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Bangalore North University
Government First Grade College Sidlaghatta
Government First Grade College, Sulibele

XVII NATIONAL SOCIOLOGY CONFERENCE

Digital Divide

Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups

30th & 31st October 2025

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dr. ADINARAYANAPPA N.A.
Secretary, KSA
Organizing Secretary,
XVII KSA National Sociology Conference

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ABOUT THE COLLEGE

The Government First Grade College established by Government of Karnataka in1991 was initially affiliated to Bangalore University, Bangalore, is now under Bangalore North University. At present, the college offers four Undergraduate Courses B.A, B.Com, B.Sc and BCA followed by P.G Programme in M.Com. A major chunk of the students come from rural areas both for U.G and P.G Programmes. The College possess well equipped AV rooms, Laboratories, E-Library, good infrastructure, Gym, indoor and outdoor sport facilities, good results with many centum and rainwater harvesting etc.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

In an increasingly digital world, access to technology and digital literacy has become essential for education, employment, civic participation, and social inclusion. However, millions of individuals particularly youth from underprivileged backgrounds, rural communities, persons with disabilities, women and other marginalized groups remain on the wrong side of the digital divide. This divide not only limits access to information but also deepens existing inequalities, threatening to leave vulnerable populations even further behind.

The theme of this year's National Conference, "Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups" emphasizes the urgent need to create inclusive digital ecosystems. It underscores the role of digital empowerment in ensuring equitable access to opportunities, enabling meaningful participation, and fostering innovation and resilience among underserved communities. The digital divide perpetuates systemic inequities, undermining participatory development. This conference invites rigorous discourse on policy frameworks and grassroot interventions to advance digital inclusion, fostering an equitable, empowered future.

Youth Empowerment: Access to ICTs facilitate transformative educational and economic opportunities for young populations. For India, with 50% of its populace under 25, such access fosters innovation and labor market integration, critical for sustainable economic advancement.

Inclusion of Marginalized Communities: For women, Scheduled Castes/Tribes, and rural populations, digital connectivity enables engagement with e-governance platforms and financial systems for their sustainable development.

FOREWORD

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement, digital access has emerged as both a pathway to progress and a marker of inequality. The Digital Divide, gap between those who have access to information and communication technologies and those who do not remains to be one of the most pressing developmental challenges in contemporary India. This book, `Digital Divide and Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups in India' provides a timely insightful exploration of how technology can serve as both a barrier and a bridge in the pursuit of inclusive growth.

The authors have undertaken the critical task of analyzing the intersections of technology, social equity and empowerment. By examining the experiences of youth, rural population, women and other marginalized communities, this work sheds lights on the complex realities behind digital inclusion. It demonstrates that empowerment is not merely about providing access to devices or internet connectivity, but about fostering the capacity to use digital tools meaningfully for education, livelihood, civic participation, and social transformation.

What makes this book particularly significant is its balanced approach. It not only critiques the structural and policy-level challenges that perpetuate digital exclusion but also highlights inspiring stories of resilience, innovation, and community-led initiatives. These narratives illustrate how informed interventions and digital literacy can redefine opportunities for empowerment in diverse socio-economic contexts.

As India aspires toward a digitally inclusive society under initiatives like Digital India, the insights presented here offer valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, researchers, and social practitioners. This book underscores that technology, when equitably distributed and inclusively designed, can become a powerful instrument for social justice.

We commend the authors for their thoughtful scholarship and commitment to advancing discourse on digital empowerment. It is our hope that this work will inspire continued research, policy innovation, and collective action toward narrowing the digital divide and building a future where every citizen can participate fully in the digital revolution.

A conference on this theme is highly relevant, as it provides a platform for academicians, research scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to deliberate on strategies that can bridge this gap, particularly for youth and marginalized communities. Empowering these groups with digital skills and equitable access to technology is essential for achieving inclusive growth, social justice, and sustainable development. Such a dialogue also encourages sharing of best practices, innovative models, and policy interventions that can translate into tangible empowerment. In this way, the conference serves not only as an academic exchange but also as a call to collective action to ensure that the benefits of the digital revolution reach every section of society.

The success of this conference reflects the dedicated efforts and meticulous planning of the Organizing Secretary and his committed team. Their tireless work, attention to detail, and unwavering enthusiasm have ensured the smooth conduct of every session and activity. From conceptualizing the theme to coordinating logistics and welcoming participants, their teamwork and professionalism have been exemplary. The Organizing Secretary's leadership, combined with the team's cooperative spirit, guidance and support of the Office Bearers and Executive Committee Members of KSA and the Teaching, non-teaching staff, Guest faculty and Students of the college has made this event a memorable and meaningful academic endeavour. Sincere appreciation is extended to the Editor-in-Chief and his team for their support and all those who have directly or indirectly given their invaluable contribution to the success of the conference.



Prof. Sudha Khokate

Professor and Chairperson
Department of Sociology,
Bangalore University,Bangalore
& MC Member,
Indian Sociological Society



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& Research in Sociology,
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Sri .B. N. Ravi Kumar

Hon'ble MLA
Sidlaghatta Constituency
Government of Karnataka
President, College Development Committee, GFGC, Sidlaghatta

I am glad to know that a XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' is being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

Education has always been the foundation of social progress, social change and development of the nation. The present conference, with focus on the need for digital knowledge among all sections of the society including youth and marginalized groups, represents a significant step forward in developing an education system that is not only knowledge-centered but also people-centered.

I am confident that this academic exercise will inspire new ideas and strengthen the determination of our teachers and researchers to contribute towards the vision of a developed India in this digital era.

I extend my greetings and best wishes to the organizers for the success of the event.

Sri B. N. Ravi Kumar



Sri .Sharath Kumar Bache Gowda

Hon'ble MLA
Hosakote Constituency
Government of Karnataka
President, College Development Committee GFGC, Sulibele

I am delighted to know that XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' is being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

In an age where technology drives progress, digital access has become a vital tool for education, employment, and social inclusion. Yet, many young people and marginalized communities continue to remain on the periphery, unable to benefit from these opportunities. This divide not only limits individual growth but also hinders the nation's collective development.

Through this conference, I wish the academicians, scholars, researchers and students discuss and deliberate and seek to explore ways to bridge these gaps by fostering digital literacy, skill-building, and equal access to technology. Our shared goal is to ensure that digital transformation uplifts every section of society and empowers the most vulnerable.

I extend my greetings and best wishes for the success of the event.

Sri Sharath Kumar Bache Gowda



Sri .D. T. Srinivas

MLC
Karnataka South East Teachers Constituency
Government of Karnataka

I am pleased to note that XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' is being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

In today's rapidly changing world, education must not only provide knowledge for students but also prepare them to access job opportunities by imparting digital skills in the digital world. This conference, by bringing together teachers, scholars, and researchers, has created an opportunity to explore these vital dimensions of learning to foster inclusive growth of youth and marginalized communities in development of the Nation.

I trust that the deliberations of this conference will encourage progressive thought, inspire young minds, and strengthen our collective commitment to nation-building.

Best wishes to the organizers and participants.

Sri .D. T. Srinivas



Prof. Niranjana Vanalli

Vice Chancellor
Bangalore North University, Kolar

Greetings from Bengaluru North University! On the occasion of the XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all the esteemed participants, scholars, academicians, and organizers of this XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups'.

In the present digitized world, equitable access to technology has become a cornerstone of social and economic progress. Yet, the persistence of the digital divide continues to marginalize vulnerable and weaker sections of society in general and the youth in particular who represent both our present and our future. Addressing this divide is not only an academic concern but also a national priority, as it directly influences education, employability, and inclusive development.

The theme of this conference is both timely and significant, as it brings together scholars, researchers, and practitioners to deliberate on strategies that can transform digital technologies into instruments of empowerment and social justice. I am assured that the discussions will contribute meaningfully to academic knowledge while also inspiring policy frameworks aimed at bridging these gaps.

I congratulate the Organizers for their initiative and extend my best wishes for the success of this important academic endeavour.

Prof. Niranjana Vanalli



Prof. Ramesh B

Hon'ble Vice Chancellor
Bangalore City University, Bangalore

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I am confident that this academic exercise will inspire new ideas and strengthen the determination of our teachers and researchers to contribute towards the vision of a developed India in this digital era.

I extend my greetings and best wishes to the organizers for the success of the event.

Prof. Ramesh B



Smt. Manjushree N. IAS

Commissioner
Department of Collegiate & Technical Education
Government of Karnataka

I am pleased to convey my appreciation for the XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' is being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

This academic initiative is truly commendable as it provides a platform for eminent scholars, committed teachers, and researchers to deliberate on the need for overcoming the obstacle of Digital divide and fuel the empowerment of youth and marginalized groups. The chosen theme Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups resonates with the national vision of building a knowledge-driven, equitable, and progressive society.

It is my earnest hope that the deliberations during this conference will contribute to the enrichment of knowledge, inspire transformative pedagogical practices, and encourage collaborative efforts across disciplines. Such discussions will undoubtedly play a vital role in evolving policies and plans that aim towards reducing the gaps between the rich and poor, urban and rural societies, and enable the youth and marginalized groups for equitable access to resources in the society and join the main stream to become part of a progressive and knowledge-driven nation.

I extend my warm greetings to the organizers and participants, and wish the conference a very success in achieving its noble objectives.

Smt. Manjushree N



Dr. Shobha G

Director
Department of Collegiate Education
Government of Karnataka

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my heartfelt wishes to all participants, organizers, and distinguished guests of this XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' is being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

The contemporary digital era has redefined the parameters of knowledge, communication, and opportunity. However, the persistence of a digital divide continues to reinforce structural inequalities, disproportionately affecting youth and marginalized sections of society. This divide is not merely technological but deeply social, carrying implications for education, employment, and civic participation.

In this context, the theme of the present conference assumes exceptional academic and social relevance. By engaging scholars, researchers, and practitioners in critical dialogue, the conference seeks to generate informed perspectives and practical frameworks that may contribute to inclusive digital growth and equitable access to resources. Such deliberations are vital for ensuring that technological advancement translates into social justice and empowerment. . Let us work together to bridge this divide and create a future where every individual has the opportunity to learn, connect, and thrive in the digital world.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the organizers for convening this important academic forum and convey my best wishes for fruitful discussions and significant outcomes

With warm regards,

Dr. Shobha G



Dr. A.H.M. Vijayalakshmi

Additional Director
Department of Collegiate Education
Government of Karnataka

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With warm regards,

Dr. A.H.M. Vijayalakshmi



Dr. K Ramakrishna Reddy

Joint Director
Department of Collegiate Education
Government of Karnataka

It is a matter of great pride and privilege for me to extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all the delegates, academicians, researchers, and students participating in this prestigious XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' is being organized by Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta under the aegis of Karnataka Sociology Association.

In the present era of rapid digital transformation, access to technology has become an essential prerequisite for education, employment, and social mobility. Yet, the digital divide continues to perpetuate exclusion, particularly among marginalized communities and the younger generation. This issue demands critical academic inquiry as well as policy-level interventions to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

The theme of this conference is therefore of immense significance, as it provides a forum for intellectual engagement, research-based discussions, and knowledge exchange. I am confident that the deliberations will contribute towards framing innovative strategies to bridge the digital divide and empower those who remain at the margins of the digital revolution.

I wish the conference grand success and hope it serves as a milestone in our collective journey towards building digitally empowered Bharat.

Dr. K Ramakrishna Reddy



Sri. V. Prasad

Ex- President Jilla Panchayath
Bangalore Rural, District, Karnataka

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my appreciation to the organizers of the XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups'.

In today's rapidly evolving knowledge society, access to digital tools and resources is no longer a privilege but a necessity. Yet, vast sections of our population especially marginalized communities and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds remain excluded from the opportunities that digital connectivity can provide. This digital divide not only limits educational and professional growth but also deepens existing social and economic inequalities.

This conference aims to create a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and innovation by bringing together educators, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners and aspire to identify challenges, share best practices, and chart pathways to ensure that technology becomes an enabler of equity and inclusion rather than a barrier. Empowering youth and marginalized groups through digital literacy, skill development, and access to resources is not merely a technological challenge, it is a social responsibility.

I congratulate the organizing institutions and wish the conference fruitful discussions and outcomes.

Sri. V. Prasad



Sri. B. V. Sathish Gowda

Hon'ble Director, B.D.C.C, Bank and Bangalore Dairy
Bendaganahalli, Sulibele

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Sri. B. V. Sathish Gowda



Prof. Jayashree S

President
Karnataka Sociology Association
& Former Senior Professor of Sociology,
Former Acting Vice Chancellor,
Karnatak University, Dharwad

A warm welcome to all the delegates, resource persons, speakers, guests, office bearers, organizing team, research committee conveners, members of research committees, research students, media persons and dear students for the XVII National Sociology Conference on Digital Divide: Empowerment of the youth and Marginalized groups. My Pranams to the respectful elders and stalwarts who have thought of having a professional Association of Sociology in Karnataka and named it as Karnataka Sociology Association, which was established in 1994. Since then it has been engaging in academic activities pertaining to Sociology discipline and fraternity. This year we have thought of a theme which is more relevant and significant to modern society.

Our conference motto is to empower the youth and the marginalized groups through digital inclusion which will strengthen and enhance social cohesion, and drives to sustainable development. We are living in a society where technology rules our day today life. Earlier we were confined to formal literacy which is the strong indicator of development, now along with conventional literacy, we are moving towards digital literacy which is part and parcel of our life. We can't have our routine without mobile, computers, cameras, iPods, and internet and at a higher level nanotechnology, biotechnology, data science, artificial intelligence. All these have changed the whole gamut of individual and social life. We are now being digitalized every day and every event of our life is totally depending on technology that is too digital technology. In this context there is a whooping question. Are we able to provide digital literacy to all the stake holders or what? This conference certainly addresses some common and critical issues related to it.

In the contemporary information age, access to digital technologies determines not only communication but also participation, opportunity, and empowerment. The digital divide, the gap between those who have effective access to digital and information technologies and those who do not; remains a crucial barrier to equitable development. While digitalization promises inclusion and innovation, it simultaneously deepens existing socio-economic and educational inequalities. Digital literacy created some vacuum, divisions, inequality, and exploitation, inferiority and superiority complexes, violence and cyber crimes. Herbert Marcuse aptly argued that, technology is not neutral in modern world, actor's inner freedoms have been curbed and people lose the ability to think critically.

For youth, digital empowerment translates into access to education, skills, employment, and civic participation. Yet, disparities in infrastructure, affordability, and digital literacy restrict large sections of young people especially from rural, tribal, economically weaker backgrounds from realizing their full potential. Bridging this gap is essential for nurturing an inclusive knowledge economy and fostering social mobility and social transformation.

