cigarettes.

With several methods of neuromarketing available in the market, considering their objectives and budgets businesses need to decide which method is the most useful to them. Especially, in the fast-paced industries such as FMCG or Media and Entertainment where businesses need to roll out their products every couple of weeks, the tight timelines demand using a method that fits their business the best. Studying this literature helped me gain an insight into the pros and cons of the various methods and how each one will help tackle a different need based on the type of industry.

Ethical and social ramifications

In their study, Ulman et al. (2014) propose the inclusion of public policies based on human rights laws and the bioethical principles of human honesty and dignity within the scope of research. They emphasise the importance of monitoring and evaluating bioethics panels and review boards, particularly concerning decision-making and ethical evaluation. Above all, the authors advocate for a holistic debate process that involve all relevant stakeholders such as individuals of the academic and public forums, professionals, legislators, professionals, and experts to develop a relevant and reasonable discourse as the foundation for just neuromarketing policy. They emphasize that bioethics dialogue guided by the principles of charity and nonmaleficence, offers a framework that acknowledge human participants not merely as clients or, but as people deserving protection of their privacy, integrity, autonomy and confidentiality. Cost-effectiveness cannot be the principal intention for researching live brain activity. Instead the application of the methodology should be based on morally and scientifically justified public policies. At the end of the day, the eventual goal of scientific study is to uphold the health and well-being humans. Lastly, as experts, it remains their ethical responsibility to take action on a societal-level which will in turn assist in educating and enlightening people, and influence public policy related to the use of neurotechnology.

Future Possibilities and Scope

Lee et al. (2006) suggests that neuroimaging incessantly evolving, with regards to both the advancements of technology and developing a deeper understanding of what processes and activity in different parts. As technology progresses, it allows a better quantification of temporal, frequency and geographic aspects of brain activity and thus potentially leading to new insights into the various aspects of brain activity. On the other hand, Ariely and Berns (2010) assert that with the ongoing research and progress in technology, neuroimaging will become more cost effective and quicker than traditional marketing methods. The development of analysis techniques like MVPA holds the promise of unveiling concealed information about consumer choices. Compared to the West, India remains about 2 decades behind when it comes to using neuromarketing and dissecting the benefits it has to offer. The inadequacy of full-functioning research labs and the lack of will to try something new are two factors that have contributed to the absence of the development of neuromarketing in the Indian subcontinent. Thus, today with media giants like Meta and FMCG like Procter & Gamble integrating these practices within their marketing plans, India stands at the cusp of amalgamating neuromarketing into everyday business. Even if the top 20% of businesses can figure out a way

to reap the advantages of the method cost-effectively, the scope of neuromarketing to transform the marketing sector is huge.

Research Gap

Because neuromarketing is still viewed as a novel method, the current research is majorly around defining the concepts, the techniques, and the scope the field possesses. Very little research talks about how and why the big conglomerates of the world effectively utilise the potential of the field. Secondly, even though neuromarketing is majorly used in FMCG and the media & entertainment industry, the reasons why it is predominantly focused within these industries remain unknown. Talking about India alone, the work and research conducted are fairly little and are not being done on an extensive scale to understand how worthwhile the method is to analyse the mindset of a diverse audience. The literature gap is the absence of a focused study that talks about the specific industries that use neuromarketing in India and the positive and negative impact it has on market research.

Rationale:

Neuromarketing researchers have produced theoretical and review publications in the field, but it remains very limited and mostly focused from the point of view of the West. This situation could be attributed to neuromarketing uncertainties, such as the academic effectiveness of neuroscience calculations in pushing marketing theory, ethical connotations attached with using such methods, and the practical importance of these methods as successful tools for advertising strategies given the substantial expenses and cutting-edge technology needed for empirical research. (Lim, 2018).

Aim

To assess the effectiveness and practicalities of using neuromarketing in the FMCG and media & entertainment industry in metropolitan cities in India.

Objectives

The primary objective of the study is to analyse the scope and impact neuromarketing has had on the FMCG Media and Entertainment industries within the metropolitan cities in India. There is an emphasis to try and understand how neuromarketing practices are being woven into the everyday marketing practices and budgets of the businesses. The research also attempts to identify the most popular neuromarketing techniques used in the two industries. It also tries to add to the understanding of the key insights that businesses have been able to receive through neuromarketing. Lastly, the study also discusses the restrictions of the field and the ethical connotations attached to it.

Research Questions

The research aims to investigate whether neuromarketing is an effective method of conducting market research in the FMCG and Media and Entertainment industry in India. Moreover, there is an attempt to dig deeper into understanding the popular techniques businesses are using, what are the results that they have been able to generate using these

techniques and what are the ethical standards businesses must conform to while performing such experiments.

Sample Size

A qualitative nature of the study has been followed where the primary data of the paper was collected from primary interviews supported with secondary research. The secondary data was procured from statistics and articles concerning neuromarketing. The paper will illustrate this through in-depth interviews with experts from the fields of neuroscience, neuromarketing and brand management. The interviews were conducted with professionals living and working in metropolitan cities in India. The questions asked surrounded the areas of the methods popularly used, the viabilities and scope of neuromarketing, the insights brands have got in by using the technique, the ethical ramifications, and the future possibilities. Each interview lasted close to 30 minutes. They were conducted in person, on-call or on google meet. The demographic location pertains to metropolitan cities in India.

Results and Findings

The popular techniques used in neuromarketing

According to Sirish, a Director at a neuromarketing research company in Mumbai the eye tracking and brain mapping are used primarily for commercial purposes, while FMRI machines are used in the clinical and research sectors. Padmini, a neuromarketing assistant professor at Amrita Business School in Kochi said that though EEG and FMRI are the most advanced techniques and provide the most accurate data, they are very expensive and difficult to execute. The most extensively discussed technique was eye tracking, which allows enabling to record and observe gaze positions and patterns based on brain activity. This helps in grasping human behavior in response to specific marketing stimuli or questions related to marketing. It also enhances the interpretation of the connection between what participants see during tests and how they respond to marketing information. By employing an optical camera, which can be contact lens-based, electrooculogram-based, or video-based, the objective is to detect the pupil and corneas position using infrared light (Lim, 2018). In this technique, brands also try to stimulate a similar environment to a regular shopping cycle and map what kind of reactions it evokes in consumers as they walk through the aisles.

Deepak, head of marketing at a media company in Mumbai also brought up this idea about how eye tracking helps brands understand whether their branding is visible or if the information that the brand wants to highlight is being registered or not. If Saffola oil is coming out with a new product whose communication objective is to highlight that it is good for diabetic patients, then, in such cases, if the consumer is not even looking at the line about diabetes on the bottle, then there is some gap in the overall branding that needs to be fixed. Thus, using eye tracking, such insights can be gained, and eventually, changes can be made to ensure that the right parts of the message catch the eye of the customer.

Another interesting example provided by Shreya, a manager at a market research company in Mumbai was a study where it was observed that when males visit grocery stores, if diapers are kept next to the beer, then the sales of beer increase. Such studies not only assist us to understand behavioural trends but also gets into the nitty gritty of which products can be bundled together or kept on the same shelf. The scope and possibilities of what can be done with the field are huge, and the information that can be gathered from it is endless. Having said that, she also brought up the point that holistically, eye tracking also proves to be heavy on the pocket because a similar environment needs to be simulated and high-level technology needs to be used. While a similar setting can be achieved using technologies such as virtual reality. Virtual reality goggles prove to be more advantageous as they aid in simply replicating shelves and different combinations are presented to the participants while simultaneously also tracking neurological impulses, pulse, and so on.

There has been an increasing interest in interpreting how the brain reacts to marketing stimuli and understand consumer behaviour from an empirical lens. Brands want to move away from traditional marketing approaches to dig deeper and probe harder into the unconscious of the consumer so that strategies can be made more effective and consumer-centric (Cosic, 2016). Through the course of the discussions, the popular methods of neuromarketing that came up were EEG, the use of virtual reality headsets, heat mapping, eye tracking, and fMRI.

Sectors use it the most extensively

With eye tracking emerging as the most popular method within neuromarketing, this section will focus on which industries/sectors are using it the most and how they are choosing to use the information collected. When it comes to business models, Ayesha, a founder of a research company in Kolkata believes that neuromarketing is rarely used in B2B setups since the market is too diverse to achieve the desired results. Leaving the B2C or D2C sector to use this market research method. When it comes to specific businesses, all respondents agreed that the FMCG and media and entertainment industries are leaning more towards neuromarketing. India Tobacco Company, Hindustan Unilever, and Procter & Gamble were mentioned as examples in the FMCG category, while digital and media giants such as Facebook and Netflix are also using them.

Sirish felt that these sectors are incorporating neuromarketing more than other industries because they have a lot of stimuli being developed daily that they continually want to test. Second, according to Padmini, for neuromarketing to operate, a powerful stimulus is required to elicit a response from the participant, which can be obtained by the product businesses. Having said that, Ranjini a consumer neuroscience specialist from Delhi believes that the scope of neuromarketing is diverse even in the service business, with multi-sensorial experiences and pictures coming in. She claims, neuromarketing, comes to the fore whenever a behavioural change is possible. Netflix's use of the 'Tudum' sound, for example, is a type of aural marketing that the brand has identified as a point at which the consumer can draw an instant association. Netflix may have undertaken numerous rounds of exposing the subject to aural stimuli to determine which one they bested react to and in turn, identify the sound that best suits the brand.

The methodology followed in neuromarketing.

After a neuromarketing-based trial is over, it's important to know how brands use and apply the information they have learned. Typically, we begin with a consumer insight, which forms the hypothesis that the brand wants to test. It starts with first performing a qualitative study and then followed by a quantitative one. To support this, Chintan, a category head at a popular FMCG in Mumbai said that for instance, the starting point for a hair care business is that 80% of women in India between the ages of 25 and 34 desire their hair to be pin straight and spend between 5000 and 25000 on buying products to achieve this. Following this starting point, they would do qualitative research, which would include questionnaires, interviews, and so on. Post this, quantitative research will be conducted to validate the acquired data. In circumstances where brands are short on time, they rely only on quantitative research. While coming to neuromarketing, once the experiments are conducted, the data is collated, and insights are given on aggregated data. There are certain regressions that are run on the given set of material and outputs are accordingly derived. If X number of people say a certain thing, typically neuromarketing research firms attempt to identify what is driving a specific output or what is the buying intent. Building on these insights, the client is informed about the top three important reasons that drive customers, and what is dissuading them from buying and accordingly recommendations are made based on what works and what does not. Another crucial criterion followed during such tests is that the respondents should not have had any exposure to the brand's prior marketing activity. Before beginning the experiment, they are exposed to the same stimuli so that the process is standardized and all of them start on a fresh slate. Sirish further stated that by employing neuromarketing, they can record data on a second-by-second level, allowing them to determine high and low points in the consumer journey. Thus, using neuromarketing brands may be able to provide an effective before and after picture.

Insights that businesses have received using neuromarketing.

While talking to the interviewees, some very interesting insights came up which have resulted in brands being able to better understand the motivations and emotions of the consumer when they choose specific products or respond to particular content. Obtaining information from neuro-marketing is undeniably more accurate since it considers not only the social and psychological profiles of clients but also the cognitive. As a result, neuroscience allows us to investigate more of each group and categorise the market on more solid foundations (Campero & Hernandez, 2013)

To begin, Shreya elaborated on the flirtatious nature of the consumer when it comes to daily use products such as face washes. In these categories brand loyalty of the consumer remains less as the switching costs for such products are very low. In cases like these, neuromarketing proves to be particularly beneficial, as using devices like eye tracking, marketers can gauge things like which shelf the product should be placed on for it to be visible, what the key features of the product are being noticed by the consumer, and so on. Once they have been able to dissect the different nuances, marketing communication can be thereafter adapted to fit the needs of the consumer. Another cluttered category is that of edible oils, where

the key insight that neuromarketing helped unravel was that very few households in India use just one oil at home. Whether that be coconut oil for making specific dishes or olive oil for a healthier option, oil is used based on the kind of dish to be made or the purpose it serves. And this is what brands have learned to exploit effectively. They capitalize on the idea that if they cannot be the primary brand in a home, they can still aim to become the secondary brand. To increase their chances of becoming a secondary brand, they have been bundling products to appeal to a consumer more. For example, buying 5 litres of oil will give you 1 litre free. The thought of getting more at the same price immediately acts as a form of motivation to gravitate towards the product.

Ranjini brought up the example of a neuromarketing exercise conducted by Frito-Lay in 2008 for their snack brand Cheetos. Using neuromarketing, they were able to identify that, more than enjoying the flavours of the chip, the consumers enjoyed licking the crumbs stuck on their fingers. Thus, in cases like these, if the consumer were simply interviewed about what they like about Cheetos, they would have mentioned things like flavour, crunch, and taste. But only when they were observed in a simulated and closed environment were their real intentions behind consuming the product was revealed.

Colours play a huge role in defining the tone and personality of a brand, which is why companies spend a huge number of hours trying to attach the perfect colour to their brand identity. Ayesha spoke about how different brands use the power of colour psychology to evoke a specific emotion in relation to what the brand represents. Food delivery apps such as Zomato or Swiggy use bright, warm colours such as orange or red to increase our arousal levels. While networking sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn use the colours such as blue and white as these are sites people use to interact with others, which in turn builds their confidence.

Talking about the use of neuromarketing in the media and entertainment, Deepak expanded on how brands are using it when a new movie or trailer is to be released. To figure out if the trailer is exciting enough for the audience, they show the trailer to some participants and track their reactions. Doing this helps brands rework the touchpoints in the trailer to ensure that it is well received by the audience. Brands have also started to integrate the principles of neuroscience into their day-to-day work. For instance, based on neuroscience, the brain can remember seven things at a time in short-term memory. Thus, if Kaun Banega Karodpati, a popular quiz show on Sony TV, has a contest at the end of each segment, to make sure that the audience remembers the phone number, the voiceover will break it down into 7 parts. The grouping of digits makes it easy to remember and eventually recall later.

To understand consumer response to advertisements, Sirish worked on a study for Hotstar where they compared how advertisements work on sports content in contrast to other forms of media. In this case, the participants were shown the same set of ads during the Indian Premier League context and then during other contexts such as news, movies etc. What they found is that the ads do not change based on the context, but the consumer's response changes significantly. The sales were driven on a greater level during a sports context as compared to the other ones. The reasoning for this could be a sort of 'halo effect' created while watching

sports where the consumers' adrenaline and emotions are already running high, which has a major influence on their response to ads.

Restrictions that the technology poses

Having understood the kind of results neuromarketing can generate, it is also important to stress the kind of restrictions this method poses, both from a consumer and business standpoint. While talking to Chintan, he mentioned how when it comes to FMCG brands, they run on tight timelines and costs. With products being rolled out every month, they require a method that is quick and cost-effective, which is where neuromarketing falters. Despite the insights it provides, it takes time to conduct experiments, which is difficult in an extremely competitive business world where everyone runs on schedules that must be adhered to. Small and medium-sized organisations lack the resources to conduct their own neuromarketing research, therefore they must depend on the findings of enterprises in other industries. Additionally, they face challenges with the massive volume of data generated through brain research during real-time analysis (Kolar, 2014).

A point brought up in all interviews was the expense involved in this method. High-end technology and expertise demand a certain cost, which very few companies can bear. With the one-time costs running into lacs and sometimes crores, the technique remains restricted to the tech giants and the huge FMCGs. If the cost per respondent with traditional market research is Rs. 1500 to 2000, with neuromarketing it goes up by 10 or 20 times. The cost is a huge factor when brands make marketing decisions, but the question remains: have brands been able to recognise the isolated impact neuromarketing has had on market research? The impact could be understood by recording the change in reception from the audience or a boost in revenue following the application of neuromarketing. To this, Deepak says that currently in the market, most brands are allocating funds to both traditional and non-traditional methods of market research. They combine the insights received from both and form strategies accordingly. Thus, even if, after the launch of a campaign, the brand sees a spike in consumer awareness or revenue, one cannot point out that neuromarketing is the sole reason for this shift.

Another problem the Indian market faces is that it is low on acceptance when it comes to newer technology. They believe in sticking to age-old methods if they can get standard results and solutions. But very few brands want to push the notch higher by integrating cutting-edge technology into their already existing model. Also, as mentioned by Padmini and Ranjini, very few research companies are currently doing this in India. This again has a twofold reason. One is that the scope to set up a research lab is very limited, and secondly, the costs of experimenting run very high, dissuading investors from pooling their money.

Ayesha and Shreya also brought up the point of the biases that one must consider while talking about such methods. When a participant is strapped up with wires connected to their body and instruments placed on their brain, they are naturally more conscious, which does lead to some ambiguity in the kind of reactions they give or emotions they feel. The notion of wanting to give the 'right answer' might lead them to want to give responses based on what

they think best fits the situation. Secondly, just like any other market research method, generalizations play a huge factor here. The ideal sample size ranges from 30 to 300 participants, based on which companies base their entire marketing decisions, again posing a threat to the credibility of data. Another aspect that needs to be considered is the difficulty of interpreting this data. This becomes of contention for the brand, as they also need to bring in a team of specialists that can understand, analyse, and apply the data to general marketing decisions.

Ethical conditions attached to the field

While discussing the ethical consequences attached to this field, all the interviewees elaborated on how brands must put the safety and well-being of their consumers first. Satish, a deep learning engineer from Bangalore explained a major concern with this method is that of safety. The health of the participants needs to be accounted for before an experiment is conducted. Secondly, currently, modern-day consumers already have their guard up regarding their data and its protection which makes them cautious to engage in any such activities that might infringe on their safety. Ayesha says that just as when one logs onto a website, it asks for permission to have access to their cookies, similarly, in neuromarketing, the participants are also kept well informed of the motivations of the experiment.

While speaking about the kind of measures research companies are taking, Sirish highlighted how participants are made to sign consent forms where, under the General Data Protection Rules, their identity must remain anonymous. Instead of their name, a code is attached to them, which again helps keep personal details anonymous. Padmini spoke about how there is a fine line the brand must maintain between keeping the agenda of the experiment personal and putting the needs of the consumers first. Currently, in India, there are no ethical bodies that govern the activities and practises of neuromarketing, as it remains the individual responsibility of the companies to maintain a standard of morality and uphold ethics which puts additional pressure on them to prioritise the well-being of the audience.

Future possibilities and growth opportunities

Having discussed the different facets of neuromarketing and the opportunities it presents, it was also crucial to look at how the professionals expect the field to grow and seep into more parts of the world. The common theme across the data collected was that currently in India, the scope of this method is very limited, with only a handful of research labs participating in conducting experiments and compiling results. Putting this in the context of a product life cycle, Ranjini says that India is currently in the introductory stage, while the West is a minimum of 10 years ahead of us, putting them in the growth stage. With very few sectors integrating this framework into their marketing practices, neuromarketing is still viewed as a very niche method of market research. Thus, the market penetration of neuromarketing has remained very low in the past few years. However, Deepak, feels that just like digitalization took a long time to enter India, today, there is no looking back because of the progress that has been made since 2008. Today, even the remotest parts of India have access to digital facilities,

which also represents how once the benefits of something are understood, market adoption and growth are very quick.

Shreya, too, believes that the recent boom in digitalization is a testament to how neuromarketing is only expected to grow in huge shape and bounds. Platforms like Instagram are using neuromarketing, to understand details such as which part of a 'story' the consumer is touching. Thus, companies are looking at pushing the boundaries of technology every day with the results that they can create in neuromarketing. Sirish emphasised how neuromarketing will grow more popular over time, with even startups investing in the technology as it becomes cheaper, better, and faster. Overall, the common consensus was that the field does present myriad opportunities that need to be rightly addressed, and they expect it to grow immensely in the coming years.

Conclusion

The key arguments that the interviews revealed are that a) neuromarketing is currently predominately used in the FMCG and media & entertainment industries with eye tracking being used the most, b) the use and availability are restricted to the top companies in India's largest metropolitan cities, c) the method does pose a fair number of restrictions as well, d) the uncertainty of setting aside a huge chunk of the marketing budgets towards neuromarketing e) brands and companies are fairly aware of the kind of ethical and privacy risks that the field poses f) future of the technology looks bright but has to be moulded to correctly meet needs of the brands.

To elaborate on each point, when discussing neuromarketing, a point that was also mentioned above was that a strong stimulus is required to see any kind of real results. This powerful stimulus can be found in the FMCG, media, and entertainment industries. As seen in the preceding sections, the consumer insight that neuromarketing provides makes it distinct and piques the marketers' interest. With new products and content being released daily on a massive scale, brands are in constant search of the implicit emotions and feelings of their customers so that they can nudge them to move ahead quicker in the path to purchase. Particularly in these industries, the availability of substitute products and the rate of competition are so high that each brand is looking for ways that help them stand out in the crowd. Thus, neuromarketing provides opportunities for them to identify the right rationale that will catch the consumer's attention. And because the field is so broad, every aspect of the product or content can be tested, which lowers the stakes for brands by allowing them to put things on the market that they know will work. The most used technique among the industries remains eye tracking as it helps best capture the correct physiological changes that prove to interpret consumer behaviour potently.

Another common theme that emerged during the interviews was how, due to the constraints, the method's use and availability are limited to the world's largest tech and FMCG conglomerates. It is still an activity that is outsourced to research firms that specialise in it rather than performed by businesses on an individual basis. Secondly, whether it is Hindustan Unilever or Netflix, these companies have the financial and market share power to experiment and work on product development for a longer period. Having said that, the tricky part is

deciding what kind of products or content they want to stake their claim on. Preferably brands are performing experiments on products/content where they are envisioning to create something out of the ordinary and want to verify the reaction before launch. Neuromarketing will assist them in determining whether their vision is being received by the audience. It can also be done after launch when the brand is looking at repositioning the messaging. In such cases, brands can locate the touchpoints that are deterring the consumption of the product and accordingly rework strategies.

Each neuromarketing technique aids in the treatment and interpretation of different issues, so brands must be very clear about their priorities, needs, and expected outcomes while selecting them. Ayesha and Deepak both spoke at length about how an overall cost-benefit analysis must be performed to weigh the pros and cons of the method and determine whether the investment of time, money, and effort is worthwhile. Only after the circuit is fully established in India's metropolitan cities can we expect this method to penetrate further into rural India.

Yes, neuromarketing is a field that is gaining popularity as mentioned by neuromarketing experts Sirish and Rajini, but it is also being viewed with skepticism due to the constraints it imposes. As previously discussed, due to high costs or logistical challenges, brands have been unable to fully integrate the model as their sole method of market research. The total marketing budget remains split between traditional and non-traditional market research channels. Thus, even when brands use neuromarketing, they are not fully confident enough to put all eggs in one basket which is why they diversify their investments. By churning out the best of both worlds, they are integrating an existing model with a new one to present the best outcomes.

One thing that became clear after speaking with professionals was their awareness of the ethical implications of the field. As consumers evolve daily, so do their expectations of a brand. Transparency, privacy, and intent are all values that modern consumers hold very up on their list. The rise of social media has also played a role in this. No brand activity can now be carried out in isolation. Before launching campaigns, the impact on society and the customer must be considered. Brands and research firms must be especially cautious about the type of stake they hold in the market, as one wrong move can devastate the entire brand image. Hence, when investing in cutting-edge technology, ethical considerations must be considered to ensure that consumers are not exploited in the name of profit.

In conclusion, every few years, a new novel method enters the market with big promises and a desire to change the face of existing methods and neuromarketing is currently in that stage. It brings with it new opportunities and possibilities that businesses must use. With more options available on the market, the challenges of being a marketer are becoming more complex. They need to look deeper into the minds of customers than what is visible on the surface. And one method that can help them with this is neuromarketing. Especially as seen in the research above, the scope of neuromarketing in FMCG and Media & Entertainment above is immense. Whether we talk about the 'Halo Effect' mentioned by Sirish or the bundling of products mentioned by Shreya, these are key insights that no other method has been able to provide. Also, as Deepak said, even if neuroscience techniques can be adopted by businesses

in their daily operations, the consumer's mind can be better interpreted, and it also improves the retention of information. When one talks about methods such as eye tracking that do not require heavy research instruments, even if businesses can set aside a small portion of their budget to neuromarketing, over time they will begin to reap its benefits. Yes, the method does pose constraints that might deter brands from wholeheartedly accepting it, but within the next few years, neuro marketers are optimistic about it becoming quicker, cheaper, and more effective. Talking about the Indian subcontinent, the fast-paced progress of the technology sector in the last decade is testimony to the fact that Indians are receptive to methods that seem worthwhile to them. Thus, even when one talks about neuromarketing the journey needs to start by taking small steps towards integrating the technique into daily operations so that we can see it being adopted on a larger scale in the future.

Limitations

The chosen methodology could be viewed as vague as it tends to make wide assumptions about the application of neuromarketing in the FMCG and media & entertainment industry in India. The data is incomplete and incoherent. There was not adequate data available regarding the businesses that use neuromarketing and the kind of results that they have received by using the method. If the research could have been supported by official records published by the companies, the tangibility would have been more. Being a fully qualitative study, the absence of quantitative data does pose a problem to the validity of the arguments presented. The sample size of the data is very small i.e. 8 interviews which restricts the overall access to information. Secondly, the participants were only from 4 metropolitan cities in India which does not help us understand a holistic picture of the method in other cities.

Ethical Considerations and Declarations

To maintain the complete anonymity of the interviewees, their names and place of work have been changed. The data collected was purely used for this study.

Future Scope of the study

In the future, studies could be done to see how neuromarketing techniques can be made simpler and accessible to more sectors. The potential applications in industries such as automobile, fintech and hospitality must be explored so that the benefits can be reaped by everyone trying to offer the best to the consumers. Second, India is still in its infancy stage when research could be conducted to better understand the psyche of an Indian consumer. Finally, something that can be investigated is how one quantifiable result that neuromarketing provides for once can be applied to marketing practices. This could be accomplished by testing a campaign powered solely by neuromarketing insights and measuring revenue growth or brand awareness. This will help establish a positive correlation between its advantages and the results brands can generate.

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Effect of Gender Role Conflict on Seeking Professional Assistance

Jahnvi Polumahanti ¹

Abstract

Background: Gender socialisation has deeply influenced individuals' cognitive, emotional and interpersonal functioning, leading to men's confusion about what constitutes "appropriate" gendered behaviour which forms the construct of men's attitudes towards seeking help. Purpose: This paper aims to analyse the associations between parameters of gender role conflict (IV), personality traits (IV) and barriers to seeking help for chronic stress in Indian men. Methodology: For quantitative analysis, standardised, self-administered questionnaires like the Perceived Stress Scale, Gender Role Conflict Scale, The Mini-IPIP Test and Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-SF were used. Conclusion: (i) Gender role conflict is negatively correlated ($r = -0.636$) with attitude towards seeking help; (ii) Extraversion ($r = 0.281$), Agreeableness ($r = 0.137$), Imagination ($r = 0.225$) and Neuroticism ($r = 0.266$) are positively associated with attitude towards seeking assistance; (iii) A significant difference exists between age groups 20-30 and 45-55 when it comes to gender role conflict ($t = 0.000483$, $p < 0.05$) and attitude towards seeking help ($t = 0.00002$, $p < 0.05$). The findings provide insights into the intricacies of these parameters and lay the ground for further research in this domain in an Indian context.

Keyword: Gender role conflict, Indian men, Help-seeking behaviour, Chronic Stress, Professional Assistance

Introduction

Background of the Study

Men and women have stereotypical expectations in every regard which also seeps in when it comes to processing emotions. Women who express their emotions are socially accepted, while men are often discouraged due to the façade of being 'masculine'. These gender stereotypes have persisted for many years and negatively affected both sexes (Addis & Cohane, 2005).

Indicative of conventional masculinity ideology, the practice of dismissing emotional suffering can be seen as a tool used to define masculinity and confer social position and power (O'Neil, 2008). In the 1970s, the breaking down of the patriarchal norms began with the feminist movement and stirred the existing roles assigned to men and women. While young men were expected to be more emotive and understanding of other people's emotions, they were also expected to possess stereotypically masculine qualities. This in particular, led to men's gender role conflict (GRC) (Boisjolie, 2023). This has contributed to low self-esteem,

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difficulty initiating intimate relationships, and psychological distress in the male population (O'Neil, 2008).

This paper aims to analyse the associations between personality type and barriers to seeking help (disclosing information/ self-stigma) using the lens of gender role conflict, as it impacts the younger and the older male population's attitude and behaviour towards seeking professional help for chronic stress.

Study Rationale

According to research by The Center of Healing (TCOH) in Delhi, the COVID-19 pandemic-induced state-wide lockdown which had a psychosocial impact on the Indian population. According to the report, there has been a rise in the stress and anxiety level of Indians, with seventy-four percent and eighty-eight percent prevalence, respectively (Wakode et al., 2020).

Despite the growing rate of chronic stress in the Indian population, only a few researches have been undertaken on the gendered differences in seeking professional assistance for chronic stress. Traditionally, theory and methodology have failed to emphasise the gendered experience of males. Women, for instance, are substantially more likely to meet diagnostic criteria for certain mood and anxiety disorders as per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Addis & Cohane, 2005).

Given that gender roles are profoundly ingrained in Indian culture and frequently influence the behaviour and attitudes of individuals, it will inevitably come into conflict with the changing times. By examining gender role conflict in men with chronic stress, we can better understand how these differing standards affect their mental health. Therefore, given that help-seeking environments are specifically influenced by social psychological processes, in the context of men seeking help, it is crucial to look at both the effects of gender socialisation and individual differences among men in the context of seeking help. Additionally, seeking professional help has been seen to be more acceptable in the younger generations, while it's not as much in the older male population due to restrictive deep-rooted norms and stigma. Hence, a focus on the intricacies of this difference becomes imperative.

Problem Statement

The researcher's interest in analysing the impact of patriarchy on attitude towards seeking help has only increased due to observing it in everyday life and studying its historical and theoretical underpinnings. Escalating mental health problems, specifically in India due to a high-stress environment, makes it imperative to understand gender role conflict in the Indian population and examine the extent to which personality traits and other social factors contribute to the formation of an attitude towards seeking help.

Objective of the Research

The research objectives are:

- I. To assess the relationship between the attitude of men with chronic stress towards seeking help and gender role conflict.
- II. To investigate the relative contribution of different factors like social learning and personality traits towards negative attitudes towards seeking professional help.

- III. To draw a comparison between the youth and middle-aged men in their attitude towards seeking help for mental health.

Review of Literature

Prevalence of Stress

Emotional and physical strain that results from any occurrence that endangers our homeostasis is called as stress. According to a 2018 Cigna TTK Health Insurance survey, nearly nine out of ten Indians experience stress, and the stress levels in India are higher than in other developed or developing nations (Dhar, 2018). Work is one of the most frequently acknowledged causes of stress in the country. Hence, it is not unexpected that men, who form almost 70% of the Indian labour force, suffer from prolonged periods of stress (Rehman et al., 2021). Chronic stress is the psychological or physiological response to a protracted stressful event that may be internal or external ("Apa Dictionary of Psychology", 2023). As a result of disrupted daily routines, anxiety, isolation, increased personal and workplace stress, and excessive screen time, the stress levels of the Indian population have only increased since the COVID-19 pandemic (Majumdar et al., 2020). One in eight Indians have significant difficulty coping with stress; however, approximately 75% of Indian respondents do not feel comfortable discussing their stress with a medical practitioner (Dhar, 2018).

Gender Differences in Help-Seeking Behaviour

Men are typically described as unwilling to seek assistance in times of need. Common stereotypes depict men as reluctant to ask for directions when lost, having difficulties discussing vulnerable emotions with friends and family, and shunning professional assistance when needed (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). According to Etimes, men have a harder time accepting that they have a mental health issue. Moreover, nearly 40% of participants claimed that they avoid talking about it because they don't want to seem weak (Sharma, 2021). Several studies conducted over the past three decades have revealed that men of various ages, nationalities and racial backgrounds seek professional assistance such as psychiatric care, psychotherapy, and counselling less frequently than women (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). According to the breakdown of the help-seeking process, men are less likely than women to detect and label vague feelings of distress as emotional issues and only seek help when the issue is severe (Kessler et al., 1981).

Men's help-seeking has direct relevance to the literature on male gender-role socialisation. One acquires gendered attitudes and actions from cultural values, conventions, and ideas regarding what it means to be a man or a woman. Men have ingrained ideologies towards self-reliance, physical toughness, and emotional control which conflict with the ideas of relying on others, admitting a need for assistance, or identifying and labelling an emotional problem which become essential when seeking for help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Moreover, in the modern world, people are confronted with numerous challenges like individualism, social antagonism, competitiveness, and more controlling and anxiety-driven parenting approaches (Côté, 2016). These factors also influence an individual's shame, guilt propensity, and self-esteem (Curran & Hill, 2019). Krugman (1995), utilising an intrapsychic theoretical framework, argues for the centrality of shame as an organising affective process in the development of men. One of the primary principles is that male population are particularly attuned to shaming responses from others and ill-equipped to cater to their own experience of

shame. In 2010, a team of psychologists in the United States researched shame in over 2,600 volunteers aged 13 to 89 and found that men and women understand shame differently and adolescents are most prone to this sensation. Not having fully developed identities and the need to adhere to a range of social standards that determine their place in society have caused adolescents and young adults to be uncertain of how to respond to these external expectations, which often accelerates the emergence of shame (Addis & Cohane, 2005).

Gender Role Socialisation

There is a pressing need for a greater understanding of how gender role socialisation and sexism influence childhood behaviour and human experiences across the lifespan. In the theory and research on male role socialisation, two primary overlapping topics have been identified: masculine ideology and gender role conflict for men. The first gauges how much societal norms and ideals regarding gender roles have been internalised. The second focuses on Gender Role Conflict (GRC), a psychological state in which gender roles have negative consequences or impact on the person or others. It describes the cognitive, behavioural, and emotional repercussions of masculine gender socialisation (e.g., restrictive emotionality, homophobia, preoccupation with power and competition). The result of this conflict is the limited ability of an individual to actualize their potential (O'Neil, 1981).

From childhood to late adulthood, establishing and maintaining a somewhat consistent sense of identity is one of the most significant developmental obstacles humans confront (Erikson, 1950). Psychodynamic approaches focus on men's early years and the projected formative encounters with caregivers that shape boys' emotional sensitivity and relatedness. Pollack (1995) emphasises that demands to disidentify with their primary provider, who is frequently a woman, are thought to cause boys to suffer prematurely. Because the mother is often the major source safety and intimacy for newborns, this premature disidentification leaves many men with profoundly repressed emotional desires for closeness and connection to others (Pollack, 1995).

Social learning paradigms are another set of theories that explain how gendered norms are reinforced and continue to be deeply ingrained in society. It highlights the interrelationship between the formation of attitudes and behaviours in response to external stimuli and how this phenomenon presents differently between the sexes. Children acquire the cognitive capacity to perform a varied repertoire of social behaviours through observing the models' behaviours, encoding their responses into symbolic representations, and mentally rehearsing their actions based on the behaviour of models of both sexes. Nevertheless, not all acquired knowledge is applied. Hence, although most boys know how to put on a dress and apply makeup, few choose to engage in these activities. Whatever responses children choose to produce from their repertoires largely rely on the anticipated response consequences. Children prefer to perform behaviours exhibited by same-sex models because they have been more frequently rewarded and less frequently criticised for imitating same-sex models (Perry & Bussey, 1979). In addition, categorising traits as feminine or masculine activates heuristics-based thought. Both genders are expected to develop only 'gender-appropriate' traits and to distance themselves from traits that are not stereotypical of their gender (Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

Attitude towards Seeking Help

In terms of attitude towards seeking help, American men are usually reluctant to seek counselling services. According to Tracey, effective therapeutic dyads go through several power transitions: first, the client-therapist relationship is balanced in power; thereafter, the balance changes in the favour of therapist; and finally, the relationship returns to being symmetrical. As masculine socialisation emphasises gaining power, control, and self-reliance, men may be less likely to seek treatment and more likely to discontinue it to preserve autonomy (e.g., 'real man helps himself') (Blazina and Watkins, 1996). Reactance theory further suggests how by complying with an authority, a man may experience loss of control (Nadler, 1990).

Further, attitudes towards asking for assistance are associated with restricted emotionality, as emotions might be seen as time-consuming baggage that is unnecessary. This might result from socialization, as men who express their emotions out loud might even face social repercussions for doing so (Blazina and Watkins, 1996). According to the social constructionist perspective, help-seeking scenarios are contexts in which various meanings of masculinity are created and moulded. For instance, male athletes who do not display extreme physical discomfort and continue to compete despite a serious injury are often praised for their commitment and spirit (Courtenay, 2000).

In addition to stigmatisation and social support, culture and society also influence an individual's perception of seeking assistance (Siddiqi, 2021). Atik and Yaltyn's study show the effect of individualistic and collectivistic cultures in shaping people's views towards asking for assistance. According to their research, Turkey is predominantly defined by collectivist principles that emphasise the cultural values of community and family loyalty. Since many people in collectivist cultures tend to be more group-oriented, the participants in this study may choose to discuss their worries with their friends and family than seek professional assistance. Similarly, in terms of collectivism, India ranks above several other nations, and such conformist cultures force individuals to perform gender roles that are culturally set (Atik & Yaltyn, 2011).

Role of Personality Traits

Although it is considered that masculinity has a social foundation, it is nonetheless treated as a stable and internal concept, making it difficult to explain for individual and across-situation variability (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). An individual's attitude towards seeking assistance is influenced by various personal, social, demographic, and similar factors. The Big Five Model (BFM), which is based on five basic dimensions labelled Extraversion (vs. Introversion), Agreeableness (vs. Antagonism), Conscientiousness (vs. Undependability), Neuroticism (vs. Emotional Stability), and Openness to experience, is commonly used to assess the structural pattern of personality (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Atik and Yaltyn concluded from a study on university students that those who described themselves as extraverted, agreeable, and open were more likely to exhibit positive help-seeking attitudes. Extraverts are typically outspoken, socially assertive and energised by the presence of others. Therefore, in times of difficulty, they may require someone to talk to; hence, individuals are more likely to hold favourable attitudes towards seeking assistance. Agreeable people are typically courteous, cooperative, kind, helpful, and hopeful. These descriptors may help explain why agreeable individuals have favourable attitudes towards help-seeking. Open people are inclined to

attempt new things; they are receptive to new experiences such as professional counselling (Atik & Yaltyn, 2011). Kakhnovets remarked that closed people may be hesitant to accept assistance because they are more conventional and conservative. No correlation between Conscientiousness and Neuroticism and help-seeking attitudes was found (Kakhnovets, 2001).

Research Gap

The limitations found in the current literature review are primarily that the existing studies emphasise the perspective of women when discussing the effects of patriarchy on mental health. Secondly, most studies have been conducted in Western countries and may not be generalizable to other cultural contexts. Third, by the nature of the study, there is a dearth of statistical data/ studies on Indian men when assessing attitudes towards seeking help for chronic stress due to underreporting of issues. Further, most models assume a linear understanding of gendered norms.

Research Questions

Does gender role conflict affect men's attitudes toward seeking help?

Do personality traits like extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience influence one's willingness to seek professional help?

Is there a difference between middle-aged and young men in terms of their gender role conflict?

Is there a difference between middle-aged and young men in terms of their attitude towards seeking professional help?

Null Hypothesis

NH 1 – There is no significant difference among men of different age groups towards attitude towards seeking professional assistance for chronic stress.

NH 2 - There is no significant difference among men of different age groups in their overall as well as subscale level of gender role conflict.

NH 3- There is no significant relation between a high Success, Power, and Competition score and a positive attitude towards seeking professional help among men with chronic stress.

NH 4 - There is no significant effect of a high score on Restrictive Emotionality on a positive attitude towards seeking professional help among men with chronic stress.

NH 5 - There is no significant effect of personality traits of extraversion, intellect or imagination and agreeableness on a positive attitude towards seeking professional assistance.

Alternative Hypothesis

AH 1 – There is a significant difference among men of different age groups towards attitude towards seeking professional assistance for chronic stress.

AH 2 - There is a significant difference among men of different age groups in their overall as well as subscale level of gender role conflict.

AH 3- There is a significant relation between a high Success, Power, and Competition score and a positive attitude towards seeking professional help among men with chronic stress.

AH 4 - There is a significant effect of a high score on Restrictive Emotionality on a positive attitude towards seeking professional help among men with chronic stress.

AH 5 - There is a significant effect of personality traits of extraversion, intellect or imagination and agreeableness on a positive attitude towards seeking professional assistance.

Aim

To study the relationship between gender role conflict and attitudes regarding seeking professional assistance for chronic stress in men.

Research Approach

As the following research is still in the nascent stage and the concepts themselves are multifaceted, to identify patterns and trends, a quantitative methodology was undertaken. This also helped in forming conclusive arguments while comparing the two age groups.

Variables

The independent variables are (i) Gender Role Conflict and (ii) Personality Traits, while the dependent variable is (i) Attitude towards Seeking Help.

Population

A total of 95 men in the age groups of 20 to 30 and 45 to 55 were the study's target population. Given that the questionnaires were in English, the target demographic had a basic command of the language.

Sampling technique

The sample was a regionally convenient sample without randomization. Further, purposive sampling was used for this study. It is an arbitrary and selective selection technique that is based on the characteristics of the population, which is solely composed of men.

Tool

To measure the above-mentioned variables, I deployed the following four scales:

I. Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Sheldon Cohen in 1983, assesses how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overburdened people perceive their life to be in the past month. Co-efficient alpha reliability for PSS was 0.84 with a test-retest correlation of 0.85.

II. Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-SF (ATSPPHS-SF)

This scale determines the attitudes underlying why people delay treatment: (i) Willingness to Seek Emotional Problems Treatment. (ii) The value and need of treatment. The internal reliability of the scale is 0.84, while the test-retest reliability with a one-month interval is 0.80. (Fischer & Farina, 1995).

III. The Gender Role Conflict Scale - Short Form (GRCS-SF)

It is designed to analyse the impact of strict adherence to limiting masculinities on the male population. The scale consisted of four variables: (a) Success, Power, and Competition; (b) Restrictive Emotionality; (c) Restrictive Affectionate Behavior between Men; and (d) conflicts between Work and Family Relations. Using Cronbach's alpha, the GRCS-16's internal consistency ranged from 0.75 to 0.86.

IV. Mini- International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP)

It is a standardised inventory established by Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, and Lucas (2006) that measures the Big Five personality traits concisely yet effectively. This scale is comprised of five variables: Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), Neuroticism (N), and Openness (O). Cronbach's alpha of Mini-IPIP (all 20) items of the sample was found to be 0.789.

Results and Discussions

Data collection

Participants

A total of 95 people completed the survey. Approximately fifty participants (52.6%) of the sample were between the ages of 20 and 30, with a mean age of 23 (SD = 2.63). The remainder of the sample (n = 45) ranged in age from 45 to 54, with a mean age of 51 (SD = 4.3).

Procedure

Google Forms were used to distribute questionnaires to all prospective participants via WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. The snowball effect was also applied to the acquisition of electronic data.

Data analysis

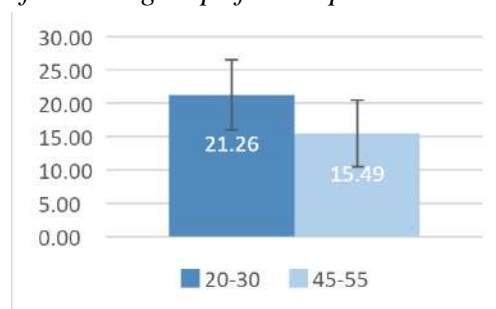
This data analysis comprised descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation. For ATSPPHS-SF and GRCS-SF scales, an unequal variance t-test was used to understand if there is a significant difference between the means of the two age groups and how they are related. The link between attitudes towards seeking help and the five personality traits, and the four gender role conflict subscales were separately examined using a correlational design.

Data Compilation and Interpretation

Perceived Stress Scale

Figure 1

Showing the Mean and SD of the two groups for the perceived stress scale.



The perceived stress of the respondents was moderate, with a mean score of 18.52 (n = 95, SD = 6.39). As seen in Figure 1, the younger age group (20-30 years) had a perceived stress level mean of 21.26 (SD = 5.25), which was significantly higher than that of the older age group (M= 15.49, SD =6.21).

As the study aimed to measure chronic stress, the results skewed the overall results because the participants reported moderate stress. This could be accounted to the fact that the scale used was intended to measure the perceived stress of the last month. In addition, as was mentioned in the secondary research, because of the complex gender socialization, men have a harder time accepting that they have a mental health problem. The statements on the questionnaire covered statements from how frequently they experienced a specific negative emotion to how frequently they were able to deal with or control it. The moderate score may also be justified because the latter type of statements received, on average, positive responses. This coverup, to appear self-sufficient and independent, can be seen as a part of gender role conflict as well.

ATSPPH-SF Scale

Table 1 Showing the Mean, SD and sample size of ATSPPHS and t-value between the two age groups.

Table 1	ATSPPHS-SF		
Subject	Mean	SD	t-value
Overall	14.208	6.198	2.04E-05
20-30	16.860	4.020	
45-55	11.556	6.995	

The overall results of the dependent variable measured through the Attitude Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-SF (ATSPPHS-SF) were $M = 14.208$ ($SD = 6.198$), which is interpreted as a negative attitude towards seeking help. As seen from Table 1, the unequal variance t-test was a statistically significant difference between the two age groups ($M_{20-30} = 16.86$, $M_{45-55} = 11.56$, $t = 0.0000205$, $p < 0.05$). As seen from Table 1, the unequal variance t-test was a statistically significant difference between the two age groups ($M_{20-30} = 16.86$, $M_{45-55} = 11.56$, $t = 0.0000205$, $p < 0.05$). The findings reveal that the two age groups differ significantly in their overall attitude towards seeking help, with the older age group being more reluctant to seek professional help. Hence, it can be concluded that null hypothesis 1 "there is no significant difference among men of different age groups towards attitude towards seeking professional assistance for chronic stress", is rejected.

