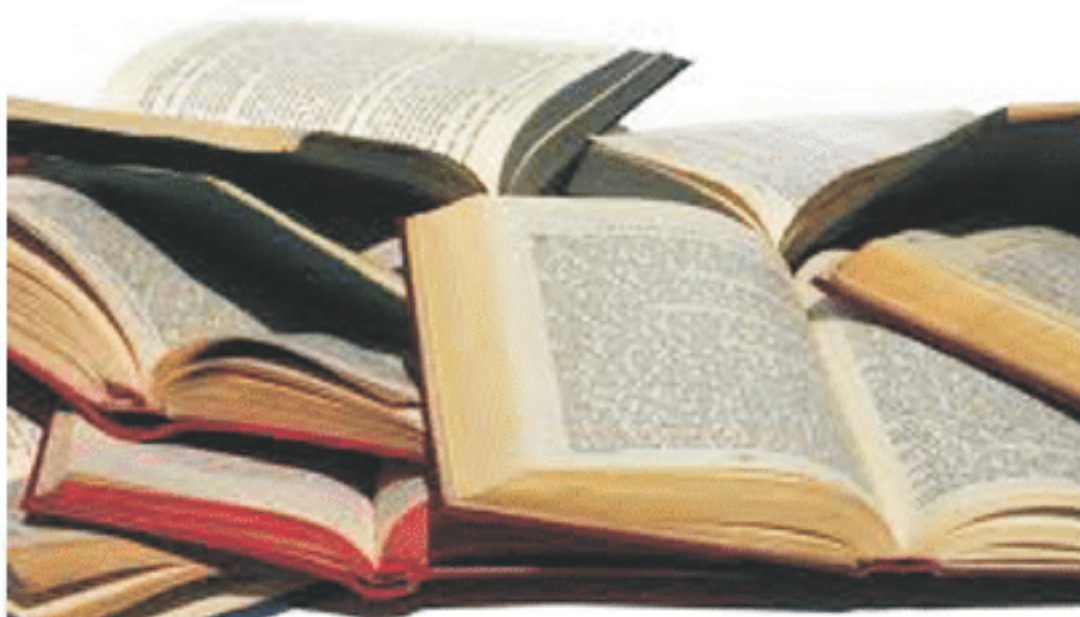


VOLUMES 14 [2025]

ISSN 2348 - 2680

Echoes of Research



Peer-Reviewed Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Government College for Woman

Thiruvananthapuram

ISSN 2348 - 2680



ECHOES OF RESEARCH

Peer-Reviewed Multidisciplinary Research Journal

echoes@gcwtvm.ac.in, editorechoes@gcwtvm.ac.in

VOLUME 14

Government College for Women

Thiruvananthapuram -14

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2025

ECHOES OF RESEARCH (ANNUAL)

VOLUME 14

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Published by:
Prof. (Dr.) B. Sreekumar
Principal
Government College for Women
Thiruvananthapuram

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CONTENTS

Sl No.	Title	Page No.
LANGUAGE & LITERATURE		
1	Cyberpunk and Autism in Shared Narrative Contexts Sulekha A K	1
2	Environmental Degradation and Climate Dystopia: Reimagining Survival in Alexis Wright's The Swan Book Raj Sree M S	9
3	Revisiting Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway as a Classic Modernist Text Manju PB	15
4	‘माटी की मूर्तें’ और ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ में चित्रित सामाजिक यथार्थ का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन निम्मी औसेफ* और अम्बिली वि. एस.	20
5	जेंडर निरपेक्षता हासिल करने में स्त्री कविता की भूमिका : विशिष्ट स्त्री कवियों के संदर्भ में जश्वन्त एस प्रभु	26
6	രംഗകലാസൗന്ദര്യത്തിലെ ദ്രാവിഡക്കലർപ്പുകൾ: സംഘകാല ലാവണ്യശാലയ്ക്കുള്ള മുൻനിർത്തി ഒരുവേഷണം വിഷ്ണു കെ. നായർ	33
SCIENCE		
1	Role of Financial Literacy in Building Resilience in Dual-Career Marriages Christina Mariam Chacko* and Sonia George	40
2	Growth Mindset and Procrastination Among College Students Participating in Sports Mohammed Farhan* and Arathi Sarma U	48
3	Organisational Culture and Turnover Intention among Self-Financing College Teachers in Kerala:A Multivariate Analysis Anjitha Mary C J* and Aneesh V Appu	57
4	Moral Orientation, Ethical Integrity and Emotional Competence among College Students Ameena Mohamed* and Sonia George	65
5	Relationship Between the Use of Social Network Sites and Body Image Dissatisfaction Among Young Adults Gowri S Nampoothiri* and Aneesh V Appu	73

SI No.	Title	Page No.
6	Exploring the Intersection of Technology and Aging: A Bibliometric Analysis Huda Ameen* and Sonia George	80
7	Parental Attachment Among Emerging Adults: A Literature Review Savithri K Bhattathirippad* and Sonia George	90
8	Effect of Mindfulness Intervention Among Adolescents Without Parental Care: A Narrative Review Amrutha S* and Sheril Elizabeth Jose	100

SOCIAL SCIENCE & ARTS

1	Quality of Work Life among IT Professionals- A Comparative Study of Traditional Work Environment, Hybrid Model Work Environment, and Coworking Spaces Kavya M Chandran*, Reshma R* and Vinod G	115
2	Driving Financial Performance Through ESG Strategies in Banking Sector Mamatha V G* and Nimi Dev R	122
3	Analysis of Linear Relations in India's Exports Using Arima Model Malavika K* and Binu R	132
4	The Influence of Anchoring Bias on Financial Planning Among Government Employees Anjali R* and Vinod G	142
5	Public Infrastructure Development and Land Prices: A Sustainable Development Perspective Aleena Maria Zacharia1*, Krishna Babu* and Biju S K	154
6	A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis of Non-Performing Loans in the Banking Sector Kunjummen T Tharian* and Biju S K	162
7	Profitability and Risk in Derivative Products: Evidence from the Indian Financial Market Vishnupriya I* and Nimi Dev R	182
8	Who Pays the Premium for Sustainability? Consumer Segmentation in the Coffee Market Sreereshma S.R*, Dr.A.S.Dileep A S* and Dr. Santhosh V S	193
9	Kitchen-Based Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment: A Gendered Analysis of Food Enterprises in Thrissur District, Kerala Ancy Anto Kannampuzha* and Ramya R	201
10	Music and Health with Special Reference to Music Therapy Aiswarya N D	210

Sl No.	Title	Page No.
11	Freedom and Self-Discovery: Unveiling Jiddu Krishnamurti's Philosophy of Life Vinitha Mohan	215
12	Ethical Dimensions of Robotics: Deontological Analysis of Rules, Governance for Accountability Akshai S	223
13	Gadamer's Hermeneutics: Fusion of Horizons in Contemporary Communication John Robert* and Vinitha Mohan	228
14	Life-World and System: Habermas' Insights into Culture, Law, and Democracy Priya O	233
15	Gendered Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence: Concerns and Questions Febin Mariam Jose	238
16	Kristeva's Philosophy of Love: From Psychoanalysis to Ethics Pournami S R	244
17	Conceptual Role Semantics of Ned Block Vijitha V	250
18	Revisiting the Technological Singularity Discourse: Philosophical Considerations Tara Jane Paul* and Saji Y	256
19	Revisiting Vivekananda's Syncretic Philosophy: Insights for a Harmonious Living Mangalya B.	263
20	Body, Gender, and Freedom in Merleau-Ponty, Iris Marion Young, and Holly Lawford-Smith: A Critical Analysis Bismi L S* and Joby Cherian	269
21	The Machinic Gaze: The Matrix as a Representation of Lacanian Orders Arunima A Asok* and Joby Cherian	278
22	Philosophical Praxis in Ambedkar Jaya G Nair* and Nazneen A	285
23	A Phenomenological Analysis of the Human Experience of Touch: Reading Through Maurice Merleau-Ponty Gasper K J	291
24	Assessing Nutritional Challenges and Dietary Behaviours of Elderly Women in Rural Kerala Divya S R	297
25	Sustainable Living through Eco-Socialism, an Alternative Pathway Sreejith P V	305

EDITORIAL

Echoes of Research is a peer - reviewed multi-disciplinary journal with ISSN (print): 2348 – 2680, published annually by Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram. Since its foundation in 2012, the journal has strived to promote scholarly research and foster interdisciplinary dialogue among researchers and academics.

This volume is of particular importance since it includes the full papers presented in the International Conference on Science, Society and Culture in partnership with Cognitopia, the multidisciplinary academic festival held in January 2025, as part of the Quasiquicentennial Jubilee Celebrations of our institution.

Government College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram, provides a strong academic and research environment, supported by a thriving scholarly community comprising nearly 500 research scholars and 150 dedicated research supervisors. With such a rich intellectual foundation, we recognize our responsibility to sustain and strengthen the spirit of research and scholarly publication. Each volume of Echoes of Research signifies a crucial advancement in reaffirming our dedication to academic excellence.

Each volume showcases research contributions from many distinct disciplines, highlighting its multidisciplinary essence. The contributors comprise researchers from our institution and from various research centres across Inida. The journal employs a single-blind peer review process, in which each submitted manuscript is assessed by three reviewers, whose judgments dictate the paper's acceptance. Upon acceptance, the articles are subjected to professional content editing to guarantee the utmost standards of publication.

This volume presents a rich and diverse collection of scholarly contributions spanning the fields of languages, social sciences, and sciences, addressing contemporary issues and emerging areas of academic inquiry. I extend my sincere gratitude to the authors for their valuable contributions and to the reviewers for their meticulous evaluations and dedicated efforts in maintaining the academic quality of this publication. The acceptance rate for this issue stands at 52%, reflecting the rigorous review process and the commitment to scholarly excellence.

This publication would not have been possible without the financial support from Department of Collegiate Education, Kerala which facilitated content editing and printing.

I express my sincere appreciation to the Principal, Research Committee members of the college and other teaching and non-teaching staff for their continuous support in making this issue a reality.

I invite our readers to engage with the insightful contributions in this volume and to continue their quest for knowledge with the same enthusiasm that has guided them throughout their academic journey.

Dr. NISHA N G

Editor



Cyberpunk and Autism in Shared Narrative Contexts

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Received: 30/08/2025

Revised: 03/02/2026

Accepted: 07/02/2026

Abstract

*Cyberpunk literature, with its iconic portrayal of high-tech dystopias and themes of alienation, offers a rich framework for exploring neurodiverse experiences. This paper examines how autism is metaphorically reflected in cyberpunk narratives that grapple with identity and societal marginalisation. Drawing on autobiographical works such as *Thinking in Pictures* by Temple Grandin and *The Mind Tree* by Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay, it explores parallels between cyberpunk's core motifs—alienation, sensory overload, and technological adaptation—and the lived experiences of autistic individuals. The struggles of protagonists in *Neuromancer* or *Snow Crash*, marked as outsiders within rigid systems, echo the autistic experience of navigating neurotypical societies often characterised by exclusion. Sensory-rich cyberpunk environments, exemplified by *Blade Runner*'s neon-lit cityscapes, resonate with the sensory sensitivities and overwhelming realities described by autistic authors, allowing readers to empathise with sensory processing challenges. Moreover, the dual role of technology—as both empowering and isolating—reflects its complex impact on neurodiverse lives, where it can aid communication while amplifying difficulties. Finally, the hyperfocus and specialised skills of cyberpunk characters, such as hacking or cybernetic enhancements, mirror the intense interests and abilities often associated with autism.*

Keywords: Cyberpunk, Autism, Alienation, Sensory overload, Cybernetics

Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is clinically characterised by “persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts”, including challenges in social reciprocity, non-verbal communicative behaviours, and the capacity to develop, maintain, and understand relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, p. 31). In addition to these social-communicative differences, a diagnosis of ASD requires the presence of “restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities” (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, p.31). These patterns may manifest as “ste-

reotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech”, including echolalia or idiosyncratic phrasing; as an “insistence on sameness” reflected in rigid routines or ritualised verbal and non-verbal behaviours; or as highly circumscribed interests marked by an atypical intensity or focus (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, p.50). Additionally, autistic individuals may display “hyper- or hypo reactivity to sensory input”, or an unusual engagement with sensory aspects of the environment, such as heightened sensitivity to sound or texture, or visual fascination with movement and light (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, p.50).



While the DSM-5 frames these features primarily as diagnostic criteria, critical autism scholarship challenges deficit-focused interpretations of repetitive and sensory behaviours, viewing them instead as meaningful forms of self-regulation, communication, and engagement with material and technological environments. This perspective shifts the focus from pathologisation to autistic embodiment, allowing ASD to be situated within broader critical and interdisciplinary debates beyond clinical psychiatry. Moreover, this study aligns more closely with the social model of disability, which locates disability in the interaction between bodies and their environments rather than within the individual alone. From this perspective, sensory overload, communicative difficulty, and social withdrawal are not intrinsic failures of the autistic body but responses to environments structured around neurotypical norms.

This study deliberately brings together two distinct but dialogically resonant bodies of narratives. On the one hand, it examines key cyberpunk texts—William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984), Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash* (1992), and Emma Bull’s *Bone Dance* (1991)—along with their cinematic and aesthetic counterparts such as *Blade Runner*. These works are selected for their sustained engagement with themes of alienation, sensory excess, fragmented urban spaces, cybernetics, and technologically mediated identity. On the other hand, the paper draws on autobiographical and reflective autism narratives, particularly Temple Grandin’s *Thinking in Pictures* (2014) and *The Way I See It* (2008), and Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay’s *The Mind Tree* (2003). These texts articulate lived experiences of sensory overload, solitude, non-normative cognition, and alternative modes of meaning-making from within the autistic perspective. However, this study does not propose cyberpunk as a universal metaphor for autism, nor does it assume homogeneity in autistic sensory or

cognitive experiences. Rather, it examines selective resonances between specific cyberpunk texts and particular autistic narratives, while remaining attentive to individual differences.

Cyberpunk: Concepts and Features

In *Virtual Geographies*, Heuser (2003) defines cyberpunk within the context of post-modernism, describing it as a distinct sub-genre of science fiction that has influenced various fields such as film, music, and feminist theory. Heuser identifies several key characteristics of cyberpunk, including its focus on virtual space and its subversive, deconstructive approach to high culture, modernity, the human body, and technologies like computers and prosthetics. Additionally, cyberspace presents new narrative possibilities that were previously unavailable to the science fiction genre. Heuser suggests that cyberspace can be seen as a “meta-space”, emphasising the very notion of space (or notional space) in fiction (p. 25).

Travel in cyberspace is often described through metaphors such as flying, surfing, or riding, yet without reference to a tangible mode of transportation. The computer-generated environment creates a shifting illusion of speed, experienced by the disembodied cyber-hero as they move rapidly through this virtual realm. For the cyber-hero, this experience resembles the sensory overload often reported by individuals on the autism spectrum, where stimuli appear intensified and the boundary between solid and fluid becomes blurred, creating a world that is both disorienting and fascinating. Solids appear to transform into liquid, allowing movement through walls and evoking the sensation of ice breaking apart and falling away in fragments that distort as they descend. This paradox of solid fluidity is a key rhetorical feature of cyberspace, providing a verbal foundation for its fluid architecture. In *Neuromancer*, as Case becomes fully immersed



in cyberspace, he loses all sense of horizon; instead, data appears infinite, resembling an endless neon cityscape. This overwhelming sensory experience mirrors the hyper-stimulating environment many on the autism spectrum encounter daily, where sensory input feels perpetual and lacks clear boundaries. Data is represented, in *Neuromancer*, as vast corporate structures, likened to a city with towering spires reminiscent of Manhattan skyscrapers. These towers maintain the hierarchical connotations of power structures, yet their material is now composed of light and neon gas. This imagery semantically connects to the neon-lit Night City introduced earlier in the narrative. The sensation of infinity, “an endless neon cityscape, complexity that cut the eye, jewel bright, sharp as razors” (Gibson, 1984, pp. 253–54), often associated with the sublime, is amplified by the illusion of immense speed and the sensory disorientation it produces (Heuser, 2003, p. 46).

Light plays a crucial role in shaping the concept of cyberspace, serving as the immaterial substance from which it is constructed. Objects within this realm appear solid, as the intensity of light is associated with the concentration of information. This reliance on light as the primary medium evokes the sensory overload experienced by individuals with autism, where certain sensory inputs—such as bright lights or loud sounds—can become overwhelming and difficult to filter. Case thrives in the nighttime environment, where the vibrant holographic logos and neon advertisements of Night City revive after remaining lifeless during the day. The illuminated night, functioning as an artificial day, symbolises vitality and activity, embodying a hallmark of the noir aesthetic that cyberpunk draws from detective fiction and film. However, for the character and perhaps for individuals experiencing sensory sensitivities, this constant barrage of light can become disorienting, adding to the feel-

ing of being overwhelmed in a fast-paced world. The night sky is depicted as a vast, dark backdrop against which the illuminated cityscape stands out (Heuser, 2003, p. 106).

Cyberpunk Cities and Sensory Experience

The setting of Emma Bull’s *Bone Dance* (1991), though distinct in several ways and drawing more heavily on the cyberpunk genre, portrays a similar type of ruined urban environment filled with potential. The story takes place in a Louisiana town vaguely reminiscent of Hong Kong, featuring a mix of sleek high-rises for the elite, bustling streets alive with bicycle cabs, food vendors, and market stalls, and grand yet abandoned buildings that serve as homes for marginalised individuals, including the protagonist, Sparrow (Sponsler, 1993, p. 259). This reimagining of urban decay aligns with the themes of *Neuromancer* and *Snow Crash*, where sensory overload contrasts with desolation to convey complex landscapes of both alienation and opportunity. Just as the vibrant yet chaotic world of cyberpunk creates a sense of fragmentation, individuals on the autism spectrum may navigate a similar duality, where a world of sensory overload—whether from noise, lights, or movement—is punctuated by moments of disconnection and isolation. In both cases, the overwhelming sensory experience is tied to an environment that is simultaneously alienating and full of potential, mirroring the complex internal worlds of those who must adapt to and interact with their surroundings in a way that is not always intuitive or comfortable.

In *Snow Crash* and *Neuromancer*, Neal Stephenson and William Gibson vividly capture the sensory overload of their cyberpunk landscapes. Downtown in *Snow Crash* is depicted as “a dozen Mannhattans, embroidered with and stacked on top of each other” (Stephenson, 1992, p. 16), where “mile-high neon skyscrapers” (p. 255) and the “pulsat-



ing neon street” (p. 98) create a dizzying, electrified spectacle. Similarly, Gibson’s *Neuromancer* evokes the chaotic energy of the Sprawl: “Summer in the Sprawl, the mall crowds swaying like windblown grass, a field of flesh shot through with sudden eddies of need and gratification” (Gibson, 1984, p. 45). Together, these descriptions immerse the reader in a vibrant, overwhelming tapestry of sights, sounds, and desires central to the cyberpunk narrative.

Autism and Sensory Processing

Just as the chaotic, neon-lit landscapes of *Snow Crash* and *Neuromancer* bombard their inhabitants with an overwhelming sensory barrage, Temple Grandin, a renowned autistic author and animal behaviour expert, describes in *The Way I See It* how the everyday world can feel equally overpowering for individuals with autism. Flickering fluorescent lights, the sharp tang of perfumes or colognes, and the cacophony of high-pitched sounds—whether from squeaky shopping cart wheels, store announcements, or the piercing feedback of a microphone—can transform seemingly benign environments into arenas of sensory torment. A previously welcoming space can become unbearable, its once-familiar stimuli now inextricably linked to discomfort or fear. Grandin notes that sensory inputs, like scratchy fabrics or the stiff seams of clothing, can create an intense, almost visceral reaction, akin to walking on “burning sandpaper” (Grandin, 2008, p. 130). For those on the autism spectrum, the sensory world often mirrors the relentless, electrified chaos of cyberpunk cities—both rife with stimuli that can overwhelm and alienate.

Alienation and Solitude

Unlike earlier dystopian traditions, where the devastated landscape symbolised alienation and was seen as a hostile environment to be overcome for any positive outcome, cyberpunk reimagines such landscapes and

the sense of alienation as advantageous. The cyberpunk narrative often involves finding comfort in alienation, with decay-ridden settings transforming into spaces of opportunity and creativity. Protagonists in these stories are typically deeply alienated figures, but their estrangement is viewed positively as it sets them apart from a mundane, corrupt, and homogenised post-industrial society. The physical environment they occupy, despite its destruction, becomes a space for innovative possibilities. In this way, cyberpunk and the stories inspired by its themes embrace this shift, responding to a world saturated with inequality, power struggles, technological excess, and aimless violence not with despair, but with a sense of acceptance and even exhilaration (Sponsler, 1993, p. 261).

Claire Sponsler, in her essay *Beyond the Ruins: The Geopolitics of Urban Decay and Cybernetic Play*, observes that the physical settings in most cyberpunk stories are characterised by desolate, debris-laden urban landscapes, expansive zones of decay and desolation, and remnants of a collapsing civilisation. Sponsler also highlights the near-total absence of any tranquil or aesthetically pleasing natural features in these settings. This type of landscape is wellknown from numerous 1980s tech-noir films such as *Robocop*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Terminator*. In these films, bleak urban settings filled with deserted factories, barbed wire, and charred ruins create a foreboding backdrop for the unfolding action (Sponsler, 1993, p. 253). However, rather than purely evoking discomfort or isolation, these environments also offer a space for individuals to revel in their solitude and alienation. Similar to those on the autism spectrum, who might find solace in retreating from the overstimulating demands of social interaction, characters in cyberpunk narratives often embrace their alienation, finding comfort in their solitary existence within these dystopian landscapes. The absence of external pressures allows



them to carve out their own meaning and navigate a world on their own terms.

Much like the protagonists of cyberpunk narratives, who transform alienation into opportunity and creativity, some real-life experiences also reimagine isolation as a source of empowerment and innovation. This reframing of solitude as enriching rather than debilitating finds a striking parallel in the works of the autistic author Tito Rajarshi Mukhopadhyay. For Tito, loneliness is not a void but a pleasurable state, symbolised by the colour gray. In *The Mind Tree*, he writes, “The colour of loneliness is gray”, capturing its subtle yet pervasive presence (Mukhopadhyay, 2003, p. 157). As he experiences loneliness, the world’s colours shift—the sun, sky, and even his blood take on a grayish tint. Mukhopadhyay delights in this grayness, describing it as a “soft colour” that allows other hues to exist without overwhelming them, unlike the harshness of “devouring jaundice yellow” (Mukhopadhyay, 2003, p. 157). Even the words of others become gray, seamlessly folding into his solitary experience. Most strikingly, he finds sweetness in this solitude, noting, “I opened my mouth to taste the sweet gray and fill myself with its sweetness” (Mukhopadhyay, 2003, p. 157). Gray becomes more than a colour—it is a flavour, a texture, and a source of quiet joy. Mukhopadhyay redefines loneliness as a beautiful, enriching experience, where gray symbolises introspection and contentment rather than emptiness. This introspective redefinition aligns with the cyberpunk ethos of finding beauty and meaning in seemingly bleak or alienating conditions.

Cybernetics and the Body

Next, this analysis turns to the concept of cybernetics and its potential relevance in autism, particularly in relation to autonomy and self-direction. The term cybernetics, as Timothy Leary explains in his essay *The Cyber-Punk: The Individual as Reality Pilot*, originates from the Greek word *kubernetes*,

meaning “pilot”. This Greek root holds significance as it embodies cultural traditions of independence and self-reliance shaped by the geographical features of ancient Greece. According to Leary, the independent city-states, located on peninsulas surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea and protected by mountains, nurtured a spirit of autonomy. Mariners of the time, forced to navigate without maps or advanced tools, developed resourcefulness and independent thinking, traits that likely contributed to the democratic and inquisitive nature of Greek society. The ancient Greek navigator, or pilot, symbolised this independence by making critical decisions to steer their course (Leary, 1988, p. 254).

Leary also notes that in 1948, Norbert Wiener coined the term “cybernetics” to describe the study of control and communication processes in both machines and living organisms. Leary further observes that the term “cyber” has since evolved to encompass the theoretical study of control systems in electronic, mechanical, and biological domains, with an emphasis on the flow of information. He also highlights the derivative term “cybernetate”, which refers to the automation of processes using computers or systems governed by such automation (Leary, 1988, pp. 256–257). This evolution of the concept of cybernetics sets the stage for its application in both therapeutic technologies and the speculative landscapes of cyberpunk literature.

In William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, Molly Millions is introduced as a “street samurai”, a figure whose extensively modified body positions her at the intersection of human entity and machine enhancement (Gibson, 1984, p. 33). Her most striking features include retractable razor blades implanted under her polished burgundy fingernails and mirrored, surgically inset lenses that permanently cover her eyes, enhancing her vision while cutting her off from direct eye



contact—an image often read as symbolic of emotional distance and self-protection. Critically, Molly is not portrayed as a victim of technology but as someone who claims autonomy through bodily modification. Her augmentations enable her to survive and operate within a violent, corporate-dominated urban world on her own terms. Scholars frequently read Molly as embodying cyberpunk's reworking of identity: she is alienated, guarded, and solitary, yet powerful and self-directed.

Technology in Autism Support

Similarly, just as Molly Millions leverages technological augmentation to navigate her world, Temple Grandin explores how engineered tools can enhance human experience and address individual sensory and emotional needs. In Chapter 3, *The Squeeze Machine*, of *Thinking in Pictures*, Temple Grandin describes her invention of the squeeze machine as a fusion of human ingenuity and mechanised intervention to address emotional and sensory needs. Modelled after devices used in veterinary care, Grandin adapted this tool to create a calming experience, entering the machine to apply gentle pressure that soothed her overstimulated senses. This interplay between body and machine mirrors the themes of cybernetics and cyborg identity central to cyberpunk narratives, where technology blurs the boundaries of the human experience. Much like the cybernetic systems in these stories, Grandin's squeeze machine embodies a feedback loop: the machine becomes an extension of her body, offering comfort that redefines her emotional and social interactions. Her realisation that physical soothing could foster emotional kindness parallels the cyberpunk ethos of self-discovery through technological augmentation, subtly transforming the self through mechanical means.

Similarly, in their article, Weiss and Gal discuss the potential of advanced technological tools, such as video modelling, video

self-modelling, virtual reality (VR), shared active surfaces (SAS), and robotics, for therapeutic and educational interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These tools have shown promise in improving skills related to social interactions, functional activities, and communication (Weiss & Gal, 2011, pp. E35–E55). This scenario mirrors the themes of cyberpunk works, particularly those that explore the intersection of human bodies and advanced technologies. In *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, for instance, the protagonist, Case, becomes part of a world where human consciousness is melded with cyberspace through technological augmentation. Similarly, children with ASD using technologies like VR and robotics could be seen as undergoing a form of cybernetic integration where their sensory experiences and social interactions are mediated and enhanced by technology. These tools, much like cybernetic enhancements in cyberpunk, offer the potential for redefining how these children engage with their environment and others around them.

The cyborg serves as a complex symbol through which we navigate the dual impulses of aspiring to enhance our biological limitations by adopting machine-like qualities while simultaneously grappling with the fear of machines entirely supplanting the human body. This duality allows us to process and adapt to the growing integration of technology into modern life (Benesch, 1999, p. 381). Grandin's squeeze machine and the technologies described by Weiss and Gal (2011) reflect this duality, where technology functions as both a tool for empowerment and a reminder of our increasing reliance on machines to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

The study draws on the social model of disability, as articulated by Michael Oliver in *The New Politics of Disablement*, co-authored with Colin Barnes, which challenges the perception of disability as an individual



tragedy and instead situates it within social structures that create barriers for disabled people (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 23). For some autistic individuals, social expectations and certain environments, rather than their neurological differences alone, can contribute to difficulties in participation or inclusion. In cyberpunk fiction, similar dynamics appear in characters whose bodies are modified or augmented, such as Molly Millions in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. A comparable tension is seen in NnediOkorafor's *Noor* through the character of AnwuliOkwudili, a disabled Igbo woman known as AO (Autobi-
 onic Organism), whose cybernetic prosthetics enhance her abilities while also producing new forms of social isolation (Okorafor, 2011). Like Oliver's social model, these narratives show how bodily difference, sensory intensity, and social structures can intersect to affect engagement, suggesting parallels with the experiences of specific neurodivergent individuals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the convergence of cyberpunk and the actual experiences of individuals with autism reveals striking parallels that enrich our understanding of both. Through the exploration of cyberspace as a fluid, immersive realm, we see how technology can provide a means of navigating and reconfiguring environments that feel overwhelming or alienating. Much like the protagonists in cyberpunk fiction, individuals with autism often experience sensory overload and alienation in their everyday lives, yet they also find empowerment through the use of technology that enhances their agency and interaction with the

world. Cyberpunk's exploration of the cyborg—an entity that blends human and machine—offers a metaphor for the potential of technological tools to augment and expand the capacities of individuals with autism, allowing them to redefine how they relate to others and their surroundings. As we continue to integrate more advanced technologies into therapeutic practices, it is crucial to understand the deep impact that such tools can have on shaping identities and fostering new forms of interaction. The ability to control and adapt one's sensory input, as exemplified by Temple Grandin's squeeze machine, reflects the fundamental desire to regain agency in an increasingly technology-driven world. In this way, both the cyberpunk genre and the embodied experiences of individuals with autism converge, offering a powerful commentary on the intersections of technology, identity, and human resilience in a rapidly evolving landscape. These connections underscore the importance of technology not just as a tool of survival but as a medium through which new modes of self-expression and empowerment can emerge. This article is, however, grounded in an interpretive framework that brings literary analysis into dialogue with autistic narratives. Rather than collapsing autism into symbolism or genre allegory, the study reads cyberpunk texts alongside autobiographical and reflective autistic experiences to explore how speculative imaginaries and lived realities can illuminate shared questions of embodiment and technological mediation. The value of this approach lies not in equivalence but in juxtaposition, allowing convergences to emerge without erasing difference.

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Environmental Degradation and Climate Dystopia: Reimagining Survival in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 09/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

Abstract

*The deepening ecological crisis of the twenty-first century has generated profound anxieties of environmental degradation, climate displacement, and ecosystem collapse. Literature has responded to these anxieties in the form of climate fiction or cli-fi, conjuring dystopian futures shaped by ecological trauma. This essay examines the Indigenous Australian cli-fi novel *The Swan Book* (2013) by Alexis Wright, which uses the trope of black and white swans to think through the themes of environmental collapse, forced migration, colonial history, and cultural survival. Merging Indigenous storytelling, myth, and ecological realism, Wright constructs a dystopian novel where climate change and settler colonialism converge to cause displacement, ecological disbalance, and fragmented identities. The novel situates the swan as both natural and symbolic entity: a species affected by climate change, and a metaphor for Indigenous resilience and colonial domination. Situating the novel within global cli-fi discourse, the essay contends that *The Swan Book* positions the interconnected realities of ecological degradation and cultural erasure and conjures alternative ways of living with nature. By this reading, the novel is a critique of anthropocentrism, capitalist exploitation, and climate injustice, and the urgency of ecological preservation and cultural continuity.*

Keywords: Climate Fiction (Cli-fi), Environmental Degradation, Dystopia, Indigenous Literature, Migration, Anthropocene, Postcolonial Ecocriticism.

Introduction

Climate change is not merely a scientific and environmental phenomenon but also a deep cultural crisis. Literature has become a key medium of articulation of such a crisis, yielding new genres like climate fiction (cli-fi) that address planetary fears. Dystopian visions of climate breakdown are now leading cultural narratives, charting the social, political, and existential costs of environmental degradation. One of the driest inhabited continents to be populated, Australia is highly exposed to the impacts of climate change. Increased temperature, prolonged droughts, catastrophic bushfires, and environmental ruin have rendered the continent a hub for climate crises. Thus, Alexis Wright's *The*

Swan Book is a foundational Indigenous cli-fi. Placing ecological destruction on the same plane as the histories of colonisation, migration, and dispossession, the novel imagines a singular vision of dystopia in which human and non-human survival are entwined.

The article examines *The Swan Book* from three connected perspectives: environmental destruction, dystopian fantasy, and cli-fi visuality. It considers the ways in which the novel narrates climate-displacement, the symbolic function of swans in representing ecological and cultural persistence, and the ways in which Wright's novel participates in international cli-fi discourse by situating Indigenous worldviews and colonial history at its centre.



Research Objectives

The goals of this research are to examine how *The Swan Book* depicts the convergences of climate change, colonial history, and Indigenous dislocation from the ecocritical and postcolonial ecocritical perspectives, and to interpret the symbolic function of swans as ecological and cultural symbols of survival, dispossession, and resilience.

The research also attempts to investigate how Wright's novel utilises Indigenous narrative modes to reimagine the global genre of cli-fi and dystopia, and to link the novel's fictional climate dystopia to actual ecological crises in Australia like bushfires, desertification, and destruction of wetlands. Finally, the research attempts to assess how the novel critiques the Anthropocene as a universalising category by placing its uneven and disproportionate effects on Indigenous and marginalised subjects at the forefront.

Hypothesis

This research speculates that Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* refigures the tropes of cli-fi and dystopian fiction by bringing Indigenous epistemologies into narratives of climate collapse. It argues that Wright not only narrates environmental decline but also bridges it to colonial dispossession, thus situating climate change as a 'double dispossession.' The novel illustrates that Indigenous narrative cultures provide alternative ecological imaginaries and survival tactics, countering Western visions of apocalypse in the Anthropocene.

Literature Review

Authors like Rob Nixon (*Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 2011) state that environmental harm is generally slow, dispersed, and irregularly distributed in poor societies. Environmental harm in Australia has been exacerbated by settler colonial land use, overgrazing, mining, and natural resource overexploitation. Literature, particularly Indigenous literature, emphasises the relationship between environmental

degradation and cultural displacement. Dystopian literature emphasises the breakdown of environmental and social structures due to climate change. Margaret Atwood, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Amitav Ghosh have written climate dystopias in which survival is under threat from sea-level rise, drought, and failing ecosystems. Wright's book belongs to this genre but reorients dystopia from within an Indigenous viewpoint, where environmental destruction and colonial violence are intertwined.

The neologism cli-fi, coined by Dan Bloom, refers to fiction that engages with climate change. Ursula Heise, in *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet* (2008), defines cli-fi as extrapolating local environmental concerns to global imaginings. Indigenous cli-fi, on the other hand, brings together narrative practice, nature knowledge, and memory, and other imaginings of resilience. Wright's *The Swan Book* is a paradigmatic example of this mode, situating myth of the swan within a climate dystopia.

Research Gap

Although there has been considerable scholarship on Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* in terms of Indigenous identity, trauma, and postcolonial politics, there has been a lack of close analysis of how the novel reconfigures cli-fi by writing ecological crisis into Indigenous epistemologies and narrative modes. Much cli-fi scholarship actually continues to be preoccupied with Western technology and apocalypse narratives with little consideration of how Indigenous worldviews provide different paradigms for conceptualising climate change, displacement, and survival. Likewise, Anthropocene studies universalise human agency, ignoring differential effects on marginalised and colonised subjects. This research corrects these oversights by placing *The Swan Book* at the nexus of climate change, colonial history, and cultural survival, marking its original contribution to global cli-fi and ecocritical scholarship.



This study proposes that *The Swan Book* warrants sustained ecocritical attention, but in making this claim it is not arguing that the novel has received no previous ecocritical consideration. Indeed, the novel has been read through a dystopian lens by Robert Dixon (2011) and through an environmental lens by Belinda Wheeler (2017). For Dixon, Wright's novel is part of a new Indigenous tradition of dystopian speculative fiction that denounces the political inadequacies of the Australian settler state. For Wheeler, Wright's fiction participates in Indigenous climate futurism and foregrounds Indigenous sovereignty, in particular, Indigenous ecological sovereignty. Their readings of Wright's work are groundbreaking, but they use ecology and dystopia as either a thematic framework or a generic framework, rather than as a combined theoretical framework for analysing narrative forms and symbolism. This study extends the readings by offering a dedicated ecocritical/decolonial analysis of *The Swan Book* that foregrounds the swan as a multispecies displacement metaphor and indexes Wright's climate dystopia with the theoretical frameworks of slow violence and environmental injustice, and analyses how Indigenous notions of cyclical time reshape the discourse of the Anthropocene. It thus aligns ecological context with the narrative and symbolic patterns of Wright's fiction.

Research Methodology

The research takes a qualitative and interpretive stance, based on close reading of *The Swan Book*, to examine its narrative strategies, symbolism, and Indigenous narrative modes. It draws on ecocriticism, postcolonial ecocriticism, trauma studies, and cli-fi/dystopian scholarship of writers like Rob Nixon on slow violence, Dipesh Chakrabarty on the Anthropocene, Cathy Caruth on trauma, and Amitav Ghosh on cli-fi. The novel is further set within the Australian ecological emergency of bushfires, desertification, and wetland loss, as well as legal and political

battles over conservation and Indigenous rights. The comparative framework places Wright's writing within global cli-fi, but with a focus on its Indigenous epistemologies. The inquiry through this synthesis reveals how Wright's narrative condemns environmental destruction while dreaming of cultural resilience.

This research is grounded in ecocriticism and postcolonial ecocritical theory, which collectively form the framework for analysing how *The Swan Book* interweaves ecological destruction with Indigenous dispossession. Wright's novel places at the forefront the ecological collapse fuelled by climate change while also revealing the historical and ongoing violence of colonisation. Reading the novel in this way allows for the analysis of how ecological crises are unfixable from social and cultural injustices, specifically indigenous injustices.

In addition, the analysis also engages with trauma and memory studies to follow the intersections of climate trauma, colonial trauma, and cultural memory resilience. Lastly, the novel is positioned in the broader universe of cli-fi and dystopian studies, situating Wright's work in global cli-fi while highlighting the distinctive Indigenous epistemologies and imaginative strategies it offers. These strategies combined shed light on how *The Swan Book* complicates ecological and colonial futures, and imagines possibilities of survival and continuity.

Contemporary Significance

The research is extremely pertinent in the modern context of intensifying climatic disasters, from global warming and loss of biodiversity to megafires and sea-level rise. In Australia, recent history like the Black Summer fires (2019–2020) illustrates the environmental devastation Wright fictionalises. Apart from ecology, the novel is attuned to urgent debates regarding Indigenous sovereignty, ecological justice, and cultural survival in the Anthropocene. As cli-fi becomes



an increasingly urgent form of imagining planetary futures, Wright's novel illustrates the need to listen to Indigenous thought, which prioritises the entanglement of environmental and colonial histories. The research contributes to wider interdisciplinary debates in ecocriticism, Indigenous studies, and environmental humanities by illustrating how literature reflects and critiques modern global crises.

Analysis

Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* is set in post-climate change Australia, ravaged by drought, flooding, and desertification, which displace human and animal populations. The black swan, indigenous to Australia, is a metaphor for this environmental destruction: its natural habitat is consumed by urbanisation, predation, and climatic factors. Wright traces how these birds are driven to migration, mirroring the general state of Indigenous dispossession under colonialism. The struggle to survive of the swans cannot be separated from histories of displacement of Aboriginal people.

Wright situates *The Swan Book* in a radically destabilised ecological future where climate disorder has overturned natural rhythms and rendered the land unrecognisable. The narrator observes that "the world had turned upside down in the weather," (49) capturing how climate change is not an isolated event but a total systemic inversion. Environmental breakdown appears through recurring images of drought, dust, and fire "dust storms wrote their law across the country" (3) suggesting that nature itself has become a governing force replacing human political order. Wetlands and swamps, once life-sustaining ecosystems, are shown as vanishing spaces 'the swamp was dying before anyone knew its name.' These descriptions align ecological destruction with erasure, reinforcing how environmental collapse produces cultural and historical disappearance alongside biological loss.

This ecological vision is rooted in real-world parallels. Australia's catastrophic bushfires, including Black Saturday (2009) and the Black Summer fires (2019–2020), killed billions of animals, destroyed ecosystems, and erased habitats. These events echo Wright's haunting depictions of fire, drought, and mass animal death. Likewise, the degradation of wetlands, vital for migratory birds protected under international treaties such as JAMBA, CAMBA, and ROKAMBA, resonates in the novel's landscapes of ruin. Wright fictionalises these realities to show how ecological imbalance erodes the survival of both human and non-human communities, exposing the intertwined vulnerability of species.

Wright's dystopia is not merely futuristic but profoundly historical. For Indigenous Australians, the history of dispossession, forced removal, and erasure has long been a dystopian reality. Climate change enlarges these injustices, creating what critics identify as a 'double dispossession,' in which ecological collapse doubles colonial trauma. Oblivia, the novel's central character, is this double jeopardy: a mute Indigenous girl, sexually assaulted and silenced, who finds sanctuary with the swans in a devastated swamp before being taken to the People's Palace. Her silence is figured against the enforced migrations of birds and peoples, highlighting what Rob Nixon calls 'slow violence,' the slow but ruinous destruction of land, species, and identity.

Oblivia's muteness embodies trauma produced by what Rob Nixon calls slow violence, destruction that unfolds gradually and invisibly. Her withdrawal from speech 'silence was her only country' signals both psychological injury and political marginalisation. She finds refuge not in human institutions but among birds "she spoke only to the swans" (19) suggesting a cross-species community formed through shared vulnerability. The narrative emphasises that devastation "came quietly, season by season"



(47) and that “the damage learned patience,” (54) reinforcing that harm accumulates over time rather than through spectacle. Oblivia’s condition parallels the land’s exhaustion, making her body a site where ecological and colonial violence converge.

The swans function as living symbols of forced migration and ecological exile, paralleling Indigenous dispossession. Wright describes them as arriving ‘like refugees from another sky,’ explicitly framing nonhuman displacement in political terms. Their migration is not seasonal but catastrophic ‘they had lost the country that remembered them’ which links habitat destruction with memory loss and belonging. The birds’ movement becomes a cartography of damage ‘their flight was a map of loss.’ By portraying the swans as displaced beings searching for viable ground, Wright creates a powerful analogy to Aboriginal histories of removal and relocation, making ecological crisis inseparable from colonial history.

At the centre of Wright’s symbolic terrain are the black and white swans. The black swans, native to Australia, represent resilience, survival, and cultural persistence, which reflect Indigenous cosmologies that sustain Oblivia. The introduction of the white swans, by contrast, represents colonial invasion, ecological disruption, and the imposition of external hierarchies. The clash between black and white swans symbolises the colonial encounter, relocating the birds as living emblems of cultural persistence and displacement. In conflict and flight, Wright identifies ecological destruction with colonial histories.

The novel insists that climate dystopia is not new for Indigenous communities but an intensification of ongoing colonial rupture. Wright writes of a nation where “history lived like a wound in the ground,” (3) suggesting that dispossession is materially embedded in landscape. This framing supports

the critical idea of ‘double dispossession,’ where climate change compounds colonial displacement. The land and its people are both subjected to recurring erasure, and the narrative repeatedly links territorial theft with environmental degradation. The result is a dystopia that is historical rather than speculative.

Wright notes that ‘power built its palace on broken ground,’ implying that political authority thrives on prior dispossession. The state’s appropriation of Oblivia “she was moved like a possession” (7) reduces her to symbolic capital within nationalist spectacle. Authority presents itself as benevolent while operating coercively ‘authority dressed itself as salvation.’ Climate emergency thus becomes justification for intensified domination, revealing how environmental catastrophe can consolidate rather than weaken colonial-modern power structures.

Lastly, Wright reconceptualises cli-fi aesthetics by inscribing Indigenous narrative practice into planetary discourse on the Anthropocene. In contrast to Western cli-fi, which typically entails technological apocalypse or linear decline, *The Swan Book* combines myth, song, and cyclical narrative in Aunt Bella Donna’s voice. This oral narrative form resists linearity, proclaiming continuity through cycles of survival and migration. The climate dystopia it depicts rising seas, dust storms, and desiccated wetlands, is congruent with scientific projection, but Wright refuses to universalise the Anthropocene as a human condition. Rather, she lays bare its uneven burdens, demonstrating how climate change accelerates colonial dispossession and authoritarian rule, as in Oblivia’s forced marriage to Warren Finch and her incarceration in the People’s Palace. Through such strategies, *The Swan Book* bears witness to Indigenous resilience even as it discloses the intertwined crises of ecology, colonialism, and modernity.



Conclusion

In the end, Wright's *The Swan Book* proves the initial thesis: the novel reimagines the parameters of cli-fi and dystopian genre by inserting Indigenous epistemologies into climate crisis narratives. Rather than representing climate crisis as speculative or potential, Wright represents ecological trauma as historical, experiential, and proximal in its source. Through decaying swamplands, deracinated swans, dust storms, and climate control, the novel shows how environmental and settler colonial violence function as a dual process of dispossession. Dystopia is not always in the future; it is in the past, in the now, and here. Wright reconfigures cli-fi into a form of climate justice narrative by braiding together swan mythology, Oblivia's body, and wounded Country.

Yet Wright's project is not merely a project of critique, but also a project of renewal: Indigenous song cycles, storytelling, and cosmology reorganise the narrative into a form of counter-narrative to the linear, universalising logic of the Anthropocene. By interlacing Indigenous songlines, Oblivia's muted song cycles, and relational cosmology, Wright reconceptualises cli-fi, refocusing the genre from technological catastrophe to coloniality and climatic injustice. By fusing

Waanyisongline and cli-fi, Wright creates a decolonial narrative in which survival is not instantiated through technology, but reproduced in and through relations between land, story, species, and memory. The black and white swans are not only metonyms of ecological precarity and colonial invasion, but also vessels for Indigenous persistence and multispecies cohabitation. *The Swan Book* shows that Indigenous narrative cultures produce ecological imaginaries and survival strategies that counter Western cli-fi imaginaries of terminal apocalypse.

This interpretation has practical, political implications. *The Swan Book* suggests that Indigenous knowledge, land ethic, and care are necessary components of climate response and recovery, not technocratic fixes alone. In the aftermath of Australian bushfires, and in the rush to formulate climate adaptation policy, this interpretation points towards a call to action: to incorporate Indigenous land management, cultural burning practices, and Country-based governance into recovery and climate change policy. Wright's novel suggests that ecological futures rely upon decolonising land practices, upon how land is known and how land is cared for. In this way, recognising relational Indigenous ecological knowledge becomes not only a cultural imperative, but an ecological one.

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Revisiting Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway as a Classic Modernist Text

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Received: 28/08/2025

Revised: 07/03/2026

Accepted: 10/03/2026

Abstract

Writers and artists were compelled to resort to ingenious ways of expression in form, style and themes to present their creative work that could break away from the cocoon of tradition after the First World War. So the writers resorted to modernism as a theory with its emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity. In prose fiction, it subverted tradition by departing from the conventional ways of representing the characters, blurring the distinction between genres, emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, collages, violating the syntax and coherence of language to provide a new reading experience to the people after the post-war trauma. The aspects of modernism can be seen well exemplified by Virginia Woolf in the classic work Mrs. Dalloway. My paper positions Mrs. Dalloway within the post-truth condition by looking it through the lens of medical discourse and biopolitics. It also explores how the novel anticipates the epistemological instability of the post-truth era while remaining a must read that follows all the templates of modernism.

Keywords: Modernism, Medical discourse, Biopolitics, Trauma, Memory, Time.

Introduction

Modernism as a theory has penetrated into art, architecture, painting and films with its emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity. In prose fiction, it subverted tradition by departing from the conventional ways of representing the characters, blurring the distinction between genres, emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, collages, violating the syntax and coherence of language to provide a new reading experience to the people after the post-war trauma. The spirit of modernism embraced the issues of class, gender, the struggle for knowledge and senselessness and alienation under its broad ambit of discourse.

Virginia Woolf considered as one of the most influential and much sought after writers of her time is an author par excellence whose writings are still valid and studied profound-

ly in the academia. Modernism cannot move forward without the inclusion of Virginia Woolf the prominent 20th-century writer who is considered the pioneer of stream of consciousness technique. My paper explores the modernist elements in the classic text *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) to establish Virginia Woolf's status as an apostle of modernism. It theoretically repositions the novel through the lenses of medical discourse and biopolitics put forward by Foucault, examining its relevance in the post-truth era.

Methodology

The paper examines the dexterous ways in which Virginia Woolf employs the modernist elements in the narrative. By a close reading of the text, the paper establishes Virginia Woolf as a pioneer of modernism. This study employs medical discourse and biopolitics



put forward by Foucault to examine the novel as a classic modernist text in the post-truth era.

Analysis

Set in 1923 post-war Britain and narrated in the stream of consciousness technique, *Mrs Dalloway* is a unique novel that details the happenings of a single day in the life of Woolf's characters, which are troubled and distressed. The novel abruptly begins with *Mrs Dalloway's* decision to host a party and to buy the flowers herself. Here starts the roller-coaster ride of *Mrs. Dalloway* as she roams around London, ruminating the past and introspecting the decisions she has made in life and love. 'Dalloway' is an appendage that Clarissa got as a result of marrying Richard Dalloway, an influential Member of Parliament in the Conservative government and his position helped Clarissa carry over herself in the way she wanted and get recognised. Later she laments for "being Mrs. Dalloway" (Woolf, 2020, p. 17).

Modernist writers like Woolf employed the technique of memory as a recurring phenomenon in human psyche under the influence of the theory put forward by Henri Bergson. It was a time when Sigmund Freud's 'Psychoanalysis' and Henri Bergson's concept of 'clock-time' and 'mind-time' were in vogue. The novelist here resorts to memory extensively when she wants to reconnect the past of Clarissa Dalloway who travels through her memory. Here, the chronological time and psychological time are represented through clock-time and mind-time to give the story its narrative space that applies the trope of memory to move to-and-fro in time. The ebbs and flows in and out of various characters' thoughts and memories are dexterously woven into their present actions and interactions through time. "The subjective lives of characters are interrupted at times by reminders of the regular, objective, clock time or by the external events" (Latham, 2015, p. 105). The formidable pres-

ence of the omniscient narrator who knows everything about the character is noteworthy and this commanding voice is even capable of intruding the subjective thoughts of characters. A constant shifting of points of view from one character's subjective interior thoughts to another's within a single paragraph is another highlight of this novel. For this end, the writer often relies on free indirect discourse, a literary technique that helps to describe the interior thoughts of characters using third-person singular pronouns. This ensures smooth and subtle transition between thoughts of various characters.

Virginia Woolf the innovative writer has experimented with form and theme throughout her career and *Mrs. Dalloway* is no exception. The fresh morning in London takes Clarissa Dalloway, the graceful, high-spirited, upper-class English woman to her past and she thinks about the days she has spent in her father's estate at Bourton when she was eighteen. There are many flashbacks that take us to Bourton throughout the novel. Through her observations and travel, Clarissa also gives us a rhythmic glimpse of Westminster in London and its bustles with Big Ben chiming, indicating the passage of time and impending death. London functions as a biopolitical landscape governed by clock-time and public spectacle. The chimes of Big Ben regulate bodies into synchronised modernity. Psychological time, however, disrupts this order through memory and interiority.

Just as Virginia Woolf emerged as a titular figure among the Bloomsbury group, Clarissa Dalloway establishes her own distinct presence, despite being portrayed as a traditional woman adhering to societal conventions. Clarissa becomes a spokesperson of Woolf as she creatively and critically comments and expresses her opinions of what is going on around her. By introducing Miss Kilman – the history teacher of Elizabeth – having a German ancestry – Virginia Woolf



was able to link the fear of change and the anxiety between the life lived before the War and the life lived post-war in Britain. Anne E. Fernald in “A Feminist Public Sphere? Virginia Woolf’s Revision of the Eighteenth Century” states that, Woolf “was something of an outsider in the London literary scene” (Woolley, 2021) due to her gender. Woolf’s female characters reflex her own desire to enter the public sphere and share the space with men. After war, the role of women changed and that is why Woolf presented characters like Miss. Kilman, Elizabeth and Sally Seton. Miss Kilman is also religious and could do whatever Clarissa was not able to. She is least interested in parties and material things in life. She is more masculine than feminine like her name suggests. Once the war is over, Miss Kilman is accepted in the society, while Clarissa is devoid of a public outlet for her empathy and social intelligence. In his *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* (2000), Michael Whitworth states that “though modernist writing is dominated by the experience of metropolis, of technological innovation and the accelerated pace of modern life, it satirises and rejects the phenomena of ‘bourgeois’ modernity ...” (p.147). That is why we can see that both Kilman and Elizabeth dislike the London social life and parties and they like to lead a simple life other than what Dalloway does. With the aid of these characters, Woolf is able to be a modernist and a feminist at the same time in her approach and could also reject the “bourgeois’ modernity in favour of [...] primitivism” (Whitworth, 2000, p.147). Mrs. Dalloway dislikes Kilman not only because she influences Elizabeth, but also the fact that Kilman represents change.

Another woman who commands our attention in the novel is Sally Seton. The influence of Sally can be seen in the life of Clarissa throughout her memory in the novel. She is the one who kissed Clarissa on the lips, one who smoked cigars and did absurd things. The lives of the iconoclasts who tried to re-

form and refine the world, at last ended up in marriage. Both of them finally succumbed to the ways of English society who never accepted deviants. Through the character of Sally Seton, Virginia Woolf breaks the gender stereotypes prevalent in society. Woolf can be seen as a feminist, as she has written this novel after the first wave of feminism when women got the right to vote. The novel is both modernist and feminist in its outlook.

The point of view shifts to Septimus Smith, a World War I veteran, who has injured in trench warfare and suffers from Shell shock. We also come to know that Septimus has not recovered from the death of Evans, a close officer in the army. Septimus was a promising poet and a lover of Shakespeare before the World War. He plunges into war for romantic patriotic reasons and is not able to recover from the horrors of the war and its after effects. He becomes numb, and felt little sad when his friend Evans died. Now he finds nothing worth in England he fought for and is also disinterested in his society and himself. For no reason, he equates his lack of feeling to a crime. “He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its degradation; how he had married his wife without loving her; had lied to her; seduced her; outraged Miss Isabel Pole, and was so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street. The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death” (Woolf, 2020, p.76). The trauma of war has permanently tainted him and his soul. He begins to see visions and has threatened to commit suicide and his Italian wife Lucrezia finds it difficult to manage her husband in the middle of the street. So she passes her time in the Regent’s park with her husband and is worried about his mental state of affairs. Lucrezia Warren Smith has sacrificed her life for her husband.



As the fragmented narration unfolds, suddenly the sound of aeroplane attracts the attention of everyone who reacts differently to this. Sky writing phenomena were used in London in 1922. The aeroplane skywriting scene dramatizes mass spectatorship and collective interpretation. Septimus perceives meaning in the skywriting as he says “they are signaling to me” (Woolf, 2020, p.28). This perception of Septimus is labelled as madness and Woolf delineates this in lyrical prose that destabilises the boundary between pathology and insight. The prose itself blurs epistemic hierarchies. In the post-truth condition, institutional authority often overrides lived experience, and emotional or politically convenient narratives dominate public discourse. Septimus’ testimony about beauty, horror and war trauma is dismissed as delusion, while psychiatrist William Bradshaw’s clinical pronouncement becomes an accepted fact. Urban modernity becomes a field of surveillance where deviation is quickly pathologised. Here, people are trying to come to terms with the repercussions of the First World War. The aeroplane also shows impending danger of war which is looming around all. In order to divert his attention, Maisie Johnson who appears in the novel as one visiting for the first time is taken aback by the queerness of the young couple Septimus and Lucrecia and cries “Horror! Horror!” (Woolf, 2020, p.33), taking us to Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness*. It indicates both the horrors of war people are suffering from and also the horror of madness that abnormal Septimus and his normal wife is undergoing.

Septimus is taken to the psychiatrist Dr. Holmes for treatment and the doctor reduces his condition to nervousness and prescribes cricket and music halls (Woolf, 2020, p.28). The behaviour of Septimus indicates that he has suffered from deferred war neurosis and yet Dr. Holmes takes no notice of that dismissing his patients ‘headaches, sleeplessness, fears and dreams’. Later they meet

another celebrated psychiatrist William Bradshaw who has earned a position in society through his treatment of patients. William Bradshaw, by simply looking at Septimus declares that “... it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes” (Woolf, 2020, p. 80). William Bradshaw is not sympathetic towards his patients and cares only for the rich and he prescribes rest cure for Septimus. The psychiatrist wanted Septimus to be treated away from home and his wife. Rest cure, a kind of gendered, disciplinary treatment was prescribed during the First World War for servicemen who had breakdowns. Psychiatric authority thus imposes interpretive closure. The cowardly behaviour of soldiers was attributed by military leaders to shell shock they had experienced during war. The shell shock is treated not as a medical condition, but as a moral failure, reflecting the biopolitical pressures of the era. Subjective suffering is medically dismissed. So they were treated with a range of therapies, including electric faradisations and Mitchell’s rest cure. The rest cure becomes a disciplinary mechanism rather than therapy. Virginia Woolf herself has undergone rest cure when she had a mental breakdown. Lucrezia feels that William Bradshaw has deserted and failed to help them. About his nature, Lucrezia sums up thus: “He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up. It was this combination of decision and humanity that endeared Sir William so greatly to the relations of his victims” (Woolf, 2020, p.85). Bradshaw enforces ‘proportion’ and ‘conversion’, insisting on social normalisation (Woolf, 2020, p.83). These terms mirror what Foucault describes as the modern state’s management of populations through normalisation (Foucault, 1973). Foucault argues that modern institutions – especially medicine and psychiatry – do not merely diagnose illness but construct regimes of truth that discipline bodies (Foucault, 1973). In



this framework, William Bradshaw and Dr. Holmes function not simply as flawed doctors but as agents of epistemic power who regulate which experiences count as legitimate reality. Moreover, Septimus' shell shock is not simply trauma – it becomes a site where institutional discourse overrides lived experience.

Septimus' condition worsened as psychiatrists could no longer provide a lasting solution to his problems. He started seeing visions and Lucrezia fails to prevent a separation from her husband. Virginia Woolf anticipates critiques of psychiatric institutionalisation long before anti-psychiatry movements emerged. In post-truth context, Bradshaw represents technocratic authority, while Septimus represents experimental truth marginalised by institutional discourse. Later Septimus commits suicide by jumping out of the window when Dr. Holmes enters the room. Clarissa's reflection that "Death was defiance" (Woolf, 2020, p.198) reframes suicide not as pathology but as resistance to biopolitical control. Even though Septimus and Clarissa Dalloway have not seen or met each other in the novel, they are connected

in the beginning of the novel itself when Clarissa recalls having a premonition one June at Bourton that "something awful was about to happen" (Woolf, 2020, p.9). This sensation anticipates Septimus' suicide later in the novel. He is Clarissa's double. Instead of Clarissa, here Septimus commits suicide, but in real life Clarissa a double of Virginia Woolf commits suicide.

Conclusion

The novel begins and ends with flamboyant Clarissa that provides a novel experience to the readers with its form, theme and style deployed in a valiant manner. With a different idiom created in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf stamps her position as a modernist feminist writer in the strict sense of the term. By faithfully following all the templates of modernism, *Mrs. Dalloway* anticipates the post-truth condition by dramatising how institutional power manufactures truth, marginalises dissenting subjectives and disciplines non-conforming bodies. Woolf successfully exposes how medical discourse constructs normalcy, disciplines deviance and renders certain lives disposable.

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‘माटी की मूर्तें’ और ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ में चित्रित सामाजिक यथार्थ का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन

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Received: 01/09/2025

Revised: 17/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

सारांश

आधुनिक हिन्दी साहित्य के दो सशक्त हस्ताक्षर रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी जी एवं महादेवी वर्मा जी के रेखाचित्र 'माटी की मूर्तें,' और 'अतीत के चलचित्र' में सामाजिक यथार्थ का सशक्त चित्रण किया गया है। बेनीपुरी जी और महादेवी जी की दृष्टि और भाषा-शैली भिन्न होते हुए भी दोनों समाज में घटित यथार्थ को प्रभावी ढंग से प्रस्तुत करने में सक्षम रहे हैं। 'माटी की मूर्तें' में बेनीपुरी जी ने उन चुने हुए लोगों के बारे में लिखा है जो उन्हें अत्यंत प्रिय थे। 'अतीत के चलचित्र' में महादेवी जी ने समाज में उपेक्षित, हीन समझे जाने वाले किंतु मानवीय गुणों से युक्त व्यक्तियों को रेखाचित्र का विषय बनाया है। बेनीपुरी जी ने भी समाज में उपेक्षित व्यक्तित्वों को ही विषय बनाया, अंतर केवल इतना था कि वे उपेक्षित व्यक्तित्व उनके प्रिय थे। दोनों ही प्रमुख रेखाचित्रकारों की श्रेणी में आते हैं।

बीज शब्द: रेखाचित्र, सामाजिक यथार्थ, तुलनात्मक अध्ययन

प्रस्तावना

साहित्य का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन पाठकों को व्यापक दृष्टि प्रदान करता है। तुलनात्मक अध्ययन से साहित्य के विविध पहलुओं को समझने में सहायता मिलती है। साहित्य कृतियों को तुलना करने से पता चलता है कैसे विभिन्न काव्य, कहानी, नाटक आदि कृतियाँ किस प्रकार समय के साथ बदलती हैं और कैसे आधुनिक समाज की मांगों को प्रतिबिम्बित करती हैं।

साहित्यकार समाज का अंग होता है, जिस समाज में वह रहता है उसकी समस्याएँ उसे आन्दोलित करती रहती हैं। समाज में घटित होनेवाली सच्ची घटनाओं का यथार्थ चित्रण ही सामाजिक यथार्थ कहलाता है। साहित्य कोश में सामाजिक यथार्थ के बारे में लिखा हुआ है "सामाजिक यथार्थ दार्शनिक दृष्टि से प्रत्यक्ष जगत से बिल्कुल भिन्न है। यह प्रत्येक मानव मस्तिष्क से सम्बंधित है, किंतु सामाजिक यथार्थ के भीतर वे शक्तियाँ



आती है, जो मस्तिष्क के बाहर है। आर्थिक, सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, सांस्कृतिक और ऐतिहासिक परिस्थितियों का समुच्चय ही सामाजिक यथार्थ है। ये शक्तियाँ मिलकर उस सामाजिक वातावरण का निर्माण करती हैं, जिनसे हमारे संस्कारों की सर्जना होती है।” (धीरेन्द्र वर्मा, 2005) अर्थात् सामाजिक यथार्थ के अंतर्गत समाज के मनुष्यों द्वारा प्रतिदिन होनेवाले सभी क्रियाकलाप आ जाते हैं। समाज के वास्तविक रूप के चित्रण को सामाजिक यथार्थ कहते हैं। लेखक अपने आसपास के वातावरण को या उस समाज को प्रस्तुत करता है जिस में वह अपना जीवन व्यतीत करता है। समाज में व्याप्त वर्ग संघर्ष सामाजिक विषमता दरिद्रता, नारी जीवन की विसंगति आदि का यथार्थ चित्रण साहित्य में देखा जा सकता है। सामाजिक यथार्थ की अवधारण बदलती रहती है। साहित्य में सामाजिक यथार्थ का चित्रण हमेशा रहती है। युगीन परिस्थितियों के आधार पर ही सामाजिक यथार्थ में बदलाव आता है।

मनुष्य के सभी कलात्मक प्रयासों में एक ही आशय निहित रहता है, यह आशय है- सौन्दर्यानुभूति की अभिव्यक्ति। सौन्दर्यानुभूति की पूर्ति के लिए मनुष्य नित्य नवीन खोज में लगा हुआ है। फलस्वरूप साहित्य में नवीन विधाओं का जन्म हुआ। इन विधाओं में रेखाचित्र भी एक सशक्त और प्रभावशाली विधा है। यह चित्रकला और साहित्य के सुन्दर समन्वय से अद्भूत अभिनव कला रूप है। रेखाचित्रकार

साहित्यकार के साथ-साथ चित्रकार भी होता है।

रेखाचित्र हिन्दी साहित्य की नवीनतम विधा है। इसका विकास छायावाद युग में स्वतंत्र रूप से हुआ है। इस युग के प्रमुख रेखाचित्रकारों में पं. पद्मसिंह शर्मा, पं. बनारसीदास चतुर्वेदी, बाबू शिवपूजन सहाय और श्रीराम शर्मा का प्रमुख स्थान है। छायावादोत्तर युग में रेखाचित्र का पूर्ण रूप से विकास होने लगा। इस युग के रेखाचित्रकारों में दो नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं— महादेवी वर्मा और रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी। रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी जी एवं महादेवी जी के रेखाचित्र ‘माटी की मूर्तें’ और ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ में सामाजिक यथार्थ का खुला चित्रण किया गया है।

शोध प्रविधि

इस विश्लेषण में दोनों कृतियों—‘माटी की मूर्तें’ और ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’—के प्रमुख रेखाचित्रों का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन किया गया। पात्रों के चरित्र-चित्रण, विषय-वस्तु, भावुकता, सामाजिक यथार्थ और भाषिक शैली को आधार बनाते हुए समानताओं और भिन्नताओं की पहचान की गई।

सन् 1941 में लिखित ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ में महादेवी जी ने समाज में उपेक्षित, हीन किंतु मानवीय गुणों से युक्त लोगों को रेखाचित्र का विषय बनाया है। ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ में ग्यारह शब्दचित्र हैं—रामा, भाभी, बिन्दा, सबिया, बिट्टो, दो फूल, घीसा, सबला, आलोपी, बदलू, लछमा आदि। इन शब्दचित्रों द्वारा मन की कोमलता, भावों की



तीव्रता तथा सरलता का प्रवाह दिखाया गया है। साहित्यकार विमलेश तेवतिया ने महादेवी जी का एक कथन उद्धृत किया है, जिसमें महादेवी जी का कहना है— “आदर्श की रेखाएँ कल्पना के सुनहले-रूपहले रंगों से तब तक नहीं भरी जा सकतीं जब तक उन्हें जीवन के स्पंदन से न भर दिया जाए, और दूसरी ओर यथार्थ की तीव्र धारा को दिशा देने से पहले उसे आदर्श के कूलों का सहारा देना आवश्यक है।” (डॉ. विमलेश तेवतिया, 2008) उन्होंने यथार्थ को ही रेखाचित्र का आधार बनाया। यथार्थ के साथ-साथ कल्पना, आदर्श और भावुकता का समन्वय भी दिखाया है। महादेवी जी ने एक ओर समाज के उपेक्षित वर्ग—सेवक रामा, नेत्रहीन आलोपी, बदलू और लछमा—का चित्र प्रस्तुत किया, तो दूसरी ओर बाल-विधवा मारवाड़िन, मातृहीन बिन्दा, परित्यक्ता सबिया आदि के माध्यम से विधवा-समस्या और नारी पर हो रहे अत्याचारों का चित्रण भी किया है।

‘माटी की मूरतें’ सन् 1946 में लिखा गया बेनीपुरी जी का सशक्त रेखाचित्र-संग्रह है। इसमें बेनीपुरी जी ने सामाजिक यथार्थ का खुला चित्रण किया है। उन्होंने स्वयं कहा है— “ये मूरतें न तो किसी आसमानी देवता की हैं, न अवतारी देवता की। इन कुरूप, बदशक्ल मूरतों में एक चीज है और वह है जिंदगी। ये माटी की मूर्तियाँ चलते-फिरते आदमियों के शब्दचित्र हैं।” (रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी, 1946) इस कृति की श्रेष्ठता का अनुमान मैथिलीशरण गुप्त के इस कथन से लगाया जा सकता है— “लोग माटी की मूरतें

बनाकर सोने के भाव बेचते हैं, पर बेनीपुरी जी सोने की मूरतें बनाकर माटी के मोल बेच रहे हैं।” (डॉ. अनिता पाण्डेय, 1968)

‘माटी की मूरतें’ में बारह शब्दचित्र हैं— रजिया, बलदेव सिंह, सरजू भैया, मंगर, रूपा की आजी, देव, बालगोविन भगत, भौजी, परमेसर, बैजू मामा, सुभान ख़ाँ, बुधिया आदि। इन रेखाचित्रों के माध्यम से समाज में व्याप्त अनेक समस्याओं को उजागर किया गया है। ‘रजिया’ एक व्यक्ति-प्रधान रेखाचित्र है जिसमें गाँव की एक चूड़ीहारिन का सजीव चित्र अंकित है। ‘बलदेव सिंह’ में पहलवान बलदेव अन्याय के विरुद्ध लड़ता हुआ दिखाई देता है, जिसे अंततः विद्रोहियों ने मार दिया। ‘रूपा की आजी’ में रूढ़िवादिता का चित्रण है। ‘सुभान ख़ाँ’ में धार्मिक समस्याओं के साथ-साथ धार्मिक रूढ़ियों का विरोध करते सुभान ख़ाँ का साहसिक चित्रण है। बेनीपुरी जी ने अपनी सूक्ष्म अवलोकन-दृष्टि से इन पात्रों के माध्यम से ग्रामीण जीवन के साधारण व्यक्तियों पर प्रकाश डाला है, जिनके वर्णन से सामाजिक यथार्थ स्पष्ट रूप से सामने आता है।

शोध निषकर्ष

‘माटी की मूरतें’ और ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ की तुलना करने से पता चलता है कि रचना-शैली और भाषा-शैली भिन्न होने के बावजूद दोनों ही कृतियाँ समाज में व्याप्त यथार्थ का प्रभावी चित्रण करने में समान रूप से सक्षम हैं। ‘माटी की मूरतें’ में बेनीपुरी जी ने उन लोगों को विषय बनाया है जो उन्हें अत्यंत प्रिय थे, जबकि ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’ में



महादेवी जी ने समाज के उपेक्षित, हीन किंतु मानवीय गुणों से युक्त व्यक्तियों का चित्रण किया है। बेनीपुरी जी ने भी उपेक्षित व्यक्तियों को ही विषय बनाया है, अंतर केवल इतना है कि वे उनके आत्मीय थे। दोनों रचनाकारों ने बाह्य और अंतरंग दोनों प्रकार की विशेषताओं का सूक्ष्म चित्रण किया है। समाज की कुरूपताओं को पहचानकर उन्हें अपने रेखाचित्रों का विषय बनाया गया है और करुणा, स्नेह, श्रद्धा आदि भावों को भी व्यक्त किया गया है। इन कृतियों में सामान्य जन के जीवन के प्रति सम्मान और आत्मीयता का भाव विद्यमान है।

बेनीपुरी जी के रेखाचित्रों में भी यथार्थ के साथ कल्पना और भावुकता का सुन्दर समन्वय है, परंतु महादेवी जी के रेखाचित्रों में भावुकता का प्रवाह अधिक प्रभावी रूप से दिखाई देता है। स्त्री और पुरुष होने की भिन्नता के कारण दोनों की संवेदनशीलता में अंतर भी स्पष्ट होता है। घीसा के माध्यम से महादेवी जी यह बताती हैं कि गरीबों के प्रतिभाशाली बच्चे परिस्थितिवश आगे बढ़ने से वंचित रह जाते हैं। 'घीसा' और 'आलोपी' के चित्रण में उनकी ममता-भरी भावुकता झलकती है। 'आलोपी' रेखाचित्र के अंतिम वाक्य से यह भाव और भी गहरा हो जाता है। आलोपी की मृत्यु की बात सुनकर भावुक होकर महादेवी जी कहती हैं कि— "तब मैं आँखें मल-मलकर सोचती हूँ, नियति के व्यंग्य से जीवन और संसार के बल से मृत्यु पाने वाला आलोपी क्या मेरी ममता के लिए प्रेत होकर मंडराता रहेगा?" (महादेवी

वर्मा, 1941) इस पंक्ति में लेखिका अपने दुख और ममता को व्यक्त करती हैं। उन्हें लगता है कि आलोपी की याद उनके मन में हमेशा जीवित रहेगी।

बेनीपुरी जी ने भी अपने सभी रेखाचित्रों में भावुकता और आत्मीयता का भाव प्रस्तुत किया है, परंतु यह महादेवी जी की तुलना में कुछ कम प्रतीत होता है। 'अतीत के चलचित्र' में पुरुष पात्र अपेक्षाकृत कम हैं, और नारी-पात्रों में विधवा-समस्या विशेष रूप से उभरकर आती है, जिससे विषय-पुनरावृत्ति का आभास होता है। दूसरी ओर 'माटी की मूरतें' में विषय-वैविध्य स्पष्ट है—शब्दों का सशक्त प्रयोग मिलता है। बेनीपुरी जी ने धार्मिक समस्या, रूढ़िवाद, सामाजिक अनैतिकता, जाति-व्यवस्था, जमींदारी-प्रथा आदि समस्याओं का मार्मिक चित्रण किया है।

'अतीत के चलचित्र' में पात्र अधिकतर सहनशील हैं—वे विद्रोह करना नहीं जानते। महादेवी जी कहती हैं— "युगों से पुरुष स्त्री को अपनी शक्ति के लिए नहीं, सहन-शक्ति के लिए दंड देता आ रहा है।" (महादेवी वर्मा, 1941) महादेवी जी स्त्री की सहनशीलता से सहमत नहीं हैं। स्त्रियाँ प्रतिरोध करने की बजाय अधिक सहनशील होती हैं। इसलिए पुरुष उसका फ़ायदा उठाता है। महादेवी जी कहती हैं कि जो दंड पुरुष स्त्री को देता है, वह उसकी सहनशीलता के कारण ही उसे मिलता है। वे स्त्री को प्रतिरोध करने की प्रेरणा देती हैं।



‘माटी की मूर्तें’ में प्रतिरोध की प्रवृत्ति दिखाई देती है। ‘बलदेव सिंह’ रेखाचित्र के पात्र बलदेव सिंह और ‘सुभान खाँ’ रेखाचित्र के पात्र सुभान खाँ इसके सशक्त उदाहरण हैं, जो दूसरों के लिए या सच्चे धर्म के लिए लड़ने से पीछे नहीं हटते। बलदेव सिंह की वीरता इस शब्दों से पता चलता है।

“काश, किसी शेर ने यह हालत की होती! दो शेर लड़ते हैं, एक गिरता है। ऐसा ही होता है; इसके लिए अफसोस की क्या बात? बलदेव सिंह तो ऐसी ही मृत्यु चाहते थे। उन्होंने मौत की कब परवाह की? मौत की आँखों में आँखें डालकर मुसकुराना-यही तो बलदेव सिंह थे। क्षत्रिय की तरह युद्धक्षेत्र में काम आऊँ, खेत रहूँ-यही तो उनकी कामना थी।” (रामवृक्ष बेनीपूरी, 1946)

सुभान दादा का मानवता का सशक्त चित्रण इस संदर्भ से मिलता है।

“सुभान दादा वहाँ से उसी तना-तनी की हालत में मसजिद में आए। नमाज पढ़ी। फिर तसबीह लेकर मसजिद के दरवाजे की चौखट पर “मेरी लाश पर हो कर ही कोई भीतर घुस सकता है।” (रामवृक्ष बेनीपूरी, 1946)

चर्चा

तुलनात्मक अध्ययन से ज्ञात होता है कि यद्यपि बेनीपूरी जी और महादेवी जी दोनों

संदर्भ:

अनिता पाण्डेय (1968, रेखाचित्र-सिद्धान्त और सृजन, पृष्ठ सं. 64

धीरेंद्र वर्मा (2005), हिन्दी साहित्य कोश भाग-1, पृष्ठ सं : 758

महादेवी वर्मा (1941), अतीत के चलचित्र , पृष्ठ सं. 63

ही समाज के उपेक्षित और साधारण लोगों के जीवन को केंद्र में रखते हैं, परंतु उनकी दृष्टि और संवेदनशीलता में अंतर है।

रामवृक्ष बेनीपूरी और महादेवी वर्मा के रेखाचित्र-‘माटी की मूर्तें’ और ‘अतीत के चलचित्र’-दोनों में सामाजिक यथार्थ का प्रभावी चित्रण मिलता है। दोनों की भाषा शैली में एक प्रवाह है जो पाठकों को आकर्षित करता है। बेनीपूरी जी के रेखाचित्र दिन-प्रतिदिन के सामाजिक जीवन और व्यक्तित्व की सहज, सरल और सरस अनुकृति हैं, जब कि महादेवी जी ने दुःख और करुणा के लौकिक और आध्यात्मिक परिप्रेक्ष्यों को स्पष्ट कर उसे व्यापक अर्थ प्रदान किया। समाज में हो रही समस्याओं को स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाने में दोनों सफल हुए हैं। दोनों की रचनाएँ और भाषा-शैली अलग होते हुए भी समाज में हो रहे यथार्थ का चित्रण करने में दोनों सक्षम रहे हैं। कुछ भिन्नताएँ होते हुए भी दोनों प्रमुख रेखाचित्रकारों की श्रेणी में आते हैं। सामान्य जन की जिंदगी के प्रति सम्मान और आत्मीयता का भाव दोनों में भरा हुआ है। जब बेनीपूरी जी माटी की मूर्तों को सोने के भाव में बेचा तो महादेवी जी ने अतीत के पन्ने खोलकर यथार्थ का चलचित्र दिखाया है।



महादेवी वर्मा (1941), अतीत के चलचित्र , पृष्ठ सं. 92
रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी (1946), माटी की मूर्तें, पृष्ठ सं. 4
रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी (1946), माटी की मूर्तें, पृष्ठ सं.17
रामवृक्ष बेनीपुरी (1946), माटी की मूर्तें, पृष्ठ सं.61
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सहायक ग्रंथ

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जेंडर निरपेक्षता हासिल करने में स्त्री कविता की भूमिका : विशिष्ट स्त्री कवियों के संदर्भ में

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Received: 19.08.2025

Revised: 12.02.2026

Accepted: 17.02.2026

शोध-सार

प्रस्तुत शोध-प्रबंध में जेंडर की सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक अवधारणा तथा भारतीय पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत स्त्री की स्थिति का विश्लेषण हिन्दी स्त्री कविता के संदर्भ में किया गया है। जेंडर केवल जैविक लिंग तक सीमित न होकर सामाजिक अपेक्षाओं, सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों और मानसिक संरचनाओं से निर्मित होता है। भारतीय समाज में यह संरचना मुख्यतः पितृसत्तात्मक रही है, जहाँ परिवार जेंडर स्टीरियोटाइप्स के पुनरुत्पादन का प्रमुख केंद्र है।

नब्बे के दशक की हिन्दी स्त्री कविता विशेषतः अनामिका, नीलेश रघुवंशी और कात्यायनी की कविताएँ इन पितृसत्तात्मक मान्यताओं का प्रतिरोध करते हुए स्त्री अस्मिता, अनुभव और मुक्ति की आकांक्षा को सशक्त स्वर प्रदान करती हैं। यह शोध स्त्री शोषण के पारंपरिक और आधुनिक (बाज़ारवादी व डिजिटल) रूपों की पहचान करते हुए यह प्रतिपादित करता है कि हिन्दी स्त्री कविता जेंडर संवेदनशीलता और समतामूलक समाज की स्थापना की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण सांस्कृतिक हस्तक्षेप है। शोध पत्र के विषय के रूप में स्त्री कविता का अध्ययन इसलिए लिया है कि साहित्य की सार्थकता सामाजिक अनुकूलन करने वाली द्वंद्ववात्मक संरचनाओं को चुनौती देने की क्षमता पर आधारित है। स्त्री साहित्य इसी अर्थ में विलक्षण है कि वह सामाजिक विषमता के द्वैत को लिंगाधारित विषमता का अतिरिक्त आयाम देता है और लिंगाधारित असमानता को इकट्ठे प्रस्तुत न करके अन्य सामाजिक विषमताओं के परिप्रेक्ष्य में उसकी जटिलताओं को सामने लाता है।



बीज शब्द

जेंडर निरपेक्षता, पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था, भूमण्डलीकरण, स्त्री शोषण, जेंडर संवेदनशीलता, डिजिटल एक्टिविज़्म

मूल आलेख

जेंडर (Gender) एक सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक अवधारणा है, जो यह निर्धारित करती है कि समाज किसी व्यक्ति से उसके स्त्री या पुरुष होने के आधार पर किस प्रकार की अपेक्षाएँ रखता है। यह जैविक लिंग (Sex) से भिन्न है, क्योंकि जैविक लिंग व्यक्ति की शारीरिक और जैविक संरचना पर आधारित होता है। जेंडर की अवधारणा केवल शारीरिक भिन्नताओं तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि इसमें सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक और मनोवैज्ञानिक तत्व भी शामिल होते हैं। अतः जेंडर की समझ को व्यापक बनाना और पारंपरिक धारणाओं को चुनौती देना लैंगिक समानता की दिशा में एक आवश्यक कदम है। भारतीय पारिवारिक संस्थाओं में जेंडर स्टीरियोटाइप्स प्रायः पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था के रूप में स्थापित दिखाई देते हैं। यह व्यवस्था परंपराओं के माध्यम से निरंतर बनी रहती है, जिसका मुख्य उद्देश्य स्त्री और पुरुष को असमान सामाजिक भूमिकाओं में बाँटना होता है। समाज पुरुष को शक्ति, अधिकार और स्वामित्व का प्रतीक मानता है, जबकि स्त्री

को करुणा, सहनशीलता और त्याग से जोड़कर देखा जाता है। इस प्रकार की सामाजिक संरचना का मूल आधार पारिवारिक परिवेश ही है, जहाँ से यह मानसिकता पीढ़ी-दर-पीढ़ी स्थानांतरित होती रहती है। इस व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन अत्यंत आवश्यक है। इसके लिए केवल सामाजिक संरचनाओं में ही नहीं, बल्कि व्यक्ति की सोच में भी बदलाव आना चाहिए। यह समझ विकसित करना आवश्यक है कि स्त्री और पुरुष के बीच कोई स्वाभाविक श्रेष्ठता या हीनता नहीं है, बल्कि दोनों समान मानवीय क्षमताओं और अधिकारों से युक्त हैं। ऐसी जेंडर-संवेदनशील चेतना को केंद्र में रखकर हिन्दी कविता जगत में नब्बे के दशक में अनेक कवयित्रियाँ उभरकर सामने आईं। इनमें अनामिका, कात्यायनी, नीलेश रघुवंशी और सविता सिंह प्रमुख हैं। इनकी कविताएँ पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था का प्रतिरोध करते हुए एक जेंडर-न्यूट्रल और समावेशी समाज की परिकल्पना प्रस्तुत करती हैं।

“अनामिका की कविताओं का स्त्री पक्ष अन्य स्त्री रचनाकारों से कई मायनों में भिन्न है। स्वतंत्र स्त्री अस्मिता की प्रतिष्ठा तथा स्त्री



मुक्ति की निरपेक्ष हठधर्मिता उनके यहाँ नहीं है। उनका स्त्रीवाद उस ठेठ भारतीय संदर्भ से प्रेरित है जहाँ व्यक्ति इकाई पर बल न देकर परिवार को इकाई मान लिया जाता है” (रेखा सेठी, 2019, p. 99)। स्त्री पुरुष के बीच स्थित भिन्नता की पहली सोच तो परिवार से ही सिखायी जाती है, अनामिका की ‘बेजगह’ नामक कविता में यह संदर्भ व्यक्त है-

“याद था हमें एक-एक क्षण
आरंभिक पाठों का-
राम, पाठशाला जा !
राधा, खाना पका !
राम, आ बताशा खा !
राधा, झाड़ू लगा !
भैया अब सोएगा
जाकर बिस्तर बिछा !
अहा, नया घर है !
राम, देख यह तेरा कमरा है !
‘और मेरा ?’
‘ओ पगली,
लड़कियाँ हवा, धूप, मिट्टी होती हैं
उनका कोई घर नहीं होता”
(अनामिका, 2010, p. 15)

उपर्युक्त पंक्तियों में बचपन से परिवार या प्राथमिक शिक्षा स्थानों में लड़कियों को यह सिखाया जाता कि कैसे वे पुरुषवर्चस्ववादी समाज में खुद को बनाए रखें। परिवार और

समाज द्वारा दी गई यही पितृसत्तात्मक सीख आगे चलकर स्त्री को पतिव्रता और पुरुष को स्वामी के रूप में स्थापित कर देती है। इस प्रक्रिया में स्त्री घरेलू हिंसा और मानसिक दमन के चक्र में फँस जाती है। परंपरा के नाम पर थोपी गई यह भूमिका स्त्री के आत्मसम्मान और स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व को गहरे रूप में प्रभावित करती है। अनामिका की ‘पतिव्रता’ नामक कविता में पतिव्रता का सौभाग्य का पोल खोलता है-

“स्वामी जहाँ नहीं भी होते थे
होते थे उनके वहाँ पँजे,
मुहर, तौलिए, डण्डे,
स्टैम्प-पेपर, चप्पल-जूते,
हिचकियाँ-डकारें-खर्राटे
और त्योंरियाँ - धमकियाँ - गालियाँ
खचाखच”।
(अनामिका, 2010, p. 27)

कविता का आरंभ अंग्रेजी राजसत्ता के उस बिम्ब से किया है जहाँ कहा जाता था कि ब्रिटिश राज में सूरज कभी नहीं डूबता वैसे ही परिवार में स्त्री के लिए पति के हिंसा का साया भी खत्म नहीं होता। जिस पति का होने से पतिव्रता सौभाग्य होता है, वही पति ही पत्नी के दुःख का कारण बनता है। अनामिका भारतीय परिवारों के यथार्थ को सामने लाते



स्त्री की विडम्बनाओं को अभिव्यक्त करती है। ऐसी स्त्रियों की भूमिका गुलामों से भी बदतर रही है। पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था की सीख और संस्कारों के महीन बुनावट स्त्री को सब सहने एवं मुलायम होने सिखाती हैं। अनामिका की ज्यादातर कविताओं में भारतीय लोक जीवन का पक्ष देखने को मिलता है जहाँ पितृसत्तात्मक समाज के प्रति विरोध है लेकिन पुरुष से नहीं है। उनके अनुसार "बराबर का यह साथ तभी हो सकेगा जब पुरुष अतिपुरुष न रहें और स्त्रियाँ अतिस्त्री। एक ध्रुवीय विश्व न माइक्रो स्तर पर अच्छा है, न मैक्रो स्तर पर। संतुलन ही सुख का मूल मंत्र है... सरप्लस न क्रोध का चाहिए, न कामना का (अनामिका, 2012, p. 35)।"

पितृसत्तात्मक व्यवस्था ने ऐतिहासिक रूप से स्त्री को सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक और आर्थिक स्तर पर नियंत्रित किया है। इसके समानांतर, भूमंडलीकृत, बाज़ारवादी व्यवस्था ने स्त्री शोषण के नए रूप विकसित किए हैं। आधुनिक उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृति में स्त्री देह को वस्तु या उपभोग की सामग्री के रूप में पुनर्परिभाषित किया गया है। इस प्रकार, शोषण का स्वरूप बदला है, किंतु उसका मूल ढाँचा अब भी पितृसत्तात्मक ही बना हुआ है। 'चौदह बरस की कुछ सेक्स वर्क्स' नामक कविता में अनामिका वेश्यावृत्ति करने में

मजबूती यौन दासियों को दिखाती है, उनके देह जो महीन शोषण का शिकार होते भी वे अपने मन को देह से अलग कर रहती हैं, वही एक स्त्री का अंतर्द्वंद्व है -

“एक दिन आऊँगी मैं टीवी पर
एक अंगूठे की तरह मैं दिखाऊँगी देह
दूर से

- - - - -

हाँ हम हमेशा खुश रहती हैं
हँसती हुई दिखती है हम हर ओर
टीवी में सारे मुखपृष्ठों / चौराहों पर”
(अनामिका, 2007, p. 69-70)

नीलेश रघुवंशी की कविता 'सुन्दरियो' में जिस प्रकार स्त्री देह को दर्शन या प्रदर्शनी वस्तु बनाकर रखा जाता है, इस स्थिति की ओर स्त्रियों को सचेत कराती हैं -

“मत आया करो तुम सम्मान
समारोहों में
तश्तरी, शाल और श्रीफल लेकर
दीप-प्रज्वलन के समय
मत खड़ी रहा करो माचिस और
दिया-बाती के संग
मंच पर खड़े होकर मत बाँचा करो
अभिनंदन-पत्र
उपस्थिति को अपनी सिर्फ मोहक
और दर्शनीय मत बनने दिया करो
सुंदरियों,



तुम ऐसा करके तो देखो
बदल जाएगी ये दुनिया सारी”।
(नीलेश रघुवंशी, 2004, p. 44)

इन पंक्तियों द्वारा नीलेश स्त्री की नागरिक अधिकारों के साथ स्त्री पुरुष बराबरी का सपना बुनती हैं। नीलेश की कविताएं उस स्त्री अनुभव को पकड़ने की कोशिश करती हैं, जहाँ परिवर्तन की आकांक्षा जीवन की सरल तम अभिव्यंजनाओं में घटित होती है।

नीलेश की कविताओं में बराबरी के साथ ही मुक्ति की आकांक्षा भी है। नीलेश की कविताओं में अपने ‘स्व’ को तलाशती लड़की के रूप में ‘कविता लिखने वाली लड़की’ सामने आती हैं,

“जब कभी कविता लिखती है लड़की
कहा जाता है सीखो मशीन चलाना
सिलो कपड़े बुनो स्वेटर
मत बुनो शब्द मत बुनो कवि
यह सब फ़िज़ूलखर्ची है वक़्त की।

ओ मरीना
तुम्हारी ही तरह
मैं भी बनूंगी कवि
मशीन पर सिलते हुए कपड़े सिलूंगी
कविता
बुनते हुए स्वेटर बुनूंगी शब्द

खुले आसमान के नीचे बैठकर करूंगी
बातें
तुम्हारी कविताओं पर”।
(नीलेश रघुवंशी, 1997, p. 24-25)

प्रस्तुत पंक्तियों में लड़की को परंपरा और व्यवस्था कभी उसे चारदीवारी के अंदर रहने सिखाती उन सब के प्रति एक प्रगतिशील चेतना रहती है। यहाँ लड़की की कविता लिखने का चाह केवल कविता लिखने से मात्र नहीं तथाकथित व्यवस्था के प्रति विरोध एवं अपने सपनों को पाने और अपनी अस्मिता की खोज है। नीलेश की यह लड़की की आकांक्षा अपने मुक्ति की सपना के साथ जेंडर स्टीरियोटाइप्स को तोड़ने में मजबूरी हैं। “नीलेश रघुवंशी की कविताओं का संसार हमारे सम्मुख स्त्री कविता की एक नई दुनिया उपस्थित करता है। उनकी कविताओं में स्त्री की जिस छवि से हमारा परिचय होता है वह उस लड़की की है जो शिक्षा से उपजे आत्म विश्वास को लेकर दुनिया मुट्ठी में करने निकली है” (रेखा सेठी, 2019, p. 144)।

कात्यायनी की ‘हाँकी खेलती लड़कियाँ’ एक प्रगतिशील सोच वाली कविता है, जो पितृसत्तात्मक समाज में पारंपरिक बेड़ियों को तोड़कर आगे बढ़ती युवतियों का चित्रण करती है-

“आज शुक्रवार का दिन है



और इस छोटे से शहर की ये
लड़कियाँ
खेल रही हैं हाँकी।
खुश हैं लड़कियाँ
फिलहाल
खेल रही हैं हाँकी
कोई डर नहीं।

सो जाएँगी लड़कियाँ
सपने में दौड़ती हुई बॉल के पीछे
स्टिक को साधे हुए हाथों में
पृथ्वी के छोर पर पहुँच जाएँगी
और 'गोल-गोल' चिल्लाती हुई
एक दूसरे को चूमती हुई
लिपटकर धरती पर गिर जाएँगी !"
(कात्यायनी, 2008, p. 20)

प्रस्तुत पंक्तियों की लड़कियों का हाँकी खेलना उनके अपने अस्तित्व एवं अधिकार का प्रतीक है। "पेनाल्टी कॉर्नर मारती, खुलकर हँसती लड़कियाँ" समाज की तथाकथित थोथी मान्यताओं को पार कर अपना स्पेस ढूँढ लेती हैं। कात्यायनी इस बिम्ब को अपनी कविता का अविस्मरणीय बिम्ब बनाकर प्रस्तुत करती हैं। वे मानती हैं कि हमारे देश में भी परिवार के पितृसत्तात्मक ढाँचे की रागात्मकता लगभग नष्ट हो चुकी है क्योंकि यह पारिवारिकता पूंजीवादी ढाँचे पर टिकी है जिसमें साधन और

सम्पत्ति पर स्त्रियों का स्वामित्व लगभग नदारद है। ऐसे परिवार के प्रति उनका कोई मोह नहीं है" (रेखा सेठी, 2019, p. 81)।

निष्कर्ष

वर्तमान समय डिजिटल युग, जिसे सूचना युग भी कहा जाता है, जिसने समाज के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में व्यापक परिवर्तन किए हैं। इस दौर में डिजिटल तकनीक और इंटरनेट ने शिक्षा, रोजगार और अभिव्यक्ति के नए अवसर प्रदान किए हैं, विशेषतः स्त्रियों और लैंगिक अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के लिए। हालांकि, इसके साथ डिजिटल डिवाइड, साइबर उत्पीड़न और श्रम शोषण जैसी नई चुनौतियाँ भी सामने आई हैं। अतः डिजिटल विकास को सार्थक और न्यायपूर्ण बनाने के लिए जेंडर संवेदनशील नीतियाँ और डिजिटल साक्षरता को प्राथमिकता देना आवश्यक है। निष्कर्षतः कहा जा सकता है कि स्त्री और पुरुष के बीच विद्यमान असमानता का मूल कारण पितृसत्तात्मक मानसिकता है, जो सामाजिक नियमों और सांस्कृतिक परंपराओं के माध्यम से पुनरुत्पादित होती रहती है। इस असमानता को समाप्त करने के लिए जेंडर संवेदनशीलता का विकास अनिवार्य है। समकालीन हिन्दी स्त्री कविता इस दिशा में एक सशक्त



सांस्कृतिक हस्तक्षेप के रूप में उभरती है, जो समतामूलक और समावेशी समाज की कल्पना को सशक्त स्वर प्रदान करती है। साहित्यिक प्रतिरोध और डिजिटल एक्टिविज़्म दोनों का मूल उद्देश्य एक ही है, अन्याय के खिलाफ आवाज़ उठाना और समाज को सोचने पर मजबूर करना। जहाँ साहित्यिक विरोध शब्दों,

कविताओं, कहानियों और लेखों के माध्यम से चेतना जगाता है, वहीं डिजिटल एक्टिविज़्म उसी चेतना को सोशल मीडिया, ब्लॉग्स और ऑनलाइन अभियानों के ज़रिए व्यापक जनसमूह तक तेज़ी से पहुँचाता है।

संदर्भ ग्रंथ सूची

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രംഗകലാസൗന്ദര്യത്തിലെ ദ്രാവിഡക്കലർപ്പുകൾ: സംഘകാല ലാവണ്യാശയങ്ങളെമുൻനിർത്തി ഒരന്വേഷണം

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Received: 15/08/2025

Revised: 29/01/2026

Accepted: 01/02/2026

സംഗ്രഹം

കേരളീയ രംഗകലകളിലെ സൗന്ദര്യാശയങ്ങൾ ഒരു സങ്കരസംസ്കൃതിയുടെ ഉൽപ്പന്നമെന്ന നിലയിലാണ് പാകപ്പെട്ടിരിക്കുന്നത്. എന്നാൽ ഈ കലർപ്പിലെ നാനാഘടകങ്ങളുടെ വ്യതിരിക്തതകൾ അടയാളപ്പെടുത്താതെ പോകുന്ന സാഹചര്യമാണുള്ളത്. ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളുടെയാധാരം നാട്യശാസ്ത്രമടക്കമുള്ള സംസ്കൃതഭാഷയിലെ ശാസ്ത്രീയഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളാണെന്ന ധാരണ സമൂഹത്തിൽ ശക്തമായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്നു. ഇത് കേരളത്തിലെ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളിൽ ഉള്ളടങ്ങിയിട്ടുള്ള ഇതര സൗന്ദര്യാശയങ്ങളെ റദ്ദ് ചെയ്യാൻ കാരണമാവുന്നു. പ്രാദേശികമായ അനവധി സൗന്ദര്യാശയങ്ങളാൽക്കൂടി നിർമ്മിതമായ രൂപങ്ങളാണ് കേരളത്തിലെ രംഗകലകൾ. മാത്രമല്ല നാട്യശാസ്ത്രാനുസാരിയായ രീതിശാസ്ത്രങ്ങളെ പിൻപറ്റാതെയാണ് ഏറിയപങ്കും അവയുടെ നടശരീരങ്ങൾ പാകപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ളതും. ഈ വിരുദ്ധസാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ മുൻനിർത്തി കേരളീയ രംഗകലകളിലെ ദാർശനികതയിൽ ഉള്ളടങ്ങുന്ന ദ്രാവിഡ സൗന്ദര്യ സങ്കല്പങ്ങളെ ഉദ്ധാരണം ചെയ്യാനാണ് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിലൂടെ ഉദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നത്.