For the marginalized communities, the digital divide is multidimensional intersecting with age, class, caste, gender, disability, geography. Lack of access to devices, poor connectivity, language barriers, and limited digital skills exclude them from e-governance, online education, healthcare information, and economic opportunities. Empowerment in this context should ensure digital capability, critical thinking, and inclusion. Bridging the digital divide is not merely a technological aspect it is more of a social welfare and social justice imperative. Papers in this volume concentrate and focus on the above issues which are bothering us. I take this opportunity congratulate the organizing Secretary and team for venturing into this mega publishing task.

ALL the BEST

(Prof. Jayashree S)



Dr. Murali Anand G

Principal
Government First Grade College
Sidlaghatta, Chikkaballapura District

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my appreciation to the Organizing Secretary of the XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' for realizing the event in our College which is thriving to provide education to the poor and rural students mainly drawn from weaker sections of the society which makes the theme more relevant and most needed. The digital era has opened unprecedented opportunities for growth, innovation, and knowledge-sharing. Yet, the persistence of the digital divide remains a pressing concern, especially for youth and marginalized communities who are often deprived of equal access to technology and digital resources. This disparity not only limits individual potential but also challenges the broader goals of equity and inclusive development.

The theme of this conference is both timely and significant, as it provides a valuable academic platform to deliberate on strategies that can bridge these divides and ensure that technology becomes an instrument of empowerment for all. I firmly believe that the discussions and insights emerging from this event will contribute meaningfully to research, policy, and practice in this crucial domain.

I commend the Department of Sociology and the organizing team for their efforts in hosting this important conference. It takes lot of courage and hard work to organize such a huge event in a small town like Sidlaghatta which calls for a big applause and I wholeheartedly wish a resounding success.

(Dr. Murali Anand G)



Dr. Adinarayanappa N A

Associate Professor of Sociology
Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta
& Secretary Karnataka Sociology Association

It is my pride and privilege to host the XVII National Sociology Conference on 'Digital Divide: Empowerment of the Youth and Marginalized Groups' being organized at Government First Grade College, Sidlaghatta. The theme of the conference addresses one of the most critical challenges of the 21st century. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and widespread digitalization, access to digital tools and resources has become central to education, employment, social participation, and overall empowerment. However, the benefits of digital technology are not equitably distributed. Significant sections of society, particularly young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalized communities remain on the periphery, unable to leverage the opportunities offered by digital connectivity.

This conference seeks to critically examine the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to the digital divide. By bringing together academicians, sociologists, educators, policymakers, and practitioners, it aims to generate evidence-based insights and policy recommendations that can promote digital inclusion. The conference emphasizes strategies for empowering the youth and marginalized communities through skill development, digital literacy programmes, equitable access to technology, and participatory approaches that integrate social, economic, and cultural considerations.

Ultimately, the theme underscores the belief that digital technology, if harnessed inclusively, can serve as a powerful tool for social justice, empowerment, and transformative change. The deliberations in this conference aim to contribute to bridging the gap between technological potential and social equity, fostering a society where every individual can participate meaningfully in the digital age.

I extend a warm welcome to all the delegates and wish a grand success.

Dr. Adinarayanappa. N A

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AND THE DIGITAL INCLUSION AGENDA: A PATHWAY TO EQUITABLE GROWTH IN INDIA

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Abstract

The digital divide continues to limit equitable access to technology, digital skills, and online services, disproportionately affecting rural populations, women, and marginalized communities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provides a strategic framework for addressing these disparities by supporting digital infrastructure, literacy programs, and inclusive technology initiatives. This paper explores the role of CSR in advancing the digital inclusion agenda, drawing on recent data from TRAI, World Bank, UN SDGs, and CSR India 2024 reports to illustrate both progress and persistent challenges. Case studies from Indian companies such as Infosys, TCS, Wipro, and Reliance Jio demonstrate how corporate interventions can empower communities through skill development, digital finance, and access to technology. Despite significant growth in internet and broadband penetration, rural areas and disadvantaged groups remain underserved, highlighting the need for targeted, sustainable, and collaborative efforts. The paper concludes by advocating for strategic CSR initiatives aligned with national policies like Digital India, public–private partnerships, and long-term monitoring to ensure impactful digital empowerment. By integrating CSR with the digital inclusion agenda, corporations can foster social equity, economic participation, and sustainable development while contributing to global Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Digital Inclusion, Digital Divide, Digital Literacy, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Introduction

Digital inclusion has emerged as a key determinant of socio-economic progress in the 21st century. While the expansion of digital technologies has revolutionized communication, education, and commerce, millions remain excluded from this transformation due to unequal access, affordability, and literacy. In India, the Digital India

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Mission aims to empower citizens through technology, yet bridging the last-mile connectivity gap remains a challenge.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), mandated under the Companies Act, 2013, has evolved from philanthropic giving to a strategic instrument for nation-building. Increasingly, corporations are aligning CSR with national priorities such as digital empowerment, education, and skills development, thereby contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Understanding Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion is more than providing internet access; it encompasses:

- Accessibility – ensuring affordable infrastructure, devices, and connectivity.
- Digital Literacy – equipping individuals with skills to effectively use digital tools.
- Usability & Relevance – creating content and services tailored to diverse communities.
- Equity – addressing socio-economic, gender, and geographical disparities.

The digital divide disproportionately affects rural populations, women, marginalized groups, and economically disadvantaged communities. In education, for example, students in urban areas with internet access have a distinct advantage over rural students who lack connectivity. Similarly, small businesses without digital tools struggle to compete in a technology-driven economy.

CSR and its Relevance to Digital Inclusion

CSR offers corporations a platform to contribute to digital equity in three major ways:

1. Infrastructure Development – Supporting rural broadband, community Wi-Fi, and ICT facilities.
2. Capacity Building – Training programs in digital literacy, coding, and online safety.
3. Inclusive Access to Services – Encouraging e-governance, online banking, telemedicine, and digital marketplaces.

These initiatives align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

- SDG 4: Quality Education (through e-learning initiatives)
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (through digital skills for employability)

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- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (through ICT investment)
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (bridging socio-economic digital gaps)

Thus, CSR can be a strategic tool not only for corporate reputation but also for creating long-term societal value.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of CSR in promoting digital inclusion in India, focusing on access, affordability, and digital literacy.
2. To analyze the initiatives of major Indian corporations (Infosys, TCS, Wipro, Reliance Jio) in bridging the digital divide through technology-led CSR programs.
3. To assess the impact of CSR-driven digital programs on marginalized communities, rural populations, and women in terms of education, skill development, and employability.
4. To propose recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of CSR interventions aimed at achieving inclusive digital empowerment in line with national policies and SDGs.

Review of Literature

Several studies have highlighted the intersection of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the Digital Inclusion Agenda, emphasizing the role of businesses in bridging the digital divide.

Carroll (1999) conceptualized CSR as a multi-dimensional responsibility involving economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic aspects. Within this framework, digital inclusion initiatives can be positioned as both ethical obligations and strategic contributions to social development.

Castells (2000) described the rise of the network society, stressing how digital access determines participation in the modern economy. This reinforces the need for corporate efforts to ensure marginalized communities are not excluded.

World Bank (2021) reported that nearly 3 billion people globally remain offline, with the majority concentrated in developing countries. This underlines the urgency of CSR projects that enhance connectivity, digital literacy, and affordability.

CSR in India: According to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA, 2023), Indian companies spent over ₹25,000 crore under CSR, with education and skill development (including digital literacy) being among the top areas of

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investment. Kapur & Shrivastava (2020) found that Indian IT companies such as Infosys, TCS, and Wipro have increasingly aligned CSR activities with digital empowerment, contributing to rural e-literacy and ICT training. UNESCO (2022) highlighted that digital skills are now as critical as basic literacy, calling for multi-stakeholder collaborations, where corporates play a pivotal role. Google & Tata Trust's Internet Saathi program has been studied as a successful model (Sundararajan, 2019), showing how CSR-led initiatives can empower rural women through digital literacy. European Commission (2020) emphasized CSR's role in advancing the digital agenda across Europe, where corporations are encouraged to support digital education, cybersecurity awareness, and inclusive access.

Together, these studies confirm that CSR is not just philanthropic but a strategic tool for addressing digital inequality. Corporations that invest in digital inclusion are simultaneously building social capital, future-ready workforces, and long-term market expansion.

CSR Provisions in India

In India, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is governed by Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates certain companies to allocate a portion of their profits for social development activities. Companies that meet any of the following criteria in the preceding financial year are required to comply: a net worth of ₹500 crore or more, an annual turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or a net profit of ₹5 crore or more. Eligible companies must spend at least 2% of their average net profits from the last three years on CSR initiatives. To ensure proper implementation, each company is required to form a CSR Committee within the Board, responsible for designing the CSR policy, recommending projects, and monitoring execution.

The scope of CSR activities is defined in Schedule VII of the Companies Act and includes areas such as eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting education and healthcare, ensuring gender equality, advancing environmental sustainability, supporting skill development, preserving cultural heritage, and contributing to government relief funds. Recent directives emphasize impact-oriented CSR, encouraging companies to focus on measurable outcomes and initiatives that align with national development goals and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Digital literacy, technology access, and skill development have become key priority areas under this framework, reflecting the evolving nature of CSR in India.

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CSR and Digital Inclusion: India's Progress

According to CSR India 2024, Indian corporates spent a record ₹34,909 crore on CSR in FY 2023–24, representing a 13% annual increase. Around 59,634 CSR projects were implemented, with technology-based education and skill programs showing the fastest growth.

- TRAI (2024) notes that India's internet subscribers crossed 950 million, yet rural broadband penetration remains below 37%, underscoring the continuing digital divide.
- NASSCOM Foundation (2024) reveals that 83% of technology firms spend more than the mandatory 2% on CSR, with over 2,610 CSR projects focused on education and digital empowerment.

Major Indian Corporate Initiatives

❖ **Infosys Foundation**

- Established digital classrooms in 100 rural schools across Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
- Partnered with Common Services Centres (CSCs) to upskill 6 crore rural youth.
- The Infosys Springboard initiative has digitally trained over 10 million learners, with 4.8 million completed by FY 2022.

❖ **Reliance Jio**

- With 488 million users, Jio is India's largest telecom network, extending 5G access to 95% of villages.
- Collaborated with the government's INDIA AI initiative (₹10,371 crore) to expand AI-driven digital learning.
- Jio's low-cost connectivity transformed rural inclusion, facilitating online education and financial services.

❖ **TCS iON**

- Provides digital learning platforms to 12.7 million learners and partners with 500+ training organizations.
- Conducted 3,180 large-scale exams for 200 million candidates, digitizing India's examination ecosystem.
- Holds 80% market share in digital assessment services.

Wipro Ltd.

- Invested ₹107 crore in digital inclusion projects, training 2.41 lakh students and 21,000+ teachers.

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- Reached 4.5 million beneficiaries through 225+ projects across 17 countries.
- Collaborated with NASSCOM Future Skills to train 10,000 engineering students in AI, IoT, and cybersecurity.

Issues and Challenges

Despite the positive contributions of CSR initiatives to digital inclusion in India, several issues and challenges limit their effectiveness:

1. **Geographical Disparities**
    - Many CSR-driven digital programs are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural and remote regions underserved.
    - Aspirational districts with limited infrastructure often receive minimal corporate attention.
2. **Digital Infrastructure Gaps**
    - Inadequate internet connectivity and lack of access to devices hinder the reach and effectiveness of digital inclusion programs.
    - Limited availability of reliable broadband and electricity in certain regions affects program sustainability.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation Deficiencies**
    - Absence of systematic long-term monitoring and impact assessment makes it difficult to measure the success and scalability of initiatives.
    - Lack of standardized indicators for digital literacy and digital inclusion outcomes limits comparability across programs.
4. **Socioeconomic and Cultural Barriers**
    - Low levels of digital literacy among women and marginalized communities reduce program uptake.
    - Resistance to technology adoption due to cultural norms, lack of awareness, or fear of new tools can impede engagement.

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Analysis and Discussion

The examination of CSR-driven digital inclusion initiatives in India reveals a distinct shift from traditional philanthropic approaches to strategically focused interventions. Corporations are increasingly leveraging technology as a tool to enhance education, digital literacy, and employability, thereby addressing the persistent digital divide.

The discussion highlights that while these initiatives have made significant strides, challenges remain. CSR efforts often display geographical and demographic imbalances, with urban regions receiving greater attention compared to remote and aspirational districts. In addition, gaps in long-term monitoring and evaluation hinder the assessment of sustained social impact.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that strategically aligned CSR programs—particularly those that integrate with national missions like Digital India and Skill India—can enhance effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability. Cross-sector collaborations between corporates, government, and civil society are crucial for maximizing outreach and ensuring that digital empowerment initiatives translate into inclusive socioeconomic benefits.

Recommendations

- Integrate CSR with Digital India Mission to align objectives and share infrastructure.
- Target aspirational districts for inclusive technology and digital literacy programs.
- Encourage consortium models—joint CSR projects among tech firms, NGOs, and academia.
- Focus on AI, data literacy, and cyber awareness to future-proof inclusion efforts.
- Adopt transparent impact metrics aligned with SDG indicators for digital empowerment.

Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a vital mechanism for promoting digital inclusion in India, enabling equitable access to technology, digital literacy, and skill development. The study highlights that strategic, technology-driven CSR initiatives by companies such as Infosys, TCS, Wipro, and Reliance Jio have made meaningful contributions toward bridging the digital divide, particularly for rural populations, women, and marginalized communities.

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While significant progress has been achieved, challenges including regional disparities, infrastructure gaps, and limited long-term monitoring persist. To ensure sustainable impact, CSR initiatives must be strategically aligned with national programs such as *Digital India* and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reinforced through collaborative partnerships among corporates, government, and civil society.

Ultimately, CSR-driven digital inclusion not only empowers individuals with essential skills and access but also contributes to broader socioeconomic development, fostering inclusive growth and creating pathways for long-term digital empowerment across the country.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN GOA

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ABSTRACT

This study systematically examines the role of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in promoting women's financial inclusion in Vasco Baina Slum, Goa, within the broader context of India's ongoing digitalisation initiatives. Utilising a survey of 100 women, the research employs regression analysis to identify demographic determinants influencing UPI adoption, factor analysis to ascertain key drivers, and descriptive statistics to evaluate UPI's impact on access to formal financial services. Findings indicate that income levels and smartphone ownership are the primary predictors, accounting for over 60% of the variance in adoption rates. Furthermore, five principal determinants of UPI usage are identified, with "UPI Usage and Adoption" being the most significant factor, followed by "Trust and Confidence in UPI" and "Convenience and Confidence." The study concludes that, while UPI has substantially enhanced financial inclusion by enabling secure, convenient, and inclusive digital payments, economic constraints and limited smartphone penetration remain significant barriers to broader adoption. Policy recommendations include expanding access to affordable smartphones and enhancing digital literacy, particularly in rural regions, to bolster financial inclusion. These insights underscore the potential of digital payments to foster inclusive economic growth across India.