An interesting pattern can be observed between the two groups for the items with third-person statements (e.g., 'There is something admirable in a person's attitude who is willing to cope with his or her conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help'), the scores were on an average higher or more positive than the first-person statements (eg. 'If I believed I was having a mental breakdown, my first inclination would be to get professional attention'). This, in some sense, signifies self-stigma in terms of seeking help. To further understand the negative attitude towards seeking professional help in men and the difference between the two age groups, it is important to look at related concepts like gender role conflict, which is more societally driven and personality traits which is more individually driven.

Gender Role Conflict Scale

Table 2.1 Showing the Mean and SD of GRCS overall and the subscales and t-value between the two age groups.

Table 2.1	GRCS Overall		
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Overall	3.491	0.905	0.00048
20-30	3.203	0.633	
45-55	3.811	1.051	

Participants' total GRCS score was $M = 3.491$ ($SD = 0.9$), which lies in the middle range of responses according to O'Neil et al (1986). Further, as seen in Table 2.1, the unequal variance t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the two age groups ($t = 0.00048$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 2.2 Showing Mean and SD of Success, Power and Competition between the two age groups.

Table 2.2	F1 - Success, Power and Competition		
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Overall	3.738	1.132	0.205
20-30	3.625	1.000	
45-55	3.850	1.264	

According to Table 2.2, the result for the first factor, Success, Power and Competition, which examines individual attitudes towards success attained through competition and power, was moderate ($M = 3.738$, $SD = 1.132$). Because $t = 0.205$, there was no significant difference between the two age groups.

Table 2.3 Showing Mean and SD of Restrictive Emotionality between the two age groups.

Table 2.3	F2 - Restrictive Emotionality		
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Overall	3.673	1.132	0.0214
20-30	3.395	0.976	
45-55	3.95	1.318	

Table 2.3 shows F2 – Restrictive Emotionality, which is defined as having difficulty and fears about expressing one's feelings and difficulty finding words to express basic emotions, had a moderate mean score of 3.673 with a significant difference between the two age groups ($t = 0.0214$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 2.4 Showing the Mean and SD of Restrictive Affectionate Behaviour Between Men for men belonging to the two age groups.

Table 2.4	F3 - Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men		
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Overall	3.006	1.444	1.27E-09
20-30	2.200	0.966	
45-55	3.811	1.421	

Though F3 - Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (Table 2.4), It alludes to having few ways to communicate one's thoughts and sentiments to other men, showed a moderate score ($M = 3.006$, $SD = 1.444$), there was seen to be a significant difference between the two age groups with the younger age group scoring significantly lower ($t = 0.0000000013$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 2.5 *Showing Conflicts between Work and Leisure for men belonging to the two age groups.*

Table 2.5	F4 - Conflicts Between Work and Leisure – Family Relations		
Subject	Mean	SD	t-value
Overall	3.612	1.138	0.857
20-30	3.590	0.953	
45-55	3.633	1.325	

Lastly, as seen from Table 2.5, F4 - Conflicts Between Work and Leisure - Family Relations which measures the difficulty maintaining work-life balance, which can lead to health issues, overwork, stress, and a lack of leisure and relaxation, also had a moderate score (M=3.612, SD=1.138), with no

significant distinction between the two age groups ($t=0.857$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, NH2 is rejected as there is a significant difference between the overall GRCS score of the two groups, as well as on the F2 - Restrictive Emotionality and F3 - Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men subscale.

The difference in the order of the factors between the two groups also signified something important. F1, F4, F2, and F3 were in the highest to lowest order for the younger age group, while F2, F1, F3, and F4 were for the older age category. In my opinion, this could be attributed to the fact that the younger age group have more knowledge acquisition-based goals and as their locus of control is externally derived, they form their identity based on career and educational competitiveness. Additionally, as noted in the literature review, the rise of individualism, societal conflict, and competition has made the process of creating an identity more difficult. On the other hand, the older generation places a greater emphasis on meaning-based goals, and their locus of control tends to be more internal. As a result, they are more rigid with their current beliefs and emotional behaviours and less focused on identity formation linked to careers or professions.

Correlation between Gender Role Conflict Scale and ATSPPH-SF Scale

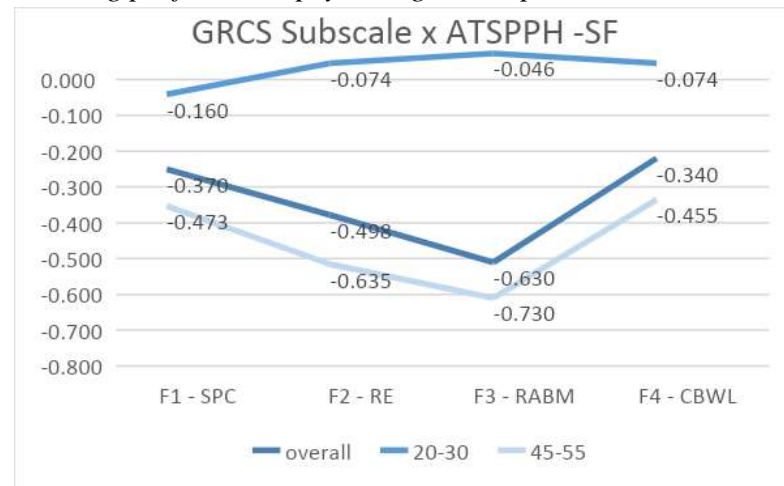
Table 3 *Correlational Analysis between the four variables of GRCS and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help. Additionally, showing the difference between the two age groups.*

Variable	Group	GRCS (overall)	F1- Success, Power and Competition	F2 - Restrictive Emotionality	F3 - Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men	F4 - Conflicts Between Work and Leisure – Family Relations
(ATSPPHS-SF)	Overall	-0.636	-0.370	-0.498	-0.630	-0.340
	20-30	-0.178	-0.160	-0.074	-0.046	-0.182
	45-55	-0.731	-0.473	-0.635	-0.730	-0.455

A correlation was employed to test the relationship between each of the four variables of the gender role conflict scale: (a) Success, Power, and Competition; (b) Restrictive Emotionality; (c) Restrictive Affectionate Behavior between Men; and (d) conflicts between Work and Family Relations and Attitude towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-SF (ATSPPHS-SF). As seen in Table 3, there was a moderate negative correlation of -0.636 between the overall GRCS and ATTSPH scores; however, when calculated group-wise, the younger group displayed a low negative correlation of -0.178, while the older group displayed a significantly high negative correlation of -0.731. This can be attributed to the

previously mentioned high scores by the latter group on the GRCS while low scores on the ATSPPH-SF scale.

Figure 2 *Graphic representation of correlational analysis between the four variables of GRCS and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help.*



The analysis reported that F1 - Success, Power, and Competition was moderately correlated negatively ($r = -0.370$) with attitude towards seeking professional help. This means that someone high on success, power, and competition dimension of the gender role conflict aspect would have a negative attitude towards seeking help. Therefore, the data does not support null hypothesis 3, that there is no significant relation between a high Success, Power, and Competition score (GRC) and a positive attitude towards seeking professional help in this population. However, what was interesting was the group-wise correlation between the two variables showed a significant difference. As per the analysis, both groups showed a negative correlation which aligned with alternative hypothesis 3. However, the younger group showed a low negative correlation ($r = -0.160$), while the older group showed a higher negative correlation ($r = -0.473$). In Indian society, men are traditionally socialized to seek power and control and to be autonomous and self-reliant, and they derive personal worth from such manifestations of masculinity. Therefore, help-seeking may be directly incongruent with values acquired through socialization. Further, traditional male socialisation regarding authority and control may conflict with the therapeutic relationship's nature. Men may be reluctant to seek therapy because they do not want to appear weak and fall short of what is expected of a man in a position of authority. As a result, reactance theory indicates that men would be reluctant to seek professional assistance to maintain control.

F2 - Restrictive Emotionality subscale showed a moderate negative ($r = -0.498$) correlation to attitude towards psychological help-seeking. This signifies that a high level of restrictive emotionality corresponds to a negative attitude towards seeking help. Hence, null hypothesis 4 is rejected. Regarding age-group differences, the younger group showed a low negative correlation ($r_{20-30} = -0.074$), while the older group showed a moderate negative correlation ($r_{45-55} = -0.635$). In line with previous research, the older group's greater negative correlation may be explained by their potential conviction that emotions are irrelevant and time-consuming baggage. This might be because men who express their emotions might even

face social repercussions. Men may therefore have a strong incentive to hide their emotions and may not be inclined to recognise or proactively seek out such problems.

Contrary to empirical studies, the current study showcased a moderate-high negative correlation between F3- Restrictive Affectionate Behaviour ($r = -0.673$) and attitude towards seeking professional help. This was also significantly different between the younger age group, which had almost no correlation ($r_{20-30} = -0.046$), while the older group had a high negative correlation ($r_{45-55} = -0.730$). As the older generation also scored higher on restrictive emotionality ($M = 3.95$), it could be understood that men may feel uncomfortable seeking help and fear intimacy or emotional closeness here, especially with other men. Moreover, the social stigma around homosexuality in Indian society can contribute to RAB towards men. Therefore, they might show more restrictive behaviour towards seeking help when a professional is a man. Although this factor is not directly related to seeking assistance, the level of social stigma attached to F3 in the Indian context can be linked to that of seeking assistance.

Lastly, F4 - Conflicts between Work and Leisure – Family Relations shows a low negative correlation ($r = -0.339$) to attitude towards seeking professional psychological help. The younger group showed a low negative correlation ($r_{20-30} = -0.182$) while the older group had a moderate negative correlation ($r_{45-55} = -0.455$). According to empirical research, work-leisure conflict is associated with increased psychological distress. In addition, men may be especially reluctant to seek assistance in cultures where traditional gender roles are emphasized because it may be perceived as a threat to their masculinity and ability to support their families. However, as there is an inconsistency between the two groups, no conclusive claims can be made according to the present study.

Mini-IPIP

Table 4 Showing the Mean and SD of Mini-IPIP subscales.

Table 4	Extraversion		Agreeableness		Conscientiousness		Neuroticism		Intellect or Imagination	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Overall	11.926	2.687	13.716	2.789	13.558	3.110	11.516	2.960	12.979	2.932
20-30	12.640	3.062	14.280	2.970	12.220	2.720	12.440	3.221	13.460	2.786
45-55	11.133	1.938	13.089	2.457	15.044	2.852	10.489	2.263	12.444	3.027

The five personality traits which were assessed using Mini-IPIP (Table 4), signified a mean of the overall group as a moderate score for extraversion ($M = 11.926$), neuroticism ($M = 11.705$) and intellect or imagination ($M = 12.979$). At the same time, agreeableness ($M = 13.716$) and conscientiousness ($M = 13.558$) was considered as highly scored traits.

Since the majority of the empirical data is situated in the Western context, the initial purpose of conducting a personality test was to identify patterns of differences between Western and Indian cultures. According to the current study, the traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness received the highest average support data based on cultural differences and their impact on one's attitude toward seeking assistance. The fact that India is a collectivist culture that places a high value on social harmony, interpersonal relationships and respect for authority can be credited with the reason for the high scores on these two traits. These values may influence cooperativeness and respect, which are traits associated with conscientiousness and agreeability. However, it is also crucial to consider response bias, which may contribute to higher scores on agreeableness and conscientiousness. Due to societal pressure, people might

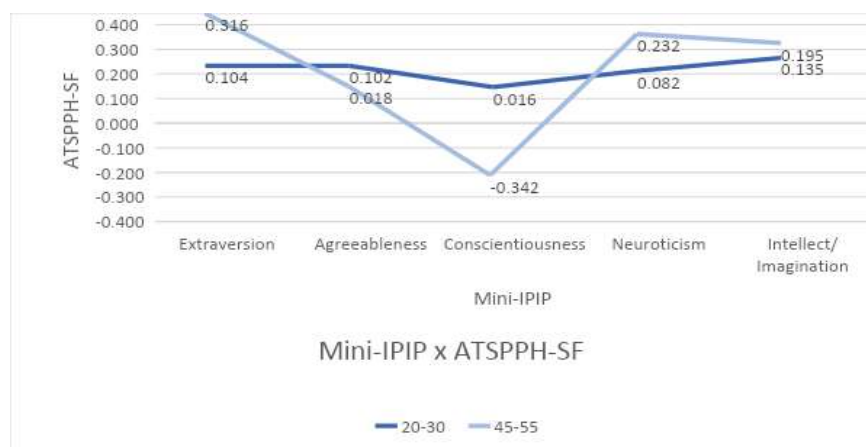
have been more likely to act in a manner that favours both themselves and their social group. Research, however, indicates that response bias does not play a significant role in understanding cultural differences in personality traits. Lastly, even though the scores of the two groups did not vary substantially for most traits, conscientiousness was one trait where they did. However, because the majority of the scores were moderate or moderate-high, only inconclusive arguments can be drawn at best.

Correlation between Mini-IPIP and ATSPPH-SF Scale

Table 5 Overall correlational analysis between the five four personality traits from Mini-IPIP and the attitude towards seeking professional psychological help.

<i>Overall</i>	<i>Extraversion</i>	<i>Agreeableness</i>	<i>Conscientiousness</i>	<i>Neuroticism</i>	<i>Intellect or Imagination</i>
<i>ATSPPH-SF</i>	0.281	0.137	-0.357	0.266	0.225

Figure 3 Correlational Analysis between the five four personality traits from Mini-IPIP and attitude towards seeking professional psychological help of the two age groups.



Correlation analysis indicated several significant relationships (see Table 5). While on average extraversion ($r_e = 0.281$), agreeableness ($r_a = 0.137$), neuroticism ($r_n = 0.263$) and intellect or imagination ($r_i = 0.225$) showed a low positive

correlation with attitude towards seeking professional help, conscientiousness ($r_c = -0.357$) was found to show a low negative correlation with it. Therefore, null hypothesis 5 was rejected as there was a significant effect of personality traits of extraversion, intellect or imagination and agreeableness on a positive attitude towards seeking professional assistance. However, inconsistent with existing literature, conscientiousness and neuroticism traits also correlated with attitude towards seeking professional help.

As supported by secondary data, someone high on extraversion will be more sociable, assertive, and more likely to seek help as they may feel comfortable talking to others. As agreeableness is characterized by traits such as empathy and cooperativeness, it is also positively correlated to seeking help as they may be more sensitive to the needs of others and may value social support. Lastly, as seeking professional help is a new experience, scoring high on intellect or imagination was positively associated with it as they may be more open to new ideas and perspectives and more willing to seek out novel solutions to their problems. For the age-difference attribute, it was fascinating to observe that the older generation demonstrated a

comparatively stronger correlation; however, this should not be confused with a positive attitude. Their average scores on the five traits (see Table 4) were lower than those of the younger generation, and their average scores on their attitude towards seeking help (see Table 1) were also moderate, so their association estimate was stronger.

Contrary to existing literature, conscientiousness showed a low negative correlation with attitude towards seeking help for the older generation, while it showed no correlation for the younger generation. As conscientiousness is marked by being organized, responsible, dependable, goal-oriented and less risky, someone high on this trait would be more likely to seek help when they perceive a need for it. Hence, as with age, one tends to have more fixed patterns of their beliefs and being open to experiences is lesser, so the older generation refrains from seeking help (See Figure 3).

Neuroticism is characterized by a tendency towards negative emotions such as anxiety, worry, and moodiness. The existing research suggests that people higher in neuroticism may be more likely to have negative attitudes towards seeking help, possibly due to feelings of shame or stigma surrounding mental health treatment. The current study shows a positive correlation between the two. However, there is no correlation between the younger generation's attitude toward seeking help and neuroticism and a low positive correlation between the older generations (See Figure 3). The older group's association with lower scores on the neuroticism scale and a negative attitude toward seeking assistance can be attributed to the fact that lower neuroticism indicates being less likely to experience negative emotions and, as a result, being less likely to perceive the need for help or support. In addition, research suggests that people with lower neuroticism are more self-reliant and less likely to seek assistance from others when confronted with difficulties or stressors.

Nevertheless, it is essential to remember that not all people who exhibit these patterns of personality traits will have a particular attitude toward seeking help. An individual's willingness to seek help can also be influenced by stigma, access to care, childhood experiences, and personal beliefs. In addition, it is important to approach the process of seeking help for mental health issues with sensitivity and openness to individual differences because it is a complicated and multifaceted process dependent on various individual and contextual factors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study, based on quantitative research conducted on the effect of gender role conflict on seeking professional assistance for chronic stress, confirmed that gender role conflict has a significant impact on the likelihood that Indian men will seek professional assistance. All subcomponents of gender role conflict, from achievement to emotional aspects, were found to be negatively associated with seeking professional assistance for chronic stress among men. This indicates that the more gender role conflict an individual has, the less likely they are to seek help. In addition, although the correlational analysis with personality traits did not yield statistically significant results, it shed light on the effect of culture on gender socialisation. As the study intended to investigate, age was found to be a differential factor in assessing one's attitude towards seeking help and gender role conflict, with younger men exhibiting less gender role conflict and a relatively more positive attitude towards seeking professional assistance. However, the findings of this study, which was conducted in

India, have provided a perspective that is distinct from that of the extant corpus of literature and studies conducted in other countries. Although the primary results are consistent with previous studies, namely that GRC and openness, agreeableness, and extraversion correlate with attitude towards seeking assistance, the sample population yielded several novel findings and explanations.

This is one of the few studies examining gender role conflict in the Indian context through the male-gendered lens, it offers essential insights into the intricate relationship between gender norms and help-seeking behaviour among men. In addition, as it correlates with the third variable of personality traits with attitude towards seeking help, it adds to existing research on the impact of cultural differences in one's attitude towards seeking help. The comparison between two age groups, which is one of the first in the existing literature, enables one to understand the basics of individuality and the generational gap, which would further help in framing interventions. These findings are significant because they establish the need for mental health interventions tailored to the cultural and societal norms of Indian men. In addition to highlighting the study's contribution, it emphasises the need for sustained research and intervention efforts to resolve these issues.

Future research should begin by expanding the sample population and establishing greater validity. Incorporating additional prospective constructs such as gender, class, occupation, religion, social support, and formative experiences could facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts. In addition, the studies should overcome the limitations of the quantitative methodology and include not only qualitative data but also longitudinal research in order to comprehend the distinctions and factors better.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the fact that though it aimed to measure the relationship between gender role conflict and attitude toward seeking professional help in men with chronic stress, the ultimate sample population was perceived to have only moderate stress. Also, as the scales are not designed or adapted to the Indian population, the results may have been hampered because shorter versions were used for convenience. The findings from the GRCS, Mini-IPIP, and ATSPPH-SF scales, along with the correlational design between the independent and dependent variable, offer, at best moderate evidence, which, when combined with the lack of empirical research, only makes generalizability challenging. Additionally, the findings cannot be generalized because the number of participants (N=95) was too small, and they were mainly from the middle and upper-middle classes. The limitations due to the study being quantitative are (i) lack of in-depth understanding of associated parameters; (ii) self-reporting bias; (iii) correlational design does not allow for causality study. Lastly, due to the complexity of the topic, the two independent variables are insufficient to determine an individual's attitude towards seeking help.

Ethical Considerations and Declaration

Before the commencement of the survey, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and their rights as participants (i.e., the survey is completely voluntary, and participants can stop at any given point). All participants provided their informed consent. Participants were assured that all collected information would be kept confidential and

anonymous. Additionally, only the components relevant to the study, i.e., gender role conflict, attitude towards seeking professional psychological help and personality traits, were assessed.

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Milfs, Momagers & Yummy Mummies: The Romanticisation of Pregnancy and Motherhood by Celebrities

Saachi Gupta ¹

Abstract

*In her book *The Second Sex*, feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote, “One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman.” Judith Butler elaborated on this idea through their theory of gender performativity and the continuous reconstruction and attempted subversions of gender. Using these feminist theories, this project aims to analyse the social performance of pregnancy and motherhood by public figures across continents, looking at celebrities such as Kylie Jenner, Alia Bhatt, and Kate Middleton. This paper will argue that the hypervisibility of pregnant bodies in the media is not as liberating and progressive as it is presented to be: instead, it leads to the fetishisation of pregnancy and is another way of confining women to ideas of ideal femininity. The fantasy of motherhood celebrities present is also an unrealistic and romanticised depiction that ultimately benefits the patriarchy. This paper adds to the literature about celebrity maternity by using Judith Butler as a framework to argue that representations of pregnancy and motherhood in the public eye are restrictive, performative, and harmful. While Judith Butler's theory of performativity has previously been used to analyse pregnancy, no existing literature analyses its connection to maternity in the public eye.*

Keywords: pregnancy, motherhood, gender, performance, femininity

Introduction

In 2018, after a carefully hidden pregnancy, 20-year-old Kylie Jenner announced the birth of her daughter with an eleven-minute-long, professionally directed video, *To Our Daughter*, filled with “sentimental backing music, nostalgically grainy footage, and close-up shots of Kylie’s nude pregnant tummy” (Gillezeau, 2019). Journalist Natasha Gillezeau writes about Kylie Jenner, “drip-feeding us tender images and clips of her and Stormi that play into an easy, breezy covergirl version of motherhood” (2019). After Stormi’s birth, motherhood became undetachable from Jenner's brand, only further cemented with the drop of Kylie Baby, a skin and hair care brand for babies and children. Jenner continues to perform her maternity to perfection, but this performance — complete with matching outfits, glamorous amusement park-themed parties, and life-size dollhouses — is not unique to her.

Through this paper, I will attempt to trace how we culturally went from being secretive and private about gestation to making it hypervisible in popular culture and the public sphere. Using examples of Kylie Jenner, Demi Moore, and Indian celebrities like Sonam Kapoor and Alia Bhatt, I will argue that this hypervisibility of pregnancy is not, in fact, the liberating stance that it is made out to be. Instead, it sets unrealistic standards for ordinary people around the world, making pregnancy look desirable when it is often, in fact, a difficult process that takes

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a toll on one's body, mind, and professional life. The openness surrounding pregnancy is thus what Judith Butler calls an attempted subversive reconstruction of identity, which later ends up being just as oppressive.

The subversive reconstruction of the pregnant woman began in 1991, when actress Demi Moore's semi-nude photoshoot at seven months pregnant became the cover of *Vanity Fair*, and with it, one of the first pregnancy photoshoots to be circulated publicly. Before this, pregnancy was seen as a primarily private event to be hidden under baggy clothes and within households. Demi Moore's photoshoot, however, had a lasting cultural impact, leading several celebrities (to date) to announce their advanced pregnancies with meticulously curated photoshoots in magazines or on social media. Not only has this made pregnancy fashionable, but it has also monetised the process and created an industry out of this life-altering period. Celebrities "drop" their baby-related announcements like a surprise album: fittingly, then, in a neoliberal, capitalistic society, the baby ends up becoming a part of their brand image. (Gillezeau, 2019). This paper discusses how the unrealistic idea of maternity that celebrities present has become aspirational for ordinary people, who end up being disillusioned and disturbed by the hardships and realities of the gestational period, which is often rife with mental and physical health issues. They also find themselves unable to live up to the beauty and parenting standards set by celebrities and, as a result, suffer from issues like pregorexia. Furthermore, the monetisation of pregnancy and motherhood has made the process highly capitalistic and also stressed the idea of the neoliberal mother who effortlessly balances work and family at once.

The seemingly innocuous romanticisation of motherhood can thus be harmful and counterproductive instead of liberating. Women, especially celebrities, performing their pregnancies to perfection ties into Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, which states that gender is a "stylised repetition of acts" and "woman is something we 'do' rather than something we 'are'" (qtd. in Salih, 2002, p. 10). Not only does this performance reinforce antiquated notions about womanhood, but it is also highly misleading. Gillezeau states, "Becoming a parent still has different social and economic consequences for women and men. Patriarchal societies have a vested interest in making motherhood look like the ultimate utopic end goal women should prioritise above all else" (Gillezeau, 2019).

Literature Review

According to Sarah Salih, Judith Butler tends to ask questions instead of answering them. The author paraphrases one of Butler's most important questions, asking: "What happens if our identities 'fail', and might such failures provide opportunities for subversive reconstructions of identity? Perhaps those reconstructions, as subversive as they may seem, will end up cohering into identity formations which are just as oppressive in their own way" (Salih, 2002, p. 2). This idea is reminiscent of Demi Moore's 1991 cover shoot: while it "marked the breaking of the powerful cultural taboo around the representation of pregnancy" (Tyler, 2013, p. 23) and moved pregnancy from the private sphere to the public, it also ended up creating problems of its own.

Pregnancy was now reframed as a sensual body performance, sexualised and marketed to the male gaze. Among other factors, this was represented by the upswing in the consumption of pregnancy pornography, a previously niche subcategory of porn that now became

mainstream (Tyler, 2013). This fetishisation of the pregnant body leads to self-objectification and “continuous body surveillance” (Gow et al., 2011), which may also cause shame associated with bodily functions and changes such as breastfeeding and the weight gain that comes with pregnancy (Gow et al., 2011).

Today, posing for maternity photoshoots is “an almost compulsory celebrity rite of passage” (qtd. in Tyler, 2001, p. 69). Celebrity photoshoots, both during and after pregnancy, represent the ideal body, showcasing that “women can have both babies and beauty without having to choose between the two” (Bedor and Tajima, 2011). As a result, a thin, tight body during pregnancy is seen not just as “a marker of good health” but also of “morally good maternal citizenship” (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 6). Only certain kinds of pregnancies are seen as good: namely, those of “white, tight, youthful bodies with social capital and appropriate aspiration; ‘lower-class’ pregnant celebrities, for instance, are deemed trashy and sluttish if they bare their bumps” (Tyler, 2013, p. 27).

This idea of the perfect mother has led to the rise of an entirely new industry surrounding motherhood, ranging from wellness spas and aerial yoga for pregnant women (Tsaliki, 2019) to mommy bloggers and momfluencers:

The most highly valued, visible and celebrated images and performances of pregnancy and motherhood at the time are those which are most brandable; celebrities... ‘Cultivate branded identities to navigate the contradictory demands of postfeminism, a neoliberal emphasis on individualism and entrepreneurialism, and the professional or semi-professional requirements of their media (2019, p. 6).

Thus, maternity provides public figures with social capital to soften their brand image (Tiidenberg and Baym, 2017). The high visibility of celebrity pregnancies has led to family photographs worldwide also beginning to document stages of maternity, “carefully staging changing body shape in poses which mimic celebrity photo shots” (Tyler, 2013, p. 24). This is reflective of Judith Butler’s idea of gender performativity, which states that gender is a “stylised repetition of acts” and “woman is something we ‘do’ rather than something we ‘are’” (qtd. in Salih, 2002, p. 10). In their paper on the performance of pregnancy on social media, Tiidenberg and Baym take a similar direction, writing: “Women “do pregnancy” as they (a) learn to be pregnant by seeking information and taking advice, (b) master routines of self-care to guarantee the health of the foetus, and (c) constantly perform pregnancy to ensure that others acknowledge it. Women thus do pregnancy in an environment that judges them as doing it right or wrong” (Tiidenberg and Baym, 2017, p. 2). The performance of pregnancy and motherhood, thus, is a test of womanhood, meant to reaffirm femininity. Additionally, the new neoliberal mother “must pursue one’s professional ambitions without abandoning desires for a fulfilling family life” (Allen et al., 2015).

Public figures like Kylie Jenner not only romanticise motherhood through content that is “saccharine ASMR — dripping with giggles, cuddles and filters” (Gillezeau, 2019). Magazines and social media may present celebrity mothers as figures who are “just like us”; this only leads to common people being bombarded “with unattainable goals... and encouraged to believe that they can replicate celebrities’ successes” (Bedor and Tajima, 2011). Bombarded with these standards presented by public figures of what the ideal mother must be like, women are once again confined to performing their femininity and motherhood a certain way. They

are, unfortunately, never able to live up to the ideals set by celebrity mothers, as “one can rationally assume that celebrity mothers have access to resources that are not available to regular readers, from supplemental childcare to dieticians and personal trainers” (Bedor and Tajima, 2011). As stated above, one of the central arguments in this paper focuses on how the hypervisibility of celebrity pregnancies sets unrealistic expectations for parents worldwide, and oppresses women by confining them to antiquated standards of womanhood.

Objectives of Research

Through my research, I aim to understand how celebrity pregnancies and motherhood are presented as desirable for mass audiences and how their performances of maternity reaffirm age-old patriarchal notions. Using Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity and gender fragility, I will study how celebrities have become a central means of distributing contemporary neoliberal social values, causing women to ‘do pregnancy’ in ways that cater to the male gaze.

Research Questions

How does the performativity of celebrity pregnancies and motherhood lead to the reconstruction of their identities and the reinforcement of patriarchal norms? Further, how does this exoticisation of celebrity pregnancy impact general audiences and their relationship with gender expression?

Methodology

The research methodology for this project is primarily qualitative, and I have used the discursive method to analyse text and multimedia. This method includes investigating the underlying meaning and effects of communication, which I have deployed to study personal social media posts (Instagram, YouTube) and magazine editorials updating audiences about celebrity pregnancy and motherhood experiences. My subjects are intercontinental and will not be limited to a specific nation, culture, or age group.

While my primary material comprises direct and indirect communication about celebrity maternity, my secondary research includes authors such as Imogen Tyler, Brenda Weber, Aisha Ahmed, and Barbara Kathz Rothman, who write about subjects including the exoticisation of celebrity maternity, its ill effects on society, as well as the mental and physical risks associated with gestation and postpartum. I will use Judith Butler and her theories of gender performativity and gender fragility as a theoretical framework.

A ‘Bump’ in the Road

In 2022, a friend of mine had a pregnancy scare: her period was a few days late, she would complain about feeling nauseous every morning, and suddenly could not stand the smell of her favourite foods. We joked about the situation, but when a week passed, and she found her underwear spotted with a tinge of pink blood — what she thought was implantation bleeding — things became less funny. The idea of pregnancy at 21 was terrifying, and our only knowledge of these subjects came from the media. A week after her period had been delayed, my friend bought two pregnancy tests and took them in a public toilet: the result was negative. While her initial reaction was a relief, she confessed to me that a part of her wished she *had* been pregnant, irrational as it was. Despite not wanting children, the idea had been

incomprehensibly appealing to her. However, I could see why the idea of pregnancy seemed so alluring: in the last few years, several celebrities influencing our generation had become parents. In 2011, singer Beyoncé revealed her first pregnancy while performing at the MTV Video Music Awards; Shakira welcomed her sons Sasha and Milan; in 2018, reality star Kylie Jenner gave birth at 20; in 2020, supermodel Gigi Hadid announced her pregnancy through a stunning photoshoot, and pop star Katy Perry revealed hers in the music video for her song “Never Worn White.” The list is endless, but these public figures had one thing in common: all of their pregnancies were revealed in highly curated ways. For her book *Screaming on the Inside: The Unsustainability of American Motherhood* (2022), author Jessica Grose interviewed mothers from several different cultural backgrounds and was taken aback by the “pervasiveness and uniformity of women’s visions of the ideal pregnancy” (p. 47). They expressed their embarrassment at falling for the social media version of pregnancy and the unrealistic expectations it set, “[envisioning] a time of perfect happiness and Instagrammable beauty” (2022, p. 48). This glamorous representation of maternity all across mainstream media presents motherhood as an aspiration, as if “women’s natural destiny [is] to have children” (Grose, 2022, p. 22). Consciously or unconsciously, it reinforces long-established patriarchal notions of femininity and motherhood. Therefore, my friend was not alone in how she felt about pregnancy.

Emancipation, Oppression, and Subversive Reconstruction of Identity

In “What is Critique?”, Judith Butler writes about the failure of identity — and how these failures make way for subversive reconstructions that “end up cohering into identity formations which are just as oppressive in their own way” (Salih, 2002, p. 2). Pregnancy, for centuries, was seen as an abject and passive state, somewhat obscene in public-facing work.² In fact, until the early 90s, pregnant women had been markedly absent from all popular visual representations (Tyler, 2001, p. 69). This dramatically changed in August 1991, when Annie Leibovitz photographed American actress Demi Moore nude and seven months pregnant, clad in just diamonds, for the cover of *Vanity Fair*. The controversy this photograph provoked made *Vanity Fair*’s August issue the subject of discussion in at least “ninety-five television spots, sixty-four radio shows, 1,500 newspaper articles and a dozen cartoons” (qtd. in Tyler, 2001, p. 190). The public circulation of the photograph reconstructed the idea of femininity, and pregnancy now became highly visible, stylized, and sexualised (Tiidenberg and Baym, 2017), celebrated spectacularly in the public sphere and “suddenly and shamelessly everywhere.” Demi Moore’s cover was seen as a subversive reconstruction, reshaping pregnancy into “a sexy bodily performance: a ‘body project’ to be coveted and enjoyed” (Tyler, 2013, p. 24). In the past, women had never had the opportunity to publicly construct and present pregnancy on their own terms. Now, they were offered a new, empowering ideology that said it was possible to “have both babies and beauty without choosing between the two” (Bedor and Tajima, 2011, p. 3), and pregnancy was “an opportunity to have a differently fashionable and sexy body shape” (Tyler, 2013, p. 24).

²Historian Alice Kessler-Harris notes that until the 1970s, many workplace institutions “required pregnant women to resign as part of their contract” (Grose, 2022) when they began to show — a school teacher back then, Kessler-Harris also had to sign such a contract.

In 2018, Vanity Fair editor Tina Brown revisited the 1991 Demi Moore cover in an interview, stating how proud she was of how it “liberated women from a sense that pregnancy was something to be sort of covered up” (qtd. in Handley, 2018). She then discussed its influence on how celebrity pregnancies are now represented: “Stars who are pregnant since, all want to do that Demi Moore shot... pregnant stars want to say, my rite of passage, I get to do my Demi Moore cover” (qtd. in Handley, 2018). Soon after, specialist pregnancy photographers arose “to meet the demand for pregnancy photography amongst ‘ordinary’ women” (Tyler, 2013, p. 23).

However, this seemingly emancipatory experience created new requirements for expecting mothers that — as Judith Butler predicted — were oppressive in a different way. Until then, pregnancy had “provided even the most famous women with some respite from the scrutiny and documentation of their bodies, clothing and personal lives” (Tyler, 2013, p. 27). Earlier generations of mothers shared that they had felt no pressures or concerns about their appearance or weight when they were pregnant (Bedor and Tajima, 2011). Post the Vanity Fair cover; however, there was an emphasis on the exposure of skin and surface of the pregnant body and pregnant women were presented as “desirable objects for the male gaze” (Tyler, 2001, p. 71). Mass audiences were bombarded with visual representations of the ideal pregnant body to aspire towards: thin, youthful, and predominantly white, “with a taut, tight ‘bump’” (qtd. in Bedor and Tajima, 2011). Pregnant beauty contests, pregnancy pornography, and fashion show us how pregnant women, unlike before, are not exempt “from either the relentless pursuit of beauty or the pressure to perform sexual availability” (Tyler, 2013, p. 27). Thus, the heightened visibility of pregnancy was not liberating but another “site of feminine performance anxiety and... a new kind of confinement for women” (Tyler, 2013, p. 29).

This anxiety was exacerbated as the gestating body was framed as a manageable project to be disciplined and regulated, failure to do which was not just seen as an indicator of bad health, but also “viewed as a signifier of ‘deficient’ neoliberal citizenship, selfhood and motherhood” (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 5). An alarming example of this notion of the shapeliness of the pregnant body denoting “morally good maternal citizenship” (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 6) was seen in 2012, when the Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton's first pregnancy happened to coincide with reality star Kim Kardashian's. The two were constantly pitted against each other by the media. While Middleton, the “good princess” (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 7) was consistently praised for her passive demeanour, elegant maternity fashion, domestic inclinations, and thin body with a “hardly visible bump” (Allen et al., 2015, p. 913), Kardashian was brutally shamed for her weight gain, clothing, and uninhibited behaviour, which was regarded as “evidence of her unsuitability for motherhood” (Allen et al., 2015, p. 916). One such comment is mentioned below:

Fake tanning, tight clothes and high heels ... does this girl know anything about child development and how to be a good mother? She's a total embarrassment to women everywhere. Still married to another man and not divorced... How proud she must be... Women should pass a basic IQ test before they're allowed to get pregnant (Reader comment 2013) (qtd. in Allen et al., 2015, p. 916).

Any form of unruly deviation from what is considered ‘respectable maternity’ leads to vitriolic brutalisation and persecution of mothers, with those in the public eye being especially prone to heavily moralistic “classed and raced judgments” (Allen, 2015, p. 916). Years later, Kim

Kardashian opened up about her traumatic experience being pregnant, admitting to suffering from preeclampsia and stating that she was not a “good” or “cute pregnant person” (“Here’s Why Kim Kardashian...”, 2021). While her mother and sisters had easy pregnancies, Kardashian said she hated every part of being pregnant. She also talked about the merciless bullying she was subjected to, demonstrating how “the pregnant body becomes public property” (Allen et al., 2015, p. 916) in online spaces.

Digital Motherhood and Performativity

The entanglement of online spaces with motherhood has changed how parents function forever and added greatly to the performative element of motherhood. As Tyler writes in her paper on maternity under neoliberalism:

The internet has enabled the rise of a phenomenal ‘digital motherhood’ ... millions of mothers are online, creating blogs, sharing foetal scans and ‘celebrity style’ pregnant photographs in ‘bump galleries’, swapping tips and commiserating with each other in the chat rooms of sites such as Mumsnet, and uploading childbirth movies to video-sharing platforms (Tyler, 2013, p. 22).

As Judith Butler points out, a central function associated with femininity is the ability to reproduce: hence, performances of maternity are seen almost as a test of womanhood, and sharing these on the internet is a way for many women to publicly reaffirm their gender identity in a world where “masculinity and femininity are ‘accomplishments’, while heterosexuality is an ‘achievement’” (Salih, 2002, p. 131). According to Judith Butler, the body is controlled by social, gendered norms: they are “in some sense animated by a norm, or contoured by a norm” (qtd. in Osborne and Segal, 1994). The pregnant body, posted so often on the internet by both public figures and ‘ordinary’ people, is hence a means to perform gender – and while the freedom to be vocal about pregnancy, something that has been taboo for so long, may seem emancipatory, Judith Butler argues that “behaviours and desires create the illusion of inner world, actually reinforce and regulate sexual norms within the heterosexual matrix” (He, 2017, p. 684).

The first wave of digital motherhood arose in 2001-2009 when parents began “flocking to the internet to tell their raw and unfiltered truth, and to find community” (Grose, 2022, p. 99). They quickly gained attention for their “grittier depictions of motherhood” (Grose, 2022, p. 101) — however, this had never been their goal. Most parents started these blogs only to document their daunting experiences as new parents: they were not “trying to create an aspirational world [or] attract advertisers” (Grose, 2022, p. 99). Unfortunately, another section of parents on social media began to portray a sunnier, more performative version of motherhood. It is no surprise that this aspirational brand of maternity attracted advertisers: it was only logical to invest in “moms who focus more on the lovely and beautiful” (qtd. in Grose, 2022) rather than self-proclaimed bad moms who admit to missing their life without a baby, or skipping pages of bedtime stories while reading to their children. As a result of this, “the corners where the “real talk” is happening” (Grose, 2022) have become increasingly private.

With the idea of ‘pregnant beauty’ taking centre stage, terms like ‘MILF’ (Mom I’d Like to Fuck) and ‘yummy mummy’ are seen all over social media, and performing pregnancies has become a way for both public figures and ordinary people to gain social capital. In 2017, Beyoncé’s pregnancy announcement on Instagram became the site’s most-liked post, beaten

only in 2018 when Kylie Jenner shared the news of her daughter's arrival. Jenner then took to YouTube to share a professionally directed video documenting her pregnancy, titled "To Our Daughter."³ An irresistibly sentimental montage of ultrasound appointments, intimate family moments, and shots of Jenner caressing her pregnant belly, this video, in addition to Jenner's many radiant and sensual photos fondling her baby bump, exemplified how the idea of the perfect pregnancy was being thrust upon audiences.

According to Imogen Tyler, "the celebrity body has become a central means through which contemporary social values are distributed and... become hardwired into everyday practices" (2013, p. 24). Undeniably then, these fetishized depictions of pregnancy have a strong influence on "expectations of what is 'normal' or ideal during pregnancy or postpartum" (Gow et al., 2011), with expecting mothers anticipating feeling like "a goddess floating on a cloud" (qtd. in Grose, 2022, p. 48) in what should be "a beautiful process day in and day out" (qtd. in Grose, 2022, p. 49). The internalisation of these societal beauty standards leads to self-objectification, which during pregnancy, manifests into shame and embarrassment associated with physical changes like weight gain and the appearance of stretch marks, as well as bodily functions like breastfeeding (Gow et al., 2011).

The Unromantic Realities of Pregnancy

Tyler states that the idea of the perfect pregnancy "activates the kinds of 'negative narcissism' (emptiness, anxiety and guilt) upon which consumer culture is predicated" (Tyler, 2013, p. 29). Unsurprisingly, an entire industry has sprung from this beauty surveillance, including maternity clothes and cosmetics, exclusive wellness spas, pregnancy photoshoots, foetal films, and belly casts (Tiidenberg and Baym, 2017). Tsaliki states, "under neoliberalism, the most intimate bodily experiences have become thoroughly capitalised" (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 7). Women everywhere are offered "a skintight, attractive consumer-orientated version of maternity" (Tyler, 2013, p. 30), which hides the emotional and physical strain and turbulence that motherhood brings. Sophie Lewis, author of *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, sagaciously starts their book with the line: "It is a wonder we let foetuses inside us" (2019, p. 2). Jessica Grose nearly echoes this sentiment, writing about her less-than-ideal first pregnancy: Apart from vomiting uncontrollably and being unable to eat for whole days, she could not sleep even once throughout the tenth week. Her hair began to thin, she had severe acne, and just brushing her teeth made her gag. Furthermore, her depression and anxiety snowballed without the SSRIs she had stopped taking when she found out she was pregnant. Even though doctors informed her that the chances of her foetus being impacted negatively by these SSRIs were low — and that untreated maternal anxiety and depression are *also* moderately risky for foetuses — she struggled with the possibility of her baby being harmed, elaborating, "I knew I would blame myself for selfishly choosing relief over my baby's health" (2022, p. 42). Grose's struggle with pregnancy is not unique: approximately 70%-80% of pregnant people suffer from morning sickness (Lee and Saha, 2011), with almost 3% dealing with hyperemesis gravidarum, a form of nausea and vomiting so aggressive that it causes the sufferer to lose 5% of their body weight, if not more. 2-10% of women develop gestational

³In March 2022, post the birth of her son Aire Webster, Jenner posted a similar video on YouTube, titled "To Our Son."

diabetes, and a few other fatal issues affecting maternal and foetal health include preeclampsia, infections, and anaemia (Grose, 2022). Lewis notes, “In the United States, almost 1,000 people die while doing childbirth each year and another 65,000 nearly die” (2019, p. 2). These pregnancy mortality rates are disproportionately higher for black women and native women.⁴ Despite this, there are very few discussions about how pregnancy is “an unconscionably destructive business”, elaborating:

Scientists have discovered—by experimentally putting placental cells in mouse carcasses—that the active cells of pregnancy “rampage” (unless aggressively contained) through every tissue they touch (2019, p. 2).

As if these physical ailments aren’t debilitating enough, somewhere between 7-20% of pregnant people experience perinatal anxiety and depression (Grose, 2022), and “postnatal PTSD affects at least three to four percent of birth-givers in the UK” (Lewis, 2019, p. 4). The lack of adequate and accessible healthcare in several countries makes this experience even more challenging.

The Neoliberal Girlboss Mother

It is not just health ailments that make pregnancy and motherhood tough on women: even today, discrimination against pregnant women in the workspace is rife, with Tyler noting in 2013 that “7 percent of all pregnant women in Britain lose their jobs each year as a consequence of becoming pregnant and women with children under 11 are the most discriminated group in the British workforce” (29).⁵ One of the tensions that Tyler believes the “fetishistic figure” (2013, p. 30) of pregnant beauty tries to conceal, in addition to “the hidden class exploitation (the armies of nannies, cleaners, childminders) which supports middle-class motherhood, nostalgia for an imaginary era of ‘blissful motherhood’ and anxiety about infertility amongst middle-class women”, is the “incompatibility of maternity with the neoliberal workplace” (Tyler, 2013, p. 30). About two months into her first pregnancy, Grose saw no option but to quit her job. Her health was declining rapidly, and the 6-8 week-long maternity leave that her job — and most jobs around the world — would provide her with was not enough. She believes that her being able to quit was an “act of privilege” (2022, p. 7): she had the financial safety net of her husband’s job, something many expecting mothers do not have. Even then, it was a decision she regretted for years as it set back everything she had worked for throughout her professional career. In the capitalistic neoliberal era of girlbosses and momagers, expecting mothers are pressured to challenge gender roles by continuing to work during most of their pregnancies. While it is imperative and non-negotiable for expecting mothers to have the *option* to work, today’s environment, aided by upper-class celebrities, pushes the idea that mothers-to-be *need* to continue working to prove their worth as functioning members of society — as if it is a test that they must pass to demonstrate their capability as future mothers. When unable to live up to these standards, “most women [feel] like they [are] failing on every possible level” (Grose, 2022, p. 48), with many women, Grose interviewed

⁴ Black women are three times more likely, and native women are over two times more likely to die from pregnancy complications than white women.