താക്കോൽ വാക്കുകൾ: രംഗകല, നാട്യശാസ്ത്രം, സംഘകാലം, ദ്രാവിഡ സൗന്ദര്യശാസ്ത്രം

ആമുഖം

കേരളീയ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളുടെ സൗന്ദര്യ സങ്കല്പനങ്ങൾ ബഹുതല സ്പർശിയാതെയാരു ആശയപരിസരമാണ്. അതിന്റെ മൌലികതകൾ ഏറിയപങ്കും സംസ്കൃതകലാസിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങളുടെ പിൻതുടർച്ചയെ ആശ്രയിക്കാൻ താല്പര്യപ്പെടുകയും അതിലൂടെ അഭിജാതമായ സ്ഥാനങ്ങളെ കൈവരിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുകയുമാണ് ചെയ്തത്. ഇന്ത്യയിലെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട ക്ലാസ്സിക്ക് കലാരൂപങ്ങളുടെയെല്ലാം ചരിത്രസ്ഥിതികൾ ഈ നിലയ്ക്കുള്ളതാണ്. നാട്യശാസ്ത്രാശ്രയിതയാണ് ഇന്ത്യയിലെ ഭൂരിപക്ഷം ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളുടെയും അടിസ്ഥാനങ്ങളെ ഉറപ്പിക്കാൻ എക്കാലത്തും പണ്ഡിതർ ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. ഇവിടെ സംഭവിക്കുന്ന പ്രധാന പ്രശ്നം ഈ കലകളുടെയെല്ലാം പ്രാദേശികമായ രൂപാടിത്തറകൾ വിസ്തൃതമാക്കപ്പെടുന്നുവെന്നതാണ്. എല്ലാ കലാരൂപങ്ങളിലും സഹജമായ ഒരു പ്രാദേശിക സൗന്ദര്യ പശ്ചാത്തലം നിശ്ചയമായും ഉള്ളടങ്ങിയിരിക്കും. അതിലേക്ക് കാലാന്തരത്തിൽ കൂടിച്ചേരുന്ന കലർപ്പുകളോടെയാണ് ഇന്ന് കാണുന്ന നിലയ്ക്കുള്ള

സൗന്ദര്യ തലങ്ങൾ ക്ലാസ്സിക്ക് കലകളിൽ വന്നു കൂടിയിട്ടുള്ളത്. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ കേരളീയ രംഗകലകളിൽ ഉൾച്ചേർന്നിരിക്കുന്ന പ്രാദേശികമായ സ്വരൂപസങ്കല്പനങ്ങളെ സംബന്ധിച്ച ചില ആശയങ്ങളെയാണീ പ്രബന്ധം മുന്നോട്ടു വെക്കുന്നത്.

പ്രബന്ധശരീരം

സൗന്ദര്യമെന്ന (*Beauty*) സങ്കല്പനം കേരളീയ കലകളുടെ രൂപപ്പെടലിനെ സ്വാധീനിച്ചതിന് വിവിധമാനങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ചരിത്രപരമായ അന്വേഷണം കൂടിയാണ്. സൗന്ദര്യമെന്ന സങ്കല്പനത്തെ പാശ്ചാത്യരും പൗരസ്ത്യരും തങ്ങളുടേതായ നിലയിൽ നിർദ്ധാരണം ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. സങ്കല്പന പരമായ സമാനതകൾ പലപ്പോഴും ഇവതമ്മിൽ കാണാമെങ്കിലും സൗന്ദര്യ സങ്കല്പനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് ഇരുശാഖയിലും ഉൾപ്പെട്ട അന്വേഷകരുടെ യുക്തിക്കാണ് ഈ സന്ദർഭത്തിൽ പ്രാധാന്യം. ഈ യുക്തിയാണ് അവരുടെ ആശയങ്ങൾ തമ്മിലുള്ള വ്യത്യാസങ്ങൾക്ക് ആധാരമായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്നതും. കലാസൗന്ദര്യ



ശാസ്ത്രമെന്ന നിലയിൽ പാശ്ചാത്യ-പൗരസ്ത്യ ആശയങ്ങളെ കേരളീയ കലകളുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തിയുള്ള ആലോചനകൾ അനവധി നടന്നിട്ടുണ്ട്. രസസിദ്ധാന്തത്തേയും മറ്റും അടിസ്ഥാനപ്പെടുത്തി കേരളീയകലകളെ അവലോകനം ചെയ്യുന്ന പ്രവണത കലാപരിതാക്കൾക്കിടയിൽ വളരെ വ്യാപകമായി നടപ്പിലുള്ളതുമാണ്. പൗരസ്ത്യ സൗന്ദര്യദർശനങ്ങളെന്ന നിലയിലിന്ന് പ്രധാനമായും വ്യാഖ്യാനിക്കപ്പെടുന്ന സംസ്കൃത കാവ്യ സൗന്ദര്യദർശന സങ്കല്പങ്ങൾക്കപ്പുറം പ്രാദേശികമായ സൗന്ദര്യ സ്വാധീനങ്ങളെ വെളിച്ചത്തു കൊണ്ടു വരേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ഭൂമി ശാസ്ത്രപരമായ ചരിത്രാന്വേഷണത്തിൽ കേരള മുൾപ്പെടുന്ന പൂർവ്വതമിഴകത്തിന്റെ സംസ്കാരത്തിൽ നിന്നാണ് ഈ സങ്കല്പത്തെ നിർമ്മിക്കേണ്ടത്. ഭാഷാപരമായും സംസ്കാരപരമായും കേരളത്തിനു കൂടി അവകാശപ്പെട്ട പൂർവ്വതമിഴകത്തിന്റെ ലാവണ്യബോധങ്ങൾ കേരളീയകലകളുടെ വികാസത്തെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്നതിന്റെ തലങ്ങളെ പരിശോധിക്കുകയാണിവിടെ ചെയ്യുന്നത്. അതിലൂടെ കൂടിയാട്ടവും കഥകളിയുമടക്കമുള്ള കലകളെ ആശയപരമായും രൂപപരമായും പൂർവ്വ തമിഴകത്തിലെ സാംസ്കാരിക പരിസരം സ്വാധീനിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് ബോധ്യപ്പെടാം.

രണ്ടായിരം കൊല്ലത്തെ പഴക്കം അവകാശപ്പെടുന്ന സംഘ സാഹിത്യം തന്നെയാണ് ഈ പഠനത്തിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന മുഖ്യസ്രോതസ്സ്. സംഘകാലത്ത് കേരളമുൾപ്പെടുന്ന പൂർവ്വതമിഴകത്ത് രചിക്കപ്പെട്ട സാഹിത്യീയതയിൽ ഉൾക്കൊള്ളുന്ന സൗന്ദര്യ സങ്കല്പനങ്ങൾ കാലത്തുടർച്ചയിൽ കൈമാറ്റങ്ങളിലൂടെ കേരളത്തിലെയും തമിഴ്നാട്ടിലെയും കലകളിൽ സ്വാധീനമുണ്ടാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഒരുതരത്തിൽ ഇന്നുള്ള തലമുറകളുടെ (ജീൻ) വിവിധ പരിശോധനകളിലൂടെ നൂറ്റാണ്ടുകൾ പഴക്കമുള്ള പിൻതലമുറയുടെ ജനിതക സ്വഭാവങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതു പോലെ തന്നെ. പക്ഷേ ഇവിടെ പൂർവ്വസംഘത്തമിഴിലെ സാഹിത്യാംശങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നാണ് കേരളീയ കലാ പരിപ്രേക്ഷ്യത്തെ സാധ്യമാക്കുന്നത്. സംഘകാലം എന്നറിയപ്പെടുന്ന എ.ഡി ഒന്നാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടുമുതൽ അഞ്ചാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടുവരെ നീളുന്ന കാലയളവിൽ രചിക്കപ്പെട്ട കാവ്യങ്ങളാണ് സംഘ സാഹിത്യം എന്ന പേരിൽ പ്രചരിക്കപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ളത്. എട്ടുതൊക, പത്തുപാട്ട്, പതിനെൺകീഴ് കണക്ക് എന്നിങ്ങനെ വിഭജിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള അവയിൽ പൊതുവേ സ്നേഹം, പ്രേമം, വിരഹം മുതലായ വിഷയങ്ങൾ കൈകാര്യം

ചെയ്യുന്ന അകം കവിതകളും യുദ്ധം, വീരം തുടങ്ങിയവ ചർച്ചചെയ്യുന്ന പുറംകവിത കളുമാണുള്ളതെന്ന് സാമാന്യമായി പറയാം.

പൂർവ്വ തമിഴകത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് അറിവു നൽകാനുതകുന്ന സാമഗ്രിയാണ് സംഘസാഹിത്യം. പൂർവ്വതമിഴകത്തെ ജീവിതാവസ്ഥയും സംസ്കാരവും അതിൽ നിഴലിക്കുന്നു. സംഘകാലത്തെ സാംസ്കാരിക അഭിവൃദ്ധിയെയും അതിന്റെ തലങ്ങളെയും കുറിച്ച് ഈ കൃതികളിൽ പ്രതിപാദ്യങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ജീവിതരീതികൾ, കാർഷികരീതികൾ, പ്രകൃതി പശ്ചാത്തലങ്ങൾ, സമൂഹ സങ്കല്പനങ്ങൾ, യുദ്ധങ്ങൾ, ഭരണ സമ്പ്രദായങ്ങൾ തുടങ്ങി അക്കാലത്തെ പലവിഷയങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും ഈ കൃതികളിൽ പരാമർശമുണ്ട്. സങ്കല്പനപരമായ വൈവിധ്യങ്ങൾ അക്കാലത്തെ തമിഴകത്തിന്റെ ലാവണ്യതലങ്ങളിൽ നിറഞ്ഞിരുന്നതായി ഈ കൃതികളിൽ നിന്ന് വ്യക്തമാകും. കേരളീയ കലകളെ നിർമ്മിക്കുന്ന /പാക്കപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന സൗന്ദര്യബോധം തലമുറകളായി ഇവിടുത്തെ ജനതയ്ക്കിടയിൽ നിന്നും സ്ഫുടം ചെയ്തതാണ്. ഒപ്പം തന്നെ പലതരത്തിലുള്ള അധീശ ചിന്തകളും കാലാന്തരത്തിൽ ലാവണ്യ ബോധങ്ങളെ പരിഷ്കരിക്കുകയും പുനർനിർമ്മിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. അതിന്റെ പരിണാമ ദശകളിലാണ് ദക്ഷിണേന്ത്യയിലെ സമ്പന്നമായ കലാപാരമ്പര്യങ്ങളും സാഹിത്യ പാരമ്പര്യങ്ങളും രൂപപ്പെടുന്നത്. ഏകധാരയിൽ സംഭവിച്ച ഒന്നല്ല ഈ ചരിത്രഘട്ടങ്ങളൊന്നും തന്നെ. ദക്ഷിണേന്ത്യയിലെ ചരിത്ര സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെക്കൂടി അതിസൂക്ഷ്മമായി പരിശോധിക്കുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമേ സൗന്ദര്യ ശാസ്ത്രപരമായി സംഭവിച്ച വ്യതിയാനങ്ങളും അവയുടെ കാര്യകാരണങ്ങളും ബോധ്യപ്പെടുകയുള്ളൂ.

സംഘകൃതികളിൽ ഭൂരിഭാഗവും അതെഴുതിയ കവികളുടെ പേരിൽ പ്രസിദ്ധമായതാണ്. പ്രതിഭാശാലികളായ അനവധികവികൾ അക്കാലത്ത് ജീവിച്ചിരുന്നുവെന്നതിന്റെ തെളിവു കൂടിയാണിത്. കവിത/കാവ്യം/പാട്ട് എഴുതുകയെന്ന പ്രക്രിയയ്ക്ക് അക്കാലത്ത് സാംസ്കാരിക പരമായി വലിയ പ്രാധാന്യമുണ്ടായിരുന്നുവെന്നും ഭരണാധികാരികളടക്കമുള്ളവർക്ക് പ്രീതിദായകമായ കാര്യം കൂടിയാണ് ഈ കവികൾ ചമയ്ക്കുന്ന പാട്ടുകളെന്നും ഈ കൃതികളിൽ നിന്ന് വായിച്ചെടുക്കാം. പുറംപാട്ടുകളെല്ലാം ഭരണാധികാരികളെക്കുറിച്ച് അവരുടെ ആശ്രിതരായ കവികൾ പുകഴ്ത്തി പാടുന്നതാണ്.



വീരേതിഹാസ സമാനമായ ഈ പഴന്തമിഴ് കാവ്യങ്ങൾ മാത്രമാണ് സംഘകാല സംസ്കൃതിയെക്കുറിച്ച് ഇന്ന് നമുക്ക് ലഭ്യമായ ദത്തങ്ങൾ.

പഴന്തമിഴ് സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ പ്രഥമഗണനീയമായ കൃതിയാണ് പത്തുപാട്ട്. പത്തുപാട്ടുകളാണ് (കൃതികൾ) ഇതിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നത്. പാട്ട് എന്ന സങ്കല്പനത്തിന്റെ വിശദാംശങ്ങളെ കൂടി സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ് സംബോധന. ഒരു സംസ്കാരമെന്ന നിലയിൽ പാട്ടെഴുത്തിന്റെ സമ്പ്രദായം വ്യാപിച്ചതിന്റെ ലക്ഷണമായി ഇതിനെ കണക്കാക്കാനാവും. പാട്ടെന്ന പദം പരോക്ഷമായി ധ്വനിപ്പിക്കുന്ന സംഗതിയാണ് കേൾവി. പാടുന്നതിന്റെ ഫലം മറ്റൊരാളെ കേൾപ്പിക്കുക/മറ്റൊരാളിലേക്ക് എത്തിക്കുക എന്നതാണ്. സംഘം കൃതികളെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് ഈ വസ്തുത കൂറേക്കൂടി വ്യക്തവുമാണ്. ഏതെങ്കിലും രാജാവിനെ പ്രീതിപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ട ആവശ്യം പ്രസ്തുത പാട്ടുകാർക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്നുവെന്നത് വ്യക്തമാണ്. ഇതിനാൽ പാടിയാൽ എന്ന സൂചന കേൾവിയുടെയും പാടലിന്റെയും കർച്ചയുടെയും അടിസ്ഥാനഘടകങ്ങളായിത്തീരുന്നു. അവതരണം-ആസ്വാദനം എന്ന ദ്വന്ദ്വത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ച ദക്ഷിണേന്ത്യൻ സൗന്ദര്യ ബോധത്തിന്റെ ആദ്യ സൂചകങ്ങൾ ഒരർത്ഥത്തിൽ ഈ പാട്ടുകളാണെന്നുപറയാം. സംഘം കവിതകളിലെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട ചിത്രീകരണമാണ്, കവികളെഴുതുന്ന പാട്ടുകൾ നാടുതോറും പാടിനടക്കുന്ന പാണരും, ആ പാട്ടുകൾ കേട്ട് നിർവൃതികൊള്ളുന്ന നാനാനാടുകളിലെ രാജാക്കന്മാരും നാട്ടുകാരും. ആസ്വദിക്കലും ആസ്വദിപ്പിക്കലും പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട സംസ്കാരമായി അക്കാലത്ത് വളർന്നിരുന്നുവെന്നും അതിനുപയുക്തമായി പാട്ടുകളെ അക്കാലത്തു തന്നെ പാകപ്പെടുത്തിയിരുന്നുവെന്നും ഇതിൽ നിന്നു മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. ആസ്വദിക്കലിന്റെ അനന്തരത അമൂല്യങ്ങളായ ദ്രവ്യങ്ങളും സൗകര്യങ്ങളും അധികാരങ്ങളും പാട്ടു രചിച്ചവർക്കും പാടിനടന്നവർക്കും ലഭിക്കുകയെന്നതായിരുന്നു. ആസ്വാദനം എന്ന പ്രക്രിയയുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാനങ്ങളും അത്രുപപ്പെടുത്തിയെടുത്ത സംസ്കൃതിയും ഇതിലൂടെ വ്യക്തമാകുന്നുണ്ട്.

സൂക്ഷ്മമായി പരിശോധിച്ചാൽ കേൾവി എന്ന പ്രതിഭാസത്തിന്റെ വേറിട്ടമാനങ്ങൾ സംഘം പാട്ടുകളുടെ സംവേദനപ്രക്രിയകളിൽ വ്യക്തമാകും. കേൾവി, ഉൾക്കൊള്ളലായും ആസ്വദിക്കലായും രണ്ടു മാനങ്ങളെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഘടകമായി ഈ പാട്ടുകളിൽ പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു.

ഭരണപരമായ മഹത്വം, വീരം, യശസ്സ് തുടങ്ങിയ ഘടകങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് രാജാക്കന്മാരെ അറിയിക്കുന്ന പ്രധാന മാധ്യമം ഈ പാട്ടുകളാണെന്ന് അതിന്റെ ഉള്ളടക്കത്തിലൂടെ മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. മറ്റൊരുതരത്തിൽ പറഞ്ഞാൽ അകം പാട്ടുകളിൽ പാട്ടിന്റെ/കേൾവിയുടെമാനങ്ങൾ ബോധ്യപ്പെടുത്തലുകളോ/ഉൾക്കൊള്ളലുകളോ ആകുമ്പോൾ, പുറം പാട്ടുകളിൽ കേൾവിയുടെ മാനം പ്രധാനമായും നിർവൃതി- മറ്റൊരർത്ഥത്തിൽ ആസ്വാദനമാണ്. തങ്ങളുടെ വീരേതിഹാസങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് കവികളോ പാണരോ പാടിക്കേൾക്കുമ്പോൾ നിർവൃതരാകുന്ന ഭരണാധികാരികൾസംഘം കവിതകളിൽ ഒട്ടാകെയാണ്.

നവീനമായ പല അന്വേഷണങ്ങളിലും സംഘകാല ചരിത്രങ്ങളിൽ പറയുന്ന പല പ്രവിശ്യകളുടെയും സ്ഥാനം കേരളത്തിന്റെ പരിസരങ്ങളിലാണെന്ന് കണ്ടെത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. സംഘകാല കവിതകളിൽ പലയിടത്തും അയിരമല എന്ന പർവ്വതപദേശത്തെ പ്രതിപാദിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ അയിരമല ആനമലയാണെന്നും, പെരിയാർ സംഘംകവിതകളിൽ പ്രധാന പരാമർശമുള്ള നദിയാണെന്നും ഗവേഷകർ അഭിപ്രായപ്പെട്ടുകാണുന്നുണ്ട് (വൈദ്യനാഥ അയ്യർ ജി, 1997, 189). കൊങ്കുദേശം പാലക്കാടടക്കമുള്ള നാടുകളിലായി പരന്നുകിടക്കുന്ന പ്രദേശമാണെന്നതും വ്യക്തമാണ്. ഈയർത്ഥത്തിലാണ് കേരളീയമായ സൗന്ദര്യാംശത്തെ പൂർവ്വ തമിഴകത്തെ സാംസ്കാരിക ഭൂമികയുമായി ചേർത്തു വായിക്കുന്നതിന്റെ യുക്തി. സമകാലികമായ കലാസ്വാദനത്തിന്റെയും സംവേദനത്തിന്റെയും വേരുകളിൽ പലതും അവസാനിക്കുന്ന സംഘകാലത്തെ പഴന്തമിഴ് കാലങ്ങളിലാണെന്നത് വ്യക്തമാണ്. വടവേങ്കടം തെൻകുമരി എന്ന ഭൗമാതിർത്തിക്കുള്ളിലാണ് സംഘകാല സാഹിത്യത്തെ വിന്യസിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ നിലയ്ക്ക് കേരളം കൂടി ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നതാണ് പൂർവതമിഴകം. അതിനാൽ ചരിത്രപരമായും, കേരളത്തിനും കൂടി തുല്യമായ നിലയിൽ കൊള്ളക്കൊടുക്കലുകൾ അവകാശപ്പെടാനാവുന്ന സാഹചര്യം ഈ യുക്തിക്കുണ്ട് (2019).

സംഘകാല കൃതികളിലെ അടിസ്ഥാന സങ്കല്പനങ്ങളിലൊന്നാണ് പ്രതീകാത്മകത. സംഘകാല കൃതികൾക്ക് ആധാരമായ നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന തിണവ്യവസ്ഥ ഒരർത്ഥത്തിൽ പ്രതീകാത്മകതയാണ്. സംഘം കൃതികളിൽ ജീവിത രീതിയെ പ്രകൃതിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെടുത്തി സൂചിപ്പിക്കുകയും അതിലൂടെ ആശയാവിഷ്കാരങ്ങൾ



നടത്തുകയുമാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്. ഒരു ആവാസ വ്യവസ്ഥയെ സംബന്ധിച്ച സൂചനയ്ക്കായി ഒരു സംജ്ഞ തന്നെ ഉതകുന്നു. മുല്ലെ എന്ന തിണ ഒരു സവിശേഷമായ (മലമ്പ്രദേശത്തെ ജീവിത രീതികൾ) വ്യവസ്ഥയുടെ ചിഹ്നമാവുകയാണ് യഥാർത്ഥത്തിൽ സംഭവിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ നിലയിൽ തിണ സങ്കല്പം പ്രതീകാത്മകതയുടെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടൊരു ആശയമാണെന്ന് പറയാം. ആവിഷ്കാരത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനമായി പ്രതീകത്തെ ബലപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന കലാതന്ത്രത്തെ ഇത് ധ്വനിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഈ ആശയത്തിന്റെ ദാർശനികത അതിന്റെ വിപുലമായ അർത്ഥത്തിൽ കേരളത്തിന്റെ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലാപാരമ്പര്യത്തിൽ പ്രകടമാണ്. വിശേഷിച്ച് കൂടിയാട്ടം, കഥകളി എന്നീ കലകളിൽ. ഈ കലകളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാനതത്വം തന്നെ ആശയാവിഷ്കാരം പ്രതീകാത്മകതയിലൂടെ സാധ്യമാക്കുകയെന്നതാണ്. കൂടിയാട്ടത്തിലും കഥകളിയിലുമുള്ള ഈ ആശയം തലമുറകളായി പകർന്നുവരുന്ന സൗന്ദര്യ ബോധത്തിന്റെ അനന്തരഫലമാണ്. ദക്ഷിണേന്ത്യൻ പരിസരത്തിൽ പ്രതീകാത്മകതയെന്ന സങ്കല്പത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ച വായനകൾ ആദ്യം ലഭിക്കുന്നത് സംഘ കാലത്തെ കൃതികളിൽ നിന്നാണ്. സംഘസാഹിത്യത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ച പ്രമാണ ഗ്രന്ഥമായി കണക്കാക്കുന്ന തൊൽക്കാപ്പിയത്തിൽ തന്നെ കാല-പ്രകൃത്യാദികളെ പ്രതീകാത്മകതയിൽ അടയാളപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്¹. ഭാഷയേയും സൗന്ദര്യ സങ്കല്പനങ്ങളേയും വ്യവസ്ഥപ്പെടുത്തുകയെന്ന സമ്പ്രദായത്തിന്തൊൽക്കാപ്പിയത്തിനു മുൻപേയുള്ള കാലത്തു തന്നെ തമിഴകത്ത് നിലനിൽപ്പുണ്ടായിരിക്കണം.

ചിട്ടപ്പെടുത്തലെന്ന സങ്കല്പനത്തിന്റെ പ്രാദേശികമായ മാതൃകയെ തൊൽക്കാപ്പിയത്തിലെ ഈ വ്യവസ്ഥപ്പെടുത്തലിൽ നമുക്ക് ദർശിക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. വിനിമയാദികൾക്ക്-അത് ഭാഷയായാലും സാഹിത്യമായാലും-വ്യവസ്ഥപ്പെടുത്തൽ നടത്തുന്നതിലൂടെ ശാസ്ത്രീയമായ അടിത്തറയുണ്ടാക്കുകയെന്ന ഉദ്ദേശമാണ് മുന്നിട്ടു നിൽക്കുന്നത്. ശാസ്ത്രീയമാക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ ആ വ്യവഹാരത്തിന് കൃത്യതയും പൊതുവായൊരു രീതിശാസ്ത്രവും സിദ്ധിക്കുന്നു. ഭാഷയിലൂടെയും പിന്നീട് സാഹിത്യത്തിലൂടെയും വികസിച്ച ഈ ചിട്ടപ്പെടുത്തൽ അതിന്റെ മുൻതൂക്കമായ ഘട്ടത്തിലാണ് ഇവിടുത്തെ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളിൽ

പ്രകടമാകുന്നത്. കൂടിയാട്ടത്തിലും കഥകളിയിലും അടിസ്ഥാന ഭാഗമായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന ചിട്ടയുടെ രൂപകല്പന തൊൽക്കാപ്പിയത്തിന്റെ കാലത്തിനു മുൻപേ ഇവിടുത്തെ സാംസ്കാരിക പരിസരങ്ങളിൽ പ്രകടമായിരുന്ന വ്യവസ്ഥപ്പെടുത്തലെന്ന സങ്കല്പനവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട് കിടക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. ഇതിനർത്ഥം കേരളീയ കലകൾക്കായാലുമായ ചിട്ടകളുടെ പൂർവ്വമാതൃകയോ സ്വാധീനശക്തിയോ ഈ കൃതികളാണെന്നതല്ല. ഈ കൃതികളുടെ കാലം മുതൽക്കേ ഇവിടുത്തെ പ്രവിശ്യാപരമായ ബൗദ്ധിക വ്യവഹാരത്തിൽ പ്രകടമായിരുന്ന വ്യവസ്ഥാതല്പരതയുടെ എത്രയോ വികസിതമായ ഭാഗമാണിന്ന് നമ്മുടെ കലാരൂപങ്ങളിലടക്കം കാണുന്ന ശാസ്ത്രീയതയുടെ ആധാരം എന്നാണ്. കേരളീയ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളുടെ സൗന്ദര്യത്തിനാസ്പദമായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്ന ഇത്തരം ചിട്ട പ്രാധാന്യത്തിന് പലതരത്തിലുള്ള സംസ്കാരങ്ങളുടെ ഇടപെടൽ കാരണമായിട്ടുണ്ട്.

കേവലമായ നോട്ടങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് കാഴ്ച എന്ന സവിശേഷതയിലേക്കുള്ള സംഘകവികളുടെ ദാർശനികത പ്രധാനമാണ്. കേവല കാഴ്ചയ്ക്കപ്പുറം സഹജാവബോധങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് മനുഷ്യൻ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തിയെടുക്കുന്ന സവിശേഷാശയങ്ങൾ പാശ്ചാത്യ നാടുകളിലും ബി.സി അഞ്ചാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടോടുകൂടി തന്നെ രൂപപ്പെടുന്നുണ്ട്. പ്രീസോക്രട്ടീക് കാലം മുതൽ തന്നെ ആശയപരമായ ഈ സവിശേഷതയെ ലാവണ്യശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെ ബീജാംശങ്ങളായി പാശ്ചാത്യ പഠിതാക്കൾ കണ്ടുവരുന്നു. ഭാരതത്തിലും സമാനകാലത്തുതന്നെയാണ് തത്വ ചിന്താപരമായ ആശയരൂപീകരണങ്ങൾ നടക്കുന്നത്. ഇതേകാലത്ത് തന്നെയാണ് രാമായണം-മഹാഭാരതാദി ഇതിഹാസങ്ങളുടെ രചനാകാലമായി കണക്കാക്കുന്നതും. സഹസ്രാബ്ദങ്ങൾക്കിപ്പുറവും ഇന്ത്യൻ തത്വചിന്തയുടേയും സൗന്ദര്യബോധങ്ങളുടേയും സ്വാധീന ശക്തിയായി ഈ കൃതികൾ നിലകൊള്ളുന്നു. സംഘം കൃതികളെ സംബന്ധിച്ചാണെങ്കിൽ ഇന്ത്യൻ ഇതിഹാസങ്ങളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കിയും ബ്രാഹ്മണ്യവൽക്കരണത്തോടെ പ്രബലമാകുന്ന ദേവതാസങ്കല്പങ്ങളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കിയുമുള്ള നിരവധി പരാമർശങ്ങൾ കാണാം². പക്ഷേ കേന്ദ്രവിഷയമാകാനുതകുന്ന തരത്തിലല്ല സംഘം കൃതികളെ ഈ ഇതിഹാസകാവ്യങ്ങൾ സ്വാധീനിച്ചത്. സാമ്പ്രദിക

¹ തൊൽക്കാപ്പിയത്തിലെ അകത്തിണ, പുറത്തിണ മുതലായ ആശയങ്ങൾ ഉദാഹരണം

² സുബ്രഹ്മണ്യൻ, കൃഷ്ണൻ, വൈദിക ദേവന്മാർ തുടങ്ങിയവരുടെയെല്ലാം പരാമർശങ്ങൾ



സൂചനകളായി കടന്നു വരുന്നതല്ലാതെ മുഖ്യ വിഷയമെന്ന നിലയിൽ ഭാരതത്തിലെ പ്രബല ദർശന-സാഹിത്യാദികൾ ഇവയിൽ വിഷയമായിട്ടില്ല. ആശയസ്വീകരണംമുതൽ വിഷയാവതരണംവരെ തനതായൊരു സാംസ്കാരികത എല്ലാക്കാലത്തും സംഘസാഹിത്യം നിലനിർത്തിയിരുന്നു എന്നതും ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. കടൈച്ചങ്കം എന്ന മൂന്നാംസംഘത്തിലെ കൃതികൾ മാത്രമേ ഇന്ന് ലഭ്യമായിട്ടുള്ളൂവെങ്കിലും, ഈ കൃതികളിലെ പ്രതിപാദ്യങ്ങളിലൂടെ മേല്പറഞ്ഞ ആശയം വസ്തുതാപരമാണെന്ന് മനസ്സിലാക്കാം.

സംസ്കൃത സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ആശയങ്ങളെ സംഘസാഹിത്യത്തിൽ സ്വീകരിക്കുമ്പോഴും ഭാഷാപരമായ രൂപാന്തരത്തിലൂടെയാണ് അവയെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. പുരാണങ്ങളിലെ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ സംബോധനയെ പഴന്തമിഴ് ഭാഷാരൂപം കൊണ്ടാണ് സംഘസാഹിത്യങ്ങളിൽ അവതരിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതെന്ന് ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. രൂപപരമായ വ്യക്തിത്വം പാകപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിൽ ശ്രദ്ധേയമായ സമീപനമാണിത്. സംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിലൊന്നാണ് വ്യക്തിപരമായ മാനങ്ങളെന്ന ബോധ്യം സംഘകവികളിൽ നിലനിന്നിരുന്നുവെന്നതിന് തെളിവാണ് ഭാഷാപരമായ ഈ സമീപനം. അക്കാലത്ത് കാവ്യവിഷയങ്ങളിലും ഇതേരൂപ നിഷ്കർഷത പുലർത്തിയിരുന്നതായി കാണാം. പഴന്തമിഴ്കാലത്ത് ഭാരതത്തിലെങ്ങും പ്രചാരംലഭിച്ച സാഹിത്യശാസ്ത്രങ്ങളെ പിൻപറ്റിയല്ല സംഘകാലം അവരുടെ സാഹിത്യത്തിന് ഇടമൊരുക്കിയത്. പൗരാണികമായ ബ്രാഹ്മണ മൂർത്തി സങ്കല്പങ്ങളോ സംസ്കൃത സൗന്ദര്യശാസ്ത്രമോ അല്ല സാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനങ്ങളായി സംഘകാലം സ്വീകരിച്ചത്. സ്വന്തം സംസ്കാരത്തെയും പ്രകൃതിയെയും പ്രതിഫലിപ്പിക്കുന്ന തനതായൊരു മുദ്ര സംഘ സാഹിത്യം അടിസ്ഥാനമായി സ്വീകരിച്ചിരുന്നുവെന്നതാണ് വസ്തുത.

കുടിയാട്ടത്തിലും കഥകളിയിലും പൊതുവായി കാണപ്പെടുന്ന രൂപപരമായ സൗന്ദര്യതലങ്ങൾ വിദൂരാവസ്ഥയിൽ സംഘകാല സൗന്ദര്യബോധവുമായി യോജിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. കേരളീയ കലാസംസ്കൃതിയുടെ സ്വാധീനശക്തിയെന്ന നിലയിൽ സംഘ സാഹിത്യത്തെ വിലയിരുത്തുമ്പോൾ, ഇന്ന് നിലവിലുള്ള കുടിയാട്ടത്തിന്റെ സ്വഭാവ സവിശേഷതകളുമായി

ഇണങ്ങുന്ന ചില ചേരുവകൾകണ്ടെത്താനാവും. സംഘകാലത്തിന്റെ പതനത്തിനുശേഷം ഏകദേശം അഞ്ചുനൂറ്റാണ്ടിനപ്പുറമെന്ന് കൂടിയാട്ടത്തിന്റെ പ്രാകൃതരൂപങ്ങൾ വൃദ്ധി പ്രാപിക്കുന്നത്. പിന്നീടുള്ള ഒരു സഹസ്രാബ്ദക്കാലം കൊണ്ടാണ് ഇന്ന് കാണുന്ന കുടിയാട്ടത്തിന്റെ രൂപഘടനയിലേക്ക് ഈ കല പരിവർത്തനപ്പെടുന്നത്. അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി കുടിയാട്ടത്തിന്റെ സവിശേഷത അതിന്റെ ആവിഷ്കാരത്തിന്റെബലമായ വിപുലീകരണത്തിന്റെ സംസ്കാരമാണ്. ആശയത്തെ അതിന്റെ പരമാവധി ആവർത്തനങ്ങളിലൂടെ-ആവർത്തനങ്ങൾ എന്നത്. സൂക്ഷ്മമായ കാഴ്ചകൾ കൂടിയാണ്-പരമാവധി ഫലിപ്പിച്ചെടുക്കുന്ന കലാതന്ത്രം. ആവർത്തനങ്ങളിലൂടെ വിപുലീകരിക്കുന്ന ഈ സംസ്കാരം ഒരു കലാബോധമെന്ന നിലയിൽ ഇവിടുത്തെ ജനതയിൽ പകർന്നുവന്നിരിക്കുന്നു. ഈ ബോധത്തിന്റെ പിന്നാമ്പുറങ്ങൾ പ്രാദേശികമായി അന്വേഷിച്ചാൽ സംഘകൃതികളിലെ പുറം പാട്ടുകളിലും അകംപാട്ടുകളിലും കാണുന്ന വർണ്ണനകൾക്ക് സമാനമായിത്തോന്നാം. തനിയാവർത്തനങ്ങളായ പ്രകൃതിവർണ്ണനകൾ, രാജവർണ്ണനകൾ എന്നിവയിലൂടെയെല്ലാം ഉദ്ദേശിച്ച ആശയത്തിന്റെ വ്യക്തതയെ പരമാവധിപറഞ്ഞു ഫലിപ്പിക്കുകയാണിതിന്റെ ഉദ്ദേശം. സൗന്ദര്യപരമായ കല്പനകളിലൂടെ വികസിക്കുന്ന ഈ ആവർത്തന ഖണ്ഡങ്ങൾ, സംഘകാലത്തെ ജനതയിൽ ഉള്ളടങ്ങിയ ആശയാവിഷ്കാരത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ച ലാവണ്യ ബോധങ്ങളാണ്. ഈ ആശയത്തിന്റെ 'സംസ്കൃത'രൂപമാണ് കുടിയാട്ടത്തിന്റെ അവതരണശരീരത്തിൽ ഉള്ളടങ്ങിയിട്ടുള്ളത്. ആവർത്തനത്തിന്റെയും വിപുലീകരണത്തിന്റെയും ആശയലോകം പ്രാദേശികമായ കലകളിൽ ഉള്ളടങ്ങുന്നത് ഇവിടുത്തെ തന്നെ പിൻതലമുറകളുടെ ചിന്താപദ്ധതികളിൽ നിന്നാണെന്ന് ഇതിലൂടെ വ്യക്തമാണ്. ആവർത്തനങ്ങളിലൂടെയും വിപുലമായ കാഴ്ചകളിലൂടെയും സൗന്ദര്യപരമായൊരുപൂർത്തി സാധ്യമാക്കുകയെന്ന രീതി പ്രാദേശികമായ അന്വേഷണയുക്തിയിൽ സംഘകാലത്തുനിന്ന് തുടങ്ങുന്നതാണെന്ന് ബോധ്യപ്പെടും.

കേരളീയ ക്ലാസിക്ക് രംഗകലകളുടെ അടിസ്ഥാന ആശയങ്ങളായി നിലകൊള്ളുന്ന പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട രണ്ട് സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ യുദ്ധവും പ്രണയവുമാണ്. കുടിയാട്ടത്തിൽ പ്രധാനമായ രാമായണ നാടകത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനം സീതാ-രാമന്മാരുടെ വേർപാടും അനുബന്ധ കഥാസാഹചര്യം



ങ്ങളുമാണ്. പുരാണത്തെ അവലംബിച്ചാണ് ഈ കഥകളെല്ലാം ഇത്തരം കലാരൂപങ്ങളിൽ ആവിഷ്കരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നതും. *സുഭദ്രാധർമ്മജയം* എന്ന പ്രസിദ്ധനാടകത്തിന്റെ മുഖ്യാശയം പ്രണയമാണ്. കഥകളിയിലും സമാനസാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ പ്രകടമാണ്. പുരാണകഥകളെയാണ് പ്രധാനമായും സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നതെങ്കിലും അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി യുദ്ധവും പ്രണയവുമാണ് പ്രയോഗസാധ്യതകളുള്ള കലാവിഷയങ്ങളായി നിലനിൽക്കുന്നത്. നിരവധി നാടകീയ സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ പുരാണാദികളിൽ ഉണ്ടെങ്കിലും ആചാര്യന്മാർ കലാസൃഷ്ടിയിൽ ഫലപ്രദമായി സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത് എക്കാലത്തും ഈ രണ്ട് ആശയങ്ങളാണെന്ന് ബോധ്യമാകും. ഈ ചോദനസാമൂഹികമായ മാനസിക വ്യവഹാരങ്ങളുടെ ബാക്കിപത്രമാണെന്ന് വ്യക്തമാണ്. സംഘകൃതികളുടെ മുഖ്യ ആശയം യുദ്ധവും പ്രണയവുമാണ്. ആവിഷ്കാരത്തിന്റെ സൗന്ദര്യാംശങ്ങളായി ഈ വിഷയങ്ങളെ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്ന പ്രകൃതം അക്കാലത്തു തന്നെ നിലവിലുണ്ടായിരുന്നു എന്നതാണ് വസ്തുത. മനുശാസ്ത്രപരമായൊരു പൊതുബോധം കാലങ്ങളായി പകർന്നുകിട്ടിയതിന്റെ സൂചകമാണിത്.

സംഘകൃതികളെ സൂക്ഷ്മമായി പരിശോധിക്കുമ്പോൾ ചിലസവിശേഷമായ കലാസങ്കേതങ്ങൾ കൂടി വ്യക്തമാകും. അകം പാട്ടുകളുടെ കേന്ദ്രമായ നായകനേയും നായികയേയും കൂടാതെ തോഴി എന്ന കഥാപാത്രത്തിന് ധർമ്മികമായ പ്രാധാന്യം ലഭിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. പല സന്ദർഭങ്ങളിലും ഇത്തരം കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾക്ക് നിർണായക സ്ഥാനവും ധർമ്മവുമുണ്ട്. തോഴി/തോഴൻ എന്ന പാത്രസങ്കല്പനം കേരളത്തിന്റെ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലാസംസ്കാരത്തിൽ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട അംശമാണെന്നതും കൗതുകകരമാണ്. കൂടിയാട്ടത്തിലെ വിദൂഷകൻ അതിലെ പ്രധാനകഥാപാത്രത്തിന്റെ തോഴനായാണ് പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെടുന്നത്. ഉദാഹരണം *സുഭദ്രാധർമ്മജയത്തിലെ* അർജുനന്റെ സുഹൃത്തായ കൌണ്ഡിന്യൻ. പുരുഷാർത്ഥകൃത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രസ്ഥാനം വഹിക്കുന്ന ഈ തോഴൻ അവതരണഗതിയുടെ ഘടനാ വിന്യാസത്തിൽ പ്രധാന പങ്കുവഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്³. പുരാണകഥകളെ അനുവർത്തിക്കുന്നതാണെങ്കിലും പല ആട്ടക്കഥകളിലും 'തോഴി'

എന്ന സങ്കല്പനത്തെ വിസ്തൃതമായ ആവിഷ്കാര ദൗത്യത്തോടെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. *നളചരിതത്തിലെയും കീചകവധത്തിലെയും ബാണയുദ്ധത്തിലെയും* 'തോഴി' സങ്കല്പനത്തിന്റെ വ്യാപ്തി കഥാഗതിയെ നിർണായകമായി സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്നതാണ്. തോഴി/തോഴൻ എന്ന ആശയത്തെ സൂക്ഷ്മമായി പരിശോധിച്ചാൽ കേവല ബാന്ധവത്തിനപ്പുറം പ്രധാനാശയമെന്ന നിലയിൽ ഇവിടുത്തെ കലാസങ്കേതങ്ങളിൽ സവിശേഷമായ ഈ പാത്ര സങ്കല്പനം ആവിഷ്കൃതമാവുന്നത് കാണാം. സംഘകാലകൃതികളിലെ 'തോഴി'മാർ കൃത്യമായ ചട്ടക്കൂടോടെയുള്ള ധർമ്മനിഷ്ഠതകൾ പാലിക്കുന്നത് പല പാട്ടുകളിലും കണ്ടെത്താനാവും. പൊതുവായ അനവധി സ്വഭാവ സവിശേഷതകൾ ഈ തോഴിസങ്കല്പനത്തിന് എല്ലാകാലത്തും ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട്. ദൂത്, അമ്മ തുടങ്ങിയ ആശയങ്ങളെ സംബന്ധിച്ചും സംഘകാലത്ത് നിന്ന് തുടങ്ങുന്ന ചില സൗന്ദര്യ ശാസ്ത്രമാനങ്ങൾ സമകാല അവതരണകലകളിലും കണ്ടെത്താനാകും.

പ്രകൃതിയേയും സവിശേഷാശയമെന്ന നിലയിൽ സംഘം കൃതികൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. പ്രതീകാത്മകമായി പ്രകൃതിയെ ഉപയോഗിക്കുകയും ആശയസാക്ഷാത്കാരത്തെ ഫലപ്രദമാക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന സംഘം കൃതികളുടെ കലാചാര്യപ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടതാണ്. സംഘകൃതികളിൽ പ്രകടമാകുന്ന പ്രകൃതി ചിത്രങ്ങളുടെ സൂക്ഷ്മത അതിന്റെ മുർത്തരൂപത്തിൽ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളിൽ ഇന്ന് പ്രകടമാണ്. *പുറനാനൂറിൽ* ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള പലവർണ്ണനകൾ കാണാം. ഇതിൽ 'വന്യത'യെ, അതിന്റെ സൂക്ഷ്മ ശരീരത്തെ കലാത്മകമായി ആവിഷ്കരിക്കുകയാണ് ചെയ്യുന്നത്. 'മൈത്രി' എന്ന സങ്കല്പനത്തിന്റെ സൂചകമായി ഐക്യത്തോടെ വസിക്കുന്ന വന്യമൃഗങ്ങളുടെ ചിത്രങ്ങൾ പുറ നാനൂറിലുണ്ട്. സങ്കല്പനപരമായ കലാത്മകത ഈ വർണ്ണനകളിൽ പ്രകടമാണ്. ഇതേ ആശയത്തിന്റെ മറ്റൊരു രൂപമാണ് കൂടിയാട്ടത്തിലെ *ശിഖിനിശലഭം* പോലെയുള്ള അവതരണങ്ങളിൽ കാണുന്നത്. *നളചരിതത്തിലും കല്യാണസൗഗന്ധികത്തിലും ബാലിവധത്തിലും* വന്യതാ സങ്കല്പത്തെ ഈയർത്ഥത്തിൽ പരിശോധിക്കാനാകും. കിർമ്മീരവധം കഥകളിയിൽ ധർമ്മപുത്രരുടെ ദൈന്യാവസ്ഥയെ പ്രകൃതിചിത്രവുമായി ഇണക്കിയുള്ള 'മാർഗ്ഗേ തത്ര' എന്നാരംഭിക്കുന്ന ശ്ലോകം ഉദാഹരണം.

³ ഈ കഥാപാത്രമാണ് പിന്നീട് വിനോദം വഞ്ചനം അഗമനം രാജസേവ തുടങ്ങി 4 ബൃഹത്തായ പുരുഷാർത്ഥങ്ങളെ പറഞ്ഞ് അവതരണത്തെ മുന്നോട്ടുകൊണ്ട് പോകുന്നത്.



സംഘകാലത്തുതന്നെ കലയെന്ന സങ്കല്പനം അതിന്റെ ശാസ്ത്രീയമാനങ്ങളെ അടിസ്ഥാനപരമായി ചിട്ടപ്പെടുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട് എന്നതിന്റെ തെളിവാണ് അക്കാലത്തെ കൃതികളിലെ സാങ്കേതാത്മകമായ പരാമർശങ്ങൾ. നൃത്തം, ഗീതം, വാദ്യം എന്നീ തൗരത്രികങ്ങളെ സംബന്ധിച്ച ശാസ്ത്രീയതകൾക്ക് സംഘസാഹിത്യത്തിൽ തന്നെ പ്രതിപാദ്യങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ചിലപ്പതികാരത്തിലെ 'അരങ്ങേറ്റുകാതെ' ഈ നിലയ്ക്ക് പ്രസക്തമായ ഒരു ഭാഗമാണ്. സപ്തസ്വരം, രാഗവ്യവസ്ഥ എന്നീ സമ്പ്രദായങ്ങൾ ഇന്ന് നിലനിൽക്കുന്നതിന്റെ പ്രാകൃത രൂപങ്ങളായി അക്കാലത്തും സമൂഹത്തിൽ നിലനിന്നിരുന്നുവെന്നു ഇത്തരം രേഖപ്പെടുത്തലുകളെ സൂക്ഷ്മമായി പരിശോധിക്കുന്നതിലൂടെ മനസ്സിലാക്കാം. ദക്ഷിണേന്ത്യയെന്ന പ്രദേശത്തെ പൊതുവായും കേരളത്തെ സവിശേഷമായും സ്വീകരിച്ച്

അതിന്റെ കലാ വ്യവഹാരങ്ങളും സൗന്ദര്യശാസ്ത്രപരമായ സവിശേഷതകളും പ്രാദേശിക ചരിത്രത്തെ മുൻനിർത്തി ഈ വിധത്തിൽ അന്വേഷണവിധേയമാക്കാം.

ഉപസാഹാരം

കേരളത്തിലെ ക്ലാസിക്കൽ കലകളുടെ സൗന്ദര്യബോധത്തെ സാധ്യമാക്കുന്ന സങ്കല്പനങ്ങളിൽ പലതും സംഘസാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെ ആവിഷ്കാരങ്ങളിൽ പ്രകടമാണ്. ലാവണ്യത ഒരു ജനതയുടെ മനോഘടനയിൽ ഉള്ളടങ്ങിയിട്ടുള്ള സവിശേഷതയാണ്. തലമുറകളിലൂടെ പകരുന്ന സ്വഭാവം അതിനുണ്ടുതാനും. സംഘകാലസാഹിത്യത്തെ, കേരളത്തിലെ കലാസമ്പ്രദായങ്ങൾക്ക് മാതൃകയാകുന്ന ലാവണ്യ തത്വങ്ങളെ സംബന്ധിച്ച അന്വേഷണങ്ങൾക്കുതക്കുന്ന സങ്കല്പനങ്ങളായി ഈ യർത്ഥത്തിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കാം

ഗ്രന്ഥസൂചി

ഇളയപെരുമാൾ എം, സുബ്രഹ്മണ്യ പിള്ള എസ്.ജി,(2019), *തൊൽക്കാപ്പിയം*(വ്യാഖ്യാ), കേരള ഭാഷാ ഇൻസ്റ്റിറ്റ്യൂട്ട്, തിരുവനന്തപുരം

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Role of Financial Literacy in Building Resilience in Dual-Career Marriages

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Received: 05/08/2025

Revised: 01/02/2026

Accepted: 11/02/2026

Abstract

Balancing professional and household responsibilities presents significant challenges for couples where both husband and wife are employed. This study investigates the role of financial literacy in increasing resilience and lowering stress among newlymarried dual-career couples where both individuals are concurrently pursuing ascending career paths. The research uses a qualitative multiple-case analysis approach (N = 4) to investigate financial behaviours, decision-making strategies, and the impact of financial literacy on marital harmony. Findings show that financial literacy promotes financial resilience by helping couples develop better budgeting practices, conflict resolution, greater alignment in financial goals, and adaptability. The study highlights the importance of financial literacy and the necessity to offer tailored financial education in promoting financial stability and building financial resilience to help dual-career couples effectively navigate economic challenges.

Keywords: Financial literacy, Marital harmony, Dual-career couples

Introduction

Dual-career couples are increasingly common in today's evolving marital dynamics. These partnerships, characterised by shared household and professional responsibilities, require strong decision-making and conflict-resolution skills. Studying dual-career couples provides a unique lens for understanding how shared professional ambitions and reciprocal stress interact to shape modern household dynamics. Financial literacy is pivotal in helping couples navigate challenges and build resilience. According to Remund (2010), "Financial literacy is a measure of the degree to which one understands key financial concepts and possesses the ability and confidence to manage personal finances through appropriate, short-term decision-making and sound, long-range financial planning, while mindful of life events and changing economic conditions". Beyond a

singular definition, a comprehensive review of the literature reveals that financial literacy is operationalised through five distinct categories: (1) conceptual knowledge about finances, (2) communicative competence regarding financial matters, (3) aptitude in managing personal finances, (4) financial decision-making skill, and (5) confidence in planning for future financial needs (Remund, 2010). By integrating these dimensions, financial literacy shifts from a purely academic attainment to a dynamic life skill that is "acquired gradually" and refined by the ability to remain mindful of shifting economic conditions and personal life events. Financial resilience—the ability to absorb, recover, and adapt to financial shocks such as income loss or unexpected expenses—relies on financial literacy, resource management, and access to supportive systems to maintain long-term stability (Salignac et al.,



2019). Financial literacy supports economic stability and fosters trust, effective communication, and alignment on shared financial goals.

When combined with economic volatility, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed people's money management weaknesses, as many families lacked sufficient savings or liquid assets to weather sudden income shocks, such as job losses or furloughs (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Szustak et al., 2021). When both spouses balance demanding jobs and family obligations, work–family conflicts and financial stress are especially noticeable in dual-career marriages. Fostering financial resilience and marital satisfaction requires an understanding of how financial literacy can help mitigate these difficulties. This study explores how financial literacy influences resilience-building among newlywed dual-career couples.

Theoretical Framework

The Family Stress Model asserts that economic hardship generates financial pressure, leading to psychological distress and disruptions in family functioning (Conger & Elder, 1994). Through their research, Liu and Chen (2025) extended the Family Stress Model to resilience, proving that economic pressure increases parental distress and conflict, while family strengths like cohesion and communication have mediating effects on well-being, with financial resilience (e.g., emergency savings) acting as a key buffer between adversity and psychological outcomes. Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory explains that financial stress reflects actual or threatened loss of valued resources (e.g., savings, status), whereas resilience functions as a personal resource that helps individuals protect and rebuild resources under adversity. Financial literacy directly bolsters an individual's financial resilience by transforming theoretical knowledge into proactive, adaptive behaviours, equipping individuals to adapt to economic

adversity (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Leland (1968), in his Precautionary Savings theory, explained that literate individuals are better equipped to accumulate “buffer” resources that shield them from economic volatility. Complementing these views, Resilience theory highlights positive adaptation to stressors, such as poverty or debt, through protective factors like problem-solving, social support, and meaning-making, thereby buffering the negative impacts on their mental health (Southwick et al., 2014).

Review of Literature

Financial Stress and Contentment in Marriage

Couples with dual careers encounter additional difficulties because both partners work in cognitively taxing occupations. Psychological well-being and marital satisfaction are adversely affected when work-related stress permeates family life (Bachrach et al., 1991). Economic stress exacerbates work–family conflict and lowers marital quality, according to Ross et al. (2021). Britt et al. (2017) contend that relationship problems can be made worse by financial anxiety, particularly in cases where couples are not financially literate. Research has demonstrated that techniques such as joint financial planning and budgeting can reduce stress and promote marital stability (Xiao & O'Neill, 2016). Couples who are more financially literate make wiser choices and are more resilient when the economy is struggling (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015).

Stability in Marriage and Financial Literacy

Couples who are financially literate are better able to manage their debt, set financial goals, and accumulate emergency savings. Better relationship quality is linked to positive financial communication (Archuleta et al., 2013). On the other hand, conflicts are made worse by financial secrecy or unfavourable communication (Zimmerman & Roberts, 2012). By investing in financial education, couples can attain long-term



stability and contentment through activities like retirement planning and joint budgeting. According to Romo and Carpenter (2020), minimising financial secrecy-a frequent cause of discord in marriages involving two careers-requires collaborative financial decision-making. Furthermore, lowering economic vulnerabilities is largely dependent on financial literacy. Couples who participate in financial literacy programmes are more likely to build emergency funds and retirement savings, improving their emotional and financial resilience, according to Lee and Sabri (2017).

Financial Resilience in Dual-Career Marriages

A study by Johnson and Krueger (2020) showed that couples with financial literacy are more trusting and flexible, and are better at juggling the demands of work and family. Their results support Conger's family stress theory, which holds that coping strategies can either improve or worsen marital ties in response to financial strain (Conger et al., 1999). According to Evans and Bartolome (1984), couples who actively work together on financial issues are more flexible and trustworthy, which improves their capacity to tolerate unpredicted external demands. Singh and Nayak's (2021) research emphasise the importance of financial planning and mutual support in preserving marital harmony while highlighting the cultural aspects of resilience in dual-career couples.

Research Objective

To examine financial literacy among dual-career couples by exploring how financial knowledge and practices influence decision-making and can contribute to financial resilience and marital harmony.

Method

This study adopts a multiple-case analysis approach to investigate how financial literacy influences resilience in dual-career

marriages. Four newlywed couples, married for less than one year, were selected through purposive sampling to represent diverse professional backgrounds and financial practices. Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Both partners are engaged in full-time professional careers.
2. Married for less than one year.
3. Willingness to discuss personal and financial aspects of their marriage.

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared well in advance, and expert opinion was taken regarding the nature and content of the questions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study to ensure ethical compliance. Participants were interviewed to explore their experiences with financial decision-making and coping strategies.

Interview Questions

1. How do you and your partner manage household finances? Do you create a monthly budget together?
2. What is your approach to savings and investments? Do you follow specific strategies?
3. How do you prioritise financial goals as a couple? Are there any disagreements about financial decisions?
4. How do financial discussions typically take place in your relationship? Are they collaborative or conflict-prone?
5. What measures do you take to cope with financial stress in your marriage?
6. How has financial literacy influenced your ability to handle unexpected expenses or emergencies?
7. How do you and your partner plan for long-term financial goals such as retirement or homeownership?



Results

Excerpts from the interviews are given below.

Couple 1: PS & SM

PS, a 29-year-old Male, Financial Analyst

"We both prefer a structured approach to finances. Each month, we create a budget together and track our expenses. I like using apps for this, while my partner prefers spreadsheets."

"There have been disagreements, especially when one of us wants to prioritise savings over leisure spending. However, discussing our goals, like saving for a home, helps us find common ground."

"We avoid using credit cards for purchases and prefer to rely on cash whenever possible."

"Our financial literacy helped us build an emergency fund that came in handy during a family medical issue last year."

**SM, a 27-year-old Female,
Software Developer**

"I've learned a lot from my partner about investments, particularly in mutual funds. We started diversifying our savings and even plan to explore retirement accounts."

"At work, I sometimes feel stressed, but knowing we are financially secure reduces that burden. It helps me focus on my job without worrying about unexpected expenses."

"Financial literacy has made us proactive rather than reactive when it comes to money, and that has brought peace of mind."

Couple 2: AJ & JK

**AJ, a 31-year-old Male,
Marketing Manager**

"I grew up in a family that didn't discuss money openly, so financial discussions initially felt uncomfortable. But with time, we've established trust."

"We set up a joint account for household expenses, which ensures transparency and helps reduce conflicts."

"Financial literacy classes we attended online during the pandemic introduced us to index funds and goal-based investing. It's been a game changer."

JK, a 28-year-old Female, Architect

"We prioritise savings but also set aside a small amount each month for hobbies and personal interests. It keeps us motivated."

"Balancing work and family life is easier knowing financial goals are covered. Even if work overwhelms us, our solid financial plan provides a sense of control."

"I think our resilience as a couple stems from openly sharing responsibilities—financial and otherwise. That way, neither of us feels overburdened."

Couple 3: RK & VM

RK, a 30-year-old Male, Data Scientist

"I handle the long-term financial planning, such as investments in equity, while my partner takes care of day-to-day expenses. It's a division that works well for us."

"One strategy we've adopted is setting financial goals for different time horizons: short-term (vacations), medium-term (home renovation), and long-term (retirement)."

"We rely on mutual funds compared to Recurring Deposits as the profit percentage is comparatively high. However, it requires constant study of the market"

"When disagreements arise, we rely on facts—budget reviews or investment performance—rather than emotions to resolve them."

VM, a 28-year-old Female, Teacher

"Financial literacy has helped us understand how small changes, like reducing dining out, can significantly boost savings."



“We faced challenges when one of us wanted to prioritise family support over personal savings. Open communication and a detailed financial plan helped resolve this.”

“Learning together about financial concepts has strengthened our partnership. We now see money as a tool for achieving shared dreams.”

Couple 4: LP & RS

LP, a 32-year-old Male, Journalist

“Initially, our financial discussions were sporadic and unstructured. But after we faced a debt crisis early in our marriage related to home furnishing and marital expenses, we realised the importance of literacy.”

“We started with basic strategies like tracking expenses and progressed to creating a debt repayment plan. Within 10 months, we were able to settle almost half of the debts.”

“Today, we allocate savings, investments, and discretionary spending funds. It helps us stay accountable without feeling restricted.”

RS, a 32-year-old Female, Entrepreneur

“Financial literacy has given me the confidence to plan for the future, even with the uncertainties of running a business.”

“I appreciate that my partner encourages regular financial reviews. These discussions help us adjust to changing circumstances, like fluctuating income from my business.”

“Being financially aligned has not only improved our marriage but also helped us support extended family without straining our resources.”

Discussion

Couple 1: PS & SM

PS, a financial analyst, and SM, a software developer, have been married for 4.5 months. They manage financial decisions through collaborative monthly budgeting. In addition to their minimalist lifestyle, they

prioritise savings, allocating 50% of their income for future security. Their discussions reveal that financial literacy enables them to avoid credit-based purchases, thereby maintaining financial control. The couple values adaptability and mutual respect, demonstrating how shared financial goals and open communication can help reduce conflict. This goes along with research by Saxey et al. (2022), which highlights that withholding information and financial infidelity serve as primary catalysts for the dissolution of romantic relationships. PS and SM show that structured financial planning can significantly improve marital harmony. Their shared use of budgeting tools illustrates how financial literacy can enhance decision-making and conflict resolution. This couple's practice of collaborative budgeting, shared budgeting tools, and discussions about finances might be indicative of their financial transparency, which is defined as the practice of spouses honestly and openly sharing financial information (Koochel et al., 2020). They demonstrate resilience by utilising financial literacy to build an emergency fund, which helps alleviate anxiety in the face of uncertainty.

Couple 2: AJ & JK

AJ, a marketing manager, and JK, an architect, have been married for 8 months. They face challenges balancing demanding careers with household responsibilities. Despite their hectic schedules, they maintain a joint bank account to manage expenses. Vogler and Pahl (1994) observed that joint account structures tend to facilitate both partners to have an equal voice in important economic matters. AJ and JK are more into stock trading. However, being brought up in an environment where money-related talks are not welcomed, AJ, at times, finds it hard to put forth his financial perspectives, which sometimes creates unwanted friction in AJ and JK's communications. Their case highlights the importance of shared financial lit-



eracy and its role in aligning financial goals.

AJ and JK highlight the transformative power of financial literacy in fostering open communication. Their use of a joint account reduces the potential for misunderstandings and enhances transparency. Research also suggests that integrating household finances and adopting a joint management strategy is positively correlated with increased relationship quality (Olson et al., 2023). Their proactive approach to financial education underlines how continuous learning strengthens partnerships. The couple's ability to balance personal hobbies with savings underscores the importance of financial goals in marital satisfaction.

Couple 3: RK & VM

RK, a data scientist, and VM, a teacher, have been married for six months. They attribute their financial resilience to early education in budgeting and saving strategies. They allocate 40% of their income to mutual funds and retirement plans. RK's systematic approach to financial planning inspires VM to adopt a similar discipline. They believe financial literacy reduces anxiety, enabling them to focus on career and family goals. Joint decision-making extends to household tasks, fostering harmony despite their high-pressure careers. Rempel et al. (1985) suggest that collaborative decision-making stems from the mutual trust, long-term commitment, and loyalty in the relationship.

RK and VM exemplify how a division of financial responsibilities can enhance marital efficiency. RK's focus on long-term investments complements VM's management of daily expenses, showcasing the benefits of role specialisation. Their goal-setting for short-, medium-, and long-term horizons reflects advanced financial literacy and mutual understanding. Their reliance on data to resolve disagreements further underscores the value of informed decision-making.

Couple 4: LP & RS

LP, a journalist, and RS, an entrepreneur, married for eight months, emphasise the significance of financial transparency. They actively discuss investment opportunities. When decision-making is collaborative, spouses engage in more frequent dialogue about their financial outlook, creating a synergistic effect where the couple profits from the knowledge and skills of the other (Flury & Ickes, 2006). RS's habit of tracking expenses via apps and LP's preference for traditional savings methods led to constructive debates. Their financial literacy enables them to adapt quickly to unexpected expenses, such as medical emergencies. Their approach exemplifies how informed financial decisions can build confidence and trust in a marriage.

LP and RS demonstrate how financial crises can catalyse the adoption of financial literacy. Their transition from unstructured discussions to disciplined financial planning highlights the adaptive nature of financially literate couples. By prioritising debt repayment and diversifying savings, they have established a foundation of resilience. Their focus on regular financial reviews fosters accountability and strengthens their partnership.

Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of financial literacy in enhancing resilience in dual-career marriages. Couples with higher financial literacy exhibit better conflict resolution, financial management, and adaptability.

Future research should focus on interventions that promote financial education and its integration into marital counselling programmes.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported interview data. While this ap-



proach provided rich, contextual insights into the lived experiences of dual-career couples, the results may be influenced by social desirability bias.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the partic-

ipating students for their time and insights. Special thanks to the research advisors and academic committee for their valuable feedback and guidance throughout the study.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Growth Mindset and Procrastination Among College Students Participating in Sports

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Received: 25/08/2025

Revised: 25/02/2026

Accepted: 05/03/2026

Abstract

In sports psychology, the concept of growth mindset has been widely examined in academic achievement contexts, yet its relevance to sport-specific self-regulation, particularly procrastination among collegiate sports participating individuals, remains insufficiently investigated. This study examined the association between growth-oriented beliefs about athletic ability and procrastination tendencies in sport-related contexts among college athletes in Kerala, India. Using a correlational design, data were collected from 111 student-athletes through the Pure Procrastination Scale and the Conceptions of the Nature of Athletic Ability Questionnaire-2. Owing to non-normal data distribution, Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed. Results from the Spearman Rank correlation method indicate that there were no significant relationships between the growth mindset and the components of procrastination. However, a significant positive relationship exists between the fixed mindset and one of the components of procrastination, i.e., timeliness/lateness. These findings support the conceptualisation of procrastination as a domain-sensitive construct shaped by motivational beliefs rather than solely as a generalised dispositional tendency. By extending growth mindset theory into sports performance contexts, this study contributes to the literature on motivation and self-regulation in sport and underscores the potential value of psychologically informed interventions to enhance performance readiness among collegiate sports participating individuals.

Keywords: Growth mindset, Fixed mindset, Procrastination, Sports students, Motivational readiness

Introduction

Students frequently exhibit a penchant for engaging in physical endeavours like participating in sports activities, which are often more captivating and foster connections with others, thereby boosting their mental health. The field of sports psychology has been playing a big role in addressing the many characteristics, opportunities, and challenges in sports that affect mental health. According to the American Psychological Association, sports psychology can be defined

as a field that uses psychological knowledge and skills to address optimal performance and well-being of athletes, developmental and social aspects of sports participation, and systemic issues associated with sports settings and organisations (APA, n.d.).

The coexistence of competitive performance environments and self-beliefs about ability makes the mindset-behaviour link particularly salient in sports contexts. The implications of Carol Dweck's mindset theory can be observed in comprehending the type of



mentality they possess. In her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2014), drawing from her inherent theories of intelligence, Dweck posits that individuals with a growth mindset, or incremental self-theory, hold the belief that their fundamental traits have evolved over time. Conversely, those with a fixed mindset, or entity self-theory, are defined by Dweck as individuals who believe their fundamental 'traits are set in stone.' Nevertheless, a notable level of competition exists, and a growth mindset can emerge during their involvement in athletics and sports performances, as students place a high value on the accomplishments gained from these events. Such cognitive appraisals are theoretically linked to self-regulatory processes, suggesting that implicit theories of ability may significantly influence the emergence, maintenance, or mitigation of procrastinatory behaviours in academic and sport-related domains.

While a growth mindset encourages persistence, strategic effort, and adaptive interpretations of setbacks, procrastination represents a form of self-regulatory failure that undermines these adaptive processes. From a social-cognitive perspective, as articulated in Albert Bandura's framework of self-regulation and reciprocal determinism, individuals' beliefs influence how they anticipate outcomes, manage emotions, and initiate goal-directed action. More recently, theorists have claimed that mindset beliefs have significant implications for sports performance, highlighting the idea that high-achieving sports mindsets affect sports achievement and the way competing situations are handled (Dweck, 2014). Sportspersons endorsing a fixed mindset may interpret challenging training demands or competitive pressures as threats to their perceived competence, thereby increasing avoidance tendencies and delaying necessary preparation. In contrast, those with a growth mindset are more likely to construe effortful practice and temporary setbacks as integral to skill development, re-

ducing fear-based avoidance and facilitating timely task engagement. Therefore, procrastination in sports settings may not merely reflect poor time management but may be partially rooted in underlying implicit beliefs about ability. Players and their performance may benefit psychologically from higher levels of growth beliefs, which may also have a favourable impact on how they interpret stressors (e.g., reduce the psychological impact of competition anxiety) (Jowett & Spray, 2013; Vella et al., 2016; Spray, 2017). Extending this perspective, such beliefs may play a crucial role in mitigating procrastinatory tendencies within sports contexts. Athletes who perceive ability as malleable are more likely to interpret competition anxiety and performance pressure as functional signals for preparation rather than as threats to self-worth. This adaptive appraisal reduces avoidance-driven delay and promotes timely engagement in training, strategic planning, and skill refinement.

According to Klein (1971), the first part, in the word procrastination, 'pro,' means 'forward,' while the second portion, 'crastinatus,' implies 'of tomorrow.' (Munda & Tiwari, 2024). According to Klingsieck (2013), procrastination can be defined as "the voluntary delay of an intended and necessary and/or[personally] important activity, despite expecting potential negative consequences that outweigh the positive consequences of the delay." Procrastination has been conceptualised both as a state and a trait, and studies suggest the role of intrapersonal processes related to negative self-evaluations as a perpetuating factor in procrastination (Sirois, 2014). Examining the interplay between growth mindset and procrastination offers a nuanced understanding of how motivational belief systems shape behavioural engagement, persistence, and performance outcomes among college students participating in sports. Empirical evidence from Ahmad et al. (2024) indicates that structured sports participation serves as a viable inter-



vention for mitigating Generalised Anxiety Disorder and chronic procrastination among university students. Notably, the intersection of self-regulation and physical activity is supported by Zhang et al. (2024), whose predictive modelling revealed that procrastination and action control are significant antecedents of exercise behaviour. These data highlight the necessity of considering psychological traits when evaluating the efficacy of sports-based mental health programmes. This study aims to understand the relationship between the student's growth mindset and procrastination, which can further affect his/her mental well-being to pursue the desired achievement. The variables that are used for this study are growth mindset, fixed mindset, procrastination, and its three components. These components were formed from the three-factor model of procrastination which was proposed by Swardal et al. (2016) are (1) decisional delay, which refers to the individual's delay in the decisional making; (2) implemental delay, which refers to the irrational delay of action from the individual and; (3) timeliness or lateness, indicates the delay in meeting deadlines and timeliness while performing a task.

Need and Significance

Procrastination and sports performance among students have been the subject of studies, but little is known about the implications of a growth mindset, which also has an impact on procrastination among students in colleges, especially in the Indian context. Procrastination, conceptualised as the voluntary delay of intended tasks despite foreseeable negative consequences, represents a critical self-regulatory challenge that can undermine both academic responsibilities and systematic sports training. In competitive environments where consistent practice, discipline, and psychological preparedness are essential, maladaptive delay may compromise performance trajectories and overall well-being. While mindset training has

gained prominence in organisational and educational discourse, its specific implications for reducing procrastination and strengthening performance-oriented behaviours in sports remain underexplored. The findings from the study can inform about the inclusion of psychological skills like mindset training and time management into sports science curricula and academic and training programmes in the universities of Kerala. In the context that the Higher Education Ministry of Kerala is taking initiatives to develop a sports culture among college students, the study underlines the role of psychological competence and well-being in optimal sports performance. The findings of this study have practical applications in enhancing college students' general well-being, which could benefit them in future situations. Understanding the psychological determinants of delay behavior becomes essential for fostering competence, resilience, and optimal athletic functioning. This is why this study is necessary and relevant today.

Objectives

To find out the relationship between growth mindset, fixed mindset, and procrastination among sports-participating college students.

Hypothesis

There will be a significant relationship between growth mindset, fixed mindset, and procrastination, and its dimensions among college students who participate in sports.

Methodology

Participants

A priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 to determine the required sample size for detecting a medium effect size ($r = 0.30$) at $\alpha = 0.05$ and power = 0.80. The analysis indicated a minimum sample size of 82 participants. Using purposive sampling, 111 college students who participated in at least one intercollegiate sports event (individual or team) from various arts and sci-



ences colleges in the Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, were included in the study. Students who have previously participated in sports events but currently do not were excluded.

Design

The design used for the research was a correlational design.

Instruments

The instruments used for this study are:

1. Pure Procrastination Scale (Steel, 2010): Pure Procrastination Scale was used to collect information from the respondents regarding procrastination. Initially, the scale is standardised based on the unifactor model of procrastination, which was proposed by Steel. A number of other inventories were used to develop the scale. Finally, 12 items were extracted in the form of the Pure Procrastination Scale. The three subscales, which comprised a three-factor model that was proposed by Swardal et al. (2016), were as follows: Decisional delay: items (1–3), Implemental delay: items (4–8), and Lateness/Timeliness: items (9–12). The reliability of subscales was tested by Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.89 for the implemental delay, 0.82 for the decisional delay factor, and 0.74 for the timeliness/lateness component of procrastination. It was developed with improved validity (Steel, 2010).

2. Conceptions of the Nature of Athletic Ability Questionnaire-2 (CNAAQ-2; Biddle et al., 2003): Implicit theories of athletic ability were measured using the Conceptions of the Nature of Athletic Ability Questionnaire-2 (CNAAQ-2; Biddle et al., 2003). This 12-item instrument measures both growth mindset orientation (i.e., incremental beliefs) and fixed mindset orientation (i.e., entity beliefs). The CNAAQ-2 is considered to be a reliable measure as indicated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients of $\alpha = 0.80$

for overall growth mindset and $\alpha = 0.70$ for overall fixed mindset (Biddle et al., 2003). The CNAAQ-2 has been used to examine implicit theories of ability in physical education trainees (Wang & Koh, 2006), college age students (Wang et al., 2009), junior college student-athletes (Chian & Wang, 2008), team sport athletes (Stenling et al., 2014), and high level amateur and semi-professional soccer players (Gardner et al., 2015).

Data collection and procedure

Data were collected through an online survey platform (Google Forms), with participation scheduled according to respondents' availability. The measures comprised the Pure Procrastination Scale, the Conceptions of the Nature Athletic Ability Questionnaire, and a structured demographic information sheet designed to capture relevant background variables. All instruments were administered in a standardised format to ensure procedural consistency.

Prior to data collection, participants were provided with a detailed description of the study's objectives, scope, and anticipated academic contributions. Informed consent was obtained electronically from all participants before data collection initiation. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to decline participation, omit responses to specific items, or withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty or adverse consequences.

The study adhered to established ethical guidelines governing research involving human participants. To ensure confidentiality and data security, no personally identifying information was collected. Responses were anonymised at the point of collection, and data were used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. To



assess the normality of the data obtained, the Shapiro–Wilk test for normality was used. To find the relationship between the variables, the Spearman rank-order correlation was used.

Result and Discussion

Descriptive information about the participants is displayed in Table 1. The majority of participants in this study were in the age range of 21–23 years, with a percentage of 57.7%. Most of the participants were male college students (74.8%), while females accounted for 25.2% of the participants. A major proportion of the students who participated in the study hailed from rural areas of Kerala, with a percentage of 44.1%. About 58.6% of the participants took part in Intercollegiate sports events, which indicates that the majority of the students qualified for higher competitive levels. About 68.5% of the participants have received formal coaching, and 57.7% of students practice nearly every day.

Table 1. Descriptive information about the participants.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–20	33	29.7
	21–23	64	57.7
	24–27	14	12.6
Gender	Male	83	74.8
	Female	28	25.2
Place of Residence	Rural	49	44.1
	Urban	42	37.8
	Semi-urban	20	18.0
Course Stream	Arts	46	41.4
	Science	54	48.6
	Commerce	11	9.9
Level of participation	All India Inter		
	University	14	12.6
	Intercollegiate	65	58.6
	International	4	3.6
	Zonal	28	25.2

Formal coaching	No	35	31.5
	Yes	76	68.5
Training frequency	Less than once		
	a week	13	11.7
	Nearly everyday	64	57.7
	Once in a week	13	11.7
	Thrice in week	21	18.9

The Shapiro–Wilk test for normality was used to check whether the data are normally distributed. The variable procrastination was not found to be significant ($w = 0.978$, $p = 0.061$), which implies that it follows the normal distribution, while the variables growth and fixed mindset were found to be significant ($w = 0.839$, $p = 0.000$, and $w = 0.976$, $p = 0.041$) and didn't follow the normal distribution. Hence, non-parametric tests were employed in the study.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients showing the relationship between growth mindset, fixed mindset, procrastination, and its dimensions.

Variables	Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
Decisional Delay	0.054	0.116
Implemental Delay	−0.075	0.152
Timeliness/Lateness	−0.086	0.189*
Procrastination Total Score	0.058	0.174

*Significant at 0.05 level

From Table 2, results from the Spearman Rank correlation method indicate that there were no significant relationships between the growth mindset and the components of procrastination. However, a significant positive relationship exists between the fixed mindset and one of the components of procrastination, i.e., timeliness/lateness. This suggests that individuals with a high score in the fixed mindset were likely to procrastinate while engaging in sports activities, often deferring them to lateness. So (2022) provides empirical evidence that a fixed mindset ad-



versely affects the confidence and dedication dimensions of athlete engagement. When athletes construe ability as innate and immutable, setbacks are internalised as confirmation of deficient talent rather than as cues for adaptive effort. This attributional rigidity erodes self-efficacy and attenuates sustained commitment to performance development. When performance limitations are viewed as biologically predetermined rather than effort-dependent, athletes exhibit greater discouragement in the face of adversity and an increased propensity to disengage. Training inconsistency should not be construed merely as poor time management; it reflects motivational disengagement and ego-defensive avoidance from the individual. This cyclical process perpetuates procrastination, weakens persistence, and increases the likelihood of sport withdrawal.

However, an important theoretical nuance emerges from the finding that no significant relationship was observed between growth mindset and procrastination. The overwhelming influence of other factors could explain the absence of an association between the growth mindset and procrastination. To support this, the study conducted by Barabanshchikova et al. (2018) found that the negative past, control over the planning of the action, and the monitoring of the implementation of the action predict procrastinating behaviour among athletes. Further, they found that the influence of such factors differs among participants of individual and team events in sports. Certel and Kozak (2017) examined locus of academic control and academic procrastination among athletes and found that the external locus of control, which is significantly high among athletes participating in team events, is positively correlated with academic procrastination. Stress is also found to be strongly correlated with procrastination, and recent studies have explored the mediational role of self-compassion in the relationship between stress and procrastination (Sirois, 2014; Rapoport

et al., 2022). The impact and interrelationships of such relevant variables, which could exert an overpowering influence on procrastination and their interactions with implicit beliefs like growth mindset, are underexplored in this (Certel & Kozak, 2017).

Similarly, the lack of assessment instruments that tap the expressions of procrastination in sports-specific activities and contexts is also a matter of concern. Results obtained from another study imply that general procrastination positively correlates and also predicts domain-specific procrastination (Şirin, 2011). The differences can still be seen in these contexts and raise the significance of developing valid procrastination scales or assessment tools. This remains an underexplored territory in sports psychology (Klingsieck, 2013). Promisingly, Klingsieck and Weigelt (2016) attempt to conceptualise and describe sports procrastination as an intention-action gap in all areas of sporting activities, ranging from competitive sports to exercise.

Classical mindset theory often conceptualises growth and fixed mindsets as opposite ends of a continuum, implying that a lower fixed mindset automatically corresponds to a higher growth mindset. Yet, contemporary research increasingly suggests that they may function as partially independent constructs rather than strict opposites (Ortiz Alvarado et al., 2024). In the Indian cultural context, endorsing growth-oriented beliefs (e.g., valuing effort and perseverance) does not necessarily eliminate fixed beliefs about innate talent or destiny. Sarkar (2023) critiques the mindset theory for its lack of attention to cross-cultural differences. She stresses that in Indian culture, individuals with fixed mindsets prioritise ability and effort equally, whereas those with a growth mindset move beyond incremental beliefs towards challenging themselves, mastering new skills, and personal growth. Cultural narratives emphasising fate, natural gift, so-



cietal comparison, and examination-based achievement systems may allow both belief systems to coexist within the same individual. Thus, there is a grave need for thoroughly redefining the construct of growth mindset since the present conceptualisation does not cover the broader meanings of this concept in collectivistic cultures like the Indian society. Such a broader conceptualisation can also aid in the development of culturally relevant assessment tools to explore mindsets.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between growth mindset and procrastination among college students who participate in sports. Results could not demonstrate a significant relationship between growth mindset and procrastination, though fixed mindset is found to be related to the timeliness/lateness dimension of procrastination. Results are suggestive of the need to consider multiple factors influencing procrastination in sports contexts as well as to advance a domain-specific conceptualisation and assessment of procrastination, as it manifests in sports-related behaviours.

A key limitation of this study lies in the complexity of comprehending and evaluating implicit beliefs such as mindsets, which are culturally shaped and contextually embedded. Although growth and fixed mindset constructs have been extensively examined in Western literature, their manifestation within the socio-cultural milieu of Kerala may differ due to culturally informed notions of success, failure, effort, destiny, and athletic identity. Such cultural influences may affect how sportspersons internalise, interpret, and express mindset beliefs, thereby raising concerns regarding the cross-cultural applicabil-

ity and interpretative validity of standardised psychological measures without rigorous cultural adaptation and validation. The study is further constrained by gender imbalance within the sample, as overrepresentation of male participants may limit the generalisability of findings to female sportspersons, whose experiences of motivation, societal expectations, access to resources, and support systems may differ significantly. Additionally, reliance on district-level sampling restricts external validity, as participants from a single geographic area may share homogeneous socio-economic and institutional characteristics; broader, multi-district or state-wide sampling frameworks would enhance representativeness. Methodologically, the use of general procrastination scales constitutes another limitation, since this study uses a pure procrastination scale. Such instruments may not adequately capture sport-specific manifestations of delay, including postponement of practice, conditioning, skill refinement, recovery routines, or competition preparation. Future research should therefore prioritise culturally sensitive theoretical refinements of concepts of growth mindset, balanced gender representation, geographically diverse sampling, and the development of validated sport-specific procrastination measures to strengthen the empirical and contextual foundations of sports psychology research in Kerala and also in similar settings.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the participating students for their time and insights. Special thanks to the research advisors and academic committee for their valuable feedback and guidance throughout the study.

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Organisational Culture and Turnover Intention among Self-Financing College Teachers in Kerala: A Multivariate Analysis

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Received: 18/08/2025

Revised: 26/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

Turnover intention is a critical issue that demands the attention of every organisation. Since employee turnover can have a detrimental impact on productivity, it is important to understand the determinants of such a choice. While numerous studies have proposed strategies to reduce turnover intention, the underlying factors contributing to this phenomenon, especially from an organisational perspective, remain insufficiently examined. Addressing this gap is necessary to develop effective retention strategies and strengthen organisational performance. This study examined the influence of organisational cultural elements on turnover intention among self-financing college teachers in Kerala. A sample of 386 individuals was collected from various self-financing institutions affiliated with four state universities. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to evaluate the effects of eight significant cultural elements. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of cultural elements on turnover intention. The model revealed a significant relationship, with an R^2 value of 0.199, indicating that it explained 19.9% of the variance in turnover intention. The study highlights implications for institutional policies aimed at retaining talented educators and enhancing organisational stability within the higher education sector.

Keywords: Organisational culture, Turnover intention, Higher education, Self-financing institutions

Introduction

Education has long been regarded as a fundamental human need that plays a crucial role in social and economic development by generating knowledge and building human capital. Investment in education enhances individual well-being and contributes to reducing social inequalities. However, globalisation has increasingly transformed higher education into a market-driven enterprise, expanding access while simultaneously raising concerns about quality, affordability, and accountability (Mense et al., 2018).

Declining government funding for public higher education worldwide has prompted institutions to adopt competitive and market-oriented strategies, leading to rising costs and a significant expansion of private and self-financing institutions (Brown, 2015). These structural transformations have also reshaped employment conditions within higher education, intensifying pressures on faculty and raising concerns about organisational climate and retention.