Keywords: *UPI, Financial Inclusion, Digital Transformation, Women, Regression Analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

India's transition to digital has been characterized by the mass adoption of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), a platform that has transformed money transactions. The convenience, affordability, and instant nature of UPI have substantially contributed to financial inclusion, making banking services accessible to millions of individuals who previously had no access to them. Especially in rural and remote areas, UPI has reduced cash dependence and introduced people to digital finance.

UPI Transactions Summary by Year

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Year	No. of Banks live on UPI	Volume (in Mn)	Value (in Cr.)
2023	5483	117641.09	18292795.21
2024	7210	172208.01	24682520.78
2025	1961	51403.70	7021740.42

Source: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

UPI transactions have registered a strong surge from 2023 to 2024, with a steep increase in the number of banks and transactions, indicating the growing role UPI is playing in India's digital economy. The trend picks up in 2025, although there is a dip in both volume and value due to having a partial year of data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

UPI has emerged as a primary driving force for financial inclusion in India, providing access to bank accounts and reducing dependence on cash (Girish, Honnamane, & Kundu, 2023). Chakraborty, Danane, and Bhosale (2023) propose the extension of financial inclusion following demonetization using UPI, primarily facilitated by applications such as BHIM. Swaraj and Bohara (2024) were concerned with security issues, whereas Sampath (2023) examined UPI's international expansion, particularly its adoption by SMEs in Ireland. Roy, Pramanik, and Bandyopadhyay (2025) wrote about UPI's contribution to digital banking revolution, whereas Zohmingthanga, Vanlalhriati, and Renthlei (2025) mentioned its contribution in Mizoram. Yoganandham (2025) discussed the inclusion of UPI in government schemes, such as pensions, and Chugh (2023) highlighted the exponential growth of UPI. Gupta (2024) and Modi (2023) emphasized the significance of UPI in enabling interoperable payments and surmounting conventional impediments to financial services. In summary, UPI has extensively promoted financial inclusion, making digital financial services easily accessible throughout India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of UPI adoption on financial inclusion.
2. To identify key factors of UPI usage for financial inclusion.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Development of Questionnaire

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The study is empirical and exploratory. A questionnaire comprising 20 statements on UPI usage and financial inclusion will be developed, utilising a 5-point Likert scale. The final version will include demographic questions and statements measuring UPI adoption.

Sample Design and Data Collection

Data will be collected from 100 women in the Vasco Slum Area, Goa, using a convenience sampling method through Google Forms.

Tools Used for Analysis

To analyse the collected data effectively, the following statistical tools will be applied:

Descriptive Statistics: To summarise and describe the basic features of the data, providing an overview of UPI adoption and financial inclusion levels.

Regression Analysis: To assess the relationship between demographic variables (age, income, education) and UPI adoption.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table No. 1: Descriptive Statistics about Demographic Variables

Attributes	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25 Years	20	20%
	26-35 Years	33	33%
	36-45 Years	24	24%
	46 Years and Above	23	23%
Income	Below ₹10,000	40	40%
	₹10,000 - ₹25,000	35	35%
	₹25,000 - ₹50,000	15	15%
	Above ₹50,000	10	10%
Smartphone Access	No	45	45%
	Yes	55	55%

Source: Primary Data

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According to the survey conducted, Table 1 explains that the majority of women in vasco, Goa, approximately 40% of women have a monthly income of less than ₹10,000, indicating significant financial constraints within the community. Regarding smartphone access, 55% of women have access to smartphones, which is a critical factor for UPI adoption. These findings underscore the importance of accessible and affordable digital financial tools, such as UPI, in enhancing financial inclusion. For the study, a total of 100 respondents were captured through Google Forms.

Table No.2: Multiple Regression Analysis to assess Relationship between Demographic Variables and UPI Adoption

Variables	**Unstandardized Coefficients (B)**	**Standard Error (SE)**	**Standardized Coefficient (Beta)**	**t-value**	**Sig.**
Constant	1.199	0.131		9.158	0.000
Age	-0.005	0.038	-0.009	-0.143	0.886
Income	0.750	0.121	1.302	6.216	0.000
Smartphone Access	1.076	0.110	1.868	9.753	0.000

Source: Primary Data

Model Fit Summary

R value	**R^2**	**F value**	**Sig.**
0.788	0.621	38.906	0.000

The regression analysis indicates that Smartphone Access and Income significantly influence UPI adoption among women at the 0.05 significance level. The model explains 62.1% of the variation in UPI usage ($R^2 = 0.621$, $p < 0.001$), with both predictors showing strong positive effects. However, Age was not found to be a significant factor ($p = 0.886$). These findings suggest that enhancing digital access and economic capability can substantially improve financial inclusion through UPI in low-income communities.

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Table No. 3: Cronbach's Alpha for Reliability of Data

Reliability Statistics	**Value**
Cronbach's Alpha	0.823
Number of Items	30

Source: Primary data

A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.823 indicates high internal reliability of the survey data. This suggests that the data is consistent and trustworthy for further analysis, ensuring that the responses from the participants are reliable.

Table No. 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test for Factorability

Test	**Value**
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)	0.963
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square: 2481
Df	19
Sig.	.001

Source: Primary Data

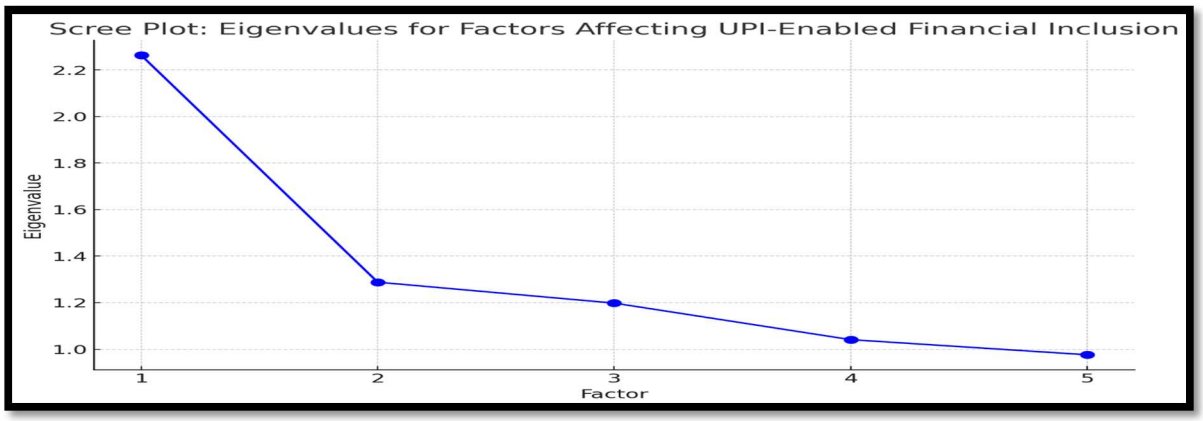
The KMO Bartlett's Test evaluates the significance of the correlation matrix and determines if the data is appropriate for factor analysis. Both the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted to confirm the data's fitness for factor analysis. A KMO value over 0.6 is deemed acceptable for this analysis.

The KMO value of **0.963** indicates excellent sampling adequacy, suggesting that the data are highly suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also yielded a chi-square value of **2481** with **19** degrees of freedom and a significance level of **p < .001**. This result confirms that the correlation matrix significantly differs from an identity matrix, further validating the data's appropriateness for factor analysis extraction.

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Figure 1: Eigenvalues for the five factors affecting UPI-enabled financial inclusion among women.



Source: Primary Data

Figure 1 presents the Scree Plot showcasing the Eigenvalues for the five factors affecting UPI-enabled financial inclusion among women in Goa. The plot illustrates how each factor contributes to the overall variance explained by the model. Notably, Factor 1, with an Eigenvalue of 2.263, represents the largest share of variance, accounting for 22.41%. It is followed by Factor 2 (Eigenvalue = 1.288, 12.76%), Factor 3 (Eigenvalue = 1.198, 11.86%), Factor 4 (Eigenvalue = 1.041, 10.31%), and Factor 5 (Eigenvalue = 0.976, 9.66%). The sharp decrease in Eigenvalues after Factor 1 highlights that these initial factors are crucial for explaining UPI adoption and financial inclusion behaviour, with the subsequent factors showing a reduced influence. This highlights the pivotal importance of the key factors in understanding the dynamics of UPI adoption and financial inclusion.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research indicates that income and access to smartphones are highly correlated with the adoption of UPI in Vasco , Goa. Regression analysis identifies that income and smartphone access correlate strongly with the adoption of UPI, explaining more than 60% of the variance in usage. The evidence also shows that although the majority of women in the community have restricted incomes, a significant percentage (55%) own smartphones, which is a fundamental enabler of UPI transactions. Factor analysis reveals five key factors driving UPI adoption, with Factor 1: UPI Usage and Adoption being the most significant, followed by Trust and Confidence in UPI (Factor 2), and Convenience and Confidence (Factor 3). These results emphasize that UPI is not only a tool for financial inclusion but also a vital medium for facilitating economic engagement among women in the slum

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The research concludes that UPI has contributed to a revolution in enhancing women's financial inclusion in Baina Vasco slum , Goa, by making digital transactions more convenient, secure, and accessible. Nonetheless, access to smartphones and income levels continue to be key factors in deciding the level of UPI adoption. The research implies that enhancing access to affordable smartphones and economic conditions can go a long way towards enhancing financial inclusion in rural communities. In addition, the identification of determinants driving UPI adoption provides useful lessons for policymakers and financial institutions to craft specific policies to promote digital financial literacy and inclusion, which in turn supports India's overall vision of digital transformation.

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HUMAN HEALTH RISK AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IN KALABURAGI DISTIRCT

Dr. Mahesh Kumar Ganwar

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Abstract:

According to WHO (2009) environmental risks have been confirmed and demonstrated to considerably impact human being health status, the impact of environmental pollution is also directly by revealing individuals to injurious agents, or in some way, by unruly life nourishing ecosystems. However, the precise role of various environmental factors to the progress of death and disease cannot be exactly determined; the World Health Organization (WHO) has approximately stated that, 13 million deaths per annum are attributable to avoidable environmental problems or causes. Objectives of the study Keeping in mind the current research problem the few significant aims of the study are framed and those as follows. To study the knowledge attitude and practice among the respondents related to different types of pollutions. To understand the human health risk due to cement dust exposure among the respondents. To analyses the quality of water, soil and air of the studied area from the prospective of habital destruction. Kalaburagi (officially Kalaburagi, also known as Kalaburagi) district is a one of the backward district in the state of Karnataka, India. It is the administrative headquarters of the Kalaburagi District of the North Karnataka region. Kalaburagi is 623 km north of the state capital of Bengaluru and 220 km from Hyderabad.In view of the limitations of the study and researcher, all the factors were considering such as, time factor, nature of the research and the other factors, it was planned to study a total sample of 800 residents of the selected places where mining and industries are existed and working of the study area.

Key Word: Environmental, Exposure, Pollutions, Approximately

INTRODUCTION:

The environment or our surrounding are severely affects our health in a multiple of ways. The interface between human being health and the surroundings has been widely studied by the several workers across the globe.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Keeping in mind the current research problem the few significant aims of the study are framed and those as follows.

- To study the knowledge attitude and practice among the respondents related to different types of pollutions.
- To understand the human health risk due to cement dust exposure among the respondents.
- To analyses the quality of water, soil and air of the studied area from the prospective of habitat destruction.

Hypothesis:

Environmental pollution, particularly from cement dust and related industrial activities in the Kalaburagi District, significantly increases the risk of negative health outcomes and diseases among the local population.

STUDY AREA:

Kalaburagi (officially Kalaburagi, also known as Kalaburagi) district is a one of the backward district in the state of Karnataka, India. It is the administrative headquarters of the Kalaburagi District of the North Karnataka region. Kalaburagi is 623 km north of the state capital of Bengaluru and 220 km from Hyderabad.

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLE SELECTION PROCEDURE:

In view of the limitations of the study and researcher, all the factors were considering such as, time factor, nature of the research and the other factors, it was planned to study a total sample of 80 residents of the selected places where mining and industries are existed and working of the study area.

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It has been already noted in previous sections that, due to the limitations of the present study, only 80 respondents were selected from all the backgrounds of the study area. During the study period, best suitable efforts like purposive of sampling method were used to collect information from respondents, all of them as provided information with reference to their opinion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table-1.1 : Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	18	22.5
31-40	27	33.75
41 to 60	23	28.75
More than 60	12	15.0
Total	**80**	**100.00**

The above table data table 1.1 indicate that, total about 80 respondents were interviewed for the present study. Among the total respondents about 18 (22.70 percentage) were between age group 20 years to 30 years, 33.00 percentage of respondents were between 31 years to 40 years age, 28.75 percentage of respondents were between 41years to 60 years age group respectively.

Table-1.2 : Marital status of the respondents

Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Married	43	53.75
Separated	15	18.75
Divorced	10	12.5
Widowed	12	15
Total	80	100.00

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The above table no 1.2 explain about marital status of the respondents of the present study. The data reveals that among total respondents about 53.75 percentage were married, followed by separated are about 18.75 percentage, divorced about 12.5 percentage ad widowed are about 15 percentage respectively.

Table-1.3 :Respondent's opinion on existence of cement mines are in operation in study area

Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1-9 years	2	2.5
10 – 14 years	05	6.25
20-25 years	21	42
30-39 years	23	28.75
40-49 years	17	21.25
Over 50 years	12	15
Total	**80**	**100.00**

The above table1.3 indicate that, the existence of the cement mines in the study area. According to the opinions of the respondents, 48.75 percentage of the respondents are said to be that from past 50 years the mining activity is existed in the study area, 21.25 percentage of respondents are stated that, the mining of cement is existed about 40 to 49 years, 28.75 percentage were felt that from 30 to 39 years the cement mining is existed in the study area, 42 percentage were felt that from 20 to 25 years the cement mining activity is continued in the study area.