⁵ This is despite the nation passing a raft of equal opportunities legislation since the 1970s.

recounting “falling short of what their families, workplaces, and our culture wanted from them when they were publicly performing pregnancy” (2022, p. 48).

But this difficulty in finding or continuing to work is not the idea presented by celebrities, who seem to smoothly and effortlessly manage multi-million dollar empires alongside parenthood. For many public figures, motherhood is intrinsically connected to their work and branding: another part of their identity that can be monetised off. Cultural critic Moir believes motherhood is a “potential lucrative endeavour for celebrities who want to reinvent themselves” (qtd. in Tsaliki, 2019, p. 4), and mentions several “(predominantly white) celebrities whose lifestyle brands and children’s apparel are legitimised by the stars’ status, expertise and identity as mothers” (2019, p. 4).

For example, in 2020 on her daughter’s first birthday, Kylie Jenner released the ‘Stormi Collection’ of Kylie Cosmetics. A little over a year later, she started an entirely new company that cemented her identity as a mother in the minds of people: Kylie Baby is a skin and hair care brand for babies, complete with pastel pinks and blues, and photoshoots of Jenner and Stormi. During her pregnancy in 2022, Alia Bhatt launched Edamamma, a maternity clothing brand, with items for both babies and mothers. Actress Anushka Sharma recently partnered with and invested in Slurp Farm, a healthy food brand for children. When not profiting from their motherhood directly by collaborating with or founding brands, celebrities still use their personal experiences as artistic inspiration, which they subsequently profit from. In August 2021, for example, singer Halsey released a full-length album about being a new mother, titled *If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power*, complete with a cover featuring her bare breast and a baby in her lap. Tsaliki writes, “maternity provides an easily identifiable state with which celebrities can mould common experiences with audiences, regardless of their rank in the star system. In what is seen as a highly chaotic consumer environment, motherhood affords celebrities the development of a brand identity” (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 4).

Pressure to be Pregnant

From the way that motherhood is presented in the media, many women expect it to be “completely transformative, and felt bad about themselves when it was not metamorphic” (Grose, 2022, p. 66). Judith Butler worries about the toll that a gendered performance takes on “the subject... and other subjects who may be oppressed and negated in the process” by reinforcing oppressive norms (Salih, 2002, p. 131). Jump started, no doubt unintentionally, with Demi Moore’s Vanity Fair cover, the hypervisibility and romanticisation of pregnancy make the process look appealing and desirable, thus adding to the pressure that women around the world feel to have children. As Weber states, “the cult of motherhood lays out a strong ideological imperative that mothering alone should satisfy the deepest desires of a woman’s heart” (Weber, 2011, p. 1116). With this, Gillezeau states, the patriarchy “keeps women feeling “bad” if they can’t have or don’t want kids and naturalises their role as “caregivers” in society, thus helping to keep them from accruing the same influence as men in other domains like business, law, politics and culture” (Gillezeau, 2019).

This connects, once again, to Butler’s statement about motherhood being considered an integral part of female identity – but why is this the case; why is it “pregnancy by which the body gets defined” (qtd. in Osborne and Segal, 1994, p. 33)? After all, there are in fact “women of all ages who cannot be impregnated” (qtd. in Osborne and Segal, 1994, p. 33).

Butler argues, thus, that pregnancy is “the imposition of a norm, not a neutral description of biological constraints” (qtd. in Osborne and Segal, 1994, p. 33). This norm has been so ingrained in female bodies that “if you are in your late twenties or your early thirties and you can't get pregnant for biological reasons, or maybe you don't want to, for social reasons... it takes a pretty vigorous (and politically informed) community around you to alleviate the possible sense of failure, or loss, or impoverishment, or inadequacy” (qtd. in Osborne and Segal, 1994, p. 34). Actress Jennifer Aniston recently opened up about this sense of failure, recalling that as tabloids and news channels speculated for several years over when she would start a family, she “was going through IVF, drinking Chinese teas, you name it.” (qtd. in Pergament, 2022). Society’s idea of the flawless pregnancy, hence, not only oppresses women who *are* pregnant by pressuring them to perform their pregnancies perfectly, but also negates the experience of infertility, causing a deep sense of panic and moral failing amongst women who cannot or choose not to have children. Thus, as Judith Butler states, the gendered performance takes a toll on the subject by inciting feelings of inadequacy.

Conclusion

Demi Moore’s 1991 Vanity Fair cover thus unknowingly changed the way we view pregnancy, marking a shift in how gender was performed publicly. The present study has provided an overview of this shift to the fetishization of pregnancy, diving into the idea of ‘pregnant beauty’ which is pervasive in the current digital age, and the role this plays in providing the world with an unrealistic and misleading perception of maternity. In addition to connecting this to the subversive reconstruction of identity and how this reconstruction makes way for a different kind of oppression – in this case, the pressure to be physically attractive while being pregnant – this paper also discussed how performing gender takes a toll on all subjects, serving to further marginalise them.

Studying examples of celebrity pregnancies post the 1990s, this paper discussed how in the current cultural backdrop, being thin, white, wealthy, and physically attractive while pregnant is considered a marker of “morally good maternal citizenship” (Tsaliki, 2019, p. 6). It then explored the concept of digital motherhood and how performing pregnancy and motherhood on the internet has become a way to amass social capital – however, the paper argues that this openness and hypervisibility surrounding pregnancy is not necessarily a good thing as it leads to negative narcissism and unrealistically romanticised expectations from pregnancy, which in reality can be a difficult and gruelling period. The realities of pregnancy disguised by the idea of pregnant beauty range from physical issues like preeclampsia and pregorexia to mental health issues like increased anxiety and depression. In addition to this, discrimination against pregnant women is still highly prevalent in the workspace, even as the current neoliberal environment requires them to smoothly balance their professional and personal lives – something that many celebrity mothers can do due to access to more resources and an ability to incorporate their motherhood into their work and branding.

Judith Butler wonders how we can ever tell “what is subversive and what merely consolidates power?” (Salih, 2002, p. 2), and if we have absolutely any choice or control over how we ‘do’ our identities. There is always the question of how one can know the difference between “the power we promote and the power we oppose” (Salih, 2002, p. 97). The answer, Salih writes, is that we can never know in advance, “so that subversive recitation will always

involve a certain amount of risk” (2002, p. 97). It is a risk that many of us should be willing to take, to break out of the ironclad restrictions of gender. As Seyla Benhabib says, “If we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform, is there ever any chance to stop the performance for a while, to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself?” (qtd. in Salih, 2002, p. 68).

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The Big, the Bad and the Queer: Analysing the Queer-Coded Villain in Selected Disney Films

Sriya Veera ¹

Abstract

Queer representation in media has historically been problematic. Queerness has not been included in early films and television shows, and much of recent media has been accused of underrepresenting or misrepresenting it. Homosexuality has either been the butt of jokes or depicted as deviant and evil. This kind of portrayal involves harmful negative – and often inaccurate – stereotypes that can add to existing prejudice and discrimination. The discourse of the vilification of homosexuality in media has become established recently, with cult horror classics and children’s films being at the centre. The influence of misrepresentation in media is particularly concerning when it comes to children’s films. Fans and critics have accused studios like Disney of employing techniques like queer coding in order to vilify queerness. My paper analyses this queer coding of villains in children’s films. I shall begin by studying the history of queer representation in media, particularly in Disney films. I shall consult fan criticisms on social media and blog websites to gain insight into the discourse. I also aim to understand the use of harmful stereotypes in the characterisations of selected Disney villains and the influence this has on audiences.

Keywords: Representation; Queer Coding; Disney Villains; Stereotypes; Queer Identity

Introduction

In the March of 2022, the state of Florida, USA, signed in the law HB 1557, which has been dubbed the “Don’t Say Gay” bill. The law that would take effect in July 2022 bans any instruction and discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in certain grade levels in school. The inherent assumption of the bill equates queerness with deviance. In a time when the world is learning to accept homosexuality, this bill hindered progress. This bill has sparked political outrage throughout the United States, with Florida at the centre. Since one of Disney’s largest studios is also based in Florida, Disney became one of the targets of outrage and backlash.

Fans believe that Disney has always profited from queer identities. Its silence over this exclusionary bill was inexcusable to them. During this time, Disney films were being analysed critically by queer fans who claimed that the studio had a history of misrepresenting queerness. They also claimed that the LGBTQ+ community was under-represented in Disney films. Disney didn’t write openly gay characters into their films until 2020. The technique of queer coding came to light in this discourse. Queer coding is defined as the sub-textual coding of a character as being queer without explicitly stating that they are queer. Fan analyses of Disney films reveal that many characters can be seen as being queer-coded. Multiple articles and

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listicles – like *Buzzfeed*'s “45 Of The Greatest Queer-Coded Disney Characters There Have Ever Been, That Aren't Elsa From ‘Frozen’” and *Screen Rant*'s “Maleficent & 9 More Disney Characters You Never Knew Were Queer-Coded” – have been published concerning this topic. It is important to note that Disney's villains dominate listicles like these.

This recent backlash against Disney and the discourse that has emerged from it is the foundation for my study. Disney villains like *The Lion King*'s Scar and *The Little Mermaid*'s Ursula have never been openly queer in the films, but queer fans have still begun to identify with them. They identified the use of common queer stereotypes like the limp wrist in these characterisations, the very stereotypes that have been used to associate homosexuality with otherness. The response to queer coding is multifaceted. On the one hand, queer coding evil characters can be harmful; it can push the narrative that maligns queer identities. At the same time, when LGBTQ+ identities were largely absent from film, queer-coded villains were the only kind of representation queer fans could turn to and resonate with. Fans have taken to loving these characters while acknowledging that studios like Disney must take a step forward towards progress and inclusion. I believe that studying queer-coded villains and their social influence can contribute towards Queer Studies.

Research on discrimination against the queer community is vast. My research study will focus specifically on the use of negative queer stereotypes in media. For this, I plan on taking an interdisciplinary approach by consulting Queer Studies and Media Studies. Studies like one conducted by the University of Tennessee and analysis reports published by GLAAD agree that queer representation in mainstream media has either been scarce or problematic at best. Homosexuality was either written as a punch line for jokes or a tool to make the heterosexual protagonist stand out. In both cases, common negative stereotypes associated with homosexuality were weaponised. LGBTQ+ representation in media was strongly influenced by social prejudice and helped perpetuate the same.

One manner of othering homosexuality in media was through the queer coding of evil characters. Queer coding refers to the sub-textual use of queer tropes and stereotypes to fictional characters; the character's sexual identity is not explicitly stated or confirmed. The tropes and stereotypes in question are labelled as queer because of their historical association with homosexuality. Laman (2021) claims that queer coding is used in the characterisation of villains. For instance, there has been a noticeable trend of male villains who cross-dress (Norman Bates in *Psycho* and Robert Elliott in *Dressed to Kill*). Other works like Henderson's (2022) *Let's Talk About Queer Coding & Its History in Film and TV* mirror this line of thinking. They agree that this form of queer coding is influenced by and further influences the association of queerness with deviance. It reinforces the notion wherein homosexuality is evil, unnatural, and wrong.

My research studies Disney villains specifically. A significant reference source for me will be fan theories found on Twitter and Reddit threads. I will be looking at fans' analyses of Disney villains. Fans claim that Disney villains are queer-coded. For instance, they agree that male villains like *Aladdin*'s Jafar are portrayed as ‘effeminate’ men. Being effeminate has historically been attributed to homosexual men. It became a basis, an explanation, for discrimination. Likewise, female villains have ‘masculine’ features and mannerisms. Fans also claim that this character design was intentional. It was used to set villains apart from virtuous heroes. It reflects the negative stereotypes surrounding homosexuality.

At this point, I must note that resources on queer-coded villains are scarce. Extant research analyses the queer-coded villain in the context of horror and thriller films like *Psycho* (1960), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and *Jennifer's Body* (2009). Fans in fan fiction forums like *Wattpad* and *Archive of Our Own* have studied topics like queer coding and queer-baiting. Though, researchers have recently been gaining interest in them. I believe there is scope for research on queer-coded characters in media targeting children. This paper will analyse the case of the queer-coded villain in selected films as the primary sources for this study: *The Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Aladdin* (1992), and *The Lion King* (1994). The aforementioned horror and thriller films will serve as references and starting points from which I shall analyse the selected villains, Jafar, Scar, Ursula and Maleficent. I do not claim with certainty that these characters are queer. What I will be doing is arguing that these selected villains can be perceived as queer-coded.

Queerness Misrepresented

Media has a reciprocal relationship with society. According to Moroni (2012), media serves “as a reflection of societal ideology” and “television depiction can affect . . . the civil laws of a nation.” The suppression of non-heterosexual identities was widespread and deep-rooted in society. It has found its way into the intersection between politics and media through censorship laws.

This influence of social ideals in media can be seen in the Motion Picture Production Code, better known as the Hays Code. The Hays Code was a strict set of guidelines meant to govern media content. It was developed in retaliation to films that were perceived as going against morals and traditional ideals. Such films portrayed feminist themes, drug use, graphic violence, and more. They received fierce criticism from powerful religious and political institutions, which pressured film creators to ‘purify’ their content. Catholic religious leaders, in particular, condemned specific themes in films. They called for a “Code of conduct for movie content” (“Hollywood Censored”), a code that would ensure that the films being produced at the time would not negatively influence their audiences and society.

Films adhering to the Hays Code can be seen as being conservative now. The guidelines provided to studios were thorough; they were reflective of traditional moral ideals. The Code prohibited the depiction of sexual content – both overt and suggestive; profanity, portrayals of drug and alcohol abuse; and graphic, realistic violence. Restrictions that mirrored Christian ideologies were also placed on themes of love and romance in film. At the time, only the heterosexual marriage was seen as pure, so the Hays Code maintained the need to uphold the sanctity of marriage. Homosexuality may not have been explicitly mentioned in the Code, but it was certainly considered immoral at the time. Heavy restrictions were placed on how LGBT identities could be portrayed in films. Queer characters had to behave in very particular ways that would dictate how audiences would perceive them. Generally, this meant depicting queer characters as deviants, predators or paedophiles. This ideology represented queerness as an other to be openly condemned and destroyed.

Queer identities were heavily vilified in all kinds of media, including children’s films. Evil supernatural characters like vampires and werewolves were portrayed as having queer traits and relationships. This portrayal became an apparent way of linking the identity of queer with that of ‘freak’. Horror and slasher films also have perceivable queer villains. Hitchcock’s

films like *Rebecca*, for instance, had a tendency to portray homosexual people as obsessive murderers.

It is challenging to find positive depictions of homosexuality in early films. Understanding its real-world effect is incredibly crucial. GLAAD has noted in its analysis of LGBT representation in media that queer characters are often underrepresented and portrayed with harmful stereotypes. This has had a twofold impact on society.

A largely negative representation of homosexuality on screens can feed into existing prejudice. For people outside of the LGBT community, media content becomes one of the primary means for them to learn about the community, especially when laws like the Don't Say Gay Bill prohibit even the discussion of homosexuality in educational institutions. Consistently painting queer characters as degenerates, cements that image into the minds of straight audiences. When societies are prejudiced against the LGBT community, negative media representations end up creating unsafe environments for the community.

The effect of media representation is not limited to audiences outside the LGBT community. Seeing their own identity stigmatised and villainised so widely can have serious consequences on the mental and physical health of queer individuals. It invalidates them and their experiences and can make them feel isolated from society. Authentic representation of the struggles and experiences of queer characters can help people come to terms with their own sexualities. It can help dismantle internal homophobia, too. Further, when queer adolescents feel safe within their identities, they are at lower risk of developing depression and attempting suicide.

LGBT representation in media has evolved over time. As homosexuality becomes socially acceptable, strict guidelines like the Hays Code have lost relevance. Openly queer characters have found a place in films and TV shows. However, we must note the difference between mere, surface-level inclusion and meaningful representation. Studios may not attempt to portray queerness aptly because they consider the inclusion of openly gay characters as risky because majority of their audiences identify as heterosexual. It would also be challenging to capture queerness accurately when the writer's rooms have no space for queer people.

GLAAD reports published in the 2000s have noted that while there are more LGBT characters in media now, these characters are typically tokenised. Gay caricatures still exist in the form of the 'effeminate' male or the 'gay best friend'. They are typically portrayed as sassy, mean, gossip-loving, and flamboyant. They have no substance, only these overused character traits.

Rainbow capitalism, the commercialisation of pro-LGBT movements, has paved the way for misrepresentation. Studios view and treat the LGBT community as consumers, which may result in the exploitation of the queer identity. The community becomes a new market to break into, appease and gain financially from. Creators only aim to make more profit while putting in minimal effort to provide positive and authentic representation.

Queer coding is a technique that was identified as emerging from rainbow capitalism in media. This involves coding characters as queer without explicitly confirming their identities. Here, too, common LGBT stereotypes are heavily played upon. These characters are ascribed traits and behaviours commonly associated with queerness. Queer audiences are drawn in with the promise of getting to see queer characters and getting to see their identities represented, only to find that this inclusion of queerness is written between or under the lines.

A character's queerness becomes more of an implication than something meaningful. When a character is intentionally queer-coded, "the audience is meant to interpret him as a queer person" (Martinez, 2013). It requires in-depth analyses and decoding of the characters. Studios benefit by promising representation and not explicitly following through.

The process of identifying a character as being queer-coded is complicated. There is always the possibility of playing into harmful stereotypes historically associated with the queer community. Avila (2021) says that this acknowledgement of queer characters "involves a conscious awareness of the shared cultural meanings queer people have been identifying with for hundreds of years". There is this shared understanding among the community about what constitutes queer coding. Queer audiences know what to look for. They know their personal and shared traits well and have common experiences. They also know how they have historically been perceived in a heterosexual-dominated world. Hence, they are able to point out the signifiers of queerness in characters.

We must note that when decoding characters, the analyses cannot be used "to say that something is gay or not gay with certainty" (Avila). We can only make a case for why we believe a character can be read as gay; our interpretations are based on cultural meanings that are not fixed in society.

While queer coding may have had harmful consequences, it has given queer fans a space to redefine and reclaim characters as part of the community. Through the means of fanfiction especially, fans can create worlds where their favourite queer-coded characters are unabashedly and openly queer. Fans can reclaim characters. They can find comfort and validation in portraying their queer icons as they wish to.

Queer-coded antagonists and villains have become fan favourites. Characters like James and Jessie from *Pokémon* and Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* are now seen as queer icons. These characters provided some representation when there was nothing else for queer audiences to turn to. They may have caused harm at some point, but they also had the power to bring comfort. Other Disney villains have also become beloved characters among LGBT fans, especially those who grew up with those Disney films.

The issue regarding Disney, though, is that its target audience is largely comprised of children. How the studio represents its characters can fundamentally shape the ideals of future adults. Disney's influence proves powerful because children are seen as more impressionable than adults. Seeing villains that behave in particular, perceivably queer ways creates "a psychological association" between 'queer' and 'evil' in the minds of children" (De Urquía, 2020). These characters are used to encourage children not to act in those specific ways. Queerness becomes the villain that must be defeated by heroes. Children grow up with these attributions, they bring them into their social worlds, and they may end up perpetuating them as adults. This puts the LGBTQ+ community at risk.

I argued earlier that queer coding isn't necessarily bad. In a society where depicting homosexuality was risky, queer coding allowed creators to provide some form of representation. Whether this representation would be positive or negative depended on these creators. An issue arises when only villains are queer-coded. Moreover, when companies like Disney, who have widespread reach and influence, do this. Disney has recently come under intense scrutiny for its lack of queer representation. This criticism has arisen from Disney's

failure to do more than simply claim that it is a gay-friendly company. This claim becomes meaningless when no meaningful action has been taken to help the LGBT community.

There is a simultaneous condemnation and reclamation of its villains' portrayals. As Allen (2018) says, "like many kids who later came out as members of the LGBTQ community, I couldn't help but love these villains." Nothing can be done about the older portrayals of characters like Ursula and Scar. Hailing them as queer icons provides strength to queer fans. Reclamation has power, but fans also recognise that society has changed since these films were first released. Reboots and newer adaptations can potentially portray these characters as unabashedly gay. Yet Disney still fails or rather refuses, to explore this possibility.

The Big, the Bad and the Queer

Snow White's Evil Queen was Disney's first movie villain. She was vain, sadistic and bitter. She was dressed in dark clothes throughout the film. And her target was the young protagonist of the film. Subsequent Disney villains have embodied these traits, building upon this blueprint, especially when it comes to the queer-coded aspects of their identities.

By nature, Disney's villains stand in opposition to their heroes in every way. Their state of being a villain is not limited to their actions; it is a part of their identities. The traits and behaviours ascribed to them are typically considered immoral by society. They are outcasts who may partake in unlawful activities and are nonconforming. Female villains do not conform to traditional ideas of femininity, while male villains do not conform to those of masculinity. These characters are meant to symbolise everything that is bad. In the process, they also become the *Other*. Disney villains' nonconformity to traditional ideas concerning gender has given way for them to be read as queer. This concept serves as a basis for my queer interpretation of the selected Disney villains.

Maleficent

"Maleficent doesn't know anything about love, or kindness . . ." (Reitherman et al., 1959)

The audience's first impression of Maleficent is that she is dramatic. She first appears to us shrouded in green smoke, angry that she wasn't invited to Aurora's christening. She was told outright by the good fairies that she wasn't wanted at the occasion. She sets the movie's plot in motion when she places a curse on Aurora and disappears in the same green smoke.

Maleficent is elegant in her black cape, and she has a flair for the dramatic. Her design was heavily inspired by Maila Nurmi, a goth icon best known for her character Vampira, as shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1: *Nurmi's Vampira*

Her resemblance to Vampira can be seen in Figure 2, which shows an early sketch of her design. Marc Davis, the animator who worked on *Maleficent*, wanted to depict her as more than a witch. He wanted her to look like a graceful femme fatale and like a vampire. Her collar was made to look like bat wings when closed. And he wanted her cape to resemble the flames of fire when she opened it. Another vital detail Davis added to her design was the phallic horns on her head. His end goal was to intensify the feeling of threat one felt from the moment *Maleficent* first appeared in the film.



Figure 2: *Sketch design of Maleficent*

Emphasising Maleficent's evilness also meant emphasising how different she is from the 'good' characters. Aurora embodies purity and innocence. The three good fairies are jolly; they are good in the literal sense that they can only use their magic to bring joy to others. Greene (2014) says that the original versions of Maleficent's design were much rounder and softer, but they were scrapped to ensure that Maleficent was all jagged edges. Her high cheekbones and overall sharp structure add to this feel. Maleficent is also the only character in the film who is not white. She is green, signifying her feelings of jealousy against Aurora. Her voice is deep, and she doles out her curses and hatches evil schemes so gracefully. In many ways, Maleficent is camp.

Moreover, her villainous agenda also stands in the way of heterosexual ideas of love. The curse she places on Aurora ensures that the princess would not grow up to find her prince and get married. The film focuses on procreation and on how important love is. Maleficent is all but ostracised for what the good fairies believe to be her inability to love. This resonates with queer audiences because their forms of love and courtship have also long been unaccepted by society. *The Sleeping Beauty* plays into this skewed perception of queerness.

When it comes to Maleficent, the queer coding seems obvious because she is so unfeminine, but it also deals with the social alienation queer people have experienced. Maleficent lives in a dark castle, far away from the lively town. She is never really given a chance to be understood, accepted or even negotiated with. Throughout the film, the 'good' fairies bash her and insinuate that everything she touches falls into ruin. Maleficent is one of Disney's earliest queer-coded villains; she has helped create the blueprint. Her being unwelcome because of her identity is what appeals to queer fans, who have embraced her with love and acceptance.

Ursula

"They weren't kidding when they called me, well, a witch" (Musker & Clements, 1989)

Ursula is one of the most beloved Disney villains. One of the reasons she is seen as very heavily queer-coded is that her design was inspired by a drag queen called Divine. Ursula's costume is a deep purple bodysuit that extends to her six phallic tentacles. Her spiked

white hair was inspired by Divine's butch look in *Pink Flamingos*. Her makeup is strong and bold – her nails and lips are painted a bright red. Her eye makeup especially resembles that of Divine in design. Figure 1 shows the similarities between Divine's look and Ursula's character design.



Figure 3: Side-by-side comparison of Ursula & Divine

This design was very much intentional on the creators' part. Ursula has received backlash from conservative audiences for being modelled off a drag queen, but the animators saw nothing wrong with this. They wanted to utilise Divine's camp energy for their villain and to make Ursula into a diva. Everything Ursula does is dramatic and camp. She is incredibly vain; she carries herself with flair and tortures mer-folk for no apparent reason.

It is hard not to miss the use of dark colours in Ursula's scenes. Her surroundings are dominated by dark blues and purples. Her status of being ostracised from her community is cemented by her living in a dark cave, away from all the light Ariel's kingdom is associated with. Her pets are two dark blue eels. She is also the only mer-person in the film with a different skin colour. This was all intentional on the part of the animators, Howard Ashman and John Musker.

Pat Carroll, Ursula's voice actor, intentionally deepened her voice to capture Ursula's essence. Her voice was at its deepest during Ursula's song "Poor Unfortunate Souls" (Musker & Clements, 1989). The idea of performance is most obvious in this song. It is important to note the contribution of a gay man, Howard Ashman, in writing this song. "Poor Unfortunate Souls", at its core, is a song about performance. Ursula sings to Ariel to teach her that she must perform woman. This song is important because it shows us that Ursula knows where she stands in the world. She knows that her identity is not accepted by fellow mer-folk, that they are scared of her, and that she is far from traditionally feminine. This plays into the knowledge queer people have about their standing in the world. Ursula understands that gender identity is a performance.

At her core, Ursula is evil. She takes advantage of people for fun; she turns them into seaweeds for fun. She is dark and fat and can be perceived as highly masculine. While these traits establish her as a villain, they also resonate with queer fans. Queer people know what it is like to be an outcast and the anger and bitterness that comes with the status. Ursula is a queer icon because she embodies these traits and ideals, and because she sets out to reclaim her power throughout the film.

Jafar

“Perhaps you’d like to see how snakelike I can be.” (Clements & Musker, 1992)

One of the male villains frequently seen as queer coded is Jafar. Like the other villains in this category, Jafar’s character is also chock-full of exaggerated queer stereotypes. He was animated by Andreas Deja, an openly gay man. Griffin (2000) claims that Deja’s sexuality has influenced how he creates his characters. In the case of Jafar, this involves using stereotypical gay attributes in his character design.

Like the former villains discussed here, Jafar is also incredibly dramatic. He is also the opposite of the protagonist of the film, Aladdin. While the other characters dress in bright colours, Jafar swishes around in a deep red and black outfit. He is slender, and his beard is crooked. He carries himself with dramatic flair, similar to the camp aura that Ursula portrays. A close look at his design shows that he puts on a thick eyeliner. Figure 4 shows us Jafar’s campy and sassy look, and how he stands in contrast to Aladdin.



Figure 4: *Jafar’s Flair and Comparing Jafar and Aladdin*

Jafar also fits into the sassy villain trope. He speaks languidly, drawing out his words. Moreover, he always has a retort ready. He is expressive and vain and power hungry. At the film’s climax, Jafar quite literally transforms into a snake. These traits ultimately culminate in portraying him as pure evil. As a villain, Jafar appeals to fans. He has a witty parrot by his side. He lives in a cool castle and gets to walk around in a chic outfit. He is theatrical like Ursula and his sass adds to the charm. In a world where people are obsessed with love and romance, Jafar is the only person who wants to overthrow the status quo and gain power. Queer fans find representation in this side of him.

A controversial aspect of a queer reading of Jafar comes in when we look at his quest to marry a young Jasmine. Jafar’s insistence on marrying Jasmine has been used as an argument to debunk the idea that he can be read as queer. I propose two counterarguments for it. The first deals with Jafar’s motive: The only reason he is inclined to marry Jasmine is because he wants to be the Sultan. There are times when he is hesitant or looks disgusted at the idea of marrying her. Another reason, I believe there are still grounds to believe that Jafar is queer-coded is the association of homosexuality with paedophilia. This is a very harmful queer stereotype, and its implications are powerful; it equates the queer-coding of Jafar with predatory traits.

Scar

“There’s one in every family . . . and they always manage to ruin special occasions.”

----(Minkoff & Allers, 1994)

Andreas Deja has also been credited for animating Scar, the antagonist of *The Lion King*. Like Jafar, Scar fits into the ‘Sissy Villain’ trope. Furthermore, like Ursula, Scar has lived in exile. He is best known for the way he speaks and carries himself. Scar always speaks in drawls. He always has something witty to say, some sassy remark to retort with. The gay stereotype of a limp wrist – a limp paw in Scar’s case – is also heavily used in his characterisation. Figure 5 is an example of the same.



Figure 5: *Scar’s Limp Paw*

Very early on in the film, Scar is placed in opposition to Mufasa first, and then Simba. His character design very obviously makes him look like a true villain with no possibility for a redemption arc. Every lion in Pride Lands is ochre in colour and has a light brown mane; every lion except for Scar. The colour difference is not hard to miss. Scar’s body is dark brown, and his mane is jet-black in colour. Unlike the other lions who walk majestically, Scar slinks about everywhere. He has perceived feminine traits in him that are starkly different from Mufasa’s masculinity. His character is designed to be slimmer and more delicate than Mufasa’s. Scar acknowledges the difference himself in the movie when he says that he would never pick a fight with Mufasa. He knows he is physically weaker. This difference is most noticeable in Figure 6, where Scar and Mufasa stand facing each other.



Figure 6: *Mufasa and Scar*

Scar’s character replaces brute strength with his malice, schemes and overall state of being campy. Rather than engaging in fights himself, Scar uses hyenas to do his bidding. Another similarity between Scar and the aforementioned villains is that he too seemed to have a disdain for heterosexuality. We are introduced to him as a character who had no interest in Simba’s showing. He couldn’t care less about Mufasa and Sarabi’s relationship. All he wants is his power and he is willing to do anything to attain it.

Deja has called Scar the “most evil of all the villains” he has worked on (Ourri, 2017). He is the only villain out of the four to actually have killed another character. When Scar comes into power after Mufasa’s death, Pride Lands experience dark times. This is portrayed very literally. The film begins to use dark colours, similar to those used in Scar’s character design.

Vraketta (2014) looks at this as a symbol for “the literal incapability of the homosexuals’ reproduction”. The association of homosexuality with disease is represented here through the droughts experienced by the Pride Lands under Scar’s rule. As a ruler and as a lion, Scar never receives respect from his peers. Mufasa sees him as a troublesome presence, and Simba is vocal about believing that Scar is *weird*. The social association of queerness with *weirdness* comes into play here. In the film’s climax, when Simba defeats Scar, the land gets its life back. It becomes green and fertile again. Simba, the likeness of Mufasa and a symbol of the heterosexual man has restored the status quo that Scar had upended. In this way, *The Lion King* symbolises more than the triumph of good over evil. It portrays the triumph of heteronormativity over queerness.

Villains Reclaimed

In multiple interviews, animators like Deja have said that they preferred working on the villain characters. These characters are extravagant icons in every way. They are also more memorable than the heroes of the stories. Both fans and animators alike believe that villains simply have more depth and dimension. Their unconventionality is appealing, and it stays with us. These villains were not relatable to Disney’s target audience – the heterosexual majority. However, they did resonate with queer audiences who know what it is like to be shunned for their identities. User MidnightTed on Twitter explains this sentiment aptly: “‘I’m queer and I hate the status quo that hold me down, burn it to the ground’ gives an outlet to young LGBTQ+ people for processing and rejecting the grief and hatred they did nothing to deserve” (Ninian, 2021). This sentiment gave way for these villains to be reclaimed as icons.

The queer community has learned to empower itself through reclamation. As Twitter user SubstanceIs puts it, some of us “want to embrace the queer community as a collective outsider identity” (Brown, 2021). This becomes grounds for the community to feel united and for queer people to feel like they belong somewhere. Embracing memorable Disney villains becomes a source of empowerment for the queer community, too. Seeing these characters be so confident and sure of themselves can, according to Flanagan (2022), “tap into the hesitation many individuals have to explore who they really are”. It can become a major source of comfort for a community that has been rejected for so long.

Understanding how these characters are queer-coded helps us understand their social impact. While these characters are beloved among queer fans now, these representations can still be seen as problematic. When children’s media is saturated with negative queer stereotypes, the idea that queer is evil becomes cemented in our psyches from a young, impressionable age. This helps sustain discrimination against the LGBT community, and it alienates queer kids and adults from society. In the eyes of the audience, queerness becomes the villain that must be defeated by heterosexual conforming heroes.

Over time, as social views change, there is hope for positive queer representation in animated Disney films. The studio has already begun featuring openly queer characters. While these characters barely have any screen time, they symbolise a change. There is now hope for authentic and positive representation of queer identities in media and in Disney films.

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Effects of Financial Digitalisation on Unemployment-Inflation Relationship in India

Taarak Trivedi ¹

Abstract

Financial Digitalisation plays a pivotal role in many economies today, enabling efficiency, accessibility and convenience. In India especially the digital economy and infrastructure are growing rapidly, increasing its reach to remote areas as well. However, the positive outlook towards financial digitalisation has been met with concerns about its potential negative impact on employment. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the macroeconomic effects of financial digitalisation on employment and inflation by examining the Phillips curve relationship. Additionally, this study seeks to account for gender-based disparities in the effects of financial digitalisation on the unemployment-inflation relationship. The findings divulge the breakdown of the Phillips curve and bring to light the inversion of the relationship between inflation and unemployment.

Keywords: Digital economy, Unemployment, Inflation, Market, India

Introduction

In a modern economy, inequality, unemployment and inflation are persistent economic problems with no permanent policy solutions, but can only be regulated in specific ways. There is often a tradeoff between these economic phenomena and these are often the focus of a majority of economic policies, political and institutional interventions. It is possible to keep a check on inequality and inflation in an economy by regulating and minimizing unemployment levels. Every industrial revolution has provided us with a critical window to make this possibility a reality by creating supplementary employment opportunities for economies with large and rapidly growing populations through upskilling and improved productivity, opening up the doors to new areas of work (Speringer & Schnelzer, 2019).

One of the most important outputs of the latest Industrial Revolution (4.0) is 'Digitalisation' i.e. the universal adoption of connected digital services by governments, businesses and consumers. In India, this process began with its roots in the Industrial Revolution 3.0 (Electronics and IT System Automation) but took a concrete shape and structure through initiatives such as the 'Digital India' campaign launched by the Government of India (GoI) in July 2015. The Digital India scheme aimed to provide digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen, digital empowerment of citizens and transformed India into a knowledge economy (<https://csc.gov.in/digitalIndia>). This initiative dovetailed well with the demonetization policy experiment, which purported to move India to a less-cash-dependent society in November 2016. Thus, there was a push for 'financial digitalisation' following Digital India as well as the demonetization of two high-value banknotes. Demonetization

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accelerated the adoption of digital payment gateways which transformed the process and scale of financial transactions and services. A pivotal factor in the widespread adoption of financial digitalisation was the advancements and availability of portable devices (Tablets & Smartphones) and high-speed internet services throughout the length and breadth of the country. One indication that financial digitalization has been successful in India could be its wider policy appeal: more than 18 nations want to adopt Indian digital payment portals like the Unified Payments Interface.

However, the present Industrial Revolution 4.0 and by extension digitalisation in India has repeatedly come under severe criticism for the fear of it replacing human labour with automated systems, setups and processes. These fears are motivated by a gap between the rate of expansion of the process of financial digitalisation and the necessary financial and digital literacy and availability of infrastructure. Furthermore, the key for companies dealing with financial transactions is to reduce costs through the replacement of redundant manual labour with automation of the needed processes that adds to these apprehensions (Sarkar & Das, 2018).

On the other hand, it is very well established that financial digitalisation significantly reduces the transaction costs incurred by firms now and then while also enhancing productivity. Hence, it follows that it could enable employers with the capacity to hire a greater number of workers for tasks requiring human functioning and effort. Additionally, it also implies that the business enterprises are left with a spare capacity to hire additional workers for executing tasks requiring human functioning and expertise.

While the extant literature has taken under examination the effects of financial digitalisation of the Indian economy on variables such as GDP, productivity, business and entrepreneurial environment and scope, or its effects on individual sectors such as banking and finance or services etc. there is less research that is empirically gauging its effects on unemployment using aggregate data for India.

Thus, this paper looks at the empirical link between financial digitalization, unemployment and inflation tradeoff, i.e. the Phillips curve. An individual who is unemployed in an economy where inflation is high will be worse off compared to the case with middling levels of inflation. This relationship helps one provide context to what being unemployed implies and therefore is explored in this paper to understand the effects of financial digitalisation. Thereby, this study finds significance and relevance for the policymakers in times of unprecedented global uncertainties, rapidly expanding reach of digital technologies and infrastructure and volatile prices to help them better understand the unemployment-inflation tradeoff and better manage the economy and people. It also opens the doors for researchers to explore uncharted territory and work on the various related aspects for detailed studies.

Research Statement:

To gauge the impacts of financial digitalisation on Unemployment in India through its changing relationship with inflation.

Objectives:

Estimating the shift in the Phillips curve relationship as a result of the growth of financial digitalisation.

Understanding the differentiated economic effects of digitalisation on male and female employment.

Background and Literature:***Background of Financial Digitalisation in India***

Through its report published in April 2022, the Indian Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) traces the inception of and the roots of financial digitalization in India. The Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) pioneered online banking services in India in 1996 by employing electronic banking services at its branches. In the year 1999, banks such as Citi, HDFC, and IndusInd introduced online banking facilities, and the trend continued ever since, with an increasing number of banks setting up net banking services on a larger scale, thereby marking the beginning of the era of digital financial transactions. Later, in the year 2008, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), formed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) sought to develop an efficient and robust payment and settlement infrastructure in India. Aadhar Enabled Payment System, Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), Cheque Transaction System and Bharat Bill Payments System (BBPS) are all products of the NPCI (IBEF, 2022).

The Digital India Programme launched by the Government of India initiated rapid development of the necessary infrastructure including the provision of high-speed internet services to the most remote areas, smartphones and bank accounts for every citizen while ensuring the availability of services in real-time from online mobile platforms to expedite the adoption of electronic financial transactions and cashless operations. In fact, before such policy initiatives were taken by the GoI, only the RBI and payment system operators (PSOs) provided payment systems that were restricted to 5 methods of payment. However, in recent times, NPCI has also begun facilitating newer payment systems (IBEF, 2022).

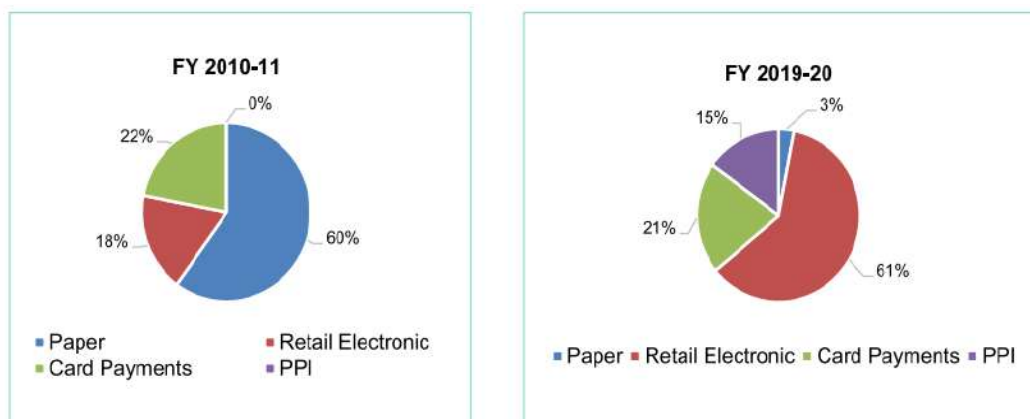
Currently, there are about 10 different digital payment systems/models that are put to use in the everyday lives of the people of India including banking cards (launched in 1980 by the Central Bank of India followed by MasterCard in 1988), Unstructured Supplementary Service Data - USSD (launched in 2016), Aadhar Enabled Payment Systems - AEPS (A bank-led model using Aadhaar authentication for facilitating online interoperable financial transactions at the point-of-sale), Unified Payments Interface - UPI (developed in 2016), Mobile Wallet, Bank Prepaid Card ("Pay Now, Use Later"), Point of Sale, Internet Banking, Mobile Banking, and Micro ATM.

Due to the deployment of appropriate infrastructure that was made affordable and accessible for almost every citizen, the nation witnessed a major jump in the number of digital transactions since 2010. From about 4.98 billion transactions valued at 96 lakh crores during the financial year (FY) 2010-11, the number of digital transactions surged to about 16.23 billion

transactions valued at 3435 lakh crores in the financial year (FY) 2020. This leap represents a growth rate of 12.54% CAGR in terms of volume and 43% CAGR in terms of value of the digital transactions over these 10 years (IBEF, 2022).

The pie charts given below provide a comparative composition of the retail transaction methods employed during FY 2010-11 and FY 2019-20:

Figure 1 Retail transactions in terms of volume during FY 2010-11 and FY 2019-20



Source: IBEF report published in April 2022

Earlier paper-based transactions accounted for 60% of the total payments and the other modes combined accounted for the remaining 40% of transactions. However, the digital mode of payment accounted for 97% of the total retail transactions in FY 2019-20, replacing cash payments and becoming the new preferred mode of payment.

Figure 2 Retail transactions in terms of value during FY 2010-11 and FY 2019-20



Source: IBEF report published in April 2022

While digital transactions accounted for only 11% of the total value in FY 2010-11, they took on the preferred mode of payment and accounted for 80% of the total value of retail transactions in FY 2019-20.

While the process of financial digitalisation was initiated by banks in the early and mid-2000s, it only got accelerated post the GOI's decision to demonetize Rs. 1000 and Rs. 500 banknotes on the 8th of November 2016. Navya G Reddy and Nikitha B S in their paper have

studied the effects of demonetization on financial digitalisation in India through an analysis of secondary sources including the RBI and the National Sampling Survey Organization (Reddy & B S, 2019). Their comparative analysis with other countries reveals that pre-demonetization, India had a majority of its transactions done in cash. The same trend also applies to most of the developing nations mentioned in the table below. However, the developed nations have a far lesser share of cash in their total transactions.

Figure 3 *Cash Transactions in value % of the total transactions*

Countries	Value (%)
Indonesia	69
India	69
Mexico	57
South Africa	47
China	45
Japan	43
Brazil	38
Australia	20
USA	14
UK	11

Source: (Reddy & B S, 2019)

Their analysis further reveals trends that clearly indicate the significant impact of demonetization on various channels of digital transactions. It created a need for newer modes of payment in the market and many startups in association with the GOI took on the opportunity to come up with convenient, efficient, safe and user-friendly modes of electronic payment that are now being used by other nations as well (Reddy & B S, 2019).

They conclude that people were able to adapt to the new (digital) financial technology for making daily transactions and that demonetization gave a major push to the mass adoption of financial digitalisation (Reddy & B S, 2019). Similar to Reddy and BS (2019), the current study also uses demonetisation as a point of inflexion to understand the effects of financial digitalisation, but with an emphasis on the unemployment-inflation tradeoff in India using the Phillips curve.

The design of the Indian payment system infrastructure and its on-ground implementation has been studied by Silva et. al (2019). The Unified Payments Interface (UPI), the India Stack platform, and other components of India's digital financial infrastructure, according to the author, have all contributed significantly to the promotion of financial inclusion and increased access to financial services for underserved groups. India's approach is aimed at providing digital financial infrastructure and services as a public good unlike any other nation and this approach has received appreciation from several local and global intellects and institutions. The paper, therefore, presents some salient takeaways from India's experience that other nations can apply. Firstly, the authors stress on how crucial it is to develop a thorough

digital ID system in order to make financial services simple, secure and accessible to all. Secondly, they emphasize the necessity of interoperable payment systems that enable customers to transfer money across various banks and payment processors without any hassle. Thirdly, the authors also press on the central role of a strong complementary digital infrastructure that can accommodate a variety of financial services, such as credit, insurance, and savings. Additionally, they highlight the necessity for a robust regulatory framework in order to guarantee the security and privacy of user financial data. However, they also find that the system is yet to succeed in achieving socioeconomic inclusion for the most marginalized sections of society (Silva et. al, 2019).

Many developed and developing nations including Singapore, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, France, BENELUX markets (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), as well as Switzerland, have adopted Indian digital payment systems. It is also known that 13 nations that desire to use the UPI interface for digital payments have signed MoUs with India (Bhardwaj, 2023). This reflects the depth, quality and strength of India's digital infrastructure and services.

The Indian government has started several programs to encourage the usage of digital payments as part of its ambitious efforts to establish a digital economy. Some of the initiatives launched with the goal of accelerating digitalization are the DigiDhan, Di project, and Cashless India. The Indian government has recently announced the acceptance of cryptocurrencies with a sound tax system in place in anticipation of a rise in the adoption of cryptocurrencies. Furthermore, for the proper regulation of alternative currencies, the government has also launched its own digital currency - the 'e-Rupee'. By 2023, it is anticipated that India's market for digital payments and transactions will reach USD 1 trillion (IBEF, 2022).

The next section explores the extant literature on the effects of financial digitalisation on the Indian economy and developing economies in general.