The higher education system in India has grown remarkably since independence,



evolving into one of the largest education systems in the world (Tilak, 2010). This expansion has involved the establishment of numerous universities, technical institutes, research institutions, and both professional and non-professional colleges aimed at generating knowledge and improving access to higher education (Engel, 1982). As public funding alone has become insufficient to support the continued expansion and diversification of higher education, private participation has increasingly been encouraged to meet growing demand (Zha, 2009). This trend is reflected in the higher education landscape of Kerala, which has witnessed a substantial rise in self-financing institutions to accommodate increasing enrolment needs. Today, a significant proportion of higher education institutions are operated by private management. While this expansion has improved educational access, it has also introduced challenges related to financial constraints, employment instability, heavy workloads, and limited professional development opportunities, which shape faculty experiences and may influence turnover intention (Muhammed Faizudheen & Abdul Azeez, 2022). These evolving institutional conditions underscore the growing concern around faculty retention in self-financing colleges, as maintaining a stable academic workforce is critical for ensuring institutional effectiveness and educational quality.

Despite the rapid growth of self-financing higher education institutions in Kerala, limited research has examined how organisational culture influences faculty turnover intention in this context. Existing studies have largely focused on structural or policy-level issues, with relatively little attention given to the role of cultural dimensions in shaping workplace experiences and retention decisions. Understanding organisational culture as a predictor of turnover intention can therefore provide deeper insights into context-specific factors affecting faculty stability and institutional sustainability.

Turnover intention

Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate consideration of leaving an organisation and is widely recognised as a critical precursor to actual turnover (Tett et al., 1993). It reflects an employee's awareness of and willingness to leave the organisation in the future (Asfahani, 2022). The intention to quit may emerge due to either favourable or unfavourable changes within the organisational environment (Peters et al., 2022). The turnover rate of an organisation is often viewed as an indicator of organisational stability and identity, reflecting the underlying characteristics of the workplace (Maertz et al., 2007).

Higher education institutions, in particular, rely heavily on the intellectual capital, expertise, and commitment of their academic staff, making faculty retention especially critical (Hassan et al., 2022). High staff turnover can lead to significant losses of both human and social capital, thereby undermining organisational effectiveness and continuity (Shin & Jeung, 2019). Various theoretical frameworks explain turnover intention as a function of job demands, organisational resources, psychological perceptions, and behavioural intentions, highlighting the complexity of factors influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to address employee retention and manage turnover.

Theoretical models of turnover

Employee turnover intention has been widely explained through theoretical perspectives that emphasise employees' evaluation of their work environment and their relationships within the organisation. Among these, Social Exchange Theory provides a useful lens for understanding turnover intention by suggesting that employees engage in reciprocal relationships with their organisation, where perceived support, fairness,



and recognition influence their attitudes and behavioural intentions (Blau, 1964). When employees perceive that the benefits they receive do not align with their expectations, they may experience dissatisfaction and consider leaving the organisation (Graen et al., 1982).

In addition, motivational and resource-based perspectives propose that employees continuously assess whether their workplace enables them to achieve personal and professional goals while preserving valued resources such as autonomy, growth opportunities, and job security. The psychological goal system perspective suggests that when employees perceive their work environment as hindering their psychological goals, their intention to leave may intensify (Zhang, 2024). Similarly, resource conservation perspectives argue that individuals seek to protect valued resources, and when workplace conditions lead to resource depletion, employees may consider withdrawal behaviours, including turnover intention (Huffman et al., 2014).

These perspectives collectively highlight that employees' decisions to stay or leave are shaped by broader organisational conditions that define their everyday experiences. One such critical contextual factor is organisational culture, which reflects shared values, norms, and practices that guide behaviour within the workplace. Understanding how these cultural elements shape employee perceptions provides an important foundation for examining their potential role in influencing turnover intention.

Organisational culture

Organisational culture represents an important contextual factor that shapes employees' workplace experiences and influences behavioural outcomes, including retention. It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide interactions and decision-making within an organisation (Schein,

1992; Akhavan et al., 2014). By shaping expectations regarding communication, support, and collaboration, organisational culture plays a significant role in influencing employees' attitudes towards their work environment and their intention to remain with the organisation (Egan et al., 2004). Although culture tends to evolve gradually and may resist rapid change, it has a pervasive influence on everyday organisational functioning.

To understand the cultural environment within organisations, Udai Pareek's (2002) OCTAPACE framework provides a comprehensive perspective by identifying eight core values that characterise organisational culture: openness, confrontation, trust, authenticity, proactivity, autonomy, collaboration, and experimentation. These dimensions reflect the extent to which organisations encourage transparent communication, constructive problem solving, mutual confidence, alignment between words and actions, initiative, decision-making freedom, teamwork, and innovation. In academic institutions, such cultural attributes can shape faculty members' sense of belonging, professional growth, and engagement, thereby influencing their perceptions of the workplace.

Within the context of higher education in Kerala, where self-financing institutions operate under evolving structural and resource constraints, understanding organisational culture becomes particularly important. Cultural environments that foster trust, autonomy, and collaboration may enhance faculty commitment, whereas cultures characterised by rigidity or lack of support may contribute to dissatisfaction and increased turnover intention. Examining organisational culture through the OCTAPACE framework therefore provides a meaningful lens for understanding how institutional environments influence faculty members' intentions to stay or leave.



Methodology

Objectives

To examine the extent to which the OCTAPACE dimensions of organisational culture significantly predict turnover intention among faculty members in self-financing higher education institutions in Kerala.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Openness does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₂: Confrontation does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₃: Trust does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₄: Autonomy does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₅: Proactiveness does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₆: Authenticity does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₇: Collaboration does not significantly predict turnover intention.

H₀₈: Experimentation does not significantly predict turnover intention.

Sample

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across different institutions, resulting in 386 responses from faculty members working in self-financing colleges affiliated with four state universities in Kerala. The inclusion criteria comprised full-time teaching faculty employed in self-financing institutions with active teaching responsibilities, while administrative staff, guest faculty, and temporary instructors were excluded from the study. Participants represented diverse academic disciplines and varied levels of teaching experience, providing a comprehensive view of faculty perceptions within the sector.

Measures

TIS-6: Turnover intention was measured using the short version of the Turnover Intention Scale developed by Bothma and Roodt (2013), which is based on Roodt's (2004) original instrument. This version consists of six items rated on a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored at the extremes (e.g., 'never' = 1, low intensity, to 'always' = 7, high intensity). Higher scores indicate stronger turnover intention. The scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

OCTAPACE: Organisational culture was measured using the OCTAPACE scale developed by Pareek (2002). It is a 40-item instrument that gives the organisation's ethos in eight values. The overall reliability of the scale was obtained as 0.81.

Results and Discussion

This study examined the extent to which the dimensions of organisational culture predict turnover intention among faculty members in self-financing colleges. Multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS (version 24) to assess the predictive relationship between the OCTAPACE dimensions – openness, confrontation, trust, autonomy, proactiveness, authenticity, collaboration, and experimentation – and turnover intention. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 23.115$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that the set of organisational culture dimensions significantly predicted turnover intention. The model explained 19.9% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.199$), suggesting a moderate level of explanatory power. Analysis of individual predictors revealed that openness ($\beta = -0.257$, $p = 0.003$), confrontation ($\beta = -0.149$, $p = 0.048$), and authenticity ($\beta = -0.303$, $p < 0.001$) were significant negative predictors of turnover intention, indicating that higher levels of these cultural dimensions were associated with lower turnover intention.



In contrast, proactiveness ($\beta = 0.272$, $p < 0.001$), collaboration ($\beta = 0.140$, $p = 0.023$), and experimentation ($\beta = 0.215$, $p = 0.005$) emerged as significant positive predictors of turnover intention. Trust ($\beta = 0.103$, $p = 0.115$) and autonomy ($\beta = -0.029$, $p = 0.624$) were not found to be statistically significant predictors of turnover intention in this study. The results of the regression analysis are pre-

sented in Table 1. Based on these findings, the null hypotheses for openness, confrontation, proactivity, authenticity, collaboration, and experimentation were not supported, whereas the null hypotheses for trust and autonomy were retained. The findings of this study reinforce the view that organisational culture constitutes a significant contextual factor associated with faculty

Table 1: Hypotheses Results

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Regression Weights</i>	β	t	p value	<i>Results</i>
H01	OP-TI	-.257	-2.996	.003*	Not Supported
H02	CN- TI	-.149	-1.98.5	.048*	Not Supported
H03	TR-TI	.103	1.580	.115	Supported
H04	AT-TI	-.29	-.491	.624	Supported
H05	PA-TI	0.272	3.996	-.000*	Not supported
H06	AU-TI	-.303	-5.496	-.000*	Not supported
H07	CO-TI	.140	2.277	-.023*	Not supported
H08	EX-TI	.215	2.799	.005*	Not Supported
R2	.199				
F	23.115				

*Note** $p < 0.05$. OP=Openness, CN = Confrontation, TR = Trust, AT = Autonomy, PA = Proactive, AU = Authenticity, CO = Collaboration, EX = Experimentation, TI = Turnover Intention

turnover intention. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory, employees evaluate their relationship with the organisation based on perceived support, fairness, and alignment between expectations and experiences (Blau, 1964), and cultural environments that promote openness, constructive confrontation, and authenticity may strengthen reciprocal commitment, thereby reducing intentions to leave. The negative association observed for these dimensions is consistent with prior empirical evidence suggesting that cultures characterised by transparent communication and value congruence are linked to lower

turnover intentions (Egan et al., 2004; Asiedu, 2015). Conversely, the positive relationships of proactiveness, collaboration, and experimentation with turnover intention may reflect the career mobility tendencies of proactive and innovation-oriented employees, who are more likely to seek environments offering greater growth opportunities, a pattern noted in studies examining proactive career behaviour and turnover cognitions (Wang et al., 2024). Within the self-financing higher education context, where employment conditions may involve contractual arrangements and competitive pressures, such individuals



may be particularly inclined to explore alternative opportunities. The non-significant effects of trust and autonomy suggest that, although theoretically important, these factors may not independently shape turnover decisions when broader structural or career considerations are salient. Overall, these findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating meaningful associations between organisational culture and turnover intention (Panchamia&Pestonjee, 2017; Li Et al., 2024) and extend the literature by highlighting how specific cultural dimensions operate within the context of self-financing institutions, where organisational environments play a critical role in shaping faculty retention dynamics.

Conclusion

This study explored how organisational culture influences turnover intentions among teachers at self-financing colleges. The findings revealed that openness, confrontation, and authenticity negatively predicted turnover intention, suggesting that promoting a culture of open communication, constructive conflict resolution, and authenticity can help retain the talent pool. Conversely, proactiveness, collaboration, and experimentation positively predicted turnover intention, indicating that teachers who seek professional growth and dynamic environments may have a higher exit tendency. However, trust and autonomy did not show significant relationships with turnover intention, implying that their influence on retention may be context-dependent.

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Limitations

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretation of the relationships observed between organisational culture and turnover intention. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias, and the focus on faculty from self-financing institutions in Kerala may limit the generalisability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, turnover intention may be influenced by other factors such as compensation and job security that were not included in this study.

Implications

Organisational culture plays a crucial role in employee retention. By promoting a culture that values transparent communication, constructive confrontations, and opportunities for authenticity, institutions can enhance faculty retention. Retention strategies should also take into account collaboration and innovation that align with faculty needs. Human resource policies should be strengthened to support long-term commitment. At a macro level, policies need to be developed to ensure career advancement pathways within self-financing colleges to prevent turnover caused by limited growth opportunities. Future research should explore moderating and mediating factors for deeper insights.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the participating teachers for their time and valuable insights. Special thanks are also extended to the research advisors for their constructive feedback and guidance throughout the study.



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Moral Orientation, Ethical Integrity and Emotional Competence among College Students

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 22/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

Carol Gilligan gave the concept 'moral orientation' which addresses the existence of two distinct styles of moral reasoning, namely, a principle-focused 'justice style' and a situation-focused 'care style'. This study aimed to find out which moral orientation, i.e., justice or care, is better translated into moral action, by examining the relationship between moral orientation and ethical integrity. In addition, the study attempts to understand which moral orientation is more strongly associated with emotional competence. The Measure of Moral Orientation-2 (MMO-2), Ethical Integrity Scale (EIS), and Profile of Emotional Competence(short) (S-PEC) were used to collect data from a sample of 199 college students from Arts and Science colleges in the state of Kerala. Karl-Pearson correlation was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that while both justice and care orientations were significantly associated with ethical integrity, justice orientation showed a stronger relationship. No significant association emerged between care orientation and emotional competence. However, justice orientation demonstrated a small but significant correlation with other-oriented emotional competence, implying the possible role of cognitive empathy and perspective-taking in justice-based reasoning among college students, rather than emotional empathy.

Keywords: Moral Orientation, Justice, Care, Ethical Integrity, Emotional Competence

Introduction

Moral orientation, or moral voice, refers to an individual's reasoning style when faced with a moral conflict or dilemma. This concept was proposed by Gilligan (1977) in response to Kohlberg's moral development theory, the most widely used framework to explain moral development.

Lawrence Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development outlines six stages across three levels-preconventional, conventional, and post-conventional-where morality shifts from external consequences to adherence to social norms and ultimately to individual

exploration of moral codes. This theory showed an emphasis on justice and universal principles (Berk, 2013; Kohlberg, 1984; Santrock, 2010). Carol Gilligan (1977) criticised this framework as biased towards males and hence not generalisable. Thus, Gilligan proposed an ethic of care as a basis for moral judgment. This, however, is not proposed by her as a replacement for Kohlberg's ethic of justice, but rather as a necessary addition to it (Reiter, 1996).

Gilligan's framework thus proposes the existence of two moral orientations. She used the term 'voices' for it. One is rule focused



and emphasises a commitment to obligation, tradition, fairness, and equity. This is the 'justice voice'. The other orientation, care, is contextually focused and emphasised by the desire to maintain relationships and respond situationally and compassionately to the needs of others (Caputo, 2000).

In this study, we explore moral orientation in a very dynamic population, i.e., college students. This development period serves as a formative stage where ethical perspectives and decision-making perspectives are solidified, directly influencing whether they evolve into socially responsible and morally conscious individuals.

Moral orientation or voice pertains to the reasoning style or the thought process that an individual adopts while faced with a moral conflict. Moral orientation provides the framework for how individuals approach dilemmas, while ethical integrity reflects the consistency between thought and action. To understand and build on the wider implications of this concept, it is important to understand how the moral orientation – justice or care – translates into ethical behaviour. Moral behaviour or action being objectively immeasurable, understanding moral orientation and its connection with ethical integrity provides us with an indirect but meaningful means to understand how moral thought influences ethical conduct.

Ethical integrity generally refers to consistency in one's thought, values, and action. Ingerson (2014) defined ethical integrity as a combination of high moral concern and positive ethical consistency. Moral or ethical concern is a combination of 4 components namely: (a) *ethical affect* – one's moral feelings and sentiments regarding moral issues, (b) *ethical cognition* – how a person thinks or reasons about ethics or morality, including the amount of thought a person gives to ethical or moral matters, (c) *ethical conation* – one's tendency orientation to act ethically

or morally, and (d) *ethical courage* – a person's willingness to do what is right regardless of the consequences, even if it means standing alone or even if there are personal costs. Ethical consistency is the congruence among these four components of ethical concern (Ingerson, 2014). In this study, the following definition is adopted:

"a positive attitude toward ethical matters (ethical concern), entailing consistency among ethical thoughts (cognition), feelings (affect) and behavioural intentions (conation) as well as ethical courage."

Weber and Green (1991) in their study demonstrated that higher stages of moral reasoning are closely related to moral action. Connelly et al. (2006) in their research found that integrity tests may be more closely related to overt moral behaviour than to moral reasoning. The person considered the most moral is the one who demonstrates the highest integrity in the positive sense (Paruzel-Czachura, 2016). Blasi (1980) emphasised the importance of clarifying the meaning of consistency between moral cognition and moral action, while acknowledging that moral action is complex and involves various feelings, questions, doubts, judgments, and decisions. The consistency of applying principles across different moral situations and its relation to moral integrity has also been highlighted in previous literature (Arvanitis & Kalliris, 2019). They argue that moral integrity is achieved when individuals act based on an internal moral system of principles, emotions, and motives.

Thus, although integrity has been studied in relation to morality and some of its related constructs (Connelly et al., 2006; Weber & Green, 1991; Wisesa, 2021), its association with specific moral orientations has not been extensively examined. To address this gap in literature on moral orientation, we deem it important in this study, to understand the relationship between moral orientation and



ethical integ-ri-ty. We try to understand which moral reasoning style or orientation, i.e., justice or care is more likely to be associated with moral behaviour or action, by coming to an understanding about its relationship to moral integrity.

The term ‘emotional competence’ describes how people handle emotional information, either interpersonal or intrapersonal (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). It refers to how an individual identifies, expresses, understands, regulates, and uses one’s emotions or those of others (Brasseur et al, 2013; Mikolajczak, 2010; Mayer & Sa-lovey, 1997).

During college years, an individual is at a key developmental stage in which he is often required to tackle an array of situations requiring healthy processing and regulation of emotions. The decision to act ethically or morally must involve the understanding and use of emotions – both of oneself and that of others. The emotional competence one exhibits can guide ethical reasoning and decision-making. Numerous research studies highlight the role of emotions in shaping moral actions (Arvanitis & Kalliris, 2019; Blasi, 1980; Malti et al., 2010; Perren et al., 2011; Tangney et al., 2007). The majority of the research on moral orientation with respect to emotional competence-related constructs focus and highlight a positive association between sympathy and empathy, and care moral orientation (Juujarvi et al., 2010, 2012; Skoe, 2010).

In this study, we also try to understand the relationship between moral orientation and emotional competence, to find out which moral voice is more strongly associated with emotional competence. Based on the reviewed literature, it is hypothesised that:

1. Justice orientation will be positively associated with ethical integrity.
2. Care orientation will be positively associated with ethical integrity.

3. Care orientation will be positively associated with emotional competence.
4. Justice orientation will show weaker association with emotional competence.

Method

Participants

The questionnaire was distributed among 210 college students from 3 different Arts and Science colleges – one each from south Kerala, central Kerala, and north Kerala to ensure representativeness of sample.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria:

Participants included undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 18–24 years, enrolled in government and aided arts and science colleges in Kerala. Students who were native/residents of Kerala, able to understand English and Malayalam and who provided informed consent were included in the study. Students enrolled in self-financing colleges were excluded to maintain relative homogeneity of the institutional context. Students originating from outside Kerala were also excluded to ensure cultural comparability. Questionnaires with substantial missing responses and incomplete data preventing scoring were also excluded from analysis.

From the 210 initial participants, after excluding incomplete questionnaires and cases not meeting the inclusion criteria, 199 valid responses were retained for final analysis.

Instruments

Moral Orientation was measured using the Measure of Moral Orientation (MMO-2) developed by Debora Liddell (2006), a 52-item test. Created specifically for use among college students, this scale measured justice and care orientation through a set of 7 college-related dilemmas, and a series of statements following each story. Students responded to each statement on a Likert scale ranging 1–4.



Ethical Integrity was measured using the Ethical Integrity Scale (EIS) by Marc-Charles Ingerson (2014), a 12-item objective measure, with sub-dimensions ethical cognition, ethical affect, ethical conation, and ethical courage, which were added together to give total ethical integrity scores.

Emotional Competence was measured using Profile of Emotional Competence-Short (SPEC) developed by Mikolajczak et al (2014). This 20-item objective scale measures both self-oriented and other-oriented emotional competence based on the sub-components – emotion identification, expression, understanding, regulation, and use.

Every item of each scale was followed by its Malayalam translation for additional ease and clarity. In addition, participants also filled out a sociodemographic data sheet for data about gender, age, course of study and residence district and type-urban or rural.

Procedure

The questionnaire set was approved by the University Level Ethics Committee of the University of Kerala. Formal permissions were taken from the principals of each college to distribute questionnaires in the classrooms during a set free hour. Students signed a consent form after reading a participant information sheet that gave adequate information about the objectives of the study and nature of questions. Clear instructions and introductions were given; doubts were addressed. Students took approximately 30 min to complete the entire questionnaire set.

In order to maximise the information collected and to minimise the effects of missing data, we substituted the individual's scale mean for missing or conflicting (multiple responses) responses. This strategy for handling missing data is supported by Cohen and Cohen (1983) in their discussion of missing data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the 199 participants based on gender, academic stream, and geographic zone.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Male	81	41.00
Female	118	59.00
Stream		
Science	10	5
Commerce	55	28
Social Sciences	125	63
Art	9	4
Zone		
North Kerala	75	38
South Kerala	51	26
Central Kerala	73	36

Table 2 shows the associations between justice and care moral orientation and (i) ethical integrity and (ii) emotional competence – both intrapersonal (self) and inter-personal (other).

Table 2. Correlation matrix for moral orientation, ethical integrity, and emotional competence.

	Justice	Care
Total integrity	0.415***	0.198**
Total EC	0.094	0.072
Other	0.141*	0.113
Self	0.003	-0.004

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, and *** $p < 0.001$.

As shown in Table 2, justice orientation was significantly positively correlated with ethical integrity ($r = 0.415, p < 0.001$). There was also significant correlation ($r = 0.198, p = 0.005$) between care orientation and ethical integrity. While both moral voices have been found to be associated with moral integrity,



the association between justice voice and ethical integrity is stronger. This implies that individuals who reason with justice-oriented style tend to exhibit more ethical integrity, i.e., consistency in their thought, values, and action. A stronger justice orientation implies a strong adherence to principles. One with a dominant justice voice is bound to place greater emphasis to the principle and apply it objectively across all situations (Gilligan, 1977; Lyons, 1983; Botes, 2000). This stand was also supported by Arvanitis and Kalliris (2019) when they argued that being a person with moral integrity might be defined as consistently applying higher order principles and standards across different practical situations. On the other hand, a stronger care orientation implies more situation-specific reasoning and action, as here one might prioritise relationships and address uniqueness of the situation over the principles. This situation-specific reasoning might be perceived as inconsistency between thought, value, and action, thus explaining the weaker correlation between care voice and ethical integrity scores.

Also, there is no significant relationship between moral orientation and total emotional competence scores. Additionally, no significant correlation was found between care orientation and other oriented emotional competence in spite of evidence from past literature (Hoffman, 1987; Skoe, 2010; Juujarvi et al., 2010). However, a significant though small association ($r = 0.141$, $p = 0.047$) is observed between justice orientation and other-oriented emotional competence. Other-oriented emotional competence involves one's ability to identify, express, comprehend, regulate, and use the emotions of others (Brasseur et al., 2013). It involves empathy, perspective taking and being able to influence another individual's emotions. These findings contradict existing literature that argue for a more positive and significant association between care orientation

and empathy—a core element of other-oriented emotional competence—than between justice orientation and empathy.

These findings may be explained in the light of prior research highlighting the nuanced interplay between empathy and justice reasoning. Cognitive empathy and empathic concern, rather than emotional empathy, predict sensitivity to injustice for others (Decety & Yoder, 2016). Perspective-taking – a key component of other-oriented emotional competence – has been positively associated with post-conventional justice reasoning (Juujarvi et al., 2010). For college students, whose reasoning skills are still developing, the ability to take others' perspectives may align more closely with justice-oriented reasoning, which emphasises fairness and impartiality over emotional responsiveness.

Moreover, justice orientation may be fostered in academic and social settings where rules, fairness, and equality are emphasised. For example, Decety and Yoder (2016) argued that promoting perspective-taking and reasoning, rather than emphasising emotional sharing, is more effective in fostering justice motivation. Similarly, in some contexts, empathy – particularly cognitive empathy – is seen as essential for serving the interests of justice (Deigh, 2011). These aspects may explain why justice orientation correlates with other-oriented emotional competence among college students, who are navigating social and moral complexities in their academic and peer environments.

Overall, these findings underscore the complexity of the relationship between empathy, justice reasoning, and moral orientations in college students. While care orientation has traditionally been associated with affective empathy, justice orientation may leverage cognitive aspects of empathy such as perspective-taking to enhance fairness considerations (Decety & Yoder, 2016; Juujarvi et al., 2010; Deigh, 2011). These cognitive



components of em-pathy may therefore help explain why jus-tice orientation in the present sample showed a small but significant association with other-oriented emotional competence.

Implications

This research holds significant implications for the moral and emotional development programmes within higher education. The findings suggest that ethics-related interventions in higher education may benefit from integrating both fairness and principle-based moral reasoning as well as interpersonal sensitivity components. Incorporating structured discussions and reflections on justice reasoning, fairness, and perspective-taking within academic and social contexts may help improve students' ethical integrity and cognitive empathy.

Conclusions

This research examined the associations between moral orientation, ethical integrity, and emotional competence in college students in Kerala. The results indicate that both justice and care orientations have significant associations with ethical integrity, with a stronger correlation observed for justice orientation. This indicates that individuals prioritising justice-based reasoning tend to exhibit consistency in their thoughts, values, and actions, thereby reinforcing the significance of principled decision-making in maintaining ethical integrity. The diminished correlation between care orientation and ethical integrity may arise from its situ-

ational adaptability, emphasising relational contexts rather than universal principles. No significant relationship was identified between moral orientation and total emotional competence, contradicting earlier studies. A notable correlation was identified between justice orientation and other-oriented emotional competence, suggesting that justice reasoning may involve cognitive empathy and perspective-taking rather than emotional empathy. The findings enhance discussions regarding the relationship among justice, care, and emotional processing in moral reasoning.

This study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the study's cross-sectional design limits causal inferences regarding the relationships between variables. Second, all three variables were measured using self-report assessments, posing the issue of self-report bias and social desirability effects, especially given the nature of the constructs. The method of data collection might have also posed the risk of common method variance, potentially inflating correlation strengths. The small sample size and overrepresentation of social science students restrict generalisability and group-wise comparison. Future research should investigate these relationships in various cultural and educational settings and utilise a multimethod approach to strengthen validity of study, for example, utilising longitudinal methods to analyse the evolution of moral reasoning and emotional competence over time. Qualitative data can also provide in-depth understanding.

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Relationship Between the Use of Social Network Sites and Body Image Dissatisfaction Among Young Adults

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Received: 17/08/2025

Revised: 23/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between social network site (SNS) use and body image dissatisfaction (BID) among 300 adults in the age range of 18–35 across Kerala. It focuses on examining how the usage of SNS is associated with one's dissatisfaction with body image in adults. Data were collected using a simple random method, and standardised questionnaires were used to assess SNS usage and BID. Results showed that use of SNS was significantly associated with BID among participants. Also, significant gender differences were observed, with females reporting higher SNS use and BID than males. To be precise, using SNS for socialisation and entertainment corresponds to BID more than using SNS for information among adults. The study shows the need for mindful social network use among young adults.

Keywords: Social network site uses, Body image dissatisfaction

Introduction

It has been identified that conventional media like television and magazines have a certain negative impact on people, especially body image dissatisfaction (BID) and other body concerns (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). Today, social network site (SNS) also emerges as a form of new generation media playing an indispensable role in everyone's life, and researchers are vested in understanding their effect on body image. These platforms help build communication and connection, but they are also associated with various negative psychological outcomes like BID (Abdulwahab et al., 2024). There are various studies stipulating the association of social networking site use and BID, with various dynamics at play, like upward social comparison (Wang et al., 2024). Various studies point out that the interactive nature of these

platforms creates a feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with one's body. This study explores the relationship between the use of SNS and BID.

Studies say that currently, a person spends about 2 hours per day on social media, while it was only 45 minutes per day a decade ago (Ryding & Kuss, 2019). SNSs are a haven for those seeking friendship and connection because, despite featuring pictures of various people, including celebrities, they are user-centric and let users display themselves as attractively as they see fit by permitting editing or touch-up tools (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). When one is continuously exposed to typical media images of being thin posted by others, it leads to body image issues, eating disorders, and body dissatisfaction in men and women (Ryding & Kuss, 2019).



In this mediatised world, SNSs pave a smooth pathway for getting subjected to unrealistic beauty depiction by peers and their favourite celebrities, leading to social comparison, which will ultimately lead to BID (Ho et al., 2016). The media employs a sociocultural pressure on females to achieve the Western standard of beauty to be thin, which can also lead to BID (Meier & Gray, 2013). Ho et al. (2016) say that men's and women's experiences are different when it comes to BID. They explain that females use SNS for self-representation and exhibiting personal aspects, leading to lateral and upward social comparison. On the other hand, men use their SNS for exhibiting their non-physical attributes like intelligence or sense of humour, leading to lateral comparison. Also, the common trend understood is that the media content emphasising weight and appearance is the most consumed than any other type of media content (Meier & Gray, 2013).

BID is the unfavourable attitude of a person towards their own physique, including their shape and weight (Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015). They suggested that BID stems from the disparity between individual and social beauty standards. The research focusing on BID and SNS use has found that women exposed to thin ideal models feel dissatisfaction and shame about not being like that (Barlett et al., 2008). While males exposed to muscular action figures tend to decrease their body esteem (Kalodnar, 1997). Boys often feel dissatisfied with their bodies because of societal pressure to have bigger, more powerful and muscular bodies (Groesz et al., 2001).

Even though the relationship between SNS use and BID is nuanced, it is important to understand the factors which might influence these factors. Meier and Gray (2013) reported that using SNS solely for appearance-based activities is associated with BID and not the general use. Additionally, engag-

ing in active interaction can lead to positive feelings like heightened self-esteem and belonging, in contrast to using SNS passively, which can deteriorate one's well-being (Ryding & Kuss, 2019). In some studies, adolescents reported that they are under constant pressure to 'look perfect' on SNS, and they meticulously choose and edit their posts to achieve this (De Vries et al., 2018). Cultural differences also play a role in non-Western backgrounds, where the thin-ideal beauty standards are less dominant, leading to weaker associations between SNS use and BID (Swami et al., 2010). These contradictory findings call for an in-depth investigation in this field.

Several international studies are checking the association between social network use and BID; few empirical studies have examined this relationship within the cultural context of Kerala or India. The major prediction of this study is that SNS use would be positively correlated with body image concerns among adults aged 18–35, as in adolescents and preadolescents. This study also indicates the need for investing time and effort in understanding how different types of SNS use influence body image evaluation and how that affects one's mental clarity and well-being. So, studying these relationships in Kerala context will contribute to the indigenous psychological literature.

Theoretical Models

There are a variety of theoretical frameworks to comprehend the relationship between BID and the use of SNS. The tripartite model by Thompson et al. (1999) is one such theory which suggests that people would be pressurised from 3 factors (parents, friends, and the media) to have a slender or muscular body and experience BID. Sociocultural theory also states that cultural ideologies, along with social agents like feedback from media and peers, will influence an individual's perceptions of body image negatively due to the internalisation of unrealistic body



standards (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020). Social comparison theory can also be used in the digital context because users compare themselves to others, which can lead to body image issues and low self-esteem (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015).

Need and context

This study serves to develop and reform various adaptable methods for instruction, which provide insights into promoting critical media literacy, sex education and self-development sessions. It will be useful in understanding and addressing the various forms of benevolent sexism and objectification that exist in our contemporary society. Considering the intrusive nature of social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, which are frequently associated with idealised body representations, it is important to understand how these platforms are influencing one's perception of their own bodies. According to a study, viewing idealised body images on these SNS can link to heightened BID, particularly among adolescents and young adults. By exploring these factors, this study intends to add value to the existing literature on body image issues by offering insights that can lead to intervention studies focused on providing healthier self-perceptions in young adults.

Objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between SNS use and BID
2. To investigate how SNS use (socialisation, entertainment and information-seeking) predicts BID
3. To assess gender differences in SNS use and BID among young adults

Hypotheses

1. There would be a significant positive correlation between SNS use and BID
2. SNS use would positively predict BID

3. There would be a significant gender difference in SNS use and BID among young adults

Methodology

Sample

Data were collected from 300 adults across Kerala. Responses were taken from adults who had no psychological disorders. Participants were recruited from various colleges and workplaces across Kerala, including 183 females and 117 males in the age range of 18–35. A random sampling frame was made from the available lists, and participants were selected with a random number procedure to approximate simple random sampling. Inclusion criteria required the participants to be active users of at least one social networking site. Ethical approval has been acquired before data collection. All voluntary participants were ensured confidentiality and anonymity, and informed consent was collected from every participant.

Tools Used

SNS usage questionnaire

(Gupta & Basir, 2018)

The SNS usage questionnaire was intended to capture the social networking usage of adults. This gives the total SNS use of an individual. The scale has 12 items based on three dimensions – socialisation, information, and entertainment, with five, three, and four statements each, respectively. Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from always to never. Reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha was reported to be 0.830. Convergent validity ranged from 0.593 to 0.894.

Body image dissatisfaction questionnaire – 8C

(Evans and Dolan, 1993)

Body image questionnaire 8C was used to assess one's body dissatisfaction and distorted body image perceptions. This scale measures overall satisfaction with one's body image. The scale consists of 8 questions, and they must be rated on a 6-point scale



ranging from never to always. A higher score in it indicates greater body dissatisfaction. Reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha, which was reported to be from 0.85 to 0.93. Convergent validity was measured to be 0.70–0.80, making it a useful tool for researchers and clinicians.

Correlational analysis

Table 1. Summary of the correlation between variables.

	1	2	3	4
1. Socialisation	1			
2. Entertainment	0.52**	1		
3. Informationseeking	0.18*	0.22*	1	
4. Body Image Dissatisfaction	0.58**	0.55**	0.12	1

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 1 represents the correlational analysis between variables. Examining the table reveals that BID is positively correlated with SNS use dimensions like socialisation ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and entertainment ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). The information-seeking subdimension of SNS use does not have a significant correlation with BID. These associations clearly display the strength between variables like using SNS for entertainment and socialisation with BID.

Regression analysis

In this study, the assumptions of homoscedasticity, linearity, and normality were not violated. The significant beta coefficients in

Results

To achieve the study's objectives, Pearson Product-Moment correlation, multiple regression analysis, and an independent t -test, were conducted using SPSS version 24 software.

the table 2 reveal that using SNS for socialisation and entertainment has a significant relationship with BID. The results of regression analysis show that the model has 42.0% ($R^2=0.42$) of the variance in BID explained by SNS dimensions and adjusted $R^2=0.40$. So, it is clearly understood that using SNS for socialisation and entertainment is a predictor of BID. In Social Sciences, a model with R^2 -value between 0.10 and 0.50 is good. The regression model is also statistically significant with an F-statistic of 32.15. The p value is also significant. This shows that the model was statistically significant and resulted in a variance of BID ($R^2 = .42$; Adjusted $R^2=0.40$)

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis of SNS use on BID.

Indicators coefficient	Beta-error	Std value	t-value	p	Significance	R square	Adjusted R square	F-statistic
Socialisation	0.35	0.05	7.00	<0.001	Sig			
Entertainment	0.28	0.06	4.67	<0.05	Sig	0.42	0.40	32.15
Information	0.10	0.07	1.43	>0.05	Not sig			



Results presented in Table 3 reveal significant gender differences in the scores of SNS use, t -value = -4.21 , $p < 0.001$, with females ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.60$) higher than males ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.70$). Also, gender

difference is visible in the scores of BID, t -value = -5.02 , $p < 0.001$, with females ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.60$) higher than males ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.50$)

Table 3. Difference between males and females in SNS use and BID.

Variables	Females $N = 183$		Males $N = 117$		T- value	Sig
	M	SD	M	SD		
SNS use	3.80	0.60	3.50	0.70	-4.21	<0.000
BID	3.20	0.60	2.80	0.50	-5.02	<0.000

Discussion

This study found that the relationship between SNS use, especially for socialisation, entertainment, information-seeking, and BID. As the presence of SNS becomes an integral part of our daily life, it is essential to understand its psychological effects. While interpreting the results through the lens of Social Comparison Theory, frequent exposure to idealised images can increase upward comparisons, leading to intense dissatisfaction. The findings also line up with sociocultural and tripartite influence theory, where media and peer-related pressure lead to the internalisation of appearance ideals and BID.

When it comes to body image perceptions, SNS use has complex psychological implications. A study explains that image-based social media platforms are correlated with body dysmorphic symptoms among adolescents aged 16–18, which proclaims the detrimental effect of constant comparison to unrealistic beauty standards. Also, excess use of social media is linked to false body perception and unhealthy weight control behaviours among adolescents (Krzyszowski, 2025).

Certain conflicting research says that SNS can promote positive body image effects by spreading diverse and body positive contents, leading to self-acceptance and appreciation among users. A study explains that

female individuals subjected to body-positive content on Instagram expressed body satisfaction and appreciation (Ferguson, 2024). These results are in line with the body positivity movement, which aspires individuals to accept their bodies irrespective of societal standards. Theories like social comparison elucidate that comparing oneself with others on SNS affects one's self-worth. It points out that repeated exposure to thin ideals can lead to inadequate feelings and low self-esteem. Several studies reveal that reduced SNS use can lead to significant improvements in body image perceptions. A study by APA in 2023 revealed that participants who cut their SNS use by 50% for 4 weeks experienced elevated confidence about their weight and overall appearance.

This study tried to illuminate the role of socialisation, entertainment, and information-seeking behaviours on SNS and how they can shape one's body image perceptions. This study points out that BID can be a result of appearance – oriented SNS use for just socialisation and entertainment. This study also suggests that using SNS for information-seeking does not have an impact on BID. The study's findings will help develop a more nuanced knowledge of how young adults deal with body image issues in a society that is becoming more digital, offering guidance for future educational initiatives and interventions.



Limitations

Since the study is cross-sectional, causality cannot be inferred, but regression identified significant predictors. The findings should be investigated based on the following limitations, also. Primarily, this study relied on self-report measures, which can cause responder bias. Second, the participants were only from Kerala, affecting generalisability. Third, the study did not measure the duration or frequency of daily SNS usage, which can further clarify the relationship. Future research might use longitudinal or experimental studies to explain causality.

Conclusion

This research suggests that the participants using SNS for socialisation and entertainment have a reported higher level of BID. Females tend to use SNS more in comparison to their counterparts. It has been found that SNS use and BID have a significant positive correlation. Using SNS for socialisation and entertainment was identified as a significant predictor of BID. Using SNS for information-seeking does not have any significant impact on BID. The results imply that the outcomes of using SNS depend on the way one uses these platforms. Acknowledging these dimensions helps in developing interventions targeting to promote positive self-perceptions in an increasingly digital world. The findings help to identify the psychological implications of pattern formation

during SNS use among young adults. Interventions focusing on critical media literacy, healthy digital habits, and body positivity awareness programmes are essential to mitigate the negative effects of appearance-based social comparison in digital spaces.

Implications of the study

- This study has significant implications for mental health practitioners, academicians, and policy makers.
- This study guides mental health practitioners to develop interventions for young adults addressing body image issues.
- Academicians can use the findings from this study to enhance media literacy and body positivity and to develop healthy body image perceptions.
- Policy makers can also use the findings of this study to regulate diverse and realistic representations of different body types in the media and advertising sector.

Future suggestions

- Qualitative research methods could provide deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of young adults.
- Developing and evaluating intervention programmes focused on promoting healthy social media habits and body image.
- A longitudinal study could examine the impact of SNS usage on body image over time.

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Exploring the Intersection of Technology and Aging: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Received: 18/08/2025

Revised: 09/02/2026

Accepted: 12/02/2026

Abstract

As the global population ages, the interaction between older adults and emerging technologies has gained increasing attention. This bibliometric analysis explored the evolving landscape of technology in the geriatric population, focusing on articles published between 2020 and 2024. Articles indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection were used to map the evolution of this research area. A total of 300 articles were analysed using performance analysis and keyword co-occurrence analysis. The findings revealed a growing body of research in this field, with China and the USA emerging as significant contributors. Key research themes focused on technology-enabled healthcare delivery, user experience and design, impact on physical and psychosocial well-being, theoretical frameworks for technology adoption, emerging technologies such as AI and robotics, and the importance of Information and Communication Technology. Despite this, future research could focus on longitudinal studies, strategies to bridge the digital divide, exploration of cultural differences in technology adoption, and addressing caregiver burden. By addressing these aspects, this article aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how technology can be effectively integrated into elderly care and to inform future research efforts aimed at promoting positive technology acceptance among older adults.

Keywords: Older adults, Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Digital divide

Introduction

Increasing global life expectancy has fuelled the need for innovative solutions to enhance well-being and quality of life in later years. Consequently, the development and application of technology designed to support older adults have become a significant area of research. This dynamic and rapidly growing area of research is often referred to as Gerontechnology. It is an interdisciplinary field “concerned with the development, adoption, and use of technology to maximize the health, well-being, and functional independence in all domains (including social, occupational, vocational, and psychological) in older adults” (Lane et al., 2017, p. 962).

Gerontechnology emerged in the late 20th century to promote aging in place, where older adults can live comfortably and independently in their own homes and communities (Shirke, 2024). To support this goal, the field encompasses a range of both hardware and software solutions. This includes wearable health monitoring devices, telehealth or mHealth services (the practice of medicine and public health supported by mobile devices), smart home automation systems, assistive devices, and so on. However, the adoption and use of these innovative technologies among older adults remains an area of concern in terms of varying levels of digital literacy, cost, and usability challenges.



This disparity between technological availability and adoption highlights the need for a deeper understanding of this evolving landscape among the aging population.

A bibliometric analysis of existing research on this topic may serve as an invaluable tool to better understand these trends and inform future developments. Associated with the

information sciences, the concept of bibliometrics was introduced in the 1930s and later popularised by Pritchard in 1969 (Osareh, 1996). The two main types of bibliometric analysis include performance analysis and science mapping (Lim et al., 2022). The techniques under these methods are visually summarised in Figure 1.

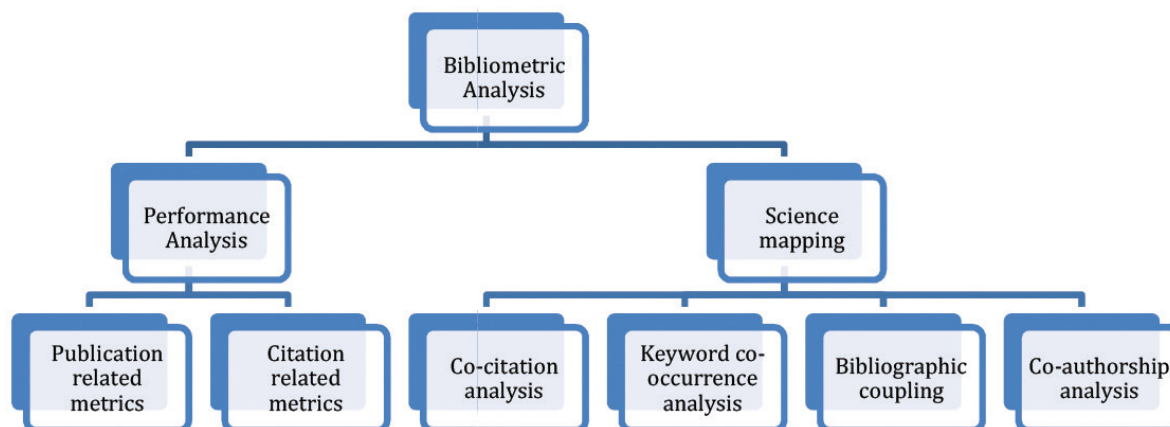


Figure 1: Overview of key methods in bibliometric analysis

Previous bibliometric analyses of this area focused on specific domains such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption by older adults with cognitive frailty (Fadzil et al., 2024), telemedicine (He et al., 2024), voice assistants for reducing loneliness and social isolation (Marziali et al., 2024), smart homes (Hong et al., 2022), and technology-based solutions for health challenges (Liu et al., 2024). In contrast, this study intends to contribute to a contemporary overview of the Gerontechnology landscape during and following the Covid-19 pandemic. This timeframe was characterised by a rapid acceleration of digital adoption and technological advancements around the globe. Collectively, these studies highlight the growing recognition of technology's potential to enhance the quality of life of older adults while identifying significant research gaps and areas for future research.

Objectives

This article aims to provide a bibliometric overview of research indexed in the Web of Science database on perspectives on technology use among older adults between 2020 and 2024.

Methodology

This section outlines the comprehensive approach taken to analyse recent developments in technology use among older adults. It details the data sources, time period, search strategy, data standardization, and analysis techniques employed to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the findings. This rigorous methodology provides a solid foundation for the study's conclusions.

Data Source

The Web of Science Core Collection (WoS) serves as the data source for this analysis.



WoS is widely recognised for its rigorous selection and coverage of high-quality journals with reliable citation data, suitable for bibliometric studies. Its multidisciplinary coverage across Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) and Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) is essential for capturing the interdisciplinary field of Gerontechnology research.

Time Period

The analysis focused on articles published within the last five years (2020–2024) to capture the recent developments in the field of technology use among older adults.

Search Strategy

The researchers conducted a search by combining ‘older adults’ with ‘technology’ and ‘perspectives’. Using the following search strategy: (TS= ((‘older people’ or ‘older adults’ OR ‘elderly’ OR ‘aging*’) AND (technology or ‘artificial intelligence’ OR ‘AI’ OR ‘Gerontechnology’) AND (‘perspectives’ or ‘acceptance’ OR ‘adoption’ OR ‘attitudes’ OR ‘barriers’ OR ‘facilitators’)) AND PY= (2020–2024)), the literature search initially yielded 2346 journal articles. After restricting the types to ‘Article’ and the language to ‘English’, the search produced 1887 results.

Because database searches retrieve articles that appear superficially relevant but are not actually related, manual screening was necessary to ensure the relevance of the literature (Shang et al. 2024). Articles that deviated significantly from the research theme were removed through this process. Specifically, articles were excluded if they did not focus on the geriatric population or if they were purely technical, medical, or engineering studies without addressing psychosocial implications. Ultimately, 300 valid articles were identified from the Web of Science Core Collection. Figure 2 illustrates the article selection process following PRISMA guidelines.

Data Standardization

The keyword list of exported raw data may contain different expressions of the same keywords as well as words that are not directly related to our research objectives (Nguyen & Hallinger, 2020). Thus, the data are cleaned by removing irrelevant keywords (e.g., man, women, people, scale, etc.), merging synonyms (e.g., older adults and elderly, Covid-19 and coronavirus, etc.) and standardizing plural forms (e.g., barrier and barriers, technology and technologies, etc.). This helps in reducing clutter in keyword analysis, thereby ensuring accuracy in interpretation.

Data Analysis

The search results were exported from Web of Science in plain-text format. The cleaned dataset was then analysed using the Bibliometrix package of RStudio software and VOSviewer for bibliometric analysis and visualization. The obtained dataset was analysed for performance and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Performance analysis refers to the evaluation of documents, journals, authors, and countries, based on publication and citation counts (Donthu et al., 2021). Two primary techniques employed in performance analysis are descriptive analysis and citation analysis.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis is used to analyse the relationship between keywords in a dataset. As keywords represent the content of an article, a network of keywords from the selected articles can illustrate the conceptual framework of a specific research area. The size of the nodes in the visualization represents the frequency of the items, and the thickness of the lines reflects the strength of the co-occurrence relationship (Gozali et al., 2023).

Ethics

This study used data exclusively from the Web of Science Core Collection. No human subjects were involved in the research process.

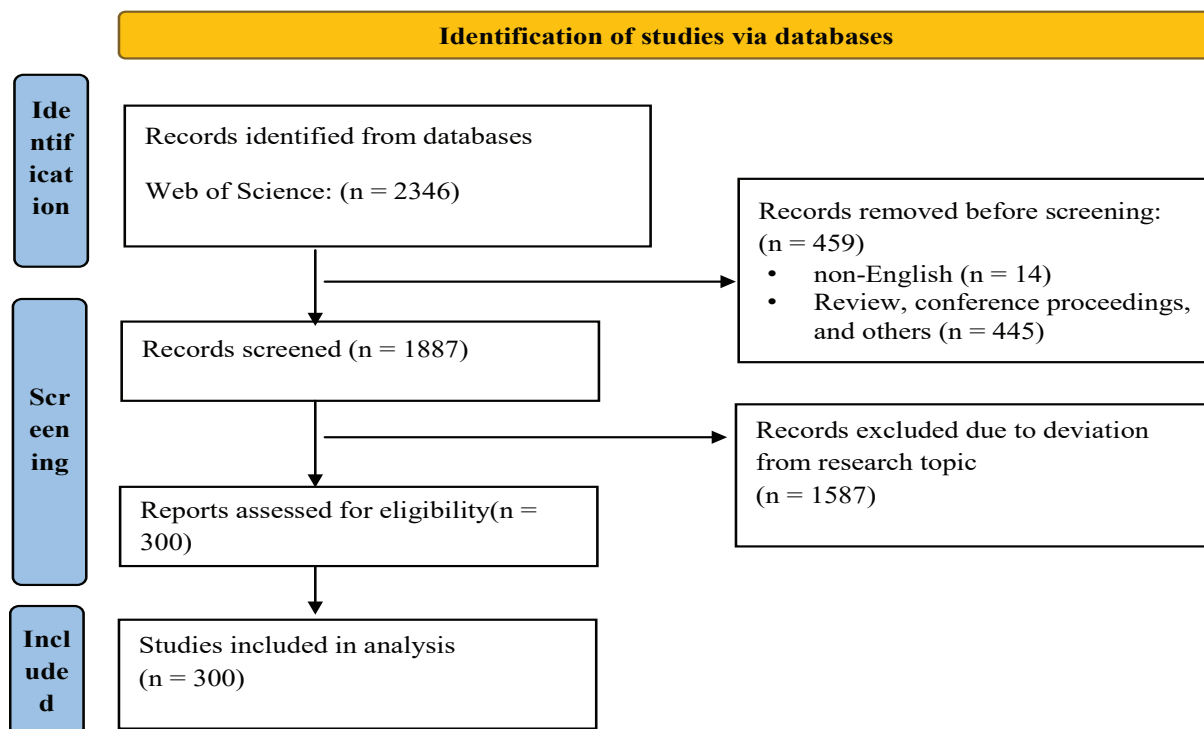


Figure 2: PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the findings from the bibliometric analysis with performance and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Two primary techniques employed in performance analysis are descriptive analysis and citation analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

A total of 300 articles, collected from 118

different sources published between 2020 and 2024, were used for the bibliometric analysis. The total number of authors is 1300, according to the statistics provided by Biblioshiny. In addition, the annual scientific production reveals a gradual increase with 77 publications by 2024, accounting for 16.36% growth. An overview of the data used for the bibliometric analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the dataset

Description	Results
Timespan	2020–2024
Sources: Journals	118
Documents: Articles	300
Annual growth rate (%)	16.36
Document average age	2.68
Average citations per doc	13.27
References	13832



Document contents

Keywords Plus (ID)	549
Author's Keywords (DE)	824
Authors	
Authors	1300
Authors of single-authored docs	10
Single-authored docs	11
Co-authors per doc	4.71
International co-authorships (%)	32.33

Citation Analysis

The analysis of author contributions and citation metrics revealed a clear temporal pattern in the field's intellectual growth between 2020 and 2024. The mean number of citations per article declined from 35.14 in 2020 to 1.66 in 2024, due to the decreasing number of citable years. While the volume of research expanded annually from 42 to 77, the rate at which they are noticed (mean citations per year) dropped from 5.86 (2020) to 0.83 (2024). This pattern suggests a tran-

sition from high-impact academic breakthroughs during the Covid-19 period to a specialised incremental stage of research.

Influential Sources and Contributors

The top ten journals in the field of technology use among older adults are listed in Table 2. These journals published 106 articles, constituting 35.3% of the total publications. Moreover, the study of technology and aging has spread across a diverse range of disciplines, from computer science and engineering to gerontology and healthcare.

Table 2: Distribution of articles across the top ten journals

Sources	Articles
Frontiers in Public Health	16
International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction	14
Healthcare	12
Educational Gerontology	11
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	11
Journal of Medical Internet Research	10
Disability and Rehabilitation- Assistive Technology	9
BMC Geriatrics	8
Digital Health	8
Frontiers in Psychology	7



The influence of researchers in any field can be analysed through both their productivity and the impact of their work. In terms of publication volume, Stara V emerged as the most prolific author with four publications. When considering the most cited works within the dataset of 300 articles, the contribution of Farivar et al. (2020), focusing on wearable device adoption, remains highly influential. Similarly, Askari et al. (2020), with their works on mHealth and perceived risk, represent the field's sustained contributors, generating works that are both cumulative and cited.

Geographic Distribution and Collaboration Analysis

The knowledge distribution in the field of Gerontechnology, as indexed in the Web of Science database, is dominated by China (71), the USA (48), Canada (17), Australia (15), the United Kingdom (14), and Germany (12). The geographical distribution of publications shown in Figure 3 reveals that 88% of the 300 documents under analysis were produced by the developed countries.

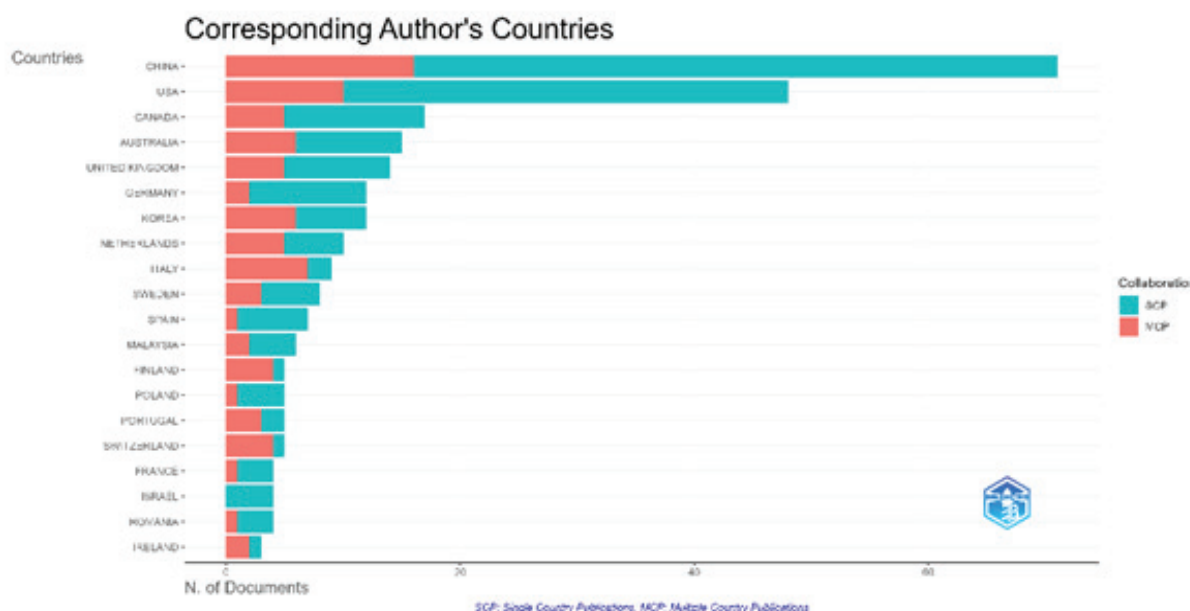


Figure 3 : Geographical distribution of research

Note: Generated from bibliometrix.

A critical gap in representation was observed for the developing countries, like India. Despite being one of the world's fastest-growing aging populations, India contributed only two documents in this time frame, as per the database. This research divide may be reflective of the coverage biases of the database, where research published in regional journals may be underrepresented. However, it can also suggest that the current Gerontechnology solutions being designed may not account for the unique infrastructural, socioeconomic, or cultural contexts of the

developing nations.

The network of international collaborations within WoS reveals varying levels of interaction, with collaboration frequencies ranging from one to eight. The USA exhibits the highest number of collaborations, partnering with China (8), Canada (6), and South Korea (7). Countries such as Australia, Germany, and Canada frequently collaborated with various countries. Countries engaging in frequent collaborations may benefit from enhanced knowledge exchange, resource



pooling for research, and the development of standardized technologies that can be implemented across different cultural contexts.

However, these patterns also highlight the existing geographic hierarchies, as the collaborations are within well-represented regions, limiting the participation of the developing countries. These hierarchies observed in WoS-based networks may reflect both genuine capacity gaps and biases in indexing and co-authorship. However, such underrepresentation in the collaborative network limits the diversity of perspectives and diminishes the field's capacity to design globally relevant technologies.

Keyword Co-occurrence Network

The analysis of keyword co-occurrence utilises 824 author-specified and 549 database-generated keywords (Keywords Plus) from selected articles. A network of keywords from the selected articles, as shown in Figure 4, can illustrate the conceptual framework of a specific research area (Donthu et al., 2021). When a pair of keywords appears together in multiple articles, it strongly suggests a significant connection between the concepts represented by these keywords.



Figure 4: Keyword co-occurrence network using VOSviewer

Note: Generated from VOSviewer

The research trends observed in the analysis can be organised into six clusters. The most significant themes identified were as follows:

- Cluster 1 centres on the practical application of technology within healthcare settings for older adults. Research within this cluster evaluates effectiveness, with a focus on overcoming barriers in the implementation of technology-based healthcare services. These studies, often influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, also highlight the role of caregivers in technology adoption.
- Cluster 2 focuses on user experience and user-centred design to meet the special needs and preferences of the elderly population. This area explored specialised technologies such as assistive technology, smart homes, and virtual reality to address cognitive and physical challenges and ethical implications. The importance of understanding the perceptions and interactions with technology has also been discussed.
- Cluster 3 examines the role of technology in promoting physical health, psychological well-being, social connections, and independence among older adults, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy and self-confidence.
- Cluster 4 emphasises the use of established theoretical models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to understand technology adoption behaviour among older adults. It also highlights the importance of rigorous evaluation methods for assessing the effectiveness and impact of technological interventions.
- Cluster 5 focuses on emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, to support older adults, their



adoption, and the potential psychosocial impact on mental health and social connections.

- Cluster 6 is a smaller cluster that emphasises the importance of ICT that serves as the foundation for many other specialised technologies and services for older adults.

Overall, the network reveals a multifaceted landscape of research that highlights the interplay between technological advancements, user needs, and broader social and healthcare contexts. However, this analysis identified some future research directions in the fields of technology and aging.

More longitudinal research is required to assess the long-term impact of technology use on the health, well-being, and social connections of older adults. Although the digital divide is mentioned as a key concept, its relationship with other aspects is not particularly strong, suggesting a need for developing strategies to bridge the digital divide among older adults with respect to their socioeconomic status and geographic location. Also, addressing cultural differences through comparative studies may help to understand the influence of cultural factors on technology acceptance, adoption, and use among older adults. Additionally, there is a need to explore the potential of technology to mitigate caregiver burden, enhance communication and collaboration between caregivers and healthcare professionals, and provide education and training resources for them.

Finally, it is crucial to examine the ethical implications associated with technology and older adults. These considerations must respect the autonomy and dignity of the user by prioritising data privacy, security, and accessibility. Specifically, older adults with cognitive impairments require significant attention regarding the informed consent for monitoring technologies and data-driven services like AI. Moreover, ethical practice should proactively address the digital divide

and marginalization based on socioeconomic status and digital literacy. It is essential to provide adequate support and training to empower older adults to use new technologies effectively and safely.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has its share of limitations. It is important to note that the analysis is limited to publications indexed in the Web of Science databases and may not capture all relevant research. This selection may have overlooked important research published in other databases such as Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar, potentially excluding some significant studies. Consequently, the observation of underrepresented developing countries in this field may be reflective of indexing biases. Hence, future bibliometric analyses could employ multi-database searches and consider grey literature to capture a more comprehensive literature base of global knowledge production in Gerontechnology.

Moreover, the terminology used in the field can change over time; thus, the search terms used in the study can also impact the analysis. Furthermore, the study only included limited techniques of bibliometric analysis, which may impact the comprehensive understanding of the field of study. Consequently, future analysis may expand data sources, incorporate other document types including conference papers and reviews, and include a more exhaustive search strategy and diverse analysis techniques to obtain a better understanding of this academic landscape.

Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis of the literature between 2020 and 2024 reveals rapid growth and diversification of research on technology use among older adults. This period witnessed a notable shift towards specialised technological applications, such as artificial intelligence and robotics. In addition, international as well as interdisciplinary collab-



orative efforts are gaining prominence in addressing the specific challenges faced by older adults. As global life expectancy rises, the importance of understanding and optimising technology for this demographic has become increasingly crucial. Future research

could address the identified gaps and challenges to ensure that technological advancements genuinely enhance the quality of life of older adults across diverse contexts and cultures.

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Parental Attachment Among Emerging Adults: A Literature Review

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Received: 30/08/2025

Revised: 23/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

The trend of research revolving around parental attachment predominantly focuses on children and adolescent populations. However, it is essential to delve into the long-term impact of parent–child relationships and their role in the lives of the emerging adulthood population who are navigating through the transitional phase into full-fledged adulthood. The concept of parental attachment emphasises the attachment formation between the individuals and their maternal and paternal figures based on robust theoretical perspectives. The current literature review has looked into the studies published on parental attachment in the context of the emerging adult population. The relevant studies were selectively retrieved from various databases including Science Direct, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science, JSTOR as well as other additional resources including Google Scholar. The studies were categorised based on the year of publication, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and key outcome variables, with a particular focus on positive developmental outcomes. This review highlights the significant role of parental attachment in shaping the experiences and well-being of emerging adults, offering valuable insights for future research and practical efforts to support individuals during this transitional phase of life. Furthermore, the findings also shed light on the existing research gap and further scope and need for expansion of studies on parental attachment styles and its impact on the underexplored population of emerging adults.

Keywords: Parental attachment, Emerging adult

Introduction

The concept of parental attachment has been a significant focus in Developmental Psychology, initially explored through the attachment theories. These theories examine the dynamics of the parent–child relationship and its impact on children’s development. Originally proposed by John Bowlby and later expanded by Ainsworth and Main, attachment theory has been analysed from various perspectives to understand the different facets of attachment patterns and their impact on children.

Parental attachment, at its core, refers to the emotional bond between a child and their primary caregiver, shaped through early interactions. Research has emphasised the importance of secure attachment in fostering healthy development during early childhood, highlighting its long-term influence on emotional and psychological well-being. Parental attachment serves as a predictor of various emotional and psychological outcomes in later stages of life, influencing factors such as self-regulation, social competence, and mental health. The attachment



experiences people have with their parental figures are said to form the internal working models which are basically the mental schemas responsible for forming the emotional, behavioural, and cognitive components determining their affective behaviour. According to Waters et al. (2000), parental attachment is the model of relational interactions against which future attachment relationships are compared.

Most of the studies have focused on the impact of parent-child attachment in children and adolescents. There are various studies emphasising the outcomes of early attachment in adult relationship formation. These categories of studies vaguely consider adulthood in its totality. This highlights the relevance of the current article where the core emphasis is to understand the role of parent-child relationship in the highly significant population of emerging adults.

The concept of emerging adulthood has been proposed by the American psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (2000), who defined a new life stage of development to categorise individuals who fall under the midway between adolescents and full-fledged adulthood. Arnett has observed that the challenges faced by individuals in this mentioned age group reflect a transitional period where they neither belong to the adolescent group where the challenges predominantly revolve around puberty-associated changes, nor can be considered a fully developed adult based on their roles as an individual in society. Initially focused on people within the age group of 18–25 and later expanded till 29 years, emerging adulthood is marked by significant characteristics. According to Arnett (2000), the newly defined life stage of emerging adulthood is theoretically and empirically different from adolescents and adulthood. Arnett has specified five characteristic features of emerging adulthood, including identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in between and possibilities/optimism. Even though the

individuals in this developmental stage are legally considered to be adults in the societal standards, they are in a constant phase of establishing themselves at various spheres of their lives. This includes challenges faced during career exploration, personal relationship establishment, being autonomous in personal life, being responsible for one's own self and decision-making in various life choices. This could be a challenging period as they strive through establishing themselves as an adult in the social hierarchy.

All these aspects highlight the importance of studying this life stage of development. The following study aims to understand the trends in research revolving around parental attachment and emerging adults which helps in providing an insight into the role of parental attachment in this age group. It is essential to delve into the long-term impact of parent-child relationships and their role in the lives of the emerging adult population who are navigating through the transitional phase into full-fledged adulthood. This exploration will provide clarity on existing gaps in the literature. The findings will help formulate strategies to enhance the mental well-being of the emerging adult population, as well as address key problematic patterns, thereby alleviating the challenges associated with this developmental phase.

Method

Selection strategy

The need and significance of understanding the literature related to parental attachment among emerging adults will play a crucial role in understanding the trend as well as pattern in current research findings, thereby directing the future possibilities in research.

For the mentioned purpose, an intensive and in-depth narrative review was carried out.

Relevant studies were selectively retrieved from various databases including JSTOR, Science Direct, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science and Google Scholar.



The rigorous extraction of studies based on the set inclusion and exclusion criteria was carried out from June 2024 to November 2024.

The studies were categorised based on the year of publication, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and key outcome variables, with a particular focus on positive developmental outcomes.

The search was limited and focused on the initially established search strategy. Boolean search operators used in the extraction process included 'AND' and 'OR' for article selection. The major key terms used for extraction included 'Parental attachment' AND 'Emerging adults,' 'Parental bonding' AND 'Emerging adults' OR 'University students.'

Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for the articles to be reviewed were:

- i) Studies published between the years 2010 and 2024, with no geographic restraints.
- ii) Only empirical studies (including quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional, and longitudinal studies) were selected for review.
- iii) Only studies published in the English language were considered.
- iv) Studies focusing exclusively on emerging adult children, excluding their parents.
- v) Studies focusing on individuals falling under the age bracket of emerging adulthood (even with a varied title for the same age group) were considered.

Exclusion criteria

- i) Systematic reviews and meta-analyses were not considered.
- ii) Research studies conducted on vulnerable populations, such as individuals with physical or psychological challenges, were excluded.
- iii) Studies involving participants undergoing any form of psychiatric treatment were excluded.
- iv) Studies focusing on individuals experiencing significant emotional challenges were excluded.

Based on the above specified inclusion and exclusion criteria, studies were sorted, and articles with full-text availability were short-listed for further analysis in the review.

Results and Discussion

A total of 110 articles were retrieved from the selected databases. The selection process followed a thorough screening procedure, which involved assessing abstracts, reviewing full-text articles, and eliminating duplicates. After considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the pool of retrieved studies was narrowed down to 13 eligible articles which are incorporated in the literature review. Articles that were thematically relevant but did not satisfy the inclusion criteria were excluded. The current literature review focused predominantly on positive developmental outcomes associated with parental attachment. The key findings from the selected studies are discussed below.

Table 1. Summary of the initial study extraction across the databases.

Database	No: of Studies Initially Retrieved
JSTOR	21
Science Direct	27
Taylor & Francis	38
Web of Science	24

**Table 2.** Characteristics of the studies on parental attachment among emerging adults.

Author(s) and Year	Country	Sample Size	Study Design	Findings
Kvitkovičová et al. (2017)	Czech Republic	1,342	Longitudinal (2 waves)	PA predicted career decisions via self-concept clarity;
Ávila et al. (2011)	Portugal	170 (SEM)	Cross-sectional romantic	PA predicted attachment via emotion regulation.
Cabral et al. (2012)	Portugal	942	Cross-sectional (SEM)	Secure attachment linked to adaptive coping; mediation by emotion regulation.
Pont, L and Smorti, M (2019)	Italy	253	Cross-sectional	PA predicted sibling warmth and life satisfaction.
Guarnieri et al. (2014)	Italy	385	Cross-sectional (SEM)	Romantic attachment mediated the link between maternal attachment&life satisfaction.
Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2017)	USA	766	Cross-sectional	Maladaptive schemas mediated the link between poor attachment and suicidality.
Jiao (2021)	USA	238	Cross-sectional orientation	Conformity predicted attachment anxiety and avoidance.
Assor et al. (2021)	Israel & China	235	Cross-cultural cross-sectional	Freedom and authentic inner compass predicted vitality and volitional functioning.
Holt et al. (2018)	UK	184 (2) longitudinal samples)	Longitudinal	Stable secure attachment predicted improved academic and emotional outcomes.



Valarezo-Bravo et al. (2024)	UK	199	Cross-sectional (Path analysis)	Parental attachment predicted well-being directly and via friend attachment.
McGinley (2018)	USA	187	Cross-sectional	Helicopter parenting is negatively associated with empathy and prosocial behaviour.
Fermani et al. (2019)	Italy	296	Cross-sectional	PA positively predicted healthy romantic relationships.
Cherrier et al. (2023)	France	756	Cross-sectional (PLS-SEM)	Insecure attachment is linked to lower self-esteem and IPV victimisation.

Note. PA = Parental Attachment, PLS-SEM = Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling, SEM = Structural Equation Modelling IPV = Intimate Partner Violence

Table 3. Summary of major themes identified from the literature review.

Author	Country and Year	Major Themes Identified
Ávila, M., Cabral, J., and Matos, P. M.	Portugal, 2011	Emotion regulation process and coping.
Cabral, J., Matos, P. M., Beyers, W., and Soenens, B.	Portugal and Belgium, 2012	
Guarnieri, S., Smorti, M. and Tani, F.	Italy, 2014	Life satisfaction and sibling relationship.
Ponti, L., & Smorti, M.	Italy, 2018	
Kvitkovičová, L., Umemura, T., and Macek, P.	Czech Republic, 2017	Career decision-making
Holt, L. J., Mattanah, J., and Long, M. W.	UK, 2018	Quality of peer relationships and emotional functioning.
Valarezo-Bravo et al.	UK, 2024	
Fermani et al.	Italy, 2019	Impacting romantic relationship



Jian Jiao	USA, 2021	Family communication as influence for attachment formation.
Cherrier, C., Courtois, R., Rusch, E., and Potard, C.	France, 2023	Self esteem
McGinley, M.	USA, 2018	Empathy and Prosocial behaviour
Assor, A., Cohen, A., Ezra, O., Yu, S.	China and Israel, 2021	Impacting autonomic behaviour
Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al.	USA, 2017	Influencing self-esteem schemas (Maladaptive)
Feistman et al.	USA, 2016	Normative changes positively impacting life

Table 1 presents the total number of studies initially retrieved from the selected databases, whereas Table 2 outlines the methodological and contextual characteristics of the studies included in this narrative review, mainly country of origin, year of publication, sample size, research design, and principal findings. Following the application of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, the selected studies were synthesised to identify recurring conceptual themes, which are summarised in Table 3. The thematic analysis provides a structured understanding of the developmental relevance and multidimensional outcomes associated with parental attachment during emerging adulthood.

The evidence indicates a predominance of research conducted within Western contexts, particularly among populations in the USA and Europe, with most studies employing cross-sectional and longitudinal designs.

Understanding the findings from the studies will provide an outlook on the role of parental attachment in the lives of emerging adults. Detailed understanding of the recurrent themes found in these studies is discussed below.

Emotion regulation and coping

Ávila et al. (2011) examined emerging adults in Portugal and found that the quality of parental attachment significantly influenced patterns of emotion regulation, which, in turn, accounted for notable variations in how emerging adults perceived their relationships with intimate peers. Their study further highlighted the mediating role of emotion regulation in the relationship between emerging adults, their parents, and intimate peers. Moreover, secure parental attachment was linked to greater trust and lower levels of ambivalence and avoidance in romantic relationships. Based on the findings of Cabral et al. (2012), variations in parental attachment were associated with differences in emotion regulation strategies and coping mechanisms in emerging adults. The study also concluded that a stronger emotional bond with parents including perceived support in autonomy development as well as moderately low levels of separation anxiety were linked to more adaptive emotion regulation and coping strategies. Emotion regulation was found to partially or fully mediate the relationship between attachment and coping.



Life satisfaction and sibling relationship

Ponti and Smorti (2019) indicated that attachment to mother figure and father figure had both direct and indirect associations with life satisfaction in emerging adults. Secure parental attachment was found to be positively related to warmth and negatively related to conflict in sibling relationships which in turn contributed to greater life satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings indicated that strong parental bonds directly enhance life satisfaction as well as exert an indirect influence through the perception of sibling warmth, thereby emphasising the role of family dynamics in well-being during emerging adulthood. The mentioned study brings in the relevance of understanding siblings—emerging adult individual's relationship dynamics as an extension of understanding life satisfaction of an emerging adult. Another literature that discussed this theme is the study by Guarnieri et al. (2014) which stated that romantic attachment plays a dominant role in shaping life satisfaction during emerging adulthood. According to the study findings, romantic attachment emerged as the strongest predictor of life satisfaction in emerging adulthood, while peer attachment showed no significant relationship. Moreover, attachment to the mother influenced life satisfaction indirectly through romantic attachment.

Career-related decision-making

Kvitkovičová et al. (2017) have published the findings from a two point (2-year apart data collection on same samples) conducted on 1342 emerging adults from the Czech Republic. The study aimed at exploring how attachment relationships with mothers, fathers, best friends, and romantic partners influence the career decision-making process of emerging adults, both directly and indirectly through self-concept clarity as a mediator. The initial findings suggested that the attachment pattern to mother and father figures along with friends played a crucial

role in career decision-making. The second part of the study, that is, time 2 analysis, showed a much different response pattern in which romantic attachment had a significant impact on career decision-making, in both cases self-concept clarity was a factor of relevance.

Peer relationship and emotional functioning

Holt et al. (2018) have done two longitudinal studies on college-going emerging adults and findings indicated that students with secure attachments demonstrated the best academic, social, and emotional well-being. Stable and secure parental attachment was associated with improvements in academic performance, emotional health, and social competence, while persistently low parental attachment was associated with declines in emotional functioning. The study also emphasised on the outcome that students with increasing peer attachment showed better emotional functioning. Also, findings from the study published by Valarezo-Bravo et al. (2024) have concluded that secure attachment towards parents has a positive effect on the well-being of the emerging adults. The parental attachment dynamics also act as a predictor for attachment towards friends.

Impact on romantic relationship

Fermani et al. (Italy, 2019) highlighted a key finding indicating that varying levels of parental attachment significantly influence the romantic styles of emerging adults. Participants reported distinct patterns in their attachment to both mother and father figures, which were found to impact their romantic relationships. The study also noted that positive parental attachment is associated with healthier romantic dynamics, suggesting that individuals' perceptions of their attachment to their parents can guide their relationship behaviours and potentially prevent unhealthy relationship patterns.



Family communication influencing attachment formation

Based on the study conducted by Jiao (2021), family communication patterns play a significant role in attachment formation in emerging adults. The study has assessed dimensions of family communication patterns and concluded that Conformity orientation consistently predicted attachment anxiety and avoidance in both parent–child and romantic relationships whereas conversation orientation specifically predicted attachment avoidance towards parents. Conversation orientation has been found to strengthen the positive association between conformity orientation and attachment insecurity.

Impact on self-esteem

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Cherrier, C. et al. (France, 2023) aimed at investigating a serial multiple mediation model for exploring the relationships between parental attachment, self-esteem, and social problem-solving (SPS) in relation to three forms of intimate partner violence (IPV): psychological, physical, and sexual. Results from the study concluded that insecure parental attachment was associated with lower self-esteem, which can lead to psychological and physical violence victimisation. The results suggest that enhancing life skills, such as problem-solving and self-esteem, can help emerging adults manage relationship conflicts more effectively.

Empathy and pro-social behaviour

McGinley, M. (USA, 2018) has studied Helicopter parenting and attachment on prosocial behaviour and empathy as these concepts were not explored in the young adults age group. The study highlighted that there were very few positive prosocial and empathetic outcomes visible as a result of helicopter parenting approach from both maternal and paternal figures. Helicopter parenting seemed to be an extension of an over controlled style of parenting which can impact

the moral development of an individual over the course of time. A contradictory finding from the study was the effect of ‘attachment’ in the mentioned study indicating that elevated attachment has improved the positive relation between helicopter parenting and prosocial behaviour in young men. Thus, study findings indicate the need to have further research on this concept for better understanding of the phenomena.

Impacting autonomic behaviour

Assor, A, et al. have conducted a study in China and Israel during 2021 to know the need for autonomy in emerging adults upon interaction with their mother. The study focused on the ideas like ‘feeling free’ as well as ‘having authentic inner compass’ as contributing factors for the need for autonomy in emerging adults. The study concluded that experiencing freedom and having a well-defined inner compass are key components that drive an emerging adult’s autonomy. It is reflected in feelings of volition and self-endorsed and self-directed behaviour which are goal oriented, thereby contributing in autonomy.

Influencing self-related schemas

This particular theme deviates from the above-mentioned positive developmental outcomes. To back this concept of self-related schemas, Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (2017) conducted a study on emerging adults in the USA. According to the study, poor parental attachment can lead to negative self-related schemas including the feeling of emotional deprivation and defectiveness. This can lead to the risk of suicidal ideation or negative thought patterns and behaviour. The major findings from the research are that maladaptive schemas could mediate the link between unhealthy parental attachment in emerging adult children which in turn could lead to unhealthy emotional challenges including suicide proneness and ideation.



Conclusion

- Current research helps to highlight a notable gap in studies focusing on the influence of parental attachment styles within the emerging adult population and draw the pattern of the existing literature.
- Addressing this gap is crucial for developing targeted strategies to support individuals in navigating the challenges of this phase.
- Secure parental attachment fosters better emotional regulation, greater autonomy, and enhanced interpersonal relationships and social skills.
- Expanding research in this area holds the potential to enhance our understanding of the long-term impact of early attachment experiences and inform evidence-based practices aimed at fostering mental health and well-being.
- A deeper understanding of parental attachment can provide valuable support for emerging adults as they navigate the transition into adulthood.

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Scope for Further Research

The current research holds the following limitations which can be addressed in the future studies for the advancement of knowledge.

- First, the data retrieval was done from a few databases which were strategized by the researcher.
- Qualitative studies were excluded from analysis.
- Limited Eastern perspective: Lack of literature from eastern perspective, thus generalisability becomes a constraint.
- The focus on Western attachment models may overlook the complexities of attachment relationships in non-Western cultures.
- Exclusion of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, as they can contribute to multiple perspectives on analysis of the research question.



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Effect of Mindfulness Intervention Among Adolescents Without Parental Care: A Narrative Review

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Received: 30/07/2025

Revised: 23/02/2026

Accepted: 26/02/2026

Abstract

Adolescents residing in foster care, residential institutions, and kinship care are at elevated risk for psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and perceived stress. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have been increasingly implemented to enhance emotional regulation and psychological well-being among vulnerable youth populations. This narrative review synthesises empirical evidence examining the effectiveness of MBIs among adolescents without parental care. A structured search was conducted across Sage, Taylor & Francis, ScienceDirect, PubMed, PsycINFO, Semantic Scholar, and Shodhganga for studies published between 2015 and 2024. Six experimental research studies met the inclusion criteria. Findings indicate that MBIs demonstrate promising, though variable, effects in reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, while improving resilience, self-regulation, subjective well-being, and mindfulness. However, methodological heterogeneity, small sample sizes, reliance on self-report measures, and absence of long-term follow-up limit the generalizability of findings. Overall, MBIs appear feasible and potentially beneficial for adolescents in alternative care settings. Further large-scale randomized controlled trials with standardised outcome measures and extended follow-up periods are required to strengthen the evidence base.

Keywords: Mindfulness-based interventions, Adolescents, Foster care, Alternative care, Psychological well-being

Introduction

Adolescence represents a critical developmental period characterised by significant emotional, cognitive, and social transitions (Nakkula & Toshali, 2020). Contemporary conceptualisations increasingly extend adolescence from approximately 10 years into the early twenties, reflecting ongoing neurobiological maturation and psychological development (Arnett, 2000; Sawyer et al., 2018; Steinberg, 2014). This developmen-

tal stage is marked by identity formation, increased autonomy, and exploratory behaviours. However, adolescents residing in foster or residential care settings experience disproportionately higher levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties compared to their peers in family-based environments (Alderman et al., 2019). Research indicates elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and other behavioural disorders among youth



in alternative care settings (McGuire et al., 2018), many of whom have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Engler et al., 2022). Globally, approximately 5.37 million children and adolescents reside in institutional or alternative care arrangements (Desmond et al., 2020; Petrowski et al., 2017), underscoring the urgent need for accessible and effective psychological interventions for this vulnerable population.

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have emerged as promising approaches for enhancing emotional regulation and reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression among adolescents (Lin et al., 2019; Shapero et al., 2018). Evidence suggests that mindfulness practices are associated with reductions in psychological distress and improvements in coping and emotional regulation (Goldberg et al., 2018). However, the feasibility and effectiveness of MBIs within alternative care settings require careful examination. Adolescents in foster and residential care may face barriers to accessing conventional mental health services, including limited availability of services, reduced engagement with traditional talk-based therapies, and instability in caregiving relationships due to frequent placement changes (Gray et al., 2018). Consequently, it is essential to evaluate the applicability and adaptability of mindfulness-based programmes within these contexts.

This narrative review aims to synthesise existing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of MBIs among adolescents without parental care, including those residing in foster care, residential institutions, kinship care, and children's homes. Specifically, the review examines the types of mindfulness interventions implemented, their psychological outcomes, and considerations related to feasibility and implementation within alternative care environments.

Method

Design

This study adopted a narrative review design. Relevant literature identified from multiple databases and academic search engines included peer-reviewed articles and doctoral dissertations for narrative synthesis. The literature search was conducted between September and December 2024 across the academic databases Sage, Taylor & Francis, and ScienceDirect, PubMed, PsycINFO as well as the academic search engines Semantic Scholar and Shodhganga. Boolean operators ("AND" and "OR") were used to combine search terms. The primary search strings are: ("mindfulness-based intervention" OR "mindfulness-based stress reduction") AND ("children's home" OR "children in residential care" OR "adolescents in foster care" OR "children in residential care" OR "looked-after children" OR "child care institution"). Filters were applied to refine the search by subject relevance, publication year (2015–2024), full-text availability, and English language. These criteria were implemented to ensure conceptual alignment with the objectives of the review and to facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of relevant studies.

Study Selection

The review employed a structured screening process. Two independent reviewers conducted the screening procedures. The initial search yielded 434 records. From which 254 articles were identified after removing duplicates. After screening by abstract and title, 240 articles were excluded. Fourteen full-text articles were subsequently assessed for eligibility. Based on relevance to the review objectives and adherence to the inclusion criteria, six studies were included in the final narrative synthesis. Any discrepancies between reviewers during the screening process were resolved through discussion and consensus. A flow diagram illustrating the study selection process is presented in Figure 1:



A flow diagram illustrating inclusion of studies.

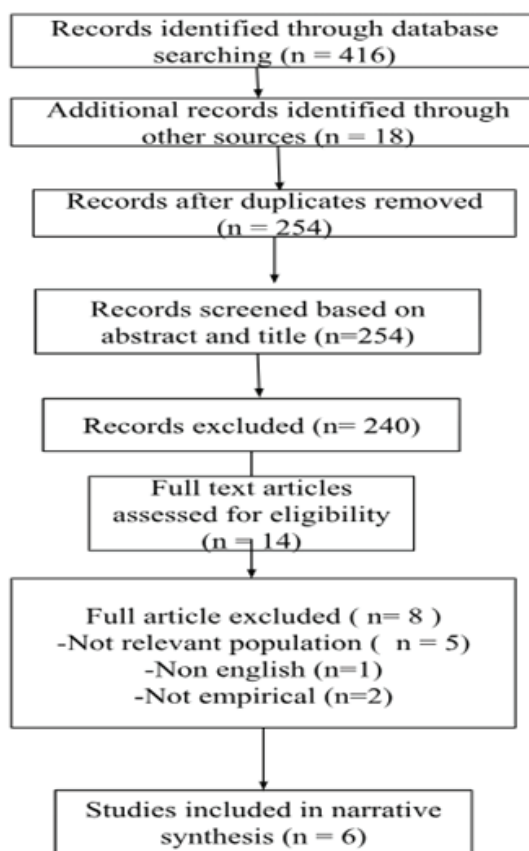


Figure 1: Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to conducting the review. Studies were eligible if they were published between 2015 and 2024. In addition to peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral dissertations meeting the inclusion criteria were included, considered as a grey literature to reduce publication bias and enhance comprehensiveness in an emerging field (Paez, 2017).

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

- (a) included adolescents aged 10–21 years, consistent with contemporary studies which extended adolescents up to 24 years;
- (b) focused on participants residing in alternative care settings, including foster care, residential institutions, kinship care, or children's homes;

- (c) examined adolescents not living with their biological parents;
- (d) evaluated MBI as the primary intervention;
- (e) reported quantitative psychological outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress, or well-being);
- (f) employed quantitative or mixed-methods research designs;
- (g) were published in English between 2015 and 2024; and.
- (h) included adolescents who can read and write.

No restrictions were imposed regarding the duration or intensity of the intervention or the geographical location of the study in order to maintain a broad and inclusive search strategy.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Relevant data were systematically extracted from each included study, including: (a) authors and year of publication; (b) country of study; (c) study design; (d) sample characteristics (e.g., age range, sample size, and care setting); (e) type and duration of the MBI; (f) outcome measures used; and (g) principal findings related to psychological outcomes.

Given the heterogeneity in study designs, intervention formats, outcome measures, and sample characteristics, a meta-analysis was not considered appropriate. Instead, findings were synthesised narratively and organised thematically according to key psychological outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress, mindfulness, and well-being) as well as implementation-related factors.

Results and Discussion

Study Characteristics

General study characteristics are summarised in Table 1. A total of six studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the narrative review. Two studies were conducted in India, specifically in the Jammu



and Kathua districts (Raina, 2023) and in Delhi (Kumari, 2021). The remaining studies were conducted in the United States (Jee et al., 2015), Turkey (Atak & Artan, 2024), Indonesia (Silvianetri et al., 2022), and the United Kingdom (Sunthararajah, 2019), reflecting a geographically diverse evidence base. All studies received approval of their institutional review boards. Participation was fully voluntary, and participants' privacy was fully protected.

Sample sizes varied considerably, ranging from a small pilot sample ($N = 7$) to a larger intervention cohort ($N = 108$). Participants were adolescents aged 10–21 years residing in alternative care settings, including residential institutions, foster care, kinship care, and children's homes. The adolescents are under care without their biological parents

for a period of time due to legal orders or specific circumstances. In several studies, participants presented with mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms, elevated perceived stress, or low subjective well-being, whereas other studies implemented mindfulness interventions as preventive programmes rather than targeted therapeutic interventions.

With respect to methodological design, three studies employed randomised controlled or experimental pretest–posttest control group designs (Atak & Artan, 2024; Jee et al., 2015; Silvianetri et al., 2022). The remaining studies utilised quasi-experimental or single-group pretest–posttest designs (Kumari, 2021; Raina, 2023; Sunthararajah, 2019), indicating variability in methodological rigour across the included studies.

Table 1: Details of studies included in the review

Authors	Geographical area	Age	Gender	Sample size (N)	Study design	Target population
Jee et al. (2015)	Rochester, NY	14–21	Mixed	42	Randomised control trial	Adolescents living in foster care
Sunthararajah (2019)	United Kingdom	14–18	Mixed	7	One-group pretest–posttest design	Looked-after children
Kumari (2021)	Delhi, India	10–19	Mixed	70	Quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design	Adolescents with depression living in residential care
Silvianetri et al. (2022)	West Sumatra	17–20	Females	20	Experimental pretest–posttest control group design	Adolescents with low subjective well-being living in residential care
Raina (2023)	Jammu and Kathua, India	10–14	Mixed	108	Quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design	Adolescents with high perceived stress living in residential care
Atak & Artan (2024)	Istanbul, Turkey	13–18	Mixed	50	Experimental pretest–posttest control group design	Adolescents in children's care homes



Quality Appraisal

Given that this study adopted a narrative review design, it did not apply a formal quantitative quality appraisal or risk-of-bias scoring system. Narrative reviews do not mandate a formal quality appraisal. The included studies were methodologically heterogeneous, varying in design (randomised controlled trials, quasi-experimental studies, and single-group pretest–posttest designs), intervention formats, and outcome measures. This heterogeneity limited the suitability of applying a standardised appraisal tool or conducting comparative quality scoring across studies.

Additionally, the field of MBIs among adolescents without parental care remains emerging, with a limited number of available empirical studies. Restrictive methodological filtering based on rigid quality thresholds may have further narrowed the already small evidence base.

Among the included studies, only Jee et al. (2015) employed a randomised controlled design with participants blinding to group allocation. In contrast, the remaining studies did not report blinding procedures, increasing potential risk of performance and detection bias. Furthermore, none of the studies explicitly reported formal intervention fidelity assessments, limiting conclusions regarding treatment adherence and implementation consistency. Several studies conducted normality and homogeneity of data (Atak & Artan, 2024; Raina, 2023; Silvianetri et al., 2022) before hypothesis testing, which strengthens implementation validity. However, the absence of fidelity monitoring and long-term follow-up across studies constrains the strength of causal inference. Overall, while the reviewed studies provide preliminary support for the feasibility and potential effectiveness of MBIs in alternative care settings, methodological variability and design limitations necessitate cautious interpretation of findings.

Intervention

Across the included studies, interventions primarily consisted of mindfulness-based programmes delivered over 4–8 weeks. Sessions commonly incorporated core mindfulness practices such as breathing exercises, body scan meditation, mindfulness yoga, psychoeducation, and structured group discussions. Session frequency varied, ranging from weekly 1-hour sessions to twice-weekly 2-hour sessions, reflecting variation in programme intensity and delivery formats.