Table-1.4 :Respondent's opinion on type of pollution produced by cement mines

Particular	Frequency	Percentage
Air pollution	21	26.25
Water pollution	10	12.5

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Soil pollution	11	13.75
Sound pollution	16	20
Noise pollution	11	13.75
Dust pollution	9	11.25
Other type pollution	2	2.5
Total	80	100.00

The above table1.4 indicate that, respondent opinion on type of pollution produced by the cement mines of the study area. According to the opinions of the respondents, more than half of the respondents of the present study are about 13.75 percentage of the respondents are said to be noise pollution is more due to the existence of mines, 26.25 percentage of respondents are stated that, air pollution is more due to mining activity, about 11.25 percentage stated that, dust pollution is more due to the working of mines in the surrounding area respectively.

Table-1.5 :Respondent's opinion about what type of impact observed due to existed pollution

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Pollution of water	8	10
Streams of lakes water polluted	10	12.5
Un potable water	17	21.25
Depletion of water quality of Open wells	10	12.5
Lack of potable water	23	28.75
Not applicable	12	15
Total	**80**	**100.00**

The above table1.5 indicate that, the existence of the cement mines and their impact on human health people of the study area. According to the opinions of the respondents, 28.75 percentage of the respondents are

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said to be that lack of portable water problem existed due to the mining activity, 15 percentage of respondents are stated that, the mining of cement no impact or this is not applicable to them, about 21.25 percentage stated that, un potable water, followed by 12.5 percentage were felt that depletion of water quality was observed in the study area due to the mining of cement industries the cement mining, 12.5 percentage were felt that the cement mining activity is polluted the natural water resources of eh study area and 10 percentage of the respondents were stated that, the existed cement mines are polluted the natural lakes or rives or streams of the study area.

Table-1.6: Respondents' knowledge on cement dust has great impact on human health

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	70	87.5
No	10	12.5
Total	**80**	**100.00**

The data analysis of the above tabled indicate that, majority of the respondents are about 87.5 percentage were felt that the dust has severely impact the health of the humans and about only 12.5 percentage of respondents were felt that dust has no impact on human health.

Conclusion:

The present study results indicate that, human health is always connected with surrounds of the habitats where we are living. The health is more important factor in any individual life and due to the pollution or pollutant the health is seriously affected at various level. The present study shows that, the natural resources affected pollutants are impact on the health status of the human beings. The contaminated food and environment has more impact on human health. The heavy activity of the mining in the study area is producing huge amount of pollutant in to the environment and affecting the health of the people.


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ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN THE FORMATION AND MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF CHINCHOLI TALUKA, KALABURAGI DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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Abstract:-

Kalaburagi is endowed with numerous potential tourist destinations that remain largely untapped. There is an urgent need for government intervention to systematically develop these sites. Among the prominent areas with high tourism potential is **Chincholi Taluka,** which is characterized by vast forested landscapes and scenic natural attractions such as **Chandrampalli Dam, Gottamagotti Hills**, and **Othapotha Waterfalls**. Despite their rich ecological and aesthetic value, these sites continue to be underdeveloped due to inadequate tourism infrastructure, weak branding and marketing strategies, limited advertisement, and the absence of comprehensive planning.

This paper examines the **issues and challenges involved in developing Chincholi Taluka as a tourism destination of international standards,** with a special focus on **community-based tourism (CBT)** as a tool for **local socioeconomic empowerment.**Using a **mixed-methods case-study approach,** the research identifies structural, institutional, capacity-related, that hinder local participation and benefits from tourism. It also assesses community attitudes, income diversification potential, and the readiness of local institutions to manage CBT initiatives effectively. The findings are used to propose a practical CBT model emphasizing **local governance, skill development, resilient infrastructure,** and **market linkages.** The paper concludes with targeted **policy recommendations** and a strategic **action plan** to transform Chincholi into a vibrant **ecotourism hub of North Karnataka.**

Key words: Community based Tourism(CBT), Formation, Management,Tourism Infrastructure, Sustainable Tourism, Community participation,Benefits

1.Introduction:

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a critical component of sustainable tourism development, emphasizing the active involvement of local communities in planning, managing, and benefiting from tourism activities. It seeks to generate alternative livelihood opportunities, reduce poverty, and foster inclusive growth by

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positioning communities as primary stakeholders rather than passive beneficiaries (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). Unlike conventional tourism models, which are often dominated by external investors and top-down governance structures, CBT focuses on community ownership, participatory decision-making, and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms (Scheyvens, 1999). In the Indian context, tourism has evolved as a strategic sector contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, and rural development. Rural and semi-rural regions across the country are endowed with diverse natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, traditional knowledge systems, handicrafts, and unique lifestyles, all of which hold substantial potential to attract both domestic and international tourists (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2023). However, despite this inherent potential, many rural destinations remain underdeveloped and underutilized, primarily due to inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing, fragmented planning, and insufficient community engagement (Bhatia, 2013).Although CBT is conceptually rooted in bottom-up participatory planning, in practice, its implementation often remains top-down, led by governmental agencies, NGOs, or private actors. This disconnect can be attributed to limited awareness, organizational capacity, and technical skills among local communities, which hinder their effective participation in tourism development processes (Cornelissen, 2005). Enhancing community capacity through awareness creation, skill development, institutional support, and policy facilitation is therefore crucial for the success and sustainability of CBT initiatives. Across various regions in India, successful CBT models illustrate its potential as an effective instrument for rural transformation and cultural preservation. Notable examples include community-managed homestays in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, eco-tourism initiatives in Kerala, and cultural village tourism projects in the North Eastern states (Das & Chatterjee, 2015; Gurung & Seeland, 2011). These initiatives have demonstrated how local communities, when empowered, can deliver authentic tourism experiences while simultaneously enhancing their own socio-economic well-being. Moreover, CBT has contributed to the revival of traditional art forms, protection of cultural heritage, and promotion of environmental conservation, aligning closely with the goals of sustainable development.

2 .Objectives of the Study

The present study has been undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. **To identify** the major tourism sites located in **Chincholi Taluka of Kalaburagi District,** Karnataka.

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2. **To examine** the **tourism potential** of these sites and assess the **extent of community involvement** in tourism-related activities.
3. **To recommend appropriate measures** for the **development of tourism infrastructure** in these locations, with a focus on sustainable practices.
4. **To create awareness** among the **local population** regarding the **anticipated socio-economic and cultural benefits** of Community-Based Tourism (CBT).
5. **To sensitize policymakers and stakeholders** about the **need to promote and develop CBT initiatives** in the region to ensure inclusive and sustainable tourism growth

3. Methodology

Research Design and Data Collection

The study combines **primary and secondary data sources:**

Primary Data: Household Surveys: Structured questionnaires were administered to a representative sample of local households to collect data on residents' perceptions of tourism, participation levels, and expectations regarding economic and social benefits.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including **community leaders, local government officials, tourism operators, and representatives of NGOs,** to gather qualitative insights into the management, challenges, and opportunities associated with CBT.

Participant Observation: Direct observation of community activities, tourism operations, and local cultural events was undertaken to document **practices, community engagement, and cultural expressions** related to tourism.

Secondary Data: Document Analysis: Relevant policy documents, government reports, census data, tourism development plans, and scholarly literature on CBT were analyzed to contextualize findings and provide background information on regional tourism potential.

Sampling Strategy A **purposive and stratified sampling approach** was employed to ensure representation of diverse stakeholders and households:

For household surveys, **50 households** across the selected villages were chosen based on proximity to tourist sites, economic dependence on tourism, and demographic diversity.

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For interviews, 50 stakeholders representing community organizations, government departments, and tourism service providers were selected to ensure a broad range of perspectives.

4. Community Based Tourism and Ecotourism

Community Based tourism is not the same as ecotourism, though it is an overlapping concept. Community Based Eco Tourism is a form of Eco Tourism where the local community has control over, and is involved in its development and management with a major share of the benefits remaining within the community. CBT is closely linked to ecotourism, but it offers a more concrete concept by stating the type and degree of participation and involvement for local people, and the associated costs (Halstead 2003 : 7). So, Community Based tourism is more people-centred, community- oriented, and resource–based than ecotourism (Armstrong et al 2005 quoted in Manis 2008; 48). The idea behind the community–based approach is to create potential for empowering the community, enhancing their involvement in decision making and ensure that the will and incentive to participate come from the community itself (Amstrong et al 2003:2). Local people must be able to control and manage productive resources in the interest of their own families and the community. Therefore, it is also important that a responsible proportion of tourism revenues are enjoyed by the community in one way or another.

5. Benefits of Tourism to the Community

The anticipated benefits of CBT are three (Rozemeijer, 2001, p. 13):

(1) CBT generates income and employment and ,as such contributes to rural development – a benefit that especially applies in remote areas;

(2) the benefits derived from the use of natural resources for tourism will prompt the community to use these valuable resources in a sustainable way; and

(3) CBT adds value to the national tourism product through diversification of tourism, increasing volume and economies of scale.

6.Tourism places of Chincholi Taluka

1. Chandrampalli 2.Gottamgotti 3.Othapotha

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Chincholi taluka of kalaburgi district is also known as Are-malenadu with Tourism hub of Kunchavaram forest, chandrampalli dam and Gottamgotti hill station, Othapotha water falls.

7. Formation of Tourism Infrastructure

The development of tourism infrastructure is a **key prerequisite** for promoting Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and enhancing the overall accessibility and attractiveness of tourist destinations in **Chincholi Taluka**. Robust infrastructure not only facilitates tourist inflow but also ensures that local communities can actively participate in and benefit from tourism activities.

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7.1 Transport and Connectivity

Chincholi Taluka is strategically located near major urban centers such as **Kalaburagi, Bidar, Tandur, and Zaheerabad** and lies approximately **100 km from Hyderabad,** a major metropolitan hub. Its proximity to the **Hyderabad-Mumbai national highway** presents a significant advantage for tourism development. To fully leverage this, it is essential to establish a **well-planned network of all-weather roads** connecting the taluka to district headquarters, neighboring towns, and the national highway. Enhanced connectivity will facilitate smooth travel for tourists, improve the transport of goods and services, and enable local communities to access markets, training, and tourism-related opportunities.

7.2 Accommodation Facilities

To attract and accommodate tourists, a range of **lodging options** should be developed. This includes **community-run home stays, eco-lodges, guest houses, and small hotels,** emphasizing comfort, cultural authenticity, and sustainability. Properly managed accommodation facilities can generate **direct income for local residents** while promoting cultural exchange and enhancing the visitor experience.

7.3 Utilities and Basic Amenities

Essential utilities, including **reliable electricity, clean drinking water, waste management systems, and proper drainage,** are critical for sustainable tourism development. The availability of such services ensures that both tourists and community members experience a **safe and comfortable environment,** while also supporting local tourism enterprises.

7.4 Sanitation and Hygiene Facilities

Sanitation and hygiene are vital for maintaining the **health and well-being of visitors and residents.** Public toilets, proper sewage disposal, and waste segregation mechanisms should be established at tourist sites, markets, and transport hubs. Awareness campaigns and community participation in maintaining cleanliness will further strengthen the **sustainability of tourism initiatives.**

8. Gottamgotti Hills

Gottamgotti Hills is another important natural attraction in Chincholi Taluka, known for its **undulating terrain, scenic views, and cultural significance.** With proper planning, the site can be developed into a **nature-based adventure and heritage tourism destination.** The following infrastructure initiatives are proposed:

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1. **Hilltop Viewpoints and Watchtowers:**

   The hilltops provide panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Strategically placed **viewpoints and watchtowers** can be developed for tourists to enjoy sunrise and sunset views. These structures can be built using eco-friendly materials to blend with the natural surroundings.

2. **Trekking and Nature Trails:**

   The hills are well-suited for **organized trekking routes, guided nature walks, and birdwatching trails,** appealing to adventure tourists, students, and nature enthusiasts. Signages, resting shelters, and safety measures should be incorporated to ensure a secure and enjoyable experience.

3. **Adventure Sports Facilities:**

   The topography of the area allows for the development of **rock climbing, zip-lining,** and **rappelling activities** under trained supervision. Such facilities will attract youth and adventure-seeking visitors, adding diversity to the tourism offerings in the region.

9. Integrated Planning Across Sites

While each site has its **unique tourism potential,** their development must follow an **integrated planning framework** to ensure **connectivity, consistency in visitor experience, and sustainability.** Proper **transport links, signage systems, digital promotion,** and **community participation mechanisms** should connect these sites as part of a **larger tourism circuit** in Chincholi Taluka

10.Conclusion:

Chincholi Taluka has the potential to become one of the most significant tourism hubs in **North Karnataka**, owing to its rich natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and ecological resources. However, as this study has highlighted, the **formation and management of Community-Based Tourism (CBT)** in the region face several structural, institutional, infrastructural, and environmental challenges. Inadequate tourism infrastructure, limited branding and marketing strategies, poor promotional activities, and the absence of integrated planning have collectively restricted the growth of tourism in this area. For Chincholi to develop into a **tourism destination of international standards,** the government must take the lead in formulating clear **policies, infrastructure development plans,** and **capacity-building programs** that are tailored to the unique characteristics of the region. Equally crucial is the **active participation of local communities** in every phase of tourism development. By

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positioning local residents as **central stakeholders**—in planning, decision-making, implementation, and benefit-sharing—CBT can effectively contribute to **socioeconomic empowerment,** employment generation, and sustainable livelihoods.

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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL GAP: CHALLENGES OF VELIP TRIBAL WIDOWS IN ACCESSING TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

The **digital revolution's benefits are unevenly distributed in India**, creating a stark digital divide, particularly for the most marginalized. This article examines the intersectional crisis of **gender, tribal identity, geographic isolation, and widowhood** that creates formidable barriers to technology access for **Velip tribal widows** (primarily in Goa and the Konkan region).

The challenge is multifaceted, rooted in:

1) Economic and Infrastructural Barriers (prohibitive cost of devices/data, poor network connectivity, and lack of household digital assets);

2) Digital Illiteracy and Skill Gap (low foundational literacy, and the absence of localized, culturally sensitive training programs); and

3) Socio-Cultural Constraints (patriarchal norms restricting technology use by widows, social isolation reducing access to information, and a lack of trust/perceived relevance of digital platforms).

This exclusion results in severe repercussions, including **cutting them off from digitized government welfare schemes, limiting livelihood opportunities, hampering access to vital health information, and impeding social empowerment.**

Keywords: Affordable, Infrastructure, Digital Literacy, Velip tribal community, geographical isolation

Introduction:

The digital revolution promises to democratize information, services, and opportunities, yet its benefits remain unevenly distributed. In India, the **digital divide** is particularly stark for marginalized communities, and an even more vulnerable sub-section is **widows from Scheduled Tribes (ST)**, such as the **Velip tribal community** (primarily found in Goa and parts of coastal Maharashtra/Karnataka). These women face an intersectional crisis of gender, tribal identity, geographic isolation, and widowhood, which collectively creates

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formidable barriers to accessing and utilizing modern technology. Addressing this gap is critical for social justice, economic empowerment, and ensuring their inclusion in the nation's development narrative.