Effects of Financial Digitalisation on the Indian Economy

Financial digitalisation has become embedded into the Indian economy's growth and its future. It is key to achieving great levels of efficiency of resources, workforce and capital and also cost-cutting. It has been adopted by a mushrooming number of businesses since it has saved them a lot of time, cost and redundant labour. Hence, it holds great potential to positively impact India's GDP and growth. This is also true for almost all developing countries as shown by Khera et. al (2021). This paper examines the relationship between digital financial inclusion and economic growth across a sample of 52 developing countries. The authors find that digital financial inclusion can contribute to economic growth by increasing access to finance, promoting entrepreneurship, and improving financial efficiency, especially in countries with low financial inclusion. Their statistical analysis reveals that an increase in digital financial inclusion by 1% in these countries results in an increase of about 0.1% growth of their real GDP. For some countries, an annual growth of up to 2.2% points has been found as a result of digital financial inclusion in payments. Through empirical techniques, they establish that the impact of financial digitalisation on a nation depends on a variety of factors including the

quality and reach of digital infrastructure, level of financial literacy, regulatory environment and favourable policies (Khera et. al, 2021).

An attempt to understand the impact of digitalisation on the Indian economy was made by Lazanyuk Modi (2021) through an analysis of the economic processes that determine economic growth. Using correlations, they found a positive relationship between the rising use of plastic money and indirect tax collection, thus supporting their hypothesis that digitalisation has improved transparency and accountability. With the help of regression analysis, they also assuage the prominent fear that digitalisation will lead to wide-scale unemployment. It was found to be associated with an increase in India's exports and trade volumes without increasing the unemployment rate, which seemed to have reduced over the years from 2013 to 2018 (Lazanyuk & Modi, 2021).

Digitalisation is also an attempt to include a larger fraction of the population in the formal financial system, providing them with improved access to financial goods and services. Aditi Pathak and Avni Gupta study how effective digitalisation has been at providing efficiency in transition between numerous channels and subsequently leading to easier governance. They study the relation between digital preparedness, better governance, and development at the micro and macro levels by using two schemes of the GoI and inter-country data respectively. Through an empirical analysis, they find that digitalisation has positive impacts on economic development, social welfare, and government effectiveness, but these impacts vary according to the level of digitalisation in a country. As countries advance through various stages of digitalisation, it has a greater impact on economic growth and quality of life while for countries just beginning their journey, it has a great impact on the provision and access to basic services and education (Pathak & Gupta, 2017).

The authors also state that developed countries benefit from nearly 25% higher economic growth, but tend to lag as much as emerging markets in job creation. The main reason for the different impacts of digitization lies in the economic structure of developed and emerging countries. Developed countries rely primarily on domestic consumption, making the non-trading sector important. Across all developed economies, digitalization boosts productivity and has a measurable impact on growth. However, as low-skilled, low-value jobs are offshored to emerging markets where labour is cheaper, job losses can result. Emerging markets, on the other hand, are more export-oriented and driven by tradable sectors. They tend to benefit more from the employment effects of digitalization than from the impact on growth (Pathak & Gupta, 2017).

While papers such as those mentioned above and others have tried to gauge the effects of financial digitalisation on various aspects of the Indian economy, it comes as a surprise and shock that there is no literature directly studying the effects of financial digitalisation on unemployment in India, despite the significance of this issue for policymakers, for institutions and for those in power.

But a somewhat similar approach is seen in Titalessy (2020), which discusses the relationship between cashless payments and inflation in Indonesia. The author argues that the use of cashless payments can affect inflation in both positive and negative ways depending on a variety of factors such as the level of competition in the market, the availability of substitutes for cash, and the behaviour of consumers and businesses. On one hand, cashless payments can increase the velocity of money, which may lead to an increase in inflation. On the other hand,

cashless payments can reduce the costs associated with using cash, such as the cost of transportation, storage, and security, which may result in a decrease in inflation. The paper also discusses how the adoption of cashless payments can affect different segments of society, including the unbanked and elderly populations, and highlights the importance of addressing these concerns in any policy discussions related to cashless payments and inflation. Overall, the author concludes that the impact of cashless payments on inflation is complex and depends on various factors, including the type of cashless payment and the economic and social context in which it is used (Titalessy, 2020).

Additionally, the paper on the provincial analysis of China by Ahmad et.al examines the relationship between digital financial inclusion and economic growth in China. The authors argue that digital financial inclusion can play a significant role in promoting economic growth, particularly in developing countries like China. They use provincial-level data to analyze the relationship between digital financial inclusion, human capital and economic growth. Unlike previous studies, the authors adopt the new proxy of digital financial inclusion based on digitalisation level, breadth of coverage and depth of usage and find a positive relationship between economic growth and digitalisation. This paper provides a methodology and structure that can be employed in the current paper to trace the impact of financial digitalisation on the Phillips Curve (Ahmad et. al, 2021).

Phillips Curve

The Phillips Curve depicts the relationship between inflation and unemployment in an economy. Developed by William Phillips, this economic theory proposes inflation and unemployment to have a stable and inverse relationship. This follows the logic that economic growth is accompanied by inflation which in turn should lead to an increase in employment. But this relationship failed to explain the stagflation that many countries experienced including the US. In their paper, Hany Guirguisa and Tin Shan (Michael) Suen trace out the Phillips curve for the US and try to understand its weakening relationship with inflation (Guirguis & Suen, 2022). This paper provides a good model of regression techniques that are employed in the present study.

Methodology

Data

This section outlines the data used for meeting the research objectives outlined above. The current study adopts a quantitative approach using secondary data from the online databases of national and international organizations including the Reserved Bank of India (RBI) and the World Bank.

Given below are the operating definitions of the variables for which data was extracted from the above-mentioned databases:

Table 2: Variable Definitions

Variable	Definition	Source
1. <i>Gross Domestic Product (GDP)</i>	The monetary value of final goods and services (i.e. those that are consumed by the final user) produced in a country in a given period of time	RBI Database on the Indian Economy
2. <i>Wholesale Price Index (WPI)</i>	It represents the average wholesale price movement for a basket of goods. For the purpose of this study, the 'All Commodities' data of WPI was used.	RBI Database on the Indian Economy
3. <i>Employment</i>	The number of persons on the live register of the RBI including both the public and private sector in lakhs of persons.	RBI Database on the Indian Economy
Variable	Definition	Source
4. <i>Total Labor Force</i>	People aged 15 and above who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period. It includes people who are currently employed and people who are unemployed but seeking work as well as first-time job seekers.	World Bank Database
5. <i>Labor Force Participation, Male</i>	Percentage of males in the total labor force.	World Bank Database

6. <i>Labor Force Participation, Female</i>	Percentage of females in the total labor force.	World Bank Database
7. <i>Financial Digitalisation</i>	The sum total of the value of transactions done through or payments made using card payments (credit and debit cards), prepaid payment instruments, mobile banking, UPI and BHIM Aadhar pay.	RBI Database on the Indian Economy

Variables including WPI and GDP were originally present in sets of 10 years, each with a different base year. Hence, a technique called ‘Index Splicing’ was adopted to reduce the datasets to a common base year. WPI data points were adjusted to the base year 1970-71 and the GDP data points were adjusted to the base year 2011-12.

The technique of data extrapolation was used in a very few places to fill in the essential gaps in the datasets.

Additionally, the natural log values of these variables were also calculated for ease of data representation owing to the bulky nature of the values of macroeconomic variables under consideration.

All of these were then carefully compiled into a single table consisting of values for these variables from the year 1970-71 to 2019-20.

Empirical Methodology

Models for multilinear regression analysis were prepared and run through the software ‘Stata’ for data analysis.

The first set of models incorporates RBI data on Employment. Here, the dependent variable is WPI and the independent variables include Employment, Card Payments (the sum total of credit card and debit card transactions), and All Digital Payments i.e. the index for financial digitalisation as given above.

$$\pi_t = \beta_1 \pi_{t-1} + \beta_2 \pi_{t-2} + \beta_3 \text{Employment}_t + \epsilon_t \quad (1)$$

$$\pi_t = \beta_1 \pi_{t-1} + \beta_2 \pi_{t-2} + \beta_3 \text{Employment}_t + \beta_4 \text{CardPayments}_t + \epsilon_t \quad (2)$$

$$\pi_t = \beta_1 \pi_{t-1} + \beta_2 \pi_{t-2} + \beta_3 \text{Employment}_t + \beta_4 \text{AllDigitalPayments}_t + \epsilon_t \quad (3)$$

where, π_t represents WPI,

π_{t-1} represents WPI for the previous year,

π_{t-2} represents WPI from two years before,

and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ are coefficients of the variables given the regression equations.

The second set of data incorporates World Bank data on the Total Labour Force of India and its composition. Here, also the dependent variable is WPI and the independent variables include Female Labor Force Participation, Male Labor Force Participation, Card Payments (the sum total of credit card and debit card transactions), and All Digital Payments i.e. the index for financial digitalisation as given above.

$$\pi_t = \beta_1 \pi_{t-1} + \beta_2 \pi_{t-2} + \beta_3 MaleLabForce_t + \beta_4 FemaleLabForce_t + \epsilon_t \quad (4)$$

$$\pi_t = \beta_1 \pi_{t-1} + \beta_2 \pi_{t-2} + \beta_3 MaleLabForce_t + \beta_4 FemaleLabForce_t + \beta_5 CardPayments_t + \epsilon_t \quad (5)$$

$$\pi_t = \beta_1 \pi_{t-1} + \beta_2 \pi_{t-2} + \beta_3 MaleLabForce_t + \beta_4 FemaleLabForce_t + \beta_5 AllDigitalPayments_t + \epsilon_t \quad (6)$$

where, π_t represents WPI,

π_{t-1} represents WPI for the previous year,

π_{t-2} represents WPI from two years before,

and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5$ are coefficients of the variables given the regression equations.

Results

Data Description

Various trends from the compiled data are discussed below:

Figure 5 : Inflation Vs. Employment - RBI Data

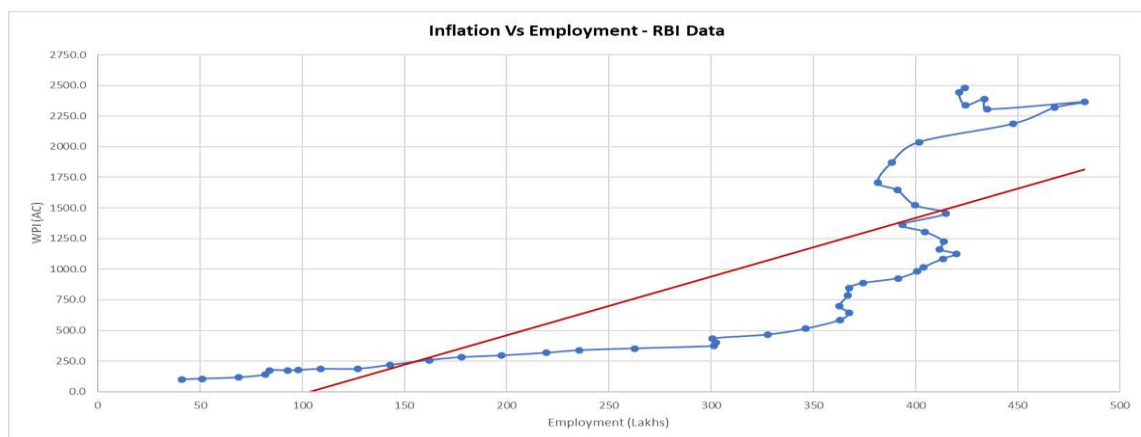
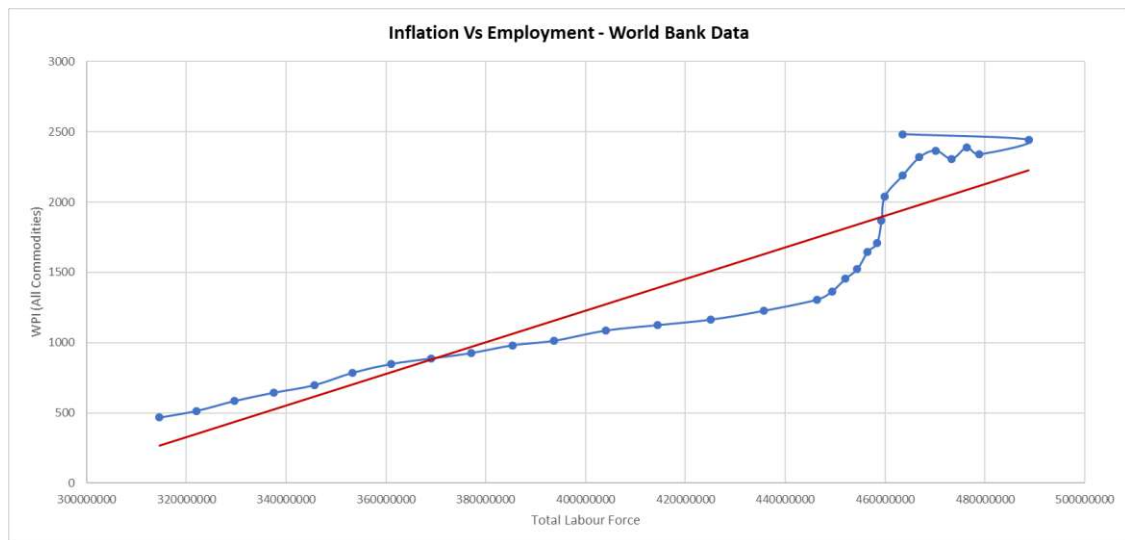


Figure 6 : Inflation Vs. Employment - World Bank Data

The two graphs presented above represent how the relationship between inflation and employment has evolved over the years. The point of difference between the two figures lies in the observation that figure 5 has many kinks and spikes compared to figure 6 which has a relatively smooth curve. This can be justified based on the differences in the methods of data collection employed by the RBI and the World Bank. While the RBI avoids using data extrapolation techniques to fill in gaps for many data sets, the World Bank datasets are observed to have fewer data gaps due to extrapolation techniques used by them.

Both the figures indicate a positive relationship between the two variables, thereby indicating an inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment, consistent with the prediction of the Phillips curve. However, towards the end we observe that there is a reduction in employment despite an increase in inflation, hence, a reversal from the Phillips curve relationship. This insight will further be explored through the results of regression analysis.

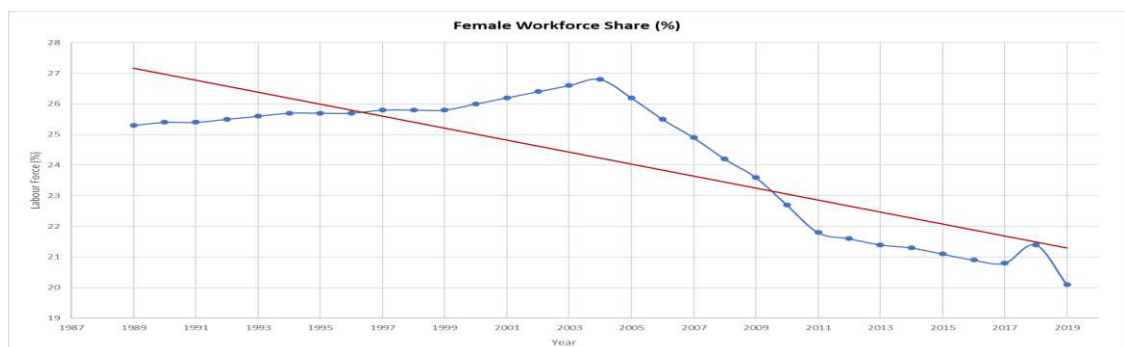
Figure 7: Female Share in the total labor force over 5 decades

Figure 7 reveals one of the most concerning trends that begs immediate attention of policy makers. From 1989 to the year 2004, India witnessed a gradual rise in the share of females in the total labor force of India. Beginning from the year 2004, there has been a meteoric fall in

the share of females in the workforce from the peak value of 26.8% to 20.1% in 2020. The gap between male and female share of workforce over the period of 3 decades is depicted in the figures below:

Figure 8: *Composition of total labor force of India - Male Vs. Female*

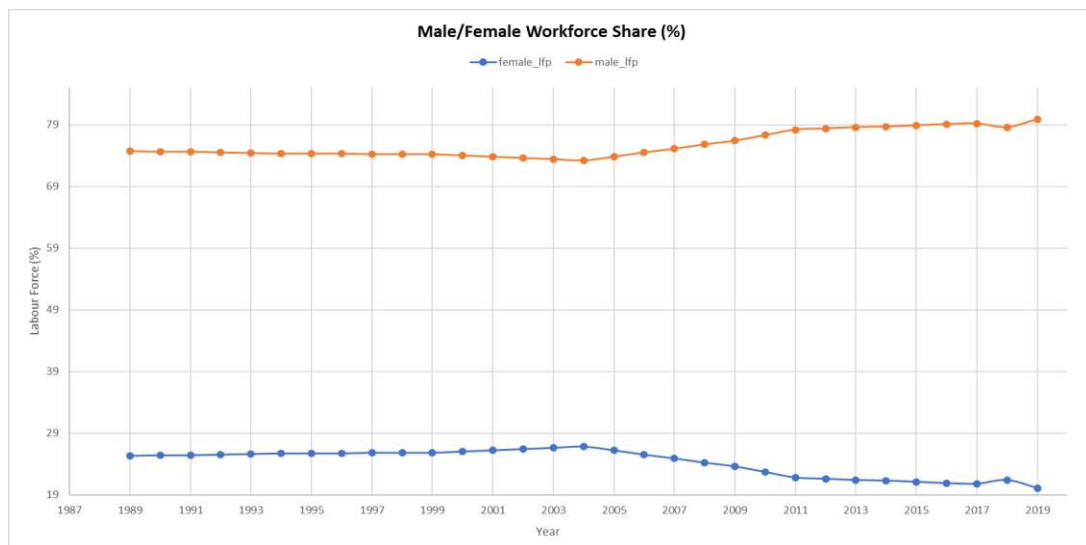
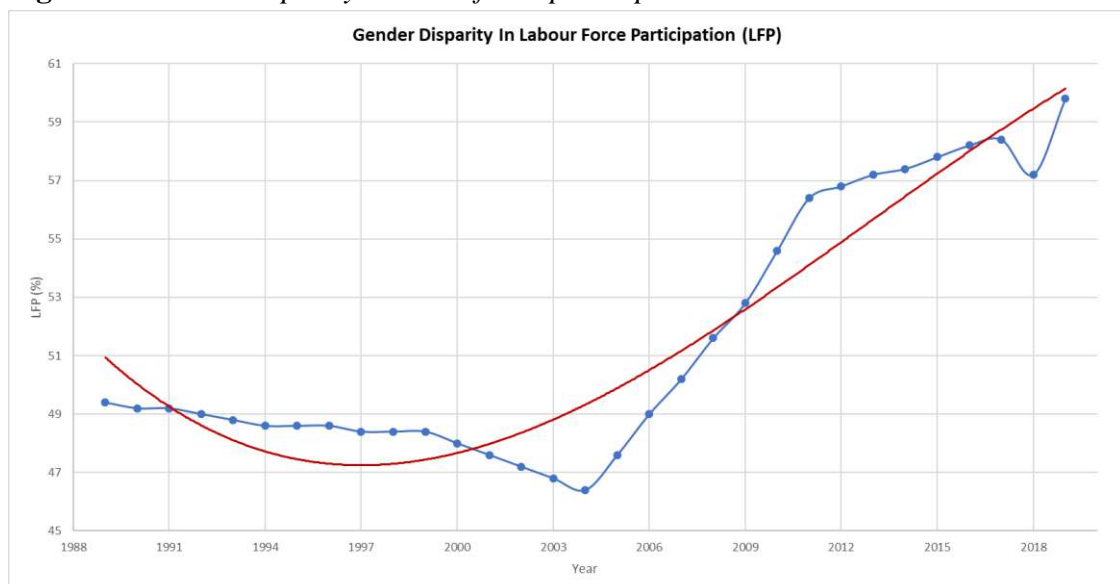


Figure 9: *Gender disparity in labor force participation*



Figures 8 and 9 clearly indicate a trend moving towards greater disparity in the share of labor force between males and females. When all kinds of active efforts, movements and protests for female rights and equality are pervading the country, a trend like this is very disturbing and raises numerous questions on the future of India's female workforce. It also calls for immediate action from those in authority at various levels and institutions.

Regression Analysis Results

In this section, we outline the key results from estimating the regression equations in Equations 1--3 and 4--6 using Stata 17.

Figure 10 : *Results of the first set of regression models*

VARIABLES	(1) WPI	(2) WPI	(3) WPI
Lag WPI	1.204*** (0.145)	0.643* (0.321)	0.823** (0.321)
2nd Lag WPI	-0.232 (0.141)	0.112 (0.261)	-0.0246 (0.266)
Employment	0.0179 (0.0260)	-0.0565 (0.140)	-0.0113 (0.151)
Card Payments		0.0327** (0.0139)	
All digital payments			0.00955 (0.00557)
Constant	0.0575* (0.0338)	0.790* (0.365)	0.587 (0.366)
Observations	48	16	16
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

It can be inferred from the table above that the coefficient of the WPI of the previous year i.e. lag WPI has a significant value in all three models and is positively related to the WPI of the year under consideration. This means that the WPI of a present year will depend strongly on the WPI of the previous year. But as we move down to the 2nd lag WPI, the coefficient changes to negative than positive and again negative but is not significant. We also observe that digital payments have a positive relationship with WPI.

What is of our prime interest is the relationship between employment and WPI. In model 1, employment and WPI are positively related to each other, implying that unemployment and inflation are inversely related to each other. This result is consistent with the Phillips Curve. However, in model 2, as we introduce card payments into the equation, we observe a reversal in the nature of the relationship between these variables. Employment and WPI are now seen to be inversely related to each other. As we move to the model 3 where we introduce all digital payments, the relationship between employment and WPI remains inverted but weakens in strength. Thereby, it is clear that the introduction of financial digitalisation renders the Phillips curve relationship falsified since unemployment and inflation become directly related to each other. When inflation rises, unemployment also rises with it and when inflation reduces, unemployment also reduces. This entails that even when there is more money flowing into the economy, unemployment is seen to be rising. On the contrary, during the

periods when there is a reduction in money circulating in the economy, unemployment is seen to be reducing.

One way to justify this new observation or trend could be on the following line of thinking. With more money to spend, firms seem to be investing in infrastructure and technology that helps them automate many tasks that needed multiple people in the past. Hence, the rise in unemployment could be attributed to the unskilled or semi-skilled workers who are replaceable with newer technologies and automation. On the contrary, even when there is a reduction in the money flowing into the economy, the demand for skilled labor seems to be persistent, thereby increasing employment. But it is important to note that these justifications need further verification and research as it falls outside the scope of this paper.

Moving on to the second set of regression equations, the results of the analysis are summarized in the table below:

Figure 11 : Results of the second set of regression models

VARIABLES	(1) log(wpi)	(2) log(wpi)	(3) log(wpi)
log(wpi) = Lag	1.130*** (0.181)	0.184 (0.285)	0.317 (0.288)
log(wpi) = 2nd Lag	-0.163 (0.173)	0.330 (0.200)	0.231 (0.201)
logfemale_lfp	1.352* (0.676)	0.836 (0.633)	1.126 (0.714)
logmale_lfp	4.421* (2.182)	3.694* (1.899)	4.592* (2.122)
log(card)		0.0286** (0.0106)	
log_digi			0.0101** (0.00439)
Constant	-23.31* (11.60)	-17.21 (10.31)	-22.10* (11.53)
Observations	31	16	16
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

It can be inferred from the table above that the coefficient of the WPI of the previous year i.e. lag WPI has a very significant value in model 1 and is positively related to the WPI of the year under consideration. For model 2 and 3 also the relationship remains positive. This again means that the WPI of a present year will depend strongly on the WPI of the previous year. But as we move down to the 2nd lag WPI, there is a negative correlation with the WPI of the year under consideration that becomes positive in models 2 and 3 but the results are not significant.

This table primarily helps us understand how the share of males and females in the total labor force of India. In model 1, we observe that the labor force participation of males and females are both positively related to WPI and both have a significant coefficient. But males have a much stronger relationship with WPI compared to females. This may be due to their

majority share in the workforce. As we move to model 2 and model 3, we still observe a positive relationship between male labor force participation and female labor force participation but the results are significant for males only. But it is important to note the significance of this positive relationship between female participation rate and WPI as it provides hope for increase in their employment even in the phases of higher inflation. However, this is still speculative and steps need to be taken to turn it into a reality for India.

Furthermore, on introduction of card payments to the 2nd model, we find a significant positive relation between the former and WPI. A similar significant positive relationship between all digital payments and WPI is further seen in the 3rd model. This could be largely because, with digital modes of payments, the velocity of money in the economy increases rapidly.

Conclusion

From the discussions above, we observe that financial digitalisation has a direct relationship with inflation. The results and analysis also clearly indicate the breakdown and reversal of the Phillips curve relationship for India after the introduction and mass adoption of financial digitalisation. They further reveal a strong positive relationship between labor force participation of males and females with inflation while maintaining the gendered disparity in the significance of this relationship.

Since the focus of this paper is on an existing research gap in the literature, the paper opens up several avenues for further inquiry and investigation. Firstly, the direct and significant relationship between financial digitalisation and inflation is a matter of concern that needs to be studied in depth in order to be able to keep inflation in check. Additionally, since the Phillips curve relationship between inflation and unemployment weakens and breaks down with the mass adoption of financial digitalisation in the country, researchers need to step in to derive a new mechanism for understanding and accurately predicting the relationship between these critical macro variables. Furthermore, the new found direct relationship between unemployment and inflation needs to be examined thoroughly through a sectoral analysis to determine what sectors are affected severely due to this development. Last but not the least, in order to make digitalisation a hero for India, appropriate reskilling and upskilling programs need to be implemented, conditional that ground-level research is done on how to implement them and for which sectors are these crucial.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of the study is data unavailability for macro variables. Since no concrete time series data on measures of unemployment was available, the research uses employment data to understand the effects of financial digitalisation on unemployment. The regression models used here are pretty basic models and more rigorous methods can be adopted to get a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon in study. Commenting on whether financial digitalization has increased or decreased unemployment in India falls outside the scope of this paper and its methodology.

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The Effect of Ecological Anxiety on Consumer Behaviour

Hiya Rupreja¹

Abstract

An increasing number of researchers are investigating how our emotions impact the way we respond to environmental catastrophes like climate change. This study will be based on more logical, scientifically-backed explanations for these emotions. "Ecological Anxiety" is one such emotion. Eco-Anxiety is a growing concern among individuals who are worried about the environmental impact of their actions. Consumer behaviour, especially in the tourism industry, which is well known for its environmental effect, may be affected by this worry. The objective of this study is to investigate how "Ecological Anxiety Impacts Consumer Behaviour in the Tourist Sector". This paper's research methodology will include a variety of quantitative methods in addition to data analysis. A simple random sampling technique was used to choose the target audience for the same. Individuals over the age of 18 made up the target audience. The data analysis that was conducted helped better understand not only the respondents' but also their level of eco-anxiety, their behaviour while travelling, and their attitudes towards sustainable tourism. The study's findings showed that 71% i.e., the majority of participants were invariably dealing with eco-anxiety. Nonetheless, even if it meant paying more, they were prepared to alter their routines in order to progress towards a future that was more sustainable. Overall, this study emphasises the significance of contributing in the development of environmentally friendly tourist practices termed as "Eco- Tourism" that might lessen the damaging effects of tourism.

Keywords: Climate Change, Ecological Anxiety, Consumer Behaviour, Tourism Sector, Eco-Tourism

Introduction

Climate change, a significant global concern, will have a negative impact on individual's physical and mental health in addition to its detrimental effects on the ecosystem. Researchers are increasingly examining how emotions affect how we react to natural disasters like climate change. This raises issues for a number of reasons. To begin with, we must acknowledge that different emotions can act in a variety of very different ways if we want to have a better grasp of the nature and importance of eco-emotions. Additionally, this paper will be based on more in-depth, scientifically supported explanations of the emotions that will be researched. The term "eco-anxiety" represents the anxiety and other difficult feelings brought on by environmental concerns and the threats and difficulties related to them (Hayes et al., 2018; Pihkala, 2019). Concern over the environment can have an impact on a variety of issues, including stress and anxiety brought on by other significant decisions and parts of people's lives, such as future planning, choosing a new job, starting a family, etc. In principle, eco-

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anxiety shouldn't be seen as a mental disorder per se, but rather as an appropriate response to the magnitude of environmental problems endangering the Earth. However, it can become a significant problem if it is powerful enough to result in incapacitating unhappiness (Pihkala, 2019).

Extremely complex associations have been observed between consumer behaviour and climate change. Consumption habits can become ingrained and accustomed much like any other behaviour (Knowles et al., 2020; Verplanken & Wood, 2006). There are a number of elements that can affect changes in consumption patterns and ultimately prompt changes in consumer behaviour. These variables frequently have a contextual element and are independent of the specific customer, such as natural disasters, changes in the social environment, technology, or governmental policies. According to many researchers, convenience is a key component of behaviour that is climate friendly. An increasing number of consumers who "place the planet first when drafting their shopping list" have also brought attention to the implications of climate change, and more especially, eco-anxiety, on consumer behaviour. Additionally, data indicate that the demand for moral and environmentally friendly consumer goods is growing in the majority of the countries around the world.

According to climate researchers, changes to daily routines are one of the most effective ways to address the present environmental crisis affecting our planet. For instance, limiting the use of fossil fuels and altering consumer consumption patterns, particularly our travel habits.

Travel-related eco-anxiety is typically brought on by the realisation that by leaving home and seeing the globe, our planet is also put in danger. Every decision we make, from accounting for our CO₂ emissions to applying sunscreen, has a consequence. Intense feelings of hopelessness and despair at not being able to do enough have been brought on by realising this (eco-anxiety).

Analysing the travel sector further, mass tourism and the businesses that cater to it have a notorious history of being connected to a number of detrimental environmental effects, including greenhouse gas emissions, excessive waste, water and energy shortages, overdevelopment, environmental destruction, and wildlife exploitation. In addition, excessive tourism has resulted in socio-economic problems such as commodification, standardisation, and adaptation to visitor needs, lost or faked authenticity, rude behaviour, denying access to locals, cultural dilution, exploitation, and conflict at the workplace.

Due to all the above-mentioned reasons, this paper will be focusing on a rather important sector, one that significantly contributes to about 8% of global emissions - "The Tourism Sector".

However, as previously indicated, eco-anxiety is a specific type of fear that arises in response to concerns about environmental damage and ecological disaster. Thus, as a result of the damage caused by the tourism sector, the focus of this research paper will be a type of tourism termed as "Eco-tourism" that promotes natural and cultural events among others.

Ecotourism can be defined as "purposeful travel to natural places to study the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to change the integrity of the ecosystem, while providing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources profitable to local people" (McCormick, 1994). This definition served as the foundation for creating the conceptual framework. A communication plan, an assessment system, ecotourism criteria, and associated management recommendations were all part of the operationalization of the framework. These tools were developed in accordance with the guidelines provided by Kusler (1991) on Strengthening Resource Conservation through Ecotourism, Jeffries (1997) on biodiversity and conservation, Kersten (1997) on Community Based Ecotourism and Community Building, and McCormick (1994) on how ecotourism can save a rainforest.

Furthermore, the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) offers the following supplemental definition of ecotourism: "Responsible travel to natural areas" that focuses on conserving the environment, promoting the welfare of local communities, and incorporating elements of interpretation and education.

By supporting ecotourism, one can ensure the continual growth of the tourism sector while positively impacting communities worldwide on social and economic levels. Ecotourism not only offers the opportunity for enjoyable and meaningful immersion in nature but also fosters greater compassion and care for the world's natural wonders. Thus, ecotourism becomes a sustainable way to travel, reducing travel anxiety in tourists and inspiring them to actively support local communities and preserve the environment instead of just passing through.

As a result, this research study will examine the need for ecologically conscious travel (also known as "Eco-Tourism") in the state of Maharashtra in India as well as travellers' propensity to adopt such behaviours.

Problem Statement

What is the extent of ecologically conscious travel in the state of Maharashtra and are travellers willing to choose sustainable practices?

Research Questions

The main objective of this research paper is to investigate how eco-anxiety influences consumers' decisions when it comes to travel choices. Through a comprehensive analysis of the topic, the paper further intends to shed light on the factors contributing to the significance of identifying this prevalent eco-anxiety in consumers' travel choices.

Literature Review

Mikael K. A (2022), in his article, "Climate Change and Consumer Behaviour" published by the Jyväskylä University, School of Business and Economics conducted a research similar to the study that this research paper proposes. By outlining its prevalence in the Finnish community and its effects on consumer behaviour, Mikale's thesis aims to raise awareness of eco-anxiety. His theoretical framework examined both the theory underlying pro-

environmental consumer behaviour and the psychological effects of climate change. According to the findings, a significant portion—nearly one third—of Finns under 30 have experienced eco-anxiety. The results also indicated a direct link between having eco-anxiety and altering one's consumption habits to be more sustainable. Although there is little research on and discussion of eco-anxiety, this study seems to connect directly to the topic this paper is hereby suggesting.

"The world of worry" written by Roberts. et al (2020), also explored the topic of consumer eco-anxiety and environmental behaviours. Their book demonstrates how individual differences in anxiety severity and coping mechanisms are apparent. While some people seek professional assistance, others attempt to manage their anxiety through eco-activism and alterations to their lifestyles, which is another subject intended to be discussed in this paper. In order to add quantitative context to the conversation, they also polled 1,002 UK consumers on their attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs regarding the environment, including how concerned they were about its future. Environment-related anxiety was widespread throughout the sample in yet another article.

"Eco-Anxiety: - What is it and how does it matter?" written by Charlie Kurth and Panu Pihkala (2022) is a highly significant scholarly review which is in accordance with this research analysis. Kurth and Pihkala explore the growing efforts among scholars to comprehend the emotions triggered by ecological crisis such as climate change and how these emotions can positively impact our overall well-being on mental, emotional and ethical levels. Yet, conceptual and methodological concerns have hindered a large portion of the previous research on these subjects. As a starting step towards resolving these difficulties, their review focuses on eco-anxiety, much like this research paper aims to do too. The authors conduct a comprehensive analysis of a diverse array of studies, employing methodologies from philosophy, emotion theory, and multidisciplinary environmental studies. Through this examination, they illustrate how investigating anxiety in a broader context can contribute to the development of improved models for understanding eco-anxiety. According to the findings of this research, the term "eco-anxiety" may be best interpreted as referring to a group of unique but connected ecological emotions. In spite of eco-anxiety typically being associated with negative perceptions, the authors find that a specific form known as "practical eco-anxiety" can actually have significant advantages when responding to threats like climate change. When experienced appropriately in terms of timing and intensity, practical eco-anxiety not only improves one's moral disposition but also contributes to the well-being of both individuals and the planet.

An article by Nishtha Jain and Prashasti Jain (2022) published by the Manipal University discusses a subject that is based on the same hypothesis as this study report, "Eco-Anxiety and Environmental Concern as Predictors of Eco-Activism." The article explains how the planet is at great risk of destruction due to reckless and exploitative human behaviour. In order to evaluate how much eco-anxiety and environmental worry influence eco-activism, their study examined the relationships between eco-anxiety (EAn), eco-activism (EAc), and environmental concern (EC). Three scales were used: Taj Environmental Attitude Scale, Pro

Environmental Behavior Scale, and Hogg's Anxiety Scale. For statistical analysis, Pearson's correlation and regression were applied. The study revealed a noteworthy (significant at the 0.01 level) mild positive correlation of 0.22 between eco-activism and eco-anxiety, and a correlation of 0.33 between eco-activism and environmental concern. The regression analysis showed that both eco-anxiety and environmental concerns were powerful predictors of eco-activism.

Based on the same premise as this research study, Bianca Antonela et al.'s study: - "Eco-Anxiety and Consumer Behaviour: Mutual Influences" dated 2022 was also conducted. The writers begin by explaining the increasingly diverse economic and social issues that today's global society is confronting. One of these is the concern for the state of the environment, which has as its primary concerns the following in the future, especially: the depletion of resources, the decline in their quality, the rise in pollution levels and the cost of basic resources, the detrimental effects on human health, etc. The concept of eco-anxiety, which is thought to be an emotional condition, encompasses all these different types of worry. Young people, particularly those from developed or developing countries, are the segment that is most affected, according to specific studies and research. Unexpectedly, there is a correlation between the prevalence of this disorder and progress and well-being: the more developed a nation is, the more prevalent this form of eco-anxiety is. From a different angle, it can be said that modern society has largely evolved into a consumer society and that people's desire to consume more and more has almost become the norm. Countries both developed and developing experience this phenomenon. Additionally, during the past three years or so, there has been a noticeable shift in consumer preference for ecological or at the very least more environmentally friendly goods and services. The goal of this essay is to draw attention to the interrelationship between two topics that are extremely important to today's society: ecological anxiety and consumer behaviour. It is predicated on the notion that these two ideas interact. Observation, literature review, synthesis, and interpretation are the research methodologies. Consequently, the emergence of eco-anxiety leads to a higher inclination towards purchasing environmentally friendly products. However, the compulsive buying behaviour, considered an emotional coping mechanism, can result in excessive consumption and, in turn, have negative consequences for the environment, including pollution, resource depletion, and the generation of large quantities of challenging-to-manage waste.

The article titled, "Fear of the Future: Eco-anxiety and Health Implications, a systematic review" by Pastor- Valero Maria et. al, in the year 2022, goes into the depths of explaining us about the term "Eco-Anxiety". This systematic review was conducted to assess the scientific research on eco-anxiety connected to climate change and its effects on general population health. They do, however, conclude that there is a connection between eco-anxiety and poor mental health outcomes, particularly among younger people, women, and the "Global South" nations. The study's results indicate a correlation between eco-anxiety and pro-environmental behaviour, potentially offering a way to lessen its adverse effects on health. Nevertheless, the authors warn that without adequate coping strategies, eco-anxiety may act as a stressor, potentially impacting mental well-being negatively.

In "Coping with Eco-Anxiety: An Interdisciplinary Perspective for Collective Learning and Strategic Communication" Hua Wang et al. (2023) examine the psychological effects of anthropogenic climate change and the ecological crisis. Eco-anxiety is a form of anxiety characterised by unfavourable, distressing, and instinctive physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions to environmental degradation and climate change. Experiences of eco-anxiety will continue to be made worse by the speed, scope, and severity of environmental catastrophes as they develop. Researchers and professionals are still working to understand and handle the phenomenon. They support an interdisciplinary approach to address the complexity and urgency of eco-anxiety, which can be understood in the context of a more significant issue facing humanity, in order to help prioritise future endeavours. Also, they offer a primer on eco-anxiety based on ground-breaking empirical research and current scoping reviews. They additionally suggested four opportunities for group learning and strategic communication: (1) framing messages in a way that is inspiring and actionable, (2) using storytelling to influence social and behavioural change, (3) using knowledge sharing and linked resources, and (4) using positive deviance to solve complex problems.

The study "Consumer Behavior and Demand Response of Tourists to Climate Change" conducted by Daniel Scott et al. (2022) focuses on examining how climate change impacts tourism demand patterns. Tourists possess the highest adaptive capacity among all elements within the tourism industry, as they can quickly adjust their holiday plans in terms of location, date, and type of destination. Understanding how tourists perceive and react to the effects of climate change is essential for predicting potential shifts in tourism demand across different regions and seasons, as well as identifying the growth or decline of specific tourism markets. In spite of several articles analysing how tourists respond to diverse environmental and climatic changes, little is truly understood about the complexity of demand responses. The study examines and discusses prior research, offers a framework for understanding how people perceive change, and identifies the most pressing research needs.

"Understanding of consumer behaviour as a prerequisite for environmental protection" an article by Folke ölander & John Thøgersen in the year 1995 tell us how our consumer lifestyles are to some extent to blame for a number of the environmental issues that threaten our ecosystem. Without significant changes in consumer attitudes and behaviour, more sustainable lifestyles cannot be achieved. A frame of reference using three basic groups of variables—motivation, ability, and opportunity—is used to synthesise what is known and what needs to be discovered about the determinants of consumer behaviour with an environmental impact. Illustrations from studies conducted by the research team at the Aarhus School of Business, to which the authors belong, are provided in addition to surveys of other researchers' work; this study has primarily focused on waste processing and recycling. Several approaches to altering consumer behaviour in favour of a more environmentally friendly one are also taken into consideration. As tools for transformation, information, moral justifications, and financial incentives are considered. As an alternative to eliciting extremely precise behaviours, general aims like increased psychological and communicative participation in environmental concerns should be taken into consideration when creating goals for change techniques.

In the article "Promoting Green Tourism for Future Sustainability," Ahmad Puad Mat et al. (2010) present the definition of green tourism as "tourist activities that are environmentally friendly and encompass various objectives and interpretations." Green tourism involves being an environmentally conscious traveller or providing travel services with an eco-friendly focus. The increasing pressure from governments to adopt practical and effective environmental management strategies has made the concept of green tourism highly appealing to travel businesses and operators. Moreover, winning and promoting internationally recognized environmental awards can boost tourism businesses' ability to market their services. Consequently, many concerned parties have proposed green tourism products to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism. This conceptual paper aims to explore and describe the different approaches to green tourism in various nations, as well as the concept of green tourism, certification processes, and its implementation. Although the emphasis of this research study will be only on Maharashtra, this article will assist in gaining an overall understanding of the significance of environmentally conscious travel.

Mohd et.al in their article, "Ecotourism Development : Educational Media of Environmental Care" describe how Sustainable tourism activities with little environmental impact, often known as ecotourism, are one ideal tourist management model to be adopted while protecting the sustainability and the beauty of nature. They concentrate on the idea of ecotourism, just like this research article does, and explain how it is thought that when tourism and nature conservation are merged, the remaining environmental potential is being developed. Human beings will greatly benefit from the development of natural ecotourism that adheres to ecological principles. Its value lies not only in the preservation of the increasingly uncommon flora and fauna and the availability of a healthy environment and climate, but also in its potential as a formal and casual direct lecture medium. In order to prevent the intergenerational chain of nature education from being broken, the availability of valuable educational ecotourism places needs to be carefully monitored. Future generations will get more accustomed to nature as an essential component of life by using ecotourism to promote educational principles.

"Ecotourism - A key to protect the biodiversity in Maharashtra" an article by Dr. Vanadana M. Joshi (2014), explains how Ecotourism, often known as sustainable nature-based tourism, is essential for protecting endangered species. It combines tourism while respecting the environment. Also, it offers chances for visitors to encounter and investigate the profound expression of nature. Additionally, it highlights how crucial it is to safeguard regional culture and wildlife. By creating jobs, ecotourism contributes to local economic growth. It also helps to raise awareness and bring in money, which helps to protect the endangered species. Joshi's study seeks to investigate the significance of ecotourism in the state of Maharashtra, much as this research study also does. She continues by describing the diversity of Maharashtra's biodiversity, which includes forests, wetland habitats, grasslands, the seashore, and evergreen forests. UNESCO has listed the natural area of Kaas in the Western Ghats as a World Heritage Site.

The article titled, "Eco-tourism: Conservation of Biodiversity in Maharashtra" written by Pardeshi et. al (2015) starts by defining how ecotourism is environmentally friendly travel that places a priority on enjoying the outdoors and encourages respect for and preservation of both the natural world and human culture. India is also creating ecotourism hotspots in a few of its states. Tourism benefits from biodiversity, which differs considerably around the world. It is essential for maintaining a thriving ecology. Due to the increased urbanisation, biodiversity has been impacted during the previous few decades. Protected areas, which are set aside for rare and endangered plant and animal species, are one of the many attempts made to preserve biodiversity. The findings of the study tells us how 15,732 sq. km of Maharashtra's land is set aside as forest, or around 5.02% of the state's total area. Maharashtra is abundant in several types of biodiversity, including evergreen forests, wetlands, grasslands, and woodlands. In developing nations, it is difficult to conserve unique and endangered plant and animal species since laws and regulations are not always adhered to. Ecotourism, often known as sustainable nature-based tourism, is essential for protecting endangered species. It combines tourism while respecting the environment. Also, it offers chances for visitors to encounter and investigate the potent expression of nature. Additionally, it highlights how crucial it is to safeguard regional culture and wildlife. By creating jobs, ecotourism contributes to local economic growth. Ecotourism raises awareness and brings in money, which helps to protect the endangered species. Despite the fact that ecotourism is an under researched topic, this study determines the value of ecotourism in maintaining Maharashtra's biodiversity, which is precisely what my research paper also aims to investigate. The authors of this article explain that in addition to a thorough investigation of the pressure and detrimental effects on biodiversity, adoption of ecotourism based on environmental carrying capacity will result in the development of sustainable tourism, which is urgently required.

The article, titled "Ecotourism in Maharashtra State" written by Mr. Ramdas Lad (2018) hereby proposes exactly the same topic that this research paper also focuses on. He introduces ecotourism by telling us how it is one of the tourism sectors that is expanding the fastest and generating the most discussion worldwide. Ecotourism entails travelling to locations that are near to nature without significantly affecting the local flora and wildlife. Its main objective is to raise tourist knowledge of ecological protection so that local and economic growth may coexist with environmental preservation. Moving forward, Lad asserts that Maharashtra is an epitome of natural beauty and grace, blessed with dense forests, heavy monsoon rains, and a myriad of flora and fauna. The region is also adorned with harmonious folk music, dances, and vibrant festivals, offering a diverse culinary experience with its delightful dishes. Moreover, Maharashtra's handlooms and handicrafts add to its cultural richness. However, the most captivating feature remains its lush green landscapes, which serve as a representative symbol of the region and have made it a central attraction for tourists. As a result, Maharashtra holds enormous tourism potential. Lad makes an effort to highlight the role that tourism may play in fostering economic growth. In conclusion, he makes recommendations for turning the tourism sector into a potential tool for economic development in Maharashtra, which is exactly what this research study also wants to do. He also makes an effort to analyse trends in the flow of tourists into the state.