Taming the Adolescent Mind Programme

One study employed *Taming the Adolescent Mind*, a manualised five-week MBI originally developed by Tan (2013) for adolescents aged 13–18 years and later adapted by Sunthararajah (2019). The adapted version condensed the programme into four 2-hour sessions delivered twice weekly, with scheduled 20-minute breaks incorporated into each session. The intervention integrated structured mindfulness practices with components informed by Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Psychoeducational elements introduced participants to the principles and benefits of mindfulness, alongside guidance on applying mindfulness practices in everyday life. Experiential activities included mindful breathing, mindful eating, environmental awareness exercises, sensory awareness tasks (e.g., identifying tactile stimuli with eyes closed), and interactive exercises such as mindful thumb wrestling. ACT-informed techniques, including cognitive defusion, the ‘tug-of-war’ metaphor, and values clarification exercises, were also incorporated. Participants were introduced to the ROAM framework (Regulate attention, Observe, Acceptance, Mindful action) to enhance self-regulation and stress management skills.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Programmes

Several studies implemented adaptations of



MBSR. Potter (2017) developed an eight-week MBSR programme comprising thematic modules addressing mindfulness, attention, brain-based awareness practices, emotional regulation, communication, compassion, and independent mindfulness practice. The programme incorporated structured exercises such as raisin meditation, body scan, mindful eating, sitting meditation, mindful yoga, the STOP one-minute breathing space, radical acceptance practices, mountain meditation, and compassion meditation. Atak and Artan (2024) adapted this MBSR framework into a mindfulness-based group intervention aimed at reducing perceived stress and enhancing life satisfaction, subjective happiness, and mindfulness. Session duration was modified according to participants' attention capacity. Similarly, Raina (2023) implemented an eight-week MBSR programme consisting of weekly 1-hour sessions. The intervention included mindfulness breathing, yoga, observational awareness exercises, mindfulness stopping techniques, role plays, cognitive restructuring exercises, and loving-kindness practices. Each session concluded with home-practice guidelines and a feedback form. Participants also completed a weekly meditation form to monitor practice adherence. The study reported significant improvements in perceived stress, psychological well-being, self-regulation, and mindfulness.

Kumari (2021) also employed an eight-week MBSR-based intervention incorporating breathing exercises, body scan meditation, sitting meditation, and mindfulness yoga. The programme included both therapist-supervised practice and participant-led sessions to enhance skill acquisition and adherence. Significant improvements were observed in resilience and depressive symptoms.

In contrast, Jee et al. (2015) implemented an eight-session MBSR programme consisting of weekly 2-hour sessions. The first hour focused on structured mindfulness skill

instruction delivered by a trained psychologist, while the second hour included less structured activities such as arts and crafts, yoga instruction, music, and social interaction. This study did not report significant improvements in stress or anxiety outcomes.

Mindfulness Counselling

Silvianetri et al. (2022) implemented a mindfulness counselling intervention among adolescents residing in child care institutions. The sessions included psychological orientation, breathing exercises, awareness and focus exercises, reflective activities, evaluation, and follow-up components. Compared to structured MBSR-based programmes, this approach was more counselling-oriented and less standardised in format.

Psychological Outcomes

Across the included studies, mental, emotional, and behavioural states were assessed using standardised psychological measures, as summarised in Table 2. Changes in these psychological outcomes were subsequently analysed and synthesised in this review. Psychological outcome refers to the measurable, observable changes in an individual's emotional, cognitive, or behavioural state resulting from experiences, interventions or environmental factors.

Anxiety

The anxiety is assessed by symptoms of physiological arousal, excessive worry, tension, and fear using measures such as State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI-S and STAI-T) and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21). Reductions in anxiety were reported across several studies, although the level of statistical significance varied (Sunthararajah, 2019; Jee et al., 2015). Sunthararajah (2019) observed substantial reductions in anxiety following the intervention, particularly among participants with higher baseline anxiety levels, suggesting greater potential for improvement in those with elevated



initial symptoms. However, some participants demonstrated minimal or no change, indicating variability in response.

In contrast, Jee et al. (2015) reported improvements in anxiety within the intervention group; however, differences between the experimental and control groups were not statistically significant. Subgroup analyses suggested a trend towards improvement among younger adolescents (aged 14–17 years), highlighting the possibility that developmental stage may influence responsiveness to MBIs.

Depression

Depression score obtained from self-report measures assessing feelings of hopelessness, loss of interest, negative self-evaluation, using validated instruments such as Beck depression inventory-II(BDI-II) and Depression anxiety stress scale-21 (DASS-21). Findings regarding depressive symptoms were more consistent. MBIs were associated with significant reductions in depression among adolescents residing in alternative care settings (Kumari, 2021; Sunthararajah, 2019). Kumari (2021) reported a significant pre–post reduction in depressive symptoms following the intervention. Notably, the reported prevalence of depression among adolescents in institutional care (8.63%) exceeded national prevalence estimates reported in 2016, underscoring the clinical relevance of targeted interventions in this population. Overall, the evidence suggests that mindfulness-based programmes may be particularly beneficial in addressing depressive symptomatology among adolescents without parental care.

Stress

Stress was assessed using adolescents who perceive their lives as unpredictable, uncontrollable and overwhelming using validated scales such as the Perceived stress scale (PSS) and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale(-

DASS-21). Information from caretakers were also used as a tool to perceive the stress of adolescents. The impact of mindfulness interventions on perceived stress yielded mixed findings. Raina (2023) reported statistically significant reductions in perceived stress following an MBSR intervention. However, other studies observed reductions that did not reach statistical significance (Atak & Artan, 2024; Jee et al., 2015). These inconsistencies may reflect differences in intervention structure, sample size, baseline stress levels, or methodological rigour.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is operationally defined as the total score obtained on the standardised self-report assessing present moment awareness. In the included studies, mindfulness was measured using Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) and the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale(MAAS). Among the four studies that assessed mindfulness as an outcome, three reported significant increases in mindfulness levels following the intervention (Atak & Artan, 2024; Raina, 2023; Sunthararajah, 2019). Increased mindfulness was associated with improvements in life satisfaction and subjective happiness, as well as reductions in perceived stress (Atak & Artan, 2024; Raina, 2023). Furthermore, Raina (2023) identified positive associations between mindfulness, self-regulation, and psychological well-being, supporting theoretical models that conceptualise mindfulness as a mechanism underlying broader emotional and behavioural improvements.

Other Positive Psychological Outcomes

Additional positive outcomes were reported across studies. Silvianetri et al. (2022) found significant improvements in subjective well-being among adolescents with initially low well-being assessed by the Subjective Well-Being Scale (SWB). Although Atak and Artan (2024) observed



improvements in life satisfaction and subjective happiness, these changes were not statistically significant. Kumari (2021) reported significant improvements in resilience following an MBSR-based intervention. The Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM), which assesses the capacity to adapt positively to adversity, was used to assess resilience.

Interventions incorporating practices such

as mindful breathing, yoga, observational awareness, cognitive restructuring, and loving-kindness exercises were associated with enhanced self-compassion, non-judgmental awareness, self-regulation, and psychological well-being (Raina, 2023). Collectively, these findings suggest that consistent engagement, sustained practice, and participant motivation may play important roles in optimising the psychological benefits of MBIs in alternative care settings.

Table 2 Summary of intervention, duration, measures and findings

Authors	Intervention	Duration	Test statistics	Measures	Significant findings
Jee et al. (2015)	Mindfulness skill teaching	8 sessions (2 hour weekly)	Independent sample t test	CAMM; STAIT/ STAIS	Within group: there is no significant improvement in anxiety and stress. ($p > .05$)
Sunthara rajah (2019)	<i>Taming the adolescent mind</i> : A mindfulness-based training	4 sessions (2 hour twice a week)	Descriptive statistics	DASS-21; CAMM	Within group: improvement in anxiety, depression and stress.
Kumari (2021)	Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)	8 sessions (1 hour weekly)	Paired sample t test, ANOVA, Duncan's post-Hoc test	BDI-II; CYRM	Within group: improvement in depression and resilience ($p < .001$)
Silvianetriet al.(2022)	Mindfulness counselling	6 sessions	Independent t test	SWB	Between group: improvement in subjective well-being ($p < 0.05$)
Raina (2023)	Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)	8 sessions (1 hour weekly)	t test, correlational analysis and mediational analysis	PSS; PWBS, ASRI; Weekly practice form	Between group: improvement in perceived stress, self-regulation, mindfulness and psychological well-being ($p < .01$)
Atak & Artan (2024)	Mindfulness-based group work	8 sessions (1.5 hour weekly)	Pearson correlation, dependent sample t test.	SWLS; PSS-4; SHS; MAAS	Between group: improvement in mindfulness ($p < 0.05$). No significant difference in life satisfaction, subjective well-being and perceived stress ($p > .05$)



Note: CAMM = Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure; STAI-T = State-Trait Anxiety Inventory-Trait; STAI-S = State-Trait Anxiety Inventory-State; DASS-21 = Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21; BDI-II = Beck Depression Inventory-II; CYRM = Child and Youth Resilience Measure; SWB = Subjective Well-Being Scale; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; PWBS = Psychological Well-Being Scale; ASRI = Adolescent Self-Regulation Inventory; SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale; SHS = Subjective Happiness Scale; MAAS = Mindful Attention Awareness Scale.

Implementation Considerations

Implementation factors varied across studies and were shaped by the contextual realities of alternative care settings. All interventions were delivered within at-risk environments, including residential care institutions, foster care, kinship care, and children's homes, where adolescents were not residing with their biological parents. In three of the six studies, participants presented with clinically relevant concerns such as mild-to-moderate depression, low subjective well-being, or elevated perceived stress. In the remaining studies, mindfulness interventions were implemented as preventive programmes rather than targeted therapeutic interventions. Participant recruitment and enrollment procedures differed across studies and appeared to influence engagement. Two studies conducted orientation sessions prior to the intervention to reduce anxiety and enhance willingness to participate (Sunthararajah, 2019; Atak & Artan, 2024). In Sunthararajah (2019), social workers played an active role in addressing adolescents' initial reluctance, resulting in the enrollment of participants who had previously expressed hesitation. These preparatory efforts suggest that rapport-building and trust development are important facilitators of engagement in this population.

In contrast, Jee et al. (2015) provided financial incentives (\$25 at both pre- and post-intervention assessments) to encourage participation in both intervention and control groups. Despite this, attrition was substantial, with 13 participants from the intervention group and 14 from the control group

withdrawing, including three participants who were removed due to behavioural incidents. These findings indicate that extrinsic incentives alone may not sufficiently address engagement challenges in alternative care contexts.

Feasibility was assessed in several studies through participant feedback and monitoring of practice adherence. Sunthararajah (2019) gathered qualitative feedback regarding course content, presentation, and areas for improvement, while Raina (2023) utilised weekly mindfulness practice logs to evaluate engagement, awareness, and satisfaction. In both cases, participants generally rated the interventions as helpful and reported applying mindfulness techniques outside structured sessions. Such findings suggest that when appropriately structured and contextually adapted, mindfulness interventions are acceptable and feasible within alternative care settings.

Programme adaptations were also evident. For example, Sunthararajah (2019) modified session scheduling—from five 1-hour sessions per week to four 2-hour sessions delivered twice weekly—to accommodate participants' availability during school holidays. Similarly, Atak and Artan (2024) adjusted session length based on observed attention span, with sessions averaging approximately 1.5 hours. These adaptations highlight the importance of flexibility and responsiveness to developmental and contextual needs when implementing mindfulness programmes among adolescents in care.

Overall, the findings indicate that successful implementation in alternative care settings depends not only on intervention content but



also on recruitment strategies, rapport-building efforts, programme flexibility, and ongoing participant engagement.

Comparative Analysis

Across the included studies, interventions were primarily grounded in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) or structured mindfulness-based programmes, with some incorporating elements of ACT or less structured therapeutic components. Tan's programme, adapted by Sunthararajah (2019), uniquely integrated ACT-informed techniques such as cognitive defusion, values clarification, and the ROAM framework. In contrast, the MBSR-based interventions implemented by Raina (2023), Kumari (2021), Jee et al. (2015), and Atak and Artan (2024) adhered more closely to traditional mindfulness curricula emphasising breath awareness, body scan meditation, yoga, and compassion practices. Silvianetri et al. (2022) adopted a counselling-oriented mindfulness approach that was comparatively less standardised and structured.

Notably, interventions that combined structured experiential mindfulness practices with reflective and values-based components (e.g., Sunthararajah, 2019; Raina, 2023) tended to report more consistent psychological improvements than programmes incorporating hybridised or partially structured formats (e.g., Jee et al., 2015). Programme duration ranged from four to eight weeks, with total instructional time varying across studies. Four weeks to eight weeks of mindfulness programmes are considered to be beneficial (Brintz et al., 2020; Gotink et al., 2016). However, duration alone did not appear to account for outcome variability. Although several eight-week programmes demonstrated significant improvements (Raina, 2023; Kumari, 2021), others yielded mixed or non-significant findings (Jee et al., 2015). These inconsistencies suggest that factors such as intervention fidelity, participant engagement, and contextual adaptation

may be more influential than programme length alone. Further research is needed to clarify these relationships.

Methodological rigour varied considerably across studies. Three investigations employed randomised controlled or experimental designs, while the remaining studies utilised quasi-experimental or single-group pretest–posttest designs. Sunthararajah (2019) utilised a single group pretest–posttest design, but it remains weak for applying causal inference. Studies reporting statistically significant findings frequently relied on smaller samples (e.g., Silvianetri et al., 2022; Sunthararajah, 2019), which may increase the risk of inflated effect sizes and generalisability. Conversely, Jee et al. (2015), who incorporated a randomised design alongside physiological and qualitative measures, reported non-significant changes in stress and anxiety, suggesting that more rigorous designs may yield more conservative results. At the same time, larger quasi-experimental studies (e.g., Raina, 2023; Kumari, 2021) reported significant improvements in psychological well-being, highlighting the need for cautious interpretation across differing methodological frameworks.

Attrition rates also varied. Higher dropout rates observed in some studies (e.g., Kumari, 2021; Jee et al., 2015) likely reflect contextual instability and engagement challenges inherent in alternative care settings. In contrast, studies incorporating orientation sessions, rapport-building strategies, and flexible scheduling (Sunthararajah, 2019; Atak & Artan, 2024) appeared to demonstrate improved engagement and retention. These findings underscore the importance of implementation strategies and contextual sensitivity in enhancing intervention effectiveness within this population. Although no standardised risk-of-bias tool was applied, methodological strengths and limitations were narratively evaluated.



Interpretation

This narrative review examined the effectiveness of MBIs among adolescents residing in alternative care settings, including residential care, foster care, kinship care, and child care institutions. Across six studies conducted in diverse cultural contexts, MBIs demonstrated promising, but variable psychological benefits. Reported outcomes included reductions in anxiety, depression, and perceived stress, alongside improvements in resilience, subjective well-being, self-regulation, and mindfulness. However, methodological heterogeneity, small sample sizes, and inconsistent statistical significance limit the strength of definitive conclusions.

Therapeutic Effects of MBIs

A notable pattern emerged in which studies targeting adolescents with elevated baseline distress (e.g., mild-to-moderate depression or high perceived stress) reported more robust improvements than those implementing mindfulness as a universal preventive intervention. This finding suggests that MBIs may function more effectively as therapeutic interventions for high-risk youth rather than as generalised preventive programmes in alternative care settings.

Reductions in depressive symptoms were among the most consistent findings across studies (Kumari, 2021; Sunthararajah, 2019). Given that adolescents in institutional care frequently exhibit higher rates of depression than community samples, these results underscore the potential clinical relevance of structured mindfulness programmes for this population. In contrast, anxiety outcomes were more variable. Some studies reported significant reductions, whereas others observed non-significant trends. Variability in engagement, baseline severity, developmental stage, and group dynamics may partially account for these differences. For example, difficulties in participant engagement and group cohesion were noted in one study,

potentially influencing overall intervention outcomes (Sunthararajah, 2019). Findings related to stress were similarly mixed. While some interventions demonstrated statistically significant reductions in perceived stress (Raina, 2023), others reported non-significant changes (Jee et al., 2015; Atak & Artan, 2024). In alternative care contexts, under-reporting of distress, trauma-related coping mechanisms, or limited emotional awareness may influence self-report outcomes. Notably, in one study, adolescents did not self-identify as experiencing stress, yet caregiver reports indicated observable behavioural changes (Jee et al., 2015). Such discrepancies highlight the importance of multi-informant assessments when working with trauma-exposed youth.

Importantly, increases in mindfulness were associated with concurrent improvements in life satisfaction, self-regulation, and psychological well-being (Raina, 2023; Atak & Artan, 2024), supporting theoretical models that conceptualise mindfulness as a mechanism for enhanced emotional regulation. These findings align with evidence suggesting that mindfulness strengthens attentional control, non-judgmental awareness, and adaptive coping processes.

Intervention Structure and Mechanisms

Intervention structure appeared to influence outcomes. Programmes incorporating structured experiential practice, guided reflection, and ongoing home practice demonstrated more consistent benefits (Raina, 2023; Kumari, 2021). Supervised practice sessions and monitoring of adherence likely enhanced skill acquisition and internalisation of mindfulness techniques. Encouraging the application of mindfulness in daily activities (e.g., mindful eating or brief awareness practices) may facilitate generalisation beyond structured sessions (De Vibe et al., 2013).



Programme duration alone did not appear to determine effectiveness. While several eight-week interventions reported significant improvements, shorter adaptations also yielded positive outcomes when delivered with high engagement and structured facilitation. These findings suggest that intervention fidelity, participant involvement, and contextual adaptation may be more influential than programme length alone.

Implementation Considerations

Delivering MBIs within alternative care settings presents distinct challenges. Adolescents in these environments may have experienced neglect, abuse, or parental loss, potentially affecting trust, emotional openness, and group cohesion. Orientation sessions, facilitator support, and rapport-building strategies appeared to enhance engagement and retention.

Attrition rates varied across studies, reflecting contextual instability and logistical barriers. Financial incentives, as used in one study (Jee et al., 2015), did not appear to substantially improve retention or psychological outcomes. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000), extrinsic rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation and autonomy, whereas mindfulness practice itself may foster autonomous regulation and internally motivated behaviour. Future research should examine how motivational factors interact with mindfulness engagement in alternative care settings.

Group dynamics also emerged as an important factor. For some adolescents, group-based mindfulness programmes facilitated peer connection and social support, which may be particularly beneficial for socially isolated youth. However, group formats may not be equally suitable for all participants, as individual differences in trauma history, motivation, and therapeutic preference may influence engagement and responsiveness.

Strengths

This review contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it addresses a vulnerable and under-researched population—adolescents residing in alternative care settings. Second, by focusing specifically on intervention studies reporting quantitative outcomes, the review provides structured insight into measurable psychological effects of mindfulness-based programmes. Third, inclusion of doctoral dissertations alongside peer-reviewed publications enhances comprehensiveness in an emerging field where published studies remain limited.

Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the number of included studies was small ($N = 6$), limiting the breadth and generalisability of available evidence. Second, substantial methodological heterogeneity was observed across studies in terms of design, intervention format, duration, facilitator training, and outcome measures, complicating cross-study comparison. Third, most studies relied predominantly on self-report assessments, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, under-reporting of distress, or limited emotional awareness among trauma-exposed adolescents. Only one study incorporated multi-informant data. Fourth, long-term follow-up assessments were absent, restricting conclusions regarding the sustainability of intervention effects. Fifth, no studies reported effect sizes. Additionally, no formal risk-of-bias appraisal was conducted within this narrative review, which limits methodological precision. Finally, the included studies primarily examined mild-to-moderate psychological difficulties, and findings may not generalise to adolescents with severe clinical conditions.

Considerations for Future Research

Future research should prioritise methodological rigour and conceptual clarity. Large-scale randomised controlled trials with



adequate statistical power are needed to establish causal inference and lower effect size inflation. Standardisation of outcome measures would improve comparability across studies. Longitudinal follow-up assessments are essential to determine the durability of intervention effects; in addition, systematic monitoring of intervention fidelity is required to ensure adherence to programme protocols and to clarify the relationship between implementation quality and psychological outcomes. Comparative research examining different mindfulness modalities (e.g., traditional MBSR, ACT-informed programmes, mindfulness-based group work) may clarify differential mechanisms of change. Finally, integrating mixed-methods approaches—including qualitative interviews and multi-informant assessments—would provide richer understanding of feasibility, engagement, and contextual adaptation in alternative care environments.

Summary and Conclusion

This narrative review examines the emerging evidence on the effectiveness of MBIs among adolescents without parental care. Although the current evidence base remains

limited and methodologically heterogeneous, preliminary findings suggest that structured mindfulness programmes may offer meaningful psychological benefits in reducing depressive symptoms and enhancing emotional regulation, resilience, and well-being. A similar finding was found in mindfulness intervention on depressive symptoms in adolescents, conversely the less structured mindfulness sessions found improvements on depression (Reangsing, 2021). Similarly, Silvianetri et al. (2022) found that the less structured mindfulness counselling was effective in improving subjective well-being. Implementation feasibility appears promising when interventions are contextually adapted and supported by rapport-building strategies. Nevertheless, conclusions must remain cautious due to small sample sizes, limited methodological rigour, and absence of long-term evaluation. Strengthening the empirical foundation through rigorous, large-scale research is essential for applying in this setting. Despite these limitations, mindfulness interventions represent a potentially accessible and developmentally appropriate strategy to support the psychological well-being of adolescents in care.

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Quality of Work Life among IT Professionals- A Comparative Study of Traditional Work Environment, Hybrid Model Work Environment, and Coworking Spaces

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Received: 13/08/2025

Revised: 22/02/2026

Accepted: 13/03/2026

Abstract

This study examines the quality of work life of IT professionals working in traditional offices, hybrid models, and coworking spaces in Trivandrum, Kerala. A descriptive research design was used, and data were collected from 90 IT professionals using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. The findings show that most IT professionals reported a moderate level of QWL across all workplace models. Although employees in the hybrid model reported higher QWL in descriptive results, statistical analysis showed no significant difference in QWL across the three workplace models. A significant difference in QWL was found based on gender. Most respondents preferred the hybrid model, followed by coworking spaces, while work-from-home was the least preferred option. The study suggests that workplace model alone does not determine employees' quality of work life.

Keywords: Quality of work life, Work environment, Hybrid mode, Coworking spaces

Introduction

Quality of work life (QWL) is an important aspect of human resource management. QWL requires organisations to provide a conducive environment for employees to enhance their satisfaction and productivity. It involves addressing how work impacts individuals and organisational performance while encouraging employee participation in problem-solving and decision-making. QWL evaluates the degree to which employees can fulfil significant personal and professional needs within their workplace (Akram & Amir, 2020) and it is the favourableness and unfavourableness conditions in the work place of employees. QWL is one of the most important factors for motivating human and improving job satisfaction. Therefore, job satisfaction can be improved

through changing and manipulating the components of QWL and in this way; the suitable environment for organisation development should be provided (Kermansaravi et al., 2014). There is a positive relationship between QWL and job satisfaction, which means increased job satisfaction will contribute to a higher QWL for employees. And also, higher QWL leads to higher job performance and productivity. A high quality of work life leads to a better quality of life of the people and vice versa. Therefore, we can say that QWL is an important element of an employee's life. A high QWL would bring many benefits to the employees and the organisation itself and it indicates that QWL is beneficial to both organisational as well as individual growth and development. Success of every organisation heavily depends upon



the productivity of their human resources. Therefore, organisations are constantly seeking ways to improve productivity through improving QWL.

This paper examines the QWL of IT employees working in various types of workplaces. The workspace models are explained below.

Traditional work environment

Traditional work environment simply means work from office only mode. Generally, all companies prefer work from office settings. In this model physical presence of the employee is compulsory for work. Usually, employees were expected to work in a structured office space and within a specified timeline. All jobs cannot be performed in online mode, so traditional work environment always exists. IT companies can choose work from home mode but some of the companies still following traditional work environment due to many reasons. Work from office is more productive in some cases because the atmosphere allows natural collaboration and communication between staff members.

Hybrid model

Hybrid model is a combination of work from home and work from office concepts. It is a model in which employees have the freedom to choose where and when they work. In this mode, employees typically enjoy more autonomy and better work life balance. Under this arrangement, employees come into office for one or two days a week, enabling them to interact with colleagues and attend important meetings in the office.

In today's scenario, more IT companies are relying on the hybrid model. In India this trend started becoming more popular after the covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic period companies understood the benefits of work from home concept and tried to use it effectively. As a result, hybrid model has become more popular by combining the benefits of both office and remote work.

Coworking spaces

Coworking space is an arrangement where people are working independently or collectively in a shared office. It is a kind of arrangement in which several workers of different companies work within a shared office space. It is a big office space which is divided into number of parts for allocating for different companies. It may provide single seat, multiple seats, open seat, dedicated desk and for group of workers get customised space for working. These are well defined and managed office spaces where business owners, freelancers, startup founders who are looking for an office space. It is a kind of attractive to independent contractors, independent scientist, work at home professionals, who need a distraction free work environment.

Literature Review

The QWL is a critical factor for organizations aiming to achieve their predefined goals (Sabonete et al., 2021). QWL encompasses both employee and organisational well-being, closely connecting to key aspects such as job satisfaction, productivity, job involvement, and job enrichment (Srinivas & Rajesh, 2021). Job satisfaction serves as a vital bridge between QWL and employee commitment, with both factors contributing positively to organisational commitment. Improved QWL fosters stronger employee commitment (Marzuki et al., 2022). Both individual and organisational levels, QWL studies have high significance. It gives emphasises on giving importance for work-related and non-work-related factors. Work-related variables include job involvement, role conflict, and inflexible work schedules, while non-work variables encompass family involvement and family conflicts (Abdul et al., 2011).

Achieving a high QWL requires persistent organisational efforts. These unwavering efforts provide employees with greater op-



portunities for job effectiveness and collaboration, which enable them in enhancing overall organisational performance. High QWL is an influential factor for organisations to attract and retain talent. Rewards, benefits, compensation, career development, communication, and safety and security can be considered as some of the key drivers of QWL. Other factors, such as top management involvement, work-life cohesion, job satisfaction, and employee motivation, are less frequently highlighted in the literature (Abd & Mheidi, 2013).

In the modern era, IT companies offer diverse workspace models, including work-from-home, work-from-office, and hybrid models. Remote and hybrid working, initially adopted as a necessity during the pandemic, have evolved into promising work trends for the post-pandemic era. These flexible work arrangements significantly impact work-life balance (Khatimah et al., 2022). A psychologically healthy work environment, where individual needs are met, enables employees to experience a QWL that aligns with their priorities and fosters satisfaction (Swapna & Gomathi, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

QWL is essential for the success of both organisations as well as individual employees. Measuring QWL is an important aspect for enhancing the performance of employees. According to NASSCOM's 2024 strategic review, "India's technology industry (including hardware) is expected to generate \$254 Bn in FY2024, marking 3.8% annual growth. Exports may reach \$200 Bn (3.3% growth), while the domestic sector could exceed \$54 Bn (5.9% growth), reinforcing IT as a key revenue source for India." IT sector industry's success heavily depends upon their employee's skill and abilities. Therefore, IT companies always seek for highly talented employees and focused on enhancing the efficiency and productivity of IT employees. Employees in the IT sector

face high stress, making QWL and work-life balance essential for good performance. So, the companies are required to provide all the essentials to increase the QWL of employees. Workspace plays a major role in the effectiveness of the job. With the emergence of diverse workplace models such as work-from-office, work-from-home, hybrid workspaces, and coworking spaces, it becomes critical to understand how these different work environments influence the QWL of IT employees. Although numerous studies have been conducted on workspace models, literature review reveals a significant gap in understanding how these models have evolved in response to the innovative concept of coworking spaces. This gap serves as the primary motivation for the study. This study aims to address this gap by comparing the QWL of employees in these varying workplace models, specifically in the IT sector in Kerala.

Significance of the Study

QWL is a concept that holds significance at all times in the professional lives of IT employees. All the IT employees are leading a busy life and experiencing high stress in their family life and work life. To maintain a balance between work life and personal life is a difficult task. All employees are trying to maximise their QWL and maintain balance between work life and personal life.

Measuring QWL of employees is essential for the smooth functioning of an organisation. The organisation needs to know the level of QWL of its employees because employees without acceptable QWL they cannot perform well. All the IT companies heavily depend upon their employee's skills and abilities. And the IT profession is widely recognised as a high-stress occupation. They are suffering more stress and, physical and mental issues. So, measuring QWL is important to take decisions for improving the efficiency of their employees.



Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of QWL among IT professionals working in traditional model, hybrid model and working in coworking spaces
2. To compare the QWL of IT professionals based on their gender.
3. To compare the QWL of IT professionals working in traditional model, hybrid model and working in coworking spaces.

Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant difference in the level of QWL among IT professionals based on the type of workplace.
- H2: There is a significant difference in the level of QWL among IT professionals based on gender.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the QWL among IT professionals working in traditional offices, hybrid models, and coworking spaces in Trivandrum, Kerala. This design was chosen to facilitate systematic comparison of QWL across different workplace settings.

Population and sample

The population of the study consisted of IT professionals working in Technopark and coworking spaces in Trivandrum. A total of 90 respondents were selected using convenience sampling due to accessibility constraints and time limitations. The sample included three workplace categories (traditional, hybrid, and coworking), with 30 respondents from each category, ensuring balanced group representation.

Data collection instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert

scale, developed based on QWL dimensions proposed by (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2022), including work environment, organisational culture, training and development, compensation and rewards, facilities, job satisfaction and security, autonomy of work, and adequacy of resources.

Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Overall QWL	0.974	51

Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability. The obtained value ($\alpha = 0.974$) indicates that the instrument has high internal consistency.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, and standard deviation), independent sample t-test (to examine gender differences), and one-way ANOVA (to compare QWL across workplace models) using SPSS.

Results and Discussions

Table1. Level of QWL of IT professionals across all workspaces.

Work space	Level			Total (%)
	Low Qwl (%)	Moderate QWL (%)	High QWL (%)	
Traditional	13.3	76.7	10.0	100.0
Hybrid	33.3	26.7	40.0	100.0
Co working	16.7	60.0	23.3	100.0
Total	21.1	54.4	24.4	100.0

Source: Primary data



The distribution of QWL levels across workplace models indicates that the majority of respondents reported a moderate level of QWL (54.4%), followed by high QWL (24.4%) and low QWL (21.1%). Hybrid employees showed the highest proportion of high QWL (40%), while traditional office employees reported the highest proportion of moderate QWL (76.7%).

Table 2. Most preferred workspace by IT professionals.

	Traditional Office (%)	Hybrid (%)	Co-working Spaces (%)	Work From Home (%)	Total (%)
Traditional	16.7	66.7	10.0	6.7	100
Hybrid	26.7	33.3	40.0	0.0	100
Co working	16.7	53.3	30.0	0.0	100
Total	20.0	51.1	26.7	2.2	100

Source: Primary data

The Table 2 highlights that hybrid workspace model is mostly preferred by the employees in the different workspace models. 51.1% of employees across all workspace models prefer hybrid as their workspace. The least preferred workspace is work from home, that is, 2.2% while coworking spaces take the second preference with 26.7%. When the results are analysed separately for employees in each workspace, most of the employees from traditional office and coworking spaces prefer hybrid. But the employees from hybrid work mode prefer coworking spaces. So, it can be concluded that hybrid is the most preferred workspace for IT professionals.

Table 3. Comparison of QWL based on gender

H1: There is significant difference in QWL among IT professionals based on gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	t
Male	60	211.53	30.04	3.87	4.437
Female	30	182.57	27.38	4.99	

Source: Primary data

Table 3 presents the comparison of QWL among IT professionals based on their gender. The results of the independent samples t-test indicate a statistically significant difference in QWL between male and female IT professionals ($t=4.437$, $p<.001$). Male respondents ($M=211.53$, $SD=30.04$) reported significantly higher QWL than female respondents ($M=182.57$, $SD=27.38$).

H2: There is significant difference in QWL among IT professionals based on workspace models.

Table 4. Comparison of QWL based on workspace models

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2064.26	2	1032.13	1.00	.372
Within Groups	89713.39	87	1031.18		
Total	91777.65	89			

Source: Primary data

Table 4 presents the comparison of QWL among IT professionals based on their workspace models. To examine whether there is a significant difference in QWL across the three workspace models, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The obtained p-value (0.372) is greater than .05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in QWL among IT professionals based on their workspace models.



Findings

The findings show that most IT professionals, regardless of their workplace model, reported a moderate level of QWL. While the descriptive results suggest that employees working in the hybrid model reported higher levels of QWL compared to those in traditional offices and coworking spaces, the statistical analysis does not support this difference as significant (one-way ANOVA, $p=0.372$). This indicates that the type of workspace by itself does not significantly influence QWL. However, a significant difference in QWL was found between male and female employees (independent samples t-test, $p<0.05$), suggesting that gender plays a role in how IT professionals perceive their work-life quality. In terms of preference, most respondents indicated a preference for the hybrid work model, followed by coworking spaces, while work-from-home was the least preferred option. Importantly, this preference reflects employees' choices and comfort rather than a proven advantage in terms of QWL outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined the QWL of IT professionals across three workplace models, traditional office, hybrid work, and coworking spaces in Trivandrum, Kerala. The results indicate that most employees experience a moderate level of QWL, regardless of the workplace model in which they operate.

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Although hybrid work emerged as the most preferred option among respondents and showed a relatively higher proportion of employees reporting high QWL, statistical analysis did not reveal a significant difference in QWL across the three workplace models. This suggests that the type of workspace alone does not determine employees' QWL. In contrast, gender was found to have a significant association with QWL, highlighting the need for organisations to pay closer attention to gender-specific experiences and challenges in the workplace. Overall, the findings imply that improving QWL in the IT sector requires a broader focus on organizational practices, job design, and employee support systems rather than relying solely on the choice of workspace model.

Limitations

1. The study used convenience sampling, which limits the generalisability of the findings.
2. The research was cross-sectional, capturing QWL perceptions at one point in time.
3. Data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may involve response bias.
4. The study was limited to IT professionals in Trivandrum, Kerala, restricting wider applicability.



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Driving Financial Performance Through ESG Strategies in Banking Sector

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Received: 31/01/2026

Revised: 23/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

Incorporating ESG factors into banking strategies is vital for ensuring sustainable growth, as it helps mitigate risks and positions banks as frontrunners in ethical and responsible financing. This research focuses on understanding how ESG factors are integrated into Indian banks' operations and their influence on financial outcomes. By analysing the impact of ESG criteria on metrics like ROA, ROE, and EPS, the study offers insights into harmonising sustainability with profitability. This study highlights the importance of ESG incorporation in the Indian banking sector, emphasising its role in managing risks and establishing leadership in sustainable financing. The research examines how ESG practices affect financial metrics such as ROA, ROE, and EPS, comparing their correlations across public and private sector banks to derive actionable strategies for sustainable banking. The integration of ESG considerations into banking operations plays a critical role in driving long-term stability, reducing risks, and reinforcing a commitment to ethical financing. The study utilises ESG data from ESG Risk Assessments & Insights for 2023-2024 and financial metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS) from banks' annual reports. Regression analysis, correlation analysis, and independent sample t-tests were employed to test the formulated hypotheses and analyse the relationships between ESG ratings and financial performance. The study reveals that ESG ratings have a stronger impact on ROA in public sector banks (PSBs) compared to private sector banks, suggesting greater operational efficiency in PSBs. However, the correlations between ESG ratings and ROE or EPS are not statistically significant for either sector; despite PSBs showing higher mean correlations for these metrics. Understanding the integration of ESG factors into banking strategies is essential for balancing profitability with sustainability. By analysing the strength of these correlations across public and private-sector banks, the research provides actionable recommendations to foster a sustainable and resilient banking system. Banks should integrate sustainability initiatives with profitability goals like ROA, ROE, and EPS and embed ESG concepts into their fundamental business processes. Management has implemented sustainability measures into frameworks for performance evaluation and implemented data-driven ESG monitoring systems. Banks in the public and private sectors may create ESG plans tailored to specific sectors to boost long-term value generation and competitiveness. All things considered, successful ESG adoption may improve investor confidence, risk management, and sustainable growth.

Keywords: Banking, ESG Rating, ROA, ROE, EPS JEL Classification: G21, G32, G39



Introduction

ESG is an acronym for Environmental, Social, and Governance. ESG represents the three main areas in ESG frameworks where companies are required to reveal their performance. It aims to cover every non-financial risk and opportunity that is a part of a company's normal business. The world is full of serious challenges such as climate change, the transformation from a linear to a circular economy, increased inequality and the need to balance economic and social pressure. The investors, the regulators, the formal and informal consumers, and the current and potential employees are pushing companies to manage the financial, natural, and social resources, in other words – the triple or double bottom line supported by proper corporate governance. Hence, more and more investors are considering ESG factors for investment decisions, and their relevance is increasing dramatically in the context of attracting any type of capital – debts or equity .

India's profound emphasis on turning into a pioneer in environmental sustainability and comprehensive development has found its affirmation both at the national level and in the world industries. The country's latest brilliant step towards such an aim becomes India's pledge to transition to net-zero emission by 2070 (Elbaz et al., 2021). The targets it has outlined under the Paris Agreement demonstrate that India is prepared to maintain the balance between its economic inconsistencies and environmental responsibility. Specifically, India has agreed to cut down the volume of carbon emission by increasing its emissions intensity 3335% relative to the level of GDP in 2005. Furthermore, by 2030, it will have transferred at least 40% production to non-fossil fuel energy sources. Overall, these changes indicate that the national economy will attempt to maintain equality and stabilise its GNP by meeting the requirements of climate stewardship (Dalal & Thaker, 2019).

In 2006, United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI) initiated a group of 70 investment and environmental experts, and developed six principles urging institutional investors to integrate ESG factors into their decisions, practice active ownership, ensure transparency through disclosures, promote wider acceptance of ESG analysis, address ESG challenges effectively, and provide regular updates on their progress (Lawton, 2024). Performance of a company is evaluated on the basis of ESG components of ESG ratings. ESG criteria, which were originally motivated by moral and ethical considerations, are now more important than ever in determining long-term corporate performance. Investors, customers, and regulators are giving company ESG performance more weight as sustainability receives international attention. This emphasises the necessity to comprehend how these evaluations impact business outcomes (Chen & Fan, 2024). Businesses still face several challenges when it comes to integrating ESG factors to improve financial performance. It affects a company's financial performance in both positive and negative ways, thus businesses should concentrate on enhancing ESG elements that boost financial success and further examine and reduce subcomponents that have a negative impact (Evans et al., 2023).

This study is important because it aims to deepen the understanding of how ESG (environment, societal, and governance) considerations are integrated into the banking sector in India and their impact on financial performance. By identifying key ESG criteria and examining their influence on financial metrics like ROA, ROE, and EPS, the study provides valuable insights into how banks can align sustainability with profitability. Additionally, comparing the correlation among ESG ratings and financial performance in public and private sector banks can inform better practices and strategies, contributing to a more sustainable and fi-



nancially robust banking industry in India. Accordingly, this study is seeking answers to following questions: What are the key ESG criteria utilised by banks in India, and how are these factors integrated into their decision-making processes? How does the integration of ESG factors influence Indian banks' financial performance metrics? In contrast to private sector banks in India, how do ESG ratings relate to financial performance indicators (ROA, ROE, and EPS) in public sector banks (PSBs)?

Review of Literature

Many studies have explored the connection between sustainability activity and its bearing on financial routine globally, but very few have specifically focused on the banking sector. A review points out mixed outcomes on impact of ESG factors on financial performance of a company. Individual social and governance score significantly influences the company value, whereas the environment score and firm value are not significantly correlated (Aydoğmuş et al., 2022). Combined ESG score has a strong impact on financial gains of firms both in standings of worth and profitability (Aydoğmuş et al., 2022; Chen & Fan, 2024; Fu & Li, 2023). ESG activity has a greater effect on the routine of private enterprises compared to state-owned ones, and it influences medium-sized enterprises more significantly than both large and small enterprises (Liu, 2022) and private sector firms are giving more emphasis on ESG practices than public sector firms (Debnath & Kanoo, 2024). ESG investments and short-term profitability have been found to have conflicting or even negative links in particular research, which contend that sustainability measures may initially raise operating expenses and lower immediate financial returns (Nollet et al., 2016). Similar to this, research indicates that bank performance is significantly influenced by governance quality since robust governance mechanisms increase transpar-

ency and reduce agency conflicts (Buallay, 2019). The adoption of ESG reporting, including ESG disclosure, would significantly enhance sustainable business practices and the long-standing financial sustainability of companies (Dalal & Thaker, 2019). Recent literature also emphasises methodological challenges in ESG research. Differences in ESG rating methodologies across agencies may lead to inconsistencies in measurement, thereby affecting the robustness of empirical findings (Berg et al., 2022).

Although ESG has gained increasing attention in recent years, empirical evidence on its impact on the financial performance of Indian banks remains limited and fragmented. Most existing studies focus either on developed economies or on non-banking sectors, with relatively little attention given to the banking industry. Moreover, prior research rarely provides a clear comparative analysis between public and private sector banks, despite their structural and governance differences. There is also a lack of integrated examination of key financial indicators such as ROA, ROE, and EPS in relation to ESG ratings within a single framework. Therefore, a comprehensive and comparative study that analyses the influence of ESG integration on the financial performance of Indian public and private sector banks is necessary to fill this gap in the literature.

Objective:

- To analyse the influence of ESG integration on Financial Performance metrics of banks in India.
- To examine and compare the relationship between Indian public and private sector banks' financial performance indicators (ROA, ROE, and EPS) and ESG ratings.

Methodology

The data have been collected from secondary sources. Data related to ESG has been collected from ESG Risk Assessments &



Insights for the year 20232024. Out of 32 public and private sector banks operating in India top five PSBs and the top five private sector banks are selected for the study based on market capitalisation. Data relating to financial metrics such as Return on Asset (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE), and Basic Earnings Per Share (EPS) were taken from the annual report of the respective bank. The collected data were compiled and organised using Microsoft Excel for preliminary tabulation, coding, and computation. For statistical analysis, the study employed Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. To examine the influence of ESG ratings on financial performance, simple linear regression analysis was employed. Separate regression models were estimated with ESG rating as the independent variable and ROA, ROE, and EPS as dependent variables. Correlation analysis (Pearson's

correlation coefficient) was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between ESG ratings and financial performance indicators. Additionally, an independent sample t-test was applied to compare the mean differences in financial performance between public and private sector banks, enabling a sector-wise comparative analysis.

Hypothesis:

H01: There is no significant correlation between ESG ratings and financial performance metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS) of banks in India.

H02: There is no significant difference in the strength of the correlation between ESG ratings and financial performance metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS) between public and private sector banks in India.

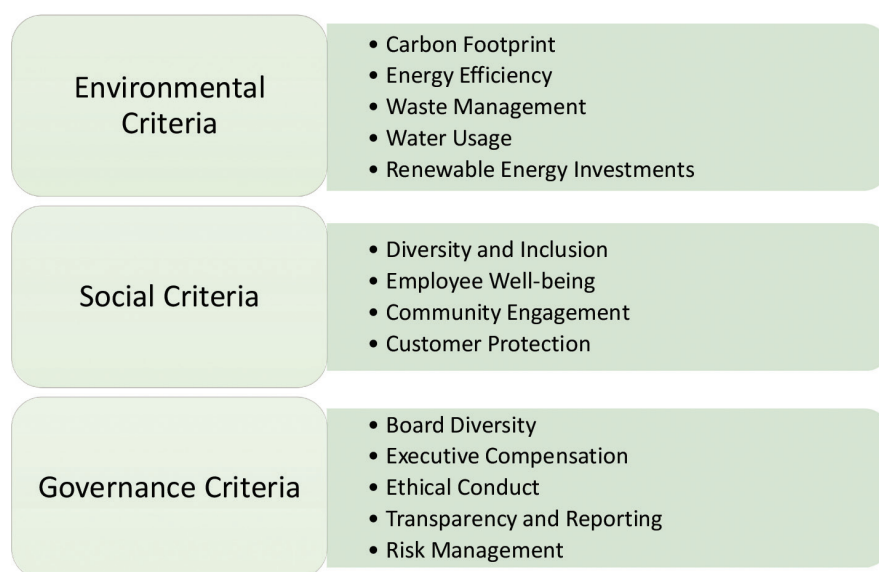


Figure 1: Key ESG Criteria Used by Banks:
(Finextra, 2024; Rezaee, 2025).

Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides a comparative overview of top five public and private sector banks in India based on their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance, alongside key financial metrics for 2023–2024.

The ESG data is broken down into three individual scores: Environment, Social, and Governance, culminating in an overall ESG Rating. The financial performance metrics included are Return on Assets (ROA%), ROE%, and Basic EPS.

**Table 1.** ESG rating and financial metrics of respective banks for March 2024.

Bank	Environmental score	Social score	Governance score	ESG	ROA% rating	ROE%	Basic EPS
State Bank of India	7.5	28.5	22.3	58.2	0.91	16.75	56.29
Bank of Baroda	3.4	22.1	26	51.3	0.96	14.36	27.28
Punjab National Bank	1.9	15.3	14	33.9	0.17	2.74	2.28
Indian Overseas Bank	0.8	18.2	19.2	38.2	0.66	8.30	1.15
Canara Bank	1.8	19.5	23.8	44.9	0.78	16.03	58.45
HDFC Bank	7.2	29.3	34.4	70.9	1.78	15.74	79.25
ICICI Bank	8.5	26.7	33.6	68.7	2.01	16.31	45.79
Kotak Mahindra	7.8	30.5	33.4	71.8	2.23	13.17	54.89
Axis Bank	7.3	36.1	31.1	74.2	0.72	7.63	31.17
IndusInd Bank	7.3	30.9	31.8	69.8	1.61	13.60	95.32

Source: (ESG Rating List – ESGRisk.ai, n.d.).

H₀₁ There is no significant correlation between ESG ratings and financial performance metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS) of banks in India.

Table 2. Table shows the regression values of financial metrics and ESG.

Dependent variable	R ²	B (Unstd. coefficient)	Constant/ intercept	Beta (Std. coefficient)	t- Value	p Value	Sig.
ROA	0.577	-0.793	0.034	0.760	3.305	0.011	Yes
ROE	0.202	4.378	0.139	0.449	1.422	0.193	No
EPS	0.454	-33.79	1.35	0.674	2.580	0.033	Yes

Source: Author's analysis using SPSS

➤ **ROA (%):** From the above table 2, the R^2 value indicates that 57% of the variance in ROA is explained by ESG rating. The standardised coefficient (B) shows that for each unit increase in ESG rating; ROA increases by 0.034%. The relationship is significant, as indicated by p value ($0.011 < 0.05$). The regression equation is:

Dependent variable = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ (ESG Rating) + ϵ where β_0 is the intercept (the dependent variables value, when the independent variable is zero). β_1 is the un-

standardised coefficient. ϵ represents the error term.

Regression equation for ROA (%):

ROA (%): $-0.793 + 0.034$ (ESG Rating) + ϵ

This equation indicates that for one-unit increase in ESG rating, ROA increases by 0.034, with intercept -0.793% when ESG rating is zero. Since p value is less than 0.05, it shows substantial correlation between ESG rating and ROA. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The correlation between ESG and ROA ratings shows



how ESG practices contribute to the overall bank's operational effectiveness, risk management, brand value, and strategic focus.

- **ROE (%):** From the table 2, the R² value indicates that 20% of the variance in ROE is explained by ESG rating. The unstandardised coefficient (B) shows that for each unit increase in ESG rating, ROE increases by 0.139%. The p value (0.19) is not significant, suggesting no strong evidence of a relationship between ESG Rating and ROE.

Regression equation for ROE (%):

$$\text{ROE (\%)} = 4.378 + 0.139 (\text{ESG Rating}) + \epsilon$$

This equation indicates that for every one-unit increase in ESG Rating, ROE increases by 0.139%, with an intercept of 4.378% when the ESG Rating is zero. Since p value is greater than 0.05, there is no strong indication of a relationship between ESG Rating and ROE. Here, p value (>0.05), fail to reject the null hypothesis for ROE. This means there is not enough evidence to conclude that ESG scores are correlated with ROE. The absence of a substantial correlation between ROE and ESG scores suggests that the factors driving ROE (like profitability, leverage, and short-term performance) might not align closely with those influencing ESG ratings (like

long-term sustainability and stakeholder engagement).

- **EPS (₹):** From the table 2, the R² value indicates that 45% of the variance in EPS is explained by the model. The unstandardised coefficient (B) suggests that for each unit increase in ESG Rating, EPS increases by ₹1.35. This relationship is significant, as indicated by the p value ($0.03 < 0.05$).

Regression equation for EPS (₹):

$$\text{EPS (₹)} = -33.79 + 1.35 (\text{ESG Rating}) + \epsilon$$

This equation suggests that for every one-unit increase in ESG Rating, EPS increases by ₹1.35, with an intercept of -₹33.79 when the ESG Rating is zero. Here, p value is $0.03 < 0.05$, which specifies that the correlation between ESG ratings and EPS is statistically substantial, and thus rejects the null hypothesis. This means there is significant evidence that ESG ratings are correlated with EPS. The correlation between EPS and ESG ratings can be attributed to the various ways in which strong ESG practices positively influence a bank's financial health and operational performance. This includes enhanced reputation, cost efficiencies, better risk management, and stronger investor confidence, all of which can contribute to higher earnings and, subsequently, a higher EPS.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the strength of the correlation between ESG scores and financial performance metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS) between public and private sector banks in India.

Table 3. The correlation coefficients (r) between ESG ratings and each financial performance metric for both public and private sector banks.

Sector	ESG vs. ROA	ESG vs. ROE	ESG vs. EPS
Public Sector Bank	0.853 (p> 0.05)	0.878 (p< 0.05)	0.763 (p> 0.13)
Private Sector Bank	-0.681 (p> 0.05)	-0.894 (p< 0.05)	-0.501 (p> 0.05)

Source: Author's analysis using SPSS.



The table 3 describes the correlation between ESG ratings and financial metrics such as ROA, ROE, and EPS. Here, the R-value signifies the strength and direction of the correlation. And p value indicates the statistical significance.

Public Sector Banks:

ESG vs. ROA: There is a solid positive correlation between ESG ratings and ROA in PSBs. However, since the p value is greater than 0.05, this correlation is not statistically substantial, so we cannot surely say that this relationship is not due to chance.

ESG vs. ROE: There is a very solid positive correlation between ESG ratings and ROE in PSBs. Since the p value is less than 0.05, this correlation is statistically substantial, indicating a likely meaningful relationship where higher ESG scores are connected with higher ROE.

ESG vs. EPS: There is a moderate positive correlation between ESG ratings and EPS in PSBs. However, with a p value greater than 0.13, this correlation is not statistically substantial, so we cannot surely assert a rela-

tionship between ESG ratings and EPS.

Private Sector Bank:

ESG vs. ROA: There is a moderate negative correlation between ESG ratings and ROA in private sector banks, meaning that higher ESG ratings tend to be associated with lower ROA. However, since the p value is greater than 0.05, this correlation is not statistically substantial, so we cannot be sure this relationship is not due to chance.

ESG vs. ROE: There is a strong negative correlation between ESG ratings and ROE in private sector banks, representing that higher ESG ratings are related with lower ROE. Since the p value is less than 0.05, this correlation is statistically substantial, suggesting a meaningful inverse relationship.

ESG vs. EPS: There is a moderate negative correlation between ESG scores and EPS in private sector banks, meaning that higher ESG scores tend to be associated with lower EPS. However, since the p value is greater than 0.05, this correlation is not statistically substantial, implying the relationship might be due to chance.

Table 4. Independent sample t-test.

Financial metric	Sector	Mean correlation	t-Value	df	p Value	Significanc
ROA	Public sector	0.85	2.56	18	0.03	Significant
	Private sector	-0.68				
ROE	Public sector	0.88	1.92	18	0.07	Not significant
	Private sector	-0.89				
EPS	Public sector	0.76	1.35	18	0.19	Not significant
	Private sector	-0.50				

Source: Author's analysis using SPSS.

ROA: From the above table 4, the p value of 0.03 indicates a statistically significant difference in the correlation between ESG ratings and ROA between public and private sector banks. The higher correlation for

PSBs suggests that ESG performance has a stronger impact on ROA for PSBs compared to private sector banks. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.



ROE: From the above table 4, the p value of 0.07 is not less than 0.05, signifying that the difference in correlation among ESG ratings and ROE between public and private sector banks is not statistically significant. However, the mean correlation for PSBs is higher, suggesting that ESG ratings may have a greater influence on ROE for PSBs, even though this result is not statistically significant. Hence, fails to reject the null hypothesis.

EPS: From the above table 4, the p value of 0.19 indicates that the difference in correlation between ESG ratings and EPS between public and private sector banks is not statistically substantial. However, the relationship between ESG ratings and EPS is slightly stronger in PSBs. Hence, fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Major Findings:

Impact of ESG integration on Financial Performance Metrics

- The positive correlation between ROA and ESG rating indicates that banks with higher ESG ratings achieve better operational efficiency. Integrating ESG factors into the operational framework of banks can lead to improved financial outcomes.
- The absence of a substantial correlation between ROE and ESG ratings indicates that the financial drivers contributing to ROE – such as profitability, leverage, and a focus on short-term returns – may not fully align with the principles underlying ESG ratings, which emphasise long-term-sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and ethical governance.
- The study revealed a significant positive correlation among ESG scores and EPS, representing that banks with higher ESG scores tend to have better EPS. This suggests a strong link between ESG performance and financial health. Strong ESG

practices are associated with improvements in a bank's operational efficiency, risk management, and cost structure, which can directly influence financial performance and lead to higher earnings, contributing to increased EPS.

Correlation between ESG ratings and financial performance metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS).

- PSBs show a higher correlation, suggesting that ESG performance has a stronger impact on ROA in PSBs compared to private sector banks.
- The correlations between ESG ratings and ROE, as well as EPS, between public and private sector banks are not statistically significant. While PSBs show a higher mean correlation for both ROE and EPS, the results do not provide enough evidence to confirm that ESG ratings have a stronger effect on these metrics. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected only for ROA, but not for ROE and EPS.

Conclusion

The analysis of the relationship among ESG scores and financial performance metrics (ROA, ROE, and EPS) reveals several key insights. First, the significant relationship between ROA and ESG ratings indicates that banks with higher ESG ratings demonstrate better operational efficiency. This underscores the value of integrating ESG factors into the operational strategies of banks, which can lead to enhanced financial outcomes, particularly in terms of operational efficiency. On the other hand, the lack of substantial relationship among ROE and ESG ratings recommends that the factors driving ROE – such as profitability, leverage, and short-term financial goals – may not be fully aligned with the long-term and sustainability-focused nature of ESG ratings. This indicates that while ESG practices promote ethical governance and long-term sus-



tainability, they may not directly impact the profitability measures that are core to ROE. A strong link among ESG performance and financial health, suggesting that banks with higher ESG scores tend to have better EPS (Horobet et al., 2024). This can be attributed to the role of ESG practices in improving operational efficiency, risk management, and cost structure, which directly contributes to better financial performance and higher earnings.

The study also reveals that PSBs exhibit a stronger connection between ESG ratings and ROA compared to private sector banks, indicating that ESG factors may have a more pronounced impact on operational efficiency in PSBs. However, the correlations between ESG ratings and ROE, as well as EPS, for both public and private sector banks are not statistically substantial. While PSBs show higher mean correlations for these metrics, there is insufficient evidence to confirm that ESG ratings have a stronger effect on ROE and EPS.

Limitations of the Study:

- The availability of ESG data limits the study, as the website provides access only

to the most recent ESG scores, and historical scores for earlier years are not publicly accessible

- The study evaluates financial performance using only ROA, ROE, and EPS. Other important performance indicators, such as Net Interest Margin, Market Valuation measures, or Risk-adjusted returns, were not incorporated, which may limit the holistic assessment of bank performance.

Future Research Scope:

- Future studies incorporating broader financial performance measures, such as Net Interest Margin, ROCE, CASA, and Cost to income ratio to get a comprehensive assessment of financial implications of ESG integration.
- Future studies may extend the analysis beyond public and private sector banks to include cooperative banks, small finance banks, NBFCs, and insurance companies.
- Since ESG initiatives may generate benefits over a longer horizon, future research may consider longer time frames to evaluate the sustained financial impact of ESG strategies.

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Analysis of Linear Relations in India's Exports Using Arima Model

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Received: 14/08/2025

Revised: 25/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

Global trade has undergone significant changes over the past several decades. USA, UAE, Netherlands, UK, and Singapore reached themselves as key players in world export market. Meanwhile, countries like China, Russia, UAE, USA and Iraq dominated the global import market.

In 2025, the trade figure shows a rising trend in export and import of both goods and services. The analysis of linear relationship in India's exports is vital for understanding the underlying pattern and predicting future performance. This study focuses on identifying significant factors influencing the export performance of India. It further analyses the linear relation in India's exports and develops an ARIMA model to forecast exports. The value of Indian exports in rupees from January 2016 to December 2023 was used for the study.

Keywords: Linear Relation, Export Performance, ARIMA, Forecasting, ACF, PACF, Stationarity

Introduction

In the modern world with the advent of globalisation the interdependence of various economies intensified. International trade serves as a keystone for an open economy. International trade refers to the exchange of goods, services and capital between countries. Import and export of products and services, which are bought and then sold across international boundaries, foster economic growth, specialisation, and promotes interconnectedness and cooperation among economies.

In 2022, world merchandise trade has experienced a 12% increase, reaching a total of 25.26 trillion US dollars. It is slower than the remarkable 27% rebound in 2021 after a 5.3% decline in 2020. When sectoral growth is considered, this represents a 32% increase compared to the pre-Covid-19 levels. The

energy sector showed rapid growth, with the fuel trade soared by 61% in 2022, ultimately due to rising energy prices. Agricultural products trade increased by 7% automotive product by 6% clothing by 9% and manufactured goods by 7% when compared to previous year (TRADESTAT, n.d.).

In 2022, the global commercial service trade grew by 15% reaching a value of 6.8 trillion US dollars. Services include transportation, tourism, goods-related services, and computer services. Transport sector experienced a 25% increase in trade, surpassing 40% above 2019 levels. However, tourism sector remained below pre-pandemic levels. The appreciation of US dollar against major currencies led to slower growth of services. The growth rate of a category encompassing various types of services decreased from 13% in 2021 to 2% in 2022. Depreciation



in the value of Euro and the British Pound affected global financial services. Compared to pre-pandemic level, computer services emerged as a dynamic sector surging by 45%. It was the effect of pandemic-driven demand for online learning, working, entertainment, cloud services, cyber security, etc. Ireland stood out as a leading exporter of computer services (*World Bank Open Data, n.d.*).

The global GDP has shown consistent growth over the past four decades, more than four times from 1980 to 2022. This upward trend reflects the expansion of economies worldwide, driven by factors such as technological advancements, increased trade and population growth.

In the case of India, in 1980 the GDP was \$ 186.33 billion. By 1990, it was increased to \$320.95 billion. From 2000 to 2022, the GDP registered a substantial and consistent growth trend over the years, especially in the recent years leading up to 2022, reaching \$3.42 trillion.

Statement of Problem

Accurate export forecasting is a key component of sound economic policy, which is increasingly hindered by the inherent complexity and volatility of international trade. Traditional methods of export forecasting, which often rely on annual data, struggle to capture the rapid fluctuations in monthly export values. This limitation undermines the ability of businesses and policymakers to make timely and informed decisions regarding trade. Moreover, the 'AmritKaal policy', introduced by the Government of India in 2022 with the aim of achieving a high-growth trajectory and strengthening the economy, places significant emphasis on improving economic resilience and enhancing export performance.

The AutoRegressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model offers a promising solution to this issue. By analysing historical data, ARIMA can effectively capture the un-

derlying trends, seasonal variations, and cyclical patterns in monthly export values, providing more accurate and timely forecasts. In the context of AmritKaal's goals namely, boosting exports, promoting economic stability, and facilitating sustainable growth—the effective use of ARIMA for export forecasting could significantly improve policy implementation and trade decision-making. However, the challenge lies in adapting ARIMA to account for the complexity of international trade and the rapid, unpredictable changes in monthly export data.

A substantial body of literature has applied time series and econometric models to analyse forecasting behaviour across trade, agriculture, and macroeconomic variables. Several studies have employed ARIMA and its extensions following the Box–Jenkins framework, using ACF and PACF for model identification and information criteria for model selection. For instance, As'ad (2012) applied ARIMA to forecast daily peak electricity demand and evaluated model performance using RMSE and MAPE, demonstrating strong predictive capability. Similarly, Goyal et al. (2021) used an ARIMA (0,1,1) model to forecast agricultural exports, confirming that short-run persistence captured through ARIMA improves forecast accuracy. Prasad and Choubey (2018) employed ARIMA (0,1,3) with residual diagnostic checks, while Paul & Das (2010) used ARIMA (1,2,1) supported by AIC, BIC, and error metrics to model inland fish production.

Several studies highlight the importance of seasonal and stochastic dynamics. Chandran and Pandey (2007) applied SARIMAX to analyse seasonal price fluctuations in potatoes, while Paul et al. (2013) used SARIMAX models to forecast meat exports, confirming the presence of seasonal persistence. Saz (2011) similarly demonstrated the effectiveness of SARIMA in forecasting inflation. Studies such as (Tektaş, 2010) compared ARIMA with ANFIS and found that hybrid



approaches improve predictive performance when nonlinearities are present.

Recent literature increasingly emphasises hybrid and machine learning approaches. Dave et al. (2021) combined SARIMAX, ARIMA, and LSTM models to forecast Indonesian exports and found that hybrid models produced lower RMSE and MAPE values compared to individual models. Grewal and Daneshyari (2022) also demonstrated superior predictive accuracy of LSTM models based on lower MSE values, while Costantello et al. (2021) employed machine learning techniques with panel econometric methods to forecast imports across European countries. These findings suggest that while traditional models capture linear temporal dependence effectively, advanced models may better capture nonlinear dynamics.

In addition to forecasting studies, some research has focused on growth and structural analysis. Thomas and Sheikh (2010) examined the growth performance of India's agricultural exports using CAGR, while Olajide et al. (2012) explored the relationship between agricultural resources and economic growth. Paul (2010) applied stochastic modelling to analyse wholesale fish prices, demonstrating the usefulness of time series approaches in commodity markets.

Volatility modelling has also received attention in the literature. Anusha et al. (2020) applied ARIMA, ARCH, and GARCH models along with neural networks to forecast spice exports, while Mishra et al. 2017 and Paul et al. (2009) used GARCH models to capture volatility in trade data, highlighting the importance of modelling conditional heteroskedasticity in highly volatile series.

Overall, the reviewed literature shows that while a variety of models including ARIMA, SARIMA, GARCH, machine learning, and hybrid approaches have been applied depending on data characteristics and objectives, most studies emphasise model

identification through ACF/PACF, selection using information criteria, and validation through forecast accuracy measures. However, despite extensive application of ARIMA and related models across commodities and sectors, much of the existing literature focuses on specific products such as spices, fish, meat, or agricultural commodities, with relatively limited studies examining recent high-frequency aggregate export data for India. Moreover, while many studies report forecast accuracy measures, fewer provide comprehensive diagnostic evaluation alongside updated datasets.

Research Gap

In this context, this study contributes to the literature by analysing aggregate monthly export data for India using a systematic Box–Jenkins approach with recent data (2016–2023). By emphasising temporal dependence, conducting residual diagnostics, and evaluating forecast accuracy, the study provides updated empirical evidence on export dynamics and short-term forecasting performance, thereby extending existing research that largely focuses on commodity-specific analysis.

The concept of linear relationship in the context of ARIMA modelling refers to the dependence of the export series on its own past values and past random disturbances. The autoregressive (AR) component captures the linear relationship between current export changes and their lagged values, while the moving average (MA) component reflects the linear dependence on past shocks or innovations. Therefore, the ARIMA framework assumes that the dynamics of exports follow a linear stochastic process, enabling the identification of persistence and adjustment patterns over time.

Objectives of the study

The primary objective of the study is to analyse the linear relations in India's exports using the ARIMA model.



Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, utilising monthly secondary data on India's exports from January 2016 to December 2023 obtained from the official dashboard of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. The analysis employs econometric techniques, including the ADF-GLS unit root test for stationarity testing. Model identification is carried out using Autocorrelation Function (ACF) and Partial Autocorrelation Function (PACF) plots, while model selection is supported by Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). The parameters are estimated within the ARIMA framework, followed by diagnostic checking using residual normality test (Chi-square test), Ljung-Box Q test for autocorrelation, and ARCH LM test for heteroskedasticity. Forecast accuracy is evaluated using Root Mean Square Error (RMSE), Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE), and Theil's U statistic. All statistical analyses are conducted using GRET software.

Significance of the study

This study's significance is in the context of the Amrit Kaal policy because one of the central objectives of the policy is to strengthen India's economic growth through enhanced export performance and global competitiveness. Since exports play a crucial role in achieving higher GDP growth, foreign exchange stability, and trade balance improvement, accurate forecasting of export trends becomes essential for evidence-based policymaking. The policy focuses on driving economic growth through improved resilience and enhanced export performance, with an emphasis on data-driven decision-making. By aligning ARIMA-based forecasting with the objectives of Amrit Kaal, this study can contribute to more effective policy implementation and better trade-related de-

cision-making. It can also help identify the specific factors influencing export performance, thereby enabling targeted interventions to address challenges and capitalise on opportunities within global markets.

Ultimately, the study uncovers linear relationships in India's export series, particularly the presence of persistence and dependence on past values and shocks, as captured through the ARIMA framework. The findings indicate that current export performance is influenced by its historical patterns and past innovations, highlighting the dynamic nature of export movements over time. These insights can inform both private sector planning and government trade strategies by improving understanding of export volatility and predictability. By enhancing export forecasting accuracy, the study supports broader economic objectives, such as sustained growth, employment generation, and stronger global market integration, which align with the vision of the Government of India under the Amrit Kaal period.

Scope of the study

This study focuses on predicting India's exports using monthly historical export data from 2016 January to 2023 December obtained from Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. The scope is limited to analysing the statistical properties of the export series, including stationarity, persistence, and dependence on past values, using the ARIMA framework. The study focuses on model development and short-term forecasting (2024–2025) rather than establishing causal relationships with other macroeconomic variables. The model developed as part of the study can be effectively used for forecasting India's exports, benefiting the government, financial institutions, exporters, and other stakeholders.

Limitations of the study

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the analysis relies on a univariate ARI-



MA framework, which considers only past values of exports and does not incorporate other macroeconomic determinants, such as exchange rate, inflation, or global demand that may influence export performance. Second, the study uses monthly data from January 2016 to December 2023, which limits the sample size and may not fully capture long-term structural changes in India's export patterns. Third, the model assumes continuity of past patterns, and therefore sudden structural breaks, policy shifts, or external shocks cannot be effectively captured. Additionally, the forecasts are limited to the short term (2024–2025), and predictive accuracy may decline over longer horizons. The use of aggregate export data may also mask sector-specific variations, and minor deviations from normality in residuals may slightly affect the precision of forecast intervals.

Results of the study

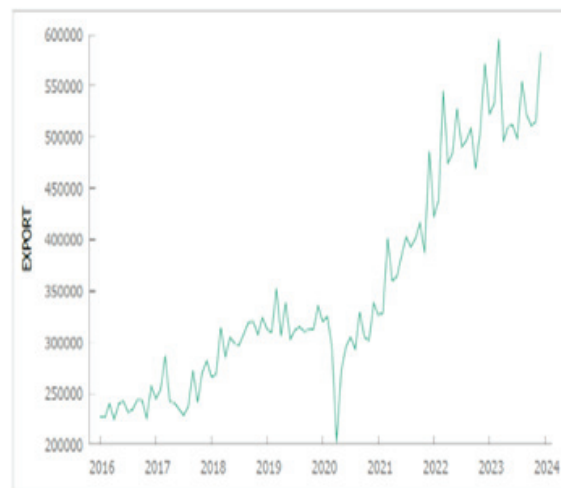
The results of the summary statistics show that the series shows an average value of $3.52\text{E}+05$ with a median of $3.13\text{E}+05$, indicating moderate central tendency within the range of $2.03\text{E}+05$ to $5.96\text{E}+05$. The standard deviation of $1.06\text{E}+05$ and coefficient of variation of 0.301 suggest moderate variability in export values over the study period. The distribution is positively skewed (0.7001) with slightly platykurtic behaviour (excess kurtosis -0.78578).

Table 1. Summary statistics 2016:01 2023:12 for the variable 'EXPORT' (96 valid observations).

Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum
$3.52\text{E}+05$	$3.13\text{E}+05$	$2.03\text{E}+05$	$5.96\text{E}+05$
Std. Dev.	C.V.	Skewness	Ex. kurtosis
$1.06\text{E}+05$	0.30142	0.7001	-0.78578
5% Perc.	95% Perc.	IQ range	Missing obs.
$2.27\text{E}+05$	$5.46\text{E}+05$	$1.63\text{E}+05$	0

Sources: Secondary data.

For analysing the trend of India's export, a time series plot was developed with year in 'x' axis and value in 'y' axis, as shown in Figure 1.



Sources: Secondary data.

Figure 1. India's exports from January 2016 to December 2023.

India's exports show an increasing trend over the period, but it is severely affected by Covid-19.

From the summary statistics and time series plot, it is clear that the data should be made stationary for subsequent analysis.

For testing stationarity, the Unit Root Test, namely the ADF-GLS test, was applied to obtain more efficient stationarity results by applying GLS detrending before testing for a unit root and results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Augmented Dickey–Fuller (ADF-GLS) unit root test results for India's exports.

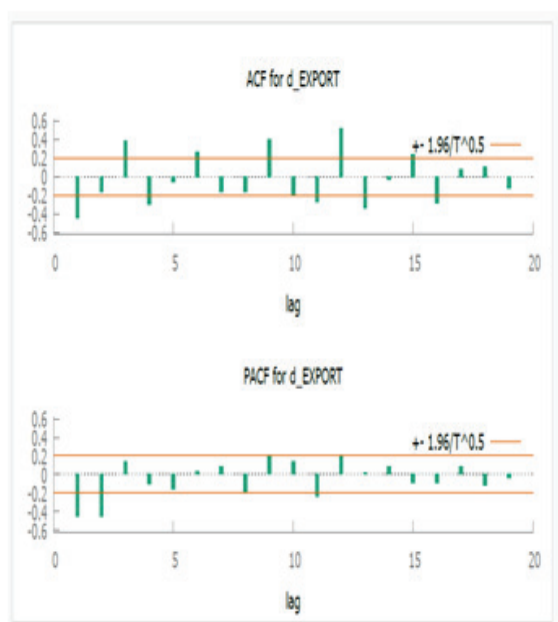
Variable	Test statistic (τ)	p - Value	Autocorrelation (e_t)	Conclusion (e_t)
EX-PORT	0.641492	0.94	0.074	Non-stationary
d_EX-PORT	-15.5198	0	-0.220	Stationary

Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.



The ADF-GLS test results indicate that the EXPORT series is non-stationary at level since the p-value (0.940) is greater than 0.05, failing to reject the unit root null hypothesis. The exports after first difference show a p-value 0.000, so that the data become stationary and can be used for forecasting. ARIMA uses a p, d, q approach for forecasting.

First-order differencing is used for making the data stationary. So 'd' is 1. The Auto Correlation Function (ACF) and Partial Auto Correlation Function (PACF) are calculated to get the values of 'p' and 'q'



Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.

Figure 2.Correlogram of first-differenced export plot (ACF AND PACF).

The ACF and PACF plots of the first differenced export series indicate short-run dependence with significant spikes at lower lags, suggesting the presence of both AR and MA components. In the ACF plot, most coefficients lie within the 95% confidence bands, indicating stationarity of the differenced series, while a few significant spikes suggest short-term dependence and the presence of MA components. The gradual decay pattern indicates a mixed ARMA structure

rather than a pure MA process. In the PACF plot, significant spikes appear mainly at the initial lags, showing short-run AR effects, while later lags remain within the confidence bounds, suggesting that only a few AR terms are sufficient. Based on these patterns, several candidate models including ARIMA(1,1,1), ARIMA(1,1,3), ARIMA(1,1,4), ARIMA(2,1,1), ARIMA(2,1,3), and ARIMA(2,1,4) were selected for further evaluation to identify the best fitting model.

Table 3: ARIMA model estimation results.

ARIMA order	Log likelihood	AIC	BIC	Adj. R ²
(1,1,1)	-1110.16	2228.33	2238.55	0.925
(1,1,3)	-1107.13	2226.27	2241.59	0.928
(1,1,4)	-1105.63	2225.26	2243.14	0.93
(2,1,1)	-1104.73	2219.46	2232.23	0.932
(2,1,3)	-1097.25	2208.50	2226.37	0.942
(2,1,4)	-1097.21	2210.41	2230.85	0.942

Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.

The comparison of alternative ARIMA models shows that ARIMA(2,1,3) (Model 5) provides the best fit to the export data as it has the lowest AIC (2208.501) and BIC (2226.378) along with the highest adjusted R² (0.9426). Although ARIMA(2,1,4) has a similar log likelihood, it includes an insignificant MA(4) term and slightly higher information criteria values. Therefore, ARIMA(2,1,3) is selected as the optimal model for forecasting exports;



Evaluations of gradient: 25

Model 5: ARIMA, using observations 2016:02-2023:12 (T = 95)
 Estimated using AS 197 (exact ML)
 Dependent variable: (1-L) EXPORT
 Standard errors based on Hessian

	coefficient	std. error	z	p-value
const	3331.91	1281.65	2.600	0.0093 ***
phi_1	-0.991208	0.0226255	-43.81	0.0000 ***
phi_2	-0.987877	0.0161187	-61.29	0.0000 ***
theta_1	0.422207	0.101254	4.170	3.05e-05 ***
theta_2	0.502480	0.0950912	5.284	1.26e-07 ***
theta_3	-0.434480	0.101498	-4.281	1.86e-05 ***
Mean dependent var	3745.305	S.D. dependent var	34814.57	
Mean of innovations	47.74900	S.D. of innovations	24725.03	
R-squared	0.945073	Adjusted R-squared	0.942631	
Log-likelihood	-1097.251	Akaike criterion	2208.501	
Schwarz criterion	2226.378	Hannan-Quinn	2215.725	
	Real	Imaginary	Modulus	Frequency
AR				
Root 1	-0.5017	-0.8721	1.0061	-0.3331
Root 2	-0.5017	0.8721	1.0061	0.3331
MA				
Root 1	-0.4838	-0.9217	1.0409	-0.3269
Root 2	-0.4838	0.9217	1.0409	0.3269
Root 3	2.1241	0.0000	2.1241	0.0000

Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.

Figure 3. ARIMA (2,1,3) model estimation.

The estimated ARIMA (2,1,3) model for the first differenced export series is expressed as:

$$\Delta \text{EXPORT}_t = 3331.91 - 0.991208 \Delta \text{EXPORT}_{t-1} - 0.987877 \Delta \text{EXPORT}_{t-2} + 0.422207 \varepsilon_{t-1} + 0.502480 \varepsilon_{t-2} - 0.434480 \varepsilon_{t-3} + \varepsilon_t$$

where;

ε_t represents the white noise error term.

The estimated ARIMA(2,1,3) model indicates that the first differenced export series is significantly influenced by both its past values and past shocks. The AR coefficients AR(1) (-0.9912) and AR(2) (-0.9879) are highly significant, suggesting strong persistence in export changes, where past movements have a substantial impact on current export growth. The MA terms MA(1) (0.4222), MA(2) (0.5025), and MA(3) (-0.4345) are also statistically significant, indicating that past random shocks play an important role in explaining short-run fluctuations in exports.

The constant term is positive and significant, implying a positive average change in exports over time.

The significant AR and MA coefficients obtained in the estimated ARIMA model confirm the presence of linear dependence in the export series, indicating that past values and past shocks systematically influence current export movements.

Table 4. Residual diagnostic test result of ARIMA(2,1,3).

Test	Statistic	p -Value	Conclusion
Normality (Chi-square)	40.356	0	Residuals not normally distributed
Ljung-Box Q (Autocorrelation)	13.9459	0.052	No significant autocorrelation
ARCH LM Test	4.4098	0.9749	No ARCH effect (homoscedastic)
Mean of residuals	47.749	-	Close to zero
Std. deviation	25544.8	-	Acceptable dispersion

Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.

The diagnostic tests confirm that the residuals behave like white noise, as evidenced by the insignificant Ljung-Box statistic and absence of ARCH effects, indicating no serial correlation and homoscedastic variance. Although the normality test rejects the null hypothesis of normal distribution, the residuals have a mean close to zero, suggesting that the model adequately captures the underlying data structure and is appropriate for forecasting.



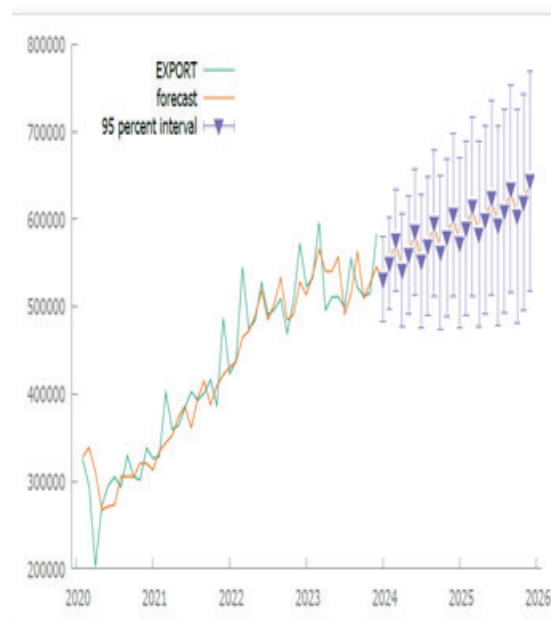
Export forecasts from January 2024 to December 2025

Based on the model developed the value of exports for the period 2024 and 2025 are shown in the table.

Table 5. Forecasted export values.

Year:month	Prediction	Std. error
2024:01	530,938.49	24,725.031
2024:02	549,309.62	26,923.733
2024:03	576,116.49	29,726.158
2024:04	541,322.92	32,785.466
2024:05	559,254.75	34,484.498
2024:06	585,778.39	36,709.918
2024:07	551,699.53	39,220.782
2024:08	569,202.72	40,660.616
2024:09	595,445.18	42,560.703
2024:10	562,068.47	44,737.933
2024:11	579,153.46	46,013.143
2024:12	605,116.81	47,697.346
2025:01	572,429.90	49,644.049
2025:02	589,106.88	50,803.128
2025:03	614,793.21	52,330.627
2025:04	582,783.94	54,105.664
2025:05	599,062.90	55,177.326
2025:06	624,474.33	56,584.382
2025:07	593,130.73	58,225.099
2025:08	609,021.44	59,227.982
2025:09	634,160.11	60,538.714
2025:10	603,470.43	62,070.566
2025:11	618,982.43	63,017.562
2025:12	643,850.48	64,248.976

Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.



Sources: Authors calculation based on secondary data.

Figure 4. Export trend and forecast with 95% confidence intervals.

The forecast results indicate a generally upward trend in export values over the forecast horizon from January 2024 to December 2025. The predicted export level starts at approximately 530,938 in January 2024 and gradually increases, reaching around 643,850 by December 2025, suggesting expected growth in export performance over time. The standard errors increase steadily across the forecast period, reflecting rising uncertainty as the forecast horizon extends, which is typical in time series forecasting. Correspondingly, the 95% confidence intervals widen over time, indicating greater variability in long-term predictions compared to short-term forecasts.

Overall, the forecasts suggest moderate growth with short-term fluctuations, while the widening confidence bands imply that the forecasts are more reliable in the near term than in the distant future.

**Table 6.** Forecast evaluation.

Metric	Value
Mean error (ME)	47.749
Root mean squared error (RMSE)	24725
Mean absolute error (MAE)	16752
Mean percentage error (MPE)	-0.61553
Mean absolute percentage error (MAPE)	4.8682
Theil's U2	0.73434

The forecast accuracy measures indicate that the model performs well with relatively low forecast errors. The MAPE of 4.87% suggests high forecasting accuracy, while Theil's U2 value below 1 indicates that the model outperforms a naïve forecast. The small mean error and negative MPE imply that the model forecasts are nearly unbiased with only slight underprediction.

10. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the ARIMA model effectively captures the underlying dynamics of the export series and provides reliable forecasts. ARIMA is based on the

assumption that time series data can be represented as a linear function of its past observations and error terms, making it suitable for analysing linear temporal dynamics. The results indicate a generally increasing trend in exports over the forecast period, with acceptable forecast accuracy and stable model diagnostics. The findings confirm the presence of linear dependence in India's export series, where current export movements are significantly influenced by their past values and past shocks. Linearity implies the proportional change between dependent and independent variables and temporal differences use these relations for predicting future trends. The ARIMA analysis helped in establishing the linear relationship in India's exports. the ARIMA model (2,1,3) developed as a result of the analysis can be very well used for predicting India's exports. The results of analysis show this. Residual diagnostic tests confirm absence of autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity, indicating that the model residuals behave as white noise despite slight deviation from normality. Therefore, the selected ARIMA model can be considered an appropriate tool for short-term export forecasting and can support planning and policy decisions related to trade performance.

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The Influence of Anchoring Bias on Financial Planning Among Government Employees

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Received: 12/08/2025

Revised: 18/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

Abstract

Financial planning is a systematic process through which individuals assess current financial resources and anticipate future needs to ensure long-term financial stability. Although traditional financial theories assume rational decision-making, real-world financial behaviour is often influenced by cognitive biases, particularly anchoring bias. Anchoring occurs when individuals rely excessively on the first piece of information they receive and use it as a reference point for subsequent decisions. This tendency is especially relevant among government employees, who typically operate within structured salary systems and fixed financial benefits. Such stability may unintentionally reinforce reliance on initial financial information, leading to unrealistic financial expectations, suboptimal investment choices, and inadequate long-term planning. This study examines the influence of anchoring bias on the financial planning behaviour of government employees and its implications for their financial decision-making and future security. The findings reveal that initial financial information strongly shapes respondents' planning approaches, often resulting in negative financial outcomes due to overreliance on early reference points. Limited financial literacy, dependence on previous financial figures, and restricted exposure to diverse financial advice further increase susceptibility to anchoring bias. The study also highlights that anchoring significantly affects long-term goals such as retirement planning and future savings. Importantly, respondents acknowledge that financial education, regular evaluation of financial plans, and professional consultation can effectively reduce the adverse effects of anchoring bias and enhance long-term financial stability.

Keywords: Anchoring bias, Behavioural finance, Financial planning

Introduction

Financial planning is a crucial process for achieving long-term financial stability and success. It involves setting financial goals, creating strategies to meet those goals, and making informed decisions about investments, savings, and expenditures (Jain, 2024). Effective financial planning can enable individuals to prepare for future needs, manage risks, and secure their financial well-being over time. At its core, financial planning involves assessing one's current financial situation, determining

short- and long-term objectives, and developing a comprehensive plan to achieve those objectives (Hani, 2020). It requires a systematic approach to budgeting, investing, and managing debt. Proper financial planning not only helps in reaching personal financial goals but also in navigating unforeseen financial challenges. However, cognitive biases, such as anchoring bias, can have a big impact on the financial planning process of individuals. When people make decisions based on a single piece of information, it's



known as anchoring bias (Dervishaj,2021). Decisions made in financial planning can be impacted by anchoring biases, which may include understating necessity, risk, and value. This may lead to insufficient savings, inefficient use of resources, or a failure to adapt plans to financial conditions. This issue is particularly relevant among government employees, who often operate within a unique financial context characterised by stable incomes, structured benefits, and job security. To create more useful tactics and interventions to assist people especially government employees, in making more reliable and well-informed financial decisions, it is essential to understand the effect of anchoring bias on financial planning Weixiang et al., (2022). This study intends to investigate these dynamics in detail, with a particular emphasis on the difficulties encountered by government employees as a result of anchoring biases. The influence of these biases on their financial decision-making and the general effectiveness of their financial planning procedures. By focusing on these areas, the study intends to provide insightful information that would help government employees make better financial plans without the intervention of behavioural biases.

Review Of Literature

Sreeraj (2025), examines how anchoring bias affects stock market investment choices by gathering data from stock traders in the Ernakulam district. Employing a descriptive research methodology and analysis via SPSS, the research reveals a noteworthy positive correlation between anchoring bias and decision-making in investments. The findings suggest that investors frequently depend on initial information, recent data, and well-known stocks, particularly when under time constraints, which reinforces anchoring behaviour. Additionally, factors such as investment experience and risk tolerance further enhance the impact of anchoring bias on decision-making.

Baulkaran and Jain (2024),investigates whether financial planners exhibit common behavioural biases and how these biases influence their recommendations for using home equity to fund retirement income. This study identifies that different factors contribute to various behavioural biases, and these biases also affect the ranking of retirement income strategies, with planners prone to mental accounting or gambler's fallacy prioritising selling investments, while those with loss aversion prefer selling and down-sizing.

Kurnia Sari et al., (2024),synthesised evidence from 30 empirical studies examining the influence of anchoring, framing, and overconfidence biases on millennial investment decisions, with particular emphasis on anchoring bias. The findings collectively indicate that anchoring plays a prominent role in shaping investment behaviour, as millennials frequently rely on initial information, such as past purchase prices or first-encountered stock values- when making buy or sell decisions. This reliance often persists even when current market conditions or updated information suggest alternative actions. Most studies report a positive and significant effect of anchoring bias on investment decisions, highlighting investors' tendency to trust initial reference points. However, a few studies note that this effect weakens when investors possess strong technical knowledge and actively process market information.

Tanukharand Sujata Kapoor (2024), examines how behavioural biases impact financial professionals' forecasting and decision-making processes. While previous studies have often focused on well-developed financial markets, this research provides insights into professionals in emerging markets, such as institutional investors, portfolio managers, investment advisors, and financial analysts. The study finds that behavioural biases influence decision-making, revealing that financial professional's forecasts are not always



rational but are often bounded or irrational due to these biases.

Ceravolo et al., (2022), try to find out the impact of visual anchoring on financial decision-making by analysing how subjects process information in Payment Account Fees Information Documents (FID). Through eye-tracking technology, the research examines whether subjects anchor their evaluations to specific items, such as the Annual Fee prominently displayed at the top of the document, and how this affects their financial choices. The findings indicate that subjects tend to focus on the Annual Fee, potentially leading to biased decisions and overlooking more advantageous options.

Jinesh et al., (2022), highlight the need for a more comprehensive exploration of behavioural biases in investment decisions. To address this gap, the study develops a reliable and valid scale for measuring various behavioural biases affecting investors' decision-making processes. The research identifies behavioural biases as a multidimensional phenomenon with several distinct dimensions, including: availability bias, representativeness bias, overconfidence bias, market factors, herding, anchoring, mental accounting, regret aversion, gamblers' fallacy, and loss aversion.

Madaan and Singh (2019), explores the influence of behavioural biases on investment decisions among individual investors in the National Stock Exchange. The results reveal that overconfidence and herding bias significantly impact investment decisions. The study highlights that individual investors are often limited in their knowledge and prone to psychological errors.

Research Gap

Existing studies have extensively examined anchoring bias in stock market investors, millennials, and financial professionals,

primarily within trading, investment, or advisory contexts. While these studies confirm the significant influence of anchoring on investment decisions, they largely overlook salaried and institutionally protected groups such as government employees, whose financial behaviour may differ due to stable income, fixed benefits, and long-term planning horizons. Moreover, prior research focuses more on short-term investment choices rather than holistic financial planning and long-term financial stability. There is also limited empirical evidence linking anchoring bias to specific financial planning challenges faced by government employees. Hence, a clear research gap exists in understanding how anchoring bias affects the financial planning decisions and long-term financial stability of government employees, particularly within the Indian context.

Statement of the Problem

In the area of financial planning, behavioural biases have been recognised as significant factors influencing the decision-making processes and outcomes. Anchoring bias is a cognitive phenomenon where individuals depend heavily on initial information or reference points while making financial decisions. In the case of government employees, due to a constant financial benefit, there is a chance of anchoring biases in their financial choices. As a result of these biases, their financial planning techniques may not be able to take advantage of the best financial possibilities. There are not many studies that focus specifically on how anchoring bias influences government employees' financial planning. It is essential to comprehend the outcomes and consequences of anchoring bias in government employees to create personalised financial awareness and advising services. In order to fill the gap, this study examines the impact of anchoring bias on government employees' financial planning.



Significance of the Study

Understanding the effect of anchoring biases among government employees is essential for developing financial education and advisory services that can be helpful to their specific financial needs. This study aims to bridge a research gap in the field by examining the impact of anchoring bias on the financial planning and decision-making processes of government employees. The study intends to provide insights that might lead to improved financial strategies and longer-term financial stability for government employees through an evaluation of current financial planning techniques and effectiveness in light of these biases. We can eventually promote financial stability and improve financial results for this particular set of people by addressing the influence of anchoring bias.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the influence of anchoring bias in the financial planning and decision-making of government employees.
2. To examine the challenges faced by government employees in financial planning due to anchoring biases
3. To assess the effect of anchoring bias on long-term financial stability among government employees.

Conceptual Model

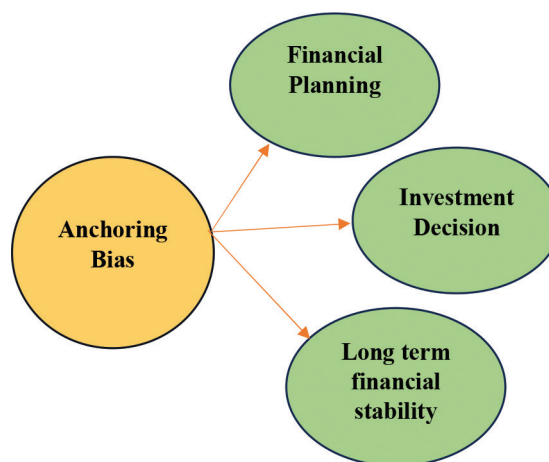
The study's conceptual framework suggests that government employees' financial planning, investment decision, and long-term financial stability are affected by anchoring bias.