Review of Literature:

Intersectional Digital Exclusion in Marginalized Tribal Communities. The proposed article examines a critical, under-researched dimension of the digital divide in India: the compounded exclusion faced by **Velip tribal widows** in the geographically isolated regions of Goa and the Konkan. The existing literature establishes a robust framework for understanding the broader challenges, but a specific intersectional analysis of this highly vulnerable sub-group is crucial for targeted policy recommendations.

1. The Multi-Dimensional Digital Divide in India

The literature consistently defines the digital divide as a multi-layered phenomenon extending beyond mere access to technology, encompassing disparities in **digital literacy/skills** and **meaningful use** (Source 1.1, 1.2, 1.3).

- **Socio-Economic and Geographical Barriers:** Numerous studies highlight that the digital divide in India is a reflection of long-standing socio-economic disparities (Source 1.5). Marginalized communities, including **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, face significant barriers rooted in **economic inequality** (ill affordability of devices/data) and **geographical isolation** (poor network coverage, unreliable electricity) (Source 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3). Rural and remote ST populations are systematically disadvantaged, with low rates of household computer ownership and internet access compared to other caste groups (Source 1.4, 3.3).
- **Implications of Exclusion:** The consequences of this exclusion are severe, resulting in limited access to digitized **government welfare schemes** (e-governance), crucial **health information**, and **educational/employment opportunities** (Source 1.3, 3.3). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly amplified these repercussions, especially in the areas of education and healthcare (Source 1.4, 3.3).

The Multi-Layered Challenge

The challenges faced by Velip tribal widows in accessing technology are multifaceted, stemming from economic, geographical, social, and psychological factors:

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1. Economic and Infrastructural Barriers

- **Affordability:** As widows, these women often lose the primary income earner and face severe financial constraints. The cost of digital devices (smartphones, laptops) and recurring expenses like **internet data plans** are prohibitively high, making technology a luxury rather than a necessity.
- **Poor Connectivity:** Velip communities often reside in remote, hilly, or forested areas characteristic of tribal settlements. This **geographical isolation** leads to **weak or non-existent mobile network coverage** and unreliable electricity supply, rendering digital devices useless even if they could be afforded.
- **Lack of Digital Assets:** The household may not own a reliable digital device. When a single device exists, it is often prioritized for the male head of the family or children's education, leaving the women, particularly widows, with **no independent access**.

2. Digital Illiteracy and Skill Gap

- **Low Literacy Rates:** Overall literacy, especially for women in many tribal communities, remains lower than the national average. This foundational barrier makes acquiring **digital literacy**—the ability to use, understand, and create content on digital platforms—an immense hurdle.
- **Absence of Localized Training:** Digital literacy programs often fail to penetrate deep tribal pockets. Where they exist, they may not be **culturally sensitive or available in the local dialect**, making learning ineffective. There is also a lack of continuous support and refresher training necessary to build confidence.

3. Socio-Cultural Constraints and Gendered Digital Exclusion

- **Patriarchal Norms:** Deeply entrenched **patriarchal norms** often dictate that technology use is a male domain. Widows, already marginalized by social stigma and restrictive customs following the death of their husband, may face added restrictions on mobility and independent use of modern communication tools.
- **Lack of Social Capital:** Widowhood often leads to social isolation, reducing their access to information networks and social support crucial for adopting new technologies. Fear of misuse, cyber-fraud, or societal judgment further restricts their willingness to engage with digital platforms.

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- **Relevance and Trust:** Many government e-governance or welfare schemes require digital access, but the women may not **perceive the direct relevance of the technology to their immediate livelihood needs** (like gathering forest produce or basic agriculture), or they may not trust digital transactions.

Implications of the Digital Exclusion

The inability of Velip tribal widows to access technology has severe repercussions on their lives and the broader goal of inclusive national development:

- **Exclusion from Welfare Schemes:** They are cut off from accessing crucial information about **government pensions, food security schemes, and direct benefit transfers** that are increasingly digitized, prolonging their poverty and vulnerability.
- **Limited Livelihood Opportunities:** Technology can offer skills training, market access for handicrafts, and alternative income streams. Digital exclusion traps them in low-wage or informal labor with no scope for entrepreneurial growth.

Path to Digital Inclusion: Recommendations

Bridging this critical digital gap requires a concerted, multi-stakeholder strategy that goes beyond simply distributing hardware:

1. **Localized and Affordable Infrastructure:**
   - Prioritize the deployment of **low-cost, sustainable community-level Internet connectivity** (e.g., solar-powered Wi-Fi hotspots at community centers).
   - Subsidized or donated digital devices tailored for low-literacy users, with **regional language interfaces**.
2. **Contextualized Digital Literacy:**
   - Launch **women-centric digital literacy programs** delivered by local facilitators, focusing on practical skills like accessing welfare portals, digital finance, and health information.
   - Integrate digital training with existing women's collectives, such as **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, to build a trusted, supportive learning environment.

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3. **Policy and Social Interventions:**
    - Implement **inclusive policy mandates** that ensure welfare schemes have robust, non-digital alternatives for the ultra-vulnerable, while simultaneously pushing for their digital inclusion.
    - Run awareness campaigns to challenge social stigma around widows' technology use and highlight its potential for economic independence and empowerment.

Conclusion

The digital gap for Velip tribal widows is a complex challenge rooted in systemic inequalities. By adopting an **intersectionality-aware approach** that addresses economic deprivation, infrastructural deficit, and entrenched socio-cultural norms, the nation can move beyond mere access to achieve **meaningful digital inclusion**. Empowering these women with technology is not just a matter of policy; it is an imperative for human rights and an essential investment in the social fabric and economic potential of India.

References:

- Tribal Studies in India: Perspectives of History, Archaeology and Culture edited by Maguni Charan Behera — a recent compendium that takes multidisciplinary perspectives.
- Antiquity to Modernity in Tribal India (4 volumes) edited by S.C. Dube, Bhupinder Singh, S.N. Mishra, K. Suresh Singh — covers a range of themes: social change, self-management, resource control, tribal movements.
- This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India by Madhav Gadgil & Ramachandra Guha — while not exclusively on tribes, useful for ecological/environmental contexts affecting tribal populations.
- The Seven Sisters of India: Tribal Worlds Between Tibet and Burma by Aglaja Stirn & Peter Van Ham — for studying tribal life in the Northeast, ethnography, rituals and culture.

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Social Entrepreneurship and Social Transformation: An Experience among the Beary in Dakshina Kannada

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Abstract

The Beary community, an indigenous Muslim group in Dakshina Kannada, illustrates how social entrepreneurship can drive social transformation. This study, based on survey data from 400 respondents, explores the initiatives of Beary social entrepreneurs in improving education, employment, healthcare and housing. The findings show notable progress in socio-economic indicators, gender equity, and community cohesion, highlighting social entrepreneurship as a catalyst for positive change. Despite these achievements, challenges remain in housing, programme design, and resource mobilisation. The study concludes that Beary social entrepreneurship has significantly uplifted the community; however, achieving balanced development will require inclusive strategies, stronger institutional support, and long-term planning.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Beary community, Social transformation, Socio-economic development, Dakshina Kannada.

Introduction

The Beary community of coastal Karnataka, with its unique linguistic and cultural identity, has become a hub for social and economic innovation. Historically known for its commercial acumen, the community has now embraced ventures that combine business skills with a commitment to social welfare, addressing pressing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare (Ichlangod 2011; Doddamane 2008).

Social entrepreneurship, which applies market-based solutions to social problems, has emerged as a transformative tool within the Beary community. It generates opportunities for economic growth and simultaneously reinforces cultural identity and community cohesion. This study explores how Beary social entrepreneurship is driving social transformation in Dakshina Kannada, with a specific focus on initiatives in education, employment, healthcare and housing.

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Objectives

1. To **examine the role of social entrepreneurship in driving social transformation among the Beary community.**
2. To **assess the impact of social entrepreneurship initiatives on education, employment, healthcare and housing.**

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the impact of social entrepreneurship on the Beary community in Dakshina Kannada. A purposive sample of 400 respondents was selected from various taluks, including Mangalore, Moodabidri, Ullal, Bantwal, Puttur, Belthangadi, Sullia, and Kadaba. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire that assessed the impact of social entrepreneurship initiatives across four areas: education, employment, healthcare and housing. The data were analysed using SPSS to derive a comprehensive understanding of how these initiatives contribute to community development and social transformation.

Literature review

Social entrepreneurship uses business strategies to address the social and economic challenges of marginalised communities through education, employment, healthcare, housing, and skill development (Dees, 2001; Seelos & Mair, 2005; Datta & Gailey, 2012). In Dakshina Kannada, government programmes support social development but exhibit gaps that local initiatives are better placed to address. Despite policies promoting education and employment, many Beary youth face barriers due to limited access to training, guidance, and financial support (Ichlangod 2011; Doddamane, 2008). Access to healthcare and housing also remains uneven, highlighting the need for locally driven solutions. Research on social entrepreneurship within minority communities, particularly the Bearys, is limited, with most studies focusing on large-scale government programmes. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how Beary-led social enterprises foster social transformation through improved livelihoods, education, healthcare, and community cohesion.

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Major findings of the study

Social entrepreneurship plays a vital role in the Beary community, fostering transformative progress in education, employment, healthcare and housing. Beary social entrepreneurs address core challenges by generating employment, raising educational standards, improving healthcare access, and tackling housing needs. Their efforts have significantly improved social transformation indicators, underscoring their importance in community development and empowerment.

Table 1: Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives for Education (N=400)

Education					
Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Total
Access to Educational resources	17.8	6.8	44.5	31.0	100
Facilitated Skill-based programmes	9.5	24.8	53.8	12.0	100
Provided Scholarships	7.5	11.5	34.0	47.0	100
Introduced Coaching programmes	13.5	49.3	22.0	15.3	100

Note1: SD stands for Strongly Disagree, D for Disagree, A for Agree and SA for Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 1, social entrepreneurship initiatives in education have significantly benefited the Beary community. A majority of respondents (75.5%) agreed that access to educational resources has improved, while skill-based programmes received positive feedback from 65.8 percent of respondents. Scholarships emerged as the most impactful initiative, with an overwhelming 81 percent of respondents recognising their role in fostering equal opportunity. These results indicate a positive shift in community engagement. However, this progress is tempered by significant criticism of coaching programmes, which elicited dissatisfaction from 62.8 percent of respondents, and concerns from 34.3 percent regarding skill-based programmes, highlighting areas requiring strategic refinement to maximise their effectiveness.

Table 2: Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives for Employment (N=400)

Employment					
Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Total
Creation of Employment opportunities	25.3	16.8	36.5	21.5	100
Improved access to Job training	17.5	14.0	45.3	23.3	100

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Introduced Career Counseling services	12.5	7.8	36.8	43.0	100
Supported the growth of Local businesses	5.0	11.5	22.5	61.0	100

As shown in Table 2, 58 percent of respondents believe that social entrepreneurship has successfully generated employment, while 42.1 percent identified challenges such as limited awareness, accessibility issues, and weaknesses in programme design. Job training was endorsed by 68.6 percent of respondents; however, 31.5 percent highlighted the need for improved outreach to women and additional support to address community needs. Career counselling received positive feedback from 79.8 percent of respondents, though 20.3 percent noted a lack of personalisation to accommodate diverse socio-economic backgrounds and career aspirations. Support for local businesses was the most appreciated initiative, with 83.5 percent recognising its contribution in strengthening the local economy, yet 16.5 percent felt that new businesses were often overlooked. Overall, these initiatives have achieved significant progress, but the concerns raised highlight the need for more inclusive, adaptable, and targeted efforts to ensure equitable benefits for all.

Table 4: Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives for Housing (N=400)

Housing					
Statement	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**	Total
Increased access to affordable Housing	28.5	34.0	22.0	15.5	100
Improved Housing infrastructure	27.0	39.0	14.0	20.0	100
Enhanced access to Housing resources	41.5	16.3	25.5	16.8	100
Provided Financial assistance for housing	33.0	28.5	15.8	22.8	100
Introduced Emergency shelter provision	24.3	31.0	26.3	18.5	100

Note1: SD stands for Strongly Disagree, D for Disagree, A for Agree and SA for Strongly Agree

Table 4 reveals dissatisfaction with the social entrepreneurship initiatives in the housing sector within the Beary community. Efforts to increase access to affordable housing were criticised, with 62.5 percent of respondents disagreeing, highlighting limited progress. Similarly, 66 percent were unhappy with housing infrastructure improvements, reflecting widespread discontent. Challenges were also evident in access to housing resources, with 57.8 percent of respondents questioning their effectiveness. Financial assistance for housing received diverse feedback, with 61.5 percent dissatisfied but 38.6 percent acknowledged some positive impact. Emergency shelter

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provision had slightly better results, with 44.8 percent agreeing it was effective, although 55.3 percent remained dissatisfied. Overall, there is a clear need for more focused initiatives to address the community's housing challenges. These initiatives must be reevaluated and enhanced to better meet the community's needs.

Discussion

The study confirms that social entrepreneurship has significantly driven social transformation within the Beary community of Dakshina Kannada, with notable progress in education, employment, healthcare and housing. These initiatives have contributed to poverty reduction, cultural preservation, and enhanced community wellbeing. However, the findings reveal that transformation remains incomplete, with gaps across several domains. Housing initiatives, for instance, have failed to adequately meet community needs; while programmes related to coaching and skill development reveals an uneven impact. The consistent level of dissatisfaction across sectors suggests that social entrepreneurship has created visible progress, yet its impact remains uneven and insufficiently inclusive.

Suggestions for Strengthening Beary Social Entrepreneurship

1. Refine coaching and skill development programmes to align with community needs, and adopt mobile applications to enhance accessibility, scalability, and personalised learning.
2. Expand mobile healthcare services, with a focus on preventive care and mental health to promote equitable wellbeing.
3. Tailor skill development and employment programmes to individual career aspirations and socio-economic backgrounds to increase effectiveness.
4. Improve housing initiatives by prioritising quality, address family-specific needs, and implement effective solutions to enhance satisfaction.

Conclusion

Beary social entrepreneurship has brought significant progress in Dakshina Kannada by improving education, creating jobs, and enhancing overall well-being of the community. Scholarships, skill training, support for small businesses, and health programmes have raised living standards and encouraged people to become more self-reliant. These initiatives have reduced social and economic gaps by giving individuals the resources and

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confidence to improve their lives. This locally led development provides a practical model for other minority communities in achieving balanced growth and lasting social transformation.