“To study the needs and importance of Eco-Tourism in Maharashtra” an analysis by Mutalik et al. (2019) tells us how even though tourism is said to be a boundless industry it also creates many opportunities for leisure and money. Ecotourism provides an opportunity for tourism to take place in accordance with the environment and nature. The tourist explores the wilderness responsibly, preserves the ecosystem, and aids in the advancement of the local populace. The huge influx of people in a few certain parts has resulted in threats of the cultural and environmental possessions of the local populace. The fight for ecotourism is both a risk and an opportunity to promote sustainable travel by diverting visitors so that a location's capacity is not exceeded, re-planning for the renewal of natural resources, and raising awareness in the host community so that it is equipped to combat the negative effects of mass tourism. It also aids in providing opportunities for travellers to discover the significant look of nature and the environment as well as the economic development of the local community.

An article by Hurri, Kaisa (2020) titled, "Eco-anxiety in travel decision-making among Generations X and Z" studies the reasons and solutions of eco-anxiety and its impacts on travelling behaviour. According to the article, eco-anxiety is a regrettable side effect of climate change that has an impact on our health, attitudes, and beliefs. It arises from the growing anxiety and desperation individuals feel over the environment. Eco-anxiety can manifest in many different ways and show symptoms including having various emotions, losing appetite, or having panic attacks. From the perspectives of two separate generations—Generation X, born between 1965 and 1981, and Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012—the phenomena is examined in further detail in this work. The paper clarifies how these generations perceive and comprehend environmental worry. The goal of this study is to determine whether environmental anxiety affects Generation X and Z travellers' travel decisions in any way. 273 valid replies from individuals who belonged to either Generation X or Generation Z were obtained from the poll. The replies from the two generations didn't differ much from one another. Based on the online survey's findings, it may be concluded that Generations X and Z travel less frequently due to eco-anxiety. They are interested in responsible travel and are concerned about the health of the environment. They already understand how to travel more sustainably. They haven't significantly altered their travel schedule, though. Since no significant differences between the generations were found, it can be argued that both generations are equally concerned about the environment. They still need to put their climate-friendly ideals into practice.

Methodology

The purpose of this research paper was to investigate "The Role of Ecological Anxiety on Consumer Behaviour." As part of its research methodology, it made use of numerous quantitative techniques as well as data analysis. The purpose of this paper was to gather primary data on consumer perceptions as well as their choices with respect to eco-anxiety. The information gathered was analysed in order to determine how eco-anxiety affects consumer behaviour. The data for the same was gathered via primary data collection methods which were through the mailing of surveys. The target audience for the same were selected via a simple random sampling method. The age group of the target audience were individuals from

the age of 18 years old and above. The survey gave the target audience a variety of options such as questions trying to understand the severity of their eco-anxiety, their perception of sustainable tourism, their willingness to pay for sustainable tourism activities etc, which will thus help in understanding how being eco-anxious affects consumer behaviour.

Primary Data Analysis

Eco-anxiety, a state of worry or fear related to the environment, has been found to have a significant impact on consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of sustainability towards our environment. To better understand this relationship, primary data analysis, through the mailing of surveys, seemed relevant to gather and analyse data from consumers about their attitudes and behaviours related to eco-anxiety and environmental concerns. To make the analysis more concise, the data analysis was conducted for the tourism sector in order to understand the behaviour of consumers in that sector. Individuals over the world travel to different places and often have no idea about the negative impacts their travel makes on the environment, local communities, as well as cultural heritage. As a result, the primary data analysis for this study will examine the behaviour of tourists from the city of Mumbai, Maharashtra. The target audience for the same was collected via a random sampling method. The age group of the target audience was individuals over the age of 18 and above as then they have the autonomy to decide and act on their actions independently. Therefore, by examining this data, we can gain insights into the ways in which eco-anxiety influences consumer behaviour.

Moving onto the primary data analysis:-

The survey analysing “The effect of eco anxiety on consumer behaviour” was sent out to 150 respondents, of which 100 were selected via a random sampling procedure. Out of these 100 respondents, 56% of them were females whereas 44% were males. The age group of the respondents were from the ages of 18 years and above with the majority, i.e.:- 61% of them being from the age group of 18-24 years of age, 18% from the 25-34 age bracket, 6% from 35-44 years of age, 12% from the 45-54 age bracket and 3% from the age group of 55 and above.

Moving further, one important demographic factor that can shed light on respondents' preferences and travel decisions is their annual family income, which was the next question asked in the survey. The kinds of travel experiences that people can afford, as well as their priorities and travel objectives, can be influenced by their level of income. For instance, people with higher earnings might have more money available to spend on travel and might favour sustainable tourist activities. On the other hand, people with lesser earnings might have fewer travel options and might favour inexpensive or value-oriented travel experiences. Furthermore, income can be combined with other demographic factors like age, education, and occupation to build more complex profiles of various traveller kinds, which has also been done with this survey.

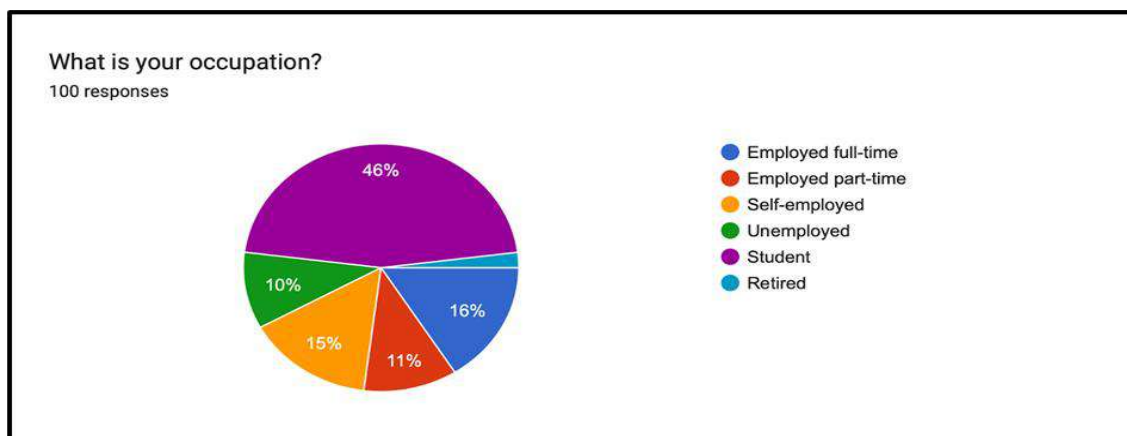
The income group options provided to the respondents were as follows:

Below 5 Lakh Per Annum (LPA) , 5-20 LPA , 20-35 LPA , 35-50 LPA , 50-65 LPA and lastly over 65 LPA.

The findings however showed us that the majority of the respondents were from either the 5-20 LPA category or had their family annual incomes over 65 LPA. Both these categories come under the “middle-income group” followed by the “high income group”. Hence, the lower income groups were not targeted for this study.

A follow-up question after understanding the income brackets of the respondents was analysing their occupational status. The occupational situation of respondents is another important demographic variable that can provide insights into their eco-friendly travel choices and preferences. Occupation can not only affect the level of environmental awareness and concern but also the availability of time and resources for sustainable travel.

The options offered to the respondents alongside the categories they chose, in percentages, are shown in the graph that follows:



Clearly, the majority of the respondents were students with 46%, 16% of respondents being employed full time, 15% being self-employed, 11% being employed part time, 10% being unemployed and finally 3% of the respondents were retired.

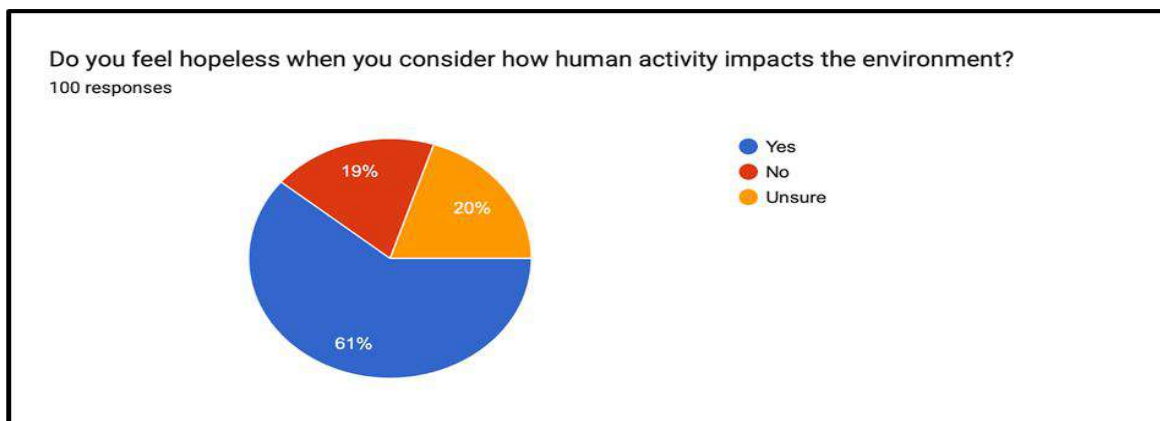
The last but one of the most important demographic questions the respondents were asked was their location within the city of Mumbai. While the majority of the respondents (46%) resided within Western Mumbai, 13% of them were from Central Mumbai, 11% of them were from South Mumbai, 7% of them were from Navi Mumbai, 23% of them were from areas surrounding the Mumbai City like Thane, Kalyan etc.

Just like the other demographic factors, knowing the location of respondents is crucial to understanding their eco-friendly travel choices because the availability of eco-friendly travel infrastructure, cultural and environmental factors, and socioeconomic status vary from place to place. Understanding these variables can aid in creating successful policies and tactics to encourage people to travel sustainably. These variables have a big impact on people's travel decisions.

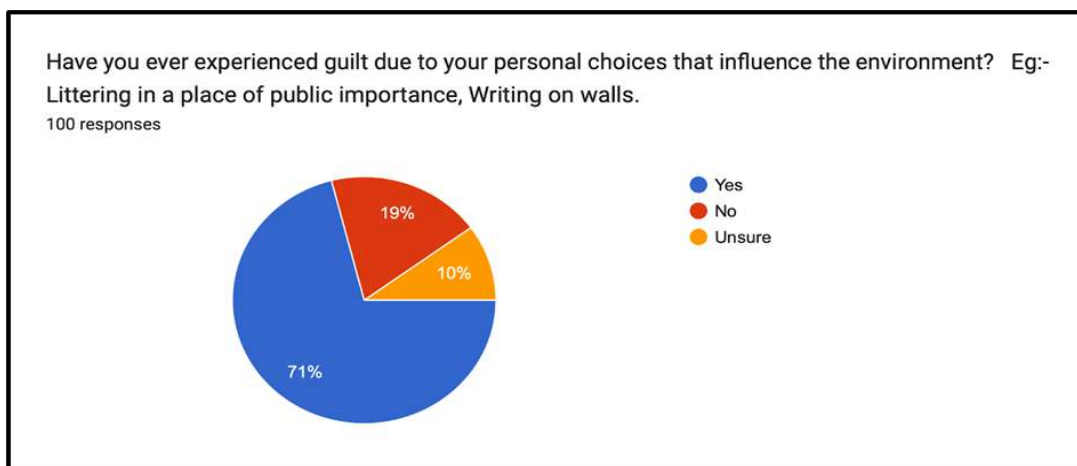
To help in understanding what makes a person eco-anxious in the first place, here below are few of the symptoms of eco-anxiety:-

Firstly, individuals experiencing eco-anxiety may feel helpless or powerless to make a positive impact on the environment, leading to a sense of frustration and hopelessness. Secondly, they may experience guilt or personal responsibility for environmental degradation, even though it's often caused by systemic issues beyond their control. Thirdly, the scale of environmental problems and their potential consequences can be overwhelming, leading to feelings of despair and anxiety about the future. Lastly, individuals with eco-anxiety may feel a sense of loss or grief over the damage to the environment or the loss of natural resources, leading to feelings of sadness and mourning. These symptoms can sometimes be difficult to manage and can have a significant impact on an individual's mental health and well-being.

Moving further, I would like to analyse two important questions together in order to derive stronger results from this analysis. The two questions alongside graphical representations showing the results are hereby pasted below:

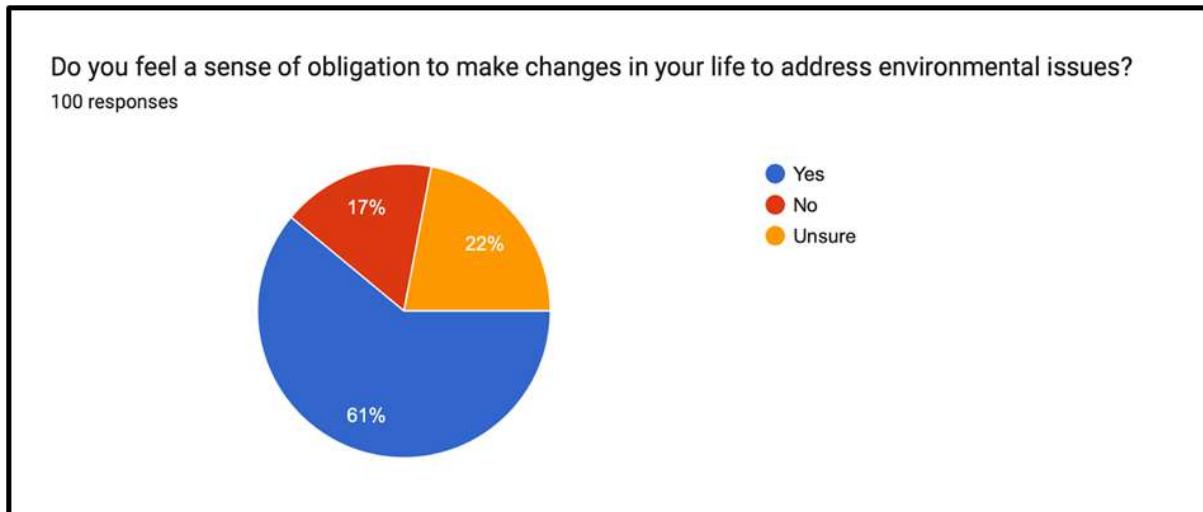


Summarising on the basis of the premise of this survey, “The effect of eco anxiety on consumer behaviour”, this study begins by evaluating how many individuals invariably show signs of being eco-anxious. The results clearly indicate that 61% of respondents felt hopeless in regards to human activity towards the environment.

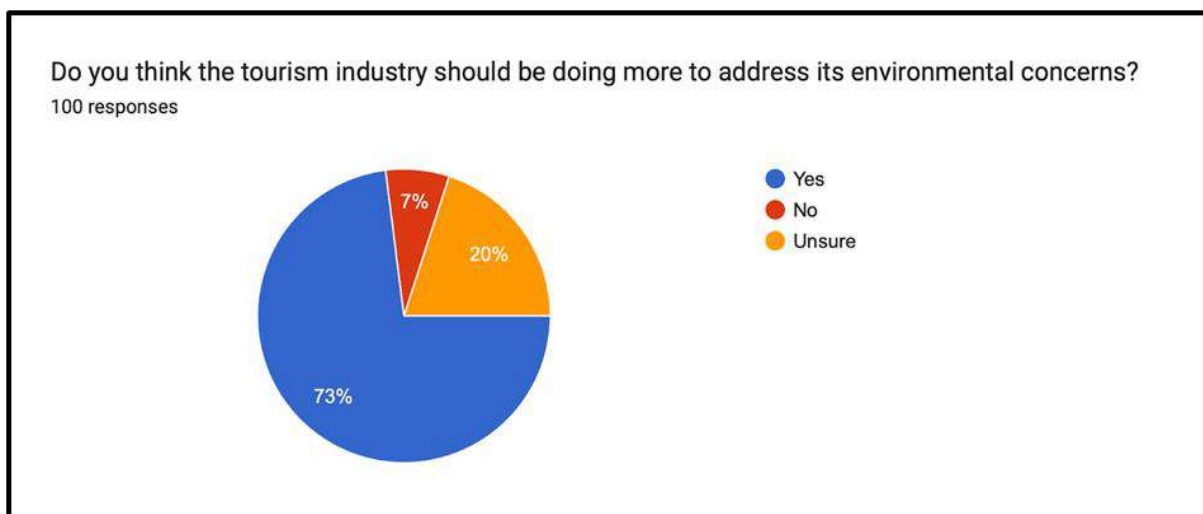


Whereas, as shown above, 71% of the participants have experienced guilt due to their personal activities in places of public importance.

Analysing the symptoms of eco-anxiety, the results clearly indicate that about 61% of participants experience feelings of hopelessness, as previously mentioned. Whereas, 71% of the participants experience guilt due to their personal activities. Hereby, this indicates that the majority of the respondents that participated in this study invariably experience signs of being eco-anxious. Another question to examine the extent of eco-anxiety faced by the participants, was one that is hereby shown below:



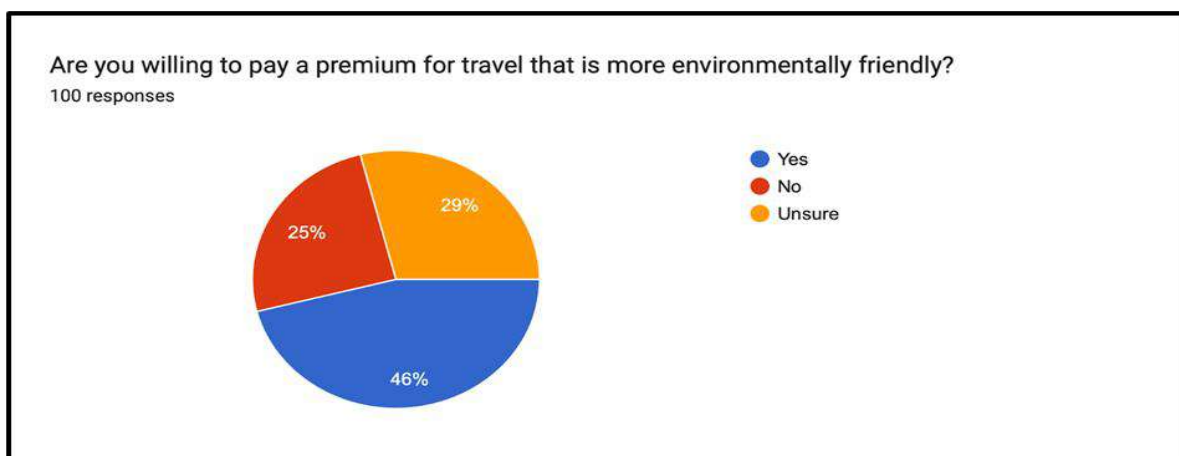
The results clearly indicated that 61% of the participants felt obligated to make changes in their life to address environmental issues. Hence, we can indicate that the majority of the participants experiencing eco-anxiety, want to make a change in their activities to help move towards a more sustainable environment.



Moving further, 71% of respondents, or the majority of respondents, agreed that the tourism sector should be doing more to address its environmental concerns. These high percentages are a result of the consumers' prevalent eco-anxiety.

Analysing the above asked questions, it is thereby proved that, eco-anxiety can have some positive effects, despite the fact that it is a negative emotion brought on by worries about the state of the environment and the possible effects of human activity on the planet. Increased motivation to take action to address environmental issues is one of eco-anxiety's important positive effects, as shown by the responses to the above asked questions. Eco-anxious individuals could feel pressured to modify their behaviour immediately, whether it's cutting their carbon footprint or backing ecologically friendly legislation. Eco-anxiety can also draw people together to foster a feeling of community and collective action, as well as enhance understanding of environmental issues.

Moving further, the participants were asked whether they are willing to pay a premium for such travel.



Analysing the results of the graph shown above, 46% of respondents claim that they are willing to pay higher for more environmentally friendly travel. By this, we can strongly enforce the same point about how for some individuals, their eco-anxiety may motivate them to seek out environmentally friendly travel options, in this case, even if it means paying more. These individuals may prioritise the preservation of natural resources and reducing carbon emissions above other factors such as cost or convenience. Nonetheless, 25% of respondents claim they are not willing to pay more. This indicates that financial constraints or a perception that sustainable travel is too expensive may play a role in their decision-making. Additionally, 29% of respondents claim they are unsure about making this decision. These individuals may question the actual environmental benefits of eco-friendly travel or may not view environmental concerns as a high priority when making travel plans. Overall, various factors such as personal values, financial considerations, and perceptions of the effectiveness of eco-friendly travel can influence why some eco anxious travellers are willing to pay for environmentally friendly travel, while others are not.

The two concluding questions that were given to the participants, were as follows:-

The first question asked them whether the concerns about the environment ever made them choose a destination that they might not have otherwise considered. A follow-up question to

this was whether they avoid certain activities in order to reduce their impact on the environment?

Majority of the participants i.e., 51% of them said they wouldn't necessarily choose a different destination than their planned one in order to reduce their impact on the environment. However, they do avoid certain activities like littering, scribbling on walls of public importance, sticking chewing gum around, in order to do their little bit to reduce their impact on the environment.

To conclude the findings of the survey, the results revealed that 61-71% of the participants knowing / unknowingly experience "Ecological Anxiety". After analysing their effect on consumer behaviour, these 61-71% eco-anxious participants feel the tourism industry should be doing more to address the concerns of our depleting environment. Nonetheless, even if it means greater expenditure on travelling, they are prepared to make long-term changes in their daily routines to lessen their impact on the environment.

Conclusion

Eco-anxiety can be viewed as a type of practical anxiety: a feeling that makes us more aware of the challenges we confront when making decisions about issues like climate change and that motivates us to participate in reflection and participation. There is little doubt that environmental issues have a direct impact on people's mental health in today's society, as evidenced by the fact that 71% of the consumers in this paper's investigation worry either daily or frequently due to eco-anxiety. Yet, 46% of these eco-anxious individuals are willing to make a sustainable change in their life, even if it means paying a premium for the same.

Eco-anxiety, thus, can be a helpful emotion that helps individuals in recognising that they must make a tough choice which inspires them to make a better one. Researchers argue that, like many other parts of our emotional lives, eco-anxiety is one that we can learn to control in more positive ways, even though it can also impair our agency and wellbeing. This viewpoint is also demonstrated by the fact that 61% of those who participated in this paper's study felt compelled to modify their lives as a result of their eco-anxiety. This research additionally discovered that geographic location, combined with demographic parameters like age, family income, and occupation, can influence how ecological anxiety affects consumer behaviour, especially in the tourist sector. For instance, individuals with higher incomes may have more money available for travel and may favour eco-friendly tourist attractions. Those with lower incomes, however, can have fewer options for travel and might favour affordable or value-oriented activities. Knowing these factors, can help in developing effective strategies and policies to encourage people to travel sustainably. People's travel choices are significantly influenced by these factors. Also, a morally praiseworthy sensitivity to ecological catastrophes is indicated by a well-calibrated inclination to be eco-anxious. The ethical significance of appropriately directed eco-anxiety is apparent, considering the inevitable disproportionate consequences of climate change on the world's impoverished populations. Experiencing eco-anxiety can be viewed as an emotion that plays a vital role in promoting the well-being of the planet.

Limitations

The first constraint identified during this research study was the limited geographic scope of the study which may not be representative of the global tourism industry. Since this research only considered the perspectives of individuals residing in areas in and around Mumbai, Maharashtra, their opinions may not reflect those of people living in other parts of the world.

Moving further, the second limitation of this study was the high-income levels of participants since the target audience was from the urban city of Mumbai. However, getting responses from the lower income groups would have altered the results of the study.

Lastly, the variability in consumer behaviour was also a limitation of this study since it's influenced by various factors, such as culture, socioeconomic status, and personal values. This was seen in the results of this research study. While some participants were willing to pay more for sustainable tourism, others weren't, which could be attributed to personal biases, financial status or other reasons.

Ethical Considerations

The study conducted on the topic, "The Effect of Ecological Anxiety on Consumer Behaviour" was conducted in accordance with certain ethical considerations.

One of the primary ethical considerations addressed in this study was that of informed consent. This research study obtained informed consent from all participants, explaining the purpose of the study, the potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Furthermore, this research study also took all the required steps necessary to protect the confidentiality of the data. Lastly, the data gathered was used for research purposes only. By addressing ethical considerations throughout the research process, this study was conducted in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of their participants while contributing valuable insights to the field.

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The Patriarchal Purgatory: How “progressive” female Indian characters on Indian TV failed by their narratives

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Abstract

There has been a constant uptick in shows on Indian broadcast TV in the past few years that have attempted to portray a “socially progressive” story of Indian society. These social progress dramas while attempting at portraying radical storytelling often end up falling back into the grey zone of most storytelling. A purgatory of sorts, where they can neither be considered regressive nor too progressive. Just neutral enough that they can be lauded by the general masses for their progressive portrayal but harmless enough not to cause too much of a stir. Anupamaa, the 2020 Star Plus show is a perfect example of this. Through this paper, by employing the use of anonymous quantitative and qualitative research, I wish to argue how even progressive female storytelling like this fails to deliver its message by pandering to this grey zone and thereby fails the potential of its female characters.

Key words: Hindi Soap Operas, Symbolic violence, Patriarchy, Systemic oppression, Motherhood.

Introduction

“The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (Camus in the *Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays*, 1995, p.24)

Albert Camus, the Algerian born French philosopher has fascinated me for quite some time. The first time I ever came across any of his writing was when I was making an inquiry similar to the one this paper attempts to make. Camus has made many an argument in his works to emphasise on the absolute absurdity of the lives we live. Most actions that we continuously perform in our lives like a 9-5 job or the chores of one's house all become much too dreadful if one decides to pause and think about the ceaseless routine that these actions demand of you. There will always be dishes to clean the next day, or taxes to file, or some report to submit. Modern human life, has to a certain degree, made this unending pointless toil an inescapable part of human existence in a way that our foraging ancestors might have never predicted.

Camus illustrates this through the allegory of the myth of Sisyphus, a man who was condemned by the Greek gods to be stuck in an eternal loop of pushing a rock up the hill, only for it to tumble back down and his labour to start all over again. Eternally, he must perform this task. He emphasises that this mindless routine is only tragic, when our Sisyphus here becomes *conscious* of it (Camus, 1995).

His words strike a familiar fear in most of our lives. In the years since Camus wrote this essay, many writers and artists have expressed their fear of the mechanical existence that modern day lives can turn out to be, how the constant repetition of tasks that must be done to

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consider your life fulfilling can feel maddening. Camus recognised the absurdity in what we consider mundane.

The reason why Camus wishes for Sisyphus to be happy is thereby simple. If he must perform this task endlessly, he will have to embrace the absurdity that comes with his seemingly meaningless existence. He knows no amount of lamenting and scorn will make the task any easier and defy the fate his life has been banished too. Yet by acknowledging the truth of his existence fully and coming to terms with his cursed fate, he can achieve a degree of content but resigned acceptance, because Sisyphus, our absurd man, has to keep pushing through regardless of whether he likes it or not. Therefore, we imagine him happy because any other existence he would have to live would be a miserable one. We imagine that his endless toil brings him satisfaction and a sense of achievement because an alternative, yet more likely understanding of his plight is simply a tragedy.

Now one may ask: what does any of that have to do with the 2020 soap opera *Anupamaa*, and the objective of this paper? Well, it is because *Anupamaa* has spent 20 years of her life in a similar fate like that of Sisyphus.

She has spent the last 20 plus years of her life dedicated to the singular task of taking care of her family. She wakes up at 5 every morning, spends the entire day, serving to her family's every demand, whether for tea or a broken button. All the while being constantly admonished for her general incompetence. Her mother-in-law always has something to complain, whether it's her cooking, her punctuality, her sense of dressing, or her low born status. Her children need her to cook for them, clean up after them, and be ready at their beck and call, yet look down on her because she can't speak English and is illiterate. Her younger son is the only exception because he finds too much alike between himself and his mother to be able to hold it against her. Lastly her husband is an entitled chauvinist man, who hates his wife for being too "bhen-ji" like. For not being cool and modern like Kavya, the woman he's been having an illicit affair with. Yet like the gods that cursed Sisyphus, he is the reason behind her eternal climb up the hill.

Her endless work in the house and the pain of insults she must bear constantly while performing them is the rock she must roll up the hill. *Anupamaa* wavers in the belief that this is all her life surmounts to from the very first episode. Yet it is almost like she hears the whispers of Camus across a millennium and puts on a smile to continue performing the burden of the tasks she believes she must eternally bear. Her tale is also one that is familiar to most of us who have seen women like *Anupamaa* in our lives. The ones who constantly toil away in the kitchen and the household to keep it together. Who we'd never want to be in the same position as because we know the endless and mindless repetition would truly drive us insane. It could be the house help in your home or your mother. You must believe in order to cope with this guilty consciousness that they must be happy. Happy to climb up the hill of damnation every day.



Figure 1 & 2. *Sisyphus*, oil on canvas by Titian, 1548–49; in the Prado Museum, Madrid and a Screencap from *Anupamaa* 2020 (Ep.24).

We're imagining both Sisyphus and Anupamaa happy, to reconcile with the tragic fate of their lives. Yet regardless of just how much Anupamaa tries and tries, she is not happy. She itches to break free, yet fears even voicing out this need. It is not until the dam breaks, and the truth of her husband's infidelity is revealed that she finally acknowledges her unhappiness with the constant toil and gruel of her life. In what was the show's most heart-breaking moment she cries to the void, with her only friend Devika next to her, about how wronged she has been by those around her. How she has been willing to bear every insult to her person if it meant that at least her place as her husband's wife in the house remained. Even if Anupamaa herself imagined herself happy, the reality of her existence would not allow this naïve resigned acceptance to remain. After all, the point of her story is to show her breaking out of this mould of her life. The premise of the show promised to her and the audience is that we shall see what Anupamaa can be when she is given a chance to pursue her dreams, for once in her life. Yet, this sole promise of wanting to see more does not suffice what we actually witness within the narrative. Let's take a critical feminist analysis of the show and its narrative structure to understand how it fails the premise the show began on.

Anupamaa: Concurrently liberating and regressive

Anupamaa began airing around the same time when most of the world was forced to confine themselves back into their homes, constantly surrounded by family who they may or may not get along with, during the month of July 2020. She represented, for many women watching, another familiar soul who found herself trapped in the cages of her home. It was a cage that was not limited to just the solitary confinement that the recent pandemic imposed, but also represented the restrictive moulds of traditional expectations that women were forced into due to the sole fact of them being women. According to the "Women in Workplace Report" by McKinsey of 2020, one in four women considered leaving their jobs, or downgrading from higher positions in order to look after their homes. The highest percentage of these women were seen to be working mothers. (Coury et al., 2020)

Van Zoonen, in her work on 'Media studies from a feminist perspective', emphasizes the importance of looking into the production and reception of media content by its audience

in order to comprehend its gendered effects. She contends that rather than being passive recipients of media messages, audiences actively shape and interpret the ideas posited in front of them. This implies that media content can be contested and challenged, as well as subvert traditional expectations of gender, with the right intentions on the behalf of its creators. (Zoonen, 2014)

I have taken a sample size of 80 female participants who are avid watchers of *Anupamaa*, splitting them between working and non-working women. Some limitations included, being unable to reach our ideal sample size of 100 participants, and being restricted to the opinions of women belonging to only upper-middle women. For secondary research, I employed the usage of many theoretical frameworks provided by sociological thinkers like Albert Camus, Judith Butler and Pierre Bourdieu.

What are some moments in the show where you feel the show is at its peak?
80 responses

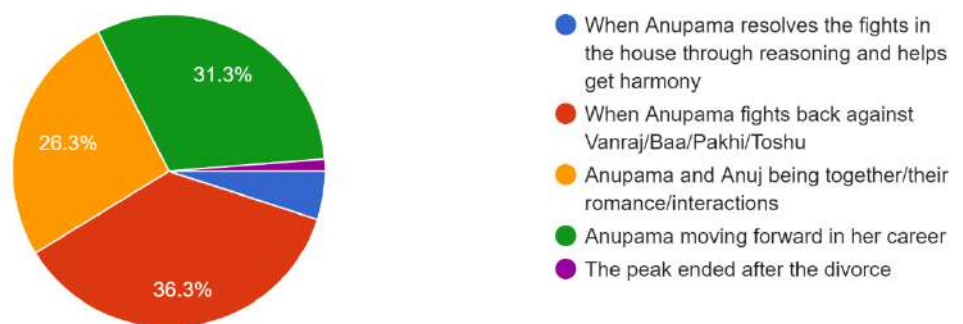


Figure 3. Survey answers

My first question inquires into when its audience was able to resonate with the storyline the best. We had taken an audience sample of 80 female fans of the show, with 57.5 % of them being working women while the rest were a mix between at home or recently working. From the above figure, it's clear that parts of the show's audience are able to identify what comes as the biggest moment of triumphs character wise for Anupamaa. Her ability to fight back against Vanrah/Baa/Pakhi/Toshu was a development in her character that only came as the show progressed past her divorce and got the highest number of votes at 36.3 % followed closely behind with her ability to move forward in her career at 31.3 %.

These moments represent major subversions in expectations for a show like *Anupamaa* and their positive reception has not gone seemingly unnoticed by its creators as well. If one were to skim through the ever trending **#Anupamaa** tags on twitter, one can visibly see that all the criticism that gets doled out about Anupamaa's passivity towards her family has an effect on the perception of its creators as well. While a direct cause – effect link cannot be established, it's not a stretch to assume that a show like this, that is so highly dependent on constant public interest to hold its place on the network, would attempt to work in audience responses into their story. The show has had multiple showdowns between Anupamaa and her family since her divorce and three separate storylines where she pursued a new career, each time with the same inspirational vigour.

Zoonen assertions on feminist media thus ring true for the creators of Anupamaa who clearly has not only attempted to create content that actively challenges the established norms of the soap opera genre but at the same time, integrate its audience's perceptions into its narratives. When attempting to understand what exactly were the different aspects of the character Anupamaa that gave her the lowest social standing in her entire household, it can very much be attributed to the social capital she possessed. Social capital is a concept outlined by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, borrowed from Karl Marx's idea of capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Social capital is interested in the inclinations and tastes that people have access to due to the economic classes they were born into.

As we've established, her abusive husband Vanraj, is characterised as a well-educated salaried man, and her children too have all received education from English medium schools. She's often admonished by her husband and children for being unable to pronounce things in English correctly, or for her tastes in food, where she prefers Gujarati cuisines over western food. These small moments of reprimand come as *symbolic violence* which according to Bourdieu means,

"Symbolic violence is not just the imposition of meanings, but also the imposition of a sense of what is possible and impossible, of what is legitimate and illegitimate, and of what is desirable and undesirable" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 172).

The show is speckled with moments which illustrate the way Anupamaa is oppressed by her family. Even for things she does purely out of the circumstances that she grew up in, (brought up in a lower-class household) are belittled to make her internalise her own subordination as natural and therefore legitimate, thereby making the process of breaking out of the cycle of emotional abuse she finds herself in, that much harder. For the first half of the show's run, she is a passive character who never fights back even at the most egregious of her family's tortures because of the structured propensities that have been deposited to her via society. She has been taught to think and act in a certain way, and in this scenario, it is to be a submissive housewife and mother who's meant to care and give endlessly, no questions asked.

She is familiar with the intricacies of social interaction she must maintain with her husband and mother-in-law. During conversations with them, her voice must be placating and soft, she must always plead for what she deserves, never ask forthright. This is the 'habitus' which the character believes she must inhabit and it is what her husband and in-laws exploit to gain further control and power over her. This 'habitus' like Bourdieu mentions is not 'permanent in nature' and does indeed change over the course of the show once she finds out about her husband's infidelity. (Bourdieu, 1991)

Upon finding out the truth Anupamaa cries about how she was willing to give up her own individual freedoms and happiness as long as she got to inhabit the role of her husband's only partner. She behaved according to this 'habitus' because she expected that her husband would also play according to these intricacies of social dynamics, and be her stern, conservative but loyal husband. His betrayal of the social expectations he was meant to perform, is the last straw for Anupamaa. After this point the story turns drastically, she questions many of these inclinations that she had inhabited in, rebelling against the restrictions that were imposed on her due to the social capital she possessed. Her rejection of the naturalisation of her own

oppression is quite subversive in the genre of Soap Operas. Yet at the same time, this subversion feels empty more often than not.

This is because, Anupamaa's roles as a mother, a wife and a daughter-in-law are performed by her so seamlessly, that they seem almost second nature to her and those around her. Anupamaa seems to have been born to play the role of motherhood. The first half of the show harps on the naturalization of the gendered roles Anupamaa plays, and while she is shown hesitant to fully reduce herself to this essentialist vision of her personhood, certainly contributes to this idea constantly.

Judith Butler, in their titular work, provides us with the perfect lens for analysing this naturalised version of gender that most broadcast television media wants us to believe and the one Anupamaa wants to fight. Gender, as it exists in our society, is a complete social structure. Butler contends that gender is a social and cultural construct that is continuously produced and reproduced through our interactions with others, rather than a matter of biology or anatomy. They propose that gender is performative, in the sense that it is created and maintained through our constant performances of gendered actions such as how we walk, talk, dress, and interact with others, thereby making it quite fragile. The moment one person decides that they do not wish to play the gender game any longer, they'd break the loop of constant reproduction that sustains it, thus making gender *fragile*. (Butler, 2006)

Everybody around Anupamaa wishes to box her into the moulds of her gender, yet this very rejection of the mould, is the driving force of the show in its second half. Anupamaa rejects the idea that she can't hold a job outside of housework, earning herself a teaching position at her daughter's high school. She rejects the idea that a woman cannot ask her husband for a divorce after finding out about his affair because "women are meant to maintain relationships not break them". She rejects the idea that a woman cannot talk back to her in-laws because her position is always below them. She rejects the idea that a woman cannot get remarried at the age at which most women are meant to be "grandmothers" according to her son. Anupamaa symbolises the fragility of gender.

Yet, Anupamaa also represents the social norms around her that reinforce this gender binary. Her rejection of these previous expectations is only as applicable as long as they are justifiable to a limit. Women should be able to do work outside the household but only until they do not forget their duties to their families, like making sure that everyone gets their evening teas, as we see with her criticism of Vanraj's current wife Kavya, the modern career woman. The same restraints that her family imposed on her when she was married to Vanraj sound unjust only because they were imposed on 'a pure and selfless character' like Anupamaa and *not* because they were by nature, discriminatory expectations of women and men.

The narrative creates the 'perfect Indian woman' out of her. On the day she goes to get her divorce with Vanraj finalized, the lawyer who was overlooking her case asks her if she's laid a claim for alimony. For any sane viewer watching, Anupamaa has all the right to claim this money, after being forced into financial dependence on her partner her entire marriage. Yet Anupamaa refuses, claiming that she just wishes to be done with the case and all the trouble that's come along with it. The lawyer is amazed at this, as he recounts tales of the other women who had fought tooth and nail to extract money from their ex-husbands and praises her for her lack of "greed". Anupamaa through this scene alone became forever solidified as the 'perfect

victim'. A perfect victim is a "damaging belief about how a victim should look and behave in order to be deemed credible and worthy of their victimhood." (Cocoran, 2022)

It seems the show is confused about whether it considers Anupamaa's life tragic because of the abuse she suffered or because *Anupamaa*, the pure of heart, in particular was unworthy of the abuse, making it sound justifiable if her characterisation was more defiant. The double standards that the showrunners constantly apply to Anupamaa and the rest of the women in the story, detail a much more complicated history of purity culture in the feminist movement. Her perfections make any wrongdoing against her a personal slight that must be corrected within the narrative. Yet this same injustice towards any other character doesn't usually warrant as much sympathy. It almost seems to scream, 'if you want more people to be feminists, you must first be as perfect and morally pure as Anupamaa to earn sympathy for your cause'.

Another example is the many times she has answered back in equal disdain to her mother in law's taunts while at the same time venerating her as some sort of wise elderly goddess. We witness over seven episodes where Anupamaa begs for Baa's blessings for her second marriage, even claiming that Baa, who has been nothing but abusive towards her for most of the show, is more like her real mother than her actual mother. This is because while she may object to her at some points, Baa who is still considered an elder of the house is to be respected. This pandering to her mother-in-law is one of the biggest sore points, which most of the primary research participants brought up as frustrating to watch.

Some answers we got particularly with regards to this situation were;

What was a moment where you disagreed with something Anupama did?

57 responses

Being too generous and forgiving towards Baa

Too much forgiving and doing for shah family

Forgiving and always trying to be there for the family that always wants her at the time of need

Agreeing to baa's request of helping them in every matter

Figure 4: *surveyors' answers*

Even her remarriage to Anuj Kapadia, the latest entry to the show last year certainly brought about a significant wave in the discourse around the show. Despite many praising it for its progressive portrayal of this modern man, their relationship pushes Anupamaa back into the role of a wife, much too quickly, after her divorce as well as that of a new mother, after they spontaneously decide to adopt a young orphan girl within a few weeks of their marriage. What could have been a fresh and liberating opportunity to explore Anupamaa's life outside of the four corners of her home after all this while, forces her back into these corners, within a prettier and more deceptive-looking cage. Anuj Kapadia is in no way oppressive or evil like Vanraj or even overbearing to her characterisation like her children. He's simply another

character in a long list of characters who needs Anupamaa to play the role of his lover and wife, when Anupamaa for the first time in her life had the opportunity to simply be *herself*. Anupamaa's story constantly reconfigures her back into newer systems of oppression while refusing to acknowledge older systematic issues that were central to her abuse.

Nationalised Motherhood

Katherine Mayo, a writer from the west, wrote the controversial book *Mother India* in 1917. The book highlighted the sorry state of Indian women because of their “inertia, lack of initiative...and sterility of enthusiasm”. The book dived deep into the state of female foeticide, the purdah systems, the mortality rate of birthing mothers and so on. The report consisted of everything that Indian nationalist were too proud to admit as embarrassments for the state of the Indian subcontinent. Even Gandhi called the Mayo report the “drain inspector's report”. (qtd. in Gupta, 2021) This general dislike towards what were significant statistics on the state of women in the country showcased how her potential as a symbol of the country took precedence in the minds of many over their actual health and state of affairs.

Figure 5: The refashioned image of mother India; source: wikicommons:



The nationalists post-Mayo report attempted to redeem themselves from this essentialist colonial image of chauvinism and ‘backwardness’ that was being attributed to Indian society. Thus, they decided to co-opt the image of the “Mother India”. They very strategically reversed the metaphor of the ‘mother’ used by Mayo and created the body of India which was imbued with national pride and veneration. (Gupta, 2021)

This image of the mother was the epitome of self-sacrifice and pain. A more comprehensive inquiry into her creation suggests that she is not an independent goddess with autonomous individuality, but rather a sacrificial victim—a mother guarded by her brave sons. This was how she was immortalised in art and poetry as well. The virtuous mother India, is a mother who must forever live with the grief and pain of the lives of the sons she lost, while continuing to produce more heirs so that they too may have an opportunity to enjoy the bountiful land she has created for them. She's dressed modestly in her flowing saree, she is a damsel in distress, constantly flanked with enemies on all sides, a mother who will demand constant protection of her dignity from her sons.

The image that begins to form around Mother India is further mythologised by using the primordial spirit of Mother Earth making the nascent concept getting an evergreen image. The primordial mother earth goddess in her earlier form was a symbol of fertility and sexual fruitiness while the Mother India had to be completely divorced from her sexuality, appearing as a completely asexual being that hinged on maintaining this 'virginal' chaste image that can never be impregnated by its opponents.



Figure 6: Primordial Earth goddess of fertility, Rajran Temple, Orissa; source: wikicommons

When they divorced the earlier form of the Earth goddess to create this purer version, they also took away the secularity of that image. The earth goddess was worshipped across tribes throughout the country regardless of religious affiliations but now she had become a symbol of “bharat”, and “Hindutva”. Mother India became much more exclusive to her Hindu sons and daughters than she did to anyone else. Therefore, the Aryan Mother India was built. An empty dream of a mother that has borne a thousand sons and disowned millions of daughters all to represent a nation that is decidedly *not the west*. Nandini Gupta says, “Though she appears as a female divine, inwardly she is nothing but a filament of patriarchal imagination that is yet

to be realized.”(7) This divine image of motherhood has permeated every stratum of Hindu culture and expectations.

Anupamaa the character has never once wavered from performing the role of the Indian mother that the militant nationalists had imagined for the nation. The first half of the show spends a good chunk of its time outlining just how well she performs the role, not just in terms of the way she cooks, cleans, and looks after her family but also in the inherent self-sacrifice that is attached to her character.

On the day of her first job, Anupamaa signs her name with an extra *maatra* (annotation) at the end of her name so it phonetically spells out “Anupam – maa”. In her mind, this was a way for her to carry her children forward with her in every step of her new life. Yet, she loses this very first job as a teacher after a near death encounter due to a kitchen fire at the school she was teaching, convincing her family that she cannot afford to do a job that will put their children’s mother in danger. This decision was taken for her by Vanraj who used her valiant efforts to save a bunch of kids from the burning building against her, as a marker that she cannot prioritise other people's children over her own.

In a mini ten-episode exclusive series by the title of “Anupamaa: Namaste America”, we see the earliest glimpse of how she gave up on her own dreams of a dance performance in America for a friend’s event upon her family’s demands, who could not imagine their daughter in-law spending an iota of time away from her duties. While the mini show was made to contrast the current Anupamaa who has now managed to find a much more supportive husband and a dance academy of her own, this self-sacrificial essence of her has still remained.