Independent variable

1. Anchoring bias

Dependent variables

1. Financial planning
2. Investment decision
3. Long-term financial stability



Hypotheses

H1: Anchoring bias influences financial planning and decision-making of government employees.

H2: Anchoring bias has a strong effect on long-term financial stability.

Scope of the Study

This study was conducted among government employees working in Thiruvananthapuram district. Here, the scope includes investigating the anchoring bias present in financial planning among government employees and challenges faced by them due to the anchoring bias, and also assessing the effect of anchoring bias on long-term financial stability among government employees.

Limitation of the Study

The study has some limitations with respect to time, sampling method, and sample size. Due to time constraints, only 50 respondents were selected as the sample, and the selection was purely based on convenience from within Thiruvananthapuram district.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of anchoring bias on the financial planning behaviour of government employees. The descriptive approach helps in understanding the characteristics and perceptions of



respondents, while the analytical approach facilitates the examination of relationships among key variables related to behavioural bias and financial decision-making.

This research gathered data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected directly from government personnel using a self-designed questionnaire tailored specifically for this study. This questionnaire featured statements evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, enabling respondents to express their views and perceptions ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. Secondary data were sourced from a diverse array of both published and unpublished materials, including research articles, books, journals, reports, and pertinent online resources to bolster the theoretical framework and enhance the contextual understanding of the study.

This study's sample size consisted of 50 government employees chosen from Thiruvanthapuram district. Data collection utilised a non-probability sampling approach, specifically the convenience sampling method, owing to limitations related to accessibility and time. The information gathered through the questionnaire was analysed with the help of statistical tools. Descriptive statistical methods like averages and weighted means were used to summarise the participants' opinions, while correlation analysis assessed the relationship between anchoring bias and financial planning behaviour.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.850	4

The reliability analysis indicates a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.850 for the four items included in the scale. This value exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, demonstrating high internal consistency among the items used to measure the

construct. It suggests that the statements in the questionnaire are well correlated and consistently capture the underlying concept being studied. The results confirm that the measurement scale is reliable and dependable for further statistical analysis. Therefore, the items can be confidently used to assess respondents' perceptions related to the study variables, and the findings derived from this scale are likely to be stable and credible.

Behavioural Bias

Behavioural bias refers to a systematic deviation from rational judgment or decision-making. It is due to psychological influences, emotions, or cognitive shortcuts. These biases are not random but are often consistent across individuals (Polychronakis, 2023). Behavioural biases can be categorised into two broad types: cognitive biases and emotional biases. Cognitive biases arise through errors in information processing, like overgeneralization or anchoring, where individuals rely too heavily on an initial piece of information when making decisions (Haselton et al., 2015). Emotional biases, on the other hand, are driven by feelings and impulses, such as fear, greed, or regret, which can lead to irrational behaviour even when an individual is aware of better options. Understanding behavioural biases is essential in fields like finance, healthcare, and public policy because these biases often lead individuals to act against their own best interests (Ewert, 2020). Recognising and mitigating their effects can help improve decision-making processes and promote better financial planning. Anchoring bias is a cognitive bias where an individual relies too heavily on the first piece of information they encounter, even if the information is irrelevant or misleading (Azzopardi, 2021). This initial reference point significantly influences subsequent judgments and evaluations, often leading to skewed or irrational outcomes. It highlights



how our minds tend to give disproportionate weight to early information, which can limit objectivity and lead to suboptimal choices (Chavan, 2024).

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study. The data were systematically coded, tabulated, and analysed using statistical tools with the help of SPSS, in line with the objectives of the research. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to examine the influence of anchoring bias on financial planning and decision-making of government employees. The results obtained from the analysis are discussed in detail to draw meaningful inferences, test the hypotheses, and relate the findings to the objectives of the study.

Table 1. Age-wise classification

Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 30	28	56
30-50	17	34
Above 50	5	10

Source: Primary data

For this study, the data were collected from 50 respondents. Among them, the majority of respondents, 54%, are male and 46% are female. The respondents belonged to age groups listed in Table 1.

Table 2. Year of services as Government employees

Year of services	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 5	25	50
5–10	4	8
10–15	8	16
15–20	3	6
Above 20	10	20

Source: Primary data

Half of the respondents come under the first category given in Table 2, having services of less than 5 years. Of the remaining respondents, 8% were in the second category and 16% were in the third group. Only 6% were included in the fourth category, and the remaining 20% were in the group having service duration of more than 20 years.

Table 3. Monthly Income-wise classification

Monthly income	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 50000	29	58
50000–100000	18	36
100000–150000	2	4
150000–200000	0	0
Above 200000	1	2

Source: Primary data

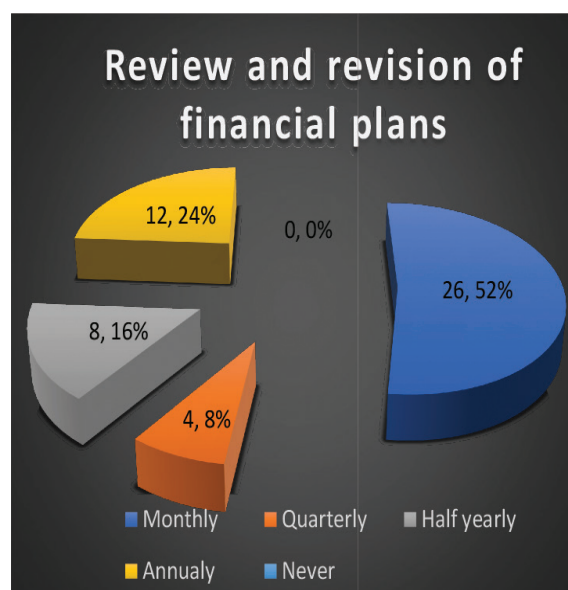


Figure 1 Review and revision regarding financial plans



From the respondents, the majority followed a structured financial plan, and 40% never followed a structured financial plan.

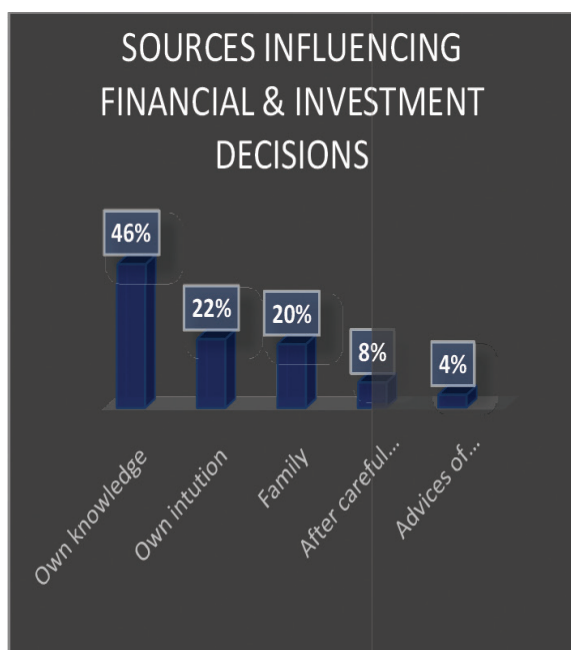


Figure 2. Sources influencing financial and investment decisions

Table 4. Factors making susceptible to anchoring bias

Sl. No	Factors	Weighted Mean1
1	Lack of financial literacy or knowledge	14
2	Over-reliance on previous financial information	13.8
3	Limited exposure to different financial advice	13.8
4	Stress or anxiety about financial stability	12.5
5	Organisational culture and policies	10.33

Source: Primary data

Most of the respondents highly agree that a lack of financial literacy or knowledge is an important factor, making them more susceptible to anchoring bias (Table 4). In addition, overreliance on previous financial information is another important reason, and limited exposure to different financial advice is another factor that makes them susceptible to anchoring bias.

Table 5. Influence of anchoring bias in financial planning

Sl. No	Factors	Weighted Mean1
1	Relying on initial financial information (e.g., previous salary, previous investment returns) while making decisions about my finances.	11.9
2	Financial planning decisions are influenced by the first piece of financial information they encounter, even if it may not be the most relevant or updated.	12.2
3	The first piece of information made a strong impact on my financial decisions.	11.5
4	The initial information received may lead to unrealistic financial plans	13.6
5	I experienced a financial decision that resulted in a negative outcome because I relied too heavily on initial financial information	13.5

Source: Primary data



Table 5 shows that most of the respondents believe that the first piece of information made a strong impact on their financial planning and decisions, and they experienced a negative outcome from their financial decisions due to overreliance on initial financial information. The initial information received led them to unrealistic financial plans. The result shows that H1 is accepted and which means that anchoring bias influences financial planning and decision-making of government employees.

Table 6. Challenges faced by government employees

Sl. no	Challenges	Weighted mean
1	Difficulty in saving money	11.2
2	Managing debt	11.13
3	Retirement planning	11.5
4	Investment decision	12.33
5	Budgeting	11.86

Source: *Primary data*

From Table 6, it is evident that the main difficulty faced by the government employees is related to investment decisions. Then they face challenges while planning their budget and planning their retirement.

Table 7: Effect of anchoring bias on long-term financial stability

Variables	Anchoring factor	Long-term effect
Anchoring factor	1	0.425**
Sig. (2-tailed)	–	0.009
N	50	50
Long-term effect	0.425**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	–
N	50	50

Source: *SPSS*

The correlation analysis indicates a moderate positive relationship between the anchoring factor and the long-term factor. The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.425$) shows that higher levels of anchoring are associated with stronger long-term considerations in financial decision-making. This relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p = 0.009$). With a sample size of 50 respondents, the results provide sufficient evidence to conclude that anchoring bias is meaningfully related to long-term factors, implying that individuals influenced by initial reference points tend to exhibit consistent patterns in their long-term financial planning behaviour. Based on Table 7, the majority of the respondents believe that anchoring bias affects their long-term financial goals, including retirement planning or savings for future expenses. Most of the respondents adjust their financial plans due to initial financial figures and state that financial education or training focused on awareness of behavioural biases improves long-term financial stability. Here the result supported H2, which states that anchoring bias has a strong effect on long-term financial stability among government employees.



Table 8 The strategies or actions to minimise the effects of anchoring bias in financial planning

Sl. no	Factors	Weighted mean
1	Financial education and training programmes	14.33
2	Regular financial check-ups or consultations with experts	19.33
3	Encouraging multiple reference points for decision-making	15
4	Mindfulness or stress-reduction techniques to avoid impulsive decisions	11.33
5	Analysing the outcome of existing financial plans and making corrections	15.33

Source: Primary data

Table 8 shows that most of the respondent's state that analysing the outcome of existing financial plans and making corrections will be the best step to reduce the effect of anchoring bias. Regular financial checkups and consultation with experts will help to minimise the effect of anchoring biases in financial planning. Financial education and training programmes will be an efficient step to reduce the effect of anchoring biases in financial planning.

Findings

- Among the respondents, 60% followed a structured financial plan and 40% never followed a structured financial plan.
- Most of the respondents were taking their financial and investment decisions based on their knowledge.

- Out of 50 respondents, 30% respondents are aware of the concept of anchoring biases, 60% have heard of it but not aware of the concept, and the remaining 10% are not aware of the concept of anchoring bias.
- According to the respondents, the lack of financial knowledge is the first challenge they face when making financial decisions.
- As government employees, they consider budgeting and retirement planning as other difficulties faced when making financial decisions.
- Most of the respondents (weighted mean 11.9) believe that the first piece of information made a strong impact on their financial planning and decisions.
- Also, 79% of the respondents experienced a negative outcome from their financial decisions due to overreliance on initial financial information.
- Most of the respondents (87%) recognise that the initial information received led them to unrealistic financial plans.
- Most of the respondents (weighted mean 14) highly agree that a lack of financial literacy or knowledge is an important factor, making them more susceptible to anchoring bias.
- Overreliance on previous financial information (weighted mean 13.8) is another important reason, and limited exposure to different financial advice (weighted mean 13.8) is another factor that makes them susceptible to anchoring bias.
- A vast majority (89%) of the respondents believe that anchoring bias affects their long-term financial goals, including retirement planning or savings for future expenses.



- Government employees adjust their financial plans due to initial financial figures.
- Most of the respondent's state that financial education or training focused on awareness of behavioural biases improves long-term financial stability with a weighted mean of 16.
- The majority of the respondents state that analysing the outcome of existing financial plans and making corrections will be the best step to reduce the effect of anchoring bias having a weighted mean of 19.33.
- Regular financial checkups and consultation with experts will help to minimise the effect of anchoring biases in financial planning.
- Financial education and training programmes will be an efficient step to reduce the effect of anchoring biases in financial planning.

Conclusion

Human beings are considered rational, but all of us face some difficulties while we make decisions. Cognitive and emotional factors influence our thinking process. From the analysis of data collected from government employees, it can be concluded that when they go through their financial planning and decision-making, they are subject to these cognitive and emotional biases. The study concludes that anchoring bias plays a significant role in shaping the financial planning and decision-making behaviour of government employees. Despite the presence of stable income and structured benefits, government employees are not immune to behavioural influences and often rely excessively on initial financial information such as past salary levels, previous investment returns, or early financial experiences. This overreliance limits their ability to adjust financial plans in response to changing economic conditions, personal needs, and long-

term goals. The findings clearly establish that anchoring bias affects both short-term financial choices and long-term financial stability, particularly in areas such as investment decisions, budgeting, and retirement planning. The study also highlights that limited financial literacy, dependence on outdated reference points, and insufficient exposure to professional financial advice increase susceptibility to anchoring bias. The statistically significant relationship between anchoring bias and long-term financial factors confirms that behavioural biases have enduring effects on financial outcomes. However, the results indicate that these effects can be mitigated through targeted financial education, regular review of financial plans, and professional consultation.

Practical Implications and Applications

The study has significant theoretical and policy implications. Academically, it extends behavioural finance literature by shifting the focus from investors and financial professionals to government employees, a relatively underexplored group with stable income and structured benefits. The findings confirm that anchoring bias not only influences short-term financial decisions but also has a meaningful impact on long-term financial stability, including retirement planning and future savings. For policymakers, the results highlight the importance of incorporating behavioural insights into employee welfare and financial well-being programmes. Financial advisory services designed for government employees should move beyond technical advice and explicitly address behavioural biases that affect planning effectiveness.

From a practical perspective, the study can be applied by government departments, financial institutions, and advisory bodies to design customised financial planning frameworks for government employees. Financial advisors can use the findings to adopt bias-aware advisory models that encourage



scenario analysis, comparison of alternatives, and continuous reassessment of financial goals. Digital financial planning tools and pension platforms can also integrate features that prompt users to reconsider initial assumptions and update plans based on current conditions. Overall, applying these insights can help government employees make more realistic financial plans, enhance long-term financial stability, and reduce the negative effects of anchoring bias on their financial well-being.

Future Directions

Future research may focus on using larger and more diverse samples across different regions and occupational groups to improve the generalisability of findings related to anchoring bias in financial planning. Em-

ploying probability sampling techniques and longitudinal research designs would help in understanding the long-term impact of anchoring bias on financial stability and retirement outcomes. Experimental and mixed-method approaches, including behavioural experiments and qualitative interviews, can provide deeper insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying anchoring bias. Further studies may also examine the interaction between anchoring bias and other behavioural biases such as loss aversion and overconfidence. Additionally, future research could evaluate the effectiveness of financial education programmes and behavioural interventions in reducing anchoring bias and improving long-term financial decision-making.

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Public Infrastructure Development and Land Prices: A Sustainable Development Perspective

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Received: 19/08/2025

Revised: 23/02/2026

Accepted: 26/02/2026

Abstract

This review article explores the intricate relationship between public infrastructure development and land prices from a sustainable development perspective. Examining various infrastructure projects such as transportation networks, urban development initiatives, and tourism infrastructure, the study investigates how these developments, particularly in terms of transportation facilities, accessibility, and connectivity, influence the spatial distribution and appreciation of land prices across diverse regions. By synthesising existing literature and empirical studies, the article illuminates the underlying mechanisms driving changes in land prices, considering factors such as accessibility, connectivity, land use policies, and socio-economic dynamics, while also addressing environmental sustainability, equity in land use, and long-term development impacts. Additionally, the review discusses the role of government interventions, regulatory frameworks, and community participation in shaping land valuation outcomes, ensuring alignment with sustainable development goals (SDGs). Through this comprehensive and interdisciplinary analysis, the article offers valuable insights for policy makers, urban planners, real estate developers, and researchers interested in understanding the complex interplay between public infrastructure development and sustainable land valuation.

Keywords: Public Infrastructure Development, Land Prices, Sustainable Development, Accessibility, Connectivity

Introduction

Public infrastructure development plays a pivotal role in shaping economic growth, urbanisation patterns, and regional development (Eberts, 1990). Governments and private stakeholders increasingly invest in infrastructure projects such as transportation networks, urban revitalisation programmes, and tourism infrastructure, which significantly impact land prices (Glumac et al., 2018). Land, as a finite resource, often ex-

periences notable value changes due to improved accessibility, connectivity, and utility stemming from these developments (Suzuki et al., 2015).

Understanding the relationship between infrastructure investments and land price dynamics is essential for achieving sustainable development. Infrastructure development is closely aligned with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Higgins, 2019). For instance, SDG 9 em-



phasises building resilient infrastructure and fostering innovation to drive sustainable industrialisation (Rockström et al., 2009). Similarly, SDG 11 focuses on creating inclusive and sustainable cities, highlighting the need for equitable land use and improved urban accessibility (Medda, 2012, Sachs et al., 2019). Additionally, SDG 13 underscores the importance of addressing climate impacts, ensuring that infrastructure projects align with long-term environmental sustainability goals (Du & Mulley, 2006).

However, while infrastructure projects offer immense opportunities for regional growth and urban transformation, they also pose significant challenges. These include displacement, environmental degradation, and increasing inequalities in land access and affordability (Wang et al., 2018). Addressing these challenges requires integrating SDG principles to promote equity, environmental stewardship, and community participation in planning and implementation processes.

Studies have shown the diverse impacts of infrastructure development on land value and socio-economic outcomes. For example, Mekuria et al. (2024) highlight the role of sustainable funding mechanisms, such as land value capture, in supporting infrastructure expansion while ensuring equitable benefits. Khasanah et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of risk analysis and community participation in mitigating the social and environmental challenges of infrastructure projects. Additionally, Miller et al. (2024) introduce engineering systems integration as a novel approach to optimise project delivery and financing, ensuring alignment with long-term sustainability goals. Zhong et al. (2024) underscore the dual nature of land finance, where increased land revenue supports rural infrastructure but over-reliance poses risks to equitable development.

This paper employs a bibliometric approach to explore the complex interplay between

public infrastructure development and land prices, focusing on the mechanisms driving these changes. By analysing a broad spectrum of academic literature and empirical studies, this bibliometric review identifies key factors such as accessibility, land use policies, socio-economic dynamics, and regulatory frameworks that influence the spatial distribution and appreciation of land values. Moreover, it highlights the critical role of government interventions, policy frameworks, and community participation in aligning these outcomes with the SDGs. Given the bibliometric nature of this study, the paper synthesises insights to address gaps in existing research and offers a holistic perspective on the topic. By providing actionable insights, it aims to assist policymakers, urban planners, and researchers in fostering sustainable and equitable land management practices in the context of public infrastructure development.

Methodology

The bibliometric dataset spans the period 1997–2025. Data were extracted from the Dimensions AI database, chosen for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed scientific literature and citation indexing. The search was conducted using the structured keyword string: ‘Public Infrastructure Development’ AND ‘Land Pricing.’ The search yielded an initial dataset of 167 documents ($N = 167$). To refine the dataset, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (Figure 1).

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Publications between 1997 and 2025.
- Studies directly addressing themes related to public infrastructure development and land pricing.

Exclusion criteria:

- Conference papers, book chapters, reports, and editorials.



- Duplicate records.
- Documents lacking complete bibliographic information.
- Studies not centrally aligned with the research focus.

Following the screening process, the final dataset was curated for bibliometric examination.

The analysis was carried out using R software (Bibliometrix package) and its web interface, Biblioshiny. Key bibliometric techniques employed included annual scientific production, average citations per year, identification of the most relevant sources, and application of Bradford's Law to determine core journals. These tools enabled systematic mapping of publication trends, influential sources, and the intellectual structure of research on public infrastructure development and land pricing.

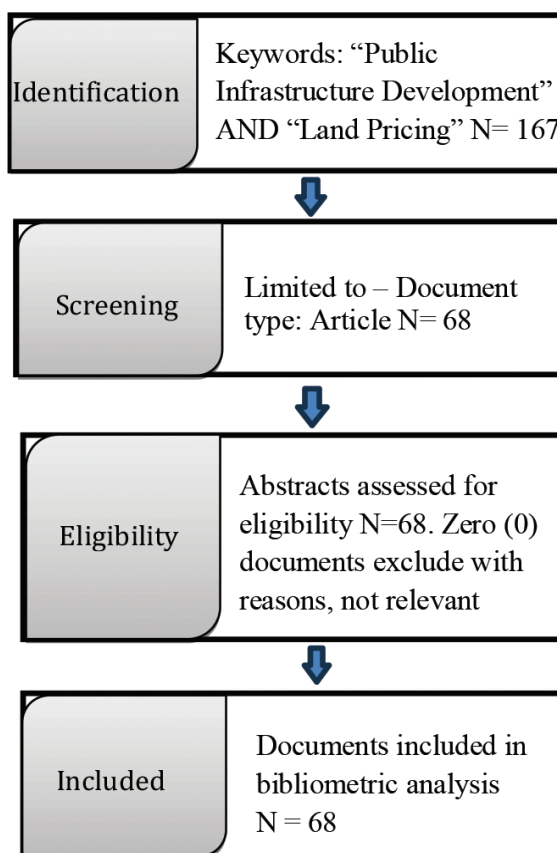


Figure 1. Research flowchart.

Results and Discussion

Annual Scientific Production

The annual scientific production of literature from 1997 to 2025 demonstrates a fluctuating yet progressively expanding research trajectory (Figure 2). Out of the final 68 documents analysed, the distribution of publications is highly uneven across the years.

The early phase (1997–2008) reflects very low research output, with most years recording 0–1 publications, and only occasional increases to 2 articles (for instance, around 2003 and 2009). This indicates that the domain was in a nascent stage, receiving limited scholarly attention.

A transitional phase is visible between 2009 and 2017, where annual production remained modest, generally ranging between 0 and 3 publications per year. Although growth was gradual, this period marks the beginning of sustained academic engagement with the topic.

A significant surge is observed in the recent period (2018 onwards). Scientific production increased sharply:

- 2019 recorded approximately 10 publications, marking the first major peak.
- 2021 shows the highest annual output (around 12 publications), representing the most productive year in the dataset.
- 2023 again demonstrates high productivity with about 11 publications.

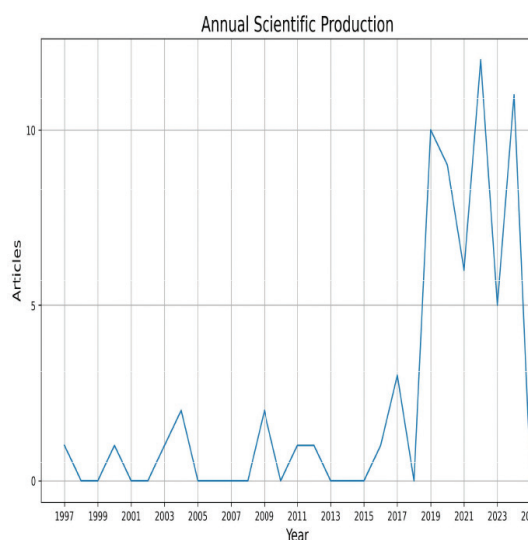
Collectively, the period 2019–2023 accounts for a substantial share of the total literature (roughly one-third to nearly half of all publications), highlighting an accelerated research focus in recent years.

The spike in output during the late 2010s and early 2020s may be quantitatively linked to expanding infrastructure investments, rapid urbanisation, and intensified policy discourse on land valuation and acquisition.



Increased funding availability, global infrastructure initiatives, and sustainability frameworks likely contributed to this rise in scholarly production.

Conversely, the sharp decline visible towards 2025 should be interpreted cautiously, as it may reflect database indexing lag or incomplete publication cycles rather than an actual reduction in research activity. Overall, the production trend indicates a late but rapid maturation of the field, transitioning from sporadic early contributions to a concentrated and high-growth research phase in the last decade.



Source: Biblioshiny.

Figure 2. Temporal distribution of publications.
Annual Citation Per Year

The analysis of average citations per year reveals the temporal distribution of research impact within the dataset (Figure 3). Citation influence is unevenly distributed, with a few peak years contributing disproportionately to the field's scholarly visibility.

During the initial phase (1997–2004), the average citation rate remained relatively low, generally ranging between 0.5 and 1.5 citations per article. This indicates limited early visibility and a smaller knowledge base

within the domain. A steady rise is observed from 2005 onwards, with citation averages increasing progressively:

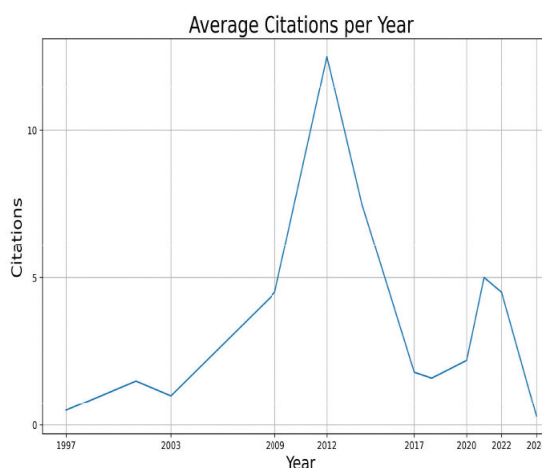
- By 2009, the mean citation rate reached approximately 4–5 citations per article, indicating growing academic recognition.
- The upward trajectory continued, culminating in the highest peak around 2012, where average citations exceeded 12 citations per article, marking the most influential publication year in terms of impact.

This single peak represents the maximum citation intensity in the dataset, suggesting that articles published around this period gained substantial scholarly attention and were widely referenced in subsequent studies.

Following this peak, citation averages show a notable decline:

- Between 2015 and 2017, averages dropped to roughly 1.5–2 citations per article, reflecting comparatively lower immediate impact.
- A secondary rise is visible around 2020, with citation averages increasing again to approximately 5 citations per article, indicating another phase of influential contributions.

The subsequent decline towards 2023–2024 falling close to 1 citation or below should be interpreted in light of citation lag effects, as recently published articles have had limited time to accumulate references. Overall, the citation pattern suggests that while publication volume surged in recent years, the highest scholarly impact (in citation terms) is concentrated in earlier periods, particularly around 2010–2012. This reflects the typical bibliometric phenomenon where older publications accumulate greater citation weight over time, whereas newer works are still in the process of gaining academic visibility.



Source: *Biblioshiny*.

Figure 3. Temporal distribution of citation impact.

Most Relevant Sources

The analysis of the most relevant sources indicates a clear concentration of publications in a limited number of core journals, consistent with Bradford's Law (Figure 4).

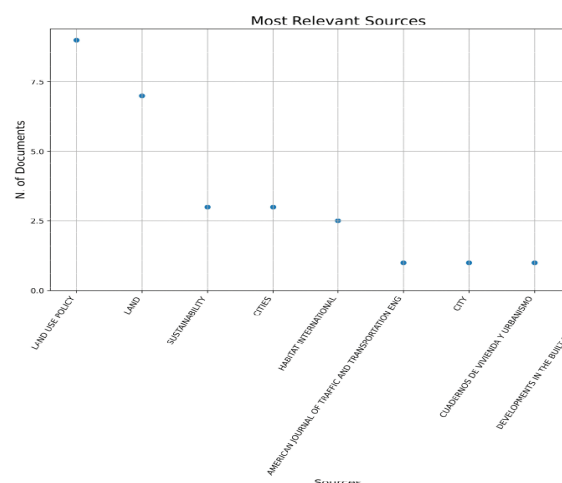
Among the 68 documents analysed:

- LAND USE POLICY emerges as the leading source with 9 publications, representing the highest contribution within the dataset.
- LAND follows with 7 publications, making it the second most productive journal.
- SUSTAINABILITY and CITIES each contributed 3 publications.
- Journals such as Habitat International and Journal of Environmental Management contributed 2 publications each.

The remaining sources contributed 1 publication each, indicating a long tail of less frequent contributors. Together, the top two journals (LAND USE POLICY and LAND) account for 16 out of 68 publications (approximately 23–24% of the total output), demonstrating a strong publication concentration in a small core group of outlets. Expanding to the top four journals increases this share to

roughly 22 publications (about 32% of total production), reinforcing the dominance of a limited number of high-impact platforms. The presence of interdisciplinary journals such as SUSTAINABILITY and CITIES reflects the cross-cutting nature of research on public infrastructure development and land pricing, bridging environmental policy, urban planning, and sustainability studies.

Overall, the distribution pattern confirms that while research is dispersed across multiple outlets, a small cluster of journals functions as primary dissemination hubs within the field.



Source: *Biblioshiny*.

Figure 4. Top publishing journals in the field.

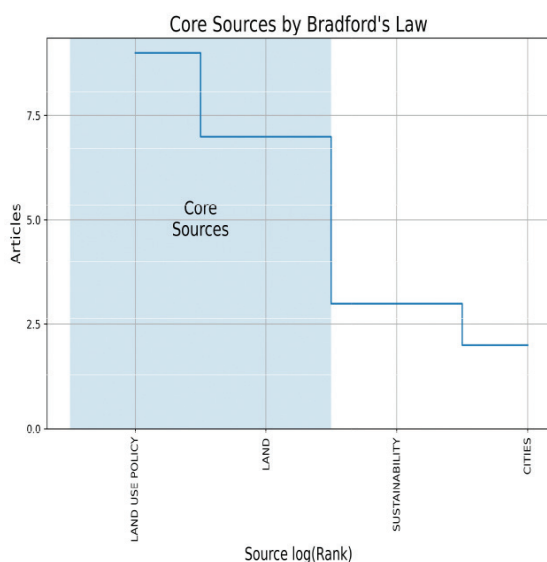
Bradford Law

The application of Bradford's Law reveals a clear concentration pattern in the publication structure of the field. Out of the 68 documents analysed, a small nucleus of journals accounts for a disproportionately high share of total publications (Figure 5). The core zone is led by LAND USE POLICY (9 publications) and LAND (7 publications). Together, these two journals alone contribute 16 articles, representing approximately 23–24% of the total dataset. When the next tier of journals – SUSTAINABILITY and CITIES (3 publications each) – is included, the share rises to 22 publications, accounting for roughly 32% of overall scientific output.



Beyond this core cluster, productivity declines sharply. Mid-tier journals such as *Habitat International* and *Journal of Environmental Management* contribute 2 publications each, while the remaining sources record single-article contributions. This steep dispersion pattern is characteristic of Bradford's distribution, where literature is highly concentrated in a few sources and widely scattered across many peripheral outlets. The observed structure indicates that researchers in the domain rely heavily on a limited set of high-visibility journals for dissemination. At the same time, the long tail of low-frequency sources reflects the interdisciplinary spread of the topic, accommodating niche, regional, or emerging research themes.

Overall, the Bradford's Law distribution confirms that while knowledge production is widespread, its primary consolidation occurs within a small, influential core of journals that shape the scholarly communication structure of the field.



Source: *Biblioshiny*.

Figure 5. Core sources by Bradford's law.

Broader Implications Across Graphs

When considered together, these graphs provide a comprehensive view of the field's evolution. The trends in production and citations

underscore the dynamic interplay between research output, impact, and dissemination. The concentration of articles in a few journals highlights the role of established venues in shaping discourse, while the broader distribution raises questions about inclusivity and diversity in academic publishing.

These insights also have practical implications for researchers, policymakers, and funding bodies. Researchers can use these patterns to identify key journals for submission, impactful years to investigate, or gaps in the literature to address. Policymakers and funders can leverage these trends to prioritise investments in areas of emerging importance or to support underrepresented research topics and journals.

Conclusion

This bibliometric review underscores the critical relationship between public infrastructure development and land price dynamics, emphasising the importance of aligning these projects with the SDGs. The findings highlight the transformative potential of infrastructure investments in enhancing regional growth, accessibility, and socio-economic development while addressing key challenges such as displacement, environmental degradation, and inequitable land access.

The integration of SDG principles, particularly those outlined in SDG 9, SDG 11, and SDG 13, provides a comprehensive framework for guiding infrastructure projects towards sustainable and inclusive outcomes. The studies reviewed demonstrate the need for innovative financing mechanisms, such as land value capture, to ensure that infrastructure expansion benefits all stakeholders equitably. Moreover, fostering community participation and addressing social and political risks are pivotal in mitigating adverse effects and promoting long-term resilience.

The exploration of engineering systems inte-



gration, as discussed by Miller et al. (2024), offers a novel approach to optimising project delivery and financing, ensuring that infrastructure projects are both efficient and sustainable. Furthermore, the dual impact of land finance, as highlighted by Zhong et al. (2024), underscores the importance of balanced fiscal strategies to support infrastructure while avoiding over-reliance on volatile revenue sources.

In conclusion, achieving sustainable public infrastructure development requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates technical innovation, equitable land management, and robust policy frameworks. By addressing gaps in current research and aligning with global sustainability priorities, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and researchers. It calls for collaborative efforts to design and implement infrastructure projects that not only transform landscapes but also contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and social equity.

Limitations and Future Research

This study relies entirely on secondary data,

limiting empirical validation of the findings. As a bibliometric review, the analysis focuses on publication trends, citation patterns, and source distribution rather than primary data collection or field-based investigation. Consequently, the study does not directly test the causal relationship between public infrastructure development and land price changes in specific contexts.

Future research may address this limitation by undertaking empirical case studies, region-specific investigations, and econometric analyses to examine the direct impact of infrastructure projects on land valuation. Incorporating primary data from stakeholders, such as policymakers, urban planners, and affected communities would further strengthen practical applicability. Comparative studies across regions or countries may also provide deeper insights into contextual variations in infrastructure-induced land price dynamics.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the research advisors and academic committee for their valuable feedback and guidance throughout the study.

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A Comprehensive Bibliometric Analysis of Non-Performing Loans in the Banking Sector

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Received: 30/08/2025

Revised: 22/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the trends and developments in the banking sector related to non-performing loans (NPLs), also known as non-performing assets (NPAs), over the period from 1989 to 2024. Using the Web of Science (WoS) Database, recognised for its authoritative and reliable collection of research publications and citations, we extracted and analysed a dataset of 281 relevant documents. The analysis was conducted using R Studio, R programming, and Excel, with a focus on identifying key publication trends, influential journals, leading authors, and significant country collaborations in the field. The study also explores the conceptual structure of keywords and the bibliographic coupling of countries to understand how often similar literature is shared globally. The findings provide valuable insights into the depth and breadth of research on NPLs in the banking sector, highlighting the most impactful contributions and identifying emerging trends and patterns within the global academic community.

Keywords: Non-performing loans, Banking*, Non-performing assets

Introduction

The banking system plays a pivotal role in driving economic development, primarily through its capacity for capital formation via credit creation. Banks' ability to generate credit is fundamental not only to their own financial stability but also to broader economic growth. However, this credit creation comes with the inherent risk of loans becoming non-performing due to various factors. Non-performing loans (NPLs) exert significant pressure on banks' balance sheets, negatively impacting their profitability and lending capacity. As a result, managing NPL levels within acceptable limits is critical for maintaining banking sector stability.

A rise in NPL ratios often signals a decline in credit quality, leading banks to tighten lending standards, which can further constrain economic activity. Several macroeconomic factors, as well as specific bank characteristics, influence the escalation of NPLs. Additionally, cross-country disparities exist in terms of the duration and efficiency of NPL resolution, especially in the aftermath of financial crises. The quality of a country's legal infrastructure, including its regulatory frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and creditors' rights, plays a crucial role in determining the speed and cost of insolvency resolution and the enforcement of contracts.



This bibliometric analysis delves deeply into the literature to identify key trends and developments in the study of NPLs within the banking sector. By analysing 30 impactful papers, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the intellectual landscape, shedding light on the determinants of NPLs and the strategies employed across different regions to manage and mitigate their effects.

Materials and Methods

The sample selection procedure for this study was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved selecting a suitable database for extracting data for bibliometric and systematic analysis. The Web of Science (WoS) Database, recognised for its reliability, was chosen for this purpose. In the second stage, relevant literature was identified within the database using carefully selected keywords. The third and final stage consisted of a thorough review of each article to ensure its relevance, with a particular focus on excluding articles that did not pertain to the banking sector. The study's objective and methodology were structured within an analytical framework.

Table 1 presents research questions and methodology.

Table 1 Research Questions & methodology

Research Question	Research Methodology
To understand the depth and trends in the banking and non-performing assets literature.	Publication trend
To identify the leading countries, impactful journals, and influential authors with respect to banking and NPL	Citation Analysis

To assess the structure and pattern of country collaboration in the field of research	Co-authorship analysis of countries
To figure out conceptual structure of keywords in banking and NPL	C o - o c c u r - rence analysis
To understand countries coupling structures and how often countries share similar literature in this field of research	Bibliographic coupling of countries

For this bibliometric analysis, data were extracted from the WoS Database, chosen for its reputation as a comprehensive and reliable source of validated and accurate research publications and citations. WoS is recognised as the world's oldest and most widely utilised database, renowned for its authority in the field of academic research (Birkle et al., 2020). Its robust collection makes it an ideal resource for conducting a thorough and credible bibliometric study.

Screening criteria for the selection of relevant research

This study aims to analyse the trends in the banking sector related to NPLs, also referred to as non-performing assets (NPAs), over the period from 1989 to 2024. To capture the overall trajectory and impact of NPLs within the banking industry, the study employed specific keywords, including "non-performing loans," "Banking*," and "non-performing assets." These keywords were strategically chosen to identify and gather relevant articles in this domain. Figure 1 illustrates the systematic process undertaken to collect and curate the pertinent studies that form the basis of this research.

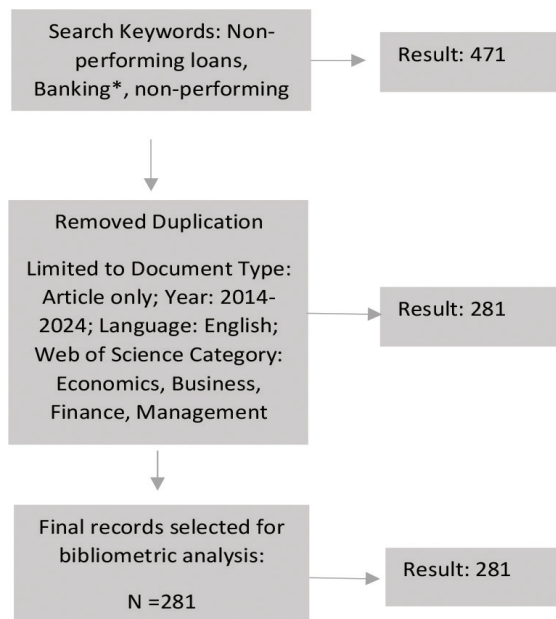


Figure1.Dataset extraction and processing steps for bibliometric analysis.

The dataset for this research was obtained from the WoSDatabase on August 14, 2024, initially comprising 471 documents. After applying the exclusion criteria, 190 documents were removed, resulting in a final set of 281 documents for bibliometric analysis. The analysis was conducted using a combination of R Studio, R programming, and Excel. Specifically, networking analyses were performed in R Studio, while additional filtering and tabulation tasks were carried out in Excel.

Results

Annual Scientific Production

The annual scientific production of research publications focusing on NPAs in the banking sector provides a comprehensive assessment of the development, expansion, and current trends in this area of study. Figure 2 illustrates the number of articles published from 2014 to 2024, highlighting a noticeable increase in research output over time. This upward trend reflects the growing importance of NPAs, particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, which significantly impacted the banking sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated NPA levels, contributing to the surge in related research. The consistent rise in publication numbers over the years underscores the increasing scholarly attention to NPAs, making the trend in annual scientific production both evident and significant.

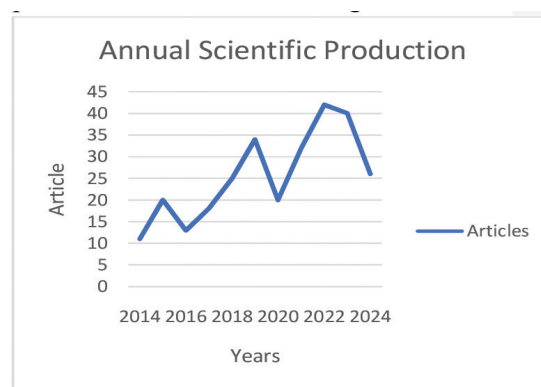


Figure 2. Annual scientific production.

Leading Countries with Total Publications

The leading contributors to research on NPAs in the banking sector are primarily from China, the United Kingdom, and the United States. China stands out as the highest contributor with 160 articles, followed by the United Kingdom with 84, and the United States with 76. Other notable contributors include Italy with 60, Greece with 55 articles, Germany with 49, Spain with 37. India also makes a significant contribution with 30 articles. Figure 3 illustrates the leading nations in this research area, highlighting their respective contributions to the study of NPAs in the banking sector.

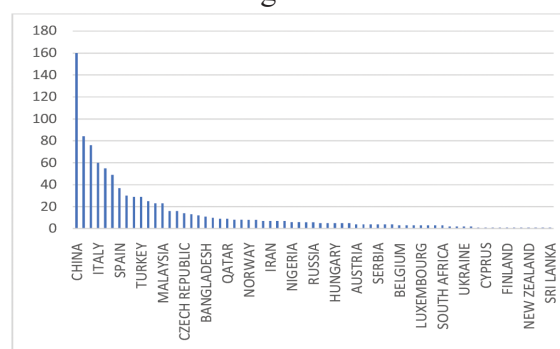


Figure 3. Leading countries with publication



Leading Countries with Total Citation

The analysis of total citations (figure 4) reveals that China leads with 1,046 citations, reflecting its significant influence in the field of NPA's research. The United States follows with 613 citations, and the United Kingdom ranks third with 474 citations. Greece and Germany also show substantial contributions with 444 and 299 citations, respectively. Other notable countries include Turkey (298 citations), Spain (235), Australia (192), Japan (159), and Italy (119). These figures underscore the global distribution of impactful research, with China, the USA, and the UK being the most influential contributors to the academic discourse on NPAs in the banking sector.

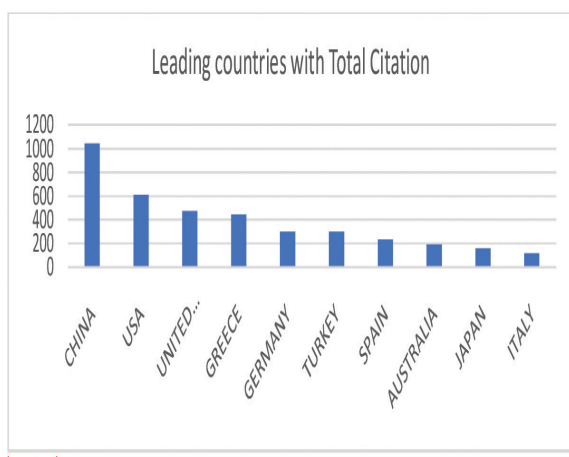


Figure 4. Leading countries with total citations

Influential Authors

The table 2 presents the 10 most prominent authors who have contributed research papers on NPAs in the banking sector, highlighting the individuals who have made the most significant contributions to this area of study. Matousek R leads with 5 publications, establishing himself as a key figure in this research domain. He is followed by Fukuyama H, who has contributed 4 research articles. This table provides valuable insights into the leading scholars driving the academic discourse on NPAs in the banking sector.

Table 2. Influential authors.

\No	Authors	Articles
1	MATOUSEK R	5
2	FUKUYAMA H	4
3	KJOSEVSKI J	4
4	PETKOVSKI M	4
5	ZHU N	4
6	GHOSH S	3
7	KANAS A	3
8	KARTAL MT	3
9	US V	3
10	WU Y	3

Source: Interpreted by the author using data extracted from WoS.

Impactful Journals

Academic journals play a crucial role in allowing academics and researchers to contribute novel and insightful concepts to their fields. Identifying the most impactful journals in a particular area of study enables researchers to select the most relevant and high-quality outlets to disseminate their findings. Figure 5 presents a list of leading journals publishing articles on NPAs in the banking sector. The top five journals in this area are *International Journal of Finance & Economics*, *Journal of Banking & Finance*, *Applied Economics*, *Finance Research Letters*, and *Research in International Business and Finance*. *The International Journal of Finance & Economics* leads with 21 articles, followed closely by the *Journal of Banking & Finance*, also with 21 articles. *Applied Economics* ranks third with 15 articles, while *Finance Research Letters* has contributed 13 articles to this field. These journals are recognised for their significant impact and are considered the most authoritative sources for research on NPAs in the banking sector.

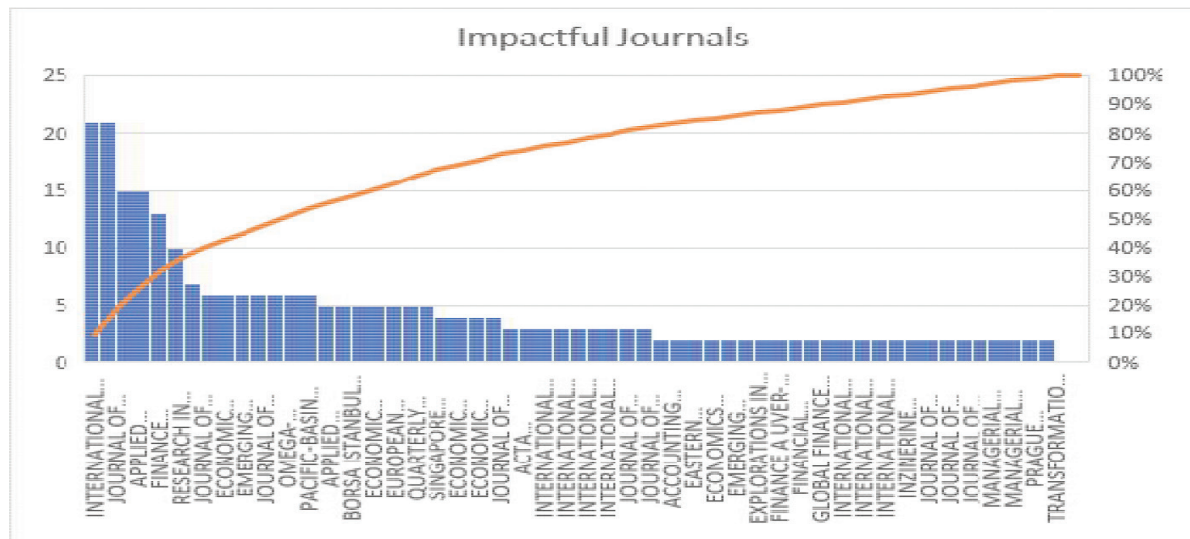


Figure 5. Impactful journals.

Research Journal with Source Impact

Based on the h-index, the g-index, the m-index, the number of citations, the of articles, and the year of publication, table 3 shows the top research journals with the most source impact.

Table 3. Research Journal with source impact .

Source	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
JOURNAL OF BANKING \& FINANCE	11	21	1	773	21	2014
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FINANCE & ECONOMICS	9	13	1.2856	195	21	2018
RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND FINANCE	8	10	0.8888	231	10	2016
FINANCE RESEARCH LETTERS	6	13	0.67	245	13	2016
JOURNAL OF FINANCIAL STABILITY	6	7	0.6	460	7	2015
ECONOMIC MODELLING	5	6	0.4545	249	6	2014
EMERGING MARKETS FINANCE AND TRADE	5	6	0.56	61	6	2016
APPLIED ECONOMICS	4	10	0.5	111	15	2017
ECONOMIC RESEARCH-EKONOMSKA ISTRAZIVANJA	4	4	0.67	60	4	2019
ECONOMIC SYSTEMS	4	5	0.4	180	5	2015

Source: Interpreted by author using data extracted from WoS.



Bradford Law

The distribution of journals listed (Table 4) aligns with Bradford's Law in bibliometrics, which predicts that a small core of journals will account for the majority of significant articles in a specific field, followed by a larger number of journals with progressively fewer relevant articles.

In this analysis, the Zone 1 journals *International Journal of Finance & Economics*, *Journal of Banking & Finance*, *Applied Economics*, *Finance Research Letters*, and *Research in International Business and Finance* constitute the core sources, collectively contributing a substantial portion of the literature on NPAs in the banking sec-

tor. These five journals alone account for 80 publications, indicating their central role in this research area.

As we move to Zone 2, the number of journals increases, but each contributes fewer articles, with most journals publishing between 2 to 6 articles. This broader distribution reflects the typical pattern described by Bradford's Law, where the most influential research is concentrated within a small set of core journals, while a larger number of peripheral journals contribute fewer relevant studies. This pattern highlights the importance of focusing on core journals for researchers aiming to engage with the most impactful and concentrated body of literature in the field.

Table 4. Bradford law.

SOURCE	Rank	Freq	cumFreq	Zone
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FINANCE \& ECONOMICS	1	21	21	Zone 1
JOURNAL OF BANKING \& FINANCE	2	21	42	Zone 1
APPLIED ECONOMICS	3	15	57	Zone 1
FINANCE RESEARCH LETTERS	4	13	70	Zone 1
RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND FINANCE	5	10	80	Zone 1
JOURNAL OF FINANCIAL STABILITY	6	7	87	Zone 1
ECONOMIC MODELLING	7	6	93	Zone 1
EMERGING MARKETS FINANCE AND TRADE	8	6	99	Zone 2
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL MARKETS INSTITUTIONS & MONEY	9	6	105	Zone 2
OMEGA-INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE	10	6	111	Zone 2
PACIFIC-BASIN FINANCE JOURNAL	11	6	117	Zone 2
APPLIED ECONOMICS LETTERS	12	5	122	Zone 2
BORSA ISTANBUL REVIEW	13	5	127	Zone 2
ECONOMIC SYSTEMS	14	5	132	Zone 2
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF FINANCE	15	5	137	Zone 2



QUARTERLY REVIEW OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE	16	5	142	Zone 2
SINGAPORE ECONOMIC REVIEW	17	5	147	Zone 2
ECONOMIC CHANGE AND RESTRUCTURING	18	4	151	Zone 2
ECONOMIC RESEARCH-EKONOMSKA ISTRAZIVANJA	19	4	155	Zone 2
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL MONEY AND FINANCE	20	4	159	Zone 2
ACTA OECONOMICA	21	3	162	Zone 2
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CENTRAL BANKING	22	3	165	Zone 2
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EMERGING MARKETS	23	3	168	Zone 2
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC AND MIDDLE EASTERN FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT	24	3	171	Zone 2
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ANALYSIS	25	3	174	Zone 2
JOURNAL OF CORPORATE FINANCE	26	3	177	Zone 2
JOURNAL OF FINANCIAL INTERMEDIATION	27	3	180	Zone 2
ACCOUNTING REVIEW	28	2	182	Zone 2
EASTERN EUROPEAN ECONOMICS	29	2	184	Zone 2
ECONOMICS LETTERS	30	2	186	Zone 2

Co-occurrence of Network



Figure 6. Co-occurrence network.

World Collaboration Map

The analysis (figure 7) shows that China and the USA are prominent in global research collaborations. China’s extensive partnerships with countries like the United Kingdom, USA, Japan, and Australia highlight

its significant role in international academic exchanges. The USA, similarly, engages frequently with Germany, Italy, Japan, and other nations, indicating its influence in global research networks. This centrality reflects both countries’ strong research infrastructure and emphasis on cross-border collaboration.



The data indicate strong regional collaborations, particularly within Europe and Southeast Asia. European countries, such as Germany, France, and Italy, frequently collaborate with each other, likely due to shared

cultural ties and EU-driven research initiatives. In Southeast Asia, nations like Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Indonesia also show significant collaboration, possibly driven by regional agreements and common research interests.

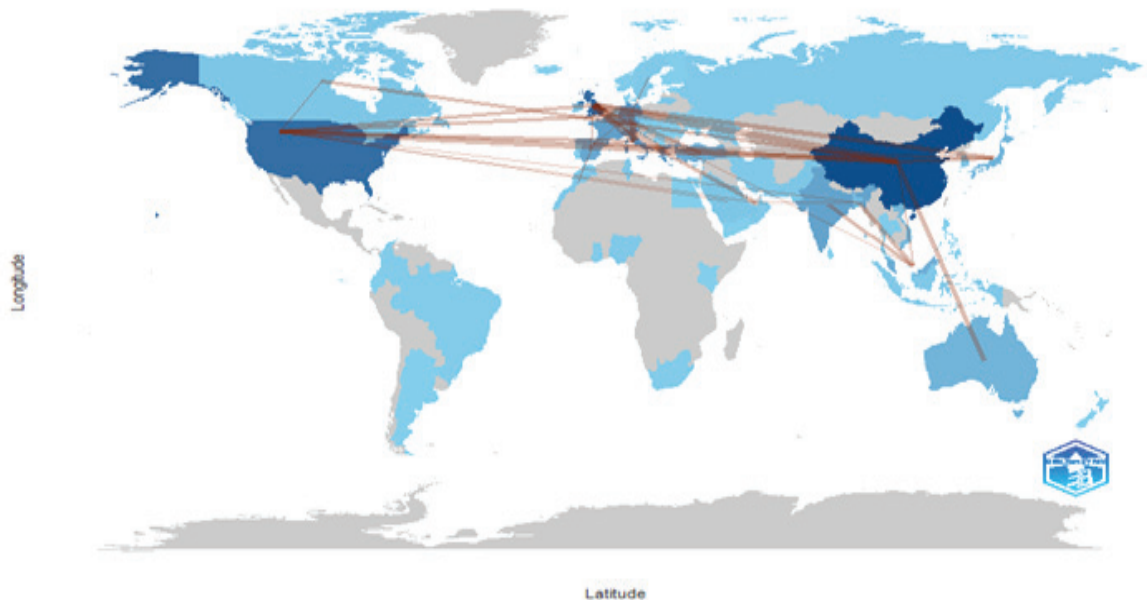


Figure 7. World collaboration map.

Systematic Review of Highly Cited Articles

Table 5. Systematic review of highly cited articles.

Document	Citations	Title	Journal	Research Focus	Research Methods	Major Research Finding
(Wang et al., 2014)	262	Efficiency measures of the Chinese commercial banking system using an additive two-stage DEA	OMEGA-INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT	Examine the interactions between macroeconomic factors and bank-specific determinants of non-performing loans (NPLs) and how these interactions influence overall macroeconomic performance in the Baltic States.	Regression Model	Findings highlight the critical role of NPLs in influencing economic stability, particularly in economies heavily reliant on bank lending, such as the Baltic States. The analysis is further strengthened by variance decomposition, which shows that changes in domestic credit, inflation, and unemployment are key determinants of NPL variations over a ten-year period.



Ghosh, 2015)	256	Banking-industry specific and regional economic determinants of non-performing loans: Evidence from US states	JOURNAL OF FINANCIAL STABILITY	The research focuses on assessing the overall asset quality in the U.S. banking industry by analysing the drivers of non-performing loans (NPLs) and their implications for macro-prudential surveillance, with a particular emphasis on the “too big to fail” hypothesis, capital management, credit quality, and the influence of state-level economic variables.	Fixed effect model	The study finds that larger banks in the US exhibit ‘too big to fail’ behaviour, where higher capitalisation leads to increased non-performing loans (NPLs). Additionally, state-level economic factors such as GDP growth, unemployment, and housing prices significantly influence NPLs, underscoring the importance of regional economic health in managing bank asset quality. The research also highlights the need to incorporate these regional determinants into macro-prudential policies and stress tests.
(Fujii et al., 2014)	164	Indian bank efficiency and productivity changes with undesirable outputs: A disaggregated approach	JOURNAL OF BANKING & FINANCE	Examines technical efficiency and productivity growth in the Indian banking. The research specifically investigates the differences in inefficiency levels across various ownership structures of banks in India.	Weighted Russell Directional Distance Model (WRDDM)	Inefficiency levels in the Indian banking sector vary significantly across different ownership structures. Foreign banks in India demonstrate higher efficiency, effectively pulling the production frontier in a more efficient direction. In contrast, State-owned Public Banks (SPBs) and domestic private banks exhibit considerably higher levels of inefficiency.
(Makri et al., 2014)	161	Determinants of Non-Performing Loans: The Case of Eurozone	PANOECONOMICUS	The research focuses on identifying the macroeconomic and bank-specific factors that influence the non-performing loans (NPL) rates in Eurozone banking systems during the period 2000-2008, with an emphasis on understanding the determinants of NPLs before the onset of the financial crisis.	GMM Difference	The study finds that both bank-specific variables (such as the previous year’s NPL rate, capital ratio, and ROE) and macroeconomic factors (public debt, GDP, and unemployment) significantly influence the non-performing loans (NPL) rate in Eurozone banking systems, highlighting the strong connection between the economic conditions and loan portfolio quality during the period 2000-2008.



(Zhang et al., 2016)	158	Non-performing loans, moral hazard and regulation of the Chinese commercial banking system	JOURNAL OF BANKING & FINANCE	This research paper provides a critical examination of the influence of non-performing loans (NPLs) on bank behaviour within China's banking sector.	Threshold panel regression	The study highlights that the NPL ratio serves as a critical indicator for detecting potential moral hazard issues in Chinese banks, urging regulators to monitor this alongside capital adequacy ratios to mitigate excessive risk-taking. The findings also caution that the threshold ratio for triggering moral hazard may vary over time due to evolving regulatory environments.
(Dimitrios et al., 2016)	143	Determinants of non-performing loans: Evidence from Euro-area countries	FINANCE RESEARCH LETTERS	The research focuses on identifying the key determinants of non-performing loans in the euro-area banking system between 1990Q1 and 2015Q2, with a novel examination of the roles of income tax and output gap.	GMM Estimator	The study finds that while bank-specific variables like LTD ratios and performance indicators such as ROE show significant relationships with non-performing loans (NPLs), supporting the bad management hypothesis. Particularly, the findings highlight the role of restrictive fiscal policies in exacerbating NPLs in euro-area peripheral countries.
(Fang et al., 2014)	141	Institutional development and bank stability: Evidence from transition countries	JOURNAL OF BANKING & FINANCE	The study investigates how various institutional reforms—such as banking liberalisation, creditor rights, and corporate governance restructuring—affect the risk-taking behaviour of banks.	Difference in difference approach	Banks' financial stability significantly increases after countries implement reforms in their legal institutions, liberalise banking, and restructure corporate governance. These reforms lead to a reduction in bank risk, particularly in terms of asset risk. Study provides evidence of a causal relationship between institutional development and banking stability. It also has improved the financial health of the banks.
(Goetz, 2018)	136	Competition and bank stability	JOURNAL OF FINANCIAL	Study empirically identifies the impact of competition on bank stability,		Competition have enhanced the bank stability as it has positively impacted the profitability and assets quality. It supports the argument that greater competition increases bank stability.



(Shen et al., 2016)	135	To engage or not to engage in corporate social responsibility: Empirical evidence from global banking sector	ECONOMIC MODELLING	The study aims to determine whether engaging in CSR activities can lead to increased profits and reduced non-performing loans for banks.		Banks adopting CSR activities are outperforming the non-CSR banks as it impacts the financial performance, and it is being influenced by the bank characteristics such as size and market share.
(Kasman&Kasman, 2015)	122	Bank competition, concentration and financial stability in the Turkish banking industry	ECONOMIC SYSTEMS	The research focuses on examining how competition and concentration influence bank stability in the Turkish banking sector from 2002 to 2012, using various indicators of competition and stability.		The major findings indicate that while competition is associated with lower bank credit risk and higher stability, concentration is linked to increased credit risk and reduced stability, with the results predominantly supporting the competition-fragility view in the Turkish banking industry.
(Avkiran, 2015)	121	An illustration of dynamic network DEA in commercial banking including robustness tests	OMEGA-INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT	The research focuses on applying and testing the robustness of dynamic network data envelopment analysis (DN-DEA) in commercial banking by benchmarking foreign and domestic banks in China, emphasising efficiency estimates through a network approach and robustness testing.	DN-DEA	The major findings highlight that the dynamic network data envelopment analysis (DN-DEA) effectively integrates network and dynamic dimensions to assess bank efficiency, with results illustrating the impact of divisional interactions and undesirable outputs on efficiency estimates, and robustness testing revealing the model's sensitivity to various assumptions and parameters.
(Fukuyama & Weber, 2015)	104	Measuring Japanese bank performance: a dynamic network DEA approach	JOURNAL OF PRODUCTIVITY ANALYSIS	The research focuses on developing and estimating a dynamic two-stage network production model for Japanese commercial banks that incorporates financial regulatory constraints to optimise the production of desirable outputs while minimising undesirable outputs over time.	Dynamic two stage Network Production	The study finds that Japanese banks exhibit significant inefficiency, with average inefficiency ranging from 19.5% to 21.5% during the analysed periods, indicating that many banks could enhance their performance by optimising the production of deposits and managing non-performing loans more effectively



(Baselga-Pascual et al., 2015)	93	Factors influencing bank risk in Europe: Evidence from the financial crisis	NORTH AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE	The research focuses on analysing the bank-specific and macroeconomic determinants of bank risk in the euro area from 2001 to 2012, particularly in the context of the financial and economic crisis.		The major findings reveal that while capitalisation, profitability, efficiency, and liquidity are significantly and inversely related to bank risk, the use of wholesale funding and less concentrated markets, along with lower interest rates, higher inflation, and economic crises, increase risk; notably, the relationship between bank size and risk is inconsistent, with some models showing a positive association potentially due to moral hazard effects.
(Zhou et al., 2019)	86	Efficiency evaluation for banking systems under uncertainty: A multi-period three-stage DEA model	OMEGA-INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE	The research focuses on developing a multi-period, multi-stage DEA model to evaluate the efficiencies of listed Chinese commercial banks from 2014-2016, examining capital organisation, allocation, and profitability while incorporating carryovers and fuzzy non-performing loans to identify inefficiencies and provide managerial insights.	DEA	The study finds that using a multi-period, multi-stage DEA model reveals that all evaluated Chinese commercial banks from 2014-2016 were inefficient, with capital allocation performing relatively better and capital organisation and profitability being weaker; the model also highlights specific inefficiencies across different bank types and stages, emphasising the need for targeted improvements and demonstrating the model's superiority in providing detailed insights into inefficiencies and sensitivities.
(Tran & Vo, 2018)	72	Should bankers be concerned with Intellectual capital? A study of the Thai banking sector	JOURNAL OF INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL	The research focuses on examining the causal effect of intellectual capital performance on financial performance in Thai listed banks, using a value-added intellectual coefficient methodology and GMM estimator to assess the impact of capital and human capital efficiency on profitability.	GMM Estimator	The findings reveal that while the Value-Added Intellectual Coefficient (VAIC) as a whole is not correlated with financial performance in Thai banks, Capital Employed Efficiency (CEE) significantly drives profitability, whereas Human Capital Efficiency (HCE) has a negative short-term impact but a positive effect on future profitability.



(Vithessonthi, 2016)	68	Deflation, bank credit growth, and non-performing loans: Evidence from Japan	INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ANALYSIS	The research focuses on examining the relationship between bank credit growth and non-performing loans in Japan under deflationary pressures, and how this relationship varies over time, particularly before and after the global financial crisis.	OLS and GMM Regression	The study finds that in Japan, despite the cyclical nature of bank credit, it is possible to increase the supply of bank loans without significantly raising non-performing loans, particularly in the context of deflationary pressures following the global financial crisis of 2007
(Ng et al., 2020)	60	Policy uncertainty and loan loss provisions in the banking industry	REVIEW OF ACCOUNTING STUDIES	The research focuses on how policy uncertainty influences banks' accruals for loan losses, specifically examining how increased uncertainty leads banks to make larger loan loss provisions and how this effect varies based on the banks' previous risk-taking behaviour and financial reporting practices.	OLS Regression	The study finds that policy uncertainty positively influences banks' loan loss provisions, with higher provisions reflecting expected future loan losses; this effect is stronger in banks that are less prudent and have lower prior reserves, and is moderated by the attention paid to financial reporting, while also linking policy uncertainty to future loan loss realisations and loan growth rates.
(Huang et al., 2015)	58	Applying the New Metafrontier Directional Distance Function to Compare Banking Efficiencies in Central and Eastern European Countries	ECONOMIC MODELLING	The research focuses on developing and applying a new metafrontier directional distance function (MDDF) within a stochastic framework to compare bank efficiencies across 17 Central and Eastern European countries, incorporating environmental variables and accounting for non-performing loans to provide more accurate measures of technical inefficiency.	MDDF	The study finds that while average TGDs significantly vary across countries and generally exceed technical inefficiency scores, improving production technology in response to financial innovations and accounting for undesirables using the directional distance function leads to more accurate assessments of inefficiency.



(Partovi&Matousek, 2019)	57	Bank efficiency and non-performing loans: Evidence from Turkey	RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND FINANCE	The research focuses on analysing technical and allocative efficiencies in Turkish banks from December 2002 to December 2017. Study examines the impact of NPLs on efficiency and how ownership structure affects bank efficiency.	DEA	The study finds that investment banks in Turkey are the most stable, NPLs have a greater impact on technical efficiency than allocative efficiency, Turkish banks could improve efficiency by increasing good outputs and reducing bad outputs, and only development and investment banks have effectively controlled NPLs, with a need for stabilisation in securities activities and management of underproduction.
(Efthymoulou& Yildirim, 2014)	51	Market power in CEE banking sectors and the impact of the global financial crisis	JOURNAL OF BANKING & FINANCE	The research focuses on assessing market power in Central and Eastern European banking markets, examining the impact of the global financial crisis and foreign ownership on market power, and analysing how asset quality and capitalisation differently affect bank margins before and during the crisis.		The study finds that while there was some convergence in country-level market power in the pre-crisis period, the global financial crisis disrupted this trend, revealing significant variations in bank-level market power based on ownership characteristics and differing impacts of asset quality and capitalisation between domestically-owned and foreign banks during the crisis
	50	Nonperforming loans in the euro area: Are core-periphery banking markets fragmented?	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FINANCE & ECONOMICS	the study investigates financial fragmentation between core and periphery banking markets, and assessing how macroeconomic conditions and bank-specific factors influence NPLs.	FMOLS	The study finds that non-performing loans (NPLs) in the euro area have increased significantly post-2008, particularly in peripheral countries due to worsening macroeconomic conditions, with evidence of financial fragmentation between core and periphery markets, and highlights the adverse effects of austerity policies and the impact of bank size on NPLs.



(Matousek et al., 2015)	50	Bank performance and convergence during the financial crisis: Evidence from the 'old' European Union and Eurozone	JOURNAL OF BANKING & FINANCE	The research focuses on investigating the convergence of bank efficiency in the EU15 countries and the Eurozone during the financial crisis, analysing the impact of the crisis on banking integration and performance.	Panel convergence methodology	The study finds a significant decline in bank efficiency and a lack of convergence among European banks following the financial crisis, highlighting the presence of club formation with weak convergence and a notable decrease in competition levels post-2008.
(Demir & Danisman, 2021)	47	Banking sector reactions to COVID-19: The role of bank-specific factors and government policy responses	RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS	The research focuses on analysing how bank-specific factors and variations in government policy responses impact bank stock returns during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Fixed effect model	The research finds that while bank stock prices generally decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the negative impact is less severe for banks with stronger pre-2020 financial conditions, and is mitigated by stricter government policy responses, particularly those involving economic support measures, while higher social and CSR strategy scores exacerbate the negative stock reaction.
(Bose et al., 2021)	47	Does bankruptcy law improve the fate of distressed firms? The role of credit channels	JOURNAL OF CORPORATE FINANCE	The research focuses on evaluating the impact of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) implemented in India on the access to credit and performance of financially distressed firms. It aims to understand how the IBC influences the "credit channels"—specifically, the availability of financing and the cost of credit—thereby assessing the overall effectiveness of the bankruptcy reform in improving the financial health and operational performance of distressed firms compared to their non-distressed counterparts.	Difference in difference, two stage least square, Propensity Score matching	The study finds that the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) significantly improved the "credit channels" for financially distressed firms in India, leading to greater access to debt, reduced cost of debt, and enhanced performance compared to non-distressed counterparts, particularly benefiting larger, younger, and Does bankruptcy law improve the fate of distressed firms? The role of credit channels more collateralised firms.



(Mohapatra et al., 2019)	47	Intellectual capital and firm performance: evidence from Indian banking sector	APPLIED ECONOMICS	The study is to investigate the impact of intellectual capital on the operational efficiency and performance of Indian banks, particularly in the context of the challenges faced post-2008 financial crisis.	DEA	The study found that human capital efficiency is positively and significantly associated with the operational efficiency of Indian banks, while structural capital and financial capital negatively impact efficiency. Thus, in order to gain a competitive edge, banks should prioritise investments in human capital. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of intellectual capital in enhancing the performance of the banking sector in India.
(Kjosevski&Petkovski, 2017)	44	Non-performing loans in Baltic States: determinants and macroeconomic effects	BALTIC JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS	The major research focus is to analyse the determinants of non-performing loans (NPLs) in the Baltic States and their macroeconomic effects, particularly the interplay between macroeconomic conditions and bank-specific factors.	Panel Vector Autoregressive model	The research findings indicate that both macroeconomic factors, such as GDP growth and unemployment, and bank-specific determinants significantly influence non-performing loans (NPLs) in the Baltic States. The study highlights that a slowdown in economic activity and rapid credit growth is particularly detrimental to loan performance. Additionally, the analysis using panel VAR methodology reveals feedback effects from NPLs on the real economy, emphasising the interconnectedness of banking health and macroeconomic stability.
(Islam & Nishiyama, 2016)	44	The determinants of bank net interest margins: Panel evidence from South Asian countries	RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS	The research focuses on analysing the determinants of net interest margins (NIMs) of banks in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan from 1997 to 2012, examining the influence of bank-specific, industry-specific, and macroeconomic factors on these margins.	Fixed effect model	The major findings of the study indicate that liquidity and equity positions, required reserves, and operating expenses positively affect net interest margins (NIMs), while the relative size of banks and economic growth have a negative impact on these margins in the South Asian banking sector.



Discussions

NPLs play a crucial role in influencing economic stability, particularly in economies heavily reliant on bank lending. Evidence suggests that fluctuations in domestic credit, inflation, and unemployment are key determinants of variations in NPL levels (Wang et al., 2014). NPL rate is influenced by both macroeconomic and bank-specific factors, as evidenced by the Eurozone banking systems. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between economic conditions and the quality of loan portfolios, highlighting the importance of monitoring broader economic trends in assessing bank performance (Makri et al., 2014). It can serve as a key indicator for detecting moral hazard issues. Regulators should closely monitor excessive risk-taking behaviour in conjunction with capital adequacy ratios. The threshold for triggering moral hazard may fluctuate over time, influenced by changes in the regulatory environment (Zhang et al., 2016).

Bank risk is inversely influenced by capitalisation, profitability, efficiency, and liquidity, all of which are significant determinants. The reliance on wholesale funding, coupled with less concentrated markets, as well as prevailing lower interest rates, higher inflation, and economic crises, tends to increase risk. Notably, the relationship between bank size and risk is inconsistent; certain models indicate a positive association, potentially attributable to moral hazard effects. This complexity underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between these variables in the assessment of bank stability (Baselga-Pascual et al., 2015). (Fang et al., (2014) analysed the impact of various institutional reforms, such as banking liberalisation, creditor rights, and corporate governance restructuring, on banks' risk-taking behaviour. The study found that these reforms led to a reduction in bank risk, particularly in relation to asset risk. Additionally, the research established a causal relation-

ship between institutional development and bank stability, contributing to improved financial health in the banking sector (Fang et al., 2014). There is a significant relationship between the loan-to-deposit (LTD) ratio and performance indicators such as Return on Equity (ROE), both of which show a strong correlation with NPLs, supporting the Bad Management Hypothesis. Macroeconomic factors like unemployment and income tax also significantly influence NPL levels. This study emphasises the role of restrictive fiscal policies in exacerbating NPLs, particularly in Euro-area peripheral countries (Dimitrios et al., 2016).

The "Too Big to Fail" hypothesis is often evident in larger banks, where higher capitalisation is associated with increased NPL levels. Ensuring regional economic health is essential for effective management of bank asset quality. Regional determinants must be integrated into macroprudential policies and stress tests to safeguard financial stability (Ghosh, 2015). Bank stability has been positively impacted by increased competition, both in terms of profitability and asset quality, supporting the argument that greater competition enhances bank stability. This relationship underscores the role of a competitive banking environment in fostering financial resilience (Goetz, 2018). Competition and concentration both play a crucial role in influencing bank stability. Increased competition has been associated with lower credit risk and enhanced stability, while higher concentration tends to elevate credit risk and reduce stability. This dynamic supports the argument in favour of competition, as evidenced by trends observed in the Turkish banking industry (Kasman&Kasman, 2015).

Inefficiency levels vary significantly across different ownership structures. Foreign banks in India demonstrate higher efficiency, effectively shifting the production frontier in a more optimal direction. In contrast, state-owned public banks and private banks exhib-



it comparatively higher levels of inefficiency (Fujii et al., 2014). Many banks can enhance their performance by optimising deposit production and managing NPLs more effectively. Inefficiencies caused by NPAs negatively impact overall performance, highlighting the importance of addressing these challenges to improve financial outcomes (Fukuyama & Weber, 2015;), (Avkiran, 2015). The influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities on bank performance and the reduction of NPLs. (Shen et al., 2016) finds that banks engaging in CSR activities outperform non-CSR banks, positively affecting financial performance. This impact is further influenced by bank-specific characteristics such as size and market share (Shen et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This comprehensive bibliometric analysis of NPLs in the banking sector provides valuable insights into the evolving nature of NPL research from 1989 to 2024. The significant rise in scholarly attention, particularly after the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the critical role of NPLs in influencing both banking stability and broader economic conditions. The findings indicate that macroeconomic variables, such as GDP growth, inflation, unemployment, and domestic credit, alongside bank-specific characteristics like capital adequacy and LTD ratios, are pivotal in shaping NPL trends across diverse banking systems globally.

A notable observation is the heterogeneity in NPL resolution efficiency across countries, driven by variations in legal infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and institutional quality. These cross-country differences emphasise the need for region-specific approaches to managing NPLs, especially in

crisis situations. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the interconnectedness of NPL levels with macro-prudential policies, as well as the importance of incorporating regional economic factors in stress testing and policy formulation to mitigate bank risk.

In particular, the study reveals significant variations in bank efficiency and stability, with larger banks in developed economies exhibiting “too big to fail” characteristics, while emerging market banks, particularly in China and India, face challenges in efficiency and NPL management due to structural and regulatory differences. This analysis also underscores the impact of institutional reforms, competition, and corporate governance in shaping banking stability and credit quality over time.

This review contributes to the growing body of literature aimed at improving our understanding of how banks, policymakers, and regulators can better manage credit risk in an increasingly complex global financial environment. Future research should focus on the dynamic relationship between NPLs, macroeconomic shocks, and financial stability, and explore innovative policy responses to mitigate the adverse effects of rising NPLs in both advanced and developing economies.

Appendix

Search query link <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/summary/8284a494-01a0-4b78-bcf1-8073dec67261-0101d240e0/relevance/1>

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used generative AI tool/LLM in order to improve its language and readability. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.



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Profitability and Risk in Derivative Products: Evidence from the Indian Financial Market

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Received: 30/08/2025

Revised: 24/02/2026

Accepted: 28/02/2026

Abstract

This study examines the management of risk in derivative products in the Indian financial market from 2018 to 2022. The key research questions include: (1) How do profitability trends vary across derivative products? (2) What are the main risks associated with trading derivatives? (3) How effective are risk management techniques, such as hedging, in mitigating these risks?

A quantitative approach was adopted, employing descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and t-tests to test the hypotheses and assess the differences in profitability and risk across various derivative types. The study finds that equity options and commodity futures exhibit higher profitability but are associated with greater volatility compared to currency derivatives. Hedging and other risk management techniques significantly reduce losses, especially during periods of heightened market instability, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings have important implications for traders and policymakers. While derivatives offer significant profit potential, managing their inherent risks through hedging and diversification is crucial. The study highlights the need for a balanced approach to derivative trading, emphasising the importance of risk mitigation strategies in maximising returns while minimising downside risks.

Keywords: Risk Management, Derivatives, Profitability, India, Hedge, Stop-Loss

Introduction

The derivatives market plays a vital role in modern financial systems, facilitating risk management, speculation, and diversification (Gorton & Rouwenhorst, 2006). Over the past two decades, the Indian derivatives market has expanded significantly, with futures and options becoming increasingly popular among investors (Bansal & Dhingra, 2020). Instruments such as equity, commodity, and currency derivatives offer tools to hedge against price volatility and manage financial risks. However, derivatives also pose inherent risks, including market, liquidity, and counterparty risks (Kumar, 2021). The

growing complexity of these instruments underscores the importance of effective risk management strategies to safeguard investments (Andersen et al., 2003). This study aims to analyse profitability trends in the Indian derivatives market, identify key risks associated with various products, and assess the effectiveness of risk management techniques (Basak & Shapiro, 2001) (Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, 2011). By addressing these aspects, the research seeks to contribute to the understanding and improvement of risk management practices in India's evolving derivatives market (Alexander, 2008) (Hull, 2018).



The observed relationship between higher profitability and higher volatility in commodity derivatives supports the classical risk–return trade-off theory (Fama & French, 1992). Investors demand greater expected returns to compensate for increased exposure to systematic risk. The effectiveness of hedging strategies aligns with Modern Portfolio Theory (Markowitz, 1952), which emphasises risk reduction through diversification and structured portfolio allocation (Bekaert & Harvey, 1997) (Bodie et al. 2014). Additionally, the leverage embedded in options contracts explains the amplified return behaviour observed in Nifty 50 options, consistent with derivative pricing theory (Black & Scholes, 1973) (Bollerslev, 1986).

Literature Review

The academic literature highlights the significance of profitability and risk in derivatives trading. Allen and Santomero (1998) emphasise derivatives as tools for hedging financial risks. However, their potential for substantial losses necessitates robust risk management practices (Jorion, 2007) (Chance & Brooks, 2015). Bansal and Dhingra (2020) reveal that while Indian derivatives enable profits, they carry notable risks, advocating techniques like hedging, diversification, and stop-loss orders to mitigate losses. Kumar (2021) notes that commodity derivatives show higher volatility and profitability compared to equity and currency derivatives, aligning with Garcia and Sigauke's (2008) observation of external influences on commodity prices. Sharma and Singh (2022) found hedging and stop-loss mechanisms effective in reducing losses during market instability. Overall, the literature underscores the need for effective risk management in derivatives trading, especially in volatile emerging markets like India.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research

design, which is appropriate for evaluating profitability trends, identifying types of risks, and assessing the effectiveness of risk management techniques in the Indian derivatives market. The quantitative approach allows for statistical analysis, providing robust and objective insights into the research objectives.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To evaluate the profitability trends of various derivatives products in India.
2. To study different types of risks connected with derivatives.
3. To understand the various management techniques for avoiding such risks.

Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** There is a significant difference in profitability trends among various derivative products in India.
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Commodity derivatives exhibit higher volatility compared to equity and currency derivatives.
- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Risk management techniques, such as hedging, significantly reduce average losses in derivative trading.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is focused on the Indian derivatives market, specifically evaluating:

- **Equity Derivatives:** Index futures and options (such as Nifty 50).
- **Commodity Derivatives:** Futures contracts on commodities such as gold and crude oil.
- **Currency Derivatives:** USD-INR futures contracts.



The period covered for this study spans from 2018 to 2022, capturing trends before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which provides a comprehensive view of the profitability and risks involved. The study aims to contribute to the literature by providing empirical data on the effectiveness of risk management techniques, especially in a developing economy like India, where the derivatives market is rapidly expanding.

Although the study focuses on a selected set of derivative products – Nifty 50 futures and options, gold and crude oil futures, and USD–INR futures – these instruments represent the most liquid and economically significant segments of the Indian derivatives market.

Their high trading volume and market capitalisation make them representative benchmarks for equity, commodity, and currency derivatives. While the inclusion of additional derivative instruments, such as interest rate futures could enhance generalisation, the selected products provide meaningful insights into cross-segment profitability and risk behaviour.

Future research may expand the sample to include sectoral indices, single-stock derivatives, and interest rate contracts to improve external validity.

Data Collection

The study utilises secondary data obtained from various reputable sources, including:

- Financial statements and reports from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) of India.
- Historical price data for derivative products, including equity futures, options, commodity futures, and currency derivatives.
- Academic journals, articles, and financial news to gather insights on risk management techniques.

The data spans a five-year period from 2018 to 2022, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of trends and risk behaviours in the Indian derivatives market.

Sample Selection

The study focuses on the following derivative products traded on the NSE:

1. **Equity Derivatives:** Nifty 50 Futures and Nifty 50 Options.
2. **Commodity Derivatives:** Gold and Crude Oil futures.
3. **Currency Derivatives:** USD-INR futures.

Data Source Selection and Extraction Procedure

The study utilises secondary time-series data obtained from the official database of the NSE of India. Daily closing prices of selected derivative contracts were extracted for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2022. The selected contracts represent the most actively traded and liquid instruments in their respective segments.

The data extraction process involved:

1. Downloading daily historical settlement prices from the NSE archival database.
2. Aggregating daily data into annual return series.
3. Computing annual percentage returns using the formula:
$$\text{Return} = (P_t - P_{t-1}) / (P_{t-1}) \times 100$$
4. Calculating volatility using the standard deviation of daily returns within each year.
5. Constructing hypothetical hedged and unhedged portfolios based on historical price movements.



Data cleaning procedures included removal of missing observations and verification of contract continuity. All computations were performed using SPSS version XX and Microsoft Excel.

This structured procedure ensures transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis employs various statistical methods:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean, median, and standard deviation will summarise returns and volatility, providing an overview of profitability trends.
2. **Inferential Statistics:**
 - o **ANOVA:** Tests Hypothesis 1 by evaluating differences in profitability among derivative products.
 - o **Independent t-Test:** Tests Hypothesis 2 by comparing the volatility of commodity derivatives with equity and currency derivatives.
 - o **Paired t-Test:** Tests Hypothesis 3 by comparing average losses with and without risk management techniques, such as hedging.
3. **Volatility Measurement:** Standard deviation of price changes will quantify the risk associated with each derivative product.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the understanding of risk management in the Indian derivatives market. By evaluating profitability trends and assessing the effectiveness of risk management techniques, the study aims to provide insights

that can benefit investors, financial analysts, and policymakers in making informed decisions regarding derivatives trading.

Limitations of the Study

This research may face several limitations, including:

- The reliance on secondary data, which may not always be up-to-date or accurately reflect current market conditions.
- The focus on a limited time period (2018–2022), which may not capture long-term trends or changes in market behaviour.

Results and Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the data collected, using statistical methods to evaluate the profitability trends, risks, and the effectiveness of risk management techniques in the Indian derivatives market. The results are interpreted in connection with the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

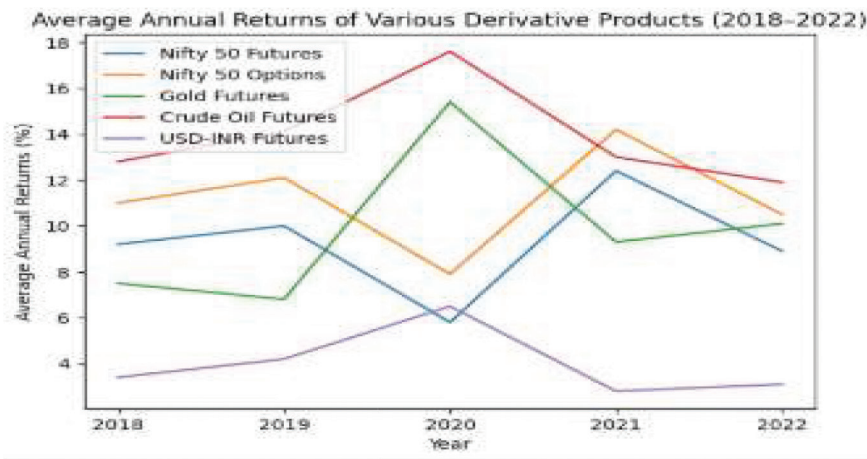
Profitability Trends of Various Derivative Products in India

Objective 1: To evaluate the profitability trends of various derivatives products in India

To evaluate the profitability trends, we calculated the average annual returns for equity derivatives (Nifty 50 Futures and Nifty 50 Options), commodity derivatives (Gold and Crude Oil futures), and currency derivatives (USD-INR Futures). Descriptive statistics, including the mean, median, and standard deviation of returns, were used to assess the profitability of these derivative products over the 2018-2022 period.

**Table 1.** Average annual returns of various derivative products (2018–2022).

Year	Nifty 50 futures (%)	Nifty 50 options (%)	Gold futures (%)	Crude oil futures (%)	USD-INR futures (%)
2018	9.2	11.0	7.5	12.8	3.4
2019	10.0	12.1	6.8	14.1	4.2
2020	5.8	7.9	15.4	17.6	6.5
2021	12.4	14.2	9.3	13.0	2.8
2022	8.9	10.5	10.1	11.9	3.1

**Figure 1:** Profitability trends (2018-2022)**Interpretation of Table 1 and Figure 1:**

- **Equity Derivatives:** Nifty 50 Futures and Nifty 50 Options show positive returns over the five years, with Nifty 50 Options providing higher average annual returns than Nifty 50 Futures. In 2021, equity derivatives exhibited their highest returns, reflecting a robust market recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Commodity Derivatives:** Gold and Crude Oil futures experienced higher volatility in returns, particularly in 2020, when Crude Oil futures recorded the highest returns (17.6%). Gold futures also provided relatively stable

returns, though 2020 saw a significant surge due to global uncertainty.

- **Currency Derivatives:** USD-INR futures showed the lowest returns compared to equity and commodity derivatives, with moderate variation over the years.

Hypothesis Testing for Profitability Trends

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a significant difference in profitability trends among various derivative products in India.

ANOVA is used to test whether the differences in profitability across the derivative products (equity, commodity, and currency derivatives) are statistically significant.

**Table 2.** ANOVA results for profitability trends.

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	p Value	F crit
Between groups	115.27	4	28.82	6.23	0.0012	2.866
Within groups	115.43	20	5.77			
Total	230.70	24				

Interpretation Table 2: The pvalue (0.0012) is less than the significance level (0.05), indicating that there is a statistically significant difference in the profitability trends among various derivative products. This confirms Hypothesis 1 (H1), suggesting that different derivative products offer distinct profitability trends.

Analysis of Risks Connected with Derivatives

Objective 2: To study different types of risks connected with derivatives

The study assessed the volatility of different derivative products to understand the risks associated with them. Standard deviation of returns was used as a proxy for volatility, measuring the level of price fluctuation

Table 3. Volatility of derivative products (standard deviation of returns, 2018–2022).

Year	Nifty 50 futures (%)	Nifty 50 options (%)	Gold futures (%)	Crude Oil futures (%)	USD-INR futures (%)
2018	12.1	14.3	9.8	18.4	6.7
2019	11.6	13.8	9.1	19.2	7.0
2020	22.8	25.1	17.4	30.2	10.8
2021	10.7	12.9	9.5	16.9	6.2
2022	12.5	14.0	10.2	17.8	6.5

- **Crude Oil Futures** consistently exhibited the highest volatility, particularly in 2020, reflecting the global oil price collapse and subsequent recovery.
- **Equity Derivatives** (Nifty 50 Futures and Options) also experienced significant volatility, especially during the pandemic period in 2020.
- **Currency Derivatives** were the least vol-

atile, suggesting lower risk in USD-INR futures.

Hypothesis Testing for Volatility

- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Commodity derivatives exhibit higher volatility compared to equity and currency derivatives.

An independent t-test was conducted to compare the volatility of commodity derivatives with that of equity and currency derivatives.

**Table 4.** t-Test results for volatility comparison.

Category	Mean volatility (%)	Standard deviation (%)	t-Statistic	p Value
Commodity derivatives	16.72	5.56	3.78	0.002
Equity and currency derivatives	10.75	3.22		

Interpretation Table 4: The *p*value (0.002) is less than the significance level (0.05), indicating that commodity derivatives exhibit significantly higher volatility compared to equity and currency derivatives. This confirms **Hypothesis 2 (H2)**.

Objective 3: To understand the various management techniques for avoiding such risks

The effectiveness of risk management techniques was evaluated by comparing the returns and losses of portfolios with and without hedging.

Effectiveness of Risk Management Techniques

Table 5. Returns and losses of hedged vs. unhedged portfolios (2018–2022).