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Issues related to Food and Dalit Identity of the marginalized section in Bama's 'Karukku' and 'Sangati'

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Abstract

The paper examines two novels *Karukku and Sangati by* Bama and brings out a moving and assertive Dalit feminist perspective. The paper makes an analysis of the food habits of the Dalits, humiliations related to food because of caste and the significance of food as a representation of suppression and poverty. Food also acts as an important topic to address issues of gender, sexual politics and social dislocation in the selected novels .Food metaphors are used to characterize people and their status in society. The significance of food preparations during festivals and ceremonies are also examined.

Key Words: Food, Dalit identity, Bama , Gender Issues, Suppression

Introduction:

Bama is one of the most prominent contemporary Dalit woman writers. *Karukku(1992)* is a prominent auto biography of its kind by a Tamil Dalit woman. Sangati (1994) can be regarded as collective biography of the Dalit women of Bama's community. The most impressive feature of *Bama's writing* is that it is endearingly colloquial in expression and does not adhere to aesthetic representation of things as was earlier with the polished way of Dalit representations done by the commiserative writers of the upper caste.

Karakku exposes the pain and anguish of Dalit exploitation and suppression. It is also symbolic of the courage one can exhibit even when all things are at odds to bounce back and stand up for a purpose in life. As Bama herself reveals in the preface of the book *"The driving forces that shaped this book are many: Events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like Karakku and making me bleed, unjust social structures that plunged me in to ignorance and left me trapped and suffocating, my own desperate urge to break, throw away and destroy these bonds, and when the chains were shattered into fragments, the blood that was split then, all these taken together."(1)*

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karukku means palmyra leaves which have sharp edges on both sides which can hurt.We see emotions of trauma, pain, resistance, protest and social change in Karukku. Bama gives several accounts of the sufferings, insults and hardships of her people. She speaks not only for herself but her entire community. Food plays a significant role in both the selected novels of Bama .It is an important aspect of their social living and acceptance of life below human dignity at the hands of the upper caste.

Bama becomes aware of her Dalit identity for the first time when she was studying in third standard. The experience is related to food; she finds the observation humorous in the beginning and narrates the incident to her brother. Bama had never heard of untouchability until then, but she had already seen, felt, experienced and been humiliated by it. She narrates several incidences which impacted her deeply about the pathetic state of the people of her community. She sees an elder from her street holding a small packet of snacks tied in a string without touching the packet. The man bows low and extends the packet to a Naicker(an upper caste man) . The Naiker opened the parcel and began eating the vadais. She finds it funny and narrates the incident to her elder brother. Her brother tells her about the caste system .He says that everybody believed that Naikers were upper caste and therefore must not touch Parayas .If they did they would be polluted .That's why the elder person had to carry the package by the string. It infuriates and disturbs her that such an important elder of their community goes off so meekly to the shops to fetch snacks and hands them over reverentially bowing and shrinking to this fellow who just sits and stuffs in his mouth. She feels so provoked and angry that she wanted to go and touch those vadais herself straight away. She reflects as to what it meant when they were called Paraya. She feels that they too were human beings and the people of her community should never do such kinds of petty errands. They should work in their fields, take home wages and leave it at that.

Both her grandmothers worked as servants', even tiny children of the upper caste would call them by their name and order about, just because they belonged to the Naicker caste. Her grandmother like all laborers' would call the little boy ayya, master and run about to do his bidding. Even the way they were given drinking water was disheartening to watch. The Naicker woman would pour out water from a height of four feet, while her grandmother and others received and drank with cupped hands held to their mouths. Her other grandmother would go to the Naicker houses early in the morning do all the cleaning work and bring home the leftover food from the

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previous evening. Her grandmother would behave as if she had been handed the nectar of the gods. It was a long time before Bama realized it that her grandmother was bringing home the unwanted food that the Naikers were ready to throw away.

One day Bama herself went with her grandmother to the Naiker house, after finishing all her filthy chores she placed the vessel that she had brought with her by the side of the drain. The Naiker lady with her left over food leaned out from some distance and tipped them into her grandmother's vessel and went away. Her vessel must not touch the vessel of the old women as it would be polluted. Bama tries to protest against this, her grandmother says "*These people are the maharajas who feed us our rice without them, how will we survive? Haven't they been upper caste from generation to generation and haven't we been lower caste? Can we change this?"*(17) Listening to this Bama feels terrible at the way her people are conditioned to oppression in the name of caste and untouchability .They are exploited by the upper caste people to do all sorts of work in their houses and fields but are treated with gross disrespect and below human dignity .The way food and water is given to them and the blind acceptance of it by the Dalits clearly suggests the social conditioning and lack of awareness in the Dalits. The food they ate was the cheapest .Most of her people worked as agricultural laborers'. Life was always on the run. It was only in the evening that people cooked rice and made curry at other times it was always kuuzh, millet-porridge.

Her elder brother, who had studied M.A., consoles her and tells her that because they are born into the Paraya jati they are never given any honor, dignity or respect. He ingrains in her strongly that if they study and make progress they can throw away the indignities. He asks her to study with care and learn all she can, then people would come to her on their own accord and attach themselves to her .This has a deep impression on her mind. She studied hard in a frenzy and always stood first in her class because of this many people become her friends even though she was a paraya. She comes to see education as a means to uplift herself.

Throughout her education she finds where ever she goes there is a painful reminder of her caste in the form of untouchability. Even at school people spoke in a bad way about her caste. If ever anything went wrong they would say without hesitation, *"It must be one of the cherri children who did it" (18)*. Everyone seemed to think Harijan children were contemptible but they did not hesitate to use them for cheap labour. When she was studying in

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seventh standard, Bama was playing with her friends on a coconut palm which grew slantwise at a convenient angle, by chance a coconut fell at her touch ,It was not even a ripe coconut just a green one without so much water in it. The next morning at the assembly the head master called her out by her name and accused her of showing the true nature as a paraya and accused her of stealing the coconut. Bama is filled with agony as she was shamed and insulted in front of all the students. She becomes an easy target as she was a paraya. People could get away making any kind of comments on them irrespective of the merit of the case.

Bama put her heart and soul in educating herself and excelled at all levels but found that the casteism haunted her everywhere, be it in school, college or workplace. There would be infighting among the dalit sub communities for petty reasons, once a pallar boy was carrying ripe bananas in his cart and a paraya boy took out two or three bananas and ate them an argument ensued with exchange of foul words and a big fight followed between the two communities. .Bama finds this stupid and feels that instead of staying united they fought amongst themselves and became the laughing butt of the upper castes.

Her people had to do some work to eat. It was only through toiling and without taking any account of their bodies as human flesh and blood that people of her community could survive. As soon as the children grew up to be ten or twelve of age they would go and find some way of making money until that time they would go about carrying siblings on their hips. They would even gather a few twigs and sticks and learn to boil a little gruel. It was always the girl children who had to look after all the chores at home. Their hard work was exploited by the Naiker employers. Bama says "*even though they worked so hard and suffered bodily pain, our people laughed and were cheerful .and however hard they toil, it is the same kuuzh everyday, the same broken grain gruel, the same watery dried fish curry. For its only when they fall asleep at night that their arms and legs are still; they seem to be at work at all other times. And they keep on working until the moment of death. It is only in this way that they can even half fill their bellies."(55)*

Even the children had to get up very early in morning pour their kuuzh into their careers half asleep totter along the van climb in and go off to work. For these little children their fate was the smell of the match of the match box solution and not the smell of knowledge or learning. Life itself was a struggle even to fill their tummies, food for nurture and health was never a priority.

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IT was only during the celebrations for Christmas, New year, Easter and Chinnamalai festival that women soaked rice and lentils for dosai, idli, and paniyaram. It was a custom for the entire congregation at the start of the New Year to go family by family to the mother superior and the priests, carrying gifts or biscuits. Even though they had never tasted the fruit themselves they somehow went through every effort to buy the fruit for the church elders. It was expected of them too.

On Sundays they usually had a good meal, they butchered a cow exactly at the time when they returned from the morning pusai. Once Bama completed her education and started to work, life became comfortable enough. She felt good to earn enough money every month to go about independently as she pleased .she could buy things that she liked, she could buy and eat whatever she liked. She realized that money could bring authority, prestige and status. Her people however hard they toiled never seemed to be able to have money in their hands. They lived on gruel every day, they wore nothing more than rags, they owned neither property nor land or even a decent house to live in .Bama says "*I realized that if only the children on my street acquired a little education and found jobs, then they could live reasonably well. But then, how are they to educate themselves? The struggle to fill their bellies is their main struggle, after all."*(77) It was this desire to uplift her community that led her to become a nun, she wanted to sacrifice her life for her people. She wanted to live her life in a meaningful manner.

Sangati gives several accounts of the life of Dalit women. Bama records the strength of the Dalit women in their struggles. There is a small, joyful and assertive world of their own despite of all their difficulties. There is a practical approach devoid of exaggerations in the depiction of the difficulties of the women.

In this novel too food is an important indicant of the position of Dalits .There are several instances in the novel where there is gender oppression related to food within the Dalit community. The women had to work even in the direst of conditions, most of the women of the paraiya street worked even on the day they were due to deliver their babies, it was inevitable as they played the prime role in getting food for their family. Even their cows and calves would die of hunger if they did not work .Most of the men spent their time and money drinking and indulging in their fancies. Women of the street led very hard lives it was the same from the time they were small infants in arms. The girl children were treated differently from boys, "*they never let the boy babies cry. If a boy baby cries, he is instantly picked up and given milk. It is not so with the girls. Even with breast feeding it is the*

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same story; a boy is breast fed longer. With girls they wean them quickly making them to forget the breast."(7)
Bama's paatti(grand mother) was no exception to this she cared more for the grandsons than her granddaughters. If she bought anything home when she returned from work, it was always the grandsons she called first, if she brought mangoes the girls got only the skin, the stones and such .She gave the pieces of fruit to the boys and the girls had to accept as they had no other way, they picked up and ate the leftover skins. It was a rule that the women had to eat after the man in the home .Once a women called Anantamma of the west street was thrashed soundly for defying this rule. The event had become well known and was sung as a song by the children of that place.

"*O Crab, Crab, my pretty little crab, who wandered through all the fields I planted, I pulled off your claws and put you on a pot, I gave the pot a boil and set it down. I waited and waited for him to come home, And began eating as came through the door. He came to hit me the, the hungry brute, He pounced at me to kill me…" (30)*

The song says that the husband beat her up so much even though she was pregnant, just because she caught some crabs from the wet fields and made a curry and ate it before he came home for his meal. Even as a child when Bama and her friends played 'mothers and fathers' the girls had to always serve the mud rice to the boys first. There are also some relishing descriptions of food preparations, Bama's paatti though quite old lived on her own cooked and ate her kanji. Her hot kuzhambu flavoured with dried fish was delicious. Even after she had lost her teeth whenever they butchered a cow on Sundays she bought the intestines and made a kuzhambu, they savoured it along with ragi kali.

During the time of famine it was a very difficult existence for them. Bama's mother narrates an incident "*yes in those days we used to go with our brooms and winnowing trays, dig into the ant-pits, sweep them out and bring away what we found. We sifted out the grass seeds that the ants had gathered, and found enough to feed one person in each of our families. That was the terrible famine at that time."*(82*)*

During the wedding feast the guests would bring a box to fill with rice and take home. This was known as 'box rice'. They usually took this home, covered it in water, and ate it the next day**.** Even as they were being served, they would scoop up some rice and set it aside. Bama questions as to "*what else can people who struggle for their livelihood do?*"(85) People who were planning for wedding had to plan well ahead and save what they could from the previous harvest.

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Both women and men went off to work early in the morning, after the hard day's work in the evening men went off their own ways, where as the women had to slog with cooking and household chores. If they protested in any way they had to face violence at the hands of the men folk at home. Women led stressful lives; it was a battle even for kanji. Their greatest struggle was to fill their bellies.

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ROLE OF MASS MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

Man is a social animal, he cannot live in isolation, so his actions affect not only him but society in general, and society affects a man in so many ways. This paper gives a brief definition of what media is and what are the effects of media on society. During the course of this literature various types of Impacts of media on the individual, his family and society are highlighted.

KEYWORDS: Society, Media, Impacts of media, Theories of media

INTRODUCTION:

Human beings express their nature by creating and recreating an organization which guides and controls their behaviour in many ways. This organization liberates and limits the activities of men, sets up standards for them to follow and maintain. Whatever the imperfections and tyrannies it has exhibited in human history, it is necessary condition of fulfillment of life. This organization which is responsible for fulfillment of life of every individual is called society. Man in every society has suffered from one or the other problems. Men in modern societies are also experiencing various problems and his behavior gets affected by many things, media is one of them. Media is the plural of the word medium. Media are the vehicles or channels which are used to convey information, entertainment, news, education, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as television, radio, newspapers, billboards, mails, telephone, fax, internet etc (the main means of mass communication).

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MASS MEDIA CAN HELP IN CHANGE

Using mass media, people attitudes and habits can be changed. For example all of us have mistaken or wrong notions about various diseases like leprosy or HIV/AIDS. Many of us think that by touching people suffering from these diseases we would be infected. You might have heard on radio or watch television programmes or read messages which tell us that by touching an HIV/AIDS patient we do not get infected. Similarly, for eradicating polio there are special programmes and messages disseminated through the media.

They inform people about then for giving polio drops to children and about the day that is declared a polio day." Special arrangements are made to give polio drops to as many children as possible on polio day. Change would also mean things for the better. The concept of development to a country is again a matter of change, when old practices and equipment are changed and new better and more efficient means are being used. Mass media play an important role in communicating this change. By giving the necessary information, and sometimes skills, the media can help bring about this change. You may ask how media can impart skills. Mass media like television an demonstrate and show how things work. You would have seen on television how a certain dish is cooked using modern kitchen equipment.

Mass Media have made the World Smaller and Closer : The speed of media has resulted in bringing people across the world closer. Let us take an example. When you watch a cricket match between India and another country in England, Australia or New Zealand, live on television, you feel you are part of the crowd in that stadium. Events, happy or sad, happening anywhere can be seen live. Sometimes we feel that the entire world is one big family. You might have heard the term "global village". It means that the whole world is shrinking and becoming a village. Wherever we go to any part of the world, we see the same products such as soft drinks, television, washing machine, refrigerator etc. and the same type of advertisements. Similarly, the worldwide web and internet have brought people and countries much closer.