In another episode that kickstarted Anupamaa finally deciding to leave the Shah house, we saw her be accused of sleeping with Anuj whose place she had to stay over at, out of compulsion. These accusations come at her, ironically, from Vanraj and Kavya, the two actual adulterers in the group who slut shame and accuse her of having a loose moral character. This seems to be the breaking point for Anupamaa who lashes out and says that she is done giving an “Agni-pareeksha” (test by fire) every time she steps outside the house to do something for herself. To this Vanraj answers that if she acts as vivaciously as he assumes she is then she has no option but to continuously prove her innocence. Her reply to this is very important: “Agni Pareeksha Ram ko diye jati hai, Raavan ko nahi.” (She would have proven her innocence by fire to a person with a Ram like character, not that of Raavan which Vanraj possess). Her reply while powerful, is *not* refuting the very *audacity* that a grown forty-year-old woman needs to prove her innocence to anyone. This is because she is the nationalised idea of ‘the mother’ as much as she is a person and thereby she must uphold the same standards of chastity and purity as ‘Mother India’, lest she betrays the “values” of her society. Anupamaa can never appear as a person with any explicit sexuality, she must always hide behind fruitive touching of shoulders or an adoring hug.

If we try to understand her actions through the eyes of Bourdieu and his concept of how power relations within a habitus can differ from one another in different playing fields or contexts, we may begin to understand her psyche better. After Anupamaa’s liberation from the confines of the habitus she inhabited for so long she is constantly reeled back into the moulds of the *moral upstanding mother*, to reduce the power she can experience in her relationships. Anupamaa continues to make sacrifices for the sake of her children and in-laws even though she has divorced Vanraj, constantly prioritising their problems over those of her new husband,

so much so that it has now become a reason for their possible separation in upcoming episodes. This mould of nationalised motherhood has occupied common consciousness for long and its effects on her characterisation are apparent.

Her character is allowed to speak back and fight in the situations related to Vanraj, since that is a relationship society no longer holds against her. But with regards to her children and the motherhood she owes to them, the expectations remain the same. Despite all the steps she takes forward for her own sake like divorcing Vanraj, starting her own dance studio, or marrying a man who truly loves her, when it comes to her children and ex mother-in-law, she falls to the trappings that the field of motherhood expects off her, and keeps taking two steps backwards. Her characterisation, thus, remains inconsistent and it is, to my knowledge, done unintentionally by its creators.

In an interview, the creator of Anupamaa, Rajan Shahi, disclosed something which recontextualizes Anupamaa as a character perfectly. He says "Let me disclose something, it's my mother who is the official producer of Anupamaa, and this serial is an ode to her". (Sunderesan, 2023). For Rajan Shahi, Anupamaa is not simply a character but a reflection of his mother's life. The reason Anupamaa keeps getting pulled back into her children's lives is because he himself has never witnessed his mother outside of this person. His mother is the ideal Indian mother and that's the quality he attaches as the most significant part of her person and understandably so. He has mentioned within the same interview of the influential role her mother played in his career and life. Rajan Shahi has used symbols/caricatures that are pre-established in common consciousness to avoid criticism. As we saw, the symbol of the "Mother India" permeates every decision that the characters and the creators make. If we are to work towards portrayal of women on screen that are not only authentic but also truly radical, there is a strong need for the creators to be able to employ a certain degree of reflexivity into their messaging and storytelling. Reflexivity would require them to confront their own internal biases that guide the way they make decisions in real life and their stories. For creators like Rajan who've had careers as lucrative as his, being able to identify where his own skewed perspectives on womanhood and motherhood affect his writing, can greatly improve the quality of storytelling Anupamaa claims it's been telling.

As Bourdieu has mentioned, one's behaviour within different fields is *unconscious* as it is socially ingrained in us from a young age. Rajan Shahi is only able to allow Anupamaa's freedom to a limited degree because after a certain point, she cannot betray the expectations of the "moral ideal mother" she has been socialised to believe in as natural. (Bourdieu, 115) Rajan falls back onto familiar character traits even if they make Anupamaa constantly contradict her own words. After all he can never imagine his own mother being able to do the same.

Conclusion

So, when Anupamaa screamed to the void of the injustices she must bear, she became the tragedy Camus warned us off. The narrative of the show promises that the more Anupamaa voices out these injustices she suffered, the more she will be liberated from the curse of mundanity we saw her and Sisyphus struggling with. As Camus said, "fate cannot be surmounted by scorn". Anupamaa's character can only scorn towards every injustice that has

been pelted towards her. All her fights against it have made her more miserable than before, unable to bring her to any true justice, as she finds herself stuck over and over again in the tricks of her abusive husband and in-laws and the burden of the responsibilities she must bear. Her narrative allows her no rest from the curse of the rock she must push uphill. It only takes away the little semblance of peace her obliviousness had offered her. Now we can no longer imagine Anupamaa happy, yet she must persist with her life just as Sisyphus would have.

My demands for better storytelling of these progressive female characters are because at the end of the day, I am one of the watchers who keeps coming back to this show in hopes that it will allow its main protagonist the “Udaan” or flight of freedom it promised her. Stories like Anupamaa’s are significant and consumed on an incredibly large scale. The women watching these stories, if my surveys were of any tell, find parts of their own lives reflected in the struggles of these characters. The least we as society owe to them is a taste of a truly fulfilling character arc that lets our Anupamaa for once be just her own person.

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Politics of Identities in Elif Shafak's Works

Khwahish Khan¹

Abstract

The topic of identity politics is much debated in the Turkish community, given the country's geographical setting and historical accounts. The impact of such a kind of politics is felt through generations, only growing in multitudes. Given the nature of literature to reflect society, this paper will explore the politics of identities in selected works by Elif Shafak, namely - The Bastard of Istanbul (2006), Honour (2011), Three Daughters of Eve (2016), and The Island of Missing Trees (2021). Centred on selected characters from each novel, this paper will look at identity in tandem with the state, society, family, and the characters themselves. Keeping Turkish identity as the pivot point, this paper will also briefly examine Shafak's role in vicariously finding her own identity through the means of the characters in her novels.

Keywords: Turkish identity, Elif Shafak, Turkish literature, multiculturalism, nationality

Introduction

Elif Shafak's upbringing symbolises a detachment similar to that of the Tuba tree - the supposed tree in Paradise with its roots in the air.² Although born in France in 1971, she was raised in Turkey post her parents' separation. To add to her displacement, she was educated in Madrid and then found places of temporary residence in Jordan, Germany, the USA,³ before finally settling in London. In *The Happiness of Blond People*⁴, Shafak speaks of an instance that always brought her on edge - "The question 'where are you from?' has always mattered to me, and felt deeply personal, albeit equally complicated. For a long time it was the one question I dreaded being asked" (2011, p. 16).

In her non-fiction novel titled, *How to Stay Sane in the Age of Division*,⁵ she elaborates on this question stating that she struggles to explain her true cultural identity due to limited patience and attention spans. Given her accent and cultural roots, society would indisputably accept her *Turkishness*, which, although she treasures, does not do her identity complete justice. Identity politics led her to choose her Turkish identity when she described her nationality to someone; however, as an individual, she houses an indefiniteness, a state of cultural and geographical fluidity. Despite this fluidity, she writes extensively on Turkish culture, centering her novels either on Turkey or the Turkish diaspora. Given this, she contested the idea of an

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²First described by Ottoman author, Mehmed Yazıcıoğlu in his 1449 manuscript titled, *Muhammediye*.

³Namely in Boston, Michigan, and Arizona.

⁴Hence referred to as THBP.

⁵Hence referred to as HTSSAD.

“inbetweenness” and cultural fluidity, primarily in HTSSAD but also reiterated it in interviews and other non-fiction works. In THBP, Shafak writes:

One can belong to numerous cities and cultures and peoples, regardless of the way current politics situates them apart. In an age of migrations and movements, when many of us already dream in more than one language, it is time to discard ‘identity politics’ altogether (2011, p. 21).

There is a trait, common to all of Shafak’s work apart from the heavy Turkish influence - her main characters, in search of their identity, are always led back to their homeland, i.e., Turkey. This could be reflective of Shafak’s internal struggle as she has been in self-imposed exile from Turkey since 2019 (Kinstler, 2017). The ground for her to do so is on account of a fear of prosecution, for in 2006, she had been charged under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code for having insulted ‘Turkishness’ in her novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul* (*Court Acquits Novelist of “Insulting Turkishness,”* 2006). As Shafak is now unable to head back to her ‘cultural roots,’ I propose that she tends to do so vicariously through the characters in her novels.

In 2010, Shafak, through her TED Talk titled “The Politics of Fiction,” spoke about her literary journey, how she faced the brunt of identity politics and the intricate link between literature and politics. Her statement which most resonates with the motive of this paper is:

We often talk about how stories change the world, but we should also see how the world of identity politics affects the way stories are being circulated, read and reviewed...If you're a woman writer from the Muslim world, like me, then you are expected to write the stories of Muslim women and, preferably, the unhappy stories of unhappy Muslim women. You're expected to write informative, poignant and characteristic stories and leave the experimental and avant-garde to your Western colleagues (Shafak, 2010, 11:10-12:10).

Carrying on this sentiment, I aim to direct this paper towards exploring how Shafak’s novels present the politics of identities and how this is linked to her journey and experiences. The purpose behind dictating a plurality to identity is to account for the fact that identity must be viewed in tandem with many facets in order to be understood as a whole. My paper will critically analyse four novels by Elif Shafak: *The Bastard of Istanbul* (2006)⁶, *Honour* (2011), *Three Daughters of Eve* (2016)⁷, and *The Island of Missing Trees* (2021)⁸. The rationale behind having selected these particular novels is the overlap of themes that will best help prove the central argument of this research. I will also consult Shafak’s non-fiction work, *How to Stay Sane in the Age of Division* (2020) and *The Happiness of Blond People* (2011). The inferences drawn from this analysis will then be viewed in relation to Shafak’s lived experiences to elucidate how she tends to find herself vicariously through her characters.

⁶Hence referred to as BI.

⁷Hence referred to as TDE.

⁸Hence referred to as TIMT.

Ben değil⁹ : Identity and the State

Lucretia-Dorina Loghin, in her essay titled, 'Elif Shafak's Approach to Multiculturalism,' described Shafak's voice to be reflective of that of Istanbul's (2017, p. 53). The writer goes on to describe that although souls have no nations, they do have a role in defining them (2017, p. 54). The complications lie in the two 'identities' Turkey holds, i.e. the Asian and the European. Having distinctly different practices, the two communities often struggle to find a commonality. In the face of this conundrum, the people of Turkey, especially Istanbul, often feel stuck. The reason I focus on Istanbul, in particular, is due to the fact that Istanbul, as a city, is divided between the Asian and the European frontier. Shafak resonates with this feeling of perplexity across her novels as expressed in *BI*, wherein she writes –

We're stuck. We're stuck between the East and the West. Between the past and the future. On the one hand, there are the secular modernists, so proud of the regime they constructed you cannot breathe a critical word. They've got the army and half of the state on their side. On the other hand, there are the conventional traditionalists, so infatuated with the Ottoman past, you cannot breathe a critical word. They've got the general public and the remaining half of the state on their side (2012, p. 114).

The situation adds a layer of complexity with the spread of Kemalist ideology, which emphasises Turkey's 'obsession' with following Western, practices (Furlanetto, 2014, p. 22). In *TDE*, Shafak explains the Kemalist ideology in a rather winsome fashion:

All the same, this city [Istanbul] bordered on Europe. Such closeness had to amount to something. It was so breathtakingly close that Turkey had put one foot through Europe's doorway and tried to venture forth with all its might – only to find that the opening was so narrow that, no matter how much the rest of its body wiggled and squirmed, it could not squeeze itself in. Nor did it help that Europe, in the meantime, was pushing the door shut (2017, p. 6).

This is where the clash between Shafak's point of view and that of the State comes to the surface. While the state demands one to pick a side, Shafak advocates for an in-between space with which her fiction and non-fiction writings corroborate. Shafak makes a critical riposte in *TDE*, asserting that "'Potential' was a tricky word. Everyone once said that Turkey had great potential - and look how that had turned out" (2017, p. 3).

This stands to be a direct critique of the Kemalist ideology. Elena Furlanetto's article accentuates Shafak's attempt to invoke her readers to think about the aforementioned idea by stating:

Who exactly are the Turks? Are we a Western society and if so, why do the Europeans treat us like a different species? Are we Middle Easterners and if so, why do we feel so aloof to their ways? Are we the symbol of "in-between-dom" and if so, in today's increasingly polarized world is it possible to take up one's abode in a threshold?

⁹Translation: 'Not me.'

[...] Can't we just stay happily situated in this unreasonable synthesis of ours? (2014, p. 25).

This emphasis on a binary is specifically accented in BI and TIMT. While BI focuses on the Turkish-Armenian conflict, TIMT is centred on the friction between the Turks and the Greeks in Cyprus which led to a devastating state of affairs on the island. In consensus with the historical timeline, I will first attempt to elaborate on how the Turkish-Armenian conflict impacted one's identity as displayed in BI.

Turkish identity is said to be controlled by the ruling social institutions. In contrast, Armenian identity is proclaimed as being one that is formed as an aftermath of the staged resistance against the 'domination of the legitimate group' (Alivin, 2017, p. ix). This bifurcation is evident through the families and the leading characters in BI - Asya Kazancı and Armanoush Tchakhmakhchian. For the purpose of maintaining order, I will first reflect upon the idea of choosing a side in the novel. In order to best explain this idea, I would like to rely on two pivotal 'locations' mentioned in the text - Café Kundera and Café Constantinopolis. These two cafés serve as an effective means of articulating BI's condemnation of Mustafa Kemal Attaturk's obsession with Westernization and historical revisionism while also serving as a 'safe space' for the customers/users (Furlanetto, 2014, p. 22).

Café Kundera was fictionally located in the European centre of Istanbul, and its customers represented the lasting influence of the Kemalist ideology on Turkish citizens. Asya, and her peers, appeared to be amnesic, disoriented, unable to represent themselves, and utterly cut off from their cultural reality. The characteristic of being amnesic is also affirmed in TDE, where Peri claims, 'We Turks are good at amnesia' (Shafak, 2012b, p. 285). Café Kundera's setting, with its walls covered with countless images of photographs, drawings, and sketches that depict landscapes from around the world, serves as a medium of escapism for the customers. The café comes off to be a space where identity is an ambiguous concept. Zehila, Asya's mother, speaks of this obscurity, stating:

Yeah, we should all line up along the Bosphorus bridge and puff as hard as we can to shove this city in the direction of the West, if it doesn't work, we'll try the other way, see if we can veer it to the East. [...] It's no good to be in between. International politics does not appreciate ambiguity (2012b, p. 145).

The "nihilists, pessimists, and anarchists" of Café Kundera believed they were condemned to extinction for they were unwilling to support any political current or choose between the East and the West (2012b, p. 145). Through the conversations that brew in the café, we learn how this rejection of the inbetweenness has affected all of them differently. However, there is one thing that connects them - a feeling of being lost. Thus, by means of this physical setting, Shafak has tried to highlight how modern Turks felt about Turkey's cultural and political state.

Café Constantinopolis, on the other hand, was an online forum where young members of the Armenian-American community discussed their ethnicity, ancestry, and trauma. The community seemed to derive their sense of identity from a shared hatred towards the Turks. Armanoush is the key figure in this 'café' as Asya is in Café Kundera. By referring to Istanbul

as it was known before the Ottoman invasion—Greek instead of Turkish—the forum's creators exclude the Turkish component from Café Constantinopolis' solid user base and from the city's identity. Armanoush, while describing the platform, states -

Every week they would choose a specific topic of discussion. Though the themes varied greatly, they all tended to revolve around their common history and culture – “common” oftentimes meaning “common enemy”: the Turks. Nothing brought people together more swiftly and strongly – though transiently and shakily – than a shared enemy (2012b, p. 113).

This is confirmed after the forum rejected Asya's apology, which drew Baron Baghdassarian, to make a crucial comment on the situation stating, “Some among the Armenians in the diaspora would never want the Turks to recognize the genocide. If they do so, they'll pull the rug out from under our feet and take the strongest bond that unites us” (2012b, p. 263). Thus, we see how the Armenian diaspora derived their sense of identity from their ‘original’ homeland and a collective sense of pain and displacement. Without this collective sense of belonging, they would as though lose their identity. This is in stark contrast with Café Kundera, where its customers had a fluid understanding of their identity. They didn't completely resonate with either side, and neither did they deem Westernization as the solution. They stand to be the accurate representation of inbetweenness.

Echoing the State's demand to pick a side, the novel TIMT focuses on identity politics during the conflict in Cyprus. Here, the tavern, Happy Fig, serves to be the equivalent of Café Kundera. However, the fundamental difference between Café Kundera and Happy Fig is their function. While the former served as a form of escapism, Happy Fig presented itself as a place where political turmoil and violence were absent, and everyone was accepted just the way they were. This characteristic of Happy Fig made it the meeting place for Defne and Kostas, where they were able to temporarily shrug off their ‘national’ identities and embrace the pure relationship between them. In the course of the novel, we see how Kostas felt the weight of the atrocities that were carried out by the officials from his community. This weight bears on his relationship with Defne, on account of which he felt the need to ask Defne if she'd still like to be with him. This instance brings out the fragility of relationships amidst political tensions. Both Defne and Kostas were caught between an expectation to stay loyal to their ‘political’ identity and a desire to go beyond the same. By hinting at this internal struggle, Shafak has tried to highlight how hampering an ascribed identity can be. Accenting the injudiciousness of such an identity, Shafak writes:

A map is a two-dimensional representation with arbitrary symbols and incised lines that decide who is to be our enemy and who is to be our friend, who deserves our love and who deserves our hatred and who, our sheer indifference (Shafak, 2021, p. 1).

There is a certain dictation of what is acceptable and what is not with such an identity. In both Defne and Kostas' situation, they did not have much of a choice in their homeland, which led them to ultimately migrate to England. Highlighting the subjectivity of experiences but the commonality of pain, Shafak writes:

People on both sides of the island suffered - and people on both sides would hate it if you said that aloud...Because the past is a dark, distorted mirror. You look at it, you only see your own pain. There is no room in there for someone else's pain (Shafak, 2021, p. 112).

A common theme through all these arguments and references has been the expectation of the State from the individuals. We see this highlighted in the novel *Honour* through the character of Adem whose inner struggle was brought to light when the question of exposing his children to Kurdish culture was to be considered. Given the altered reputation of Kurdish identity in Turkey itself, Adem is conditioned to believe that passing on this cultural identity to his children might limit their opportunities in British society. However, he also recognises the importance of preserving his cultural heritage and wants his children to have a connection to their Kurdish roots. Pembe's son, Iskender voices this internal conflict in his retort, which stated, "We Topraks were only passers-by in this city — a half-Turkish, half-Kurdish family in the wrong end of London" (Shafak, 2012a, p. 50). Shafak has tried to highlight how the identity of the previous generation affects the ones that come after by giving the first-generation diaspora a voice on their place in the world. Shirin resonates a similar sentiment in TDE, in which she refused to wear a headscarf because it had affected her and her family's identity in the past. In one such conversation with Mona on the topic of headscarves and Shirin's resistance to it, she voices, "First, it's just one, then it's ten, then millions. Before you know it it's a republic of headscarves. That's why my parents left Iran: your small piece of cloth sent us into exile!" (Shafak, 2017, p. 293).

Here, we see how a past political incident hampered Shirin's perspective on wearing a hijab which although not intrinsic, is still revered in Islam. Shirin refuses to identify herself with a piece of cloth because she believes that it holds political connotations. Another example from the referenced novel is the position of inbetweenness as demonstrated by Peri. In opposition to this is Peri's brother, Umut, reflective of the individuals in Cafe Constantinopolis, picked his side, which was Marxist. In the novel, the State's resistance to Marxist ideology led to Umut's imprisonment. Although, after his imprisonment, we don't see much of his presence in the novel, Peri references the course of his life, which reflects the solitude that he subjected himself to. Here we see how the State's intolerance destroyed Umut's identity, leading him to isolation. Interestingly, although the State demands one to pick a side, they only accept one's choice if it works in their favour. Thus, through the multifarious examples, we see how the State impacts how one perceives themselves.

Onlar için¹⁰ : Identity and Society

In THBP, Shafak quotes the Palestinian-American professor Edward Said, who proclaimed - "The more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision [sic]" (2011, p. 22). The application of this opinion is well understood from

¹⁰Translation: 'For them.'

Shafak's writing style. Her novels both directly and indirectly comment on the unconscious directive of Turkish society which is predominantly patriarchal in nature. This aspect is heightened in *BI* through the medium of Asya's family. When one sees the plot's foreground being a matriarchal family, there is an expectation of a defiance of norms and female empowerment which would finally break the patriarchal thought process. However, while the Kazancı are on the path to breaking certain patriarchal norms, they also come off as carriers of it. The Redakcja Salam Lab comments:

Shafak gives a clear signal that religion is not to blame for a social system in which daughters are treated much worse than sons. Rather, the practice is a deeply ingrained pattern of thought that shapes even the families like the Kazancı – houses where only women have lived for years.

I'd like to go in chronological order of events to better explain how this aspect is at play in the novel. Being the only male child in a household dominated by women and the only brother to four sisters, Mustafa Kazancı was treated like a 'king' (Shafak, 2012b. p. 31). Out of a fear of the 'curse' that supposedly haunted the Kazancı household, he migrated to the US. Even though he kept little to no contact with the family, he drew abundant significance in the Kazancı household for being the only 'living' man of the house. While the Kazancı women imbibe an altered sense of their standing in society, Mustafa thinks of himself as untouchable and aware of his privilege. His exacerbated sense of self leads him to rape his own sister, Zeliha, but neither does he take accountability for his actions nor the child she bore because of it. Mustafa is in a constant state of seeking escape, an escape from the memory of his abusive father and the deed he committed, i.e., raping Zeliha. When Mustafa first came into Zeliha's room, aroused, he spots his razor by her bedside table. Ignoring the suicidal intentions it hinted at, he commented - "What did you do with my razor blade? ... You sneak into my room, steal my razor, shave your legs so that you can show them to all the men in the neighbourhood" (Shafak, 2012b. p. 310).

The entire scene is described exactly like a predator approaching his prey. This incident marred the identities of both Mustafa and Zeliha. For Mustafa, the episode pushed him towards a hunger for amnesia as he is described as constantly seeking escape throughout the novel. While on the other hand, Zeliha's rape for her was a constant reminder of the male gaze. Anne Zahran Benenhaley in her thesis titled, 'Darkness, Dirt, Deviance—and Daddy: Patrilineal Relationships and the Negotiation of Womanhood in the Literature of Middle Eastern and Arab-American Woman' remarks, "Abandoned by her father, abused by her brother, and comforted by the thought of an omnipresent father figure, Zeliha cannot avoid the male gaze as much as she might try to do so" (Benenhaley, 2014).

To emphasise the extent of the male gaze and make it evident to the readers, Shafak deliberately assigns Zeliha the characteristic of wearing 'revealing' clothes. Worldwide, clothing stands to be most vulnerable to the male gaze, as it is constantly attacked as being the 'cause' of gendered violence. Shafak draws on this societal trait and applies it to Zeliha's life. In one such instance, Mustafa claimed - "You don't know how to talk to your elders. You don't care when men whistle at you on the streets. You dress like a whore and then expect respect?"

(Shafak, 2012b. p. 314). Similar sentiments are resonated by her mother, Gülsüm, when she learns of Zeliha's 'out-of-wedlock' pregnancy, wherein she remarks:

Shame on you! You've always brought disgrace on this family... Look at your nose piercing.... All that makeup and the revoltingly short skirts, and oh, those high heels! This is what happens when you dress up ... like a whore! You should thank Allah night and day; you should be grateful that there are no men around in this family. They'd have killed you (Shafak, 2012b. p. 29).

The concept of the male gaze is further reiterated in *Honour*, through the character of Jamila. Although a midwife by profession and seen in high regard, she kept a rifle in her house for her reputation did not save her from the male gaze. In one such instance, she extended her help to a wounded stranger who was a smuggler in actuality. Oblivious to his identity, Jamila nurses him back to health, only for him to attack her. Shafak describes the violence of the scene vividly through the following lines:

He jabbed at her with the end of the rifle. She lost her balance, almost falling. 'I'm curious about how you taste,' he said, as he took a step closer and eyed her hips, her breasts. 'So you've never known a man. Poor thing. Maybe after this I should give you a ride, *Virgin Midwife*' (Shafak, 2012a, p. 174).

Like the Kazancı family, Pembe, too, participated in the cycle of continuing the reign of patriarchy by reinforcing the expectation of the male gaze onto Esmâ. Esmâ narrates:

We had been very close, me and my mother... The only thing she was interested in now was my virginity. She was always preaching about the things I should never/ever/not even in my wildest dreams do... My mother warned me about boys, saying they were after one thing and one thing only. At this age, most boys were selfish and pushy, and many would never grow out of it. Yet she didn't impose the same rules on my brothers. Yunus was still too little, perhaps, but with Iskender, she was totally different, open. Iskender didn't need to be careful. He could just be himself. No holds barred [sic] (Shafak, 2012a, p. 164).

This verbatim is extremely important since it reinforces the title of the novel - *Honour*, and how that has an impact on the identity of the 'victims' of this idea. The reason I call them victims is because the importance of honour is sociological, collective, and one which is reinforced by traditions. By associating virginity with honour, one's identity is reduced to the status of their sexual engagement. This very element is also portrayed through the character of Defne Kazantzakis in TIMT. While a huge component of the rift between their relationship is based on the politics of the region, they are also from different religious backgrounds. Defne distances herself from Kostas upon learning about her pregnancy to save the two of them from societal shame. What agonized her the most on learning that she was pregnant was her family's reaction and not how this would affect her biologically and mentally. This portrays the hold societal norms have on an individual. Later on in the story, Defne's family ostracizes her when she leaves Cyprus with Kostas. This presents us with the overarching expectation of society,

which demands one to be ‘either here or there.’ The idea of an in-between or a grey area is not so well taken.

Peri expresses a similar conundrum in TDE, wherein she finds herself amidst an identity crisis that is closely linked to her religious background. Stuck between theism and atheism, Shirin defines Peri as being a part of the category called *Muslimus modernus* (Shafak, 2017, p. 64), which refers to someone who is half-Muslim and half-Modern. Bayan Momani, in their paper titled, ‘Turkey in "Three Daughters of Eve",’ compares Peri to the description of Fanny Price in Jane Austin’s *Mansfield Park*, - “Afraid of everybody, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left, she knew not how to look up, and could scarcely speak to be heard, or without crying” (Momani, n.d., p. 1).

In my way of thought, it is a precise account of Peri’s character as she does relate to all the mentioned characteristics. Her sense of self is relative to what is acceptable in the group she is seated in. High on social acceptance, Peri chooses to remain silent if the discussion is against her viewpoint instead of voicing her stance. Her demented understanding of herself stems from her family, as her father was secular while her mother was pious. She never questioned the relationship between her parents; instead, she just watched and wondered, convinced that she had the answers, which made her unsure, hesitant, and just plain confused (Momani, n.d., p. 1). Stuck between her father’s and her mother’s perspectives, Peri can never fully accept where she stands. Her identity is guided by her family and society’s expectations. When she moves to Oxford for higher education, Professor Azur becomes her source of solace as he embraces her *inbetweenness*. Elham Mohammadi Achachelooei, in her essay titled, ‘Amnesia: Identity Conflict in Elif Shafak’s Three Daughters of Eve,’ writes, “Peri’s settlement in Istanbul highlights the fact that she cannot seek meaning and resolution of identity gaps outside herself and her native land or territory” (2023, p. 7).

In the course of the story, Peri attaches her desire to find herself to her infatuation towards Azur. She looked at him with a sense of resolution, as though he held the key to all her questions; that sense of security, which she had lacked all her life, is what primarily attached her to Azur. When she learns of Shirin’s proximity to Azur, she loses all objectivity and falls back into old patterns, thus losing out on the opportunity of actually finding herself. After moving back to Istanbul, she becomes exactly who she didn’t want to be - a subservient wife, much like Pembe.

Sadece ben¹¹ : Shafak and the characters

In an interview with the Penguin Books UK, Shafak voiced:
What I don't like is to write from above, I don't situate myself above my characters or all the readers...I like to lose myself when I'm writing and be on the same level with fictional characters, [and] put myself in you know in their shoes. Stop being Elif and start

¹¹Translation: ‘Only me’

becoming someone else. It's that transformation that always intrigues me and excites me [sic] (2012, 4:12-4:45).

From the aforementioned statement, it is discernible that Shafak leaves traces of herself in the characters she creates. In this chapter, I want to lay particular emphasis on how we can see elements of Shafak in the characters so described in this paper. For the sake of not disrupting the order, I will attempt to structure this chapter in accordance with the order of themes discussed in this paper.

The first facet as discussed in this paper is that of the State's impact on one's identity. Asya, Armanoush, Peri, Umut, and Adem's experiences all correspond to Shafak's lived experiences. In her non-fiction work titled, *The Happiness of Blond People*, Shafak describes her life in middle school as a foreign student:

From Grandma's spiritual universe I was zoomed away to an international school where there were kids from all nationalities and I happened to be the only Turk. We were like a mini United Nations, with each of us seen as the 'representative' of the land from which he or she came. One implication of this was that whenever something negative occurred in relation to a country, the child associated with that country was held personally responsible – which meant mocked, ridiculed and bullied (2011, p. 14).

Along these lines, the biggest example of the State's impact on Shafak's identity is through the state of affairs she was put through when being booked under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. Even after the case was closed, she appointed two bodyguards for her safety before finally resorting to a self-imposed exile. This had a profound impact on her identity as it brought her freedom of speech into question and this also took her farther away from her roots. This falls in line with Armanoush who feels the desire to reconnect with her Turkish cultural roots but for the longest time cannot on account of her Armenian identity.

The second most prominent theme which most resonates with Shafak's identity is that of single parenthood. This theme can be found in *BI*, and *Honour*, both for different reasons. While in *BI*, it's the death of the male members, in *Honour*, it's Adem's infidelity that leads Pembe as the sole parent. It's interesting to note that this pattern is parallel to Shafak's life. Lamiaa Ahmed Rasheed and Abeer Oday Esmael in their paper titled, 'Can the Other Speak? A Representation of Otherness in Elif Shafak's *Bastard of Istanbul*,' write:

She [Shafak] never saw her father as a child, and he has been missing her entire life. There are parallels in that regard. At first, she intended to call the book *Baba and the Bastard*, with *baba* meaning father in Turkish language. In addition, as a kid, she was surrounded by many women like grandmothers, aunts, and neighbors. They were ordinary and occasionally uneducated, but they were undoubtedly strong willed and lovely souls. All of these things are represented in her book (2022, p. 617).

More than *Zeliha*, I believe Asya is the manifestation of Shafak. Both Asya and Shafak echo a search for their cultural identity and also try to come to terms with their paternal lineage. Shafak gives Asya the voice to explain her inner struggles by declaring - "All my life I wanted to be pastless. Being a bastard is less about having no father than having no past...and now here you are asking me to own the past and apologize for a mythical father!" (Shafak, 2012b, p. 262).

While Asya does (and yet doesn't) get closure, Shafak does not; here we see how Shafak projects her desired end through a dramatized narrative. In the novel, Shafak describes how Asya struggled in primary school because other children mocked the absence of a father figure in her life. This could be drawn from Shafak's lived experiences as she is described to have had a relatively tough social life in school. Although Shafak's cultural capital is variegated, she can never seem to choose between her Turkish roots and the Western world, much like Asya in the novel. Here, the only difference would be Asya's disdain towards her roots.

Honour deals with single parenthood in a different light, with infidelity at the heart of the issue. While by referring to BI, I drew on Shafak's upbringing, with *Honour*, I intend to draw onto Shafak's married life. While she doesn't talk about having faced a case of infidelity, she does talk about marriage and stagnation. In THBP, Shafak writes, "The truth was I had assumed that getting married would help me to settle down, but it did no such thing" (2011, p. 16).

In tandem with the idea of disillusionment is that of displacement which is pivotal in Shafak's life and her novels. An element of it has already been discussed through the medium of the State's impact on Shafak's identity. However, I'd like to now bring the reader back to Tuba tree. As referenced earlier in this paper, the Tuba tree has its roots in the air, which symbolizes the prospect of belonging to multiple places. We have also seen how Shafak assigns a significance to this mythical tree. Given this background, I'd like to focus on how we see Shafak express herself through TIMT. I'd like to hypothesize that Shafak places herself in the fig tree that she ascribes a voice to. Throughout the novel, we see the fig tree be an observer of the atrocities that pan out in Cyprus, while also feeling the pain the characters felt. This could be reflective of Shafak's experience with Turkey's political trajectory and how she felt after witnessing it. Most importantly, the element of commonality between the fig tree and Shafak is that of displacement. In the novel, Kostas, cuts a branch of the main fig tree which is present in the Happy Fig tavern, and replants it for the purpose of taking it with him to London. Here, the cut off branch of the fig tree is symbolic of Shafak while the main fig tree stands to be Shafak's maternal familial roots. The re-rooted fig tree adjusts to the Western climate and after some suffering finally becomes comfortable, however, it longs for the soil and air of Cyprus. This is a direct commentary on the internal state of Shafak. Although it might be debated that the fig tree did now have roots in England, it is important to draw on Kostas' manual on 'how to bury a fig tree' which involved the seasonal breaking of a few roots but preserving the main root. Here, the main root could be reflective of Shafak's referenced fixed compass leg which always remains in Istanbul. In HTSSAD, she writes, "Wherever I go, Istanbul will accompany me, that's how I feel. We do not give up on the places we love just because we are physically detached from them" (2020, p. 20). Thus, Shafak's projection of her own search and her struggles onto her characters is made evident through the novels at the heart of this paper.

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The Effectiveness of Art Therapy in Treating Parkinson Patients: A Comparative Analysis on Traditional Art and Digital Art as Mediums used in a Therapeutic Setting during Treatment

Amatullah Arsiwallah ¹

Abstract

The imaginative method of creating art is used in art therapy to assist individuals in expressing and exploring their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. Various diseases, such as anxiety, depression, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and addiction, have been successfully treated with art therapy. Greater self-awareness, insight, and healing can result through the access and expression of unconscious emotions and experiences through artistic endeavors. Along with other types of therapy, including talk therapy and medication, art therapy has been used to enhance self-esteem and interpersonal interactions. This form of therapy offers a distinctive and beneficial strategy for treating diseases, giving people a secure and imaginative setting to explore their inner selves and foster mental health. This study examines the effectiveness of this type of therapy in treating Parkinson's disease patients, the majority of whom have declining motor skills as a result of the disease's latter stages. This essay provides a thorough grasp of the many artistic mediums used in art therapy as well as studies done in that regard. The psychological and affective effects of art therapy are now well understood, but the consequences on cognitive functioning are less well understood. There is also study on the application of digital technology in art therapy. A survey of the body of literature and comparative evaluations of completed research are used to carry out data analysis.

Key Words: Art, Digital, Wellness, Healing, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Autism, Expression, Cognitive

Introduction

Art has been part of our lives for as long as humanity can remember. People have been creating and enjoying it for thousands of years. It is a reliable medium of self-expression and communication for children and adults. This raises the question of whether art may serve as more than merely a tool for people to enjoy. According to Pablo Picasso, art has the ability to cleanse the soul from the everyday burdens of life. Scientific studies show that art can heal people by changing their attitudes and physiology and make people feel lighter from the weight of their everyday stresses. When one is stressed, art can assist in changing their physiology from that of worry to relaxation and creativity. Through personal experience, art helps people release their pent-up emotions.

Certain pieces of art hold the potential to solve our problems in powerful ways. The viewers' attention must detach from the more conventional historical or stylistic issues with which art is generally concerned and it should be towards the novel methods in which the works

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of art express this for its potential to realize. The prudish view that art is created solely for aesthetic purposes has unfairly prevented art from realizing its hidden healing potential as a form of therapy.

Art therapy did not develop into an organized practice until the late 1940s. To this day, it is still a developing discipline in psychology. Art has continued as a significant component of the therapeutic community in several evaluation and treatment methods. For many people, art therapy can accomplish different things. In the broadest sense, it massages one's inner self, allowing one to have a greater awareness of themselves. Art therapy can provide support in various areas, including counselling, healing, treatment, rehabilitation, and psychotherapy.

Problem Statement

This study aims to explore the efficacy of different art mediums, encompassing both traditional and digital forms, in the treatment of severe diseases like Parkinson's.

Literature Review

Art therapy has been used in various forms throughout history, with evidence dating back to ancient times. Art Therapy began to take shape as a distinct form of therapy in 1914. Adrian Hill, a British artist who spent most of his time in the hospital after receiving a tuberculosis diagnosis began to use art as a coping mechanism for the illness and isolation that came with it. He later became an advocate for Art Therapy practice in medical settings. Amidst the treatment of numerous tuberculosis patients in sanatoriums, drawing and painting served as creative means of expression, granting them a sense of liberation within the constraints of their environment. Following Edward Adamson's discovery into the relationship between creative expression and emotional discharge, art therapy techniques were quickly adopted by psychiatric hospitals. At the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, the first recognized art therapy program was started in 1940. The program's director was the artist and psychotherapist Margaret Naumburg. Naumburg thought art therapy could be used to support those who had difficulty verbally expressing their feelings.

During World War II, art therapy was developed to help soldiers who were suffering from PTSD and other mental illnesses. The British Association of Art Therapists and the American Art Therapy Association were both founded as a result of the rising popularity of art therapy throughout time.

Today, Art Therapy finds application in diverse settings, such as hospitals, schools, and community centers, assisting individuals of all ages with various challenges like mental illness, trauma, and stress. Furthermore, it serves as a complementary therapy for those undergoing medical treatment, including cancer patients. The historical journey of art therapy serves as a testament to art's healing potential and its unique ability to facilitate self-expression beyond words. Numerous research studies have centered on exploring the healing attributes of art. Neurophysiologists acknowledge that art, prayer, and healing originate from a common source within the body, and all exhibit similar brainwave patterns and mind-body changes. They share a profound interconnection in both emotional experience and significance (Sadana, 2014)

Development in Art Therapy: Digital Era

Our use of digital technology and our participation in digital culture have become so pervasive in our daily lives that these changes have affected the way we interact with others, how we think, and how we behave. Physical interaction between people is declining, while the use of digital media for idea exchange is increasing. Online searches allow people to learn nearly anything. Everyone now has the opportunity to educate oneself and collaborate on social as well as private mental health issues.

Individuals with mental health needs are turning to digital media as a means to discover alternative approaches to educate themselves about, manage, and contemplate their mental health challenges and overall well-being (Wasil et al., 2020, as cited in Mcadams, 2021).

Due to high expenses, limited transportation, lack of information in rural areas, and shortage of skilled providers in underprivileged areas, many people are unable to access mental health services for a variety of reasons. The United States' current service providers, taken together, would not be sufficient to meet the needs of the population given the amount of people who use these services. Technology has advanced significantly in recent years, making digital gadgets like computers and cell phones more affordable and available to the majority of people. With the introduction of various applications to assist people with mental health, the use of digital means of art to treat people has also emerged.

Lee conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of Augmented Reality in enhancing the comprehension of greeting behavior and nonverbal social cues during social interactions in children with ASD. (2019, as cited in Mcadams, 2021). The use of such technology with patients has taken longer in the fields of psychology and creative therapies. Through a review of the body of research, contemporary uses of digital media were investigated, including those related to mental health. The use of the medium with different populations, including those with autism spectrum disorder, and with different age groups was also explored. A study was conducted to test the improvement in symptoms of Autistic children with the assistance of digital technology. Three boys, aged between 9 and 12, fulfilled the study's inclusion criteria. All of them had a clinical diagnosis of ASD, were not undergoing any medication or therapies during the test, and had a functional IQ of less than 90. To create the materials for the study, Lee(2019) updated the QuiverTM 3D AR coloring applications (<http://www.quivervision.com/>) and developed ten distinct social scenarios to be presented to the children during the intervention phase. After reading the story aloud with a therapist during the session, the participants were shown the augmented reality coloring book (ARCB) depicting the social interaction from the story. Subsequently, the children were instructed to color the picture, and the therapist discussed the story and picture with them. The purpose behind including coloring pages focused on hand gestures, facial expressions, or socially meaningful objects was to encourage the kids to explore new aspects they might not have noticed before. Afterward, the child can utilize a tablet computer to engage with the animated scene in virtual reality with colors of their preference, all in 3D. Following this, the children are guided to role-play their conversation with the therapist. The study was structured into three phases: the baseline phase, which gathered participant baseline data; the intervention phase, consisting of 10 sessions spread over five weeks; and the maintenance phase, which commenced six weeks after the conclusion of the intervention period. Throughout these phases, the children's comprehension and responses to different social situations were assessed using

Social Story™ (Baker, 2003a, b, as cited in Lee, 2019) trials (SSTs). (McAdams, 2021). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (KS-test) was used to compare the data to see if the youngsters had improved in their ability to judge social interactions. All three kids scored significantly higher than their baseline scores throughout the intervention period, and they continued to score higher than baseline during the maintenance phase.

The children's behavior in social circumstances had changed noticeably, according to feedback from the therapist and parents. The kids appeared to be more perceptive of nonverbal signs from others and responded to social situations more suitably. The therapist saw that the kids were eager and motivated to act out various roleplay scenarios they had learned with the ARCB (Augmented Reality Coloring Book) with their teachers and other kids.

The reason ARCB reached such a success was due to multiple reasons. The combination of the digital with art, especially in a younger generation that grows up around digital gadgets proved to capture the children's attention while coming across as non-threatening in comparison to other forms of treatments. It was shown to reduce the stress of children while increasing their motivation. Research has indicated that 3D animation incorporating spatial information can enhance social skills by enabling users to observe real-time character interactions, gestures, and expressions. This visual representation allows individuals to imitate these skills without the need to imagine actions solely based on a 2D static image. (Hoyek, Champely, Collet, Fargier, & Guillot, 2014; Wraga, Thompson, Alpert, & Kosslyn, 2003, as cited in Lee, 2019, referenced in McAdams, 2021).

The adoption of digital technology in creative therapy has been slower compared to the general population, but this gap has been narrowing in recent years. (Orr, 2012, referenced in McAdams, 2021). Increasingly, art therapists are incorporating digital technology into both their personal and professional lives and integrating it into their therapeutic approaches, as evidenced by current trends. (Kuleba, 2008; Orr, 2006b, 2012; Peterson, 2010; Peterson, Stovall, & Elkins, 2005, as cited in Carlton, 2014). In this context, therapeutic creative digital technology is employed with clients, and art-making programs including video editing, animation, digital drawing, collage, and photography are used, and in recent years even virtual reality.

The wider accessibility of digital media and technology has enabled therapists to integrate a diverse range of tools into their therapeutic practices. Studies have indicated that employing digital media sparks clients' curiosity, leading to improved communication, self-esteem, and feelings of acceptance. Additionally, it has been observed to enhance client attendance and commitment to therapy treatment. (Weinberg, 1985, as cited in Evans, 2012). Traditional art storage on the other hand requires more space than digital content which can be stored in a compact file. (McAdams, 2021).

Several client obstacles have been successfully removed with the help of digital media. Many seniors and adolescents held resistance to traditional talk therapy which is not faced as much in Art Therapy as it is a creative process many enjoy engaging in. Jamerson (2013) discusses in his research with children and adolescents that he would often see them interacting with digital media on their devices, or using social media before and after meeting them. It was this observation that struck a chord for his further research using digital media to engage in mental health services.

Some therapists remain hesitant to adopt digital tools in their practice due to various reasons. These include a lack of training in integrating digital technology into the therapeutic process, limited digital and media literacy concerning their role in art therapy, and difficulties accessing tools in Art Therapy. The IEATA (International Expressive Arts Therapy Association) (2017) emphasizes the importance of safeguarding clients' well-being when using novel techniques without established standards. In contrast, the AATA (American Art Therapy Association) (2013) addresses the use of digital media and technology, as well as conducting art therapy electronically, in separate sections. Similar to the success observed in studies with autistic patients, research has been conducted using digital technology for individuals with Parkinson's disease. One such study, which evaluates the effectiveness of symptom improvements, will be analysed later in this paper.

Treating Parkinson's with the help of Art therapy

The prevalence of Parkinson's disease (PD) is significant, with approximately 428 cases per 100,000 individuals between the ages of 60 and 70, and 2990 cases per 10,000 in those aged 70 years and older. As of 2014, there were an estimated 7.5 million PD patients worldwide, and by 2023, this number has been identified to be around 7 million in India alone. PD is one of the most common neurological conditions, affecting about 1% of individuals over 60 years old. While medication can delay its progression, PD causes ongoing and progressive disabilities. An increasing number of Parkinson's disease (PD) patients are expressing interest in non-drug therapies to alleviate their motor and non-motor symptoms. Alongside vital physical, occupational, and speech therapy, a wide array of complementary therapies are now readily accessible. These include Exercise/movement practices such as Boxing, Dance (including tango), Yoga, Tai chi, and Qigong, Mindfulness techniques like Meditation, Manual therapies like Acupuncture and Massage, and Creative pursuits like Singing/choir, Music therapy (including auditory cueing), Dance (including tango), Theatre, and Art therapy. Many of these treatments have been subject to formal investigations in PD, though often in limited patient populations. Later in this paper, two studies pertaining to Art therapy and its effects on Parkinson's disease will be analysed.

Research Questions

With the introduction of various new digital art tools such as virtual reality along with traditional tools of interactive arts, what are the benefits of going through traditional art therapy in comparison to newer interventions in art therapy while understanding the effectiveness of the result on patients suffering with Parkinson's?