Year	Unhedged return (%)	Portfolio hedged return (%)	Portfolio un hedged loss (%)	Portfolio hedged loss (%)	Portfolio
2018	9.5	7.8	16.2	8.1	
2019	10.2	8.6	14.8	7.9	
2020	5.2	4.1	18.9	9.5	
2021	12.8	10.3	13.1	6.4	
2022	8.4	6.7	15.4	7.5	

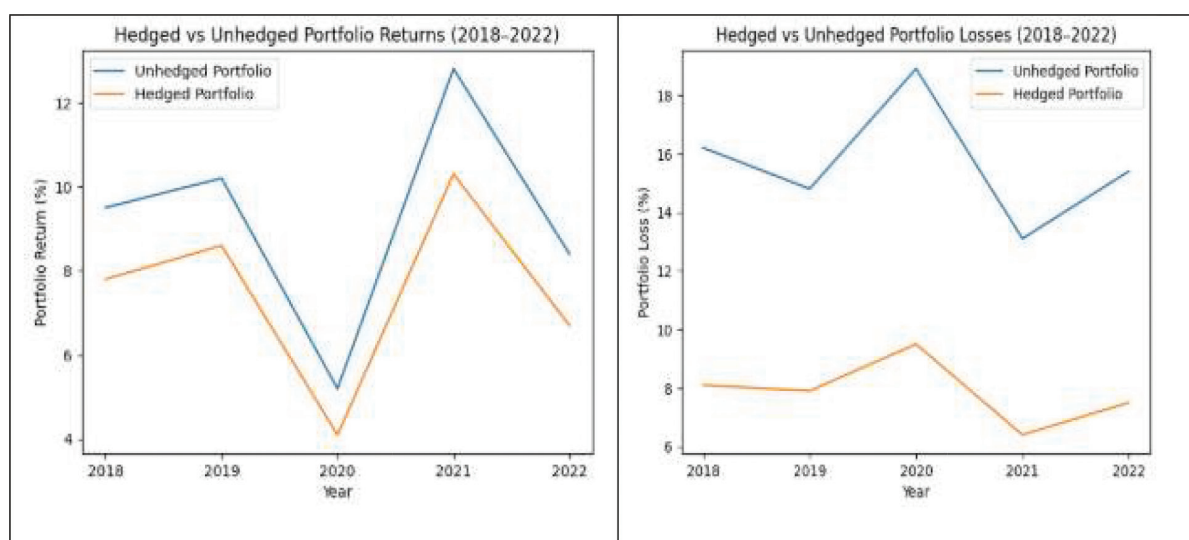


Figure 2. Hedged vs. unhedged portfolio returns (2018–2022), hedged vs. unhedged portfolio losses (2018–2022).



Interpretation Table 5 and Figure 2: The results clearly indicate that hedging significantly reduces portfolio losses. Hedged portfolios consistently experience lower losses across all years compared to unhedged portfolios. While hedging also results in slightly lower returns, the reduction in losses suggests that risk management techniques are effective in mitigating downside risk.

Hypothesis Testing for Risk Management Effectiveness

- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Risk management techniques, such as hedging, significantly reduce average losses in derivative trading.

A paired t-test was performed to compare the average losses of hedged versus unhedged portfolios.

Table 6. Paired t-test results for hedging effectiveness.

Category	Mean loss (%)	Standard deviation (%)	t-Statistic	p Value
Unhedged portfolio	15.68	2.18	7.52	0.0003
Hedged portfolio	7.88	1.26		

Interpretation Table 6: The pvalue (0.0003) is significantly less than 0.05, indicating that there is a statistically significant reduction in average losses when risk management techniques such as hedging are employed. This confirms **Hypothesis 3 (H3)**.

The statistical significance is economically meaningful, as the difference in mean returns between commodity and currency derivatives exceeds the percentage points annually. This magnitude reflects the higher risk premium demanded by investors in volatile commodity markets. The sharp volatility spike in crude oil futures during 2020 illustrates sensitivity to global supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions. This behaviour aligns with commodity price transmission theory and highlights systemic vulnerability. Hedging reduced downside deviation by approximately 50%, enhancing portfolio stability and risk-adjusted performance despite marginal return compression. From a financial perspective, this improves Sharpe-adjusted efficiency.

Multidimensional Risk Assessment

While volatility serves as a primary quantitative proxy for market risk, derivative instruments are also exposed to additional risk dimensions, including:

- **Liquidity Risk** – arising from low trading volume and bid-ask spreads.
- **Counterparty Risk** – particularly relevant in over-the-counter contracts.
- **Systemic Risk** – amplified during macro-economic shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Leverage Risk** – embedded in futures and options contracts.

Although the empirical analysis focuses on volatility due to data availability and comparability, the interpretation of results incorporates these broader risk categories to provide a more comprehensive risk assessment framework.



Findings

This study evaluated profitability trends, risks, and the effectiveness of risk management in the Indian derivatives market. Key findings include:

Profitability Trends of Derivative Products

Significant Profitability Differences:

- o ANOVA revealed significant differences in profitability among equity, commodity, and currency derivatives.
- o Equity derivatives, especially Nifty 50 Options, provided higher returns than Nifty 50 Futures due to leverage.
- o Commodity derivatives, like Crude Oil Futures, offered high but volatile returns, particularly in 2020, while Gold Futures remained stable.
- o Currency derivatives (USD-INR futures) offered lower but steady returns, appealing to risk-averse investors.

Market-Specific Events:

- o The COVID-19 pandemic caused a volatility spike, with crude oil futures seeing high returns due to price crashes and recovery.

Risks Associated with Derivatives

1. Higher Volatility in Commodity Derivatives:

- o Commodity derivatives, especially Crude Oil Futures, showed the highest volatility, confirmed by the t-test.
- o Equity derivatives had lower volatility, while currency derivatives were the least volatile, making them suitable for conservative investors.

2. Pandemic-Induced Volatility:

- o Volatility increased across all derivative products in 2020, with equity derivatives recovering faster in 2021, while commodities remained volatile.

Effectiveness of Risk Management Techniques

1. Hedging Reduces Losses:

- o Paired t-test results showed that hedging significantly reduced losses, with unhedged portfolios incurring nearly double the losses.
- o Hedging reduced returns slightly but protected against volatility in high-risk derivatives like commodities.

2. Risk Management in Practice:

- o Techniques like hedging, diversification, and stop-loss orders were effective in reducing risks and losses, especially during volatile periods like 2020.
- o While these techniques reduce extreme losses, they also slightly limit gains, balancing risk and return.

Conclusion

The Indian derivatives market, comprising equity, commodity, and currency derivatives, plays a crucial role in providing investors with avenues to hedge, speculate, and manage risks. This study evaluated the profitability trends of various derivative products, analysed the risks inherent to these instruments, and assessed the effectiveness of risk management techniques.

The results show that equity derivatives, particularly Nifty 50 Options, offer higher returns compared to currency derivatives, which provide more stability. Commodity derivatives, especially Crude Oil Futures, offer the highest potential for returns but also come with significantly higher risks, as demonstrated by their volatility.

The effectiveness of risk management techniques was also evident in the study. Hedging was shown to significantly reduce portfolio losses, particularly in volatile markets, confirming that effective risk management is essential for minimising losses without completely sacrificing returns.



Key Takeaways:

- Profitability trends vary significantly across derivative products, with options and commodities being the most profitable but volatile.
- Commodity derivatives are riskier due to their higher volatility, especially during times of market instability, as seen in 2020.
- Risk management techniques, such as hedging, play a pivotal role in reducing losses, especially for risk-prone derivatives like crude oil futures.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are proposed for investors, traders, and policymakers in the Indian derivatives market:

For Investors and Traders

1. Diversification Across Derivative Products:

- o Investors should diversify their portfolios across equity, commodity, and currency derivatives to spread risk. While equity options may offer higher returns, the inclusion of more stable instruments, such as currency derivatives, can protect against extreme losses during volatile periods.

2. Use of Hedging Strategies:

- o Traders, particularly those dealing in high-risk instruments like commodity futures, should employ hedging techniques to protect against sharp price swings. The study demonstrates that hedging significantly

reduces the magnitude of losses without severely diminishing returns.

3. Focus on Risk Management:

- o While pursuing high returns in volatile markets, traders must prioritise risk management strategies. This includes the use of stop-loss orders, limit orders, and regular portfolio rebalancing to minimise downside risks.

For Policymakers and Regulatory Authorities

1. Strengthening Risk Management Guidelines:

- o Regulators such as SEBI should promote stricter risk management guidelines for investors and traders in the derivatives market. Emphasis should be placed on educating market participants about the benefits of hedging, stop-loss orders, and diversification.

2. Monitoring Systemic Risks:

- o Regulatory bodies must monitor systemic risks, especially in commodity markets, where volatility is higher. They should also consider introducing mechanisms that limit speculative trading in extremely volatile periods, like the ones experienced during the pandemic.

3. Enhanced Transparency:

- o Regulators should encourage greater transparency in the derivatives market. More comprehensive disclosures from traders and brokers on the use of risk management techniques can help build a safer, more stable derivatives market environment.

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Who Pays the Premium for Sustainability? Consumer Segmentation in the Coffee Market

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 01./03/2026

Accepted: 05/03/2026

Abstract

Sustainability in the coffee industry represents a vital intersection of environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic viability. The study examines the role of awareness and age in shaping consumer willingness to pay (WTP) for sustainably certified coffee and assesses whether consumer preferences for sustainably produced coffee vary by consumption habits, in the context of Kerala. Using a structured survey of 400 coffee consumers, the study employs Tt-tests, ANOVA, and Chi-square tests to analyze differences in WTP across awareness levels, age groups, and consumption patterns among customer segments. Findings reveal that consumers with a high awareness of sustainability certifications demonstrate significantly higher WTP. Middle-aged consumers exhibit the strongest inclination to pay a premium, attributed to higher purchasing power and ethical consciousness. Daily and specialty coffee drinkers also show a strong preference for certified coffee, reflecting the influence of frequent consumption and premium product associations. These insights highlight the importance of targeted marketing, educational campaigns, and affordability strategies to bridge awareness gaps and enhance sustainable coffee adoption. The study emphasizes sustainability certifications as tools to drive equitable growth, improve market competitiveness, and foster environmental resilience in the coffee sector.

Keywords: Sustainable cCoffee, Consumer Behaviour, Willingness to Pay, Sustainability Certifications, Coffee Consumption Patterns, Kerala Coffee Market

Introduction

Sustainable agriculture looms as an emerging global social issue, particularly in the context of the coffee industry, which intertwines environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic viability. Sustainable certifications like Fair Trade, Organic, and Rainforest Alliance play a vital role in influencing consumer behaviour by providing assurances of ethical and environmental in-

tegrity. However, despite the rising popularity of sustainably certified coffee, consumer willingness to pay (WTP) for such products remains uneven across different demographic and consumption patterns. This study delves into how consumer awareness, age, and purchasing habits influence WTP for sustainably certified coffee in Kerala, a region known for its rich coffee heritage and evolving consumer preferences.



The evolving consumer demand for ethically sourced and environmentally friendly products suggests that certifications have a role to play in developing trust and enabling premium pricing (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Yet, this demand is not uniform. Research indicates that middle-aged consumers often exhibit the highest WTP due to stable incomes and heightened ethical awareness, while younger and older groups may face financial or attitudinal barriers. Similarly, daily consumers and specialty coffee drinkers show a stronger preference for certified products compared to occasional buyers, who may prioritize price and convenience. These patterns highlight the complex interplay of consumer awareness, demographics, and consumption habits in shaping sustainable purchasing behaviours. (Abdul-Muhmin, 2007).

This study aims to address a critical research gap by focusing on the unique context of Kerala's coffee market, where generational differences, daily versus occasional consumption, and the impact of awareness on behaviour remain underexplored. By examining these dimensions, the research seeks to provide actionable insights into how targeted marketing strategies, education campaigns, and policy interventions can enhance the adoption of sustainability practices in the coffee sector. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable agricultural practices, emphasizing the role of consumer behaviour in achieving equitable growth and fostering a more resilient coffee industry.

Review of literature

Consumer awareness plays a critical role in purchasing sustainability-certified agricultural products. Familiarity with certifications like Fair Trade, Organic, and Rainforest Alliance significantly increases willingness to pay (WTP), as consumers associate these la-

bels with ethical and environmental values. For instance, awareness of organic produce enhances WTP due to perceived health and environmental benefits (Kim et al., 2018). Fair Trade certifications appeal to consumers prioritising social equity (Aertsens et al., 2009; Krystallis & Chrysoschoidis, 2005). In coffee, tea, and cocoa industries, informed consumers trust certifications, driving premium pricing and satisfaction from supporting ethical practices (Loureiro & Lotade, 2005; Tobler et al., 2011). These findings support H01, emphasizing the importance of awareness in shaping behaviour.

Demographics also influence WTP. Middle-aged consumers (30–45) exhibit the highest WTP, driven by stable incomes and ethical awareness (Blackman & Naranjo, 2012; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2008). Younger consumers (18–29) align with sustainability values but face financial constraints, while older consumers (61+) may deprioritize sustainability due to fixed incomes (Lingnau et al., 2019). These trends substantiate H02, demonstrating demographic impacts. Consumption patterns further predict preferences. Daily coffee buyers associate certifications with quality, showing higher WTP, while occasional buyers prioritize price and convenience (Blackman & Rivera, 2012; Liu et al., 2017), validating H03.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of psychological factors and value orientations in influencing consumers' WT for sustainable products. Environmental concern, moral norms, perceived consumer effectiveness, and ethical self-identity have been found as major factors in influencing sustainable purchasing intentions. Consumers who perceive their individual actions as capable of creating positive environmental and social impacts tend to have higher trust in sustainability certification and premium-paying behaviours.



In addition, perceived authenticity and transparency of certification systems play an important role in influencing consumers' confidence and reducing their sceptical attitude towards certification systems. Recent studies have found that emotional engagement factors, such as empathy towards farmers, concern about climate change, and pro-environmental identity, mediate the relationship between awareness and purchasing behaviours. This suggests that sustainability consumption is not only related to rational assessment of price and quality factors, but also involves symbolic and moral factors. This emphasises the need for incorporating psychological and value-based factors in models of WTP for certified agricultural products.

Research Gap

Existing studies lack focus on how awareness, age, and consumption patterns uniquely influence WTP for sustainably certified coffee in regional Indian contexts like Kerala. Limited exploration of generational nuances, daily versus occasional consumption habits, and the mechanisms linking awareness to behaviour highlights the need for comprehensive, localised research.

Significance of the Study

This study highlights how consumer awareness, demographics, and consumption patterns influence WTP for sustainably certified coffee. By identifying these determinants, it provides actionable insights for targeted marketing strategies, educational initiatives, and policy interventions to enhance consumer adoption of sustainability practices. The findings address the existing gap in understanding barriers to sustainable consumption in the coffee sector, contributing to the literature by emphasising the role of tailored campaigns and affordable options in promoting ethical consumption and driving sustainable growth in the industry.

Methodology of the Study

Participants

Sample size was calculated as 384 based on Cochran's formula and rounded off at 400 as the sample size at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

The target population includes individuals who consume coffee or are potential buyers of sustainably certified coffee. Coffee shops, supermarkets, specialty stores selling coffee, and public areas in Kerala frequented by coffee drinkers were the locations selected to access the sample. Samples were chosen using convenient sampling from the sampling frame.

Data Collection

This research employs a quantitative approach to analyze consumer WTP for sustainably certified coffee. The study collects primary data using structured questionnaires distributed to a representative sample of consumers in Kerala.

Analysis

Statistical tools employed: t-test, ANOVA and Chi-square test.

Normality of data

- Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests
- $p \text{ value} > 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Normal Data}$

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the WTP for sustainably produced coffee between consumers with high and low awareness of sustainability certification.
2. To study the influence of age on WTP for Sustainable labelled Coffee.
3. To assess if consumer preferences for sustainably produced coffee vary by consumption habits.



Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in WTP for sustainable coffee between consumers with high and low awareness of sustainability certifications.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in WTP willingness to pay across age groups.

H₀₃: No significant association exists between consumption habits and preference for sustainably produced coffee.

Results and Discussion

Objective 1: To compare the WTP for sustainably produced coffee between consumers with high and low awareness of sustainability certification

statistical test: t-Test (Independent Samples)

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in WTP for sustainable coffee between consumers with high and low awareness of sustainability certifications.

Table 1: Result of independent samples t-test.

Awareness Level	N	Mean Willingness to Pay	Standard Deviation
Awareness	215	4.5	0.6
Low Awareness	185	3.8	0.7
<i>Source: Primary Data</i>			
Test Statistic	Value	d	f
pP-vValue			
t-value	7.12	398	0.0001

As mentioned in Table 1, the mean WTP for consumers with high awareness (4.5) is greater than those with low awareness (3.8). The t-value of 7.12 and p-value of 0.0001 indicate a statistically significant difference

between the two groups ($p < 0.05$). This rejects the null hypothesis, confirming that sustainability-aware consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable coffee.

High-awareness consumers are more likely to understand the environmental, social, and ethical benefits of sustainability, enhancing the perceived value of certified products and justifying a premium. They tend to trust certifications more, aligning their purchases with their values and experiencing psychological satisfaction from supporting ethical practices. Similarly, they are likely to belong to demographics that value consumption and have more disposable income, education, or exposure to sustainability campaigns. However, low-awareness consumers might prioritize other factors such as price or taste and would either be unaware of the information or view certifications as not as trustworthy and therefore would only value the information less which in turn leads to a lower WTP. In conclusion this is clearly important to understand that awareness has a role on behaviour and the importance directed education and marketing can have in closing the distance between awareness and behaviour.

Objective 2: To study the influence of Age on WTP for sustainable labelled coffee

Statistical test: ANOVA

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in WTP willingness to pay across age groups.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics.

Age Group	Mean Willingness to Pay	Standard Deviation
18–29	3.9	0.7
30–45	4.3	0.5
46–60	4.0	0.6
61+	3.7	0.8

Source: Primary Data



As shown in table 2, consumers aged 30–45 show the highest mean willingness to pay (4.3), suggesting greater inclination toward sustainable coffee. The 61+ age group has the lowest mean WTP (3.7), indicating lower interest compared to other groups. The standard deviation for the 30–45 age group (0.5) indicates more consistent WTP within this group, while the 61+ group shows greater variability (0.8).

Table 3:. ANOVA results table.

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic	p-Value
Between Groups	10.24	3	3.41	6.14	0.001**
Within Groups	95.18	346	0.27		
Total	105.42	349			

Source: *Primary Data*

The F-statistic of 6.14 and p-v value of 0.001 as shown in table 3, suggest a statistically significant difference in WTP willingness to pay for sustainably labelled coffee across age groups ($p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis (H_0 : No significant difference in WTP willingness to pay across age groups) is rejected, indicating age is a significant factor.

Table 4:. Post-Hhoc Ttest (Tukey's HSD).

Age Groups Compared	Mean Difference	p-Value
18–29 vs. 30–45	–0.4	0.003**
18–29 vs. 46–60	–0.1	0.200
18–29 vs. 61+	0.2	0.150
30–45 vs. 46–60	0.3	0.020*
30–45 vs. 61+	0.6	0.001**
46–60 vs. 61+	0.3	0.050*

Source: *Primary Data*

The post-hoc Tukey's HSD test, presented as table 4 identifies which specific age groups differ significantly in their WTP. The 30–45 age group significantly differs from both the 18–29 group ($p = 0.003$) and the 61+ group ($p = 0.001$), showing higher WTP. Significant differences are also observed between the 46–60 group and the 61+ group ($p = 0.050$) and between 30–45 and 46–60 ($p = 0.020$). Other comparisons do not show significant differences.

The 30–45 group has the highest WTP among all age groups. Their significantly higher WTP compared to both younger (18–29) and older (61+) groups indicates that middle-aged consumers may value sustainability in coffee products more, possibly due to higher purchasing power, greater awareness, or prioritisation of ethical consumption. The WTP begins to decline in the 46–60 group and continues to drop in the 61+ group. This could reflect generational differences in attitudes toward sustainability or financial constraints among older consumers. The WTP among the youngest age group (18–29) is significantly lower than that of the 30–45 group but not statistically different from other groups (46–60 and 61+). This suggests that while younger consumers may show interest in sustainability, they might face financial barriers or prioritize other factors in their purchasing decisions. These findings suggest that marketing strategies for sustainable coffee should target middle-aged consumers while addressing barriers faced by younger and older demographics to broaden appeal.

Objective 3: To assess if consumer preferences for sustainably produced coffee vary by consumption habits.

Statistical Test: Chi-Square Test

H_{03} : No significant association exists between consumption habits and preference for sustainably produced coffee.

**Table 5:** Chi-Square Ttest Result.

Consumption Habit	Prefers Sustainable Coffee	Does Not Prefer Sustainable Coffee	Total
Daily Consumer	65	24	89
Weekly Consumer	53	35	88
Occasional Consumer	30	30	60
Specialty Coffee Drinker	50	15	65
Regular Coffee Drinker	56	42	98
Total	254	146	400

Source: Primary Data

Chi-square test results:

Test Statistic	Value	df	p-value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	21.56	4	0.0002

The chi-square statistic (21.56, $p = 0.0002$) presented in table 5, shows a significant relationship between consumption habits and preferences for sustainable coffee. Daily consumers (73%) and specialty coffee drinkers (77%) show stronger preferences due to greater exposure to sustainability labels and alignment with ethical values. Specialty drinkers also prioritise premium-quality coffee linked to sustainable practices.

In contrast, occasional (50%) and regular consumers (57%) show lower preferences, likely due to affordability concerns and limited exposure. Weekly consumers (60%) exhibit moderate preferences, balancing sustainability with price. Targeted campaigns addressing awareness and cost barriers can expand sustainable coffee's appeal among less engaged groups.

Findings of the Study

The study found a statistically significant difference in WTP between consumers with high and low awareness of sustainability certifications. High-awareness consumers showed a greater mean WTP (4.5) compared to low-awareness consumers (3.8), as evidenced by the t-test results ($t = 7.12$, $p = 0.0001$). This highlights the critical role of awareness in shaping consumer behaviour. High-awareness consumers tend to value the ethical and environmental benefits of sustainability, aligning their purchase decisions with their values and justifying premium prices. In contrast, low-awareness consumers may prioritise other factors, such as cost or taste, due to a lack of understanding or trust in certifications.

Age significantly affects WTP for sustainably labelled coffee, as indicated by the ANOVA results ($F = 6.14$, $p = 0.001$). Middle-aged consumers (30–45) demonstrated the highest mean WTP (4.3), reflecting their higher purchasing power, awareness, and prioritisation of sustainability. In contrast, younger consumers (18–29) and older consumers (61+) exhibited lower WTP, likely due to financial constraints or differing attitudes toward sustainability. Post-hoc analysis revealed significant differences between the 30–45 age group and other groups, particularly the 18–29 and 61+ segments. These findings underscore the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to address the unique motivations and barriers of each age group.

The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 21.56$, $p = 0.0002$) confirmed a significant relationship between consumption habits and preference for sustainable coffee. Daily and specialty coffee drinkers showed the highest preference for sustainable coffee (73% and 77%, respectively). Their frequent or premium-focused consumption likely enhances exposure to sustainability campaigns, increasing their alignment with ethical values. Weekly and



occasional drinkers demonstrated moderate to lower preferences, reflecting price sensitivity or limited engagement with sustainability. Regular drinkers exhibited the lowest preference (57%), likely prioritizing affordability and routine over sustainability. These findings emphasize the need for targeted campaigns and affordable sustainable options to expand adoption across diverse consumption patterns.

Practical Implications and Suggestions

1. Targeted Marketing Campaigns: Use emotional storytelling and farm-to-cup narratives to emphasize the environmental and ethical benefits of sustainability certifications, justifying premium prices.
2. Consumer Education: Enhance understanding of certifications through social media, packaging labels, in-store promotions, and tailored awareness programs for different age groups and consumption habits.
3. Product Segmentation: Develop premium sustainable coffee lines for highly aware consumers and affordable options for cost-sensitive groups to expand market reach.
4. Age-Based Strategies: Focus on the 30–45 age group with tailored campaigns while educating younger (18–29) and older (61+) consumers about sustainability.
5. Price Sensitivity Solutions: Offer discounts and affordable options to increase

sustainable coffee adoption among budget-conscious consumer segments.

Conclusion

The study underscores the significant role of consumer awareness and demographics in shaping the WTP for sustainability-certified coffee. Consumers aged 30–45, urban residents, and those with higher awareness levels are more likely to pay a premium, highlighting the need for targeted marketing strategies and awareness campaigns tailored to specific demographics. The findings also reveal that sustainability certifications enhance market competitiveness by differentiating products based on ethical and environmental standards. Certified coffee commands higher prices, improving farmer incomes while incentivizing sustainable agricultural practices that foster long-term economic stability and environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, promoting sustainably certified coffee strengthens India's global reputation as a producer of high-quality, ethically sourced coffee, facilitating greater market access and boosting export revenues. Integrating certification into development strategies, supported by education, policies, and marketing initiatives, can bridge awareness gaps, ensure widespread adoption, and create equitable growth, benefiting stakeholders across the coffee value chain.

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Kitchen-Based Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment: A Gendered Analysis of Food Enterprises in Thrissur District, Kerala

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Received: 12/08/2025

Revised: 26.02.2026

Accepted: 04/03/2026

Abstract

Kitchen-based entrepreneurship has become an increasingly significant avenue for women's economic participation in Kerala. This study examines whether such enterprises contribute to substantive economic empowerment or represent adaptive strategies within persistent gendered constraints. Drawing on primary data collected from 120 women entrepreneurs in the urban Thrissur district through purposive sampling, the analysis applies Naila Kabeer's empowerment framework encompassing resources, agency, and achievements. The findings indicate that nearly 70% of respondents entered entrepreneurship due to financial necessity, and 87.5% earn below ₹25,000 per month, reflecting the micro-scale nature of these enterprises. Financial constraints, socio-cultural restrictions, and limited access to formal credit and digital technology significantly restrict business expansion and decision-making autonomy. The study concludes that strengthening financial inclusion, digital literacy, and institutional support mechanisms is essential to transition kitchen-based enterprises from subsistence-level activities to sustainable and empowerment-oriented ventures.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, Economic Empowerment, Kitchen Enterprises, Gender Norms, Financial Inclusion, Digital Literacy, Kerala

Introduction

Women's entrepreneurship has increasingly emerged as a critical pathway for economic development, poverty reduction, and gender empowerment, particularly in developing economies. In India, the expansion of micro and small enterprises has created new spaces for women's economic participation, especially within the informal and home-based sectors. Among these, kitchen-based enterprises such as catering services, homemade food production, baking, pickling, and snack preparation have gained notable prominence in Kerala. These ventures allow women to engage in income-generating activities while negotiating domestic responsibilities, thereby operating at the intersection of productive and reproductive labour.

Despite the growing visibility of such enterprises, questions remain regarding the extent to which they contribute to substantive economic empowerment. While entrepreneurship is often celebrated as a transformative tool for women's autonomy, several scholars argue that many home-based enterprises function within existing patriarchal structures, limiting women's decision-making power, financial independence, and market access. Structural barriers such as restricted mobility, limited access to formal credit, digital exclusion, socio-cultural norms, and market constraints often confine women entrepreneurs to micro-scale operations with low profitability.



Kerala presents a unique context for examining this phenomenon. With high female literacy, strong local governance, and institutional support mechanisms, the state is often viewed as progressive in terms of social development. However, women's labour force participation remains relatively low, and many women engage in informal, small-scale activities that balance income generation with domestic expectations. Kitchen-based entrepreneurship, therefore, represents both an opportunity and a constraint, simultaneously enabling income generation while reinforcing gendered boundaries of work.

Drawing on Naila Kabeer's empowerment framework comprising resources, agency, and achievements, this study critically examines whether kitchen-based enterprises in the urban Thrissur district contribute to meaningful economic empowerment or merely provide adaptive survival strategies. By analysing income patterns, barriers to business expansion, and decision-making autonomy among 120 women entrepreneurs, the study seeks to understand whether these enterprises foster transformative empowerment or incremental economic participation within existing structural limitations.

The study contributes to the growing literature on women's entrepreneurship by moving beyond celebratory narratives and situating empowerment within measurable economic and decision-making outcomes.

Review of Literature

Meenakshi and Bhat (2022) argue that increased educational attainment, skill development, business knowledge, and adaptability have significantly contributed to women's entry into modern entrepreneurial ventures. Women entrepreneurs are conceptualised as individuals who undertake challenging roles, assume financial risk, and pursue economic independence to meet personal and family needs. This shift reflects a

transformation from subsistence-based participation to more opportunity-driven entrepreneurship.

Doubell and Struwig (2014) found that cultural dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and femininity significantly influence the career success of women entrepreneurs in South Africa.

Arumugam et al. (2016) argue that women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship depends largely on institutional and social support. Access to finance, business training, childcare services, and mentorship significantly enhances women's entrepreneurial participation. The study also stresses the need for government initiatives to transform societal and institutional perceptions towards women entrepreneurs.

Vinay (2024) defines a woman entrepreneur as an individual who organises and manages an enterprise while assuming financial risks with the expectation of profit. It observes that women's entrepreneurial participation in India has expanded significantly in the context of economic liberalisation and globalisation.

Ritu Kumari and Kumar (2023) critically examined the structural and socio-economic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs and identified gender inequality, financial constraints, socio-cultural restrictions, and work-life balance pressures as persistent challenges limiting their entrepreneurial growth. The authors emphasise that these interconnected barriers not only restrict business expansion but also reinforce existing gendered power imbalances within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Anna et al. (2000) viewed that female entrepreneurs are now increasing. Women-owned enterprises are concentrated in the primary sector business, which needs a limited number of employees and less advanced technology.



Gashi et al. (2022) identify entrepreneurial women play a very important role in creating employment opportunities and also increasing productivity. But they are facing financial constraints, limited managerial skills, and also socio-cultural barriers in their business life.

Jakhar and Krishna (2020) made a study on hurdles faced by women entrepreneurs in India. Women entrepreneurs are still facing instability of income, marketing problems, low level of risk-taking ability, lack of focus on career, low level of digital technology, high level of cost of production, and lack of self-confidence.

Kaur and Kumar (2024) emphasised that work-life balance, gender inequality, the problem of finance, limited managerial ability, lack of entrepreneurial attitude, and outdated technology are important issues faced by women entrepreneurs.

Theoretical Framework

Previous studies indicate that women entrepreneurs often operate in low-capital, home-based sectors due to socio-cultural expectations and financial barriers. Financial exclusion, lack of managerial skills, limited access to technology, and marketing challenges are frequently reported obstacles. According to Naila Kabeer (1999), empowerment involves:

- Resources: Access to material, human, and social assets.
- Agency: Decision-making power and ability to define goals.
- Achievements: Outcomes such as income and improved status.

This framework helps analyse how kitchen-based enterprises contribute to women's empowerment. The empowerment framework adopted in this study is informed by Kabeer's conceptualisation of resources, agency, and achievements (Kabeer, 1999).

Economic participation enhances women's access to resources, strengthens decision-making power, and contributes to broader citizenship outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of women entrepreneurs in Thrissur district.
2. To identify major challenges faced by kitchen-based women entrepreneurs.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the challenges faced by women engaged in kitchen-based food enterprises in Thrissur district, Kerala. The research combines both descriptive analyses to understand the socio-economic profile of respondents and inferential statistical techniques to examine relationships between key variables influencing economic empowerment. Primary data were collected from 120 women entrepreneurs using purposive sampling, ensuring that respondents were actively operating food-based enterprises for at least one year within the urban areas of Thrissur district. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data on demographic characteristics, sources of finance, income levels, digital literacy, socio-cultural constraints, and marketing challenges. The study employs percentage analysis to describe the characteristics and business features of respondents. Further, correlation analysis was applied to analyse the strength and direction of relationships between income levels and key constraints such as financial, marketing, and socio-cultural barriers.

Sample Design

The study uses a descriptive research approach to examine women's entrepreneurship experiences in the Thrissur district's food business. Using structured questionnaires and purposive sampling, 120 female



entrepreneurs provided primary data. Demographics, entrepreneurial motivations, obstacles and tactics were all covered in the questionnaire. Key obstacles like sociocultural boundaries, budgetary restraints, and a lack of computer literacy were identified through data analysis, along with solutions. The analysis has been strengthened by secondary data from different journals, papers, and internet sources. The study aims to offer practical suggestions for empowering female business owners and promoting long-term, steady economic growth in the area.

Criteria:

- Women owning food-based enterprises.
- Operating for at least one year.
- Located in urban Thrissur.

Tools of Data Collection

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires covering socio-demographic details, profile of business, sources of finance, income levels, and challenges faced. Secondary data were obtained from journals and academic sources.

Results and Discussion

The result of the study provides a deep understanding of the experiences of women entrepreneurs in Thrissur district and reveals the various problems and challenges they face.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of key study variables, including income, experience, empowerment score, and major constraints.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables.

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum
Monthly income (rupees)	18,750	6420	6000

Years of experience	4.8	2.1	1
Economic Empowerment	3.42	0.68	2.10
Financial constraints (score)	3.87	0.74	2.00
Socio-cultural restrictions	3.45	0.81	1.00

The average monthly income of respondents was ₹18,750, indicating the micro-scale nature of kitchen-based enterprises. The mean empowerment score (3.42) suggests moderate levels of economic autonomy. Financial constraints recorded a high mean score (3.87), indicating that access to capital remains a critical challenge.

Table 2. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents.

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 25	2	1.66
	26-35	12	10.00
	36-45	66	55.00
	46-55	34	28.33
	Above 55	6	5.00
Marital status	Single	9	7.50
	Married	89	74.16
	Divorced/Widowed	22	18.33
Level of education	Primary Education	6	5.00
	High School	9	7.50
	SSLC	44	36.66
	Graduation	49	40.83
	Post Graduation	12	10.00
	Total	120	100

(Primary data).



Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents (55%) belong to the 36–45 age group, indicating that kitchen-based entrepreneurship is predominantly undertaken by middle-aged women. A significant proportion (74.16%) are married, suggesting that entrepreneurship functions as a supportive income strategy within family structures. Regarding education, 40.83% are graduates, and 36.66% have completed SSLC, indicating moderate educational attainment among respondents. This suggests that while women possess basic educational qualifications, enterprise engagement remains concentrated in micro-scale and informal.

Table 3. Type of business.

Type of business	No of respondents	Percentage
Home-based business	79	65.83
Speciality food products	21	17.5
Cooking/baking class	10	8.33
Food blogging	2	1.66
Event-based food services	8	6.66
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary data).

Table 3 shows a strong concentration (65.8%) is seen in home-based food enterprises. This reflects:

- Low capital requirement.
- Compatibility with domestic responsibilities.
- Limited mobility requirement.

Very low participation in food blogging (1.7%) indicates digital skill gaps and limited online market access. This sectoral concentration supports Gender Role Theory, as women remain within domestically aligned economic activities.

Table 4. Reasons for starting a business.

Reasons for starting a business	No. of respondents	Percentage
Financial necessity	56	46.66
Passion for cooking	12	10
Family encouragement	5	4.16
Opportunity to use online platforms	13	10.83
Death of spouse / Father	6	5
Unemployment	28	23.33

(Source: Primary data).

Table 4 reveals that the major reason is financial necessity (46.7%), followed by unemployment (23.3%). Together, nearly 70% of people entered business due to economic compulsion. Opportunity-driven motives like passion and online platforms are relatively low. This indicates that entrepreneurship is largely necessity-driven. Such findings suggest survival entrepreneurship rather than growth-oriented entrepreneurship.

Table 5. Years of experience.

Year of experience	No. of respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 year	12	10
1-3 years	21	17.5
4-6 years	58	48.33
More than 6 years	29	24.16
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary data).



Table 5 indicates that a majority (72.5%) of women have more than four years of business experience, suggesting that kitchen-based enterprises are not temporary survival activities but relatively stable income-generating ventures. The low percentage of new entrants (10%) may indicate the following entry barriers, such as capital constraints, market competition and risk aversion among women, etc. Empowerment theory, Kabeer (1999), sustained engagement in enterprise strengthens women's access to resources, agency, and decision-making capacity over time. Experience enhances financial management skills, customer network building, market confidence, and negotiation power within the household. Thus, longer business experience may positively influence economic empowerment and financial independence.

Table 6. Average monthly income of women entrepreneurs.

Average monthly income	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below 10,000	46	38.33
10,000-25,000	59	49.16
25,000-50,000	15	12.5
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary data).

Table 6 reveals that the majority of women entrepreneurs (87.5%) earn below ₹25,000 per month, indicating that these enterprises largely operate at a micro level rather than as high-growth ventures. The concentration of women entrepreneurs in the ₹10,000–25,000 range suggests moderate income generation sufficient to supplement household income, meet children's educational expenses, and support daily consumption needs.

However, the relatively small proportion (12.5%) earning above ₹25,000 indicates limited upward mobility and scaling capac-

ity. The theory of empowerment of Naila Kabeer reveals that income represents a resource dimension of empowerment. While participation in entrepreneurship improves access to financial resources, the modest income levels suggest that empowerment may be incremental rather than transformative. Higher income groups may experience greater financial autonomy, increased decision-making power, and improved household bargaining capacity. Thus, income level can be treated as an important independent variable influencing economic empowerment and agency.

Table 7. Sources of capital.

Sources of capital	No. of respondents	Percentage
Personal savings	26	21.66
Loans from family or friends	37	30.83
Bank loans	25	20.83
Microfinance institutions	32	26.66
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary data).

The table 7 shows that women entrepreneurs are using money from family and friends (30.83%), microfinance institutions (26.66%), personal savings (21.66%), and bank loans (20.83%) for their capital. The findings show that a major portion of women entrepreneurs depend on informal sources of capital, like family or friends and personal savings, while only 47.5% access formal financial institutions like banks and microfinance institutions. The relatively low reliance on bank loans (20.8%) may reflect:



- Lack of collateral securities.
- Procedural barriers.
- Limited financial literacy.
- Gender-based credit constraints.

The considerable use of microfinance (26.7%) also suggests that alternative credit institutions, especially small private financial institutions, play a significant role in promoting women's entrepreneurship.

According to Naila Kabeer's empowerment theory (1999), access to credit means access to resources. This resource converts into agencies and achievements. Women relying on informal sources may experience limited financial autonomy, whereas access to formal credit institutions can enhance business expansion and decision-making power.

Table 8. Barriers in business.

Barriers in business	No. of respondents	Percentage
Socio-cultural restrictions	73	60.8
Lack of work-life balance	38	31.7
Financial constraints	85	70.8
Marketing challenges	72	60.0
Lack of access to advanced technology	62	51.7
Gender-based discrimination	28	23.3
Legal or regulatory issue	18	15
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary data).

Table 8 shows the most important barrier reported is financial constraints 70.8% followed closely by socio-cultural restrictions (60.8%) and marketing challenges (60.0%). More than half (51.7%) reported a lack of access to advanced technology as a constraint. Work-life balance issues were reported by 31.7%, while gender-based discrimination (23.3%) and legal/regulatory issues (15%) were relatively less frequently reported. The dominance of financial constraints reinforces earlier findings from Tables 7 and 8, where limited income levels and reliance on informal capital were observed. Insufficient working capital likely restricts business expansion, raw material procurement, technology adoption, and marketing investments. The high percentage of socio-cultural restrictions (60.8%) highlights the persistent influence of gender norms. Women entrepreneurs may face:

- Limited mobility.
- Domestic responsibility burdens.
- Restricted decision-making autonomy.

This shows that gender constraints are higher than individual limitations in this field.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation was conducted to examine the relationships between income, barriers, and empowerment.

Table 9. Correlation matrix.

No	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Monthly income	1			
2	Empowerment	462**	1		
3	Financial Constraints	-389**	-415**	1	
4	Socio-cultural Restrictions	-276*	-331**	0.498**	1

- * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.



In table 9 monthly income shows a positive and statistically significant relationship with economic empowerment ($r = 0.462$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher earnings enhance women's decision-making capacity. Financial constraints are negatively correlated with empowerment ($r = -0.415$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that limited access to financial resources reduces economic agency.

Conclusion

The study highlights that women's engagement in kitchen-based enterprises in Thrissur district is primarily necessity-driven and concentrated among middle-aged respondents. While these enterprises enhance income generation and improve women's economic participation, the scale of earnings remains modest, suggesting incremental rather than transformative financial advancement.

Limited access to formal credit and dependence on informal capital sources indicate structural constraints within the financial ecosystem. Financial barriers, marketing challenges, and socio-cultural restrictions significantly affect business expansion and sustainability. Grounded in the empowerment perspective of Naila Kabeer, the findings demonstrate that access to resources has improved; however, the agency dimension of empowerment remains partially restricted by institutional and social factors. Thus, economic participation alone does not automatically translate into full decision-making autonomy. The study concludes that strengthening formal financial inclusion, improving market linkages, enhancing digital and business training, and addressing socio-cultural barriers are essential to convert subsistence-level enterprises into sustainable and empowerment-oriented ventures.

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Music and Health with Special Reference to Music Therapy

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Received: 20/08/2026

Revised: 05/02/2026

Accepted: 07/02/2026

Abstract

We live in a complex world covered with stress and anxiety. Anxiety and stress cause many diseases regardless of age. Many studies are trying to find a solution for this problem. Cures for stress or anxiety disorder should not be limited to antibiotics or pills, but the medication taken into the body should have a proper healing power without any side effects. There exists no such medicine that can cure or manage without any side effects to our body except music therapy. Research on music therapy is still going on. This study focuses briefly on the relationship between wellbeing of human health and music, music and nature, music and yoga and benefits of music therapy in daily life. Results of the survey taken on music and life of humans showed that there is an improvement in general wellness, memory, stress management, pain relief, expression of feelings and sleep who finds solace in music. It was also found that music therapy can be useful for managing or maintaining emotional balance of humans and patients with different disorders. Results of the survey showed that 98.6 % of people find solace in music. It was concluded that music therapy is one of the best methods for human wellbeing. Energising the chakras of our body with the help of yoga and music helps to improve health.

Keywords: Music, Yoga, music therapy, stress, anxiety, general wellness, devotional Music

Introduction

The power of music is mentioned in many texts and epics. From the ancient history of music, it is mentioned that primitive humans used music as a medium of communication even before the language came into existence. "The great Epic Ramayana of 400BC, it has been mentioned 'Sthana-murchana-kovidau' i.e., wandering birds like Lava-Kusha were well versed in the art and science of Gandharva type of music" (Prajnananda, 1963). The leather drums and bamboo flutes were used for communicating with a large group of people from ancient time itself. "The primitive men made drums out of wood and earth, and covered the mouths with the skins of animals. This

drum was called bhumi-dundubhu in ancient vedic literature" (Prajnananda, 1963). Bows were used not only to hunt animals but also as stringed instruments for entertainment. Primitive humans used to sing songs using meaningless syllables such as birth song, harvest song, lullabies, festival song, and so on, proving that music was used in many ways to entertain people from an ancient time. When we observe it scientifically, not only humans but animals too respond to the rhythm of music. "Music has become a medium of entertainment a very long time before itself in the history of mankind. Recent studies show that happy hormones were produced when we listen to our favourite music" (Levitin, 2024).



In ancient times music was used to ease the hard work. Music was always a part of our life in one way or another. Nature by itself is filled with music. Moreover, we can say that nature and music are correlated. The sound of rain, the flow of the river, the songs of the bird, the sound of the forest, the wind, and the waterfalls everything has got music and connected with nature. Each and every creature in this nature has its own music. We are familiar with the word sound, which is a type of energy made by vibrations. We hear noise and we hear sound in a musical way. We refuse to hear noise and we love to hear musical sounds. The sound which is used in music is called tone or 'Naad'. Naad can again be classified as Ahatnaad and Anaahatnaad. Ahatnaad is the sound we use in music such as vocal music, and sound of instruments, and Anaahatnaad is the sound we cannot hear with a normal ear even though it exists and we can feel it through meditation. The Universe is believed to be the outcome of Anaahatnaad. The universe and music, nature and music, the living beings and music are thus related to each other.

The concept of music and yoga is another important thing to mention here with medical fitness or human well-being. The music of human beings begins in the mother's womb itself and comes out to the world with the first cry. As we all know a baby inside the womb reacts to the music in several ways. The first music of the human brain is the sound of a mother's heart beating in a rhythmic way. The way of the reaction may vary when the baby comes out of the womb. The lullabies make the baby sleep well and the first communication with mother and baby is with such beautiful lullabies.

Researchers say that some posture of a baby is closely related to yoga asanas. As they grow they start sitting crawling in different ways, some of them relates to yoga postures. The relationship between yoga and music continues in our childhood itself. We should

practice yoga and music in our daily life which will help us feel better and live better. The healing power of music is associated with the energy points in the human body. In a scientific way the seven notes of music are related with the seven chakras, that is, the energy points in yoga along with the spine, viz. Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Agya and Sahasrara. Classical music and devotional music such as bhajans and Abhangs also create a divine energy in our human body, which is closely related to energising our energy points. The kundalini, the spiritual energy residing at the base of the spine, symbolises a coiled serpent. The seven energy points in the human body are related to 7 kinds of consciousness and physical functions. The swara in the music represents each energy point respectively. The chakra meditation in yoga and the swara practice in music helps the human body to maintain balance and general wellness. The mooladhara chakra is associated with Shadja; the element is Earth-Prithwi. This is the root or base of our body. When a musician meditates by singing Shadja, the power of the root chakra, the physical identity, the power of grounding increases. The second chakra is the Swadhishtana chakra, which is equivalent to the second swara Rishabha, which helps the functions of creativity, reproductive organs and stability: the element is Water-Jalam. Manipooraka, the solar plexus chakra, relates to the Gandharaswara, which helps the digestive functions of our body: the element is Fire-Agni. Heart chakra, the Anahata chakra, helps the functions of heart and lungs associated with compassion and love. The swara related to this chakra is Madhyama: the element is Air-Vayu. The Vishudha chakra is associated with the fifth swara Panchama and the element is Sky-Akasham. It helps the functions of thyroid gland communication and creativity. The sixth swara Dhaivata is associated with Agya chakra, which is known for improving concentration, intuition, analysis skill, and



reasoning skills. The seventh chakra is Sahasrara, related to spiritual enlightenment; the swara connected with this is Nishada. Nishada includes all the elements and it integrates all the other chakras. Our brain activities and neuron-related activities are also controlled by this chakra.

This study attempts to identify the answers to the following questions. Do Music therapy have effectiveness in improving general wellness, improvised memory, and stress management in people? Are people relying and finding solace in music? Can doing yoga energise chakras in our body? Or has music got healing power over diseases?

Materials and Methods

Data were collected through a survey method using a questionnaire created in Google Forms. The questionnaire was forwarded to various groups of people. Responses from 250 participants were considered. Initially questions were provided to identify the musical background of the respondent, like the medium of listening music, and favourite music. Subsequently questions were given to know whether the respondents were aware of the therapeutic values of music and to know whether the respondents suffer any of the conditions like head-ache, pain, stress, mood swings, sleep disorders, and traumatic brain injuries whether they find solace in music and yoga. The responses of each one of the respondents were analysed thoroughly with the help of statistical tools. Analysed data were presented in the next section.

Results and Discussion

Data from the survey were collected and analysed. In the total sample 250 individuals 40.1% were male and 59.9 % were female. Teachers, IT professionals, students, government officials, doctors, businesspersons, singers, accountants, and home makers formed the categories of sample. It was found that irrespective of the profession

100% of the respondents listen to music using different media like radio, phone, and television. Among them, 98.6% feel music as a medium to find solace or relax in this stressful life, and 85% listen to music when they feel stressed. Importantly, 81.5% of people responded that they felt and were aware that music had therapeutic power. Among the respondents, 18.7% suffered from mood swings, 11% suffered from sleep disorders, 6.6% had head ache, 1.1% suffered traumatic brain injury, 6.6% had mild depression. Apart from that, 56% were perfectly alright with their health. The study also found that 51% of respondents practice yoga and claim that it enhances their energy levels. In addition, 73.1% believe and wish that music and yoga increase the memory and are advised to practice music and yoga as a therapy. It was concluded that the people agree that music can give an improvement in general wellness, memory, stress management, pain relief, expression of feelings, and sleep. It was also found that music therapy can be useful for managing or maintaining emotional balance, especially for persons with different disorders.

Music Therapy

Music is a part of our life and has the power to heal. Music can help us to change our mental status easily. We listen and enjoy music in many ways like Radio, Television, YouTube and Social media platforms. When a child enters the school the first thing she/he listens to is the prayer song. National anthem, school anthem, and rhymes are some variety of songs ingrained from the school days itself. It is proven that a child can memorise a poem with a tune easier than a paragraph without tune.

Music therapy is different for different people. When we travel, music will be in our background in the car, some people dance with music, or some people listen to music when they are upset, which shows that the mood of a person and music are close-



ly related. When we see a romantic movie, the romantic background music helps us to enter into that feel and enjoy the romance. The way music helps us in creating different moods such as happiness, sadness, and pleasure. is a kind of therapy, which we unknowingly undergo.. Music therapy helps us enjoy our life and feel relief from stress. Nowadays we see the new concept of youth called Bhajan clubbing. Cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode, Bhajan clubbing nights are being packed out by youth audiences looking for divine energising of the mind and body. Abhangs, bhajans, devotional songs, and popular filmy bhajans are sung by the bhajan teams, the youth feels like going away from drugs and alcohol and finding new waves of enjoying life without the help of any drugs. An NDTV article about “Band behind rise of bhajan clubbing in India” on January 7, 2026 is a recent example of music therapy.

Music therapy is the method of using music or elements of music as a medicine or as therapeutic practice. It improves general wellness, emotional balance and cognitive skills. Music therapy helps all the age groups. The happiness we get through music helps us reduce anxiety, pain, tension, and stress and enjoy life. The main feature of music therapy is stress relief.

“Music therapy is a reflexive process wherein the therapist helps the client to optimize the client’s health using various facets of music experience and the relationships formed through them as impetus for change. As defined here, Music therapy is the professional practice component of the discipline, which informs and is informed by theory and research” (Bruscia, 2014). “Music therapy aims to develop potentials and/or restore the functions of the individuals so that he or she can achieve better intra inter-personal integration and consequently, a better quality life through prevention, rehabilitation, or treatment” (cited in Bruscia, 2000).

We live in a complex world. Stress is increasing day by day in all age groups. The use of music therapy will help us reduce stress. If we can make music a part of our life, we would feel better and make our life happier. Music therapy is helpful to people who suffer from mood swings such as depression, anxiety disorders, and mental disorders. Studies have proven that a person learning music from childhood has more cognitive skills compared to others. So music therapy will improve cognitive skills in humans. We must promote music in schools as part of the curriculum in hospitals as a therapy for several diseases, in nursing homes as a therapy to improve a healthy atmosphere for treatment, in senior citizen rehabilitating centres as a leisure to improve their mental state, in mental health centres to entertain the patients to enjoy the music and in offices as a medium of stress breaker. Music therapy can be useful for Dementia, Traumatic brain injuries, Stroke, Cancer, Autism, Mood swings, Learning disorders, Anxiety disorder, Pain, Sleep disorder, Developmental disorder, and depression.

Common methods used in music therapy include the following:

1. Receptive method: This therapy involves helping the patient listen to music of their choice and recall positive memories. It aims to provide peace and calm.
2. Physical music therapy: This method creates a joyful atmosphere in which the patient enjoys music and moves or dances according to their preference.
3. Recreational method: In this psychological therapy, the therapist helps the patient create new music or play an instrument. This method can help the patient cope with pain and improve mental stability.
4. Compositional method: In this method, the therapist helps the client create or compose new music.



Results of music therapy are improvement in general wellness, improvised memory, stress management, pain relief, better expression of feelings, and better sleep. The overall wellness of our body is ensured as a benefit of music therapy, and several studies have proven that the memory power and the IQ of the musicians are high compared to others and the healing power of music will help us to manage stress. As per some studies, soothing music therapy helps the patients to forget about their pain. Post-surgery patients, even cancer patients feel so relaxed when hearing good music using music therapy. The therapy in music helps the patient to open up the mind and express the feelings. The peacefulness of mind and calmness are ensured through music therapy, which in turn helps the patients to sleep well.

Conclusion

We live in a complex world. The stress and lifestyle diseases have become part of our life. Yoga practice every day will help to improve our energy. Yoga and music are re-

lated as the seven chakras and sevenswaras represent each other. Music has the power to control human emotions. Research is still going on in music therapy. The meditative value of music is found invaluable. Music therapy can be used for healing conditions like stress, depression, emotional imbalance, and pain relief. The stressful conditions of the world and food habits are the main causes of several diseases. Hence, music therapy and yoga can be used to overcome our stress, emotional imbalance, and general wellness. It is our duty to maintain good health and protect our nature for our better future, as nature is also a part of our life.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to extend sincere gratitude to the research advisors and academic committee for their valuable feedback and guidance throughout the study. Special thanks to the participants who have spent time and insights to fill the questionnaire.

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Freedom and Self-Discovery: Unveiling Jiddu Krishnamurti's Philosophy of Life

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Received: 30/08/2025

Revised: 02/02/2026

Accepted: 07/02/2026

Abstract

Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophy transcends theoretical discourse, offering a profoundly practical approach to life. At its core lies the emphasis on self-inquiry, freedom from dependence, and the courage to doubt and question. He famously asserted that teaching is paramount, not the teacher, advocating for the rejection of authority in favour of self-awareness and personal discovery. This philosophy encourages individuals to liberate themselves from psychological conditioning, fostering independence in thought and action.

Krishnamurti's ideas find tangible application in education, mental health, and interpersonal relationships. His holistic approach to learning emphasises questioning, creativity, and critical thinking, challenging traditional pedagogies. His call for awareness and observation without judgment offers tools for addressing modern anxieties, conflicts, and relationships free from attachment. However, his ideas also pose challenges, such as the resistance to questioning ingrained beliefs and balancing independence with societal responsibilities. As an applied philosophy, Krishnamurti's insights remain deeply relevant, inspiring individuals to navigate contemporary challenges with clarity, authenticity, and freedom. This article explores these themes, emphasising their transformative potential in everyday life.

Keywords: Freedom, Self-inquiry, Questioning authority, Psychological dependence, Holistic learning, Awareness, Mindfulness, Practical wisdom, Inner freedom, Self-discovery, Relationships.

Introduction

Jiddu Krishnamurti occupies a distinctive place in twentieth-century philosophical thought due to his uncompromising critique of authority, belief, and psychological dependence. Unlike traditional philosophers who construct systematic theories or metaphysical frameworks, Krishnamurti consistently refused to offer doctrines, methods, or paths. Instead, he called for a radical inquiry into the nature of freedom, self-knowledge, and human conditioning. His philosophy challeng-

es individuals not merely to adopt new ideas, but to examine the very structure of thought that sustains fear, conflict, and fragmentation in human life. In contemporary society, questions concerning freedom have acquired renewed urgency. Despite unprecedented technological advancement and political liberties, individuals experience increasing psychological anxiety, ideological polarisation, and dependence on authority—whether religious, political, or psychological. Educational systems often prioritise conformity



and competition, while mental health discourse frequently relies on techniques aimed at control rather than understanding. Against this background, Krishnamurti's insistence that freedom is an inner state arising from awareness rather than external reform poses a profound philosophical challenge. While Krishnamurti's ideas are often appreciated for their moral clarity and spiritual depth, academic discussions frequently remain descriptive, treating his thought as inspirational rather than philosophically rigorous. This study seeks to address that gap by offering a systematic thematic analysis of Krishnamurti's conception of freedom and self-discovery, while also engaging critically with the practical and philosophical difficulties involved in living according to his vision. By doing so, the study aims to demonstrate that Krishnamurti's philosophy is not merely a spiritual discourse but a demanding ethical and psychological inquiry with significant implications for education, mental health, and social responsibility.

Methodology

This study employs a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach combined with critical analysis. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for the interpretation of Krishnamurti's writings and talks as lived philosophical experiences, emphasizing how his insights into freedom, self-inquiry, and relationships emerge from human consciousness and perception. By engaging with primary texts, including public talks, letters, and commentaries, the study seeks to uncover the experiential dimensions of Krishnamurti's philosophy, rather than merely summarising doctrinal content.

Freedom: The Core of Krishnamurti's Philosophy

The idea of freedom touches the very heart of Krishnamurti's teachings. He defines freedom as "a state of mind- not freedom from something but a sense of freedom-a freedom

to doubt and question everything, and therefore, so intense, active and vigorous, that it throws away every form of dependence, conformity, slavery and acceptance (Krishnamurti, 1996, p. 124). While many believe that freedom without discipline leads to chaos, Krishnamurti offers a radical view. He asserts that true freedom naturally fosters its own discipline, which is not forced but arises from the ability to learn—different from the rigid patterns shaped by beliefs and ideologies.

Truth –A Pathless Land

Krishnamurti rejects the idea of multiple paths leading to truth. Each person has various tendencies-intellectual, emotional, or sensory-which create their own challenges. Pursuing one path exclusively leads to incomplete understanding. Instead, true understanding arises by being aware of these tendencies and learning from their complexities. For him, truth is not something that can be accumulated or understood through dualistic knowledge; it is an ongoing, ever-changing process that is discovered in every moment.

Freedom from Conditioning

Krishnamurti critiques all systems, religious or otherwise, that claim to lead to truth. According to him, no external system can bring about real freedom; instead, systems divide people and reinforce isolation. True freedom comes when individuals free themselves from the mental conditioning imposed by systems and authorities. He argues that true thinking is not about following a predetermined doctrine but involves the freedom to question and explore. He views all forms of external compulsion as stemming from ignorance and fear. Systems demand conformity, but real insight and freedom arise when individuals cease following prescribed methods and instead engage in direct perception. He stresses that when the mind becomes conditioned to follow a set routine, it loses its sharpness and clarity.



All methods—whether spiritual, psychological, or intellectual—are inherently limiting because they demand conformity and repetition. A method typically involves following a prescribed path laid out by someone who claims to have attained a higher level of enlightenment. People, in their desire to reach the same reality, eagerly conform to these instructions, repeating the prescribed actions mechanically. However, Krishnamurti argues that this kind of practice, done mindlessly and without true insight, only dulls the mind. He believes that a mind that lacks sharpness and intelligence, one that is conditioned to follow a set routine, becomes increasingly less perceptive and more rigid. In contrast to traditional systems of thought that lay out well-defined paths toward the realization of truth, Krishnamurti proposes that true freedom and understanding arise only when one breaks free from dependence on external authorities or methods. His philosophy challenges the conventional wisdom that suggests there is a fixed way to attain truth or enlightenment. This approach is particularly significant in today's society, where individuals are often swayed by the allure of quick fixes, methods, and formulas. In a world filled with rigid ideologies, Krishnamurti's call to embrace personal inquiry, direct perception, and freedom from the shackles of psychological dependence offers a refreshing alternative.

The Danger of Belief

Krishnamurti regards belief as one of the most destructive forces in human life, seeing it as a product of fear rather than a reflection of truth. He argues that belief, by its very nature, is not aligned with reality. It is a construct of the mind, shaped by personal experiences, cultural background, and religious conditioning. According to Krishnamurti, belief creates division, fostering conflict and hatred between individuals and groups. People cling to their beliefs as a source of security, but these beliefs often lead to a sense

of separateness, distancing them from others with differing views.

He also emphasizes that non-belief, or the rejection of belief, is equally the product of conditioning. Just as people are shaped by the beliefs they hold, those who reject beliefs do so based on their own upbringing, culture, and past experiences. Both belief and non-belief are, in essence, the results of conditioning—mental patterns formed through the influence of external forces, whether religious, social, or cultural. Truth cannot be found when the mind is constrained by preconceived ideas or judgments, as these mental constructs cloud one's perception and understanding. To reach truth, the mind must be in a state of constant awareness which involves observing life and the world without the interference of personal biases, judgments, or predetermined beliefs. The significance of Krishnamurti's teaching in today's society lies in its relevance to the challenges posed by polarization and ideological conflict. In a world where people often identify strongly with their beliefs, leading to division and discord, Krishnamurti's emphasis on freedom from belief offers a path to unity and understanding.

Mediator-A Crutch

Krishnamurti asserts that individuals must become their own teacher and discipline in order to truly know themselves. He argues that relying on subjective imagination or second-hand knowledge undermines freedom. Rejecting the traditional concept of a 'guru', Krishnamurti emphasizes that truth cannot be given to anyone—it must be discovered personally through self-inquiry and direct experience. He believes that the desire to seek a guru often stems from confusion and a longing for resolution, rather than a sincere quest for truth. People are drawn to gurus based on the sense of satisfaction they receive, not because they genuinely seek to understand reality. According to



Krishnamurti, one does not seek truth but rather a way out of confusion when choosing a guru.

He firmly holds that teacher is not an authority. While he acknowledged the value of sharing one's thoughts with others, he was critical of the tendency to create cults around individuals or their teachings. He says, 'I am certainly all for sharing one's thoughts with others. In that light I would be willing to accept any of the great teachers Christ or Buddha or anyone else. I only object to a cult being woven around them where the figure of the teacher becomes more important than his words or his thoughts.' (Luis, 1975, p. 51). In today's society, this observation is deeply significant, as one often witnesses individuals fighting in the name of teachers or ideologies, without truly understanding or living the essence of their teachings. Instead of focusing on the teacher or their image, Krishnamurti encourages one to live the teachings and embody them in their own lives. Only through personal experience and living the truth can we genuinely spread it to others. This approach, Krishnamurti argues, is far more powerful and authentic than mere verbal repetition. Repetition, for him, is a form of imitation, not creativity or true transformation.

Freedom from Fear

Maturity implies total and natural development of the human being which has nothing to do with age. The factor of fear prevents this natural total development of the mind. Krishnamurti says that fear comes into being when one desires to be in a particular pattern. "Fear is the cause of loneliness, of deprivation, both physical and psychological, it is the cause of attachment to property, to people, ideas, concepts, nationalities, families, ... As long as the mind asserts a permanency, there must be fear." (Krishnamurti, 1996, 283). When the mind has no security, it seeks security. Security is something like ideologies, symbols, and nationalities. This

only creates conflict and division among people.

Usually one distinguishes between two forms of identification—eternal, when outside projects like country, society, family and friends are requisitioned to fill the void within one; and internal, when the self, centred round the body and some selected pattern of thought and behaviour, makes itself the pivot and starting point for all its desires and longings and identifies itself with such internal states for its own fulfillment." (Dhopeshwarkar, 1956, p. 111) Whatever the form and purpose of identification, it is invariably disguised in innumerable ways. To quote Krishnamurti "Identification is a process of self-forgetfulness. So long as I am conscious of me. I know there is pain, there is struggle, there is constant fear." (J. Krishnamurti, 1954, p. 86.). Hence when one identifies oneself with a country, society or even with an idea, fear persists.

Concept of Education

Krishnamurti's concept of education was centred on fostering freedom, self-awareness, and critical thinking, rather than imparting knowledge or preparing individuals for societal roles. He believed that true education should encourage personal growth by helping individuals discover their potential, question everything, and gain an understanding of themselves and the world, free from societal conditioning. Education should promote a mind free of fear, competition, and authority, allowing students to approach life with openness, creativity, and intelligence. They should be encouraged to think independently, observe without judgment, and engage in dialogue that nurtures personal development.

Self-discovery as Choiceless Awareness

Krishnamurti's approach to problem-solving, challenges the conventional wisdom of relying on past experiences and intellectual solutions to resolve difficulties. He suggests



that when faced with a problem, the tendency is often to draw upon one's previous knowledge and experiences to find an answer. While this approach may offer temporary relief, Krishnamurti emphasizes that true resolution lies in a radically different way of engaging with problems. It is essential to approach problems without judgment or condemnation. Instead of immediately labeling a situation as "bad" or "wrong," one must observe it in a state of "passive awareness." This type of awareness is not passive in the sense of being indifferent or detached, but rather it involves a heightened state of attention and sensitivity to the present moment, without the interference of past biases or preconceptions. By being aware of the problem without the interference of judgment, one can observe the thought patterns, emotional reactions, and conditioning that arise in response to the issue.

This awareness is about being open to the present moment as it is, free from the filters of previous experiences or expectations. By doing so, one can uncover the true nature of the problem. Rather than seeking a solution outside of oneself, the solution is found within the awareness of the problem itself. The act of observing the problem without judgment allows the mind to see the situation clearly, without the clouding effect of past conditioning. Furthermore, Krishnamurti argues that when one seeks the cause of a problem, time is introduced into the equation. The search for a cause brings with it the notion of a timeline—past, present, and future—which can create a sense of continuity in the problem. This pursuit of cause and effect leads to further complications, as it merely extends the problem into the future. Rather than jumping into action or using past experiences to fix problems, he encourages us to approach each issue with fresh eyes, without preconceived notions or judgments. In doing so, the mind operates in its most clear and creative form, leading to deeper understanding and resolution. This approach not only

helps in solving individual problems but also contributes to personal growth, as it fosters a state of self-awareness and mindfulness that can be applied to all aspects of life.

The Silent Mind

To understand how a problem dissolves, one must first understand how it is created. Life constantly presents challenges, and it is crucial to face these challenges head-on. Problems arise when the response to a challenge is inadequate. When the mind reacts based on its conditioning or accumulated knowledge, it fails to meet the challenge fully, and this leads to the creation of a problem. An adequate response, according to Krishnamurti, requires total perception—an all-encompassing response that involves no resistance or indulgence. In his 1966 Saanen talk, he stated: "Life is always presenting challenges, and when we respond inadequately, not fully, a problem arises. A problem is something that confronts us unexpectedly, and if we cannot respond to it completely—with our entire being, including our mind, heart, and body—then an insufficient response creates a problem. Throughout our lives, we are taught to respond in fragments, not wholly. However, sometimes when we are not actively thinking, our response comes naturally and effortlessly, and no problem emerges." (Mehta, 1973, p. 131)

Thus, true resolution of any problem comes from a state of awareness, where thought does not cloud the process, and where there is complete participation of one's entire being. It is in this total awareness that a problem dissolves. When responding to a challenge with one's whole being, there is a profound understanding of the challenge, leading to an action that is natural, effortless, and complete. This principle applies not only to external challenges but also to internal struggles, such as violence, anger, or habits like smoking or drinking. By observing them attentively—using both heart and mind—one becomes fully aware of their



nature, and in that awareness, there is freedom. The process of observing and freeing oneself from a problem is not bound by time. It is about giving complete attention and observing without choice or delay. In this state of awareness, freedom is not something that will come in the future, but is accessible in the present moment.

Krishnamurti's teachings are especially significant in today's context of mental health. He believed that inner conflict arises when we fail to observe our thoughts and emotions clearly. By practicing self-awareness—observing without judgment—individuals can transcend fear, anxiety, and psychological turmoil. For instance, when one feels anger or stress, instead of reacting impulsively, Krishnamurti suggests that one simply observe the emotion as it arises. This conscious observation creates space for understanding, allowing the emotional reaction to pass without leading to further turmoil. In this way, one frees oneself from automatic responses that often escalate negative feelings. By cultivating this kind of awareness, individuals can better navigate emotional challenges, such as anxiety, anger, or stress, without becoming overwhelmed by them. This process is aligned with modern psychological approaches like mindfulness and emotional regulation, which aim to reduce mental distress by fostering clarity, emotional resilience, and healthier responses to challenging emotions.

The mirror of Relationship

Krishnamurti views relationship as a vital element of the art of living, where true connection goes beyond memory and past conditioning. He believes a genuine relationship involves communion without the interference of fear, memory, or preconceived ideas. It is an open exchange of understanding, free from the barriers created by past experiences and judgments. In such relationships, love transcends responsibility or duty, and there is no division or isolation.

He suggests that true revolution starts within the individual, particularly in their relationships with others. According to Krishnamurti, our relationship with others serves as a mirror that reveals our true selves, free of distortion. He states, "Society is what you and I, in our relationship, have created; it is the outward projection of our inward psychological states. If we do not understand ourselves, there can be no significant change in society." (Krishnamurti, 1996, p.66). This reflection in relationships helps uncover the psychological patterns that shape interactions, and only by understanding these can true transformation happen. Thus, the 'mirror of relationship' becomes a tool for self-awareness, revealing one's mental, emotional, and unconscious states.

For Krishnamurti, relationship is a vital process of self-revelation. This process requires individuals to be vulnerable, shedding their defensive barriers that hinder authentic connection. When people are open to self-discovery, relationships become opportunities for personal growth, deeper understanding, and meaningful transformation.

Krishnamurti underscores the importance of true love in building a genuine relationship. In his perspective, love is not about using others for personal fulfillment or security. True love requires letting go of jealousy, competition, pride, fear, and selfish desires. He argues that to truly grasp what love is, one must free themselves from possessiveness and ego. As he puts it, "love exists only when there is self-forgetfulness, when there is complete communion not between one or two, but communication with the highest, and that can only take place when the self is forgotten" (Krishnamurti, J.1947, December 7). Love transcends mere emotion or attachment. It is a profound, unconditional connection that can only arise when the ego and all its fears and desires are set aside. Krishnamurti's concept of relationships



as a mirror for self-awareness and personal growth can lead individuals toward more genuine and harmonious connections with others. By embracing love, understanding, and removing the barriers that separate us, the divisions that fragment society can begin to heal, fostering a more unified existence. His approach to relationships is a timely and compelling call to reconsider how people engage with one another.

Critical Reflections

While Krishnamurti's philosophy offers powerful insights into freedom and self-awareness, it also raises important concerns. His rejection of external authority places individual perception at the center of truth, fostering autonomy but risking epistemic and moral relativism in the absence of shared ethical frameworks (Gow, 2005). Krishnamurti addresses this risk through the idea of Choiceless awareness, which functions as a non-dogmatic ethical orientation.

His emphasis on attentive self-observation closely parallels contemporary psychological approaches such as mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy, anticipating insights into emotional regulation and well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). However, his refusal of structured methods limits the practical application of his ideas in therapeutic and institutional contexts.

In education, Krishnamurti's critique of authoritarian pedagogy aligns with progressive educational thought that values critical inquiry and holistic development (Dewey, 1938). Yet, institutional constraints related to assessment and accountability pose significant challenges to implementation. Finally, his focus on inner transformation over political action highlights the psychological roots of conflict but remains limited in addressing structural injustice and collective responsibility (Sen, 2009).

Krishnamurti in Comparative Perspective

Although Krishnamurti firmly rejected all philosophical labels and traditions, his ideas can be meaningfully situated alongside major comparative frameworks to clarify both their affinities and limits. His insistence on awareness without attachment resonates with early Buddhist emphasis on mindfulness (*sati*) and non-clinging as a path to freedom from suffering (Rahula, 1974). However, unlike Buddhism, which provides ethical guidelines and meditative practices, Krishnamurti consistently refused all structured methods, viewing them as reinforcing psychological dependence. Similarly, while his focus on self-knowledge recalls Advaita Vedānta's pursuit of liberation through insight, he diverges sharply from its metaphysical claims about an ultimate Self or absolute reality (Radhakrishnan, 1951). In the Western tradition, parallels may be drawn with existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Sartre, particularly in their emphasis on individual responsibility and authenticity (Sartre, 1946/2007). Yet Krishnamurti departs from existentialism by rejecting choice and will as foundations of freedom, locating liberation instead in choiceless awareness. These comparisons show that while Krishnamurti engages themes common to multiple traditions, his radical refusal of authority, system, and metaphysical certainty marks his philosophy as a distinctive and uncompromising inquiry into human freedom.

Conclusion

Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophy presents a radical vision of freedom rooted in self-awareness and direct perception rather than belief, authority, or external guidance. By emphasizing self-inquiry and choiceless awareness, he challenges individuals to understand the psychological conditioning that shapes fear, conflict, and dependence. This paper has shown that his ideas have meaningful implications for education, mental



well-being, and human relationships, particularly in a world marked by anxiety, conformity, and ideological division.

While Krishnamurti's rejection of methods and authority raises practical challenges, it also underscores the depth of personal re-

sponsibility his philosophy demands. His thought does not offer easy solutions but invites a sustained attentiveness to one's inner life. In this sense, freedom is not an abstract ideal or future goal, but a lived experience that unfolds through awareness, honest self-observation, and authentic relationship.

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Ethical Dimensions of Robotics: Deontological Analysis of Rules, Governance for Accountability

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Received: 18/08/2025

Revised: 01/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

Abstract

The increasing autonomy and indeterminacy of robotic machines put the customary means by which we tend to blame technology into question. The majority of consequence-based approaches to AI ethics that are not capable of accusing the complex and widespread methods that harm is determined are not sufficient to hold anyone responsible. This article investigates the question of whether it is possible to provide a transparent accountability foundation of robotics regulation based on Kantian deontology, which is rule-based. The analysis of concepts and deductive reasoning which is applied in the paper provides examples related to autonomous systems. It states that the “categorical imperative” introduced by Kant can be transformed into effective rules of governance which do not hold machines morally accountable. Although rule-based rules might fail under circumstances of change of conditions, deontological ethics offers moral boundaries that cannot be bargained in order to determine what is right, safeguard human dignity, and prevent responsibility diffusion. The author concludes the article by indicating that despite certain constraints, Kantian deontology is a useful ethical theory to control autonomous technology.

Keywords: Deontological ethics, Kantian ethics, Robotics governance, Accountability, Moral agency

Introduction

Increasingly, robot and artificial intelligence systems are being employed in making decisions that have impacts on human safety, their rights, and the social order. We can have an example of self-driving automobiles, artificial intelligence in the medical sector, and decision-support systems being entrusted with behaving in a scenario where the consequences are irreversible. The traditional conception of responsibility as something direct human control entails is put to the test, as such systems grow increasingly autonomous and less transparent. It is common to find the blame of something going wrong be blamed

on designers, engineers, operators, companies and regulators. This sharing of responsibility poses profound questions of who bears any ethical responsibility, as opposed to how well the system performs. Consequentialist models have frequently been discussed in the context of AI ethics where the technology is evaluated based on its consequences, including efficiency and general well-being. These models have their application in risk management, and they have difficulties in providing explicit guidelines on responsibility in cases where the harm is unintended, probabilistic, or as a result of complex systems. The outcome should not become



the basis of operation as it can conceal responsibility and moral imperative becomes a statistical trade-off rather than a moral responsibility. This shortcoming has prompted some people to reconsider the ethics of duty, particularly, Kantian deontology, which focuses on duty and respect to human dignity. Unlike consequentialism, Kantian ethics believes that moral responsibility is due to the action. The research problem of this study is whether Kantian deontological ethics can offer a sound foundation to accountability in robotic governance due to the autonomy and unpredictability of the modern robotic systems. It is asserted that deontology is useful in designing a governance that maintains the human responsibility articulate, outlines moral agency, and establishes moral constraints on autonomous systems design and deployment, without endowing moral agency to machines, through deductive reasoning and clarification

Kantian Deontology and the Foundations of Accountability

According to Kantian deontology, the moral duty is gained based on a rational moral law rather than on what the action attains (Kant, 1998). To Kant a good decision is one that the individual acts because of duty and adhering to moral law rather than based on good consequences. This concept proves particularly handy when it comes to new technologies and the outcomes can be unpredictable or uncertain. The rules that are founded on the categorical imperative include the Humanity Formula presented by Kant, which states that we should not treat people as a means but as ends. This is a rule that is important to robots and AI. It restricts what technology can perform, even in case this would help improve life. The technology should be created and used in a manner that respects human dignity, freedom, and rights. Robots are not moral agents. According to Kant, rational freedom and self-control are required of the moral agency, and robots do not possess

them. Robots are not morally responsible because they are governed by instructions and patterns rather than the moral law. In AI discussions, not all individuals distinguish the actions of a robot and their moral agency. The mix is not accepted by Kantian deontology. Recall that in the case of robots, they are not moral agents and thus concepts of accountability are altered. The liability remains in the hands of autonomous systems makers, users, and controllers. The ethical and legal responsibility of robots, their creators, and regulators stems out of the fact that robots are acted in the form of human-constructed regulations. In a deontological perspective, the issue of accountability is on human will, choice, and institutional governance, rather than on the performance of the system. This perception clarifies one of the major issues of AI ethics in the present day. When the judging of accountability is limited to the results such as accidents or efficiency, responsibility becomes ambiguous and erroneous. Harm could be a trade-off of improved performance. The deontological position is in disagreement with this claim as moral responsibility is important to act and not only to the result of act. The Kantian policy secures the definite lines of responsibility in the situation when the behaviour of the robots is difficult, unseen, or unguaranteed (Anderson and Anderson, 2021). This provides a good foundation of responsible robot governance.

From the Categorical Imperative to Governance Rules

The criticism of deontological ethics is that the abstract moral principles provided by the ethics lack sufficient practical guidelines to regulate the use of complex technologies. This reproach is particularly relevant when referring to AI and robotics, where machines are required to make decisions in new and uncertain situations. The criticism is based on the assumption that individuals believe that Kantian moral principles instruct machines on how they should act. As a matter



of fact, the Kantian ethics does not instruct us on the way in which machines should be programmed. It rather informs us on the way people are supposed to behave. These moral regulations ought to be the guide to the laws and regulations that are made by the government, rather than algorithm instructions. The morality law is broken into concrete governance, as an institutional process, but not an individual process in the form of algorithms. Under the Categorical Imperative, the Kantian moral theories have duties, which inform people on how they ought to act and the laws and regulations render the duties to be enforceable as common rules. This would entail applying moral principles to the robotics sector to be used as standards, rules, and watchdog systems to create, introduce, and control technologies. Particularly, this is so with the Humanity Formula of the Categorical Imperative. The formula establishes a moral constraint on technological practices which reduce people to efficient, profitable, convenient means since it requires individuals to be considered as an end in themselves. This principle, in terms of governance, supports the principles of rules that prioritise human dignity rather than maximising systems. Such requirements as transparency are not merely the forms of trust building, it is a moral obligation demonstrating respect to people. People in the sphere of autonomous systems should be provided with clear explanations and the opportunity to challenge the decisions, which influence them, as they are free moral agents (Floridi & Cowls, 2019). Similarly, informed consent is also a deontological type of protection, rather than a type of procedure. The issue of consent in robotics in healthcare or surveillance systems is that individuals are not utilised as a source of data or variables in a manufacturing process. It is the Kantian duty, which provides safety-first design. Reducing foreseeable harm should be considered as a design feature of the systems, not due to its statistical inefficiency, but because of the

unreasonable risk that people are exposed to contravenes non-maleficence and respect duties. Self-driven cars demonstrate how the Kantian ethics can inform government regulations. The failure in the systems in this field places human institutions in charge, rather than the vehicles. Responsibility protects safety requirements, pass/fail tests and liability systems, not simply because of cost-benefit calculations (Bonnefon et al., 2016). Such a strategy maintains responsibility despite the difficult predictability of the system behaviour. In the meantime, the Kantian rules do not reject the limitations that follow the rule-prescriptions. No code of conduct can predict all tricky situations. Nevertheless, the deontological rules are not supposed to eliminate uncertainty but establish frames of morality within which technology can evolve. Kant ethics offers a substantive and enforceable system of accountability since it places responsibilities on government actions and does not attempt to rationalise moral philosophy into machine decision code.

Unpredictability, Moral Agency, and the Limits of Rule-Based Ethics

However, the obvious advantages of the Kantian deontological ethics have grave issues when applied to independent systems that operate under unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. Opponents believe that hard moral rules are not applicable in circumstances where systems are required to make fast decisions with incomplete information, in circumstances where risks are uncertain and in circumstances where values are conflicting. The crashes in self-driving cars that are inevitable and medical triage with AI appear to require flexible outcome-based judgment, rather than a strict adherence to a duty. It is due to this that consequentialist approaches are usually more preferred by people to deal with uncertainty and attempt to produce the least amount of harm. This is one of the major flaws of this criticism,



which does not nullify the essence of deontological ethics in government. Computer calculations are not supposed to be guided by Kantian ethics. It concerns primarily establishing moral boundaries that humans should adhere to when it comes to creating, designing and controlling technology (Bostrom and Yudkowsky, 2014). Deontological ethics is not necessarily the most effective one, but it demands the prohibition of actions that are morally wrong, i.e. the use of people as means or to expose a person to unreasonable risks, even in cases of doubt. The process of implementing moral thinking into autonomous systems is typically based on the fallacy that technical knowledge can substitute moral agency. The moral agency must have rational autonomy and must be able to identify and adhere to the moral law. Even autonomous systems do not have such abilities regardless of their adaptability. When they are treated as moral agents, the responsibility is swept under the carpet and moral responsibility is transferred to the system behaviour by the human decision makers. Such an issue cannot be corrected by enhancing system autonomy; it tends to enhance the difference in responsibility (Floridi, 2013). The deontological method of governing people highly opposes this irresponsibility. According to it, individuals have ethical and political responsibilities towards systems they endorse and apply and the responsibility cannot be simply inserted into technology. Accountability also applies to making decisions regarding system design, use cases, control mechanisms, and acceptable risk even in cases of uncertainty. The approach ensures that ethics is put in check so that consequentialist optimisation does not reduce moral responsibility to statistical trade-offs. However, the deontological ethics should be aware of its boundaries. Rule-based systems never foresee all contingencies and cannot resolve all tragic situations. Understanding the boundaries of where the boundaries are is not a detri-

ment to the framework; it merely makes the framework understand its rightful place. Kantian ethics has provided a critical criterion through which technology can be judged in cases where there is no ideal outcome. By so doing, the deontological ethics does not remove moral uncertainty, but rather, it prevents the uncertainty as the excuse to spade oneself out of responsibility.

Conclusion

This article indicates that Kantian deontological ethics can provide a rational and philosophically viable basis of accountability in robotic governance despite an increasing autonomous and uncertain level of robots. Deontology ethics put moral agency at the forefront and oppose attempts to diffuse responsibility on the controversial tech systems by making moral responsibility the duty of humans rather than the behaviour or outcomes of the system. In contrast to outcome-based models which may extend harm justification to the maximisation principle, Kantian ethics establishes uncompromising moral boundaries depending on the degree to which human dignity is respected. The discussion reveals that the Categorical Imperative may be applied in the establishment of the rules of governance that can be used to design, introduce, and operate autonomous systems. Transparency, safety-first, and institutional liability model are not practical instruments, but they represent our ethical obligations regarding individuals who can be subject to technology. This rule-based regulation will not overcome all tragic predicaments and uncertainty, but it provides an ethical guidelines under which tech change must occur responsibly. There are also limitations to deontological theory as noted in the article. Hard rules do not foresee all the circumstances and can never overcome situational judgment in complicated environments. However, this weakness does not undermine the role of deontology. Kantian ethics is not a machine decision maker; it



is a list of standards that govern our decision making as human beings as well as the practice that we implement in institutions. In a world that is beginning to give more and more responsibility to intelligent systems

Kantian deontology reminds us that one cannot totally automate responsibility. The independence of technologies is a matter of responsibility of humans on duty, law and morality.

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Gadamer's Hermeneutics: Fusion of Horizons in Contemporary Communication

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Received: 02/08/2025

Revised: 03/02/2026

Accepted: 07/02/2026

Abstract

Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers a powerful framework for addressing the challenges of communication in the contemporary world. Central to Gadamer's thought is the notion of understanding as a dialogical process in which meaning emerges through engagement between historically and culturally situated perspectives. This dialogical encounter leads to what Gadamer terms the fusion of horizons, wherein differing viewpoints interact to produce a shared, though always provisional, understanding. Gadamer's revaluation of prejudice as a necessary condition of understanding further emphasises that interpretation always begins from historically formed pre-judgments, which must be critically examined rather than rejected outright.

This article explores the relevance of Gadamer's hermeneutics for contemporary communication by examining how dialogue, fusion of horizons, and prejudice can address ideological conflict, intercultural misunderstanding, and misinformation in the digital age. Through concrete examples drawn from media discourse, education, intercultural interaction, and technological mediation, the article demonstrates how Gadamer's ideas provide practical resources for fostering meaningful understanding in an increasingly polarised and information-saturated world.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Dialogue, Fusion of Horizons, Prejudice, Communication.

Introduction

Hermeneutics, traditionally understood as the philosophy of interpretation, originally focused on the interpretation of sacred and legal texts. Over time, it expanded to include the interpretation of speech, action, and social practices. For Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutics is not a methodological tool but an ontological account of understanding itself. Understanding, for Gadamer, is a fundamental mode of human existence through which individuals engage with the world, others, and themselves.

Communication, whether verbal, written, or symbolic, is intrinsic to human life. In contemporary society, however, communication is marked by paradox. While technological advancements have multiplied channels of communication, they have also intensified misunderstanding, polarisation, and the spread of misinformation. The abundance of information often obscures genuine understanding, making it difficult to distinguish knowledge from manipulation. Additionally, heightened assertions of individual identity and rights have weakened the capacity for



attentive listening and openness to alternative perspectives.

In this context, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers a valuable framework for rethinking communication. By emphasising dialogue, openness, and historically effected consciousness, Gadamer provides conceptual resources for addressing communication breakdowns in personal, social, and political contexts. This article examines how Gadamer's key concepts—dialogue, fusion of horizons, and prejudice—can be practically applied to contemporary communication challenges.

Dialogue as the Foundation of Understanding

Dialogue occupies a central place in Gadamer's hermeneutics and functions as the very medium through which understanding becomes possible. For Gadamer, understanding is never a solitary act carried out by an isolated subject; rather, it is an event that unfolds between interlocutors who are oriented towards a shared subject matter. As Kögler (2014) observes, dialogue is not simply a conversation between two individuals but a foundational phenomenon in which subjects, objects, and meanings are constituted together. In this sense, dialogue is ontological rather than merely methodological.

Unlike sophistic dialogue, which aims at persuasion, rhetorical dominance, or victory, Gadamerian dialogue is oriented towards truth. The participants do not seek to impose their views but allow the subject matter to guide the conversation. Genuine dialogue requires openness to the possibility that one's own understanding may be limited or even mistaken. This openness involves epistemic humility and a willingness to be transformed through encounter with the other.

Dialogue also has an ethical dimension. To engage in dialogue is to recognise the other as a legitimate participant in the search for

meaning. This recognition entails respect, attentiveness, and the suspension of prejudicial judgments long enough for understanding to emerge. In this way, dialogue fosters not only cognitive understanding but also ethical self-transformation.

A practical illustration of Gadamerian dialogue can be found in multicultural educational environments. In classrooms composed of students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, discussions on ethical, political, or social issues often reveal deeply ingrained assumptions. When dialogue is encouraged as a shared inquiry rather than a competitive debate, students gradually come to understand how their own perspectives are historically shaped. Through attentive listening and sustained questioning, horizons expand and new shared meanings emerge. Such dialogical engagement exemplifies Gadamer's claim that truth arises between interlocutors rather than residing in any single viewpoint.

In contemporary digital communication, however, dialogue is often replaced by monologue. Social media platforms incentivise rapid responses, emotional reactions, and ideological affirmation rather than reflective engagement. Gadamer's emphasis on dialogue serves as a corrective to such practices, reminding us that understanding requires time, patience, and openness to being addressed by the other. Reviving dialogical communication is therefore essential for overcoming polarisation and restoring the ethical foundations of public discourse.

Fusion of Horizons

Gadamer defines a horizon as the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point (Gadamer, 1989). In hermeneutical understanding, a horizon represents the historically and culturally conditioned perspective from which individuals interpret the world. Horizons are shaped by tradition, language, education,



and lived experience. They are neither fixed nor closed but remain open to transformation through encounter.

Understanding occurs through what Gadamer famously terms the *fusion of horizons*. This process involves the interaction of one's own horizon with that of another—whether a text, a person, or a cultural tradition. Fusion does not mean erasing differences or achieving complete agreement. Rather, it signifies the emergence of a broader horizon in which differences are held together in a productive tension. Through this fusion, understanding deepens and becomes more inclusive.

The fusion of horizons is particularly relevant in intercultural communication. In discussions surrounding human rights, for example, participants often approach the subject from culturally distinct moral frameworks. Attempts to impose a single universal perspective frequently lead to misunderstanding or resistance. Gadamer's hermeneutics suggests that genuine understanding arises when diverse horizons are brought into dialogue, allowing participants to compare, contrast, and reinterpret their assumptions in light of others' perspectives (Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2015).

A contemporary example of horizon fusion can be observed in technologically mediated practices such as healthcare. In modern medical contexts, artificial intelligence provides data-driven insights based on statistical correlations, while physicians contribute experiential judgment, ethical reasoning, and sensitivity to patients' lived realities. Meaningful medical decisions emerge not from technology alone or human intuition alone, but from their interpretive integration. This interaction exemplifies Gadamer's concept of historically effected consciousness, where past knowledge, present technology, and lived experience converge to produce understanding.

The fusion of horizons also bridges the tem-

poral gap between past and present. Texts from the past do not remain confined to their original contexts; rather, they speak anew to each generation. The present reader approaches the text with contemporary concerns, allowing past meanings to be reinterpreted and revitalised. In this sense, understanding is always an ongoing, historically situated process rather than a final achievement.

Prejudice and Historically Effected Consciousness

One of Gadamer's notions open to discussion is his notion of prejudice. Contrary to Enlightenment thought, which viewed prejudice as an obstacle to reason, Gadamer argues that prejudices are unavoidable and necessary conditions of understanding. As Pertierra (2021) explains, prejudices are pre-judgments that shape our openness to the world.

Prejudices arise from historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. They form the starting point of interpretation rather than its end. Understanding progresses not by eliminating prejudice but by critically examining and revising it through experience and dialogue.

In contemporary communication, prejudice is evident in social media interactions, where individuals often approach others through ideological labels and stereotypes. Gadamer's hermeneutics suggests that such pre-judgments must be brought into dialogue rather than denied. When individuals encounter the lived experiences behind opposing views, prejudices are often transformed, enabling deeper understanding instead of entrenched hostility.