Mass Media Promotes Distribution of Goods: Mass media are used by the consumer industry to inform people about their products and services through advertising. Without advertising, the public will not know about various products (ranging from soup to oil, television sets to cars) and services (banking, insurance, hospitals etc.) which are available in the market as well as their prices. Thus mass media help the industries and consumers

Entertainment and informative : Mass media is one of the best means of recreation. Television, radio, internet

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are the best means of entertainment and extremely informative. Social media keeps us up to date with the happenings around the world.

SOCIAL IMPACTS OF MEDIA

The mass media occupy a high proportion of our leisure time: people spend, on average, 25 hours per week watching television, and they also find time for radio, cinema, magazines and newspapers. For children, watching television takes up a similar amount of time to that spent at school or with family and friends. While school, home and friends are all acknowledged as major socializing influences on children, a huge debate surrounds the possible effects of the mass media and findings both in favour and against effects are controversial. The question of effects is typically raised with an urgency deriving from a public rather than an academic agenda and with a simplicity which is inappropriate to the complexity of the issue (we do not ask of other social influences, what is the effect of parents on children or do schools have an effect which generalizes to the home or do friends have positive or negative effects?). The possibility of media effects is often seen to challenge individual respect and autonomy, as if a pro-effects view presumes the public to be a gullible mass, cultural dopes, vulnerable to an ideological hypodermic needle, and as if television was being proposed as the sole cause of a range of social behaviours.

Media effects: a matter of change or reinforcement?

If by media effects, we mean that exposure to the media changes people's behaviour or beliefs,then the first task is to see whether significant correlations exist between levels of exposure and variations in behavior or beliefs. 'Change' theories -- on which this chapter will focus –generally presume that the more we watch, the greater the effect. Most research does show such a correlation (Signorelli & Morgan, 1990), albeit a small and not always consistent one. The next question concerns the direction of causality. For example, having shown that those who watch more violent television tend to be more aggressive (Huesmann, 1982), researchers must ask whether more aggressive people choose to watch violent programmes (i.e. selective exposure), whether violent programmes make viewers aggressive (i.e. media effects), or whether certain social circumstances both make people more aggressive and lead them to watch more violent television (i.e. a common third cause). To resolve this issue, the effects tradition has generally adopted an experimental approach, arguing that only in controlled experiments can people be randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions, thereby controlling for

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any other variables in the situation. Only then can causal inferences be drawn concerning any observed correlation between the experimental manipulation (generally media exposure) and result and behaviour. In research on media violence ,some researchers offer directional argument, concluding that there is evidence for both selective viewing and media effects (Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984). **SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF COMMUNICATION:**

The sociological approach to communication theory is based on assumption that there exists a definite relationship between mass communication and social change. Some of there relevant theories which are going to be discussed here are :

[1] **The cultivation theory:** It was developed by George Gerbner in 1967. It is based on the assumption that mass media have subtle effects on audiences who unknowingly absorb the dominant symbols, images, and messages of media. He calls it "cultivation of dominant image pattern". Ac̄cording to this theory a long persistent exposure to TV is capable of cultivating common beliefs about the world.

[2] **Social Learning Theory**: It is one of the most widely used theories in mass communication. According to this theory the media are active but subtle educators in teaching readers, viewers, listeners about the world. An important component of this theory is that it explains how people can learn from observations alone.

Observational Learning Theory : The Observational Learning theorist would take the Aggressive Cues theory a step further. This theory says that people can learn by observing aggression in media portrayals and, under some conditions, model its behavior. If there are 50 ways to leave your lover, then there must be at least 49 ways to be violent or aggressive. And watching violent media portrayals will teach you new ways to be violent. Ever watch a who unit, such as a Columbo episode, where you spot where the criminal makes the fatal mistake? Ever catch yourself saying, "If I ever committed a murder I would not make THAT mistake?" What? Are you suggesting there is a circumstance where you would kill someone?

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have discussed various positive and negative impacts that today media has on society. We find that major chunk of youth is using social media networks more than 5 hours a day resulting in decreasing their

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general health in general and mental health in particular. We also found that media is playing both constructive as well as destructive roles on one hand it has lots of advantages but on the other hand it has lots of disadvantages and at the end it"s upto the individual and society to decide which ones to use.

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ADVANTAGES OF MORNING WALKING FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

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Abstract

Physical inactivity remains a significant global health challenge. Amidst complex health interventions, the simple, accessible act of **morning walking** offers a powerful and cost-effective strategy for comprehensive well-being. This article synthesizes the scientifically proven physical, mental, and cognitive benefits of integrating a daily morning walk into one's routine. It highlights its profound impact on cardiovascular health, metabolic regulation, mental resilience, and overall daily productivity, arguing for its recognition as a foundational pillar in national health and wellness protocols.

Introduction:

In an era defined by fast-paced lifestyles and escalating rates of chronic disease, advocating for accessible health solutions is paramount. Walking, as a low-impact, universally available form of exercise, stands out. Specifically, the practice of a **morning walk**—ideally a brisk, 20-30 minute session leverages unique circadian and environmental factors to maximize health returns. This paper explores the multidimensional benefits of this habit, positioning it as a vital component of a healthy lifestyle for all demographics.

I. Physical Health Benefits: Strengthening the Body's Core Systems

The physical advantages of a regular morning walk are well-documented and address key areas of public health concern:

A. Cardiovascular and Metabolic Health

- **Heart Strengthening:** Regular walking increases heart rate, improving blood circulation, strengthening the heart muscle, and significantly lowering the risk of hypertension, coronary artery disease, and stroke. Studies consistently show that a minimum of 30 minutes of brisk walking daily can reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 35% (American Heart Association).

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- **Metabolic Regulation:** Morning activity, often performed in a fasted state, enhances the body's ability to utilize stored fat for energy, supporting weight management and long-term weight control. Crucially, it improves insulin sensitivity, making it a highly effective intervention for the prevention and management of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus.
- **Bone and Joint Resilience:** As a weight-bearing, low-impact exercise, walking promotes bone density, particularly vital in preventing osteoporosis and age-related fractures. The motion also lubricates joints, reducing stiffness and mitigating the symptoms of conditions like arthritis.

B. Energy and Immune Function

- **Natural Energy Boost:** Walking stimulates circulation and oxygen flow to the muscles and brain, providing a natural, sustained energy boost that is more effective and healthier than caffeine for combating morning grogginess and fatigue.
- **Immune Enhancement:** Regular, moderate exercise like walking increases the circulation of immune cells, reducing the incidence of mild infections (like the common cold) and potentially leading to milder symptoms if one does get sick.

II. Cognitive and Mental Wellness: Setting the Mind for Success

The benefits of morning walking extend beyond physical metrics, offering substantial returns for mental and cognitive health:

A. Mood Regulation and Stress Reduction

- **Neurotransmitter Release:** Physical activity triggers the release of 'feel-good' hormones—**endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine**—which act as natural mood elevators, reducing feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Circadian Rhythm Reset:** Exposure to natural light during a morning walk helps to regulate the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm). This vital reset signals the brain to suppress melatonin (the sleep hormone), fostering alertness during the day and, paradoxically, promoting deeper, more restorative sleep at night.

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B. Enhanced Cognitive Function

- **Mental Clarity and Focus:** Increased blood flow to the brain improves cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and processing speed. Numerous studies suggest that individuals who start their day with a walk report higher levels of concentration and productivity.
- **Creative Problem Solving:** The state of 'default mode network' activation achieved during a gentle, meditative walk is often linked to improved creativity and better problem-solving abilities compared to sedentary contemplation.

III. Implementation and Policy Implications

Given its high benefit-to-cost ratio, morning walking should be actively promoted across health and corporate wellness platforms:

- **Public Health Campaigns:** National campaigns should emphasize the minimum effective dose (e.g., 30 minutes, 5 days a week) and the ease of integration into daily life (e.g., walking to work, walking with pets).
- **Urban Planning:** Policies should advocate for creating safe, well-lit, and green walking spaces (parks, sidewalks, greenways) to encourage adherence, maximizing the mental health benefits derived from nature exposure.
- **Workplace Wellness:** Employers should encourage 'walking meetings' or provide flexible start times to accommodate a morning exercise routine, recognizing the link between physical activity and increased employee productivity.

Conclusion

Morning walking is more than just exercise; it is a foundational, holistic wellness practice. It simultaneously fortifies the cardiovascular system, regulates metabolism, stabilizes mood, and sharpens cognitive function. For a national conference focused on sustainable health and lifestyle transformation, the message is clear: the most sophisticated intervention is often the simplest. By prioritizing the act of stepping out at dawn, individuals can unlock a cascade of benefits, leading to a healthier, more productive, and more resilient populace.

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INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY, LIFESTYLE MEDICINE AND MENTAL HEALTH FOR A FITTER FUTURE

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Abstract:

The concept of health and fitness is evolving rapidly, moving beyond traditional notions of physical exercise to embrace a holistic, integrative approach. This article explores key contemporary trends critical for a national conference, focusing on the intersection of **Technology in Wellness**, the paradigm shift towards **Lifestyle Medicine**, and the indispensable link between **Physical Fitness and Mental Health**. Addressing these areas is crucial for developing scalable, effective public health strategies to combat the rising tide of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and foster a healthier society.

1. The Digital Revolution in Health and Fitness

The convergence of technology and wellness is reshaping how individuals monitor, manage, and engage with their health. This section highlights the transformative role of digital tools in personal and public health initiatives.

1.1. Wearable Technology and Real-Time Data

Wearable technology (e.g., smartwatches, fitness trackers, smart apparel) has become a primary driver of self-monitoring and behavior change. These devices provide users with **real-time data** on physical activity, sleep quality, heart rate, and increasingly, stress levels and other health markers.

- **Behavioral Change:** The immediate feedback loop encourages goal- setting, greater adherence to physical activity guidelines, and the establishment of routine.

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- **Preventive Care:** Aggregated, anonymized data from these devices offer invaluable insights for public health researchers and can be instrumental in identifying sedentary patterns and risk factors for NCDs earlier.

1.2. Telehealth, AI, and Personalized Interventions

The rise of **telehealth** and **artificial intelligence (AI)** is enabling highly personalized health and fitness interventions.

- **Virtual Coaching:** AI-powered fitness apps and virtual coaching services offer customized workout plans, nutritional guidance, and mental resilience training, democratizing access to professional expertise.
- **Predictive Analytics:** AI algorithms can analyze large datasets (including genetic and lifestyle information) to predict individual health risks and recommend highly tailored preventive strategies, marking a shift from reactive to **proactive health management**.

2. Lifestyle Medicine: The Foundational Pillar

Lifestyle Medicine emphasizes the therapeutic use of lifestyle interventions—such as a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substance use, and positive social connections—to prevent, treat, and often reverse chronic disease.

2.1. Physical Activity as a Prescription

The "Exercise is Medicine" initiative underscores the necessity of integrating physical activity assessment and prescription into standard clinical care. Regular physical activity is a **cost-effective intervention** proven to reduce the risk of numerous NCDs, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers.

- **Multicomponent Strategies:** Optimal health outcomes often require a multicomponent approach combining **aerobic exercise** (for cardiorespiratory fitness) and **resistance training** (for muscular strength and bone health).

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- **Combatting Sedentarism:** Addressing the global rise in sedentary behavior, which contributes significantly to health burden and mortality, requires systemic changes in environments (e.g., walkable cities) and workplaces.

2.2. Integrative Wellness and Nutrition

A foundational component of fitness is **nutrition**. The focus is shifting toward an integrative wellness approach that considers the synergy between diet, activity, and metabolic health.

- **Metabolic Health:** Research continues to highlight the profound impact of nutrition on metabolic disorders. Strategies like personalized nutrition based on gut microbiota and genetic factors are emerging areas of focus.
- **Sleep Hygiene and Stress Management:** Recognizing that fitness is not only about calories and miles, modern wellness strategies heavily incorporate **sleep hygiene** and stress-reduction techniques (like mindfulness and yoga) as essential components for physiological recovery and overall health.

3. The Bi-Directional Link: Fitness and Mental Health

The intrinsic connection between physical fitness and mental well-being is one of the most compelling areas of current research, especially in a post-pandemic world marked by increased psychosocial stress.

3.1. Exercise as a Mood Regulator

Physical activity is a powerful tool for managing mental health conditions. Research consistently demonstrates that exercise can significantly alleviate symptoms of **depression and anxiety**, rivaling pharmacological interventions in some cases.

- **Physiological Mechanisms:** The benefit is attributed to the release of **endorphins** and the modulation of **neurotransmitters** that regulate mood and cognitive function. Regular activity also improves **cardiovascular health**, which is strongly linked to cognitive longevity and reduced dementia risk.

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- **Self-Esteem and Social Health:** Participating in sports or group fitness activities can enhance self-esteem and foster **social connection**, which are critical determinants of well-being.

3.2. Cognitive Fitness and Ageing

Physical fitness, particularly cardiorespiratory fitness, is strongly correlated with **cognitive function** across the lifespan.

- **Brain Health:** Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, supports neurogenesis (the creation of new brain cells), and protects against cognitive decline. Developing programs that specifically target older adults is vital for promoting successful aging and independent living.

Conclusion

A successful strategy for national health and fitness must be **holistic, data-driven, and patient-centered**. By embracing the innovations in technology, institutionalizing the principles of Lifestyle Medicine, and actively promoting the mental health benefits of physical activity, we can move beyond simply managing disease to **proactively building a more resilient, healthier, and fitter nation.** Future efforts must focus on policy implementation that ensures equitable access to these emerging tools and practices for all populations.

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HOLISTIC WELL-BEING: THE IMPERATIVE OF HEALTH AND THE INTEGRATIVE POWER OF YOGA

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Introduction

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and demanding lifestyles, the pursuit of **holistic health** has never been more critical. Modern existence often subjects individuals to chronic stress, sedentary behavior, and a myriad of non-communicable, lifestyle-related diseases. A nation's true wealth is measured by the health of its citizens. Recognizing this, the integration of traditional, comprehensive wellness practices into mainstream public health discourse is an urgent necessity. This article explores the fundamental importance of health as a prerequisite for national progress and highlights **Yoga**, an ancient Indian science of self-development, as a powerful, evidence-based solution for achieving and sustaining optimal well-being.

The Paramount Importance of Health for National Development

Health is not merely the absence of disease; it is, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), a state of complete **physical, mental, and social well-being**. A healthy population is the bedrock of a productive, resilient, and progressive nation.