Gaps In Literature Review

The use of art therapy for patients with Parkinson's has been studied both in India and abroad. While there are multiple studies conducted in India on the effectiveness of art therapy as an additional form of therapy for children with disorders, there have also been a fair number of studies conducted from 2015-2019 which show the effectiveness of art therapy in improving motor functions, quality of life, and anxiety in patients with Parkinson's. These studies provided similar results in the levels of improvements seen in patients, but none of them used any

specific digital art form in the art interventions. Therefore, most such studies were not in context with the research being conducted for this paper.

International research has demonstrated the value of art therapy in improving the mental, emotional, and physical health of Parkinson's sufferers. Making direct comparisons between these research is difficult, though, because of the differences in sample sizes, study designs, and art therapy methods applied. For example, a 2010 study in the UK indicated that art therapy enhanced the mood and quality of life of Parkinson's patients, and a 2013 study in the US discovered enhancements in mood, quality of life, and cognitive performance. Similar improvements in life satisfaction, happiness, and cognitive function were seen in a 2019 study conducted in Spain. In summary, the research indicates that art therapy can be helpful for Parkinson's patients regardless of where the therapy is provided. However, there is a lack of prior studies that use the same sample size and compare the effects of two different mediums of the same form of therapy.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to learn how Parkinson's disease, a chronic illness, can be managed through the incorporation of some type of art intervention, whether traditional or digital. The study attempts to provide an answer to the question, "Is the use of digital technology in art therapy as helpful as the use of traditional media of art?" in order to fulfill this research purpose.

The study made an effort to separate the advantages of both types of therapy in order to determine whether one could be more advantageous than the other. The amount of research on the application of art therapy for Parkinson's patients is expanding, and it consists of both primary research studies and secondary analyses. The secondary research analysis for my study offers perceptions into the application of art therapy for Parkinson patients.

A 2020 systematic review published in *Frontiers in Neurology* examined the effects of different types of art therapy on Parkinson's patients, including painting and drawing. The review found that art therapy can improve various aspects of physical and psychological wellbeing in Parkinson's patients. Using these reviews, a further analysis of the number of benefits has been made. A 2019 case study published in the *Journal of Movement Disorders* described how a patient with Parkinson's improved their motor function and quality of life through participation in a group art therapy program.

Overall, data is derived using the existing literature and case studies available on Art therapy.

Data Compilation and Analysis

The below given table has taken two studies conducted in consecutive years as a basis for analysis of the benefits of Art therapy. The details of each given study have been segmented in 10 categories to gauge an overall understanding of each study from certain common denominators.

Analysis of two studies conducted in two different regions using two distinct mediums of Art.

Particulars	Studies Analysed	
No of studies Analysed	Study 1	Study 2
Year of research	December of 2018	December of 2016
Type of Art Medium Used	Clay Art Therapy	Virtual Reality- Based training
Conducted by	Bae Young Sil and Kim Dong-Hee	Dockx K, Bekkers EMJ, Van den Bergh V, Ginis P, Rochester L, Hausdorff JM, Mirelman A, Nieuwboer A
Region of study	South Korea	Belgium
Research Sample Size	54 Patients	263 participants in total
Demographic Information	The group had 34.5% males and 65.4% were female.	159 of the 263 participants were male (60%) and 104 were female (40%).
Number of Sessions Conducted	The intervention consists of 16 sessions, conducted twice a week for 8 weeks, with each session lasting 80 minutes.	Each session lasts for 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of treadmill training, resulting in a total of 12 sessions over 6 weeks. The entire intervention can extend for a maximum duration of 12 weeks.
Prior exposure to Art Therapy	None	The patients have gone through other forms of therapy such as physiotherapy to form comparison between the physical function improvements.
Concentration/ Goal of the study	Concentrates on the use of Clay in creating art.	Goal is to effectively target obstacle crossing and dynamic balance.

Interventions Used	The modelling sessions centered around 16 alternating themes, with each week introducing different and distinct topics. As the sessions progressed, the topics/themes delved into more personal and individualized areas, especially as they approached the end of the sessions.	A computerized simulation enables users to engage with images and virtual objects in real-time, incorporating multiple sensory modalities within the virtual environment. The key emphasis of all these interventions should be on exercise and motor rehabilitation.
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Analysis of each category:

Year of Research Conducted:

Given that both studies were conducted prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is reasonable to assert that the patients with Parkinson's disease who took part in the research were not affected by any complications resulting from the virus. The studies were carried out two years apart, providing a sufficient time gap to establish a correlation between the data collected from the chosen sample.

Type of Art medium used:

In the first study **Clay Art therapy** is used to treat the patients. In both art therapy and psychotherapy, clay is a common medium. Many promote the use of clay as a tool to advance therapeutic processes in individual and group therapy due to its therapeutic potential (e.g. Anderson, 1995; Mattes & Robbins, 1981, referenced in Sholt, 2006).

In the second study Virtual Reality is the form of Art that has been used. VR technology, a promising new rehabilitation tool, facilitates mobility by using computer-based games in a virtual environment. It is common to use both commercial VR platforms such as the Nintendo Wii and Microsoft Kinect, and specialized VR tools designed for Parkinson's disease symptoms. Regular exercise has been shown to reduce both motor and non-motor symptoms and is recommended as part of a multimodal treatment regimen. VR exercise presents potential advantages over traditional exercise by enabling individualized skill exercise in a highly motivating and fun interactive environment.



The use of Virtual Reality in Gaming (Source: Goodwork Labs, 2017)

The image above shows how game designers try to create fresh and engaging gameplay environments with the assistance of Virtual Reality. The set up along with the devices used allow gamers to experience the minute details and intricacies of design making them feel like they are part of that world.



The use of Virtual Reality in helping Parkinson Patients (Source: MJFF Feed, 2016.)

This picture was taken by a team of researchers from the Tel Aviv Medical Center and Tel Aviv University, both in Israel, who were funded to conduct a pilot study titled Virtual Reality to Decrease Fall Risk in Patients with Parkinson's Disease by Michael J. Fox Foundation in 2007. As shown in the above pictures, the technology of VR used for gaming and VR to work with Parkinson patients is drastically different. The gaming VR technology has a lot more equipment involved. In the cases of technology like the Wii, a remote control needs to be used as well. With the VR design for the Parkinson patients, it has been specifically designed in order to enhance their balance and improve their motor functions with the assistance of a treadmill but no device is required for their hands. This helps the patients focus on only one activity, as in the case of the picture, which is walking.

For the first study analysed, the study has been conducted by two researchers namely Bae Young Sil and Kim Dong- Hee. For the second study, there are multiple researchers who have been cited at each section of the study as it is a review paper. This study, being a review paper, compiles and reviews works from multiple therapeutic settings centered on patients who received VR training. This shows us that a significantly large group of individuals was able to participate and yield results, mainly positive, from this study.

Region of study:

In Korea, the practice of employing art as a diversion first emerged in 1960 when a group of occupational therapists and mental health professionals used this novel strategy with their patients. The Korean Clinical Art Association was established in 1982 by a group of South Korean psychiatrists as a subsidiary organization (including music, painting and dancing). The use of art-based therapy started at this point. The urbanization and industrialization that

followed fuelled the public's interest in cultural cures. The potential of this new subject piqued the interest of numerous people and groups, who participated in activities of their own creation (Kim, 2016). With the increase in interest in this form of therapy, numerous studies were conducted in South Korea, on patients with Parkinson's. The first study analysed is one such study that was conducted. The second study mentioned in this context was conducted in Belgium and involved multiple researchers. In this study, each researcher explored the effects of virtual reality (VR) interventions on patients with Parkinson's disease.

Research Sample Size:

For each of the studies the sample size differs. The study conducted in South Korea was on only one batch of 54 patients whereas the Belgium study was a combined review of multiple studies conducted using the same VR technology. There were 263 participants in total for all the studies, and not more than 50 participants per study. In the South Korea study, each group initially consisted of 27 patients with PD. To account for potential dropouts, 33 PD patients were selected for both the experimental and control groups. However, during the baseline demographic phase, 7 PD patients from the experimental group and 5 PD patients from the control group were excluded either due to facility patient exit or refusal to continue with the intervention. The final sample comprised 54 PD patients, with 26 in the experimental group and 28 in the control group.

Demographic information:

It was important to note that neither of the male nor female patients in the studies had undergone any form of art therapy before participating in the sessions. This information is crucial as it ensures that the observed effects and outcomes of the sessions can be attributed to the specific interventions implemented during the studies, rather than any potential confounding factors or influences from prior art therapy experiences.

Interventions made:



Source: *Journal of Evidence- Based Integrative Medicine*, Volume 23, 2018.

Clay art manipulation sessions with 16 alternate themes made up each session. As shown in the picture above, each session consisted of one theme and the patients had to express that theme with the help of clay. As the sessions progressed the themes started to become more personal and expressive for the patients which then facilitated in the patients opening up about themselves.

VR interventions:

The primary focus of all the studies was on motor rehabilitation. Specifically, three trials (Lee 2015; Yang 2015; Yen 2011, referenced in Dockx, 2016) aimed to improve balance performance, while five trials (Liao 2015; Pedreira 2013; Pompeu 2012; Shen 2014–2015; van den Heuvel 2014, referenced in Dockx, 2016) included both balancing and stepping exercises. The total duration of therapy varied across the studies, ranging from six to 52 hours of practice over a minimum of four weeks to a maximum of 12 weeks.

Six researchers utilized commercial games such as Wii Fit, Motek, or other VR games, while two studies employed customized VR programs specifically designed for PD therapy. A balancing board was used in six experiments to train both static and dynamic balance, while in four investigations, a VR headset was utilized in combination with dancing movements or stepping in place. The intervention context differed among the studies, with five trials conducted in an outpatient setting and one in a home-based setting. The context of the study was not specified in two studies.

Key Findings

Both the studies proved to be advantageous and helped in improving certain aspects of the lives of people with Parkinson's. For Clay Art therapy, the patients were able to regain their ability of fine motor skills which was affected by tremors and stiffness in Parkinson's disease sufferers. It was also proven to help lower anxiety and stress for the patients as they were able to enjoy a soothing activity that relieved their tension. Participants in art therapy experienced joy and satisfaction, which was shown to uplift their spirits and make them feel more optimistic. By allowing patients to express themselves creatively, clay art therapy was able to give them a sense of purpose and fulfillment as it made them engage in an enjoyable activity which they once would have found difficult. Overall since the therapeutic setting and interventions were done in a group, patients had the chance to interact with people who are experiencing similar things.

For Virtual Reality, the studies showed that Virtual Reality was a fun and novel technology to most people. Patients who were participating in the studies, especially those at higher stages of Parkinson Disease, who were usually not motivated enough to continue the practice of a skill in order to develop their motor skills, were now motivated to do so with the variety of tasks and activities available in Virtual Reality. The practice sessions would hence last longer due to the variety of games provided within the virtual space.

Considering that the patients were also going through physiotherapy, VR therapies may sometimes result in greater stride and step length improvements than physiotherapy. There isn't much evidence to back up improvements in gait, balance, and quality of life that are on par with those shown with active control therapy. No unfavourable situations were reported. There

hasn't been much research comparing virtual reality to passive control therapies, and there isn't enough information to compare virtual reality to no active intervention. It is challenging to generalize the findings because there is so little research available at the moment. Further study is needed to bolster and expand the body of data that supports VR in PD. This review examines the current research on the efficacy of VR exercise in PD rehabilitation. Eight trials were discovered with a total of 263 PD patients. The fact that all studies were just released shows how cutting-edge the field of study into VR augmented therapy is.

The study aimed to compare the effects of exercising with virtual reality (VR) to active control therapies and passive control interventions, specifically assessing gains in gait, balance, overall motor function, activities of daily living, quality of life, cognition, exercise adherence, and the occurrence of adverse events in comparison to Clay Art therapy. Based on current research, VR therapy shows comparable effects to active control therapies on balance, gait, ADL function, quality of life, and cognitive function in patients with Parkinson's disease. Moreover, VR therapy offers additional advantages in terms of step and stride length. When compared to passive control interventions, VR exercise leads to more significant improvements in gait, balance, ADL function, and quality of life. Although high-quality evidence is limited, earlier pilot studies have yielded similar conclusions, demonstrating positive effects on comparable outcomes with VR exercise in Parkinson's disease (Esculier 2012; Gonçalves 2014; Herz 2013; Holmes 2013; Lefavre 2015; Mhatre 2013; Mirelman 2011; Palacios Navarro 2015; Shema 2014, referenced in Dockx, 2016). Notably, improvements in gait and balance measurements persist in the VR group at three and 12 months' follow-up. Clay Art therapy on the other hand focused on self-expression for the patients. Considering how different the goals of each study were, the findings and results differed too. One essential finding was that Clay Art therapy was a more slow and gradual process. It took longer than the virtual reality training and yielded results towards the end of its sessions. The Virtual Reality training on the other showed improvement in the motor skills of the patients after a couple of training sessions itself. It was proven to be faster at yielding results and lasted for lesser sessions in comparison to Clay Art.

Limitations to Each Type of Therapy

Several limitations should be taken into account when considering the study on clay art therapy for patients with Parkinson's disease. Firstly, physical limitations such as tremors, stiffness, and coordination issues may make it difficult for patients to work with clay, resulting in their inability to fully participate in therapy. Consequently, the therapist may have to adjust the activity accordingly. Secondly, while fine motor skills and a sense of success can be enhanced through clay art therapy, these benefits may not necessarily transfer to other daily living activities, limiting the therapy's potential to be applied to other areas of the patient's life. Thirdly, working with clay can be emotionally distressing for some patients, particularly those who have had a negative past relationship with art, which could affect the therapy's effectiveness, requiring the therapist to be mindful of the patient's emotional state. Furthermore, geographic restrictions on patient diversity in the study sample meant that all participants were from Busan, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study did not take into account the consequences of Parkinson's disease treatment, which could have had an impact on the results. Finally, the investigation did not consider the minimal clinically

meaningful difference values, which could have limited the clinical significance of the study's findings. The virtual reality study also had its limitations, which should be taken into account. Firstly, patients may experience cognitive stress, cyber-sickness, or an inadvertently high or low level of Parkinson's exercise intensity. Secondly, patients might prioritize their gaming scores over their movement quality, which could reduce the benefits of training.

Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that clay art therapy can positively impact the overall mental and physical health of Parkinson's disease (PD) patients in long-term care facilities. Even in a group setting, clay art therapy facilitates exploration and potential establishment of new interpersonal or social connections among PD patients. Social interaction and engaging in activities can lead to improvements in self-confidence, emotional stability, and overall quality of life for individuals with PD. Furthermore, clay modelling has shown to ameliorate the physical symptoms of PD, including muscle rigidity, tremors, fatigue, speech issues, and sleep disturbances. These results highlight the significant potential of clay art as a non-drug therapy for PD. Thus, the study recommends further investigation and advancement in utilizing clay art as a treatment approach for PD patients.

For the Virtual Reality study, given that they are based on a small number of inconsistently high-quality studies, our results should be regarded with caution. Due to the minimal number of included trials, sub analyses on participant characteristics or study design were not possible. To establish the suitability of VR therapies in PD patients in relation to age, cognition, disease severity, and the existence of comorbidity, more empirical research is required. The components of the appropriate VR intervention must also be defined, therefore more research is required.

While the majority of academics and clinicians instinctively favour bespoke VR interventions that target particular clinical aspects of PD (Barry 2014, referenced in Dockx, 2016), objective study is preferred to ascertain whether there are differences in responses between commercialized and tailored VR interventions. Clinicians require clear instructions on how to include VR exercise into routine practice, including information on the frequency of training sessions, the length of the intervention, and the targeted motor skills. On the basis of the available dataset, such analyses were regrettably not possible.

Every therapy has its drawbacks and potential dangers. Even while analysing Art therapy we need to consider this medium in its entirety while being aware of both the advantages and limitations of its use. In this way we can learn how to effectively employ these tools for therapeutic growth that is both personal and professional for the benefits of the therapist and the clients too.

With the implementation of numerous technologies, Art Therapy has embraced and actively participated to contribute to the technological innovations of the psychology field while expanding the potential of and effectiveness of creative counselling, instead of accepting traditional status quo. With such technology being very new, the research available has provided a concise and easy understanding of both the type of mediums that are currently present in the therapy and how both the mediums of art aim for the same goals within shorter time frames of interventions. The two studies have helped gain understanding of the differences

inherent within the same type of therapy and how extensive it is via the comparative examination.

Overall, the range of secondary research conducted leads to the conclusion that art therapy can be a successful intervention for Parkinson's patients, enhancing numerous facets of physical, emotional, and psychological well-being.

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‘You Won’t Feel a Thing’: A Study of the Problematic Normalisation of Rape in Selected Manhwa

Pushkar HR¹

Abstract

At a time where instances of assault and sexually motivated crimes are on the rise, it is not surprising that references to it are made in popular culture and in movies and music. Although these references are made mostly to draw attention to the problem at hand, and have people think and change, a problematic trend is also on the rise. Of late, there has been a trend of normalizing and even romanticizing non-consensual sex in the popular discourse, leading to the emergence of a modern “rape culture” which can be seen in literature and music. This “rape culture” has led to an increase in crimes involving sexual assault and has led to the normalizing of the same. In this paper, by placing an emphasis on Korean Manhwas. I aim to research into why this trend is gaining popularity despite assault being recognized as a heinous crime and being spoken against. By looking at literature, consulting police records and interviewing a few consumers of such literature, I aim to draw a link between the two and highlight the extremely problematic aspect of this modern culture. I also look at the various mind frames and psychological reasons behind the same.

Keywords: Rape Culture, Manhwas, Popular Culture, Social Media, Sexually Deviant

TW: Non-consensual sex, blood, self-harm, murder, torture

NSFW: Due to violent graphics, the images are not reproduced here. For reference, please refer to the original text.

Introduction

I have always loved reading comics and graphic novels. I am currently an avid reader of manhwas and manga. Manhwas are the Korean term for graphic novels and comics, and they often place intense detail on the graphic and visuals aspects of the stories. These stories deal with various themes and cover various genres like romance, slice-of-life, horror, gore etcetera. Lately, while reading, a disturbing trend caught my eye. The Manhwa scene, especially stories dealing with BL (Boys Love, an acronym used to refer to stories dealing with romantic and sexual plots between two male characters) stories, seem to focus heavily on ideas of rape, stalking and gore. These stories use rape as romantic and pornographic plot points. Initially intended for female audiences, BL Manhwas now have a much broader base of readers including cis-men. This genre often serves as an outlet for homosexual writers, and also LGBTQI+ readers to find literature that suits their taste. In India as well, Lakshmi Menon writes, “many BL fans were first exposed to homosexuality through their introduction to the genre” (Welker, 8).

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A prime example of this is the Manhwa, *Killing Stalking* (2016), hereafter mentioned as KS. In KS, a character Yoonbum, stalks his crush, discovers he is a serial killer and criminal and willingly admits to being his slave. The problematic story then dives into incest, gore and a lot of non-consensual sex. The author wrote the story intending it to be a gory horror story to highlight the depravity of the characters. The story was then ‘adopted’ by the romance genre section. Simultaneously a large number of similar comics and stories with similar themes have popped up. The reason I point out this trend is that a large number of readers have ended up “liking” and romanticising such trends. The writer of KS, received death threats when they attempted to change the character’s outlook to try stopping this trend and appeal for restraint.

In a vast variety of areas in popular culture, rape and acts of violence are either normalised or shown very light heartedly. From books to media, it is everywhere. Studies have shown that intake and exposure to such stories show an increase in tendencies to commit such crimes. In this paper, I aim to answer the fundamental question: How has the romanticisation of abuse in the literature, especially in Manhwass of the current times, led to the fetishisation of abuse and the emergence of a rape culture? The methodology of this paper involves a combination of textual reading and observation of the readership and online research. The paper begins with a literature review that consults various academic sources on the legalities of abuse, as well as the Manhwa scape. I deconstruct and analyse the stories to point out the scale of abuse and manipulation. An anonymous google form was circulated for the survey. I break down the answers to the questions the survey posed, regarding the emotions and feelings that readers and viewers felt during and after reading the stories to understand what makes these themes so attractive.

Graphic novels are getting increasingly popular. With 40% of adults² having read graphic novels, it is slowly starting to make a niche for itself globally. We are all familiar with comic books that have been around since the 1930’s. Globally, multiple versions or genres of these comics exist. Comics in the USA, Manga in Japan, Manhwa in Korea are a few of these varieties. Manhwa refers to a broad type of Korean comics and animation. “The usage of the term “manhwa” began during the 1920s when it [local graphic novels] shifted from politics to children’s cartoons and humorous illustrations” (Binimbol). In the modern period, since the advent of the internet, Manhwass have shifted online. Applications such as Webtoon and LEZHIN offer Manhwass to readers across the globe, usually at a cost. Manhwass are also available on the Internet free although they are illegal due to copyright infringement. A vast number of readers usually flock to such ‘second hand’ websites to read.

One of the most popular Manhwass on LEZHIN and multiple ‘second hand’ websites is the story *Killing Stalking* (2016). Written and illustrated by a female author under the pen name ‘Koogi’, it was released on LEZHIN in November 2016 and became an instant hit. The story follows the character Yoonbum, a mentally ill man with an extremely traumatic past. He develops a crush on Sangwoo, a friend from the time he served in the military. He slowly develops an insane obsession that drives him to break into Sangwoo’s house. Sangwoo, who

² “EarlyWord: The Publisher | Librarian Connection» Blog Archive Who Reads Graphic Novels?

turns out to be a serial killer, injures and beats Yoonbum and eventually an extremely toxic, abusive and manipulative relationship evolves. Koogi, explicitly states that the story is not a romance. The story tracks multiple gory and taboo themes like blood kinks, incest, and voyeurism. The story also dives into themes of rape, homosexuality, abuse and manipulation. Throughout the story, rape and manipulation play a key role. Yoonbum in fact develops a crush on Sangwoo after he saves him from a group of soldiers who attempt to rape him. Sangwoo proceeds to rape multiple victims throughout the story.

The Pawns Revenge (2021), hereafter TPR, is an ongoing spin-off of KS, and also premiered on LEZHIN. Written and illustrated by an author under the pen name 'EVY', it is a milder and more pornographic spin-off. It follows the character Je-oh, a prostitute at the bottom of the social hierarchy. He is saved by his abusive pimp by a man named Seong-rok who turns out to be a necromantic serial killer. They tie up together and Je-oh uses his body and his killer boyfriend to exert revenge. The story also tracks themes of blood, rape and manipulation. Unlike KS, however, this story was meant to be sexualised and romanticised. We see repeated use of rape as a plot point to build romantic connections.

In both *Killing Stalking* and *The Pawns Revenge*, another common theme is of evading the law. We see both Sangwoo and Je-oh make use of police collections and various loopholes in laws to get away with their crimes. They get into the intricacies and find even the smallest of intricacies that they can use to their advantage. This theme has a lot of relevance when it comes to today's society, too. Sexual harassment and crimes related to assault have become almost commonplace. There have been multiple instances worldwide, where multiple people and rapists have used influence, contacts and loopholes in laws to escape punishment.

As the Manhwas are set in Korea, it is important to look at and analyse the existing laws there to provide a broader context. South Korea, like many countries, is grappling with an alarming increase in sexually related crimes. "Sexual harassment crimes rate stand at an astonishing rate of 3.4 reported cases every hour" (Hanyang). This totals to a staggering 80 cases a day and nineteen thousand a year (as of 2021).³ Of these cases, 86% are perpetrated by men, and 78% go unreported. This reflects a deeply rooted issue. In South Korean Law, Articles 297-299 deal with rape and related crimes. "South Korean laws governing sex-related offenses are broadly categorized into criminal law and punishment for sexual violence" (S. Lee). These laws define and state the various conditions that must be met to categorise an act as rape. Laws regarding rape have undergone a massive change. Until 2020, the legal age of consent used to be 13. After a horrific case of assault, the age of consent was raised to 16 and later on to 20 in 2022.

In the Manhwas, we see the use of rape against members of the same sex. The victims are unable to get justice due to the cunning tactics of their abusers, however, in real life things are

³"Sexual Crimes Occur at Rate of 3.4 per Hour in South Korea." *Hani.co.kr*, 2018, <english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/874473.html>. Accessed 27 Feb. 2023.

much grimmer. Male victims as well as victims from the LGBTQI+ are unable to get justice solely because of a lack of legal recognition as well as societal stigma. Homosexuality is a taboo in South Korea, and is looked down as unnatural and disruptive in Confucianism, the prevalent religion. Members of the LGBTQI+ community are in-fact subjected to what has been dubbed as “corrective rape” in order to turn them heterosexual due to the societal stigma. “In most cases of corrective rape, the perpetrators are family members because of which the victims refrain from seeking legal recourse” (Jain)⁴. Despite such worrisome facts, rape seems to be constantly fetishised in such literature.

Sang-woe

In the past few years, Manhwas have begun to dominate the graphic novel scene. What was once a localised phenomenon in Korea, is now a global favourite, with readers all over the globe. They are translated and easily available to read online. As mentioned before, KS and TPR are two of the most popular. While these stories were intended to be horror, the fans managed to turn them into a sort of problematic gospel. Turning them into queer romance stories and obsessing over ideas of rape, blood-lust and psychological manipulation. Twitter and social media is full of questionable posts and comments. Before going into the details of the impact these manhwas have had, it is important to understand the storyline. Both stories focus on the same broad theme, an obsessive, psychotic, serial killer manipulating and falling in love with a boy obsessed with them. Manhwas are popular due to the visual element that they add to the story. These graphics are detailed and aesthetic. In KS and TPR, the graphics play a key role in the actual depiction of abuse and gore. More than dialogues, the graphics are what attract audiences. The graphics are detailed and are pornographic in nature.

KS is a psychological horror story. The two main characters are Sangwoo and Yoonbum. It focuses on the relationship between the two men. Yoonbum is a shy, quiet boy in his early 20's who lives through a traumatic childhood. His parents commit suicide leaving him an orphan. He was constantly abused both sexually and mentally by an uncle who looked after him. During his conscription at the Korean military, a group of men attempted to assault him and he was saved by Sangwoo. He develops an obsession with him and breaks into his house. Sangwoo too had a problematic life. His father was an alcoholic who regularly beat his mother who would in turn beat her son. As a result, he murdered both his parents and ran away, developing a taste for blood. Yoonbum finds in his house, a woman kept mutilated and gagged. He tries to run but found by Sangwoo who knocks him out by hitting him on the head.

Fig. 1.1 below is an excerpt from Chapter 1 of KS. Yoonbum discovers the woman in the basement. She is topless, tied, gagged and bruised all over. She is alive and constantly whimpers. Yoonbum removes the tape from her mouth, after which she begs for help. She then

⁴ Jain, Rupam. “Parents Use ‘Corrective Rape’ to ‘Straight’en Gays.” *The Times of India*, Times Of India, 31 May 2015

yells as the visual shifts to Sang-woo hitting him with a baseball bat. Yoonbum then is knocked out and wakes up a while later.



Fig. 1.1 - Sang-woo finds Yoonbum in the basement. Source: Lezhin

Fig.1.2 shows the scene thereon. He wakes up to find himself chained and locked in the basement. He is confused and scared and discovers next to him the now dead body of the woman. She is bleeding, and her hair has been cut, too. According to most readers, it is from this point the ‘relationship’ between Yoonbum and Sangwoo begins. The scene is meant to be one that is disgusting and gory. It establishes the psychotic character of Sangwoo, and shows how violence and abuse is not new to him. He has been committing horrific crimes since a while now.



Fig 1.2- The scene in the basement. Source: Lezhin

From this point on is where the manipulation and abuse begins, and so is the sexualisation and fetishisation of abuse. Sangwoo breaks Yoonbum's legs and hoists him onto a ceiling fan by the neck and proceeds to masturbate against his legs. He spares his life for some reason and keeps him as a sex-slave and househelp. Yoonbum tries to escape but caught and bound in the house. Sang-woo later brings home an elderly man from a bar and kills him in front of Yoonbum as a warning. It is later revealed that Sangwoo had a weird obsession with his mother. He suffers from the Oedipus complex, and keeps and looks at Yoonbum as his mother.

Even-though Sangwoo is ‘canonically’ heterosexual, he sleeps with him repeatedly, dressing him up in feminine clothes, which belonged to his mother. He then starts letting him out of the house but continues to engage in a lot of physical abuse. Gradually, Yoonbum starts to like the treatment. Sangwoo calls home multiple women. He locks Yoonbum in a closet and forces him to watch him sleep with them whom he would later kill. He makes sure Yoonbum can watch the entire scene. He constantly glares at him as a method of psychological torture, to make sure that he doesn’t abandon him or try and escape. He fuels a sense of jealousy to make sure he has him around the grip of his fingers.

The police gradually catch wind due to CCTV footage, and suspicious behaviour around Sangwoo’s house. A policeman reopens the case of the murder of Sangwoo’s parents. He breaks into his house, but finds nothing but a scared Yoonbum who convinces him that they are a couple. Gradually Sangwoo wants to kill Yoonbum. The abuse intensifies. In the end, the police-chief is murdered by Sangwoo. The police join the dots and figure out Sang-woo’s role. Yoonbum tries repeatedly to escape, and in desperation, one day sets fire to the house. The cops step in, subdue an injured Sangwoo who is taken to the hospital.

The police discover Sangwoo’s mother’s body, preserved and stored in the walls of the house. The body is meticulously toyed with, and arranged in a particular position. He is arrested and Yoonbum is hospitalised. Yoonbum is unable to get over his dependence and love for Sangwoo. The story ends with Yoonbum visiting Sangwoo in the hospital to find out that a delusional old woman strangled him a night ago. He runs back to the old house and cries. He hears Sangwoo call out to him, and sees him at an intersection and calls out to him and gets no response.

As we can see, the story is a terrifying and terrible tale full of gore, blood and abuse. It is in no way a mild comic; it is a story that would scare many and at times was nauseating for me to read. Yet a large section of fans of the book seemed to like and find the trope romantic.

TPR is an ongoing Manhwa, which is a milder spinoff of KS. The characters are inspired from KS and even look the same. It tracks the story of two male characters, Je-oh and Seong-rok. Je-oh is a prostitute who lives in the ghettos of Seoul. He lives through a traumatic childhood that leaves him numb and traumatised. He develops a nonchalant attitude towards everything. He too suffers abuse as a young boy. He struggles to make ends meet and sleeps with multiple people to earn a living. His pimp is an abusive and short-tempered man who takes away all his money.

Soon Seong-rok, a serial killer, is hired to kill the pimp. He kidnaps the pimp, Je-oh who witnessed the event, begs to be taken as well as he was tired of his abusive life. Seong-rok kidnaps them and takes him home, and instantly starts to regret. He locks the pimp and chains him, but surprisingly lets Je-oh roam free. Je-oh proceeds to seduce him and sleep with him as a reward. It is revealed that Seong-rok is on the lookout for a former lover, a woman who also was a prostitute, whom he wants to kill. Je-oh is locked in the house as Seong-rok goes about killing. He shuffles through his belongings and finds out his plans as well as photos of his former lover. He starts to dress like and imitate her which initially angered Seong-rok but he eventually gives in and proceeds to sleep with him multiple times, engaging in violence, anger and blood-letting in the process. Je-oh once threatened to reveal Seong-rok’s plans and in anger, he gets thrown onto the floor, beaten and abused. The difference is that here, Je-oh actively

enjoys being abused, he looks for reasons to be abused, and uses them as occasions to show off his 'skills'. Je-oh begins to secretly plot a way through which he can use Seong-rok to exert revenge and gain power.

He plans to use and manipulate Seong-rok to slowly kill off his enemies and eventually take control of Seoul's powerful red-light scene. In the latest chapter, we see Seong-rok is in active contact with his former lover who is manipulating him. The pimp, even in captivity, constantly verbally harasses Je-oh. Je-oh sleeps with him to taunt Seong-rok. Je-oh frees the pimp and makes him attack Seong-rok as a tactic to manipulate. Seong-rok survives and is angry. Je-oh confesses that he did this to test him. He asks him to kill the pimp. Seong-rok drags the pimp outside to an abandoned playground in the rain. He binds him with rope and chokes him slowly to death, getting sexually aroused in the process. This shows the bloodlust that he carries as well as his subtle necrophilia tendency. Je-oh and Seong-rok sleep together right after. The chapter ends with the introduction of two policemen, who are suspicious about Seong-rok's neighbourhood and the rate of disappearances.

We see Seong-rok meet his lover, an extremely powerful woman, Hee-seong who is 2nd in line at the organisation that handles Seoul's brothels. She is the ringleader of a sex-trafficking organisation. Seong-rok is in love with her, and kills on her command to keep her position safe, and help her carry out her own plan. The police act on the tip and investigate her house and find nothing. Figuring this out, a jealous Je-oh decides he should use this as an opportunity to manipulate and get his work done. He starts planning a method to exert revenge, and using Seong-rok as a pawn to gain control and power.

In both the stories, we see the use of gore, blood and psychological manipulation. The stark difference between the two is in the way the characters react to their situation. Sangwoo and Seong-rok are both characters who have an element of blood lust to them, but Sangwoo is clearly a much more depraved and psychotic individual. He consistently abuses and manipulates just for the sheer pleasure he derives from it. Sangwoo suffers from much more complex and deep-rooted mental issues that lead him to act the way he does. Seong-rok is forced to kill and abuse for the sake of his former lover. He is also manipulated by Je-oh to kill and never does so out of his own accord. Je-oh and Yoonbum are starkly different. Yoonbum falls into the trap and unwillingly submits to all the abuse. Eventually due to his mental state, he accepts his fate. Je-oh on the other hand, derives pleasure from the abuse he suffers. He submits willingly and acts suspiciously to be abused.

We see a common theme of abuse being inflicted by two different types of characters in the stories. In KS the scary daunting Sang-woo is the orchestrator while in TPR the quiet, unassuming Je-Oh is the mastermind. The amount of gore and violence is considerably higher in KS. The plot and the graphics are much gorier and more detailed. TPR seems to be taking a darker turn. It is considerably more refined, with more emphasis placed on smut and sex than blood. Another repercussion of the popularity of such stories is the skewed perception of homosexual relationships. Gay relationships are anyway a taboo topic in most of the world and more so in South Korea where they are looked at as 'unnatural'. Through toxic and abusive representations of same sex relationships, the taboo and bias against it are further strengthened. Most of the representations are either stereotypical or abusive. The stories establish same sex relationships as ones where rape and lack of consent are normal. As one of the partners is continually abused and still decides to continue to stay in the relationship, it builds an untrue

norm around consent. There is also a constant fetishisation of gay relationships. As a result, readers often harass or intrude the private spaces of same sex couples in real life. It is often believed or stereotype that all gay relationships have abuse as a normal part of them.

The plots of both these stories are purely horrific. There is no aspect, or element of romance present in them whatsoever. Yet fans continue to claim them to be romantic. A quick search on twitter, shows thread upon thread of fan-art, edits, comments and fanfiction regarding the two stories. There are multiple pages that promote the ‘aesthetic’ of the crimes, and multiple comments and posts about how beautiful, romantic and erotic the relationships between the characters are. The popularity has reached such an extent that a live action show of KS is being planned. This poses multiple questions. What do people find romantic or adorable in a story that is so horrific? Why are people fetishizing and wishing to be abused? Why is the notion of rape and abuse being normalized? To understand the same, it is integral to look at the mind-set of the readers and the psychological reasons that have contributed to the same.

The Fan Problem

KS and TPR have a massive fan following. KS is one of the highest read and most popular Manhwas⁵ of all time. These books are highly popular and have a massive fan following. There are hundreds upon hundreds of fan pages and accounts dedicated to these manhwas on the internet and social media. The fans, the readers play a very important role when it comes to the way the stories are perceived and looked at by the people. The readers are free to interpret the story the way they like. In terms of the romanticisation of abuse, the fandoms of the Manhwas play the most important role. Fandoms are groups of individuals who like a story or character. Usually referring to groups or accounts online, the fandoms are crucial to the way stories are perceived. It is often through these fandom groups that we see posts that glorify abuse. In this section, we shall look at how these fandoms have led to the normalisation of abuse.

On opening the official fandom account of KS, one is greeted with the following two disclaimers (Fig. 3). This highlights just how deep the problem of romanticising the abuse in it is. As mentioned, the fans of the ‘Yaoi’ or BL genre of manhwas look at KS and TPR as prime examples of romantic homosexual stories. They willingly look over the abuse, or downplay it only because the stories show two men engaging in sexual intercourse. They even refuse to accept the author’s position.

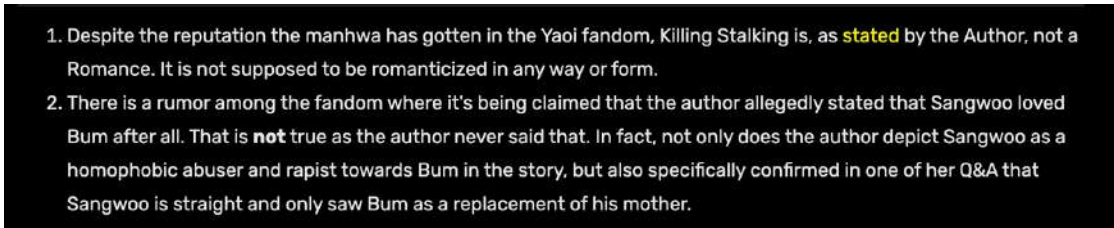
- 
1. Despite the reputation the manhwa has gotten in the Yaoi fandom, Killing Stalking is, as **stated** by the Author, not a Romance. It is not supposed to be romanticized in any way or form.
 2. There is a rumor among the fandom where it's being claimed that the author allegedly stated that Sangwoo loved Bum after all. That is **not** true as the author never said that. In fact, not only does the author depict Sangwoo as a homophobic abuser and rapist towards Bum in the story, but also specifically confirmed in one of her Q&A that Sangwoo is straight and only saw Bum as a replacement of his mother.

Fig.3: The disclaimers. Source: Killing Stalking Fandom Page⁶

⁵According to the description of the Manhwa on the Lezhin website

⁶“Killing Stalking.” *Killing Stalking Wiki*, 2016, <killing-stalking.fandom.com/wiki/Killing_Stalking>.

Accessed 28th Mar. 2023.

In order to gain first-hand information about why the readers look at something so disturbing in a positive light, I conducted an online survey to understand the various points of views. The survey was conducted via a google form and was sent out on various fandom pages and threads regarding the two Manhwas. I received a total of 72 responses. Of the respondents, 46.4% were female, 39.3% were female, and 7.2% were gender-fluid while the rest preferred not to say. Of them, 71.6% identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community. There is an image built in public perception that BL Manhwa are read largely by Queer, especially queer female audiences. The data corroborates with the same.

Why do you read Manhwas?

72 responses

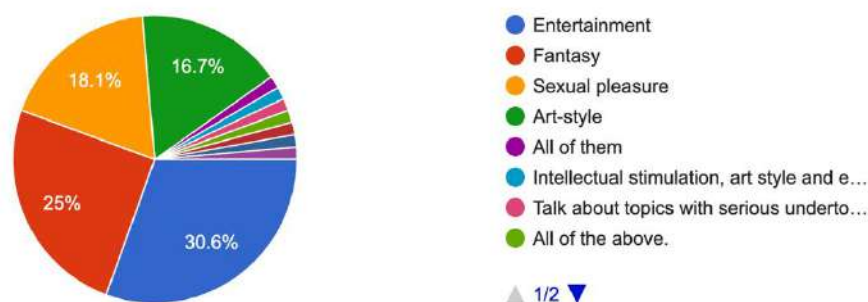


Fig.4: Survey question

Readers read Manhwas for various reasons. Sexual pleasure and fantasy is one of the reasons why Manhwas are renowned. Unlike most graphic novels, Manhwas especially those of the BL category place an extra emphasis on sex. There is incorporation of smut and pornographic images within the storyline. It is also one of the reasons that people read them. They are made this way on purpose so that it draws an audience.

Do the stories act as a way to project and fulfill kinks or any sexual fantasies?

72 responses

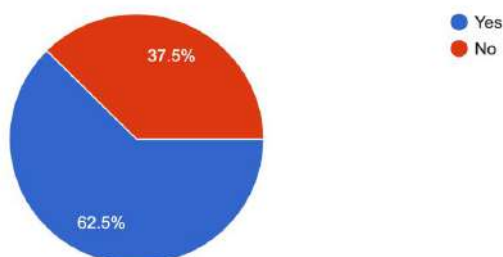


Fig. 5: Survey Question

This was further strengthened by the results of the survey where a majority of the respondents, as Fig 5 shows, replied saying the stories act as a way to project sexual kinks. In a society where morality plays a very important role, sex and sexuality is looked at as taboo. A vast majority of people have sexual fantasies and kinks related to blood and non-consensual sex.⁸ According to a study⁹ by Bivona and Critelli, around 62% of women accept that they have fantasies relating to non-consensual sex. The figure is expected to be much higher. This when linked with the fact that a majority of readers are women can explain why the abuse and rape in the novels are attractive and ‘romantic’ to so many.

The influence of such sexual deviant behaviours is so widespread that there are circles of people who engage in ‘consensual non-consensual sex’ or CNC roleplay. In the psychological field, according to the current understanding “consensual nonconsent, in essence, reflects an extreme form of eroticization of powerlessness” (Ley). This eroticisation of powerlessness forms the foundation of the stories of KS and TPR. Yoonbum enjoys being subordinate to Sangwoo. Je-oh realises how powerless Seong-rok is compared to Hee-Seong and decides to start manipulating him. Thus, it reaches out to the people who are actively looking for content that caters to their deviant thoughts, or awakens feelings of deviance in people who come across it.

An open-ended question was asked to figure out if the gore and abuse appealed to the responder and why. In response, an overwhelming percentage of viewers responded saying the scenes of gore and graphic sex serve as key reasons to read. Some responded saying that these scenes serve as important hooks to highlight the psychotic conditions of the characters. Some responded saying that these scenes satisfy the inner craving for blood-lust or violence. It acts as a way to quell violent or aggressive tendencies without having to actually act on them physically. Most said that they act as a way to fulfil certain sexual desires or fantasies. However, a small percentage also responded saying that these scenes left them unsettled and disturbed, and they preferred to skip them.

Another reason why Manhwas are such a success is due to the presence of blood and violence. The survey showed that 68% of the respondents found the use of blood and violence appealing. These violent depictions are a major attractor for those who like horror or crime related stories. According to a study by Bridget Rubenking and Annie Lang, “Disgust, it is argued here, makes us feel bad but it has functionally evolved over time to compel our attention,

⁸ “Why Are ‘Rape Fantasies’ so Common?” *Psychology Today*, 2020, <www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-myths-sex/202003/why-are-rape-fantasies-so-common>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2023.

⁹ Bivona, Jenny, and Joseph Critelli. “The Nature of Women’s Rape Fantasies: An Analysis of Prevalence, Frequency, and Contents.” *Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 46, no. 1, Feb. 2009, pp. 33–45, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490802624406>>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2023.

thus making it a quality of entertainment messages that may keep audiences engrossed and engaged” (Dye).

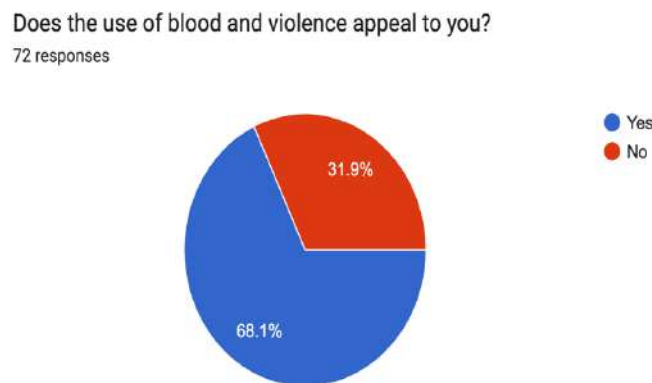


Fig. 6: Survey Question

There is a sociomoral lens through which we view media. It takes time for us to process, and try to figure out what is happening. These scenes also naturally cause a boost in hormones like adrenaline leading to an intense longing to find out what happens next. “Part of the explanation, psychologists say, can be seen in Greutert's contrasting responses to real-life and fictional gore. We find it gratifying to experience that which would normally upset us, but from an emotionally secure point of view” (Rozsa). As the Manhwas are set in a fictional setting, separate from that of the real world, it is a safe way to interact with such elements which would in real life lead to facing either ostracization or legal punishment. Thus, those who carry a want to consume material related to either gore, non-consensual sex or both find this as good and safe outlets.

Reading is a very personal experience. When a person reads a novel, they fully immerse themselves into it. When one reads stories like KS and TPR, you put yourself in the characters' space. You pick a character and resonate with it. There is the building up of a parasocial relationship. “A term coined by Horton and Wohl in 1956 [parasocial relations] refers to a kind of psychological relationship experienced by members of an audience in their mediated encounters with certain performers in the mass media” (Munday). These relations influence the way we think and feel as well as we drown into a fictional world. We start to idolise them and imbibe their character traits. In story-lines as problematic as these manhwas, when someone relates and picks a particular character, they can be pushed into toxic mind frames.

These relationships are triggered due to human emotion and psychological response. “The greater the perceived similarity, the more likely it is that interpersonal attraction will be triggered. It is important to note that this attraction can be based on both physical and mental characteristics” (Liebers and Schramm, 5). Characters like Yoonbum show symptoms of common mental health disorders as well as many sexually deviant thoughts. In such a case, people with similar mind-sets build unhealthy relationships with the characters.