This process resembles phenomenological openness, where meaning emerges from attentive engagement with what presents itself. Gadamer's concept of prudence plays a crucial role here, guiding interpretation through practical wisdom rather than rigid rules.



Application to Modern Communication

Contemporary communication is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, psychological, and technological factors. While digital technologies have expanded access to information, they have also intensified misinformation, ideological polarisation, and communicative fragmentation. The speed and volume of information often undermine reflection, making it difficult to distinguish reliable knowledge from manipulation.

In media discourse, for instance, news narratives are frequently constructed without direct engagement with affected communities. Studio-based debates and speculative commentary often replace on-ground reporting, resulting in distorted representations of reality. Gadamer's emphasis on encounter suggests that authentic understanding requires proximity to the subject matter. When journalists engage directly with people and contexts, horizons meet and misinformation is reduced through interpretive engagement.

Political communication provides another example of hermeneutical breakdown. Conflicts persist not merely because of opposing interests but due to the absence of dialogical openness. Ideological rigidity and ego-centric attitudes prevent genuine listening. Gadamerian dialogue, characterised by rationality, equality, and sincerity, offers an alternative model. By listening to opposing perspectives and recognising shared concerns, participants can move towards provisional agreements that remain open to future revision.

Interpersonal communication is similarly affected by prejudices and unexamined assumptions. In everyday interactions, misunderstandings often arise from culturally ingrained expectations. Gadamer's hermeneutics encourages individuals to approach such encounters as opportunities for horizon

expansion rather than conflict. Through dialogue and reflective engagement, communication becomes a transformative process rather than a mere exchange of information.

Gadamer and Habermas:

A Comparative Perspective

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action emphasises rational consensus achieved through undistorted communication. It seeks social integration through democratic dialogue free from domination (Sharlamenov&Jovanoski, 2014). While Habermas focuses on procedural conditions for ideal communication, Gadamer emphasises historical situatedness and interpretive openness.

In practical terms, Habermas's framework is well-suited to institutional contexts such as public deliberation, whereas Gadamer's hermeneutics is particularly effective in everyday communicative encounters—classrooms, intercultural exchanges, and interpersonal relationships—where complete neutrality is impossible. Together, these perspectives highlight complementary dimensions of communication.

Criticisms and Responses

E. D. Hirsch criticises Gadamer's concept of fusion of horizons, arguing that interpretation must prioritise authorial intention. According to Hirsch, understanding and interpretation must remain distinct activities (Schmidt, 2016). Habermas also criticises Gadamer's reliance on prejudice, associating it with uncritical acceptance of authority.

Gadamer responds by emphasising that understanding is always historically mediated. Prejudices are not fixed but subject to revision through the hermeneutical circle—a dynamic movement between parts and whole. Authority, for Gadamer, is not blind obedience but recognition grounded in experience and understanding.



Conclusion

In an age characterised by communicative excess and interpretive fragmentation, Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics provides a compelling framework for fostering meaningful understanding. His concepts of dialogue, fusion of horizons, and prejudice emphasise that communication is not merely informational but ontological—a fundamental mode of human being.

By cultivating openness, active listening, and interpretive humility, Gadamer's approach enables individuals and societies to navigate difference constructively. Understanding emerges not through domination or neutrality but through engagement with historically situated perspectives. In a world marked by polarisation and misinformation, Gadamer's hermeneutics reminds us that the path to shared meaning lies in dialogue, encounter, and the continuous transformation of our horizons.

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Life-World and System: Habermas' Insights into Culture, Law, and Democracy

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Received: 16/08/2025

Revised: 05/02/2026

Accepted: 12/02/2026

Abstract

The article seeks to delve into the central ideas of Jürgen Habermas, focusing on his critique of Enlightenment ideals, his conceptualisation of the public sphere, and his views on the dynamics between capitalism and democracy. Through an examination of Habermas' distinction between the 'life-world' and 'system', the article explores how societal structures influence cultural identity and democratic participation. The article further investigates the concept of 'refeudalisation', where corporate and state powers erode public discourse, shifting it from a space of critical debate to one of consumption. The Sabarimala case exemplifies the dynamic tension between the life-world (religious customs) and the system (constitutional rights, gender equality) and how the colonisation of the life-world by systemic forces can challenge long-held traditions. The article illustrates how the legal framework strikes a balance in resolving the tension between life-world and system.

Keywords: Public sphere, Refeudalisation, Life-world, System, Communicative rationality

Introduction

The relationship between civil society and public life is in the forefront of contemporary discussion. No single scholarly voice informs this discussion more than that of Jürgen Habermas. His contributions have shaped the nature of debates over critical theory, feminism, cultural studies, and democratic politics. Jürgen Habermas, born in Germany in 1929, is a prolific thinker in the tradition of critical theory, associated with the second-generation Frankfurt School. His intellectual development was deeply influenced by the rise of Nazi Germany and the subsequent atrocities of World War II, which shaped his understanding of capitalism, democracy, and the role of the public sphere in modern society.

Historical Foundations

Three significant historical traditions, namely the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, form the foundation of Habermas' work. These traditions have moulded his critique of modern society and its challenges. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason and scientific validation, offered a new approach to understanding the world. However, Habermas, having witnessed the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust, became disillusioned with the unaccomplished promises of the Enlightenment. As Theodor Adorno famously stated, "The fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1994, p.1). This scepticism towards Enlightenment rationality is pivotal to Habermas' critique



of modernity. Unlike other members of the Frankfurt School, Habermas upheld the Enlightenment project while also acknowledging the rise of new forms of irrationality and oppression.

The French Revolution's ideals of democracy and the Industrial Revolution's rise of capitalism were also significant in shaping Habermas' theories. While laissez-faire capitalism prevailed in the 19th century with minimal state intervention, Habermas became concerned with the convergence of politics and economics in the post-World War II era. He argued, "Public opinion, once emergent from informed and active public debate, now often appears manufactured by political and economic elites" (1989, p. 171). This convergence undermines the ideals of freedom and democracy intrinsic to 19th-century capitalism.

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

Habermas introduced the concept of public sphere, a compelling idea that explains how our discussions contribute to the democratic fabric of the society. He presented this idea under the influence of Kant. For Kant, the public sphere is a space for rational discourse aimed at achieving universal truth and guiding societal progress. But the Liberals like Mill and Tocqueville are sceptical of the use of Reason in an idealised Kantian sense. Following Mill, Habermas primarily viewed public sphere not as an idealised space for rational discourse striving for universal consensus but rather as a practical arena influenced by social forces and shaped by the dynamics of public opinion.

In his seminal work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, published in 1962, Habermas examined the participatory bourgeois public sphere that emerged in the 18th century, particularly during the rise of liberal democracy. He contrasted this

with the public sphere that characterises contemporary bureaucratic industrial societies. Habermas argued that "the public sphere was once a vibrant space where citizens deliberated and reached consensus but has since diminished in its participatory capacity" (p. 145). Public sphere in bourgeois society is not simply a space for the government or elites. Instead, it is a space where ordinary, private individuals, i.e., people who are not in positions of power or authority come together to engage in rational arguments, discuss matters of public interest, and form shared consensus. This process of individuals coming together to deliberate creates a "public" that is distinct from the private realm of personal life or economic activities. The French Revolution and the rise of the capitalist middle class served as a catalyst for the rise of bourgeois public sphere which evolved with the demise of feudalism and aristocracy. Although it advocated equality and freedom of speech, the inclusivity of this public sphere was limited. As Habermas remarked, "Freedom of expression was unequal, as wealth dictated whose voice carried weight" (1989, p. 155). This inequality, coupled with the rise of consumer-driven capitalism, led to the formation of counter-public spheres, including feminist, nationalist, and labour movements, which sought to challenge the hegemonic norms of the bourgeois public sphere.

Refeudalisation of the Public Sphere

Habermas introduced the concept of 'refeudalisation', where the public sphere is increasingly dominated by large corporations and state capitalism. Adorno and Horkheimer (2002, as cited in Habermas, 1989, p. 112) argued that culture industries and powerful economic actors transform the public sphere into a space of consumption rather than critical debate. The culture industry, comprising film, fashion, and advertising, projects societal norms and aspirations, offering apparent choices that are ultimately limited by corporate agendas. This dynamic reduces public



participation, turning citizens into passive consumers of goods and media spectacles. He warned that “information coupled with entertainment transforms citizens into spectators” (p. 166).

In modern society, consumerism and state capitalism blur the boundaries between private interests and public discourse. Activities once deemed private or hidden like consumption and economic transactions are now central to public life, often overshadowing critical public debate and participatory democracy. “Just as the wants of life and the procurement of necessities were shamefully hidden inside the oikos in classical antiquity, so too does the colonization of the life world by systems in modern society obscure the potential for meaningful public discourse, replacing it with the commodification of private interests.” (Habermas, 1987, p. 215).

Habermas distinguished between the public sphere, which should remain autonomous from the state, the market, and private interests, and the private sphere, which is the realm of individual and familial life. The public sphere should be a space where citizens engage in rational discourse and deliberation to reach consensus. In the Indian context, spaces like libraries, parliamentary debates, and political opposition play a similar role in fostering democratic dialogue.

Colonisation of Life-World

Habermas uses life-world and system as the key to understand the contemporary society. But Habermas was worried about the systemic colonisation of the life-world. It describes the process by which the instrumental rationality of social systems such as the economy and political administration eclipses and disrupts the life-world, which is the domain of shared culture, values, and interpersonal relationships. The life-world is “the reservoir of implicitly known traditions, the background assumptions that are embedded in language and culture and

drawn upon by individuals in everyday life” (Habermas, 1987, p. 124). For Habermas the life-world represents the cultural and symbolic reproduction of society, where socialisation and identity are fostered. Communication is the most important aspect of the life-world where individuals can gain recognition for the validity of their utterances. In contrast, the ‘system’ refers to the domain of capitalism and bureaucracy, which focuses on material reproduction. Habermas argues that “market forces and bureaucratic systems invade the life-world, transforming human relationships and cultural spaces into transactional exchanges, diminishing mutual understanding, and undermining individual agency” (p. 144). Individuals are reduced to passive consumers driven by media commercialisation and political spectacle. This disengagement from the life-world and the rise of spectator politics further erode trust in civic institutions, leading to a decline in democratic participation and ultimately weakening the foundation of democratic society. “A legitimization crisis occurs when a state fails to justify its authority and loses the consent of its citizens” (Habermas, 1975, p. 28). This legitimization crisis stresses the importance of democracy, dialogue, and the restoration of life-world values within systemic structures.

Decolonisation of Life-World

To resist the uncoupling of life-world and system, Habermas advocates communicative rationality as a remedial measure to strengthen the public sphere. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas postulated that subject-object dominance was prevalent among philosophers and social theorists. He emphasised the need to replace it by subject-subject or subject-other relation, which forms the foundation of our interactions with one another and the social environment. As a result, Habermas thus advocates the theory of Communicative rationality as the cornerstone, highlighting



the significance of discourse and communication in gaining democratic legitimacy. Communication is for Habermas the most important aspect of all the activities because it is here individual gain recognition for the validity of their utterance and their by modify the structure of the life-world. It promotes a change in social interactions from a strategic, individualistic way of thinking to one that is understanding-oriented and collaborative. Habermas thus emphasised the significance of language as a vehicle for authentic communication. Habermas thus envisions an ideal speech situation where all participants should engage in open, rational dialogue to arrive at consensus. He quotes, "Through discourse, society can reclaim the critical and participatory spirit of democracy" (Habermas, 1989, p. 185).

Habermas therefore used communicative rationality as a means of resolving the tension between the system and the real world. His approach offers a way to re-establish democratic involvements by combining traditions and system by fostering inclusive, logical discourse that strikes a balance between cultural traditions and systemic imperatives. He seeks to create a cohesive and just society by balancing the demands of the system with the values of the life-world through communication and understanding.

The Sabarimala Case and the Life-World/System Tension

Habermas himself recognises the challenges of communicative rationality and discourse due to deeply rooted religious traditions and social hierarchies. Habermas viewed law as a necessary corrective mechanism when rational discourse fails to resolve the conflict. According to Habermas(1996), when communication is distorted, or when reasoned debate is not possible, the law becomes the mechanism through which justice is realised and protected, even in the face of entrenched social norms.

Habermas' theory, which emphasises rational-critical discourse and the role of law in resolving conflicts, provides a useful lens through which we can understand the judicial intervention in such cases. *Indian Young Lawyers v. State of Kerala* (SCC 2018), which is well known as Sabarimala case, exemplifies the complex interplay between life-world and system. The case involves a conflict between the cultural traditions of the Sabarimala Temple, which excluded menstruating women from temple entry. In 2018, the Supreme Court of India ruled that the practice of excluding women from the Sabarimala Temple was unconstitutional, underscoring the principles of gender equality and individual rights. The decision sparked resistance from the community, illustrating Habermas' concept of the colonization of the life-world by systemic legal impositions.

Justice Indu Malhotra who was part of the bench of judges presented a strong dissenting opinion, warning against judicial encroachment into religious practices: "Matters of deep religious faith and sentiment should not ordinarily be interfered with by courts." (Malhotra,2018). This highlights the potential risks of systemic intervention disrupting cultural tradition.

However, Habermas argued, "Traditions must be critically examined to ensure that they align with principles of inclusivity and rationality" (Habermas, 1984, p. 105). In his seminal work, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Habermas states that law can serve as a facilitator to resolve the tension between life-world and system. In the Sabarimala case, Judiciary acts as an arbitrator to resolve the tension between life-world and system. If the court finds that traditions exist in contravention to constitutional morality, it is the duty of the court to uphold democratic values over regressive practices. As Justice DY Chandrachud remarks:



“Equality is not achieved by the destruction of religious freedom but by ensuring its preservation in a manner that guarantees the dignity of all.” (Chandrachud, 2018). Ultimately, the Sabarimala verdict represents a moment where the ‘Code of Law’ attempted to resolve a breakdown in the ‘Code of Communication.’ For the Indian democracy to flourish, the public sphere must be reclaimed as a space for rational-critical debate rather than strategic dominance.

Conclusion

By analysing the Sabarimala controversy as a site of discursive friction, we see that the legal verdict was not merely a decision, but an attempt by the System to correct a communicative failure. Habermas’s Lifeworld-System

tension illustrates how traditional spheres, often resistant to rational-critical discourse, can create barriers to universal participation. While his theory of Communicative Rationality offers an ideal model for democratic engagement, its application in the Indian context is frequently hindered by the ‘re-feudalisation’ of the public sphere through deep-rooted cultural and religious hierarchies. Consequently, when communicative action fails to achieve consensus, the law must intervene as a necessary systemic mediator. By asserting constitutional morality over localised traditions, the legal framework acts as a corrective mechanism, ensuring that justice is served and that the egalitarian principles of the ‘System’ protect the substantive freedoms of the ‘Lifeworld’.

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Gendered Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence: Concerns and Questions

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Received: 10/08/2025

Revised: 16/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most transformative fields of the 21st century. It has revolutionised nearly every sphere of human life ranging from industries, healthcare, education and communication to everyday life. While equipping life, it raises concerns about how AI systems may reinforce and challenge the existing social categories-particularly those related to gender. AI can spark questions related to combating societal gender norms produced by advertising, media consumption, and personalisation. Biased AI systems, which perpetuate gendered stereotypes and assumptions, limit the potential for diverse perspectives. This article explores the intersection of AI-driven platforms and gender focussing on gender equity, inclusion and the dismantling of gendered power structures. This paper discusses the need for a more nuanced approach to AI innovations and designs that incorporate and ameliorate multiple layers of identity with the sole aim of achieving gender justice.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Algorithms, Gender bias, Gender equity, Fairness, Under-representation, Qualia, Subjective experience

Funding Sources

The author wishes to declare that no financial assistance or grants have been received for the preparation and completion of this article.

Statement of the Problem

AI has permeated both public and private spectrums of our life. Despite the exponential growth of AI, there is a significant discrepancy in gender parity. This paper attempts to address the implications of AI on gender by exploring the ways in which AI platforms facilitate gender biases. Possible solutions are reflected on how the future of AI can work towards gender equality.

Objectives of the Study

- I. To assess the relationship between AI and gender

- II To investigate the ways AI perpetuates gender stereotypes

- III. To examine the gender representation in AI datasets

- IV. To evaluate the impact of gender bias on AI-based decision-making

- V. To forward new ways to foster gender equality in AI systems

Methodology

The methodologies employed in this paper to address the research objectives are descriptive, prescriptive and critical. The descriptive dimension explains how it is, the prescriptive explains how it should be and the critical dimension explains why it is the way it is.



General Introduction

Defining artificial intelligence (AI) is an easy question to ask and a hard one to answer (Kaplan 2016, p. 1). AI has become an integral part of modern life. Its influence cannot be discarded as it spans across various aspects of human life. The European Parliament described AI as the epicentre of the “fourth industrial revolution” (European Parliament 2019). However, as AI is rapidly evolving, concerns have risen about the biases embedded within these systems. One major issue is the domain of gender that requires special attention. It becomes a problematic tendency as it perpetuates gender inequalities and discriminations.

1. The Origin and Expressions of Gender Bias in AI

The question of how gender bias originated in AI is quite puzzling. It refers to a situation where AI systems display gender-based discrimination, inequalities and stereotypes that originate from numerous sources that influence how AI systems function. AI systems are designed to make decisions, predictions or recommendations based on data, but the data fed into these systems are biased. This bias originates from historical inequality, societal stereotypes or imbalanced representation of gender in the data. To name a few sources:

1.1 Biased Training Data

AI models, particularly machine learning algorithms, rely on large datasets to learn patterns and make predictions. These data repositories are not neutral as they reflect historical and ongoing gender inequalities. If these datasets are vested with biased representations with gender or incomplete, it will lead to skewed AI outputs. Datasets reflect historical gender inequalities and harmful stereotypes relevant in society like in hiring, recruitment, promotion recommendations and healthcare diagnosis. AI systems may prefer male candidates over female leading to biases and underrepresentation. For instance, when prompted, AI models may default to traditional roles—a male as a doctor and a female as a nurse (UN Woman).

1.2 Cultural and Societal Stereotypes

AI models are designed by engineers, programmers, developers and scientists that come from multiple backgrounds and their unconscious biases can be imbibed into these models, thereby influencing the design and creation. To state an example, voice assistants like Alexa and Siri are designed with female voices reinforcing the cultural stereotype and the traditional gender norms that women are care givers or perform assistant roles. E-commerce platforms rely on AI tools with the help of real-time data to predict market trends and customer behaviour to optimise sales, marketing strategies, product demand and customer experiences. By collecting gobs of consumer data and feeding them into machine learning algorithms, retailers are able to spin up sophisticated AI-powered personalisation, recommendation and automation features, all of which have become commonplace throughout the shopping experience (Thomas 2024). Algorithms frequently show beauty or household products to women and financial or tech-related brands to men. This limits customer choices and perpetuates unequal access to resources.

AI is inadequate to understand the complexity of gender as a social construct. Many models are designed with a binary framework of male and female, ignoring the non-existence of other gender identities like queer and transgender. This reinforces stereotypes and excludes their experiences as they fail to align with traditional gender norms. Facial recognition tools may work poorly for transgender people (Scheuerman et al., 2019). This is a form of epistemic injustice where their lives are denied visibility within digital spaces.

1.3 Underrepresentation of Women in Workforce

Another factor contributing to gender biases in AI is the lack of diversity among individuals who create these systems. The tech industry is historically predominated by men. This



has resulted in skewed perspectives about gender, often underrepresenting women and non-binary individuals in the design and developmental stages. Despite women making up half of the global workforce, they hold an insignificant position in AI and related fields. Women continue to be underrepresented in fields of engineering, machine learning and computer science. This gender imbalance points out to the fact that AI systems are developed primarily by male engineers leading to biases. Women are very much underrepresented in AI and in tech industries more broadly. A 2020 World Economic Forum report on gender parity suggests women account for only 26% of data and AI positions in the workforce. Women comprise only 22% of AI talent globally, with even lower representation at senior levels—occupying less than 14% of senior executive roles in AI (Pal et al., 2024). Social norms, childcare burdens, unequal pay and household are the main factors that hinder access. This imbalance influences the ways AI resolves problems and assumptions made about target populations.

1.4 Gender Bias in AI Decision-Making

AI models are increasingly used in decision-making processes of serious nature. Worryingly, AI-based decision-making systems are increasingly used to screen job applications, determine outcomes of loan applications, calculate insurance premiums and benefits, determine access to social services and more (Mehrabi et al., 2019). When gender discriminations are embedded in these systems, they can lead to unfair and unequal outcomes. Hence, women are at a disadvantaged position. The harmful effects of these systems go beyond individuals and are reported to affect families, communities and society at large (Altman et al., 2018). For example, AI exacerbates lending discriminations against women. The expected utility of loans was 68% lower for women than for men (Amaral, 2024). This bias not only reduces the diversity of perspectives and ideas, but also stifles innovation.

2. The Impact of Gender Bias in AI on Society

The gender bias in AI is a serious issue in today's world. It can lead to reinforcement and exacerbation of existing gender inequalities. It can contribute to underrepresentation of women in emerging fields like tech companies and AI. The impact is not limited to individuals; it affects institutions and services which may go unnoticed for a long time.

2.1 Erosion of Trust

The society may develop a lack of trust in AI because it perpetuates gender biases. As a result, the public is less likely to rely on them in critical areas such as hiring, healthcare and criminal justice. Biased algorithms often function as 'opinions embedded in mathematics' and can cause significant harm when they are treated as neutral or objective (O'Neil, 2016, p. 21). This may decelerate its potential integration into the social domains. This points to the lack of fairness in AI systems, and becomes a potential for causing social harm.

2.2 Fiscal Repercussions

The economic ramifications of gender bias in AI that extend beyond individuals and companies are worth mentioning. Automated decision-making systems often 'reproduce and reinforce existing patterns of economic exclusion' (Eubanks, 2018, p. 12). Women will be at a loss in hiring practices, labour market participation, pay gaps and career advancements. This can adversely affect efficiency, decision-making processes and innovation drive. Gender bias in AI limits the creative potential of organisations, hindering the development of new novel products and services. Organisations that lack diversity are less likely to outperform competitors in increasingly globalised markets (McKinsey & Company, 2020, p. 3). This impedes economic growth as diversity is pushed to the background, thereby struggling to be competitive in the globalised market.



2.3 The Gender Gap in the Tech Industry

Industries and companies prioritised on technology are key figures in driving innovation, defining the future work trends and shaping the economy. Despite its potential for growth, these face a serious gender gap. From the design of algorithms to the datasets used for training, this leads to biases that favour men. Women continue to be under-represented in leadership, technical and entrepreneurial roles. This is initiated by factors like educational disparities and gender stereotypes. The gender gap in the tech industry is a pressing issue. Women face systemic barriers to entry, retention and career advancements. According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, women hold approximately 26% of computing jobs with this number varying significantly by field. In software engineering and development, the percentage drops to 19%, while roles in system analysis and cyber security, women occupy even fewer positions. Women are paid less compared to their male counterparts even when their qualifications are similar.

Another significant area is the work place culture which prefers male employees. Gender biases still persist in daily interactions and decision-making. Women face troubles in the form of being overlooked in their ideas in meetings and being talked over by male colleagues. This creates an environment where they struggle to be visible and heard, making it harder to advance or be taken seriously in their careers. They are marginalised, excluded and isolated, thereby fostering hostile work environment and discourage them from staying in the companies.

3. Addressing Gender Bias

Addressing gender bias in AI systems is always a complex and ongoing process. The aim is to design and deploy AI systems that promote fairness and inclusivity, regardless of gender. As AI continues to grow and develop, it is imperative to ensure that it does not become a catalyst for destructive stereotypes, but instead works towards a fair and equal society.

3.1 Ethical Principles for Gender Inclusive AI

Certain ethical principles provide a foundational framework for ensuring that AI systems respect gender diversity, promote fairness and avoid discriminatory practices. These principles are as follows:

a. Fairness and equity

This principle aims to ensure the following.

- i. All individuals irrespective of gender have equal access to the opportunities and benefits provided by AI systems.
- ii. Cater to the needs of all gender identities. Fairness in AI demands systems that work equally well for all social groups, including different genders and gender identities (Wachter et al., 2021, p. 3).

b. Transparency and Accountability

AI systems should be transparent in operations and decision-making processes. This would provide room for the non-reinforcement of gender-based biases. Transparent and explainable AI systems are essential to ensure accountability and to prevent discriminatory outcomes (OECD, 2019, p. 2).

c. Representation and Participation

This principle ensures that gender diversity is incorporated in the development and governance of AI models.

d. Privacy and Data Security

Data related to gender should be collected, stored, processed and retrieved with privacy and security in mind.

3.2 Existing Ethical Frameworks for Gender Inclusive AI

Several ethical frameworks have been formulated to guide AI development to ensure inclusiveness, fairness, accountability and equity by questioning the systemic biases that arise in the design and deployment of AI systems. These frameworks address both the technical aspects and social and cultural concerns of AI with the aim to create representative and inclusive technological



environment where AI functions as a tool for innovation and a medium for social good and equality.

4. Philosophical Perspectives

AI in its current version is incapable to understand, experience and represent gender. Philosophically speaking, this inability is contributed by the absence of several defining features, one being the lack of consciousness. Consciousness is an inner and private phenomenon of self-awareness. Consciousness manifested in matter is life. Consciousness is purely a subjective experience. It is a first-person ontological inner state. Machines are unconscious. AI does not have consciousness. They process information and perform tasks on the basis of pre-given learnt patterns and programmed rules. AI can process data, but they are unaware of it. When a chatbot talks, it does not understand the meaning of its words. It acts like it understands, but in fact it does not. This is called the 'illusion of intelligence' (Bender et al., 2021). Consciousness if at all developed is functional, not biological.

Another lacking feature in AI that poses risk to its complexity is the absence of qualia; which is the subjective and qualitative experience of sensations and perceptions that define the present phenomenological state. Qualia are experiential properties of sensations, feelings, perceptions, thoughts and desires as well (Guttenplan, 1994, p. 514). Qualia are purely personal and cannot be communicated to another. The human experience of gender is a part of lived reality shaped by various factors; AI lacks this. AI can describe feelings and emotions like happiness, anger or beauty in words. But it cannot experience them. AI can recognise the colour red, but it cannot feel anything when it sees red (Searle, 1980). AI simulates the gendered traits, without having the subjective experiences of gendered qualia.

AI models are irrational, which is a unique defining feature of human beings. The absence of rationality implies the aloofness of

morality. Humans have a moral sense because their biological makeup determines the presence of three necessary conditions for ethical behaviour:

- I. The ability to anticipate the consequences of one's actions,
- II. The ability to make value judgements,
- III. The ability to choose between alternative courses of action (Darwin, 1871, p. 160).

AI systems are not moral agents. It is just a tool, not a person. It is not a thinking being. This can be justified on the grounds that they cannot evaluate their actions, cannot reflect on the consequences of these actions and cannot be aware of their responsibilities. They are not accountable for their decisions. The design of gendered AI raises ethical issues concerning the social and emotional implications of gender. They reflect gender biases, reinforcing stereotypes and discriminations. Despite exhibiting superficially gender, AI models fail to understand the subjective complexities of gendered experience. Ethics in AI needs to be guided by human beings.

Conclusion

Immediate and proactive strategies to mitigate gender disparity in silicon-brain-driven AI technologies require the concerted efforts of stakeholders such as researchers, programmers, developers, policymakers and regulatory bodies. The core principle of AI development should be gender inclusivity. This is possible through the combinations of social responsibility, technological improvements, ethical considerations and uncompromising activism. The creation of equitable AI systems is facilitated by diversifying training datasets, increasing the representation of women in AI design and development teams and continuously auditing AI systems to ensure they do not perpetuate negative stereotypes. Gender equality in AI models is not just a theoretical goal, but a practical solution for achieving a fairer and more balanced future.



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Kristeva's Philosophy of Love: From Psychoanalysis to Ethics

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 12/02/2026

Accepted: 17/02/2026

Abstract

Love is one of the most complex yet transformative human experience that is discussed all over the world. One may find love as something that breaks one's heart, or something that motivates or inspires. So, it can be said that love can be equally desirable and dismissible. Julia Kristeva's philosophy of love bridges this paradox by offering a distinctive perspective on the transformative power of love shaping subjectivity and human relationships. Rooted in Freudian and Lacanian theory, she goes beyond the traditional psychoanalytic views to propose an ethics of love that resists traditional concepts that prescribe moral standards and embraces human diversity and relationality. This article investigates her exploration of love as a dynamic force that disrupts and redefines the boundaries of identity, morality and intersubjectivity. This article also examines how love, as theorised by Kristeva, serves as a critical site for ethical engagement, advancing Kristeva's vision of a herethics rooted in relational and transformative potentialities.

Keywords: Semiotic chora, Transference love, Maternal love, Herethics, Psychoanalysis, Symbolic, Semiotic

Introduction: Love as a Critical Site of Human Interaction

Love has been the subject of discussion for many, including poets and philosophers, and a topic of concern in psychoanalysis. While traditional views often frame love as a natural instinct or a moral virtue, Kristeva sees love as a dynamic, disruptive and constitutive force that shapes subjectivity. Kristeva's philosophy of love challenges the notion of love as a romantic ideal or a biological drive. She brings in the concept of maternal love, the love of transference, making love a fundamental structure that shapes human subjectivity. For Kristeva, love is how we came into being as individuals, how we engage with others, and ultimately, how we construct meaning in our lives.

From infancy, we are shaped by love: first through the maternal bond and then through our interactions with others in the social world. Love is not just about romantic passion but it is about connection, recognition, and transformation. Without love, we struggle to define ourselves and to relate meaningfully to others. Kristeva through her works like *Stabat Mater*, *Freud and Love*, *In the Beginning Was Love*, *Psychoanalysis and Faith*, invites us to explore love not only as an individual experience but as a philosophical and ethical question.

Toril Moi highlights Kristeva's radical engagement with issues of truth, ethics, and love, stating, "Speaking across the conventional disciplinary boundaries of the academic world, Kristeva raises the fundamental



issues of human existence: language, truth, ethics, love” (Moi, 1986, vi). Kristeva’s philosophy of love is shaped by psychoanalysis, semiotics, and ethics. Psychoanalysis provides how love structures one’s subjectivity. Semiotics allows love to be a linguistic and symbolic structure in the formation of subjectivity. Ethics situates love as a mode of responsibility and recognition in human relationships.

This paper argues that Julia Kristeva’s philosophy of love articulates a distinctive form of relational ethics that cannot be reduced either to traditional deontological models or to standard formulations of care ethics. By tracing love from the semiotic chora and the maternal bond, through transference and the tension between the semiotic and the symbolic, to Kristeva’s notion of herethics, this paper tries to show that love functions as a disruptive yet formative force that grounds ethical responsibility in psychic rupture, alterity, and the welcoming of the foreigner. Kristeva’s ‘ethics of love’ does not merely celebrate care or empathy but foregrounds the ambivalent and unconscious dimensions of attachment, thereby radicalising contemporary relational and care-based approaches to ethics. Methodologically, this study adopts a conceptual-analytical and hermeneutic approach, offering a close interpretive reading of Kristeva’s primary texts in dialogue with psychoanalytic theory and contemporary debates in relational ethics.

Maternal Love and the Semiotic Chora in Kristeva’s Philosophy of Love

Julia Kristeva’s notion of maternal love is central to her psychoanalytic and philosophical views. Unlike Freud and Lacan, who emphasised the father’s role in the making of a subject, Kristeva foregrounds the mother-child relationship as the first and most crucial encounter with love. She introduces the concept of the semiotic chora. The term, borrowed from Plato’s *Timaeus*, talks of a pre-linguistic space of rhythms, drives, and

affects, to describe the earliest phase of the development of the child, where love exists before identity and language. Kristeva describes semiotic chora as that which “precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal and kinetic rhythm” (Moi, 1986, 13).

The semiotic chora holds and nurtures potentiality in the pre-Oedipal stage, where the infant exists in pure affect and sensation, not yet structured by language. The child is enveloped in the maternal, where the child feels most stable and is embraced with maternal love. Kristeva presents this maternal love as a paradox. On one hand it is nurturing, protective, and all-encompassing, providing the infant with security and emotional grounding. On the other hand, it is something that the child should give up to form their own identity. The maternal love also marks an inevitable rupture, as the child must separate from the mother and enter the symbolic order which is the realm of language and social identity.

This transition, however, is painful and exciting. It is painful as this maternal love allows separation. It is exciting because this transition makes way for the child to become an independent subject. The child, now, out of semiotic chora, is eager to attain the stability it once had while one with the mother. The traces of the lost maternal bond always remain within the child, manifesting the desire for love that feels unconditional and all-consuming, as first experienced with the mother. This sense of loss and longing follows one throughout the life and is reactivated whenever there is a chance of rupture in the settled symbolic order.

Kristeva’s concept of semiotic chora and the idea of maternal, redefines love as that which precedes language and identity. Unlike the popular romantic or the ethical conceptions of love, maternal love in Kristeva is primal, fluid, and foundational. It is a rhythm



of fusion, care, and also of separation and growth. It is through this the love is first experienced before the child even knows what 'love' is. This transition from the semiotic chora to the symbolic order initiated with the maternal necessitates the formation of one's subjectivity and the relation with the other.

The memory of maternal love in Kristeva's view lingers throughout as individuals or 'speaking beings', in Kristeva's terms, often seek the connection, expresses emotions, and navigate intimacy in life. Kristeva's maternal love offers a nuanced version of love that is both nurturing and disruptive.

Love as Transference

Transference love was developed by Sigmund Freud which was then expanded upon by Julia Kristeva. The transference love refers to the unconscious projection of the past desires, fears, or emotional experiences onto the Other. In psychoanalysis, this is often seen in the therapy, where a patient projects feelings onto the psychoanalyst, re-enacting early emotional attachments from repressed desires, trauma, or fears. Kristeva extends this idea of transference love beyond therapy. She argues that all love involves transference, making it, though illusive, a space for transformation.

Freud first introduced the notion of transference, explaining how patients in therapy develop intense emotional attachments to their analysts. He argued that transference is a necessary part of therapy because it allows the unconscious to surface. For him, love in transference is not real as it is a repetition of past desires, especially from childhood. The analysts are obligated to navigate transference carefully, neither rejecting it outright nor fully reciprocating it, as doing so would hinder analysis.

Freud writes: "Positive transference is then further divisible into transference of friendly or affectionate feelings which are admissible

to consciousness and transference of prolongations of those feelings into the unconscious. As regards the latter, analysis shows that they invariably go back to erotic sources." (Freud, 1912, 105). This suggests that love, in its transference form, is structured by past emotional ties rather than being an entirely new experience.

Julia Kristeva extends Freud's theory beyond the therapy room, proposing that transference love is not limited to analysis as it occurs in all relationships, especially in romantic love. She says that when one falls in love, they do not love the actual person; but love an image of them shaped by their unconscious past. Love, for Kristeva, is like a fictional story that is filled with projections, idealisations, which is the repetitions of the unresolved emotional patterns. She argues that transference is a necessary illusion as it provides a potential space for healing. She states: "By ensuring a loving Other to the patient, the analyst (temporarily) allows the Ego in the throes of drive to take shelter in the following fantasy: the analyst is not a dead Father but a living Father." (Kristeva, 1986, 248) This means that in therapy, similar to how, the beloved often stands in for an absent or idealised, the analyst stands in as a figure from the past a parent, caregiver, or lost object of desire.

Despite its illusory nature of transference, Kristeva sees transference as something that allows us to confront our unconscious wounds. For her, transference, when reflected upon, can lead to self-discovery. This transferring nature of love creates an environment that allows healing. Through the transference love, one can break the repetitive patterns and form much healthier relationships. (Kristeva, 1987, p. 33; Kristeva, 1992, p. 14),

For Kristeva, unlike Freud, psychoanalysis is not about removing transference but about understanding it, so that the subject can



develop a more authentic way of loving. She suggests: “The cure can only be effected through transference, and, as we have seen, transference for Kristeva means transference love: an imaginary process of identification with an archaic ideal ego (the ‘father of personal prehistory’).” (Moi, 1986, 18) This means that transference, rather than being an obstacle, can become a site of transformation whether in therapy, relationships, or self-understanding.

The Semiotic and Symbolic in Relation to Love

The semiotic realm refers to the pre-linguistic affective dimension of meaning. It emerges before a child enters structured language and represents the fluid, rhythmic, and instinctual aspects of the speaking being. The symbolic represents the structured, logical, and rule-governed dimension of language and culture. Kristeva argues that the semiotic and symbolic are always in tension, creating the dynamic process of subjectivity and meaning-making. Semiotic without symbolic may lead to chaos, dissolution of identity, and madness. Symbolic without semiotic may lead to rigidity, repression, and emotional detachment. So, for Kristeva, though one may feel a binary opposition between the symbolic and semiotic, she connects these realms together as one always follows the other. The symbolic can never escape the semiotic as there is always something that threatens the symbolic to rewrite what is already settled. Kristeva presents us with an open-ended and nuanced notion of subjectivity that is always open and widening.

The Kristevian notion of subjectivity provides for a love that is healthy and has a balance between the semiotic and symbolic aspects of the I-Other relationship. Love when viewed through Kristevian lens merges the emotional fluidity of the semiotic with the structured stability of the symbolic. This merging of the two realms helps in maintaining an evolving and

therapeutic I-Other relationship. In every human interaction, this interplay of desire and order, passion and law, body and language can be witnessed. Thus, the interplay between symbolic and semiotic realms which Kristeva terms as the process of signification, can define how one loves, speaks, and exists in the world.

Herethics: Love as an Ethical Relation

Kristeva introduces the term ‘herethics’ to describe an alternative form of ethics that is rooted in motherhood. Kristeva brings in a maternal bond and the relationship between the mother and the child to bring in an ethics that is based upon love and care. Kristevian ethics is not similar to any traditional principles of ethics which is rooted in abstract principles or rigid moralism. For instance, in the traditional deontological theories, there is a general criterion of duty as an unavoidable and necessary norm for morality. Kristeva criticises such a general standard and believed in the ethics that rise from the lived in experiences of speaking being, these experiences are of love and that which embrace intersubjectivity.

For Kristeva it is not the hard rigid rules of ethics that is needed but an ethics that is rooted in love. Love in ethics as viewed by Kristeva teaches us the responsibility for the other without domination or sacrifice. She writes, “The ethics of psychoanalysis, then, is an ethics of love... It is in this specific sense that Kristeva aligns herself with the great Catholic theologians of love, St Bernard and St Thomas for them, as for her, the human subject is a subject of love.” (Moi, 1986, 18). The ethics that is proposed by Kristeva is a flexible and compassionate one that approaches the human interactions as such that is rooted in love. Bringing love and maternal in ethics Kristeva wants to promote an I-Other relation which embraces vulnerability leading to a transformative experience that is rooted in acceptance.



Kristeva's herethics aligns with care ethics, yet it also diverges from it in crucial ways. Like care ethicists, she rejects abstract, universalist moral theories and instead professes concrete relationships, dependency, and responsiveness as the starting points of ethical life. Her choice of the maternal bond as a privileged scene of ethical experience resonates with the care-ethical emphasis on nurturing relations, vulnerability, and situated judgment.

However, herethics cannot simply be assimilated to care ethics. First, it is explicitly psychoanalytic: it emerges from an account of subjectivity structured by loss, repression, and the ongoing tension between semiotic and symbolic registers. Maternal love is never purely harmonious; it is fissured by ambivalence and by the necessity of separation. The mother-child relation is not just a model of positive care but also a site where the child must become a stranger and where the mother must welcome an Other who can never be fully assimilated. This insistence on foreignness at the heart of love complicates any idealised picture of care.

Second, unlike care ethics which often presents care as a relatively stable moral ideal of attentiveness and responsibility, (Robinson, 1999, p. 12) Kristeva underscores the instability and fragility of loving bonds. Ethical responsibility arises from the subject's confrontation with internal and external otherness: the trace of the lost maternal chora, the projections of transference love, and the irruption of the semiotic into symbolic order. Herethics thus radicalises relational ethics by insisting that love is simultaneously caring and disruptive, hospitable and uncanny, and that ethical responsiveness must reckon with this ambivalence.

Finally, Kristeva's focus on the 'foreigner within' opens herethics towards questions of social and political coexistence. Care ethics often concentrates on immediate interper-

sonal networks (Ziarek, 2013), whereas herethics suggests that the demand to welcome the stranger is structurally inscribed in subjectivity and extends from intimate relations to the global sphere of migration and cultural difference. In this sense, Kristeva's ethics of love both converges with and exceeds care ethics: it shares its relational orientation while introducing a psychoanalytic account of foreignness and disruption at the heart of ethical life.

Conclusion

Julia Kristeva's philosophy of love provides a cohesive yet intricate explanation of the formation of subjectivity and ethics through love. Starting with the semiotic chora and the maternal, she demonstrates how the speaking being arises from a fundamental experience of fusion and rupture, which leaves behind an eternal yearning for unattainable wholeness. Her reinterpretation of Freudian transference views love as a cyclical yet potentially transformational process, wherein the individual re-enacts and rewires previous attachments. The dynamic interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic ensures that love stays both disruptive and structural, destabilising the old while facilitating the emergence of new meanings and relations. Herethics identifies the ethical aspect of this process, characterising love as a means of embracing the foreigner and accepting responsibility for the Other while preserving their distinctiveness. This approach creates numerous pathways for subsequent investigation. One approach would involve a more structured comparison of Kristeva's herethics with other relational ethical frameworks, including care ethics, Levinasian ethics of alterity, or feminist ethics, to elucidate the particularities and constraints of establishing ethics based on psychoanalytic interpretations of love. Another intriguing aspect would be to investigate the political impact of herethics, especially with current discussions on migration, nationalism, and the role



of the foreigner in globalised countries. A critical examination of how important motherhood is in Kristeva's paradigm is also a point that can be considered. Continuing to

investigate these questions might help test and improve the idea that, for Kristeva, love is not just a feeling but also the shaky foundation of moral duty and what it means to be human.

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Conceptual Role Semantics of Ned Block

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Received: 30/01/2025

Revised: 13/02/2026

Accepted: 17/02/2026

Abstract

Conceptual Role Semantics (CRS), a theory advocated by philosophers like Ned Block, emphasises that the meaning of concepts (mental representations) is derived from a system of beliefs, desires, intentions and other mental states. CRS and the Computational Model, both recognize the mental representations in cognitive processes. But the gap between meaning in CRS and mechanistic representation of states in Computational Models creates a significant challenge. The main problem of CRS in relation to Computational Model lies in the difficulty of connecting the dynamic, contextual role of meaning (as in CRS) with the formal, mechanistic processes of information manipulation described in Computational Model. Finding a way to integrate these two perspectives remains a key challenge in understanding how computation and meaning work together in the mind.

Keywords: Conceptual Role Semantics, Meaning, Mental representations, Cognitive processes, Computational Model

Introduction

Semantics plays a pivotal role in philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. The question of how meaning is represented in the mind has been a central topic of inquiry. One prominent approach to understand mental representation is Conceptual Role Semantics (CRS), a theory which suggests the meaning of a concept is determined by its role in cognitive system, rather than by an intrinsic relation to external objects or states of affairs. This perspective contrasts with theories that define meaning through direct reference to the world or through fixed, essential properties.

Ned Block, a leading figure in philosophy of mind, significantly contributed to the development of CRS, offering a functionalist view that emphasises the importance of mental representations. According to

Block, the meaning of a concept is shaped by the causal and inferential relationships it has within the broader network of cognitive processes (Block, 1998, p.45). His approach challenges traditional semantic theories such as semantic externalism and representationalism which offers new insights into the nature of intentionality and consciousness (2007, p.30). Block's work has implications not only for philosophy but also for cognitive science, as it provides a framework for understanding how mental content can be structured in the brain.

The theory of CRS is a continuation of Use theory of meaning. Wittgenstein's Use theory is grounded in social and linguistic practices, that is, meaning emerges from external, public use. But Block's theory is rooted in the mental, internal processes of an individual's cognitive system.



Methodology

The methodology followed in the preparation of the article is mainly descriptive, analytical and critical.

This article explores the key tenets of Block's CRS theory, examining its philosophical implications and relevance in contemporary debates of mental representation and meaning. Through an analysis of Block's work, we will consider how his theory provides a nuanced understanding of the mind and its role in shaping conscious experience.

Ned Block, in his "Two Neural Correlates of Consciousness", proposed a conceptual distinction between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. Phenomenal consciousness is what differs between experiences of two different colours. But access consciousness is the content information about which 'broadcast' in the global workspace (2007, p.46).

Phenomenal Neural Correlates of Consciousness is the minimal neural basis of the content of an experience. It seeks the difference between the experiences of two colours like white and black. Phenomenal Consciousness is associated with the subjective and qualitative aspects of experience. It is tied to the brain activity that gives rise to conscious experience itself.

Access Conscious Content deals with the information made available to the brain's 'consumer' systems: systems of memory, perceptual categorisation, reasoning, planning, evaluation of alternatives, decision-making, voluntary direction of attention and more generally, rational control of action. Access Neural Conscious Content (NCC) refers to the neural processes that allow for information in consciousness to be used for higher-order cognitive functions. There is a 'global workspace' and the neural basis of information being sent to this global workspace is called the Access NCC (Block, 1995a, p.47).

Here arises the question that phenomenal NCC is really the neural basis of consciousness? In this, the experiential contents are accessed. But the phenomenal NCC for visual motion determines the experiential content of visual motion. Therefore, that content itself is phenomenology, that is, consciousness. Here Block also mentioned about a variety of paradigms we can use convergent evidence with varying degrees of access, to separate the phenomenal from Access NCC (1995a, p.47).

In Block's framework, phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness involve specific neural patterns or correlates that support the variety of cognitive processes. Phenomenal consciousness stands for representing conceptual roles that contribute to the qualitative experience of concepts. The specific neural activity that corresponds to the Sensation of hotness is not just about processing visual stimuli but it also involves the role that the concept of 'hot' plays in the large web of cognitive representations.

The neural correlates of access consciousness correspond to the roles concepts play in cognitive tasks like reasoning or action. The concept of 'hot' might be involved in a decision-making process, and this neural activity would reflect the inferential role that the concept plays within cognitive operations, such as in problem-solving or language use.

The correlation of CRS with Block's theory of Consciousness gives a comprehensive understanding of brain's neuronal activities and underpins both the qualitative and accessible dimensions of consciousness through the dynamic roles that concepts play in the cognitive system.

CRS has been discussed and developed by several philosophers. Wilfred Sellars, an American philosopher, emphasised the idea that meanings are tied to the roles that concepts play within a system of beliefs and in inferential patterns. Concepts are not just



isolated mental representations but are defined by their relations to other concepts. Sellars' work challenged empiricist accounts of meaning, which often assume that meanings are directly tied to experience or sensory input. He proposed that concepts do not simply 'refer' to external objects or sensory experiences but have meaning based on their functional roles within a broader conceptual system (Sellars, 1963, p.54).

Richard Rorty is also a key figure in the development of pragmatism. His ideas about language, meaning, and epistemology influenced the thinking that eventually led to the theory of CRS. In his book "Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature" he argued that meaning and truth are not simply discovered through reflection on an objective reality but are instead shaped by the roles that language plays in social practices and communities. This idea of Rorty strongly supports CRS, which emphasises that meaning is determined by the role of concepts with a system of cognitive processes (Rorty, 1979, p.28).

According to Ned Block, there are two different streams related with the study of 'semantics'. One is the 'linguistic semantics', which is the meanings of some expressions in certain language, and how they combined to make meanings of greater expressions. Another one is the 'metaphysical semantics'. It explains the basic nature of meaning. It is also about a context that provides words or thoughts of any meanings initially they have. CRS can analyse in the field of Metaphysical Semantics. In this, the essence of meaning is functional. Generally speaking, CRS is the functionalist approach to the mind (1998, pp.4–5).

This theory aims that the mind requires more than the existing fields. Computers fail to comprehend language in their programmes or manipulate symbols in a specific way. Here Block examines the Chinese Room Argument of Searle. Searle says that the less a

man does not understand Chinese, he is just mindlessly manipulating symbols. Block here says that CRS motivates the 'system reply'. That is if we programme a computer to be intelligent, it will not be the central processing unit (CPU) that is intelligent or understand the symbols. But Block goes beyond this and says about "the complex relations between CPU and other systems of mind like perception, reasoning and decision – making" (Block, 1998, p.6).

Block points and the 'two factor' version of CRS by some proponents of CRS. The view says that meaning consists of internal 'narrow' aspect of meaning and might be handled by functional roles within the body. Another view is that the external referential aspect of meaning handled other metaphysical theories of meaning. Here Block illustrates certain examples for explaining this. According to external factor, "Superman flies' and 'Clark flies' are semantically the same, since Superman = Clark Kent; it is the internal factor that distinguishes them. But the internal factor counts 'water is more greenish than bluish' as semantically the same in the month as in the month of the twin or twin earth. In this case, it is the external factor that distinguishes them" (1998, p.6).

To understand the concept of CRS, certain key ideas that centre on how the meaning of a concept is understood in relation to its role in a system of thought and reasoning were discussed.

Meaning as Role in Cognitive Systems

According to Block, meaning of a concept is not grounded in its correspondence to an external world but is instead determined by how the concept functions within a cognitive system. That is meaning arises from the inferential and functional roles that concepts play in thought and reasoning. Here the role of a concept plays in a mental system, including how it is connected to other concepts, determines its meaning. Block emphasise that the



mental states and concepts are defined by the roles and relationships within a system, rather than by their intrinsic properties or their direct reference to the world (Block, 1995a, pp. 119–130).

CRS and the Inferential Connections

One of the main ideas behind CRS is that the concepts derive meaning from their inferential roles. That is, the meaning of a concept is partially shaped by how it connects with and influences other concepts within reasoning. Concepts gain meaning through the way they are used in cognitive processes like reasoning, belief formation, and decision-making. For example, the concept “dog” gains its meaning not by referring to a specific dog, but by the relation with other concepts like “animal”, “pet”, “loyal”, “barking” and so on. These relationships determine how we use “dog” in different contexts and how it can inferentially link to other concepts in our mental framework (Block, 1995a, p. 139).

Contextual use and CRS

Similar to Wittgenstein’s theory of meaning, CRS emphasises the importance of context. The influential role of a concept is influenced by the context in which it is involved. For example, the concept of ‘bank’ might refer to a financial institution in a context, but it could refer to the side of a river in another context. The context of use determines which set of inferences and associations are activated and what the concept means in that particular instance (Block, 1995b, pp. 120–140).

Block analyses concepts as a tool for inferential reasoning. Here the role of a concept can shift based on its use in various contexts. This flexibility of meaning in different contexts challenges the idea that meaning is tied to fixed external references.

Meaning through Function

CRS affirms that meaning of concept is determined by its function in a cognitive system. The function of concepts is essential for guiding reasoning and problem-solving.

For example when we hear the word ‘cat’ the brain activates various functional roles related to that concept based on the cognitive context. Instead of the traditional theories like referential theories, it emphasises that meaning is internal and shaped by the functional roles concepts play in mental operations. This perspective aligns with Block’s broader focus on functionalism, where the meaning of mental states is defined by their functional role in the mind (Block, 1995, pp. 121–140). Here, the view emphasised in the concept is that a concept does not have meaning in isolation; instead, its meaning is based on how it is used and how it interacts with other concepts in thought and language.

Implications of CRS: Practical and Philosophical

CRS has far-reaching implications both in philosophical and practical, especially in the areas of cognitive science, philosophy of mind and artificial intelligence. Understanding CRS’s implications helps us explore its impact on understanding meaning, consciousness, cognition and artificial systems.

a) Philosophical Implications

According to CRS, meaning is not fixed by external reference but it is dynamic, arising from the functional role of concepts within the cognitive system. This implication influences the growth of philosophy of language, particularly in the field of meaning and its use in mental processes. This aligns of context dependent and role dependent with theories in pragmatics and contextualise, give way to meaning as dynamic and influenced by its use in various mental networks (Block, 2007, pp. 36–40).

CRS provides framework for understanding how concepts and cognitive processes are intertwined in the experience of consciousness. This understanding contribute to philosophy of mind especially in the fields of representationalism and phenomenal consciousness (Block, 1995a, pp. 120–130).



CRS not only focusses on philosophy of language but has certain contributions in the field of epistemology also. There are ongoing debates on how knowledge is structural in the mind and how it informs our understanding of the world. Epistemology gains its position through the concepts in reasoning processes in CRS (Block,1995a,pp.135–145).

b) Practical Implications

CRS has significant applications in cognitive science and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Machine learning systems and AI models can benefit from incorporating CRS-like frameworks. AI systems that stimulate human reasoning and problem-solving improve areas like natural language processing (NLP) (Block,2007,pp.35–40).

CRS also paves way to improve educational theories and pedagogy. Here it focuses on students on how they understand and use concept in different contexts rather than memorising static definitions. Teaching strategies might shift to focus on dynamic understanding and the functional role of concepts and fostering critical thinking.

The functions in cognitive system have applications in mental health and therapy. For example, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) helps individuals to change their thoughts that play in their mental processes. This mental health and therapeutic benefits can attain from CRS's significant applications (Block,1995a,pp.125–136).

CRS challenges the traditional theories of meaning in philosophy and reshape the discussions in epistemology, philosophy of mind and language. The useful insights for the fields of artificial intelligence, education and mental health can also achieve.

CRS and the Computational Model, both recognise the mental representations in cognitive processes. But the gap between meaning in CRS and mechanistic representation of states in Computational Models creates

significant challenges. The main problem of CRS in relation to Computational Model lies in the difficulty of connecting the dynamic, contextual role of meaning (as in CRS) with the formal, mechanistic processes of information analytical in Computational Model. These models tend to rely on static representation of concepts and can struggle to capture the context-sensitive nature of meaning (Block,2007,pp.35–40).

The challenges faced by CRS in connection with Computational Model is the difficulty in capturing the heaviness of inferential networks. The dynamic network of conceptual roles is too complex, and the Computational Model perspectives cannot be easily captured. Current AI models often lack the flexibility and depth to simulate the richness of human-like reasoning and inference (Fodor,2002,p.50).

Finding a way to integrate CRS and the Computational Model perspectives remains a key challenge in understanding how computation and meaning work together in the mind.

Conclusion

CRS says that the meaning of a concept is not just a simple correspondence to an object or a static definition but is determined by the role it plays in a larger web of cognitive functions, inferences and social practices. Meaning is not a static entity but is flexible and context dependent, grounded in how we reason, talk and interact with the world. This view contrasts with traditional referential theories of meaning. CRS emphasises the importance of inferential networks and cognitive functions in determining how concepts relate to one another and to our conscious experience (Block2007,pp.37–40).

CRS provided deep insights into the nature of meaning and cognitive role, but certain challenges are present in its application to Computational Model and artificial



intelligence (AI). CRS lacks empirical data in connection with its conceptual framework to neural mechanisms (Block, 2007, p. 136). Despite these challenges, the philosophical implications of CRS are profound, especially in the areas like epistemology, philosophy

of mind and consciousness studies. It provided a framework for understanding how concepts contribute to conscious thought and subjective experience. But CRS is an eye-opener for the research into the intersection of meaning, consciousness and cognition.

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Revisiting the Technological Singularity Discourse: Philosophical Considerations

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 10/12/2025

Accepted: 13/12/2025

Abstract

This article explores the debate surrounding the technological singularity, focusing on Raymond Kurzweil's investigation of the concept. Kurzweil predicts a future point called the singularity. At this time, technological growth will become so fast and out of control that it will lead to huge and irreversible changes for human civilisation. This article outlines Kurzweil's key arguments on the potential for artificial intelligence to surpass human capabilities. In this context, philosopher Luciano Floridi raises important philosophical concerns on the issue. This article also examines Floridi's critique, which contests the 'singularity question' on several grounds. This article compares Kurzweil's socio-ethical apprehensions with Floridi's moral considerations. It aims at a firm understanding of the singularity debate and its implications, urging a more cautious approach to technological development.

Keywords: Singularity, Ultra intelligence, Brain-technology interface, Human-machine co-evolution, Faith-based debate, Teapotism, Conditionality, Digital opiate.

Introduction

Since the beginning of time, technology has been key to growth, and humanity has always invested in new inventions. Despite this, the link between technology and human well-being has always been complicated. Early thinkers mostly enquired whether technology was helpful for a 'Goodlife' or not. With the arrival of computers and the internet, there has been a shift in focus from how technology affects our knowledge and how we define what is 'real'. The most pertinent question today is about artificial intelligence (AI). What might possibly happen when machines can think for themselves, and what does it mean to be human in the age of AI? Will technology possibly hold dominance over human intelligence and existence in the long run?

Some people think that scientific and technological progress is slowing down, while others believe that we are approaching a 'singularity', a point where things will change completely, possibly because of advances in computers and nanotechnology. While the idea of a technological singularity has recently become popular in futurist thinking, its many facets and interpretations are often varied. This study aims to observe the situatedness of the singularity phenomenon, and distinguishes some facets of the singularity discourse. This article also intends to reflect on the philosophical ideations of Luciano Floridi, a prominent philosopher, who has deliberated on the topic and offered critical perspectives on technological dominance.



Information Society

For the past fifty years, technology has been changing our world faster than ever, exerting a profound and irreversible influence on all areas of knowledge. Information and communication technologies have been a key driver of breakthroughs in scientific research and growth. However, they also pose significant risks and ethical dilemmas. They challenge our understanding of reality, the nature of knowledge, and the societal implications of information sciences. Many such issues arising with such development require careful consideration. According to Luciano Floridi, Professor at the University of Oxford, the rapid and unchecked growth of the information society has outpaced our understanding of its ethical and cultural implications. This disconnect between technological advancement and our ability to cope with it is a common experience for many people (Floridi, 2010).

The Singularity Question

The idea of the technological singularity is one of the most recently debated topics in the world of technology. It describes a moment when technological progress, particularly in artificial intelligence, becomes so rapid and powerful that it creates a new type of intelligence far beyond human capability. This rapid, unconstrained surge of intelligence is designated a 'singularity'. This critical moment makes future prediction unreliable.

The singularity is increasingly discussed within academic circles, a development perhaps foreshadowed by the work of theorists like Donna Haraway and Fredric Jameson. Futurists, scientists, technology scholars, and cultural commentators debate the singularity as a potential near-future event, using it as a lens to examine issues like bioethics, globalisation, and contemporary internet-driven techno-culture. These real-world analyses all attempt to understand a future that may already be emerging in our hyperreal present—a future that may be simultaneously

present and yet drastically different from our current reality (Tourney& Copeland, 2025).

The singularity is a theoretical future point where new technologies will combine to change our world in unpredictable ways. Most importantly, it is when artificial intelligence becomes so smart that it surpasses human intelligence, potentially blurring the line between people and computers (Tourney& Copeland, 2025).

The idea of the singularity, which originally focused on super-fast technological progress, has grown to include different ideas about huge, world-changing events. In the context of technology, the word singularity was first used by John Von Neumann, mathematician and computer scientist. He is credited with one of the first mentions of the singularity. He speculated about a point in the future where technology would advance so fast and become so complex that it would be impossible for humans to predict or understand the changes that would follow (Mucci, 2024). The potential for machines to self-improve and create even more advanced versions of themselves could usher in a new era where humans are no longer the dominant intelligent force.

Vernor Vinge believes the singularity will likely happen because of a self-reinforcing cycle of intelligence. As we create smarter computer systems, they will be able to design even more intelligent systems faster than humans can. This rapid, positive feedback loop would lead to an intelligence explosion, resulting in a superintelligent system with abilities far beyond our own (Kaplan, 2009).

Sociologist William Sims Bainbridge proposes another version of the singularity called cyberimmortality. This is the idea that we can achieve a form of eternal life by uploading our thoughts and feelings as digital data, which would live on long after our physical bodies are gone (Toumey& Copeland, 2025). Eric Drexler is widely known



for popularising molecular nanotechnology. Through his influential work, *Engines of Creation*, Drexler explicates that, as an emerging technology when fully developed, nanotechnology will have truly transformational effects (Drexler, 1986).

The idea of singularity was further popularised by its most vocal proponent Raymond Kurzweil, a leading developer in artificial intelligence, thinker, inventor, author, and futurist, who connected it to the acceleration of technological progress. Kurzweil predicts human-level AI around the year 2029 and the singularity in the year 2045. This study explores the concept of the singularity as presented in Kurzweil's major work, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*.

Kurzweil's work explores the idea that artificial intelligence will rapidly advance to a point where it surpasses human intelligence. This pivotal moment is what he calls the singularity. He states that grasping the concept of the singularity will change how we view the past and the future. He believes that to truly understand it is to inherently change your perspective on life itself. Kurzweil calls someone who understands the singularity and has thought about its implications for their own life a 'singularitarian' (Kurzweil, 2005). Kurzweil's prediction is based on his theory of 'The law of accelerating returns', which argues that technological progress, particularly in areas like computing, genetics, nanotechnology, robotics, and AI, happens exponentially rather than linearly.

Accelerating Effect

According to Kurzweil, technology, like other evolutionary processes, is growing at an exponential rate. This is a key feature of the approaching singularity. He explains that exponential growth is misleading because it starts out very slow and seems unimportant, but then it suddenly speeds up with surprising force. He warns that if we are not carefully

watching this progress, we will be caught off guard. Kurzweil believes that within a few decades, information-based technologies will hold all of human knowledge and skills, even the ability to recognise patterns, solve problems, and have emotional and moral intelligence just like a human brain (2005).

Brain–Technology Interface

The singularity, according to Kurzweil, is the point when our biological minds merge with our technology. This will create a world that is still human but has moved beyond our biological limitations. He argues that this will happen when we combine the knowledge in our brains with technology's greater speed, capacity, and ability to share information. The singularity will allow us to solve long-standing human problems and greatly increase our creativity. In essence, we will keep the intelligence that evolution gave us while overcoming the major limitations of our biology (2005). Kurzweil suggests that the singularity will fundamentally transform human understanding of the world through the merger of humans and technology, enabling unprecedented intelligence.

Convergence of Technology

Kurzweil outlines three revolutions. The 'G' or genetics revolution will allow us to reprogram biology to end disease, followed by the 'N' or nanotechnology revolution, which will let us rebuild our bodies and the world at a molecular level. However, the most significant and powerful transformation is the 'R' revolution, which will create robots with intelligence that far surpasses our own. He states: "The most powerful impending revolution is 'R': human-level robots with their intelligence derived from our own but redesigned to far exceed human capabilities. R represents the most significant transformation, because intelligence is the most powerful 'force' in the universe. Intelligence, if sufficiently advanced, is, well, smart enough to anticipate and overcome any obstacles



that stand in its path” (2005, p.181). Kurzweil describes genetics, nanotechnology, and robotics as overlapping revolutions because their development will continue concurrently, with each technology progressing towards maturity alongside the others.

Feedback Loop

The advancement of these technologies generates a feedback loop, accelerating progress. For example, increasingly sophisticated AI can contribute to the development of even more advanced AI, resulting in a rapid cycle of iterative improvement. Kurzweil explains: “Evolution applies positive feedback: the more capable methods resulting from one stage of evolutionary progress are used to create the next stage. Each epoch of evolution has progressed more rapidly by building on the products of the previous stage. Evolution works through indirection: evolution created humans, humans created technology, humans are now working with increasingly advanced technology to create new generations of technology” (2005, p.45). As a result, he predicts a ‘Human–Machine Co-evolution’ happening.

Kurzweil foretells: “By the time of the Singularity, there will not be a distinction between humans and technology. This is not because humans will have become what we think of as machines today, but rather machines will have progressed to be like humans and beyond. Technology will be the metaphorical opposable thumb that enables our next step in evolution” (2005, p.36). Evolution is not a closed process. Kurzweil argues that the new intelligence that emerges from the singularity will still be human, even if it is not biological. He says that our civilisation is already a mix of humans and machines, and this future step is simply the next stage of our evolution.

In short, while Kurzweil’s idea of a technological singularity with its promise of huge technological progress and changes for

humanity has attracted a lot of interest, the actual impact of the problem is in fact uncertain. It is a thought-provoking concept which we cannot undervalue, but which should be instigating us to consider the long-term implications of technological development. Thus, it is important to approach the problem constructively and be critically predisposed to these predictions. Hence the need for philosophising. Philosophical inquiry can help us navigate these complex issues and make informed decisions about the future of artificial intelligence. It can provide a framework for ethical considerations in a responsible and beneficial way.

Floridi offers a pragmatic approach to thinking about this problem. His philosophical reflections on the singularity hypothesis are primarily through a critical analysis of the problem. His perspectives on the singularity discourse lead us to a more stable approach to the problem. Many people worry that advanced digital technology could lead to a dangerous ‘singularity’ that might threaten humanity. However, Floridi argues that AI is still very basic, and machines are just machines, despite extraordinary claims often made by the media for marketing. While these fears are overblown, he also warns that we should not become complacent. We need to remain aware of the real perils posed by technology (Floridi, 2022). Instead of fixating on improbable risks from super-intelligent AI, we need to address the real challenges of AI development. This will help us avoid costly and damaging mistakes in how we design and use these technologies.

Faith-Based Debate

Floridi argues that the singularity debate is fundamentally a matter of faith. He contends that analytic philosophy, despite its emphasis on precision, often tends to oversimplify complex issues by creating stark dichotomies. This tendency towards either/or thinking is evident in a range of philosophical de-



bates, such as internalism versus externalism and foundationalism versus coherentism. Although philosophy seems to be open to different ideas, it often gets stuck in a pattern of either/or thinking, forcing complex issues into two opposing choices. The current debate about AI shows this divide well. There are two main groups: those who believe we can create true AI, also known as artificial general intelligence (AGI), and those who do not (Floridi, 2022).

According to Floridi, people who believe in the singularity, called singularitarians, hold three core beliefs. The first is that we will likely create some kind of super-smart artificial intelligence in the future, a moment they call the technological singularity. They do not specify exactly what this superintelligence will be like or when it will arrive. Instead, they give timelines that are close enough to be a concern, but far enough away that they will not be proven wrong in their own lifetimes. The second dogma, says Floridi, is that humanity runs a major risk of being dominated by such ultraintelligence. Third, they regard that the primary responsibility of the current generation is to ensure that the singularity either does not happen or, if it does, that it is benign and will benefit humanity (2022). Floridi compares the singularity belief to 'Manichaeism', which sees the world in extreme terms of good versus evil. He views it as a belief system about human destiny that plays on people's fears and lack of knowledge. He also argues that widespread anxieties about technology's impact on jobs, crime, and politics, along with constant news about new tech and digital problems, act as a 'digital opiate'. This constant stream of information distracts us from focusing on other important issues. Floridi explains: "Like all faith-based views, singularitarianism is irrefutable because, in the end, it is unconstrained by reason and evidence. It is also implausible, since there is no reason to believe that anything resem-

bling intelligent (let alone ultraintelligent) machines will emerge from our current and foreseeable understanding of computer science and digital technologies" (2022, p.6).

Conceptual Vagueness

Floridi points out that the argument for the singularity is often made as a conditional statement: 'If' a superintelligence appears, 'then' we will be in serious trouble. He says this is a clever way to present the idea, because the conclusion logically follows from the condition, even if the initial premise (that a superintelligence will appear) is false. This makes the warning seem valid, even if the starting point is questionable. He explains: "At other times, singularitarianism relies on a very weak sense of possibility: some form of artificial ultraintelligence could develop, couldn't it? Yes, it could. But this 'could' is a mere logical possibility, that is, there is no contradiction in assuming the development of artificial ultraintelligence as far as we know" (2022, p.6).

Teapotism

Teapotism is a simple analogy used to explain a serious philosophical concept known as the 'burden of proof'. It is short for 'Russell's Teapot', an analogy created by the philosopher Bertrand Russell. Floridi argues that while some things are impossible, like a 'happily married bachelor', others are just highly unlikely, such as aliens secretly living among us. It is illogical to believe in something just because it cannot be proven false. Russell explained, it would be absurd to believe a tiny china teapot orbits the sun between Earth and Mars simply because no one can disprove it. Floridi says the singularity is a similar kind of belief, which he calls 'teapotism'. He claims that people who believe in the singularity are mixing faith with facts and are often driven by a genuine sense of urgency about a coming apocalypse. He sees artificial intelligence as a separation between a machine's ability to do something



well and the need for it to be truly intelligent to do it.

He argues that we will see machines become increasingly capable of performing more tasks, including some we do and some that are beyond our abilities. According to Floridi, for the first time ever, a machine's ability to act on its own has been permanently separated from the need for it to be intelligent. He believes this is a major and extraordinary development on its own, without having to believe in science fiction ideas (2022).

To disprove their point, Floridi alleges that singularitarians refer to Moore's law to highlight exponential growth of technology. He restates it for the sake of clarity. An initial phase of exponential growth does not guarantee its indefinite continuation. This period of rapid acceleration often gives way to a levelling-off as it approaches a saturation point or a natural limit, ultimately leading to a cessation of growth (2022).

Singularity is not the real threat. Floridi illuminates: "It is a rich-world preoccupation likely to worry people in wealthy societies who seem to forget the real evils oppressing humanity and our planet. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded doomsayers that we have tragic problems, both serious and pressing" (2022, p.10). The greatest existential crisis we face is climate change. It is inappropriate to dwell on hypothetical disasters when billions already lack necessities like clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, according to UNICEF/WHO reports. These real-world shortages pose a significant danger to humanity.

Conclusions

The concept of a technological singularity proposes a future point where technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, will fundamentally and irreversibly change human-

ity. Key proponents, like Raymond Kurzweil, argue this event is inevitable. Their argument rests on the 'law of accelerating returns', which speculates that technological advancements occur at an exponential rate, rather than a steady, linear pace. Kurzweil believes this rapid evolution will lead to a co-evolution of humans and machines, ultimately erasing the distinction between them and creating a superintelligence far beyond our own capabilities. However, the reality of a technological singularity remains a complex and debated issue. Luciano Floridi, a philosopher in the ethics of information, offers a critical perspective, questioning the core assumptions behind the singularity hypothesis. He characterises the singularitarian view as a 'faith-based' system, arguing that it is built on unproven dogmas and unfounded anxieties about future AI. Floridi believes that the focus on hypothetical, futuristic risks is a distraction from more immediate and tangible challenges. He proposes that technology should be understood not as an autonomous force, but as a social construct deeply entwined with society.

Floridi is also criticised because he dismisses the idea of singularity as a silly plot from science fiction. His argument is only valid because current AI is in a developing phase. Critics also feel that he avoids a serious debate and does not engage with the real idea as such. Nevertheless, Floridi's ideas provide a more measured perspective compared to Kurzweil's very hopeful predictions. Floridi encourages a more careful conversation about the singularity. He stresses the need to think clearly and develop technology responsibly. He argues for a practical approach that focuses on the real-world effects of artificial intelligence, insisting that we must make sure that technological progress is properly guided by human values and is beneficial for society in the long run.



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Revisiting Vivekananda's Syncretic Philosophy: Insights for a Harmonious Living

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 15/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

Abstract

In the twenty-first century, we are still facing the challenge of evolving strategies to repress interreligious tension and conflict, cultural homogenisation, and social fragmentation. Our country has witnessed a resurgence of religious fundamentalism. In such a scenario, Vivekananda's syncretism acquires renewed relevance. His philosophical framework integrates elements from various spiritual traditions, and his syncretic approach emphasises the universal principles underlying different faiths and diverse cultures, thereby promoting a holistic understanding of the human experience. It would be fruitful to consider the interreligious harmony he suggested and evaluate how far it can be utilised to promote better understanding among different religious communities and foster cultural integration. The concept of syncretism, as extolled by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, offers valuable insights and approaches to address the challenges our society now faces.

Keywords: Syncretism, Theory and Praxis, Secular and Spiritual, Tradition and Modernity

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda, a strong advocate of syncretism, embraced in his thought different philosophical, cultural, and religious traditions that serve as a guide to cohesive social living. Syncretism is the practice of combining different beliefs and various schools of thought. It can be described by the Sanskrit term *Samanvaya* derived from *sama* which carries meanings such as sameness, impartiality, justice, equilibrium, universality, and social concord. In the context of religious and cultural studies, syncretism refers to the blending or integration of elements from different traditions into a new, coherent framework. Rather than erasing distinctions, syncretism often seeks to harmonise diverse practices and beliefs, allowing them to coexist within a shared vision. As

DeMarinis (2020) explains, in contemporary scholarship, syncretism is understood as “a mixing of elements from different religious systems or traditions,” which can serve as a positive process of acculturation and integration, enabling new forms of social and spiritual expression. This definition provides a useful lens for understanding Vivekananda's approach, where Advaitic unity did not negate diversity but sought to transform it into consonance.

Aldous Huxley in his work ‘Ends and Means’ states that the contradiction between good and evil is an illusion created by our limited perspectives and cultural conditions (Huxley, 1957). He believed that good and evil are ultimately interconnected and inseparable, like the poles of a magnet. This idea



is reflected in his concept of the ‘perennial philosophy’ which emphasises the unity and interconnectedness of all things. Joseph Needham a well-known British biochemist, sought to syncretise spirituality, science, and socialism. His concept of organicism is a holistic approach that views the natural world as an interconnected organic whole (Davies, 1990). The twentieth-century notions of Needham and Huxley were implicit in the earlier teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. For Vivekananda, syncretism does not mean the eradication of diversity or individuality. Instead, what he sought to eliminate was dissonance or discord, not consonance (Vivekananda, 2003, Vol.4). A melody is composed of carefully selected diverse notes, not the loss of diversity, leading to a single note of uniform frequency. Vivekananda’s philosophy is like a symphony: it eliminates dissonance, without producing dull monolithic uniformity. His syncretism can be distinguished from eclecticism, where elements of different traditions are cherry-picked without regard for their original context or meaning. He attempted to provide a link between high idealism and intense practicality, the spiritual and the secular, tradition and modernity. He syncretised the dichotomies between eastern and western ideals, non-dualism and dualism, spiritual knowledge and scientific knowledge, the sacred and the secular, renunciation and action, knowledge and devotion. Thus, syncretism and integration form the prevailing themes of Vivekananda’s philosophy and religion. This allowed him to adapt and incorporate elements from various traditions, making his teachings more inclusive and accessible to a broader audience.

The conflicts and confusions we see in social and religious spheres are mainly due to the differences in thought, vision, and perspective. Vivekananda held that “unity in variety is the plan of all creations” (Vivekananda, 2003, Vol.1). According to him, the evolution of society is possible only through di-

versity (Dasgupta, 1994). As Dutta notes, “Vivekananda’s syncretism, rooted in Advaita Vedanta, does not erase diversity, but seeks to eliminate dissonance. His approach harmonizes differences while affirming individuality.” (Dutta, 2025). For him, diversity is not false by nature; however it becomes false when divorced from unity, which is the central truth. In this regard, one recalls a verse from the Isavasyopanishad, which states: “those who are devoted entirely to the principle of diversity and ignore the underlying unity enter a blind darkness of ignorance. But those who are devoted entirely to the principle of indiscriminate unity, ignoring multiplicity, enter a greater darkness, because such unity is reduced to blank identity or void” (Radhakrishnan, n.d., pp. 18–19). In his opinion even though essentially the same, no men and women in any society are of the same mind or capacity to act.

Not only in religious sphere but also in social sphere, he realised that differences cannot be destroyed for all time. If we attempt to eliminate all differences, new ones will perpetually emerge. If a particular sect or theory is abolished, another will inevitably arise. To add a new cult to the existing list is to multiply the causes of human division and, consequently, human strife in society. Hence, Vivekananda argued that society could not be improved by removing all differences and diversities, but rather by syncretising them in an effective manner.

Integrating the Principle of Socio-spiritualism

Vivekananda’s philosophy is not a mere agglomeration of views and conceptions unconnected with life. He made Vedanta both an understanding and a method of solving the diverse problems of life and existence. High idealism and intense practicality are syncretised in his thought. His Vedantic interpretation- that there is no ultimate difference between human beings- promotes the fostering of a humanistic and peaceful social life. It states that the same omnipresent, om-



niscient soul resides in every person (Burke, 1986). This principle of socio-spiritualism in Vivekananda's neo-Vedanta creates a sense of spiritual oneness that leads to social commitments. For him, service was not merely an act of charity but the worship of the living God present in every being. This practical Vedanta transformed humanitarian ideals into a spiritual discipline, thereby bridging the gap between metaphysical truth and social praxis. In philosophical terms, Indian life-world is characterised not only by transcendental spirituality but also by its grounding in social action, where cognitive and ethical performances are shaped by the recognition of divinity in human relations. It recognises the dignity of humanity, and this understanding leads to a further appreciation of humanitarianism in a divine dimension. Here, he syncretised humanitarianism with humanism. This service-oriented spirituality can create positive social change, improving the lives of individuals and communities. Spirituality, in his view, must remain strongly proactive and this-worldly. His maxim, "First bread, then religion", emphasises that all human beings must be ensured minimal economic security in order to ensure spiritual goals (Parameswaran, 1987). Instead of advocating plain materialism or religious materialism (spirituality confined to mere sacerdotal elements), he suggested a moderated materialism. Material values gained on the basis of spiritual righteousness, he argued, would direct humanity towards an elevated life. Here he emphasised the need for moderation and balance between material and spiritual pursuits. His assurance that "we shall be nearer to God through football than through the study of the Gita" reminds us of the famous Kathopanisad dictum: "*Nayam atma bala-hinena labhyo*" (Sivaramakrishna & Roy, 1993). This highlights the importance he placed on physical fitness alongside mental and spiritual development. Yet, he cautioned against stagnation at the level of mere organic pleasure and satisfaction (Ranganathanan-

da, 2005). The triple ends of Righteousness, Wealth, and Pleasure are viewed as the social manifestations of the three aspects of human consciousness—thought, action, and desire. If these basic urges are unwarrantedly suppressed, the result will be restlessness in the individual and conflict in society.

Fostering Inclusivity and Diversity of Religions

Vivekananda's syncretic vision, grounded in Advaita Vedanta, emphasises harmony among religions rather than uniformity. At the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he declared, "We must not only tolerate other religions, but positively embrace them, and look upon them as our own" (Vivekananda, 2003, Vol.2). There, he did not present Vedanta as an isolated system but as a philosophy capable of embracing Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and modern rationalism. His message was that distinctiveness is not lost when traditions meet; rather, each shines more brightly when seen in relation to others. In this context, syncretism is not a dilution of doctrine but a creative expansion of truth—a way to keep religion alive, responsive, and socially transformative. His statement anticipates contemporary interfaith dialogue by affirming that pluralism is not mere coexistence but active embrace.

Vivekananda emphasised that religion is determined not by birth but by a person's inner inclinations and choices. Thus, while individualising religion, he also universalised it. He rejected sectarianism and religion confined to theories or rituals, insisting that religion is a matter of being and becoming, not merely of believing. His observation that "it is good to be born in a church, but it is not necessary to die there" reflects this stance (Vivekananda, 2003, Vol.1). At the World's Parliament of Religions he declared: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught both tolerance and Universal acceptance. We believe not only in Universal toleration, but we also accept all religions as



true” (Prasad, 1995). His approach was one of integration, absorption, not resistance or conflict; striving for a universal ideology and a higher level of syncretisation. By attributing equal validity to all religions, he held that no one religion has the monopoly on truth (Brill, 2019).

Vivekananda pointed out that every religion reveals the same truth in different ways.

As Vedic literature affirms, St. Paul expressed the same idea when he wrote, “know you that you are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwells in you”. Islam conveys a similar message, declaring that God is nearer to man than his own jugular vein. Ignorance of both one’s own religion and others breeds sectarian orthodoxy and fundamentalism, leading to hatred and violence. To explain the nature of true religion, Vivekananda sought the common base among traditions. Yet unity in religious truth does not mean uniformity of faiths. His syncretism was distinct from Emperor Akbar’s Din-i-Ilahi, which submerged individual traditions into a single synthesis.

Vivekananda advocated *sarvadharmā samānvaya* – the syncretism of all religions – rather than mere tolerance, to free society from fanaticism. Like his guru, he saw God in his illimitable unity expressed through infinite variety. “The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth”. (Vivekananda, 2003, Vol.1). He said that one should not condemn any method practiced with genuine belief, but remain true to one’s own attitude without disparaging others (Saradananda, 1979).

His holistic approach for spiritual realisation also values the diverse human tendencies and personalities, rather than forcing everyone into a particular mould. Each person has unique strengths, weaknesses, and inclina-

tions. Those who are intellectually inclined, those who are emotional and devotional, those with dynamic personalities, and those who are focused on meditation and psychic control can choose their respective paths. This comprehensive approach ensures that everyone – whether rationalist, devotee or even atheist – could find a path that resonated with them, thereby fostering inclusivity and harmony.

Vivekananda’s Vedantic pluralism as a framework for addressing modern challenges of religious intolerance and cultural divides, situating his vision within global discourses on inclusivity and interreligious harmony (Khan, 2022). By integrating these perspectives, his thought continues to resonate in twenty-first-century debates on pluralism and interfaith engagement.

Integrating Modern Ideals along with the Traditional

Vivekananda accepted and assimilated various cultures and faiths that were unfamiliar to him, without deviating from his traditional base of spirituality. His syncretic approach emphasised the integration of different spiritual, cultural, and intellectual traditions from both East and West to promote a holistic and inclusive approach to learning (Vivekananda, 2003, Vol.4). He sought to apply the social ethos, organisational methods, and managerial techniques of the West in his own country. Recognising that the weaker sections of society should be given additional opportunities to develop their innate faculties, he embraced the modern principle of equity of opportunity (Mohapatra, 1996). His association with the Western scientific approach also influenced his views on the benefits of interreligious and inter-caste marriages, as well as his discouragement of intra-cousin marriages prevalent at the time. He observed that in some respects, the spirit of Vedanta was more manifest in the West. One such theme was the attitude of the faith in oneself, which he found particular-



ly evident in Western life. Appreciating the ability of Western societies to work together towards common goals, he noted that while these goals were often material, the capacity to set aside differences and collaborate required a degree of self-transcendence (Sen, 2003).

His thought embraced cosmopolitan theories of humanism, egalitarianism, equity, and democratic values, alongside high spiritual ideals. His project of re-sacralising Indian society was based on a rational understanding of religion, influenced by the European Enlightenment and the empiricism of modern European natural science. Upon closer inspection, however, the religious pluralism propagated from this foundation and the concomitant recognition of other religions turn out to be an inclusivist vision prepared out of a sense of Advaita Oneness (Brill, 2019). As a man of enculturation, he believed that the good- whether from the past or present, or from any culture-should be accepted and assimilated. The result was a traditional-oriented reform Hinduism that claimed to be a universal religion while simultaneously promoting Indian nationalism.

Conclusion

Individuals or nations or races must necessarily have certain roots grounded in their traditions. Just as roots need fresh air and

sunlight to remain healthy and thrive, our cultural, spiritual, and personal roots also require nourishment and exposure to new ideas and experiences to stay vibrant and relevant. In the spirit of Vivekananda's syncretism, we understand that no individual or nation can progress in isolation; rather, one must share its unique treasures with others and, in turn, receive what others offer. This exchange mirrors the need for roots to draw nourishment from the soil while also receiving sunlight, urging a balance between respect for tradition and adaptive evolution in response to changing circumstances.

Thus, Vivekananda's syncretic vision inspires a harmonious blend of rooted identity and open-minded growth for sustained progress. He firmly held syncretism as both the goal and the path, with knowledge – spiritual and secular – striving as a beacon light illuminating both. The current communal tension in our society can be addressed through initiatives such as interfaith dialogue programmes, cultural exchange events, education campaigns, and efforts to foster mutual respect. Interreligious harmony, the application of Vedantic spirituality to grassroots socialism, the ethical application of science, and his opposition to anti-syncretic forces such as dogmatism, exclusivism, despotism, and cultural insularity highlight his all-inclusive vision.

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Body, Gender, and Freedom in Merleau-Ponty, Iris Marion Young, and Holly Lawford-Smith: A Critical Analysis

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Received : 13/08/2025

Revised : 07/12/2025

Accepted : 11/12/2025

Abstract

The article analyses Merleau-Ponty, Holly Lawford-Smith, and Iris Marion Young's concepts of body, gender, and freedom. Merleau-Ponty's idea of the lived body suggests that identity is shaped through our embodied experiences. In philosophy and phenomenology, the term 'lived body' refers to the body as it is experienced firsthand, not just as a biological or physical entity but also as the focal point of perception, action, and experience. In other words, the lived body is how you feel and experience your own body from inside, including sensations, movements, emotions, and how you relate to the world through your body. From birth, bodies are assigned a gender based on sex, which brings social expectations and limitations. On the other hand, Lawford-Smith sees gender as a social category built on sex. However, she believes self-ID policies can undermine women's sex-based rights. Lawford-Smith is concerned with the freedom and safety of women as a group, and critiques what she sees as the erosion of boundaries between male and female bodies. Iris Marion Young, in her 1980 article 'Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality', criticised Merleau-Ponty and Smith's arguments and shows how women internalise bodily limits due to gender norms. Gender norms restrict their movements and limit their space. This means that freedom is not just mental, but the body constitutes it. Thus, the article is a critique of the ideas regarding gender, body, and freedom of Merleau-Ponty and Lawford-Smith. Towards the end, the article evolves as a justification of Young's claims on gender, body, and freedom with supporting arguments.

Keywords: Body, Gender, Freedom, Embodiment, Other, Oppression, Domination

Introduction

Gender studies critically examine how gender shapes individual identity, social roles, and power structures. Nowadays, gender is being discussed differently from the time when the traditional gender binary (male and female) was being discussed. Gender does not just denote two identities. Today, the discussion about gender has evolved to include non-binary, transgender, and queer genders, and their impact on society. The patriarchal system followed by society continues to be a structural injustice. This injustice affects the

body and freedom. It is true in all aspects of society, including education, the workplace, healthcare, law, politics, and so on. There are two aspects to this injustice. One is the domination of gender, and the other is the oppression of gender. Thus, gender studies aim to empower social transformation. It seeks to promote gender justice, bodily autonomy, sexual rights, equality, and freedom.

Merleau-Ponty's freedom of gender is seen as bodily autonomy. His ideas are not just about a particular gender. A universal human



body is described as a model to describe the notions of embodied gender. Here, embodied gender means the idea that gender is not just a social label or a set of biological features, but something lived and experienced through the body. But Lawford Smith sees this bodily anatomy from a social perspective and explains it from the standpoint of social dominance and social oppression (dominance of others and oppression of others). Young describes these arguments in a new way. This bodily autonomy transcends mere social conventions. A person's thoughts and feelings are also important for gender. Oppression and dominance are within a person. This is what is called self-dominance and self-oppression. Self-oppression denotes the phenomenon when individuals internalise detrimental beliefs, stereotypes, or expectations imposed by society or external influences, subsequently directing such constraining beliefs inwardly. It frequently entails embracing or imposing limitations on oneself that correspond with societal oppression, such as questioning one's own value, capabilities, or entitlements due to internalised discrimination or marginalisation. A person may restrict their potential by internalising societal messages that suggest they are less competent owing to their gender, race, or heritage. Self-domination means that entails exercising control or authority over oneself in a manner that may be constrictive or detrimental. It may involve stringent self-discipline, self-control bordering on repression, or an excessive suppression of one's wants, feelings, or actions, frequently to adhere to external expectations or standards. Self-discipline may be associated with a quest for order, perfectionism, or rigid rule adherence; nevertheless, it can also result in self-neglect or psychological distress.

Gender, freedom, and the body are interconnected. The body is where gender is lived, where freedom is felt or denied, and where the power of self operates. Thus, the freedom

is embodied. Embodied freedom refers to the experience or state of being free that is strongly tied to and represented via the body. It emphasises the combination of physical presence, bodily awareness, and movement as crucial to genuinely feeling and living freedom—rather than freedom being just a mental or abstract concept. Here, the problem is this: How does Iris Marion Young's phenomenological analysis of gendered embodiment, influenced by Merleau-Ponty's theory of the lived body, offer a superior ground for comprehending women's freedom compared to the sex-based political categories suggested by Holly Lawford-Smith?

This article contends that although Merleau-Ponty and Lawford-Smith accurately emphasise embodied and social limitations, Iris Marion Young's perspective more effectively elucidates how internalised bodily comportment influences freedom; it is better to contextualise Young's assertion and propose conceptual enhancements and methodological suggestions for integrating phenomenological description with empirical research.

Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Embodied Gender: A Critique of Bodily Autonomy

Normally, gender cannot be seen only from the point of view of a set of external dominations. External domination denotes the imposition of unequal authority on individuals based on their gender by social, cultural, political, and economic structures beyond the individual. The domination is external, originating from institutions and societal processes rather than solely from individual views.

The body also has a leading role in the formation of gender. Hence, the study of gender has no meaning without the body. We should consider the body as an internal factor for further analysis. The 20th-century French thinker Maurice Merleau-Ponty tried to look



at gender from an embodied perspective. Even though he does not say anything directly about gender in his work, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1974), many of his ideas are tied to the topic of gender. The chapter 'The Body in Its Sexual Being' of *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 1974) is very much related to the concept of gender. While placing gender under domination, Merleau-Ponty tries to see the subjective nature of gender in contrast to it. Moreover, he advocates the importance of the body in determining gender.

In *Merleau-Ponty on the Sexed Body* (2020), Gavin Rae explains how phenomenology views sexuality and gender. In his introduction, he points out that Husserl has not done much research on gender or sexuality. Heidegger saw sexuality and gender as existential problems. In contrast, French thinkers such as Sartre, Levinas, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty saw gender as a philosophical issue (Rae, 2020, p.162–163). In the chapter on the 'Body in Its Sexual Being,' Merleau-Ponty sees sexuality as a pre-reflective, bodily experience. His concept of bodily schema is an example of his idea that sexuality is not fixed, not biological, and not social. It is a fluid bodily experience shaped by interaction with the world (Rae, 2020, p.162–183). So, what Merleau-Ponty has to say about gender is the same as what he has to say about sexuality.