These parasocial relations are formed on the basis of emotional needs or wants as well. When we lack something, or want something, a character acts as a way through which we project and fulfil those needs and wants.¹⁰ In the case of KS and TPR, when we look past the aspects of sexual gratification, there is a power play aspect that is at work. The characters represent the want to be heard or outspoken or the want to be suppressed sexually or physically.

When these parasocial relations get established, we wish for the characters to be real and ‘materialise’ in front of us. An open-ended question was asked, where 64% of the respondents agreed that they wanted to be a part of the manhwas replacing either one of the characters. Among the responses, few stated that they wanted a Yoonbum of their own, a Seong-rok of their own and a Sangwoo of their own. Three respondents stated that not only did they wish the characters were real, but they have also found partners and asked them to recreate tropes from the Manhwas with them. They leaned heavily on the use of CNC as well as bondage and abuse. A follow up question was asked about the same and around 50% responded saying that they did, or at least considered being victims of non-consensual sex. This was a desire fuelled in the readers by the Manhwas.

Did you at any point feel or think like engaging or being a victim of non-consensual sex while reading the stories?

72 responses

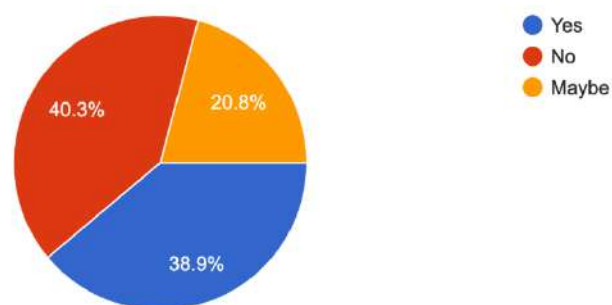


Fig. 7: Survey Response

The parasocial relationship helps us understand the way the fandoms function. The fandom problem is one that has been plaguing these stories for a while now. These Manhwas, and Manhwas themselves have earned a bad name due to the fandoms and the way they function in a toxic manner. These pages are the epicentres through which the romanticisation of abuse takes place. We find memes, songs, fan-art and cosplays that all glorify abuse. We also see the sexualisation of the serial-killer trope.

¹⁰ Gleason, Tracy R., et al. "Parasocial Interactions and Relationships in Early Adolescence." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 8, Feb. 2017, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00255>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2023.

Fans often refuse to accept that the stories are not romantic and are horror in origin. They get into multiple arguments about the same, often refusing to accept, and resorting to abusing and threatening instead. Those who disagree are labelled as homophobic and 'cancelled'. This has led to a toxic perception of the fan base and Manhwas as well. According to the fandoms, since the story revolves around two men who sleep with each other regardless of consensual or not, it should be considered as BL. As a possible consequence of the deeply ingrained parasocial relationship, the fandoms willingly look over the conflict and violence and choose to see what they want to see. Above all, they portray the manhwas in a very flowery way. The very core of the story loses its effect as a result. It goes from a story created to raise awareness of mental issues and crime to a romantic, toxic portrayal of homosexual relationships.



Fig. 8: A screengrab from twitter¹¹

Conclusion

We have looked at how through the medium of these two Manhwas, abuse and manipulation have been represented in their most repulsive and truest form. They act as mediums to draw attention to the various twisted and immoral ways in which people are motivated to resort to crime and murder. They are stories that are truly psychologically horrifying. Yet due to the way we interact with them, the perception that we have of these stories have changed. Through this paper, we have seen that these Manhwas act as a way for the readers to drown in a taboo world of their own. They act as a way through which people can interact with and fantasise about themes and fetishes that would lead to ostracization in real life. They provide a boost of adrenaline and satisfy a depraved yet natural instinct. Through these Manhwas, people can satisfy their sexually deviant fantasies and kinks without resorting to causing harm or committing a crime. As natural as this is, it gets taken too far when the line between fantasy and actuality is blurred.

We have seen how readers develop bonds and parasocial relationships with the characters to project their emotional needs. When these relationships get too deep, consciously or subconsciously, it leads to the development of a toxic mindset. As a result, we see the romanticisation and normalisation of the most horrific instances of abuse and manipulation. These stories that help appeal to the sexual fantasies of many get worrisome when people, as we have seen, start to re-create the abuse outlined in these fictional stories in real life. Through

¹¹ This tweet was found in a thread of manhwa recommendations. The conversation was about romantic, and wholesome manhwas and killing stalking was recommended as one.

social media, these stories are romanticised, made to seem dreamy and something to be sought after. Through fan-pages and posts, this romanticisation is further propelled, and more readers fall into the loop of this toxic whirlpool.

This normalising and idolising of abuse is worrisome. At a time when the world is seeing a drastic rise in sexually motivated crimes it could help further aggravate the situation. It adds to the building rape-culture in media, especially when they focus on the fetishisation of it. Another problem it poses is that of misrepresenting queer relationships. The LGBTQI+ community is one that suffers from a lot of discrimination. This is on the rise now too. When Manhwas like these portray queer relationships in an abusive light it leads to further discrimination and disrespect setting in.

Killing Stalking and The Pawns Revenge are just two in the multiple Manhwas that focus on abuse. There are countless others that use rape either as a plot point or as a central theme through the stories. There is scope to further research and understand why authors prefer to use rape as central elements, and why it is only Manhwas with abuse as themes that gain global recognition. As this disturbing trend seems to build up momentum, it is important for us to look and analyse it through multiple perspectives. In this paper, I have looked at how psychology and societal norms lead to this romanticisation. It is important for us to also note that no matter how appealing these stories may look, and how much we want them to manifest, that they are and should remain fantasy for the greater good of us all. There is no soft and easy way to deal with this issue, but it is one that deserves to be studied and understood.

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A Study of Effect of the Caregiving Burden on the Resilience and Burnout among Caregivers of Diabetic Family Members

Anindya Nagori ¹

Abstract

Informal caregivers of relatives with chronic illnesses are an overlooked and neglected population in terms of psychological well-being and health. These caregivers might experience high burden levels, extreme stress and exhaustion that leads to burnout but also could lead them to develop resilience as a healthy coping strategy. The caregiving burden and associated variables can look different for different illnesses, of which Diabetes Mellitus is relatively understudied. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the effect of the caregiving burden on the resilience and burnout among caregivers of diabetic family members via a comparative study of two age groups. A mixed methodology approach was employed, using quantitative scales like the Zarit Burden Interview – Short 12-item version, the 10-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and the Maslach Burnout Inventory along with qualitative data collection obtained through structured interviews. Results showed no correlation between caregiving burden and resilience ($r = -0.01, -0.01, 0.07$ for three categories respectively – overall, group 1 and group 2) and a positive correlation between caregiving burden and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.81, 0.81, 0.68$ – for the three categories, respectively - overall, group 1 and group 2).

Keywords: Informal Caregivers, Diabetes Mellitus, Caregiving Burden, Resilience, Burnout

Introduction

Background of the study

Caregiving is often associated with professionals like nurses, doctors and the like, but caregiving as an act and designation is much broader than that. In the recent past, scholars have introduced a new category called ‘informal caregivers’. Essentially, these informal caregivers are people who willingly provide care for a friend or relative who is ill, disabled, or has another condition that needs special attention. On the other hand, formal caregivers are paid for their services and are trained to provide care in settings like hospitals and home health agencies. Informal caregivers, however, seem to be at risk for poorer mental and physical health with an increased risk of mortality (Gerain & Zech, 2019). The distress from being a caregiver can be manifested as depression, anxiety, burden, helplessness and fear (Given et al., 2004). Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to understand and evaluate the burden put on these informal caregivers and its negative and positive impacts. Despite an avalanche of studies targeting the informal caregiving burden in relation to other chronic and mental illnesses like schizophrenia, cancer, and dementia among others. There seems to be relatively underdeveloped literature on the impact of the caregiving burden on informal caregivers of

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diabetic patients, thus making it a niche topic that requires further inquiry, especially in the Indian context.

Diabetes Mellitus is a disorder in which the body does not respond normally to or does not produce enough insulin causing the blood sugar to be abnormally high. People with diabetes need to be in constant control of the food they eat, the sugar they intake, the lifestyle they lead and make sure they do not go into a hypoglycemic shock. All of these factor into the caregiving process as well; therefore, expecting caregivers to be extra vigilant and careful and failing to do this results in guilt for not providing proper care and anger regarding the conformity of regimes.

Because of the nature of the caregiving burden that emphasises the subjective experience of the caregivers, it helps researchers bring to light how caregiving might be perceived differently by different caregivers. Some caregivers might report heavy burden, stress, social isolation, emotional exhaustion and needing assistance in daily activities but others might have different thresholds for the triggering of the burden of caregiving. Caregivers on the other end of the spectrum might instead develop resilience, find the role emotionally rewarding, honouring family ties and find the experience as a better use of family resources at the same time (Adelman et al., 2014).

Moreover, research simultaneously suggests that caregivers might not develop high levels of psychopathological issues when motivated by a sense of satisfaction. This theory is called compassion satisfaction theory which mitigates the stress theory and burnout syndrome. This construct is also positively correlated to resilience, which acts as a protective factor against the negative events that take place and helps one adapt and cope with changes (Merlo et al., 2021). This paradox rooted in a highly individualised experience thus calls upon researchers like myself, to investigate the impact of the caregiving burden on the resilience and burnout of caregivers of diabetic family members. Moreover, since existing literature does not seem to cover these variables closely in relation to not only each other but also diabetic caregiving, it can be further looked into.

Problem Statement and Objective

A study done by Luo et al. (2020) to assess the resilience of caregivers and parents for children with Type 1 diabetes concluded that emotional burdens and stress increased with the caregiving burden. This burden contributed to distress and depression in caregivers, thus, negatively affecting their quality of life. Resilience, however, positively impacted parents' quality of life in the presence of heavy caregiving burden. While this is one of the few studies available on the variables that this paper aims to investigate, it is one of the few papers that take into account diabetes as a caregiver's burden. Additionally, this paper does not consider the specific target population that this study is looking for.

Therefore, the objective of this research paper is to expand on existing literature by including not only spouses in the form of caregivers but also (and more importantly) children (who are now young adults) as caregivers for diabetic patients and understanding their mental health, psychological wellbeing and quality of life through variables like resilience and burnout in an Indian context. The research paper also aims to explore possible differences in the perceived caregiving burden that arise within these two categories of people and the prevalence of gender differences in providing support and perceiving the caregiving burden differently.

Literature Review

Caregivers and caregiving burden

With an increase in the number of people being diagnosed with chronic illnesses and diseases worldwide, the number of caregivers has also witnessed a substantial proliferation. These caregivers take the shape of those family members that provide some level of support and informal care to their care recipients and form the backbone of the family structure. Engaging in the role of informal caregivers, family members take on the additional responsibilities of looking after the major and minor needs of their ill family members. These additional responsibilities include assistance with activities of daily living like feeding, dressing, bathing etc and instrumental activities of daily living that comprise managing finances, medications and facilitating communication with others, amongst other things (Reinhard et al., 2008). Apart from these functional roles that do not adequately encapsulate the burden and stress faced by caregivers, informal caregivers are also subject to emotionally and mentally taxing roles like keeping the peace in the family, attempting to maintain normalcy by assuming the entire burden of care themselves and creating an unobtrusive environment (Stoller & Pugliesi, 1989). Additionally, caregivers may also assume the role of providing emotional support to not only the patients but also other family members.

Evidently, these competing roles and obligations can pose potential stressors in the lives of caregivers. Due to the lack of adequate resources and guidance, caregivers' physical and mental health and well-being are deeply neglected. Moreover, caregivers with a high burden level or unmet needs might find it challenging to provide care effectively (Deeken et al., 2003).

Caregivers are often seen as the 'invisible sufferers' or the 'silent patients'. To put their experiences into context, researchers described the burden caregivers face as the 'caregiving burden'. According to Adelman et al. (2014), the definition by Zarit and colleagues described the caregiving burden as the degree to which care providers perceive that providing care has negatively impacted their emotional, social, financial, physical, and spiritual functioning. This definition highlights the multifaceted toll that providing care may have on care providers and the fact that providing care is a highly personalised experience and may differ from person to person, as aforementioned. The caregiving burden is also two-fold: objective in nature, which refers to the actual demands and disturbances of the caregiving position and subjective burden, which is the distress experienced in relation to these expectations (Deeken et al., 2003). There are a plethora of psychosocial factors that regulate the impact of caregiving on their stress and wellbeing, some of which include contextual factors like socio-economic class, the relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient as well as the shared history and the cultural contexts within which they operate. An integral component that persists is the intrapsychic factors like mastery and self-esteem are associated with the psychological and/or physical outcome of caregiving. Researchers also mention that primary and secondary stressors of the caregiving process and role have the ability to proliferate and thus create a complex stress process involved in caregiving. However, moderators like mastery (perceived control over a situation/experience), self-efficacy, coping and social supports can determine how people are affected differently by the same stressors and can mediate a process of negative changes and wearing away of the self-concept (Raina et al., 2004).

By understanding the caregiving burden and the previous study, it becomes apparent the need for diagnosis and assessment of the caregiving burden and subsequent interventions. According to Adelman et al. (2014), there seems to be a necessity to have physicians assess the caregivers as well as the patients and engage in practical interventions to reduce the caregiving burden. These interventions could include encouraging the caregiver to function as a member of the care team (i.e., exploring problems of caregivers during clinic visits as well), encouraging caregivers to look after their health and wellbeing by respite care and help, providing education and information etc.

Caregiving burden and burnout

Developing negative changes in one's psychological health, like stress is largely evident with the onset of the caregiving burden. As a result of chronic stress, caregivers are highly prone to experiencing burnout. According to Lindgren et al. (1990) burnout represents an emotional manifestation of stress that rises due to the depletion of coping energy and lack of social support. This author highlights a study by Ekberg, Griffith and Foxall in 1986 to investigate burnout in caregivers. This study consisted of 30 spouse caregivers that seemed to report symptoms akin to that of burnout. Symptoms included feelings of helplessness, a sense of uselessness, inability to complete tasks, lack of understanding by others and even resentment towards the care recipient. Other studies also showed the level of emotional strain and exhaustion, low morale and frustration that were reported, all of which are analogous to components and symptoms of burnout.

The components of burnout can be amplified using Gerain & Zech's (2019) analysis of the tri-dimensionality of burnout and the expansion of its three realms – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is characterised as a feeling of overload, of being unable to go on and being emotionally drained when dealing with the caregiving scenario and the care recipient. Second, depersonalization refers to the relationship's detached approach to the individual receiving care. If taken too far, this could even lead to the latter's reification. Research suggests that while depersonalisation is less commonly seen in informal caregiving, caregivers might create emotional and psychological distance between them and the care recipients in order to protect and preserve themselves. Lastly, personal achievement is often the positive dimension of the experience of helping and providing. This aspect of personal achievement emphasises that the caregiver may experience a sense of fulfilment from providing care and find significance in it, going beyond the idea of evaluation. Studies have also investigated the occurrence of 'compassion fatigue' and 'compassion satisfaction' in informal caregiving and have compared it to emotional exhaustion and personal achievement, respectively. The former has also been considered as the precursor to burnout, but more research is to be done on the usage of these two terms in relation to burnout.

Caregiver burnout is more often than not a negative experience felt by the caregivers. It is closely related to lower wellbeing, increased psychological distress, lower quality of life and experiencing more negative emotions than positive. Not only does caregiver burnout affect the psychological health of caregivers but also adversely impacts their physical health, social contact and other realms of life like the possible development of professional burnout (Gerain & Zech, 2019).

Caregiving burden and resilience

Owing to the highly subjective experience that caregiving is, researchers like Senturk, Akyol and Kucukguclu (2018) have pointed out that some caregivers might develop a sense of meaning or purpose in the process of caregiving as opposed to unpleasant outcomes like burnout, depression or anxiety. These caregivers might find themselves residing on the positive side of the caregiving experience where their personal development flourishes. Their commitment to the individual they are providing care for increases, they feel a sense of happiness and are able to identify and rediscover themselves. They also begin to see the role of caregiving as an opportunity to nurture their relationship with their family members. The amalgamation of these positive emotions of caregivers in spite of the difficulties they face may be associated with higher psychological resilience.

Psychological resilience is characterised as a person's capacity to successfully overcome and adapt to adverse situations despite challenging circumstances, satisfaction with their social network and their social support, psychological well-being, strength, and healthy lifestyle (Senturk et al., 2018). Cherry and colleagues (2013) use Windle's definition of resilience, which is "the process of effectively negotiating, adapting to, or managing significant sources of stress or trauma. Assets and resources within the individual, their life and environment facilitate this capacity for adaptation and 'bouncing back' in the face of adversity" to amplify the psychological conceptualisation of resilience. The study done by Senturk and colleagues (2018) on the relationship between caregiving burden and psychological resilience in caregivers of individuals with dementia concluded that there was a strong negative correlation between caregiving burden and psychological resilience, which implies that as the mean scores of the psychological resilience in caregivers increase, the caregiver burden mean scores decrease significantly.

The context of psychological resilience (and burnout) in the literature studied and used up until now has been in relation to other chronic illnesses like dementia, cancer and schizophrenia. What seems to be a gap in the literature is the inadequate research conducted on caregivers of diabetic family members. One such study that relatively fills this gap is the one done by Zayas et. al (2016). These authors highlight the resilience, optimism and depression seen in caregivers of diabetic children. Through their primary data, the study concludes that dispositional optimism and resilience statistically show a significant negative correlation with depression. Therefore, the researchers suggest that people are less likely to experience psychological distress, particularly depression if they are able to withstand the effects of their child's diabetes diagnosis, as well as anxieties of potential complications, changes in lifestyle choices, and strength from this adversity

Gaps in literature review & differences in the caregiving burden between two populations

Accumulating data on the relationship between the caregiving burden and burnout, as well as, resilience respectively, has laid the foundation for understanding the possible negative and positive outcomes caregivers might experience as a result of the burden on them. However, the gap in the literature, at the moment, seems to be the severe dearth of adequate and relevant research on the relation of the three variables in context to diabetic family members and the additional lack of information on children in the form of caregivers for parents with diabetes.

While the secondary research conducted on the difference in the caregiving burden experienced between young adults and middle-aged adults is fairly limited, and in progress at the moment, a study by Adelman (2014) suggests that spousal caregivers face more difficulties than an adult child helping a parent. This is because they are more likely to live with the care recipient, are compelled to take on the role, are less conscious of the toll caregiving is taking on them, and are more vulnerable due to their advanced age and associated morbidities.

Through primary data and further inquiry into secondary data, this research paper will aim to better understand the different roles that children take on as caregivers and how that could possibly affect their psychological wellbeing as fully functional adults. Lastly, this paper also aims to assess any gender differences that play a role in caregiving. According to Parks & Pilisuk (1991), who conducted research on gender and psychological costs of caregiving, women are more likely to develop stress and anxiousness than their male counterparts.

Research Questions

This study is guided by multiple research questions in order to obtain a holistic understanding. The first question investigates the correlation between caregiving/caregiving burden on the resilience of caregivers with diabetic family members. The second one asks to what extent does caregiving affect the burnout and emotional exhaustion levels in a caregiver of a diabetic patient? What are some interventions to prevent the same? And the third question is whether there is any difference in the caregiving burden experienced by young adults (20–30-year-olds) and middle-aged adults (45 – 55-year-olds). Lastly, what are the gender differences in providing caregiver support, and how does gender play a role in the psychological wellbeing of caregivers?

Aim

To investigate and evaluate the effect of the caregiving burden on the resilience and burnout among caregivers of diabetic family members through a comparative study.

Variables

Independent Variables

- 1) Caregiving Burden

Dependent Variables

- 1) Resilience
- 2) Burnout

Population

The target population for this study include informal caregivers to family members having diabetes. In order to conduct a comparative study between two populations and investigate the differences between them, this study will assess people between 20 – 30 years old as the first target population and people between 45 – 55 years old as their second group.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample for this study will include spouses of diabetic husbands/wives, children and grandchildren (now young adults) whose parent/s and grandparent/s are/were diabetic and

inlaws of diabetic family members. This sampling technique is stratified. Additionally, given the nature and level of the research paper, convenience sampling will also be used.

Tools

For the purpose of this paper, an explanatory sequential mixed method approach will be employed to accumulate primary data. This would entail the use of qualitative methods as well as quantitative methods in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem/question. The quantitative data will be collected via various scales that will be employed in a survey. The scales that will be used include:

1. The Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI) – Short Version: The study deployed the use of the short 12-item version of the Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI) given by Bedard et al. (2001) for easier administration. Each statement is scored using a 5-point scale ranging from never to nearly always. It has been proved to produce results comparable to the original scale, and the reduction of the items did not affect the properties of the scale.
2. The 10-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10): The Connor-Davidson Resilience measure is a self-rated assessment measuring one's stress-coping ability. This paper will use the shorter 10-item scale developed by Campbell-Sills and Stein (2007) that demonstrates good reliability and psychometric properties. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from not true at all to true nearly all the time. This scale has been developed to assess resilience, with higher scores indicating higher resilience.
3. Maslach Burnout Inventory: This 22-statement assessment records a participants' burnout syndrome using three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. The items are answered in response to frequency on a 7-point scale, ranging from never (0) to everyday (6).

Whilst these scales are to quantify and decipher the variables of the study, namely caregiving burden, resilience and burnout, it is possible that these measures fail to capture crucial contextual factors of the caregiving experience. Therefore, this paper additionally uses interviews that will guarantee that all components of burden are taken into account.

Results and Discussion

Data collection

Primary quantitative data was collected with the use of a survey which was administered to 61 participants between the age groups of 20-30 and 45-55 via online Google form. The survey consisted of three sections assessing the caregiving burden, resilience and burnout (using subscales of emotional exhaustion, personal achievement and depersonalization). Results indicate that 55.7% (n=34) of the respondents belonged to the first age group (i.e., 20 – 30-year-olds) and 44.3% (n=27) of the respondents belonged to the second age group (i.e., 45 – 55-year-olds). Moreover, 68.9% (n=42) of the respondents were female and 31.1% (n=19) were male. The statistical measures used to organize and summarize data were descriptive statistics that included mean and standard deviation, along with correlational analysis to measure the linear relationships between variables.

Once quantitative data was collected, 12 respondents from the survey were contacted for the conduction of a structured interview. The interviews were conducted over video calls,

and they lasted for 30 – 40 minutes each. Each interviewee was asked 8 open-ended questions in order to assess different themes of the caregiving burden faced, coping mechanisms employed for better mental health, role of social support, emotional and mental challenges faced and the role of gender in caregiving.

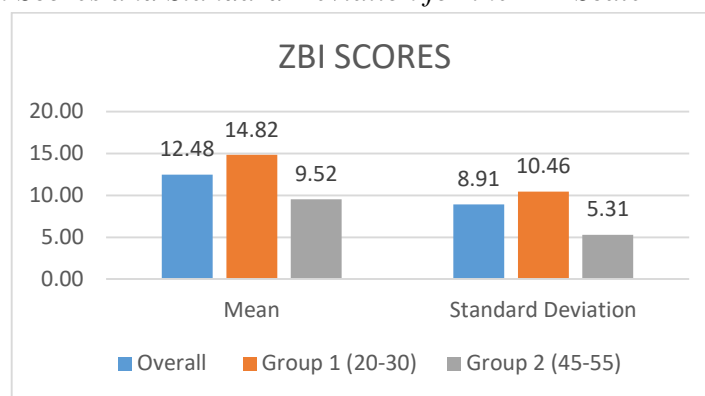
Data compilation & interpretation

Each scale was assessed and scored on different parameters in order to draw inferences: overall mean score and standard deviation, mean score and standard deviation of group 1 (i.e 20 – 30 year olds) and mean score and standard deviation of group 2 (i.e 45 – 55 year olds) along with the correlational analysis between the variables.

A. Descriptive statistics

1. ZBI Scale

Graph 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for the ZBI Scale



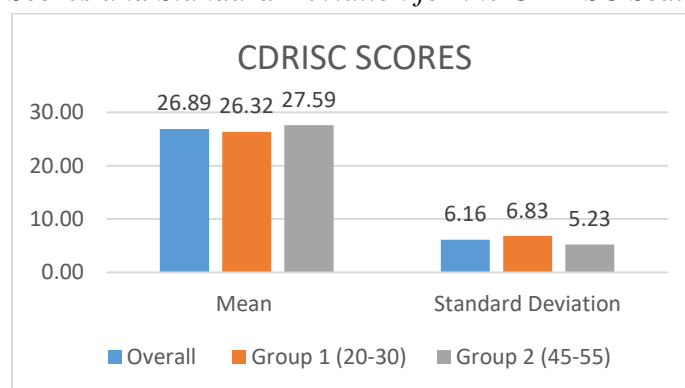
According to the ZBI scale, higher scores represent a higher burden felt by individuals. The scores should fall under range of 0 – 48, with 17 being the cut off score to fall under the bracket of high burden. Graph 1 indicates that overall, the mean score of all respondents was 12.48 which indicates a moderate level of burden felt. Amongst the two groups, results show that Group 1 has reported higher levels of burnout (14.82) as opposed to Group 2 (9.52). However, it is essential to note that with this there is a significant difference in the standard deviation indicating that in the younger age group there is a higher dispersion in the scores reported (SD = 10.46), whereas the scores of the older age group do not vary as much in comparison (SD = 5.31). This could be attributed to the severity of diabetes that caregivers are working with. It is possible that a caregiver who has reported lesser signs of caregiving burden and thus received a lower score, is dealing with a less severe case of diabetes and has therefore been situated at one end of the bell curve. Whereas, someone reporting a high score on the caregiving burden is situated on the other end of the bell curve due to the increased severity of the diabetes being dealt with.

Qualitative interpretations suggest that both, Group 1 and Group 2, feel a considerable amount of burden. Participants reported the impact of caregiving is not black or white in terms of negative impact or positive impact but rather lies in the grey area. Most responses indicated that caregiving can get tiresome on most days because of the time and energy it takes up. One participant (Female, 46 years old) explained that “there are a few days where you can’t do anything else but take care”. Indicating that caregiving can seep into other aspects of your life wherein normal functioning and day-to-day activities can get compromised. One interesting

aspect, however, was the way in which the older age group participants would minimize their burden by considering caregiving as their duty and obligation. On the other hand, participants in the younger generation were found to be more agitated with the burden that comes with caregiving since it was not something that they chose to do but rather was “it was something that was thrust upon me” (Male, 24 years old). Similarly, another participant (Female, 23 years old) mentioned that she was not given enough time or resources to process the effect diabetes had on her family and she had to suddenly become very alert and responsive early in her life. This shows the difference in the perceived caregiving burden between the two age groups as well as the effect caregiving can have on a young adult who had to grow up too quickly because of their role as a caregiver.

2. CDRISC Scale

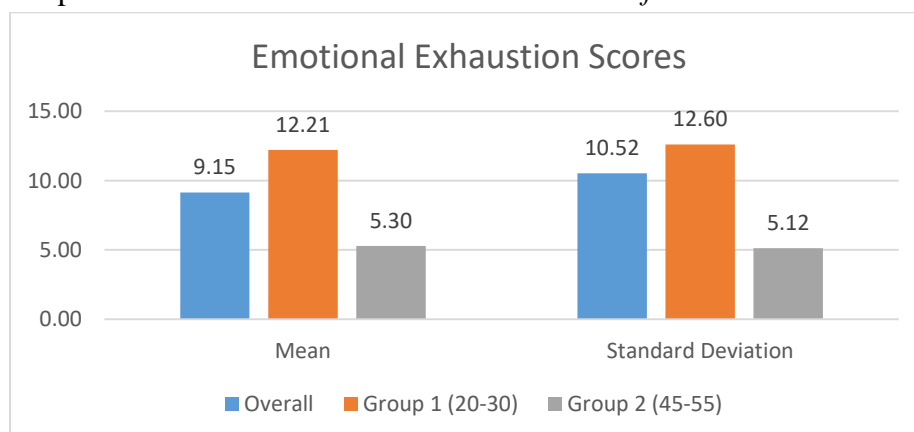
Graph 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for the CDRISC Scale

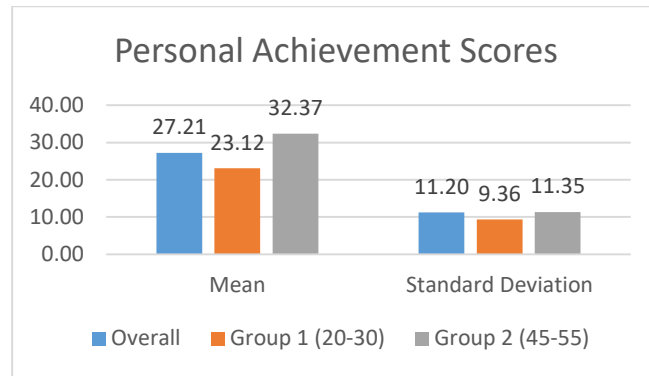
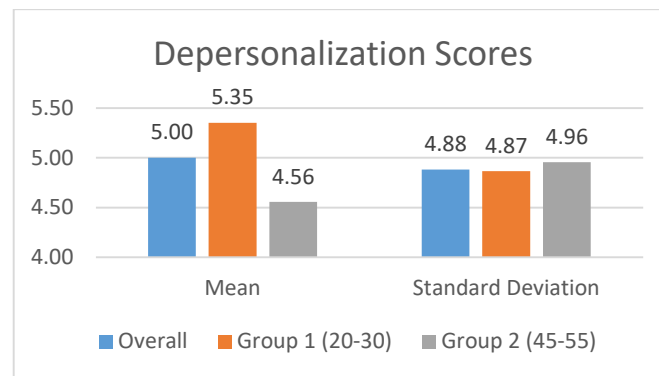


The CDRISC 10 item scale’s score ranges from 0 – 40, with a higher score indicating higher resilience. The scoring key divides the scores into 4 quartiles, ranking from lowest to highest: 0-29, 30-32, 33-36, 37-40. According to Graph 2, the overall mean scores as well as those of Group 1 and Group 2 are somewhat similar with a slight increase in the mean scores of Group 2, however they all fall into the lowest quartile of scores – indicating lower resilience scores reported by participants.

3. MBI Scale

Graph 3.1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for the MBI Scale



Graph 3.2: *Emotional Exhaustion Subscale Data*Graph 3.3: *Personal Achievement Subscale Data*

The graphs above show the mean scores and standard deviation scores for the three subscales that measure burnout. In order to measure burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) suggests that: Higher scores on the Emotional Exhaustion (EE) subscale represent greater emotional exhaustion (and higher burnout symptoms). Greater depersonalization is indicated by higher DP subscale scores (and a higher burnout symptom burden). Furthermore, higher scores on the PA subscale are associated with a greater sense of personal achievement (and lower burnout symptom burden), whereas lower scores are associated with a lower sense of personal accomplishment (and higher burnout symptom burden).

The levels of burnout thus have different cut off scores, as described below:

Burnout Level	EE Subscale Cut off	PA Subscale Cut off	DP Subscale Cut off
High	≥ 27	0-33	≥ 10
Moderate	19 - 26	34 – 39	6 – 9
Low	0 - 18	≥ 40	0 - 5

Results from Graph 3.1 indicate that the overall mean scores of EE (9.15), Group 1 mean scores (12.21) and Group 2 (5.30), all fall under the 'low burnout' classification. However, it is important to note that there seems to be a fairly large deviation in the scores reported as shown from the Standard Deviation scores : 10.52 (Overall), 12.60 (Group 1) and 5.12 (Group 2). This becomes essential to consider because it is plausible that only those

dealing with severe cases of diabetes in their family members will report higher exhaustion levels and vice versa.

Graph 3.2 shows that the mean scores for the PA subscale are 27.21 – Overall, 23.11 – for Group 1 and 32.37 for Group 2. These scores do not classify for the ‘low burnout’ bracket unlike emotional exhaustion but rather fall under the high burnout bracket.

Depersonalization scores seen in Graph 3.3 suggest a mean score of 5 overall, 5.35 for Group 1 and 4.56 for Group 2. All three scores fall under the ‘low burnout’ bracket. The standard deviation scores are fairly low and cohesive with a 4.88 overall, a 4.87 in Group 1 and a 4.96 in Group 2.

Because of the discrepancy in data that brings personal accomplishment into another bracket as opposed to the other two subscales, it becomes difficult to assess the average burnout levels in the sample size. However, in order to answer the research question that aims to assess the link between caregiving burden and burnout/emotional exhaustion levels, a correlational methodology has been deployed.

B. Correlational Analysis

1. Caregiving burden and resilience

Table 1: Correlation between Caregiving Burden (ZBI) and Resilience (CDRISC)

Age Group	Correlation between ZBI & CDRISC
Overall	-0.02
Group 1 (20 – 30 years old)	-0.01
Group 2 (45 - 55 years old)	0.07

Using the correlation score obtained overall and with Group 1, we can infer that there is little to almost no correlation seen between the caregiving burden and resilience within these categories whereas, there is a slight positive correlation between the two variables for Group 2. The strength of the association, however, is small and barely significant. This proves to be in contradiction with empirical research stated previously that had suggested a strong negative correlation between caregiving burden and psychological resilience in caregivers of family members with dementia.

The reason for the correlation between these two variables to be close to zero can be ascribed to three main reasons. Due to the fact that resilience was a separate variable being measured, it was organized as a separate section in the google form that was administered. Hence, it is likely that participants viewed resilience as a construct, as opposed to a variable in relation with the caregiving burden. Moreover, the content of the items did not include any reference to the caregiving burden, thus enabling the participants to disassociate the two. For example, the statements were general in nature like – ‘I am able to adapt to change’. Secondly, the nature of the items were black or white that were situational in nature and subject to the social desirability factor in the participants' responses. For instance, in a statement like ‘I tend to bounce back after hardship or illness’, it is not unreasonable or unlikely for a participant to respond with ‘often true’ to not only have others view them in a positive light, but view themselves in a positive light as well. Lastly, insight through qualitative data suggests that the

concept of resilience was not something that occurred naturally or immediately in participants. During the interview, all 12 participants were asked about the qualities that make them a good caregiver and qualities they would like to hone or acquire that would make them a better caregiver and none of them mentioned resilience or words synonymous to it (like adaptability, strength etc). This proves that resilience is rarely correlated with caregiving in the minds of caregivers, thus justifying the lack of correlation seen through the quantitative data.

2. Caregiving burden and emotional exhaustion

Table 2: Correlation between Caregiving Burden (ZBI) and Emotional Exhasution (EE)

Age Group	Correlation between ZBI & EE
Overall	0.81
Group 1 (20 – 30 years old)	0.81
Group 2 (45 - 55 years old)	0.68

Emotional exhaustion is one of the most important precursors to burnout. The correlational analysis done for all three categories (overall, Group 1 and Group 2) shows a significant positive correlation between the caregiving burden and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.81, 0.81$ and 0.68 , respectively) denoting that with an increase in caregiving burden, there is also an increase in the emotional exhaustion levels.

These quantitative results coincide with findings from the interviews. During the interviews, participants were asked about the challenges they faced and how they dealt with them emotionally and mentally. On an average, most participants spoke of functional challenges like having to be extra vigilant, having to schedule check ups and follow ups with doctors etc. However, a common thread seemed to be the mental toll it would take on them. Participants reported that dealing with these problems would deteriorate their mental health and quite often “emotionally and mentally drain[ing]” (Male, 28 years old) them to a point of feeling “emotionally numb” (Female, 20 years old). Moreover, participants reported that they often feel unable to ask for emotional help and support to help them deal with their challenges. A female participant, 50 years old, mentioned that “people who are not caregivers, will never understand what it entails, so they don’t usually understand where I am coming from”. The inability to share your concerns and problems or the inability of others to empathize with them is an important factor that can only add to the emotional exhaustion levels felt by the caregivers. Thus, justifying the significant positive correlation seen between the caregiving burden and emotional exhaustion levels.

3. Caregiving burden and personal accomplishment/achievement

Table 3: Correlation between Caregiving Burden (ZBI) and Personal Accomplishment (PA)

Age Group	Correlation between ZBI & PA
Overall	-0.19
Group 1 (20 – 30 years old)	0.04
Group 2 (45 - 55 years old)	-0.34

The table above demonstrates an overall negative, albeit small, correlation ($r = -0.19$) seen between caregiving burden and personal accomplishment. In Group 1, there is barely any correlation seen ($r = 0.04$) between the two variables and in Group 2, there is a relatively small negative correlation seen ($r = -0.34$).

In Indian culture, there is a lower tendency to recognise any activity done in the form of caregiving as a ‘personal’ achievement due to its sole recognition as a duty or obligation. Coming from a collectivistic culture, Indians, especially Indian women, attribute accomplishment as something done for others, therefore dissolving the word ‘personal’ in achievement. Keeping this context at the centre, it rationalises the negative correlation seen between the two variables. It gives an explanation as to why someone would choose only ‘a few times a year’ or other lower units when posed with a question like “I have accomplished many worthwhile things by caregiving”, because caregiving responsibilities are not viewed as an *achievement* but rather an *obligation*.

4. Caregiving burden and depersonalization

Table 4: Correlation between Caregiving Burden (ZBI) and Depersonalization (DP)

Age Group	Correlation between ZBI & DP
Overall	0.20
Group 1 (20 – 30 years old)	0.30
Group 2 (45 - 55 years old)	-0.07

According to the data in Table 4, the correlation between caregiving burden and depersonalization in the overall scores and Group 1 is positively correlated but the strength of the association being fairly weak ($r = 0.20$, $r = 0.30$ respectively) whereas despite being negative, there seems to be little to no correlation seen in Group 2.

Today, young adults are becoming increasingly individualistic in nature due to the influence of western culture. Thus, they are slowly delving into the experience of creating a life outside of the family and expanding their social support systems. This contributes significantly when addressing the question of depersonalization. Depersonalization means creating an emotional or psychological distance with the care recipient as a means to detach themselves. It is likely that young adults feel the need to detach themselves from their care recipients as soon as the burden increases so as to protect themselves from the toll it will take on them. Additionally, through qualitative interpretations, it is also a possibility that young adults will physically detach themselves first, so as to then emotionally and psychologically withdraw themselves from the care recipient. On being asked what are some ways they take care of themselves because caregiving can be a taxing job, 2 respondents (Male – 24 years old and Female – 23 years old) responded that being physically away from the situation by living/studying abroad helped them refocus on themselves. Additionally, the male respondent mentioned that caregiving can have a negative impact because not only is it mentally draining but “you begin to develop a negative relation with the care recipient”. This coincides with questions the depersonalization subscale tries to measure, like, ‘I don’t really care what happens to my care recipient’ or ‘I feel I treat my care recipient as if they were impersonal

objects'. Therefore, substantiating the quantitative data that shows a positive correlation between the variables in Group 1.

Moreover, though the correlation is not significant for Group 2, the small negative correlation is suggestive of the fact that the older age group is less likely to depersonalize when burden increases. Reasons for this could entail that as people age, their focus and priorities shift from themselves to their families. Therefore, making it more difficult to emotionally and psychologically depersonalize, especially if they are women who bear the primary responsibility of the household, under which caregiving plays an integral part.

C. Ancillary Observations

The advantage of conducting a mixed methodology is obtaining important information through qualitative methods like interviews that do not necessarily fit the bracket of themes being assessed in the quantitative methods. However, it still adds to the research at hand either directly or indirectly.

1. Gender differences in caregiving

To address the fourth research question that aimed to assess potential gender differences in caregiving, all 12 participants were asked if they believed that gender made a difference as a caregiver and their opinions on the same. 11 out of 12 participants strongly believed that gender and sex determine caregiving to a large extent. Participants mentioned similar sub-themes of how patriarchal norms have dictated that women be the helpers and caregivers in families and make sure their priority is looking after family members. Additionally, one participant – female, 21 years old, mentioned that “because of the reinforcement of these norms, it has become implicit that a woman will have to be the one taking on the most burden”. Another theme that was covered was how women and daughters are expected to act as emotional support and take on the role of the unpaid emotional labour. This ties in with the emotional exhaustion levels that are an antecedent to burnout. Therefore, indicating that gender and sex are closely linked with caregiving.

2. Fear and anxiety in caregivers

A general trend that was seen in most responses was the unmitigated fear and anxiety that these caregivers of diabetic family members experienced. Despite the common emotion, participants reported different incidents or concerns that would make them anxious or fearful. For example, a female participant, 21 years old, mentioned the twofold fear of her father's well-being and ensuring that his diabetes does not become detrimental for him and the likelihood of being predisposed to diabetes herself. Another participant, female, 53 years old, expressed that “my main fear is the possibility of him getting into a hypoglycemic shock when I am not there, because who will take care of him then?”. She also mentioned how this constant worry prevents her from staying out of the house too long or allowing herself to take space for herself. Lastly, a male participant, 24 years old, disclosed that the biggest challenge as a caregiver is the “constant state of anxiety you are in when it comes to your care receipt. You always have to have one eye open and it can affect other parts of your life too because you always need to be alert and have a hard time unplugging”. This information could be thus used

to gain insight into the stress levels and psychological well-being amongst caregivers of diabetic family members.

Limitations

Despite being able to derive interesting findings, the study had a few limitations. To begin with, the discrepancy seen between the quantitative and qualitative data indicates that participants answered the survey with a filter of social desirability. The qualitative interpretations suggest that participants were able to open up more freely and answer questions with honesty. For instance, 9 out of 12 participants chose either 'never' or 'rarely' in questions that aimed to assess their caregiving burden level like, 'Do you feel angry when you are around your relatives?'. However, their interviews suggested that these caregivers would often get angry, agitated or disappointed when their care recipients would not conform to regimes, diets, monthly checkups or maintain a healthy lifestyle. Granted that this is just one example, this inconsistency was seen across all scales and subscales, especially those that aimed to measure heavier and more intimate topics like burden, emotional exhaustion or depersonalisation.

Second, the sample size was extremely niche to work with and thus could not generate a large number of responses that would help make better inferences. With the resources at hand and the convenience sampling technique being used, it was rather challenging and restrictive to find caregivers for diabetic family members. Moreover, due to the small sample size ($N = 61$) the findings could not be generalized to a large extent. Additionally, since the study did not aim to filter out only those caregivers that dealt with severely diabetic family members, it made the scores dispersed and varied. Thus giving extremely high standard deviation scores and lower values of correlation.

The third and final limitation was the lack of empirical research in relation to Indian caregivers of diabetic family members. Most of the scholarly work done on this topic is either in the context of the West. If it is in the Indian context, it addresses other illnesses like cancer, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's etc. Due to the paucity of information on caregivers of diabetic family members, hypotheses and assumptions had to be made on the basis of other broader literature in this field. Therefore, increasing the probability of inaccuracy.

Conclusion

Informal caregiving literature is gaining prominence and growing relatively quickly as we begin to understand the burden that informal caregivers face. Scholarly work is now recognising the deteriorated well-being, mental health, and quality of life of familial caregivers of individuals with chronic illnesses. However, despite the growing body of research, there seems to be only a handful of articles that specifically address the problems and concerns of those caregivers who have diabetic family members. Research suggests that caregivers of diabetic relatives are at risk for reduced emotional and physical well-being and increased familial tension (Awadalla et al., 2006). Caregivers might perceive the burden put on them as mentally draining, stressful and exhausting and develop burnout or positively appraise the situation and develop resilience. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to fill in this gap and study the effect of the caregiving burden on burnout and resilience amongst caregivers of diabetic family members. The study also aimed at unravelling differences in the caregiving

burden experienced by young adult caregivers and older caregivers. Furthermore, it sought to assess if gender and sex played a significant role in the caregiving process.

The findings from the mixed methodology approach answered the four research questions respectively. First, the results indicated that there was little to no correlation found between the caregiving burden and resilience. This was in opposition to the empirical work that suggested a strong negative correlation between the two. Second, the results concluded that there was a significant positive correlation between caregiving burden and emotional exhaustion, one of the most important factors of and precursor to burnout. Third, results from the quantitative method suggest that the caregiving burden is higher in Group 1 than in Group 2. However, qualitative results indicate that both groups feel the caregiving burden almost equally, but the difference lies in how it is perceived differently by both groups. Additionally, assessment of the caregiving burden also suggests that it is important to take into consideration the severity of diabetes. Finally, interpretations from interviews suggest that gender and sex are closely linked with caregiving and make a difference in the caregiving done by women and men.

Despite a sufficient amount of primary and secondary research done, there is still scope for future studies to expand on this research and add more dimensions to it. Moving forward, future studies could aim to develop scales that are better fitted for the Indian context so that it makes analysis easier and more accurate. There is also scope for future studies to conduct the same research with a gendered perspective or lens that seeks to explore the difference in caregiving done by males and females. This could be facilitated by merging the disciplines of sociology and psychology and conducting the study by solely focusing on the female population or male population or carrying out a comparative study. Furthermore, future studies now have the blueprint for understanding the importance of filtering out only those caregivers with severely diabetic patients or those caregivers that already have a high caregiving burden level for more enriching results. Having witnessed the ancillary observations that highlighted the commonality of fear and anxiety in the participants, studies could include these as variables and understand the correlation between the caregiving burden and these variables as well. Lastly, moving forward, researchers can aim to conduct strictly qualitative research due to the sensitive nature of this topic. Doing this will allow researchers to build on certain ideas and themes after analysing not only their responses but also their body language, tone, hesitations/pauses etc.

Ethical Considerations

During the course of this study, the researcher made sure to uphold the ethical protocols of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The participants of the survey were informed about the aim of this study and their right to withdraw from the survey at any given point, along with the confidentiality and anonymity clause. All participants provided their consent to use the responses for the purpose of the paper. Additionally, all interviewed participants were requested for their participation and permission to record, transcribe and interpret their responses. Moreover, only the subtopics relevant to the research paper were assessed and questioned.

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