According to Merleau-Ponty, gender is the lived experience. The body serves as both an objective and subjective site. This subjective site of the body with which we are engaged with the world. In a way, gender is also its experience and expression. Gender is not an abstract entity. It is a living and physical reality. It gives rise to perception, desire, meaning, and so on, which are made possible by the intuition. That is why it gives rise to the gendered desire for gestures and responses of femininity and masculinity. It is rooted in the body (Rae, 2020, p.162–183). Therefore,

gender experience cannot be considered solely as an intervention and domination of external factors.

Thus, the embodied perspective of gender creates the constitutive identity. A constitutive identity means that the identity is created by more than one inherent motivations. It is the shared combination of both subjective (body and its subjective factors like thought, feeling, perception) and intersubjective motives (social factors like its norms, heritage) that creates identity. Moreover, gender identity is formed by bodily intentionality. Bodily intentionality is the awareness of the body. Whether the embodiment is absent or negated, the gender is not negated. In addition, aspects such as body feeling, knowing, and engaging reinforce the concept of embodied gender.

However, the fact that it is not only the body that causes gender formation can be read from Merleau-Ponty's ideas. Culture, languages, and social norms are the other dimensions that go along with it. That is why bodily responses are not gender. It is already an expression, which means, gender is the output of expressions that come from the inputs of culture, languages, and social norms. So, this is a symbolic in nature. This symbolic criterion represents language, culture, and social norms (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.178–182).

Merleau-Ponty on Body and Freedom

As mentioned earlier, gender and identity are imposed on us as well as constituted by others. So, the external and internal freedom of gender is also determined by others. External freedom relates to the outside of the body or the world of others (society). But internal freedom is related to the inside of a person's body. In external freedom, for instance, identity expression is dictated by others; society, rather than an individual's free will, is largely responsible for forcing identity on us. Meaning, perception, and



thinking are all derived from internal freedom. It is under the body's control. The body can perform these things at will. External factors, such as religious customs and social conventions, might also influence it at times. Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1974) describes freedom in two aspects. First is body limits freedom, and the second is body does not limit freedom (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.504).

In the first place, it tries to examine the idea of a body that includes freedom. In the sense that freedom is determined by something external to the individual. Because of this, the body restricts one's freedom. Merleau-Ponty describes it as follows: "It is also true that this option is itself a form of constraint: if I am ugly, I have a choice between being an object of disapproval or disapproving of others. I am left free to be a masochist or a sadist, but not free to ignore others.... When it comes to gender, we have the choice to accept or not accept the interference and imposition of others. But there is no freedom to ignore others. Here, it is necessary to look at the other factors, which are social, cultural, linguistic, and historical. Although ugly is combined with body, the choice and the body are mine. I am aware of this because of my own body. But I cannot ignore other people's choices. On the other hand, if I have freedom, it is determined by others" (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, pp. 504–505).

Moreover, "Even if existence as a human being were imposed upon me, the manner alone being left to my choice... it would still be a free choice" (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.506). While being embodied is not optional, the body does not limit freedom. It means that there is no control over external factors to restrict the freedom of the body. "Consciousness can never objectify itself into valid consciousness or cripple Consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.504). Physical disability does not define freedom; it belongs to the freedom of one's own body. "They are the

price which we automatically pay for being in the world, a formality which we take for granted" (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.505). The body limits the conditions of existence. But it does not restrict freedom. "There is ultimately nothing that sets limits to freedom except those limits that freedom itself has set" (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.507). We have an existential freedom. But it is limited. This limitation is based on our choice. It is hard to say what the external factor is. That is, the limitation of our freedom depends on our choice also (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.505–507).

Gender as an Oppression: Holly Lawford-Smith

Thus, Merleau-Ponty shows us that gender is in oppression because of the domination of others. So, the embodied gender is in trouble. Lawford-Smith begins to rethink two deterministic theories of gender. According to biological deterministic theory, "the gender of a person is the identification of a person based on biological differences" (Lawford-Smith, 2021, p. 47). On the other hand, social deterministic theory argues that the gender of a person is the identification of a person that is traditionally followed in society" (Lawford-Smith, 2021, p.47). She argues against these two major theories in this way: "What is gender is an important question. Some people define gender in this way: the gender of a person is the identification of a person based on biological differences and ideas that are traditionally followed in society." It is categorised as either male or female, or transgender. The terms male, female, and transgender are all "standard scientific terms for biological sex" (Lawford-Smith, 2021, p.47).

This concept implies two things. One is the biological aspects of gender, and the other is the social aspects of gender. In other words, the definition of gender is based on the concepts and biological differences that have been traditionally followed in our society. Consequently, these two factors dom-



inate in imposing the gender identification of a person. In this way, it not only oppresses freedom of gender but also controls the bodily autonomy of embodied gender. So, she rethinks that the various terms that we use to represent gender, such as male, female, transgender, and son on are standard scientific terms for biological sex (Lawford-Smith, 2021, p.47). Here, the problem is how much a word can explain the subjective experience of gender.

In Lawford-Smith's seminal work, *Gender-Critical Feminism* (2021), she rejects all these arguments in the *Gender-Critical Feminism* chapter on 'the Social Setting of Gender' (Lawford-Smith, 2021, p.47). According to her, in one way or another, sex refers to an oppression. It could be either because of the difference in physical strength or because of the reproductive capacity. Either way, it shows the oppression (Lawford-Smith, 2021, p.47). So, in a way, this oppression of sex also becomes an oppression of gender. Even today, this oppression remains a silent feature in us and our society.

From Locke's point of view, the human mind is tabula rasa, a clear slate (Locke, 1975, p.104). All gender experiences are done through input into the mind. But this experience is more of a social imposition than a purely personal one. For example, from the birth of a child, he/she unknowingly imposes a gender determined by a socially constructed biological sex. Therefore, it understands to accept the gender that determines its physical difference and thus transforms the thought and body.

The subjectivity of experience is given more importance than the subjectivity of gender. So, this, in a way, questions the very existence of subjectivity. It is the domination of others over one's subjectivity. An individual needs to design their subjective experience from within the other that determines this dominance in our society.

So, the subjectivity of gender becomes a fundamental issue here. Because this domination of the other or domination of the subjectivity of the other is what becomes the subjectivity of gender of a person. Therefore, the subjectivity of gender must be considered as duplication or impersonation of the other. And this dominance does not only come from social norms. Other factors, such as religious, political, linguistic, cultural, and historical, are also a part of this domination. Domination determines the freedom of a person's body, gender, and freedom of gender. This is the tradition of our society that we follow. When we say gender is in oppression because of the dominance of others, we must think whether the body, which is a factor of a person, has any role in this process. One should also analyse whether only these kinds of external factors determine gender and its freedom.

Erwin Straus Experimental Proof for Merleau-Ponty and Holly Lawford-Smith's Body, Gender, and Freedom

In the context of the interaction between Merleau-Ponty's and Lawford-Smith's theories of the body and freedom, the ideas of Erwin Walter Maximilian Straus, a German-American phenomenologist and neurologist, represent a practical aspect of the debate. While explaining Merleau-Ponty from a common point of view, and Lawford-Smith from a traditional binary gender view, Straus valued it from a particular angle but today this views is applicable for all genders including LGBTQ+s for attaining their embodied freedom. He practically applies his ideas to two binary genders, male and female. The dominance of one gender over another is the same as the role of the other in gender. The best example of this is the masculine and feminine gender difference. In another way, this experiment shows the dominance of the masculine gender over the feminine gender. That is, it is often one gender that opposes the domination of another gender, limits the



body, and restricts freedom. But it should be rethinking how far this view succeeded for gaining freedom from all kinds of oppression and domination.

As mentioned earlier, sex and gender are closely related. The body is central to both. That is why he differentiates the feminine body and the masculine body rather than anything. The female body is full of limitations. Straus wrote in his book *Phenomenological Psychology* (1966): “the remarkable difference is the manner of throwing of the Sexes” (Straus, 1966, p. 157). Here, the two sexes are male and female. Let us take a look at Straus’s experiment for analysis.

“A boy and a girl play ball. The space, force, acceleration, velocity, etc. that they use in this activity will be different. The girl of five does not make any use of lateral space. She does not stretch her arm sideward; she does not twist her trunk; she does not move her legs, which remain side by side. All she does in preparation for throwing is to lift her right arm forward to the horizontal and to bend the forearm backward in a pronated position. The ball is released without force, speed, or accurate aim. A boy of the same age, when preparing to throw, stretches his right arm sideward and backward; supinates the forearm; twists, turns, and bends his trunk; and moves his right foot backward. From this stance, he can support his throwing with almost the full strength of his total momentum. The ball leaves the hand with considerable acceleration; it moves towards its goal in a long flat curve” (Straus, 1966, p. 157–158).

This is a significant difference in his thinking. “This remarkable difference is called the manifestation of biological or not an acquired difference” (Straus, 1966, p. 156). That is why the remarkable gender difference is biological. In her essay ‘Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality’ (1980), Young explains it this way: Straus explains the difference in style of throwing

by referring to a ‘feminine attitude’ about the world and to space. The difference for him is biologically based, but he denies that it is specifically anatomical. Girls throw in a way different from boys because girls are ‘feminine’ (Young, 1980, p. 138).

Straus establishes this difference as biological or anatomical because the feminine body has limitations compared to the masculine body. That is, there is this difference in Strauss’s thinking from the girl’s point of view. But this cannot be felt biologically because of the norms and perspectives that exist in society. It is embedded in everyone’s body without any gender difference. That is why this so-called biological difference seems natural. Even if it is not anatomical, it cannot be seen as a physical disability or bodily limitation. In addition, Iris Marion Young proves that neither arm strength nor shoulder width limits the body. In another way, Straus is trying to show the feminine body with limitations from his masculine and patriarchal attitude. But still, he supports and proves that Merleau-Ponty and Lawford-Smith’s argument of domination determines the freedom of a person’s body, gender, and the freedom of that gender. Here, the only difference is that this domination is in us. The other is embedded in everyone’s body without any gender difference.

Rethinking Self in Oppression: Iris Marion Young

Iris Marion Young’s article ‘Throwing like a girl: A phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality’ places a lot of emphasis on the gender difference in the bordering of this gender movement. She justifies her arguments by explaining how women and men face the physical task. And in Young’s view, gender difference is not biological. It depends on social and cultural factors. It also points out that the activity of throwing like a girl is a medium that causes a lack of confidence and limits the freedom of the body. Thus, the body becomes a



limitation of freedom according to so-called patriarchal attitude thinkers (Young, 1980, p. 137–142).

Young discusses the gender difference very authoritatively in the first part of her article. They attribute the difference in throwing technique to Straus's observation that boys engage their whole body when throwing. But girls cannot engage their whole body in the action of throwing. In the subsequent conversation, they examine how women experience their bodies (Young, 1980, p. 142).

The reason for this difference is the body composition of women. This limited engagement of the whole body is not limited to the action of throwing. This is true in their daily lives. For example, when a woman is sitting, she must keep her legs close together, arms crossed, and so on. But a man is more receptive to expansive and open postures. This freedom is given to the masculine gender by society. A woman's body is intrinsically linked to her autonomy within a patriarchal society and the dominant masculine gender hierarchy. That is why her body needs to be watched, and she is ready to accept the restrained inward-focused movement (Young, 1980, p. 142–144).

The main reason for the restrained inward-focused movement is cultural conditioning and spatial limitation. The things that caused this restrained inward focused movement are not innate. They are socially conditioned. There are frequently invisible barriers that surround women. Women are also not interested in getting rid of those invisible barriers, as they do not dare to come out. And if these invisible barriers are included in the category of spatial limitation, it is this imaginary spatial limitation that limits the woman and her freedom (Young, 1980, p. 142–144).

Fragmentation of movement is another reason for this. In women's body movement, they cannot use the whole body for physical tasks. Instead, they are forced to per-

form physical tasks only on some isolated parts. So, it is significant that it leads to inefficiency and less powerful engagement (Young, 1980, p. 142–144). The fragmentation of movement is the reason for their bodily limitation with timidity and self-consciousness. There is no doubt that many women in society do physical tasks with timidity. This position is double-edged. There are two main reasons for this: one is a lack of trust in one's own body, and the second is the fear of getting hurt. The result is a cautious and tentative behaviour. And they are always self-conscious about this double-edged hesitation (Young, 1980, p. 142–144). Thus, it is a kind of self-dominance and self-oppression.

In addition, self-perception has an important role in women's body limitations (self-oppression). Women's perceptions affect their body movements. Women do not want to see their bodies as a transparent medium that interacts with the world. Instead, the body is seen as an object of attention and scrutiny (Young, 1980, p. 142–144). The most important thing is social expectation and the feminine ideal. The reason behind the physical constraints of most women is social expectations and gender norms. Women themselves fear that if they become overly physical contributors, society will never see them as strong, but as aggressive and unfeminine (Young, 1980, p. 142–144).

However, there are a few things that Young points out. Each of the factors mentioned above is a cause of limitation of a woman's body and freedom. First, these are not universal to all women. Second, these differences are not only social but also biological differences, and are acknowledged. Then, the lack of experience and the changing social norms (Young, 1980, p. 142–144).

As Lawford-Smith says, there is a gender difference. Young proves that this gap leads to gender discrimination and inequality. When each of the main reasons is pointed out, they apply to each oppressed gender.



Each oppressed gender tries to win back its freedom. We need courage and confidence for this. We should throw all kinds of imaginary spatial limitations and invisible barriers. We should get rid of all kinds of self-dominance and self-oppression (mentioned above, each reason for oppression). In other words, above-mentioned reasons are the cause for self-oppression. When they are dominating in us, we become marginalised and silenced. This self-oppression should be eradicated from all marginalised genders to attain freedom.

Conclusion

Analysis of Merleau-Ponty, Holly Lawford-Smith, and Iris Marion Young's concepts of bodily gender and freedom reveals that gender constitutes an individual's identification, which is imposed by external forces. Hence, the gender is imposed as well as constituted in nature. The body and personal freedom remain stationary here. Merleau-Ponty's assertion underscores that gender constitutes a lived experience. The analysis of bodily gender freedom reveals the influence and control of external variables. The symbolic structure of language, together with cultural and social standards, is regarded as an external element. The discussion elucidates the intricate link between subjective experience and the subjugation of others in shaping subjectivity.

Furthermore, this elucidated our comprehension that the symbolic structure governs both internal and external liberty. The issue pertains to our existential freedom. If our existential freedom is governed by the symbolic structures, what implications does this have for our existence and authenticity? This analysis identifies a fundamental existential issue rather than a phenomenological one. Young also tries to explain all of these things.

Straus concludes that the gender disparity is attributable to anatomical differences. Si-

multaneously, he adopted the symbolic notion of the other. It is reasonable to consider that these differences are primarily biological. However, he overlooked that several symbolic frames are inherently integrated within him. Consequently, he perceives his perspective on gender differences as inherent and binary. But today it is impossible to reduce it in binary circle. It should be go beyond after all other LGBTQ+ genders. His views have a wide criticism from this angle. In this perspective, Young succeeded. Because it is clear that she points out not just a particular gender female, but refers to all weak genders including in LGBTQ+.

Thus, the primary cause of subjugation and oppression is the self. Young explicitly identifies the primary factors contributing to oppression as physical composition, cultural circumstances, geographical constraints, movement fragmentation, timidity and self-consciousness, self-perception, social expectations, among others. Thus, an individual's self-control is employed to exert oppression. Consequently, these forms of dominance and oppression are manifestations of self-dominance and self-oppression that rely on the individual rather than external factors. These are the factors also affecting today LGBTQ+ genders. They fear everybody and everything in the society. They have not enough self-courage to face them and overcome them.

However, Merleau-Ponty and Lawford-Smith prioritise entities external to the self. They neglect the concept of self itself. However, throughout their ideology, they endeavour to sustain a balance between the other and the self. Young has succeeded in maintaining this position. She realised that the external imposition was forceful; however, self-imposition is far superior to external coercion. The fundamental issue is the self. Consequently, the issue of body, gender, and freedom is the existential dilemma of the self.



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The Machinic Gaze: The Matrix as a Representation of Lacanian Orders

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Received: 25/08/2025

Revised: 03/12/2025

Accepted: 11/12/2025

Abstract

The article is an attempt to analyse the film The Matrix and to investigate how the machinic gaze influences individuals' perception of reality. Gaze theory is both the act of looking and the act of being looked at. Although in contemporary society, gaze theory is mostly employed to study the objectification of women depicted in films, this article aims to illustrate The Matrix film as a representation of Lacan's three orders: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. It examines how individuals misidentify themselves through the mirror of reality in the imaginary, assess the characters' navigation through the symbolic order, and ultimately address the protagonist Neo's realisation of reality.

Keywords: Gaze theory, Machinic gaze, Lacanian orders.

Introduction

How we look at the movie's characters and perceive the ideas through them is often a debatable question. As in the case of poems and novels, there are several possibilities to interpret a movie, ranging from the viewer's interpretations of the movie to what the film-maker intends the viewers to interpret. In the Hollywood movie *The Wolf of Wall Street*, released in 2013, Jordan Belfort's second wife, Naomi, is valued for her appearance. A similar case can be found in the Gujarati movie *Hellaro*, which gained attention when it won the National Film Award for the Best Feature Film. Both the movies portray women in a sexual manner. In these scenarios, we can employ the gaze theory introduced by Laura Mulvey in her essay titled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). *Hellaro* and *The Wolf of Wall Street* depict women as objects in order to meet the sexual fantasies of heterosexual men and to reinforce patriarchal ideals. Laura Mulvey asserts that the film provides various forms of

pleasure, one of which is scopophilia, where the act of looking itself becomes pleasurable (Mulvey, 1975). Conversely, there is also enjoyment in being observed. Furthermore, she contends that male protagonists in films are depicted as perfect, complete, and powerful ideal egos (Mulvey, 1975). The dynamics of camera and technology are also crucial in film editing and production.

The concept of gaze is first introduced in the eleventh book of Jacques Lacan, titled *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, originally published in French as *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. However, Laura Mulvey is regarded as the originator of male gaze theory, as she was the first to apply Lacanian psychoanalytical concepts of gaze to critically examine the patriarchal norms depicted in cinema, while Lacan employs gaze theory as a fundamental aspect of self-perception (Lacan, 1978).



Methodology

This study adopts both psychoanalytic and phenomenological methodologies. It is said to be phenomenological because it examines the lived experience of the filmic text, focusing on the intentional structures of consciousness as manifested in the movie scenes, dialogues and symbolic motifs. This outlook can be seen in the Neo's perception of the red pill as a phenomenological epiphany that reveals the real world behind the simulated matrix. Likewise, the study integrates a psychoanalytic outlook to uncover unconscious desires, depressed anxieties and symbolic meanings which are embedded in the narrative, drawing on Freudian concepts such as the 'return of the repressed' evident when Neo confronts the mirror scene that exposes his split subjectivity. The blue and red pill sequence is chosen for its phenomenological manifestation of existential choice and its psychoanalytic representation of the ego's confrontation with the unconscious. Thus, the interpretative framework combines phenomenological reduction (bracketing the film's narrative to examine the essence of Neo's experience) with psychoanalytic interpretation (reading the matrix as a symbolic unconscious structure that shapes character's desires).

The Matrix: Narration

The Matrix is a science fiction action film released in 1999, directed by Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski featuring Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving, and Joe Pantoliano. The film depicts the dominance of machines over humans, who are ensnared within the matrix. The film opens with a woman named Trinity seated in a chair. Agents and police arrive to apprehend Trinity; upon their arrival, Trinity receives a phone call from Morpheus, who informs her that the cops are there to capture her; hearing this, Trinity gets cognisant and attempts to flee, leaping from one building to another. Upon observing,

the agent pursues her as she sprints swiftly. While running, she hears a call from a nearby telephone booth and rushes to answer it. However, a truck driven by the agent collides with her, yet she abruptly vanishes. The agent then comprehends that Trinity's next target is Neo, a hacker employed at a company under the alias Thomas Anderson.

One night, when Neo was asleep, something appeared on his computer screen. It is as follows: 'Wake up, Neo; The Matrix has you, follow the white rabbit. Knock, knock, Neo.' While seated, his companions arrived, and one of them bore a tattoo of a white rabbit on his hand. He abruptly observed this and pursued her, discovering Trinity at the pub they frequented. Trinity converses with Neo regarding the matrix. The following day, while Neo was engaged in work, he received the phone via post. Upon opening the cover, the phone rang, and he answered the call; it was Morpheus. Morpheus informed Neo over the phone that he was in peril due to agents pursuing him and advised him to flee from them. However, Neo is unable to evade capture, and the agent interrogates him with the specifics of Morpheus. Neo abruptly discusses citizens' rights and states that he must make a call. The agent asserts that one cannot speak without a mouth. After the agent's utterance, his mouth was abruptly sealed, then the agent took an object resembling a fly, originally a tracking device, and implanted it into his navel. The next day, he awakens in a different location and comprehends that the prior event was really a dream. At that moment, he receives a call from Morpheus, who states that he has been anticipating Neo's arrival throughout his existence and extends an invitation for Neo to meet him at Adams Bridge if he desires to see Morpheus. Neo arrives and observes Trinity in a vehicle. Trinity took Neo in a vehicle, during which she employed a device to extract the tracker implanted in Neo's abdomen. Only then does Neo know that something resid-



ed within him. Ultimately, Neo encounters Morpheus, who presents him with a red and blue pill, prompting him to make a choice between the two. Subsequently, he is immersed in water, followed by the extraction of the attached gadgets from his body, after which he is again submerged in water. This is the opening scene of the film.

The film states that in the 21st century, humanity discovered artificial intelligence. Subsequently, human labour became effortless with the assistance of AI. Following, a phase arises in which humans are unable to coexist with AI. Eventually, artificial intelligence assumed dominion over humanity and latterly humans recognised that the primary energy source for AI was the sun, prompting them to initiate an operation called Dark Storm to obscure the clouds. Ultimately, artificial intelligence is rendered inoperative. However, AI consequently determined that the primary source of electricity on Earth is humans. However, they also recognised that if they entrusted authority to humans, the AI would be unable to sustain itself following the demise of humanity. AI endeavours to create humans within a chamber. Upon the full maturation of people, they are converted into a liquid state and utilised as an energy source. The developed human brain remains inactive due to insufficient communication and the influence of environmental factors. AI recognises that it will attain power solely when human cognition is engaged. They create a digital world resembling Earth through a computer program(matrix), wherein the human body resides in the aforementioned chamber, and the minds of individuals are linked to the program, allowing them to exist within the virtual environment. Concurrently, AI can utilise their physical form. This software application is referred to as matrix. The matrix resembles reality, as the majority of humans remain oblivious to the fact that their existence is illusory. Some individuals recognise this and awaken; they lack the capacity to inhabit the Earth's surface and mi-

grate to the core, referred to as Zion, which is also regarded as the last human city.

Morpheus's provision of the red pill to Neo facilitated his return to reality by guiding him out of the chamber. Morpheus informs Neo that the year is not 1999, but rather 2199. To analyse this, Morpheus transports him to a location where an injection is administered to the back of his neck. Following the injection, Neo and Morpheus appear on a white screen surrounded by various garments and amenities, where they can obtain any thing they desire. In the midst of the narrative, a character known as the oracle is also presented. Oracle is referred to as the progenitor of the matrix due to her ability to foresee the future. The Oracle informed Morpheus that the guardian, known as the One, has re-emerged. Morpheus is convinced that Neo is the One. A character named Cipher selects the red pill and enters the real world, yet he desires to remain in the Matrix. Consequently, he manipulates the code, encounters the Agent, and discusses Neo, prompting the Agent to pursue Neo, a topic introduced at the film's outset. Following the second day of Neo's migration into the matrix world, Morpheus introduced him to the Oracle, who subsequently informed Neo that only one of them, either Neo or Morpheus, would live. The spies arrive there by use of the cipher's message while strolling. In the actual world, this cipher attempts to assault an operator named Tank and seeks to eliminate Neo to assess his capabilities. Morpheus is currently apprehended by the agent in the Matrix. An agent was subjected to torture to get the Zion code from Morpheus. To prevent this, the tank instructed the removal of the wire from the posterior cranial region of Morpheus. Upon hearing this, Neo halted the plan and resolved to safeguard Morpheus by entering the matrix. Neo evades Morpheus but is unable to return to the actual world due to the agent's relentless assaults and the destruction of the telephones, which serve as the means of escape. An agent shoots Neo,



leading to widespread belief that Neo would perish in the actual world due to lingering doubts about his identity as the One. Following, the gunshots inflict significant damage on Neo within the matrix, with the repercussions manifesting in the real world as well. At that moment, Trinity asserted that the oracle had informed her that once Morpheus unconditionally believes someone to be the One, she will thereafter fall in love with him. In this scenario, after Neo confronts the gunshot, Trinity kisses him out of affection, and he is resurrected. Ultimately, all acknowledge that Neo possesses the ability to manipulate the matrix and the actual world by modifying the codes. This constitutes the conclusion of the film.

The Imaginary Gaze through TheMatrix

The film presents two distinct realms: the matrix and the real world. Similar to the character Cipher, there exists a segment of humanity that perceives the matrix as the authentic reality, as it fulfils their desires in stark contrast to the actual world. The matrix (computer program) is regarded as a reflection of reality. The matrix observes the humans; this constitutes a type of gaze. In contrast to Laura Mulvey's concept of the gaze, the gaze depicted here aligns more closely with Lacanian gaze theory, as it does not objectify but instead embodies an imperceptible scrutiny of humans by computers.

We can link the perspective of machines to the conceptual framework of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Lacan posits that the imaginary constitutes the domain of images and fantasies wherein individuals misidentify themselves. At 6-18 months of age, children mistakenly perceive themselves as a complete entity while viewing their reflection in a mirror; in actuality, they are disjointed fragments of existence. They perceive themselves as estranged from the carers, referred to as the others (Lacan, 2002). In comparison to *TheMatrixfilm*, it is evident

that the individuals within the computer program genuinely perceive it as the real world. The matrix serves as a reflection of reality, akin to how individuals, as with children, misidentify themselves inside the confines of a computer program. Thus, we can assert that individuals within the Matrix exist at the imaginary level of psychoanalysis.

Symbolic Matrix: A Lacanian Analysis

Lacan posits that the symbolic constitutes the domain of symbols, with the chain of signification or language being perceived as the big Other (Lacan, 2002). In *The Matrix*, the title itself signifies a computer program. During our discussion regarding the imaginary realm, individuals misidentify themselves and engage with the symbolic to comprehend their identities and the surrounding world (Lacan, 2002).

The simulated reality embodied in the matrix 's coded signs and structures controls the character's interaction and perception with the virtual world, which is a demonstration of Lacanian symbolic- where the Lacanian real arises through the ruptures. This kind of rupture occurs in the movie when Neo comes to encounters with the material horrors of the 'real' world. This study seeks to enhance its critical examination of the connections between gaze theory and Lacanian theory, thereby providing a thorough comprehension of the film as a cultural text.

Similar to Lacan, SlavojŽižek discusses the gaze as a symbolic emptiness that both generates and exposes the subject's need and deficiency in relation to the big Other. He posits that the gaze is crucial in forming a subject's comprehension of desire, fear, and the constraints of observable reality (Garcia & Aguilar Sanchez, 2008). By contrasting it with *The Matrix*, humans shape themselves through the computer program. Consequently, computer programs and coding are forms of symbols that influence human development. In the matrix, humans exist within a



society constructed in a virtual realm, where interactions among individuals stimulate brain activity. Thus, it may be asserted that people, upon transitioning from the imaginative level within the matrix, will enter the symbolic level where interactions between society and the Other (language/computer program) become feasible.

The matrix represents the symbolic realm which conceals the Lacanian real is an ideological critique by Žižek. Neo's act of choosing the red pill in the movie enhances the Žižekian concept of 'act'. Here, Neo breaks the ideological fantasy and confronts the Lacanian real. This reflects Žižek's idea that the subject must navigate the fantasy in order to recognize the inherent inconsistency of the Lacanian symbolic order, thereby exposing how the machines manipulate desire to sustain their ideological control. The depiction of mirror scenes also shows the influence of the Žižekian idea of interpassivity which allows the characters in *The Matrix* to operate through their unconscious submission (Žižek, 1999).

In order to understand the visual power relations, the gaze theory of Mulvey can be re-applied to the film *The Matrix*. The cinematic gaze in *The Matrix* is subjected to show Neo as the active male subject who controls the scopophilic pleasure of viewing (Mulvey, 1975). The character Trinity is initially portrayed in the film merely as an object of male gaze which reinforces patriarchal structures. However, the film subverts this by granting Trinity agency in combat scenes. Here we can see the dual gaze that objectifies and empowers female characters by challenging the traditional male gaze. The camera's framing of Neo's 'chosen one's' moments further illustrates Mulvey's scopophilia, where the male gaze is tied to the reinforcement of masculine authority in symbolic order.

Illusion to Real: Neo's Quest to Escape Reality

At the outset, Trinity receives calls from a character named Morpheus, who is not immediately depicted on screen. It is, in fact, a depiction of reality. Lacan posits that the real is unsymbolisable and transcends language (Lacan, 2002). When Trinity receives a call from Morpheus, his presence is not visually represented on screen; rather, we are aware of an intangible entity. Additionally, when Neo appears, it is portrayed that Morpheus is observing him to safeguard him from the agents. The gaze of Morpheus is imperceptible, yet it exists.

Morpheus is the first to recognise that his world is the matrix, and following this revelation, he attains the real world. Subsequently, he assisted the individuals within the matrix in transitioning to the real world. This indicates that Morpheus recognises the existence of anything beyond the symbolic, which is why he becomes aware of the reality of the world. Morpheus later assisted Neo, The One, in comprehending the true nature of reality. Initially, Neo struggles to accept that the world he has inhabited is not authentic; nevertheless, Morpheus eventually assists him in discerning reality by demonstrating the distinction between the matrix and the actual world. This illustrates the depiction of the authentic dimension of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory within the matrix.

To compliment the psychoanalytic reading, the study took a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology helps us to understand and examine Neo's lived experience of reality and the conscious nature of the matrix. It also allows to analyse the embodied phenomenon, revealing how subjective perception shapes Neo's quest for truth. By combining Lacanian orders with phenomenology, the analysis captures both the unconscious symbolic structures and the first-person ex-



perience of being-in-the-matrix, thereby enriching the interpretative framework. Robert Sokolowski writes: “When we shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological, we raise the question of being, we begin to look at things in their truth and evidencing; this is to look at them in their being and also we begin to look at the self as the dative to whom beings are disclosed: we look at the self as the dative of manifestation” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 64-65). This means that the film can also be analysed using a phenomenological method, as it is a philosophical concept that examines consciousness and our experience of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Neo’s recognition of his own subjective experience in the real world as a means to escape the matrix shows a phenomenological approach. According to Merleau-Ponty, our bodies are not simply things; they are essential instruments for interacting with and comprehending the universe by emphasising the significance of lived bodily experiences and argues the interconnect-edness of mind, body, and world, hence rejecting mind-body dualism (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The matrix illustrates a duality in the mind-body relationship, as the mind inhabits a virtual realm while the body resides in a physical chamber in the initial phase of the film. When the film progresses, there comes a moment when Neo is shot by the agent within the matrix; the repercussions are felt by his physical body in the real world. This portrays the subtle yet profound connection among the mind, body, and the world.

In *The Matrix*, Neo and Morpheus are manifested in the actual world, engaging with their surroundings through their physical body. It enables them to engage with the world in a concrete manner. Conversely, their consciousness is ensnared in a matrix devoid of bodily embodiment, underscoring the dichotomy between mind and body, reminiscent of Cartesian dualism. By contrast-

ing Cartesian dualism with Merleau-Ponty’s concept of embodied phenomena, he refutes the dualistic framework and asserts that perception is fundamentally embodied, highlighting that our engagement with the world is perpetually influenced by our physical experience. In order to understand and perceive properly, embodiment is necessary which is actually shown in *TheMatrix*. We can see the growth in the awareness of embodied existence as the movie progresses from the Neo’s journey to ignorance to enlightenment. By integrating perception, reality and embodiment experience, the movie offers a commentary on the human condition, inviting viewers to question the nature of their own reality and the role of their embodied experience in shaping their understanding of the world.

The significance of the body is vividly depicted in the film also; the machines perceive humans as the source of energy, so they confine them in a chamber, and upon their demise, the machines convert the body into liquid form to extract its power. This exemplifies the significance of the body.

Conclusion

Lacanian psychoanalytic theories influence various disciplines, with *The Matrix* serving as a pertinent illustration. The transition from misrecognition in the virtual realm to the actual world comprises the representation of Lacan’s three domains: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The erroneous perception of the virtual realm as authentic encapsulates the imaginary and the society around individuals in the matrix signifies the symbolic, aiding humans in constructing their self-awareness and comprehension of the reality. Conversely, the disconnected reality beyond the matrix is the real. Moreover, the matrix instills an unobtrusive surveillance of humans by machines within the computer program. The dominance of AI over humans is seen here. Contemporary society depends on AI for numerous functions.



If this condition persists, the future developments in the realm of AI and its intersection with humans remain uncertain. This movie is thought-provoking, which holds certain value because it raises awareness about potentially hazardous AI. We must be cognizant of the potential and influence of AI on humanity.

By applying Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Zizekian concepts of act, interpassivity and Mulvey's gaze theory, this article con-

tributes new insights to the existing literature on *The Matrix*. It shows how the film's story and images challenge the way we think about reality, revealing truths about human nature and power dynamics. This study sheds new light on the film's exploration of reality, ideology, and subjectivity, adding to the ongoing discourse on integrating film theory, psychoanalytic theory, and cultural studies. It also suggests avenues for future research on representing the real and the symbolic in science fiction and popular culture.

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Philosophical Praxis in Ambedkar

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Received: 02/09/2025

Revised: 06/12/2025

Accepted: 11/12/2025

Abstract

B R Ambedkar had life-long engagement with the concepts and mechanisms required to realise a just and fair society. The principles of democracy, equality, liberty and fraternity form the cornerstones of his thought. Though primarily concerned with social justice and the emancipation of underprivileged people in the Indian society, the span of Ambedkar's engagement was much wider. Inquiries into the root cause of social issues were followed up with real-world activism. This article is an attempt to identify and highlight specific cases from the socio-political philosophy and life events of Ambedkar, in order to position him as a true proponent of the theory and practice of Philosophy.

Keywords: Constitution, Democracy, Social Justice, Praxis

Introduction

B R Ambedkar (1891–1956), considered as the chief architect of the Constitution of India, was a multi-faceted personality who made exceptional contributions as socio-political reformer, supporter of human rights, economist, legal luminary, educationist, sociologist, journalist and parliamentarian. Above all, he was fundamentally a philosopher who pondered deeply about the root causes of each of the social issues he engaged with, identified the core principles and remedial actions, and then followed up the academic engagement with real-world activism and political intervention. Ambedkar was influenced by the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey, which emphasised the need for philosophy to help solve the basic problems faced by human beings and not just to ponder about the ultimate reality (Jyothi Devindra, 2011). Philosopher J S Mill, who stressed individual initiative and freedom of thought, was another source of inspiration for Ambedkar.

The term 'praxis' stems from the Greek word for 'practice'. The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as the process of using a theory or knowledge in a practical way. Aristotle had considered praxis as one among the three modes of human activity, the other two being production and contemplation (Wainwright, 2022). Praxis is contingent, directed inward and concerned with not just the ends but the means as well. Karl Marx had stressed the need for praxis, as free, conscious and creative activity necessary for the transformation of unjust social formations.

Ambedkar can undoubtedly be hailed as a champion of philosophical praxis. He used the concepts and principles of moral and political philosophy to influence opinion and generate action towards desirable outcomes (Gopal, 2023, pp. 49–50). This article identifies and highlights some specific cases that showcase this aspect from the socio-political philosophy and life events of Ambedkar. The methodology chosen is historical and descriptive.



Stratification of the Indian Society

The social, political and economic stratification found in the Indian society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the focus of Ambedkar's initial enquiries. He pondered on the causes as well as about ways to mitigate and bridge the gaps. Ambedkar found "the Caste System and the practice of untouchability prevalent in India as the primary cause of the social oppression, exclusion and denial of resources faced by sections of the society" (Nair, 2024, p. 168). His paper titled 'Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' was presented in an anthropology seminar in 1916, while he was pursuing research in the USA.

In 1936, Ambedkar made a strong plea for the annihilation of caste in a speech he prepared for delivery in the meeting of an organisation working for caste eradication. He describes the Caste System as a social division of people of the same race (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 238). Ambedkar makes a detailed analysis to bring out the various ways in which the caste system damages both individuals and the society. The primary criterion for the selection of a person's work is specified as an example. Ambedkar points out that the natural aptitude of the person must be the basis for selection of work. That helps to develop the capacity of the individual to the point of competency. Ambedkar then points out that the varna system of hereditary callings violates this principle. He laments that a system where people's hearts or minds are not allowed to be in their work can never be efficient.

Another aspect highlighted by Ambedkar was about the division of people brought about by the caste system. "Ambedkar rejected the principle of graded inequality in the caste system, which he said was not only a division of labour but of the labourers also. He identified both casteism and racism as forms of discrimination that target people because of the circumstances of their birth"

(Nair, 2024, p. 168). Ambedkar drew upon his personal experiences as well, being a person born in a caste which was considered 'untouchable'. He called for the eradication of the caste system and untouchability.

When the organisers of the event wanted Ambedkar to change some parts of the speech, specifically referring to Hindu religious scriptures, Ambedkar withdrew from the event. He then published the text of the speech, which has become one of the most referred analysis of the caste system (Tharoor, 2022, pp. 79–83).

Many other actions were taken by Ambedkar to bring the issues related to untouchability to the forefront and to sensitise people to react. His address at a public meeting at Bhima-Koregaon in 1927 against barring untouchables from military service (Tharoor, 2022, pp. 36–38) is an example. The protest meeting organised at Mahad in 1927 against preventing use of public facilities which was followed by drawing of water from a public tank at Chowdar is another case in point. The symbolic burning of the Hindu law book *Manusmriti* is another example.

Social Justice

The concepts and mechanisms needed to realise a just and fair society was a theme on which Ambedkar had life-long engagement. Ambedkar considered social justice as the means to create an ideal or just society. According to him, the key components of social justice were liberty, equality and fraternity (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 260). Fraternity was defined as essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellow men. Ambedkar goes on to point out that "the issue of human equality is primordial and the only possible governing principle" (Nair, 2024, p. 170). Equal opportunities must be afforded to all individuals in the social, economic and political affairs of the society. All benefits and privileges in the society are to be shared by all its members. This involves the



removal of man-made inequalities through law, morality and public conscience.

To bring the cause of the Depressed Classes (untouchables were called as Depressed Classes during the colonial period) and social justice to the forefront, Ambedkar made use of publications, organisations and protest meetings while simultaneously involving himself deeply in the government-led process of legislation making. He had deep faith in the principles of law and constitutionalism.

The newspaper *Mook Nayak* was started in 1920 as a platform to talk about injustices against Depressed Classes (Tharoor, 2022). Later publications include the newspaper *Bahishkrit Bharat* in 1927 and the weekly *Janata* in 1930. Ambedkar both participated and organised conferences for members of the Depressed Classes, including the first All India Conference for the Untouchables at Nagpur in 1920, Provincial Depressed Classes conference in Nipani in 1925, Dalit Vargiya Parishad (the Depressed Classes Conference) in 1935 and so on. The organisation *Bahiskrit Hitakarini Sabha* was formed in 1924 with the motto 'Educate, Agitate, Organise' and established hostels for untouchable students, reading rooms, hockey clubs and monthly magazines. Independent Labour Party was formed in 1936 as a social democratic platform that spoke about land reforms, social safety and so on. Scheduled Castes Federation formed in 1942 and The Republican Party of India formed in 1956 are other examples of political organisations formed, in order to contest elections and become part of the law-making process. Additionally, as a practicing lawyer, Ambedkar made a mark by winning cases for the cause of the Depressed Classes.

Ambedkar was of the view that in addition to legal provisions for equality, special protection for disadvantaged communities was necessary for realising equality and true so-

cial justice. He pointed out that "any analysis of freedom does not end with confirming that there are choices available; it requires that those choices are free and equal" (Nair, 2024, p. 172). Affirmative action undertaken in a society is a tool for realising such a just and free social order. Ambedkar saw "the problem of uplifting of the subaltern as a problem of the whole society and not for the victims alone" (Nair, 2024, p. 168).

Regarding the application and practice of these ideas, Ambedkar made use of many forums. In 1919, he argued for special protections including separate electorates and reservations for the untouchables before the Southborough Committee which was preparing the Government of India Act of 1919. The causes were carried forward in the Provincial Legislative Council of Bombay during 1927. A memorandum was submitted to the Simon Commission in 1927, arguing for reservations for Depressed Classes. Ambedkar participated in the three round-table conferences conducted by the British Government during 1930–1932 and spoke about provisions needed for members of the Depressed Classes. He highlighted the need for separate electorates and reservations for the untouchable community. Differences with Gandhiji's views on separate electorates led to the Poona Pact of 1932.

The provisions included in the Government of India Act of 1935, leading to the formation of new federal and state assemblies as well as new provincial governments in 1937, can be seen as natural outcomes of these efforts. A memorandum was submitted in 1946 to the Cripps mission. Ambedkar's critical actions during 1946–1949 in the Constituent Assembly for preparing the Constitution for independent India are wellknown (Tharoor, 2022).

Self-help by the People

Ambedkar was convinced that disadvantaged people need proper actions undertak-



en for their social elevation and that mere political power is not the solution for all problems (Nair, 2024, p. 168). He thought that legal and administrative measures were only one aspect of the matter, it being far more important to the Depressed Classes to first become emancipated socially, politically and economically. It was necessary to concentrate on measures for these aims, rather than on other issues like getting entry to temples. Ambedkar was also very clear about how the disadvantaged must take their welfare into their own hands. During various addresses, he reminded members of the Depressed Classes about “the need to overcome difficulties in order that one may live worthily and with self-respect” (Tharoor, 2022, pp. 67–69). He exhorted them to “resolve to not eat thrown-out crumbs, learn self-help and gain self-knowledge. He wanted them to have clean habits, change bad ways of living, get educated and make sure that they are fit for respect” (Nair, 2024, p. 168). He called upon them to instill discontent in themselves since that is the spring of all elevation.

Constitutionalism

According to Ambedkar, “social change is a process of evolution through peace and persuasion, moving on constitutional lines”. In his speeches in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar highlighted the need to “hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives”. He wanted to “create an egalitarian society through the process of constitutionalism” (Nair, 2024, p. 171).

Ambedkar’s engagement with affirmative action, both “in the form of evolution of theories and action plans, as well as in being in the forefront of the struggle to enforce the actions, culminated with the policies and programmes for affirmative action being enshrined in the Constitution of India”, in which Ambedkar played a pivotal role as chairman of the constitution drafting com-

mittee (Nair, 2024, p. 167). The constitution was finalised in November 1949 and came into practice on January 26, 1950.

The articles and directives in the different sections of the constitution, especially in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles, form the bedrock of affirmative action in the country. The provisions include both clauses for equality and for safeguarding the rights of the disadvantaged people and for protecting their interests through preferential policies. “Constitutional guarantees for fundamental rights and freedoms, abolition of untouchability, prohibition of all forms of discrimination and reservations for opportunities in education, jobs and legislative representation and so on, are among these provisions” (Nair, 2024, p. 171).

Stressing the concept of democracy as primarily a form of society, in his final address to the Constituent Assembly in 1949 after preparing the Constitution, Ambedkar called for “the need to work towards not just political democracy but social democracy as well” (Nair, 2024, p. 169). He defined social democracy as “a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life” (Tharoor, 2022, p. 150).

Religion

Ambedkar’s upbringing was in a religious atmosphere (Jyothi Devindra, 2011, pp. 16–17). He was critical of religion but considered it politically and culturally relevant. He considered true religion as the foundation of society. A basis of religion was thought as essential for life. Ambedkar wanted to embrace a new faith that gives equal status to all, and declared in 1935 that he would not die a Hindu. After carefully studying different religions, especially Buddhism in detail, Ambedkar wrote the book ‘Buddha and his dhamma’. Ambedkar differentiated Buddhism as a godless social ethic to be embraced on rational grounds. The Buddhist



Society of India (Bharatiya Bouddha Mahasabha) was formed in 1956 at Nagpur and Ambedkar converted to Buddhism in a mass ceremony along with five lakhs of his followers (Tharoor, 2022, pp. 125–128).

Gender Equality

Women's cause was another highlight in Ambedkar's philosophy. Women were not exempted from his idea of all people being equal, and he placed "equal emphasis on the need to remove caste-based and gender-based discriminations" (Nair, 2024, p. 171). He spoke extensively on the role of women in the Indian society, addressing Dalit women in 1927, and women students in All India Depressed Classes Women's Conference in 1942. Making women lead lives secluded inside homes was condemned by him. He called upon Dalit women "to dress without heeding any caste-specific restrictions, not to marry without becoming financially stable, to educate children and to instil ambition in them". He emphasised that "relations between husband and wife must be based on friendship and not be like that of master and slave". His was "a pioneering male voice recommending birth control, rest during post-natal period, property rights for women and a uniform civil code" (Nair, 2024, p. 171).

He sought to pass a resolution in support of government-supported birth control in the Bombay Legislative Assembly in 1938. In 1948, as the law minister, Ambedkar introduced the draft of the Hindu Code bill in the parliament. The bill included rights of women to inherit property, initiate divorce and manage their own finances.

Labour Related Actions

In 1942, as the Minister for Labour, Ambedkar promoted and defended labour rights, and brought in innovative techniques for water management. His approach to water resource management, conservation and distri-

bution has stood the test of time. He pushed forward joint labour management committees in industries working for the war effort during the Second World War, worked for the establishment of employment exchanges and for granting paid holidays for industrial workers. Ambedkar considered socialism as not just about achieving economic equality but also political and social equality. He was a proponent of 'State Socialism', advocating radical reforms carried out by the State under a political democracy. He put forth the idea about nationalising agriculture and vital industries. State ownership of agriculture with a collectivised method of cultivation was advocated by Ambedkar. This was expected to solve the problem of landless labourers.

Educational institutions started under Ambedkar's initiative welcomed students of all communities. Ambedkar served as the harbinger of a new society in which caste, class or discrimination has no place.

Conclusion

Ambedkar was a thinker in the thick of politics (Gopal, 2023, p. 41). It is clear that his focus was true social justice encompassing all, not just the emancipation of a particular section of the society. The staggering volume and range of Ambedkar's thought is evident in the evolution of his works: from a student paper on caste to a magnum opus on Buddhism; a mode of thinking based on principles and encompassing questioning, relating to current realities and being open to change; and the constant formulation of ideas in response to different conditions and different times (Gopal, 2023, pp. 748–749). We can observe in Ambedkar the way the philosopher approaches issues and identifies the core concepts involved. We can also witness how the strategist formulates the action plans needed and how the politician and social activist brings those actions into reality. Indeed, a true illustration of philosophical praxis.



In a world increasingly divided on ideology and one where equality and social justice are still distant dreams, the relevance of a philosopher engaging in actions which truly help bring the theory into practice cannot be

overstated. Ambedkar's life and the specific mission he undertook act as beacon lights that illuminate the path for philosophers and social scientists of today and tomorrow, anywhere in the world.

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A Phenomenological Analysis of the Human Experience of Touch: Reading Through Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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Received: 02/09/2025

Revised: 05/12/2025

Accepted: 01/02/2026

Abstract

This study is about the French philosopher and theoretician Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis of the human experience of touch. Phenomenology is one of the major strands of philosophising of the twentieth-century Europe. It is the systematic study or theorisation of any phenomenon that is given to consciousness. Merleau-Ponty's views on touch are one of the radical attempts among Phenomenological strands to study conscious experience in specific ways. His philosophical effort is considered by many contemporary philosophers as a radical review of the major themes of phenomenological traditions. The present study focuses on the implications of the phenomenon of touch in the light of Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the experience of touch.

Keywords: Touch, Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, Body

Introduction

This study is related to the philosophical area of the phenomenology of touch. Phenomenology, as one of the major strands of philosophising of the twentieth century Europe, tries to focus on the systematic study or theorisation of any phenomenon that is given to consciousness. Phenomenon is the experience of any sort that is given to consciousness, and logos is the attempt to systematically study it. Hence, the study of phenomenon is phenomenology. Robert Sokolowski in his *Introduction to Phenomenology* describes phenomenology as follows: "Phenomenology is reason's self-discovery in the presence of intelligible objects" (Sokolowski, 2000). He explains this definition in the following way: "Not only can we think the things given to us in experience; we can also understand ourselves as thinking them" (Sokolowski, 2000). Here, thinking activity is not limited to the act of thinking as rational effort exclusively. Rather, in phenomenology, thinking is understood in a broader sense. It comprises

hoping, memorising, expecting, dreaming, aspiring and so on. All are experiences related to consciousness. It is in this sense, generally, we say phenomenology as philosophising that is linked to the study of experiences of all sorts given to consciousness, the intentionality-structuring of this consciousness, the subjective and objective poles of consciousness and the nature of *objects-given* to consciousness and the structure of it and the subject to whom it is given.

Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Edith Stein, Jean Paul Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir, Paul Ricoeur and Emmanuel Levinas are some of the key figures who had significantly contributed theoretically to the field of phenomenology in its contemporary phase. They developed explicit phenomenological views on conscious experiences in specific ways in their analyses. Still some common trajectories of enquiries on consciousness and the given experiences to it may be identified in their variegated phenomenological stud-



ies. Merleau-Ponty's view on touch is one of the radical attempts among them to study conscious experience phenomenologically in specific ways. This philosophical effort of him is considered by many contemporary philosophers as a radical review of the major themes of phenomenological traditions such as subject, body and touch in comparison with some of its contemporary equal enquiries. For instance, by addressing one of the themes in the last chapter of Merleau-Ponty's work, "The visible and the invisible", Judith Butler writes: "What Merleau-Ponty asks in this last work, and indeed what he began to trace over a decade earlier, is the question of how is a subject formed from tactility, or perhaps put more precisely, how is a subject formed by a touch that belongs to no subject?" (Butler, 2015). This is an exact track in Merleau-Ponty's analysis of human experience in various incarnations.

Touch as Phenomenological Experience

There are many attempts in different academic fields to enquire into the nature of the experience of touch. We identify presently at least three major approaches of enquiries to probe into it. The first is sociological efforts to study this phenomenon by addressing the notorious social practice of untouchability. They consider the sense of touch as a formative factor of the social phenomenon of untouchability (Ambedkar, 2000; Rao, 1988). The second attempt is by neuroscience and brain studies and also by the thinkers in the field of psycho analysis. The scientific developments related to haptic technology provide significant information about the experience of touch. Contemporary dermatological studies also contribute significantly to hitherto unexplored tactile dimension of human sense experience (Linden, 2016). The third broad area is that of the enquiries in the field of phenomenology. Following significant studies about the themes like body, self, other, alterity, empathy, gift and sacrifice, there are many phenomenological

enquiries about the phenomenon of touch as a fundamental sense experience of human existence. *The expression, phenomenon of touch*, is taken up in this study in relation to the phenomenological enquiries about touch rather than of its sense adopted in scientific or sociological studies on it.

As the attention of this article is primarily on the phenomenological enquiry about touch in relation to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, it is bound to begin by asking some basic questions about this human experience: Can scientific enquiries deeply engage the layers of this experience involved in the perceptive fields of human existence? Can phenomenon of touch belong to the knowing structure of the subject of experience? What are the structural properties of the phenomenon of touch as a human experience? Among the three major academic models of enquiring into the phenomenon of touch—sociological, scientific and phenomenological—this study assumes that it is phenomenological enquiries alone engage critically with these fundamental questions.

Contours of Human Existence as Prelude to the Phenomenon of Touch

To Merleau-Ponty, human perception in general reveals the fundamental enigmatic structure of human existence and of the world involved in this experience. In order to develop this point, he closely examines the phenomenon of touch in detail. Why phenomenon of touch is primarily adopted by Merleau-Ponty in this regard? Because, to Merleau-Ponty, touch is not an experience exclusively linked to the haptic ability of humans. To him, touch is an experience that is related to human perception in general. In all sense-experiences, a person is fundamentally in touch with the world (Vasseleu, 1998). This position about touch is an important key to understand Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach.

Having said it, in his *Intertwining, The Chiasm*, Merleau-Ponty focuses mainly on the



palpation of touch revealed in touching with hands and in the experiences of seeing. To Merleau-Ponty, touch is the initiation of human experience into the world. It is the moment of genesis of the very existence of humans and of the world. By presenting this view, Merleau-Ponty reinterprets the human being, the world and the human relation with the world. To him, ontological dualism of human thinking and world is peripheral in the light of the views regarding the intertwining fundamental structure of human existence and of the world. The clue to this position lies in the structure of touch as human experience (Vasseleu, 1998).

Hitherto in philosophy, generally, the human being is considered as the point of departure of thinking about the world. Human beings and the world were placed on opposite sides of ontology in general. As a rational subject humans incarcerate the world as object. It is a subject-object relation. The subject attempts to reduce the object as a fact into its all-powerful structure of consciousness. One can justifiably ask: what is incongruent in such a position? Merleau-Ponty addresses this issue by stating that man and world occur simultaneously in the structure of the experience of touch. So we continue to ask that what is problematic in it? To get into the point of this argument we need to search into the philosophical positions of Merleau-Ponty about the human process and its nature of knowing the world by a knowing subject. In his criticism of Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant, Merleau-Ponty points out that “they both detached the subject, or consciousness, by showing that I could not possibly apprehend anything as existing unless I first of all experienced myself as existing in the act of apprehending it” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). Here Merleau-Ponty criticises both Descartes and Kant by pointing out that this division of the human being and the world based on conscious apprehension does not cohere with the fundamental structure of human experience about the world. They

had based their philosophical position on the idea of relatedness between humans and world. This idea of relatedness is linked to the act of relating. This much is clear. What is incongruent in thinking of such a pattern? Merleau-Ponty argues that “relations between subject and the world are not strictly bilateral in nature” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). Well, that is right. But how it is affecting the positions of Descartes and Kant? He argues that if the relations between subject and world are bilateral, “the certainty of world would in Descartes, be immediately given with that of cogito and Kant would not have talked about his Copernican revolution” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). Merleau-Ponty continues his argument by stating that “the world is there before any possible analysis of mine and it would be artificial to make it the outcome of a series of syntheses which link, in the first-place sensations, then aspects of the object corresponding to different perspectives, when both are nothing but products of analysis, with no sort of prior reality” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). The subject attempts to synthesise within it the experience in its relation to world, and thereby it loses some pre-reflective aspects of world. Generally speaking, this aspect is ignored by the traditions of philosophy. In his view “reflection is carried off by itself and installs itself in an impregnable subjectivity, as yet untouched by being and time. But this is very ingenuous, or at least it is an incomplete form of reflection which loses sight of its own beginning” (Merleau-Ponty, 2000). What is the nature of such a beginning? “When I begin to reflect my reflection bears upon an unreflective experience” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). Phenomenological analysis of Merleau-Ponty regarding the human experience of the world begins from/with the unreflective experience of human nature. He calls the milieu of unreflective experience *the real*. In his view, the milieu of real is not formed or constructed, rather it is to be described. And it is accessible in touch.



Perception as the Describing of Real

The sphere of real is the realm of perception. Merleau-Ponty detaches himself from the philosophical positions of his predecessors, especially those of Descartes and Kant about the relation between human existence and the world by presenting his views about perception or unreflective experience. He clearly speaks about his position about the nature of real by stating the pre-reflective trait of perception. He writes: "I cannot put perception into the same category as the syntheses represented by judgments, acts or predications. My field of perception is constantly filled with a play of colors, noises and fleeting tactile sensations which I cannot relate precisely to the context of my clearly perceived world, yet which I nevertheless immediately place in the world, without ever confusing them with my day dreams" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). This position about the nature of perception is the point of departure of the philosophy of touch of Merleau-Ponty. He develops this theme by explaining the enigmatic structure of touch and seeing as perception. In touch and seeing, the human existence and world share an enigmatic, pre-reflective experience as the locus of their genesis. In his later study, *Intertwining, the Chiasm*, Merleau-Ponty calls this real, experience, Flesh.

Merleau-Ponty's Views on Human Existence as Subjectivity of Flesh

Merleau-Ponty points out in the preface of his work *Phenomenology of Perception* that: "I am not the outcome or the meeting point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up.... all my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced... we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the

second order expression" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). We may argue that there are portions in the structures of human existence and of the world, those are neither reducible to the scientific gaze nor to the major streams in philosophical explanations about man like those of Kantian and Cartesian that we see in the history of philosophy. It is exactly these elements of existence that phenomenology tries to describe in detail. To make sensible those fundamental principles of human existence and of the world, phenomenological enquiries analyse the perceptive experience of human existence. Merleau-Ponty states in continuation of this position about human existence that: "I am not a 'living creature' nor even a 'man', nor again even a 'consciousness' endowed with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various products of the natural or historical process – I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the word can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished-since that distance is not of one of its properties-if I were not there to scan it with my gaze" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). I, as the distance and the source of experience and as the fundamental structuring of gaze function as the point of departure of phenomenological enquiry about the basic structure of human experience.

Flesh as the Experience of Vision/Touch

It is in connection with his perspectives on perception and real that Merleau-Ponty develops his views on flesh. In *Intertwining, the Chiasm*, he elaborately discusses the enigmatic structure of flesh. What are the implications of the word flesh in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception? How does he reach at the point of discussion on flesh?



He states that in the perception of seeing/touch occurs an enigmatic structure of vision and visibility. He writes: "It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand. And it is not possible that we blend into it, nor that it passes into us, for then the vision would vanish at the moment of formation, by disappearance of the seer or of the visible" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). In this statement, he invites our attention to the inaccessible spheres of experience about vision that is hitherto unattended by philosophical reflections on it. He argues that in vision the dichotomy between the seer and things seen/object disappears. If in its fundamental structure of vision, the seer and the object seen are absent, what else then is forming vision? In Merleau-Ponty's language: "what there is then are not things first identical with themselves, which would then offer themselves to the seer, nor is there a seer who is first empty and who, afterward, would open himself to them- but something to which we could not be closer than palpating it with our look, things we could not dream of seeing 'all naked' because the gaze itself envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). In a closer examination of this statement, we can see that Merleau-Ponty is pointing towards an experience accessible to the look that tries to palpate the world before seeing it as a world of objects with the eyes of a seer. This experience is not about the world, but *rather of the world*. It is an experience simultaneously *of the look and of the world*. In this experience, the look is touching the world and is simultaneously touched by the world. The word *simultaneity* is not proper enough to describe this experience because seeing/seen object division is still there in look, but still not as seer and seen object in their traditional sense. The time of *simultaneity* has not yet born there. This is the paradox of vision/visibility experience. The distinction

between the touching and the experience of touched occurs in a space where the time is not yet dawned. What is the nature of this space where the look touches the world and in turn touched by the world (Merleau-Ponty, 2013).

Flesh as the Disrupting Space of Touch or the Locus of Body

Merleau-Ponty develops his views on space in the light of his perspectives on flesh. In order to develop the perspective on flesh, he speaks about the theme of body in his philosophy. Space is the locus of body where interposing of body and of world occurs in a time that is not yet inaugurated as chronological ordering of time. The world is of body and body is of world. He argues that "we have to reject the age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and seer in the body, or conversely, the world and the body in the seer as in a box...the world seen is not 'in' my body, and my body is not 'in' the visible world ultimately. As a flesh applied to a flesh, the world never surrounds it nor is surrounded by it" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). In this view, body should not be understood as the possession of humans. Rather it is the pre-reflective experience of humans that makes possible the interposing of it to the world and being and vice versa. This space is an experience of Being as well. How? It is in the paradox of vision and visibility, that is in the experience of flesh that the depth of being is unfurled. The depth of being should not be understood as the projections of human seer. Rather it is the interposing of the carnal being and of world where the multiple possibilities of being occurs. In the light of these explanations how can we describe the experience of flesh? In order to describe flesh, we should start from Merleau-Ponty's statement that "since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees" (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). How? In the vision one exercises, one also undergoes from the things as well. The seer and the visible re-



ciprocate one another and no longer know which sees and which is seen. This is the paradox of vision/touch. *It is this paradox of visibility, the generality of sensible and the anonymity innate to my-self is flesh.* Merleau-Ponty calls this experience *fundamental narcissism* (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). But this narcissism is to be understood within the context of reversibility. As it is described earlier, the body and world interpose each other in the experience of flesh. In this interposing of the experience of flesh, the reversibility functions as the dynamism of this experience. Merleau-Ponty describes this dynamism of reversibility with the example of the touching the left hand with one's own right hand. In this example, we are not sure what is occurring first-experience of *touching or been touched?* This uncertainty and the paradox experience is flesh. This is the enigmatic structure of the world and body. Reversibility is the description for this enigmatic paradox structure. Merleau-Ponty writes: "what we have to understand is that there is no dialectical reversal from one to the other, we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of

the reversibility which is the ultimate truth" (Merleau-Ponty, 2000).

Conclusion

Phenomenon of touch, in Merleau-Ponty's view, is the opening up to the new ways of human existence with the world in its multiple beginnings. I am the existence. I am distance. This is the source of experience. It is the fundamental order of gaze. Touch is the fissuring point to these fundamental layers of the human in its multiple complexity.

Contemporary phenomenological reflections on touch as it is represented in the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty open a non-hierarchical relational space between the experiences of *being touched and the act of touching*. This relational space cannot be controlled by the agency of touching. It is in this space that cultural transformations of all societies become possible. This study terms this relational space as the space of otherness and the space of cultural transformation where the knowing subject is ruptured by the invitation from the other, that is nothing but the multiplicity of human experiences.

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Assessing Nutritional Challenges and Dietary Behaviours of Elderly Women in Rural Kerala

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Received: 20/08/2025

Revised: 25/02/2026

Accepted: 05/03/2026

Abstract

This research examines the nutritional status and food behaviour among elderly women in Kerala, a state whose population is rapidly aging. The survey was conducted among a sample of 300 women aged 60 years and above. Physiological changes caused by aging affect appetite, nutrient utilisation, and food intake. The survey showed that 21.6% of the population were obese, 30.4% were overweight, and 5.3% were underweight. Most of the women consumed three meals a day, but some of them also had food boredom, decreased appetite, and omission of meals. Vegetables and cereals were consumed in high amounts, but protein-rich meals and animal-based meals were not. This can be initiated by factors such as price, oral status, or food and cultural preferences.

Reduced consumption of milk and milk products resulted from sensory impairment, especially reduced taste sensitivity. In all but one of the centres, almost half of the participants lacked sufficient energy daily. In addition, there were numerous micronutrient deficiencies, such as calcium, iron, zinc, and vitamins B1, B2, and C. Other than financing food availability and food diversity, social pensions were also utilised for other household expenses. Religious and cultural beliefs influenced food choices; some foods were excluded by custom or individual belief. Based on the regional data, obesity was higher in women compared to men, and there was a double burden of undernutrition and overnutrition existing side by side. Use of alcohol and tobacco was low due to budget limitations and sociocultural beliefs. The findings emphasise the need for targeted interventions and community-based nutrition education among older women. The quality of life of Kerala's older women can be improved by making public health policies more robust to make food affordable and nutritionally sufficient.

Keywords: Dietary Pattern, Nutritional Status, Elderly Women, Dietary Intake, Body Mass Index, Kerala.



Introduction

Irreversible physiological alterations as a consequence of aging influence nutrient absorption, hunger, food choice, and physical activity. These are exacerbated for older rural women in Kerala by widowhood, dependence, and food-sharing practices within the family. Kerala is undergoing a demographic transition, as the state now has the highest proportion of individuals above 60 (over 16%). Women constitute a vast majority of this age group, especially in rural Kerala, where most of them live alone or with dependents.

Functional health, prevention of chronic disease, and quality of life during old age all depend on proper nutrition. Decreased food and diet quality, however, are results of decreased appetite, dental problems, and restricted mobility. Their current patterns of eating are also shaped by traditional culture, foods that were eaten in the past, and traditional food availability. Kerala is healthier compared to other Indian states, but there is scant data on nutritional risk among the elderly, especially women. Studies indicate a double burden of malnutrition with underlying nutritional deficiencies and an increasing prevalence of obesity. The transition of the elderly from locally available, seasonally produced foods to convenience and processed foods parallels broader socioeconomic changes. To supply data for evidence-based interventions, this study aims to determine the nutritional status and patterns of eating of elderly women in rural areas of Thiruvananthapuram district.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the nutritional status of older women (60 years and above) in rural Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
2. To describe their diet and eating patterns, with special emphasis on the shift from traditional to processed foods.
3. To examine how physiological and socio-cultural determinants (including widowhood, dependency, and intrahousehold food allocation) influence nutritional status and food intake.
4. To establish the combined impact and prevalence of malnutrition for the population, both undernutrition (micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition (overweight/obesity).

Hypothesis

Rural older women (60 years and above) in Thiruvananthapuram exhibit a double burden of malnutrition—including both undernutrition (micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition (overweight/obesity)—which is associated with changing dietary patterns marked by a shift from traditional foods to processed foods and is significantly influenced by physiological factors (age-related health changes) and sociocultural determinants such as widowhood, dependency, and intrahousehold food allocation practices.

Research Methodology

In this cross-sectional descriptive study, elderly women's nutritional status and dietary intake were assessed using quantitative measures. Data were collected through structured interviews with validated tools. Data collection was conducted in *six grama* panchayats in rural Thiruvananthapuram district between September 2023 and February 2024. The sites were selected to represent a rural interior and coastal environment mix. The elderly women population of the district is constantly increasing, according to the 2011 Census. Women over the age of 60 years were found to be suitable for the study. Multistage random sampling was the technique employed. In the first stage, six panchayats were selected randomly. ASHA workers' health records were used to select older women in the second stage. From a total of 333 eligible women identified, 300 elderly women were eventually interviewed after adjusting for attrition.



Results and Discussion

Table 1 Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

Category	Subcategory	Percentage/ details
Age distribution	60–69 years	52%
Education	Primary education completed	42.30%
	Attended secondary school	26.50%
Marital status	Widowed	60.40%
Economic status	Receiving old-age pension	Almost all
	Financially dependent	70%

Note: Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents within each demographic and socioeconomic category.

Table 2 Nutritional status (BMI classification)

BMI Category	Percentage
Underweight	5.30%
Normal	42.70%
Overweight	30.40%
Obese	21.60%

Note: BMI = Body Mass Index. Percentages represent distribution of respondents across BMI categories.

Table 3 Dietary patterns and nutritional intake

Aspect	Aspect Details/percentage
Skipped breakfast regularly	13.30%
Missed/skipped dinner occasionally	17.90%
Met RDA for energy	Less than 50%
Micronutrient deficiencies	Iron, calcium, potassium, vitamin B12, vitamin C
Fruit and vegetable intake	Less than 3 servings/day
Traditional foods still consumed	Kanji (rice porridge), jackfruit, tapioca Kanji (rice porridge), jackfruit, tapioca

Note: RDA = Recommended dietary allowance. Percentages indicate dietary patterns reported by participants.

Nutritional Status and BMI Trends

Based on the anthropometric measurements, 21.6% were obese, 30.4% were overweight, and 42.7% were normal. This indicates a heterogeneous nutrition pattern. Overweight and obesity rose, particularly among older women, due to Kerala's nutrition transition that is defined by reduced physical activity and a preference for high-carbohydrate foods such as white rice. Interestingly, 10.7% were underweight, which is alarming due to the health effects of the frailty, muscle wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies among the elderly.



Kerala's better system of food security, encompassing the public distribution system (PDS) and social pension payments, could be the explanation for the lower underweight prevalence here compared with national trends. While lower than in younger age groups, the prevalence of obesity, particularly among women (6.7%), has significant implications for the management of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, both prevalent in Kerala.

Dietary Intake Patterns

In line with Kerala's food consumption pattern, all but two of the participants ate three meals a day, as per food frequency questionnaire and 24-hour dietary recall information. Vegetables, legumes, and staple foods like rice and tapioca constituted the majority of the participants' usual diet. However, high-protein foods, such as meat, eggs, and milk, were eaten very rarely. This is in line with other studies in the region and is probably due to a combination of economic restrictions, dental problems that make it harder to eat, and aversion to certain foods due to sensory decline with age.

Among the participants, 35.3% ate fruits daily, and 22.0% had milk or milk products daily. These lead to low intakes of key micronutrients like calcium and vitamin C. Alternate taste perception, which declines very rapidly after the age of 70, especially for sweet and salty, is also most likely associated with such deficiencies. Food intake and palatability are reduced by these age-related changes, especially for unpalatable foods like milk or plain vegetables.

Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors

Socioeconomic support systems play a central role in influencing food choices. The relatively high dietary diversity scores in this study were probably a result of the fact that almost all were receiving old-age pensions. But as discovered in previous studies

in Kerala, this income is frequently pooled among households and is not always used on food. In addition, the low rates of tobacco use (1.3%) and alcohol use (2.7%) among participants reflect healthy habits that could contribute to the relatively low prevalence of underweight.

Cultural and religious observances also influenced diet. Although more than 80% of the participants belonged to the Hindu category, food taboos and fasting were not reported among the group, showing a relatively homogeneous pattern of diet. But 18.7% of the sample omitted meals, primarily breakfast or dinner, for possible reasons of gastrointestinal complaints, personal preference, or financial considerations. Glycaemic disturbance and nutrient deficiency may result from omitted meals among older adults, especially those with chronic diseases such as diabetes.

Micronutrient Consumption and Food Group Consumption

As per the study, the cereal and vegetable diet was adequate, but micronutrient intake, especially iron, calcium, zinc, and B vitamins, was not adequate. This may be due to the absence of supplementation, inadequate consumption of animal-based food, and inadequate utilisation of plant food nutrients. Eggs were consumed by a mere 17.3% of the subjects regularly, and consumption of fish—once a regular habit in coastal Kerala—has reduced, most likely due to its high price or lack of availability in inland regions.

Sensory loss, such as loss of taste and smell, is also implicated in reduced consumption of dairy foods. According to Mahan and Escott-Stump (2012), for persons aged between 70 and 85 years, taste sensitivity, which can be reduced by as much as 65%, significantly affects food choice. Coupled with gastrointestinal and dental issues, sensory loss makes it difficult for women in the postmenopausal



phase to take sufficient calcium, which is essential to avert osteoporosis.

Public Health Implications and Recommendations

One such complex public health problem in Kerala is the presence of undernutrition and overnutrition in elderly women. While life expectancy and social well-being in the state have increased, nutrition by age needs more specialised interventions, such as the following:

- Older women's community meal programmes that serve nutrient-rich, culturally sensitive foods.
- Nutrition education by Kudumbashree units and local health workers, with emphasis on low-cost sources of protein and micronutrients.
- Improved mastication function and enhanced protein intake through oral health intervention.
- Fortification of PDS staple foods with required vitamins and minerals.

Weakness of this study is that it is based on self-reported diet recall, which might result in underreporting or recall bias. Statistical power for subgroup analysis might have been lost due to attrition lowering sample size from 400 to 300 subjects. In spite of this, the study is informative regarding food habits and nutritional frailties of older Kerala women.

Discussion

Physical and physiological changes that occur over a period of time and are largely outside human control are features of aging, an inevitable biological process. But aging is not merely a biological process, but is also determined by the way various societies perceive and respond to old age. Kerala's elderly population is growing at a rapid

rate, particularly among women who tend to outlive men, although the state boasts one of the highest life expectancies in India (about 75 years among women). Most of the participants in this study were between 60 and 69 years, corresponding to Kerala's and the Indian government's definition of senior citizens as those aged 60 and above.

Physiological changes with aging, such as reduced appetite, reduced metabolism, and change in taste perception, aggravate the dietary issues among elderly women in Kerala. Reduced dietary consumption and altered food habits could be the consequences. Inadequate food intake, particularly micronutrients essential for immune, bone, and brain functions, is one of the key causes of nutritional deficiency. Furthermore, social situations such as widowhood, being alone, or the loss of traditional family support systems increasingly affect the food habits and psychological well-being of older women.

A very small percentage of older women in this survey were underweight, consistent with other Kerala and other southern Indian state evidence. This can be at least partly attributed to Kerala's well-established public distribution system and easier access to medical treatment and food subsidies. Economic dependence, decreased mobility, or the inability to access or prepare well-nourished meals—particularly in rural settings or when living alone—may still result in underreporting of undernutrition among older women.

Conversely, a high proportion of the older women were overweight or obese. Kerala is experiencing the dual burden of malnutrition, i.e., both undernutrition and over nutrition. Physical inactivity, sedentary life, and energy intake higher than expenditure are some contributing factors. Based on national and state level statistics, older women are more likely to be overweight or obese compared to men. This is largely due to endocrine



causes, muscle wasting, and sociocultural beliefs linking body weight to prosperity and health. However, there is increasing awareness that overweight in old age is associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and joint disorders—all prevalent among older women in Kerala.

Eating habits are also affected by religious and cultural beliefs. Hindu eating habits and fasting customs and the eating habits and fasting customs of Christianity and Islam, followed by the majority of older women in Kerala, can affect nutritional intake. Religious practice can be beneficial by reducing alcohol and tobacco intake, but restrictive dieting or unmonitored fasting can exacerbate nutritional deficiency. Specific data on cultural practice were not collected for this study, but it can provide additional information on how older beliefs affect later-life nutrition and health.

Most of the participants were having three meals a day, which is reassuring as it shows Kerala's traditional eating pattern. Some meal skipping, especially breakfast or dinner, was observed, which may be due to loss of appetite, gastrointestinal symptoms, or economic constraints. In older women with chronic diseases such as diabetes or gastrointestinal disorders, where balanced meals at regular times are necessary to control symptoms and prevent complications, meal skipping is a cause of concern.

Drinking and smoking were also low, as would be predicted by social norms and health-oriented behaviour of older women in Kerala. It may be a stress-reducing response that is healthy for overall well-being and enables better family finance management. There are still economic challenges, though, and some older women—especially pensioners or widows—are dependent on family support or social welfare benefits, which are not always available or adequate.

Consumption of cereals, vegetables, and

fruits by participants was restricted, defining a Keralan diet rich in rice, plantains, jackfruit, and greens. Protein foods such as dairy, fish, eggs, and lentils were eaten less, though. This is generally a consequence of economic limitations, oral difficulties, or cultural and religious restrictions. Fish, a Kerala staple, is rich in essential proteins and fatty acids, but increased prices may render it unaffordable for poor women. As a result of impaired lactase production, infrequent intake of milk products is also associated with impaired perception of taste or gastrointestinal intolerance, which is common in aging adults.

Overall, micronutrient intake was low, especially for iron, calcium, zinc, and vitamins B1, B2, and C. Low intake of animal-based foods and age-related physiological alterations such as decreased stomach acidity and impaired nutrient absorption are most likely to be the cause. Specifically, lowered calcium intake was found because of low intake of milk and milk products. Age-related changes in taste and smell may make certain foods unpalatable. These findings are consistent with those of Kerala and other Indian states which show that older women's food intake remains poor even with food availability due to inadequate dietary variety and food restriction because of health problems.

Interestingly, the older women who were recipients of widow welfare schemes or old-age pensions registered the highest dietary diversity scores, which suggests that government support enhances food security. However, research has established that grants are frequently used to pay for other household expenses, including health and utility payments, which may constrain their capacity to respond to dietary deficiencies. In addition, the association between increased dietary diversity and increasing overweight/obesity suggests that food availability is enhanced but dietary quality and portion sizes are issues.



Finally, a very high percentage of participants lacked sufficient recommended energy intake, a result that is consonant with previous research on Kerala's elderly nutrition. Even consuming from various food groups, however, many of them failed to take daily quantities of required nutrients. Age-related alterations in digestion, taste, and physical condition—along with social isolation or depression—can all contribute to decreased food consumption. As Kerala's population grows older, single older women or those with poor family support are especially at risk for deficiencies in nutrients.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are that it relies upon self-reported food intake, which is susceptible to recall bias and lack of biochemical validation, generalisability (only Thiruvananthapuram rural), and absence of male comparison group. In addition, dropout of participants left fewer subjects available, and this might have weakened the statistical power to detect some associations. The findings illuminate valuable information on the food practices and nutritional problems of Kerala's older women and highlight the need for targeted public health interventions on food availability and food sufficiency in this susceptible group.

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Conclusion

The research finds a disturbing pattern: sub-standard quality nutrition among rural Kerala's older women even though they consume meals at a satisfactory pace. The co-existence of micronutrient deficiencies and overweight suggests a nutritional transition of energy-dense but micronutrient-poor food. Poor diet diversification and food insecurity are exacerbated by sociodemographic factors, widowhood, and dependency. Based on this survey, most of the elderly had satisfactory food habits but low nutritional status.

This generation of older people remains susceptible to malnutrition and micronutrient disorders based on their inadequate consumption of supplemental meals and micronutrients, though they have an understanding of the role and significance of good nutrition.

For the development of proper nutritional advice, we must know about the food habits of the elderly. Periodical nutrition education must be done to encourage healthy food habits in the elderly. The report suggests the need for dietary intervention at the community level, especially through women's self-help groups, palliative care units, and ICDS centres. The gap can be filled by encouraging nutrient-rich, locally produced food, community kitchen gardens, and diet education specifically tailored for the elderly.



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Sustainable Living through Eco-Socialism, an Alternative Pathway

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Received: 22/08/2026

Revised: 12/02/2026

Accepted: 21/02/2026

Abstract

Eco-socialism merges socialist ideals with ecological concerns, advocating for social justice and environmental sustainability. It critiques capitalism for driving both inequality and environmental harm, asserting that a profit-driven system cannot support long-term sustainability. Central to eco-socialism is democratic control over production to align economic activities with ecological needs. Green governance translates these principles into policy, emphasising participatory democracy and fair resource distribution to balance sustainability with social equity. Any debates on environment and the growth patterns contradict each other and naturally end with an appeasement philosophy of sustainable development. This paper tries to shed light on the philosophical positions of Green capitalism, capitalist growth patterns, and the need for urgent attention towards total transformation. However, transitioning to eco-socialist models faces hurdles like economic restructuring, political opposition, and the need for global cooperation. Overcoming these challenges requires systemic change, positioning eco-socialism as a transformative path towards a just and sustainable future.

Keywords: Eco-Socialism, Environmental Justice, Sustainability, Global South, Under-Development

Introduction

The neoliberal growth trajectory leads to market integration and endless global trade. The widespread market liberalisation reduced the trade barriers, thereby creating open capital markets. The native governments in the non-Western world aimed at reducing the financial deficit through the trade of renewable resources at throwaway prices to the international corporate giants. Many of the nations of West Asia are now enjoying the one-time windfall of wealth generated from the mineral resources. The extraction process also has more devastating environmental problems that were hidden under the glitter of the enormous wealth generated from it. The non-renewable assets are not efficiently used by many of the nations

and it encourages the autocratic rules to stay in power, affecting the polity and life of the native population (International Monetary Fund, 2012).

The emission of carbon in different forms now questions the overall existence of mankind. The biodegradable single use disposable items and the electronic waste challenge the atmospheric balance and create irreparable damage. The carbon footprints have recently enriched the vocabulary of the non-Western world literature and politics. These non-Western poor nations of Asia and Africa are still poor and will be more affected by the devastation of the environment and the crisis due to climate change. The petrochemicals transported from West Asia to the



rest of the world are the sole source of energy generation. Within fifty years, this source will come to an end is a scientific reality. But still, the world is not ready for alternative energy sources of this much capacity. The phenomenon of capitalism thrusting more on short-term goals over long-term sustainability is the reality of West Asian nations. Saudi Arabia produces the most crude oil among OPEC nations and it accounted for net export revenue is \$311 billion in 2022 and \$237 in 2024 (Table 1). A similar condition is witnessed by all of the nations of the developing and underdeveloped world blessed by different categories of mineral wealth. Theoretically, this condition cannot last long as the technology develops further at the global stage, the nations will face the retrospective cost for future development.

Table 1. OPEC net oil export revenue.

Country	2021	2022	2023	2024
Algeria	\$25	\$39	\$29	\$31
Angola	\$28	\$41	\$31	\$31
Congo (Brazzaville)	\$6	\$9	\$7	\$8
Equatorial Guinea	\$2	\$5	\$3	\$3
Gabon	\$4	\$6	\$5	\$5
Iran	\$37	\$54	\$46	\$51
Iraq	\$85	\$131	\$100	\$110
Kuwait	\$63	\$98	\$77	\$81
Libya	\$25	\$31	\$26	\$25
Nigeria	\$27	\$34	\$29	\$31
Saudi Arabia	\$191	\$311	\$223	\$237
United Arab Emirates	\$76	\$119	\$94	\$98
Venezuela	\$7	\$10	\$11	\$14
OPEC total	\$576	\$888	\$681	\$724

Source: Data retrieved from US Energy Information Administration, *Short-Term Energy Outlook 2023*.

Rudiments of debates on Eco-Socialism, Sustainability, and Green Capitalism

The modern eco-socialist thought emerged as part of the critical theory drifts forward from the old school of scientific socialism. By explaining the design of 'Metabolic Rift', John Bellamy Foster divulges the crisis produced by capitalism, creating the everlasting

ecological debt that nature cannot sustain. His criticism extends to the paradox that efficiency never brings sustainability; it ensures more production by escalating the use of a higher volume of cheaper products. His criticism of the liberal environmentalists' principle of 'managed growth' could only aim for the efficient use of resources but negates the restoration of natural resources before their depletion. The paradox of 'Green Capitalism' is explained expertly by William Stanley Jevons by examining the situation of the Industrial Revolution, stating that the invention of the steam engine reduced the consumption of coal for energy production, but in reality, this cheaper technology skyrocketed the use of coal by establishing more engines. Foster articulates that this efficiency myth of technological advancement serves only to reinvest the capital saved for the further exploitation of resources.

Green capitalism relies on technological development and market-driven solutions for the creation of a sustainable system. Since it is a capitalist model, the focus is on encouraging profitable, sustainable practices by encouraging business accountable for the environment. It always attempts to boost economic growth, which is the basis of the capitalist order (Berghoff & Rome, 2017). John B Foster argued that the 'efficiency' principle is an oxymoron where capitalism requires progressive growth for its existence. The data on the history of use of resources proves that even the most efficient machinery still requires significant mining of resources with little space for conservation. The root causes of the failure of many environmental summits are the theorisation of the idea of 'Green Capitalism' that failed to delink the relation between environmental destruction and economic growth. The long-standing exploitation of resources cannot be possible without using the finite resources of nature.

Foster's words, "In the twenty-first century



ry, the struggle for the environment is the struggle for the survival of humanity, and the struggle for humanity is the struggle for the environment.” specifically alarm against the agendas of present day global economic development.

Eco-Socialism on the Global Stage

Eco-socialism leads to combat environmental destruction, economic inequality and thereby challenges the rudiments of capitalism. The profit-oriented production process propagated by the capitalist mode of production always devalues ecological concerns. Hence, they are designated as ‘Red-Green’, indicative of their socialist and ecological concerns. The resources are considered only as means for mass production and the emphasis is only on the perpetual growth of the economy (Fox, 2022). The means of production were imported to any place where the raw materials were available in plenty and they started using them without taking care of the existing conditions of the native place or population. Or else the resources were exported to distant places where they can be transformed into market-demanded products. These whole processes were done by the use of the physical/ military strength of the capitalist world. The resources only played the role of enormous wealth generation and hence their conservation for future use finds no space in the agenda of the wealthy giants. The overproduction aimed at endless consumerism always treated nature as an endless production means rather than a finite source that needs conservation for future use. The idea of exchange-value for profit generation in the capitalist mode of production aims for higher GDP growth negates the use-value philosophy, which stands for satisfying the limited needs of the system.

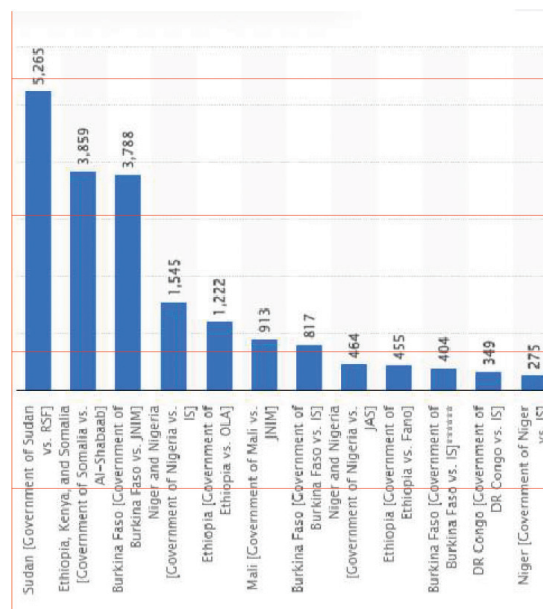
Environmental justice addresses the injustice faced by poor marginalised communities due to the resource extraction and pollution caused by the process of mass production.

The advantage of wealth generation benefited the developed world and the environmental burden was diverted to the global South (Malin, 2019). The vulnerable nations that process mineral wealth were exploited in the name of global trade and exploitation was done without addressing the non-renewable nature of the limited resource. Political instability was deliberately created to disrupt the free flow of resources from these nations.

Crisis of Sustainability

At the global level, the environment always comes under discussion among the indigenous population because their existence is directly connected with it. The politics of environmental movements demand a peaceful existence against the intrusion on their resources. The West Asian region and Africa in the recent period are at the hotspots of global politics, mostly because these regions are facing an existential crisis due to new colonialism over petrochemical/mineral resources (Chart1).

Figure: Bar diagram on crisis in Africa 2023



Source: Data extract from Statista, 2023.



The United Nations Environment Programme remembers that we inherit this environment from future generations; this thought must be the guiding principle of sustainability. UN also loudly speaks that “We must restore ecosystems to tackle climate change, save species from extinction and secure our future”(UN Environment Programme, 2012). The profit-oriented production resulted in serious damage to the ecology. Business-oriented growth propagated in another land often leads to the overexploitation of resources. The mining of petrochemical sources, groundwater, fossil fuel extraction, and the forest resources are handled under one agenda of mass profit generation. The major source of revenue in most mineral-rich nations comes from the blind sale of their national assets (Ross, 2001, p.325).

Only partial information about their resource revenues was found by the Revenue Watch Institute in 2010 when they compared 41 oil, gas, and mineral-producing countries. Many nations in Africa and Asia met their economic demand fully through their mineral wealth and depended on tax revenue collected from the citizens. Here, the accountability principle is lacking, which will affect the idea of good governance and ultimately the creation of a Welfare State. No data is made public regarding the contracts between companies and native governments, taxes applied, royalty amount, and other payments. An undemocratic polity is a necessity for multinational business tycoons so that the environmental cost of their every action can be kept hidden and hidden away from public scrutiny. The win-win situation is enjoyed by governments at one level and global capital at the other. It is a non-zero-sum game for them, where the flow of oil revenues within governments has no scrutiny and hence, the environmental impact assessment was never done.

Demand for Sustainability

A global policy outlook on eco-socialism is slowly emerging in many parts of the world which is certainly not anti-development but sustainable in nature. It focused on the interconnectedness of the global South against the disproportionate use of resources. Ecological health is given priority over wealth generation, saving species from extinction, restoring ecosystems to tackle climate change and securing our future (Hariram et al., 2023, p.10682). Severe environmental imbalances are evident worldwide. The massive use of resources without considering the impact leads to climate change and global warming. Rising atmospheric temperatures affect the depletion of flora and fauna. Both agricultural and industrial production faced setbacks and failed to meet the growing demands of the population. Food security is a concern of the modern world order due to extreme weather conditions experienced in many parts of the world.

Conclusion

The whole issue created by market-centred capitalism can be managed by redefining the habit of over-consumerism. The demand always stimulates the production process and this rising production is the major cause of the exploitation of resources. Hence, a new culture of sustainable living is needed to manage the limited resources available to mankind. The carbon footprints must be minimised and the reuse of products should be encouraged. The single-use products, the use-and-throw culture, etc., created through massive advertising by big corporations, lead humanity towards extinction. Eco-Socialism is not a policy to be implemented at the governance level. It should emerge as a philosophy of living for a crisis-driven world that is moving towards greater challenges of extinction.



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Form IV (See Rule 8)

Statement of Ownership and other Particulars about Echoes of Research Published Annually

1	Place of Publication	:	Thiruvananthapuram
2	Periodicity of Publication	:	Annual
3	Printer's Name	:	Prof. (Dr.) B. Sreekumar
	Nationality	:	Indian
	Address	:	Principal Government College for Women Thiruvananthapuram Phone: 0471 2324986 principal@gcwtvm.ac.in
4	Publisher's Name	:	Prof. (Dr.) B. Sreekumar
	Nationality	:	Indian
	Address	:	Principal Government College for Women Thiruvananthapuram Phone: 0471 2324986 principal@gcwtvm.ac.in
5	Editor's Name	:	Dr. Nisha N.G.
	Nationality	:	Indian
	Address	:	Associate Professor in Physics Government College for Women Thiruvananthapuram Phone: 0471 2324986 editorechoes@gcwtvm.ac.in
6	Name and address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners of shareholders holding more than one percent of total capital	:	-----

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