- **Economic Productivity:** Poor health, including chronic diseases and mental health issues, leads to reduced workforce productivity, increased absenteeism, and enormous healthcare expenditures, thus draining national resources. Conversely, a healthy population drives economic growth.
- **Human Capital:** Health ensures that citizens can realize their full intellectual and physical potential, contributing effectively to innovation, education, and societal advancement.
- **Societal Stability:** Mental and social well-being fosters stronger communities, reduces social friction, and enhances overall quality of life. Investment in public health is, therefore, a strategic investment in the nation's future.

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In the face of rising global epidemics of **lifestyle disorders**—such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and chronic stress—traditional and integrative approaches are essential supplements to conventional medicine.

Yoga: A Holistic Framework for Health

The term **Yoga**, derived from the Sanskrit word *Yuj*, means to 'join' or 'unite,' signifying the harmony of body, mind, and spirit. It is a time-tested, systematic methodology that extends far beyond physical exercise, addressing the root causes of disease and promoting a balanced way of living. Patanjali's **Ashtanga Yoga** (Eight Limbs of Yoga) provides a comprehensive path, emphasizing ethical discipline (*Yama*, *Niyama*), physical postures (*Asana*), breath control (*Pranayama*), and meditative practices (*Dhyana*).

The Multifaceted Benefits of Yoga

Modern scientific research validates the profound and broad-ranging health benefits of a regular Yoga practice:

1. **Physical Health:**
    - **Improved Flexibility and Strength:** *Asanas* (postures) work on muscles and joints, increasing range of motion and core strength, crucial for preventing age-related decline and musculoskeletal issues like lower back pain.
    - **Cardiovascular and Respiratory Function:** *Pranayama* (breathing techniques) enhances lung capacity, optimizes oxygen uptake, and, in conjunction with meditation, helps regulate blood pressure, contributing to better heart health.
    - **Metabolic Regulation:** Studies indicate that Yoga can help manage conditions like **Type 2 Diabetes** by lowering blood sugar levels and improving insulin sensitivity, often linked to reduced levels of stress hormones like cortisol.

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2. **Mental and Emotional Well-being:**
    - **Stress Reduction:** Yoga's focus on deep, mindful breathing and meditation is a potent antidote to chronic stress. It has been shown to lower cortisol levels and activate the **parasympathetic nervous system** (the 'rest and digest' system), promoting deep relaxation.
    - **Anxiety and Depression Management:** Regular practice modulates the autonomic nervous system and improves brain function, serving as an effective complementary therapy for reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and improving overall mood.
    - **Enhanced Focus and Cognitive Function:** Techniques like *Dharana* (concentration) and *Dhyana* (meditation) improve attentiveness, memory, and cognitive performance, which is invaluable in both educational and professional spheres.
3. **Spiritual and Social Harmony:**
    - Yoga cultivates **mindfulness** and self-awareness, fostering a deeper understanding of oneself and one's connection to the environment.
    - The ethical principles of *Yama* (non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, non-possessiveness) and *Niyama* (purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, surrender to a higher power) guide individuals toward a harmonious social life and ethical conduct, thereby improving social health.

Conclusion:

The importance of health transcends individual benefit; it is a **national priority**. Yoga, with its empirical and holistic approach, offers a sustainable and cost-effective pathway to meet the complex health challenges of the 21st century.

As we move forward, a national commitment is required to:

- **Integrate Yoga** into public health programs, educational curricula, and workplace wellness initiatives.

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- **Support further scientific research** to build an evidence base for Yoga's therapeutic potential across various ailments.
- **Promote an integrative health model** where conventional and traditional practices like Yoga work synergistically for preventive, promotive, and curative care.

By embracing the wisdom of Yoga, the nation can foster not only healthier individuals but also a more balanced, peaceful, and prosperous society, truly embodying the concept of **"Health for All."** Gemini may display inaccurate info, including about people, so double-check its responses.

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A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY IN THE CEMENT INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

The cement industry, a cornerstone of global infrastructure, is inherently exposed to a diverse range of occupational hazards, resulting in accident rates often higher than in other manufacturing sectors. This paper examines the critical health and safety challenges faced by workers in the cement industry, encompassing physical, chemical, and environmental risks. It highlights key hazards, including cement dust exposure leading to respiratory and skin diseases, physical injuries from heavy machinery and falls, and exposure to high temperatures and excessive noise. To foster a sustainable and productive work environment, the paper advocates for a proactive, multi-pronged strategy centered on robust **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)**, stringent **engineering controls** (e.g., ventilation and machine guarding), mandated use of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**, continuous **training and education**, and the cultivation of a deeply ingrained **safety culture** committed to the principle of "Zero Harm."

Introduction

The global cement industry plays a vital role in economic development, yet its complex and energy-intensive manufacturing process exposes its workforce to significant occupational risks. From quarrying raw materials to final product packaging, workers encounter environments ranging from heavy industrial machinery and high-temperature kilns to pervasive airborne dust. This context necessitates a rigorous focus on **Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)** to mitigate the risk of both acute injuries and chronic occupational diseases. Despite advancements in industrial safety, the cement sector continues to report notable rates of work-related disabilities and illnesses, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive and consistently implemented safety protocols.

Key Occupational Hazards in Cement Manufacturing

The hazards in a cement plant can be broadly categorized as follows:

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1. Health Hazards (Chemical and Environmental)

- **Cement Dust Exposure:** This is the most prevalent health hazard. Inhaling **Portland cement dust** can cause irritation to the eyes, nose, and throat. Prolonged, repeated exposure is linked to severe respiratory issues, including **silicosis** (due to trace crystalline silica), **Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)**, and even lung cancer.
- **Dermatological Issues:** Direct contact with **wet cement** is highly alkaline and can cause skin irritation (irritant contact dermatitis), chronic skin damage, and severe **chemical burns** (first to third-degree) if trapped against the skin. Trace amounts of **hexavalent chromium** can also cause allergic contact dermatitis.
- **Noise Exposure:** Heavy machinery like crushers, mills, and kilns generate sound levels often exceeding 85 dB(A). Sustained exposure leads to **Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL)**, as well as non-auditory effects like stress and fatigue.
- **Thermal Stress:** Workers operating and maintaining the kilns and pre-heater towers are exposed to **high temperatures**, leading to the risk of heatstroke, dehydration, and hot surface burns from materials like hot clinker (up to 120∘C) or hot meal (up to 900∘C).

2. Safety Hazards (Physical)

- **Falls from Height:** Work in areas like pre-heater towers, silos, and construction-related activities involves working at heights, making **falls** a leading cause of severe injury and fatality.
- **Machinery and Equipment:** The use of conveyors, rotary kilns, mills, and packaging machinery presents risks of entanglement, crushing injuries, and amputation. Inadequate **lockout/tagout (LOTO) procedures** during maintenance are critical failure points.
- **Confined Spaces:** Tanks, silos, and hoppers are often classified as **confined spaces**, posing risks of engulfment, asphyxiation, fire, or explosion due to lack of oxygen, toxic gases, or hot, flowing material.
- **Transportation and Traffic:** The movement of heavy vehicles, such as dump trucks and forklifts, in quarry and plant areas creates significant risks of **vehicular accidents** and being struck by or run over.

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- **Electrical Hazards:** Working on exposed live conductors or poorly maintained electrical systems carries the risk of **electrocution** and fire.

Strategic Framework for OHS Improvement

Achieving higher standards of occupational safety requires a holistic strategy focusing on prevention, protection, and promotion of a safety-first mindset.

1. Hazard Control Hierarchy

Implementing controls based on the internationally recognized hierarchy is paramount:

Level	Strategy	Example
Elimination	Physically remove the hazard	Using ready-mixed concrete instead of on-site mixing (if applicable).
Substitution	Replace the hazard	Using lower-noise equipment or less toxic additives.
Engineering Controls	Isolate people from the hazard	**Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV)** systems for dust control; Acoustic enclosures for noisy machinery; **Machine Guarding** on moving parts.
Administrative Controls	Change the way people work	Strict **LOTO procedures**; **Permit-to-Work** system for high-risk tasks; mandatory rest breaks for heat exposure; comprehensive **traffic management** plans.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	Protect the worker	Respirators, earplugs/muffs, alkali-resistant gloves, safety harnesses, and fire-resistant clothing.

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2. Proactive Safety Management Systems

- **Behavioral Safety Programs:** Moving beyond compliance to actively engaging workers. Initiatives like **"Safety Star" awards** and monthly safety themes encourage positive behavior, peer-to-peer observation, and reporting of near-misses.
- **Integrated Monitoring and Surveillance:** Routine monitoring of air quality for dust and silica levels, regular **audiometric testing** for noise exposure, and mandatory health screenings for workers exposed to high-risk agents.
- **Contractor Safety Management:** Given the frequent use of contractors, especially for maintenance and construction, safety standards must be consistently applied and enforced for all third-party personnel.

3. Training and Competency Development

Comprehensive, role-specific training is indispensable. This includes:

- **Induction and Refresher Training:** Covering site-specific hazards, emergency response, and correct PPE usage.
- **Specialized Training:** Certification for high-risk activities like confined space entry, working at heights, LOTO procedures, and use of heavy transport.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Conducting regular **mock drills** for fire, evacuation, and medical emergencies to ensure swift and coordinated responses.

Conclusion

The cement industry's journey towards **"Vision Zero"**—eliminating all work-related fatalities, serious injuries, and long-term ill health—is an ongoing commitment. The confluence of process complexity, heavy machinery, and exposure to harmful dust and heat necessitates that occupational safety is not viewed as a cost center, but as an essential investment in human capital and operational integrity. By institutionalizing robust HIRA processes, prioritizing engineering controls, enforcing strict PPE compliance, and fostering a collaborative **safety culture** across all organizational levels, the cement industry can significantly reduce its occupational risk profile, thereby

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ensuring that its vital contribution to national development is built on the foundation of a healthy and safe workforce.

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BODY FITNESS THROUGH KABADDI: EMBRACING TRADITIONAL STRENGTH IN MODERN WELLNESS

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Chikkaballapura District

Introduction:

In an era dominated by advanced fitness regimes and high-tech equipment, the ancient Indian sport of Kabaddi stands as a powerful testament to the efficacy of traditional physical activity for holistic body fitness. This article outlines the necessity and potential impact of a "National Conference on Body Fitness Through Kabaddi," aiming to re-introduce and re-evaluate this dynamic sport as a cornerstone for national health and well-being. The conference would serve as a crucial platform for athletes, coaches, sports scientists, medical professionals, and policy makers to explore Kabaddi's unique contributions to physical prowess, mental agility, and community engagement.

Kabaddi: A Holistic Fitness Solution:

Kabaddi is more than just a game; it's a comprehensive workout disguised as thrilling competition. It demands an extraordinary blend of strength, agility, endurance, flexibility, and strategic thinking.

- **Cardiovascular Health:** The continuous movement, holding of breath (in the "raid"), and explosive bursts of speed significantly enhance cardiovascular endurance and lung capacity.
- **Muscular Strength and Power:** Players develop powerful leg muscles for quick movements and jumps, strong core muscles for stability, and robust upper body strength for holding and tackling opponents.
- **Agility and Reflexes:** The fast-paced nature of the game requires lightning-fast reflexes, quick changes in direction, and exceptional agility to evade or capture opponents.
- **Flexibility and Balance:** Dynamic movements, dives, and tackles improve overall body flexibility and balance, crucial for injury prevention and optimal performance.

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- **Mental Fortitude:** Beyond the physical, Kabaddi sharpens concentration, decision-making skills under pressure, teamwork, and strategic planning. The ability to hold one's breath during a raid also builds remarkable mental discipline.

Objectives of the National Conference:

The proposed National Conference on Body Fitness Through Kabaddi would aim to achieve several critical objectives:

1. **Showcasing Scientific Evidence:** Present research papers and studies on the physiological benefits of Kabaddi, comparing its impact on various fitness parameters with other popular sports.
2. **Developing Standardized Training Protocols:** Discuss and formulate age-appropriate and skill-level-appropriate training methodologies that effectively leverage Kabaddi for general fitness, not just competitive play.
3. **Integrating Kabaddi into School Curricula:** Explore strategies for incorporating Kabaddi into physical education programs nationwide, promoting it as a fun and effective way for children and adolescents to stay active.
4. **Promoting Community Engagement:** Discuss initiatives to establish local Kabaddi clubs and tournaments, fostering community participation and healthy lifestyles across all age groups.
5. **Addressing Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation:** Deliberate on best practices for injury prevention in Kabaddi and effective rehabilitation techniques, ensuring the sport remains safe and sustainable.
6. **Leveraging Technology for Performance Enhancement:** Explore how modern sports science and technology can be applied to analyze player performance, refine training, and enhance the overall fitness benefits derived from Kabaddi.
7. **Policy Recommendations:** Formulate actionable policy recommendations for government bodies and sports authorities to support the promotion and development of Kabaddi as a national fitness regimen.

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Key Themes and Sessions:

The conference could feature a diverse range of sessions, including:

- **Keynote Addresses:** By renowned sports personalities, fitness experts, and policymakers.
- **Scientific Paper Presentations:** On the physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects of Kabaddi.
- **Panel Discussions:** On topics such as "Kabaddi vs. Gym: Which is more holistic?", "Building a Fit Nation through Traditional Sports," and "The Future of Kabaddi in School Sports."
- **Workshops:** Practical demonstrations of Kabaddi drills for fitness, basic rules, and coaching techniques.
- **Exhibition Stalls:** Showcasing Kabaddi equipment, fitness gadgets, and sports nutrition.
- **Interactive Sessions:** With national Kabaddi players sharing their fitness journeys and experiences.

Expected Outcomes:

The National Conference is expected to yield several significant outcomes:

- **Increased Awareness:** A broader understanding of Kabaddi's immense potential as a body fitness tool among the general public and fitness enthusiasts.
- **Enhanced Research:** Stimulation of further scientific inquiry into the health benefits of Kabaddi.
- **Policy Initiatives:** Concrete steps towards integrating Kabaddi into national fitness and educational frameworks.
- **Community Empowerment:** Growth in grassroots participation and the formation of new Kabaddi initiatives nationwide.
- **A Healthier Nation:** Ultimately, contributing to a fitter, more active, and healthier populace by embracing our traditional sporting heritage.

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Conclusion:

Kabaddi, with its roots deeply embedded in Indian soil, offers a potent and exhilarating pathway to comprehensive body fitness. A National Conference dedicated to exploring "Body Fitness Through Kabaddi" is not just timely but essential. It represents a collective effort to champion a sport that embodies strength, agility, and mental resilience, and to integrate its profound benefits into the fabric of modern wellness. By celebrating and strategically promoting Kabaddi, we can unlock a powerful, traditional solution for the contemporary challenges of national health and fitness.

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AUTHORITATIVE ROLE OF FITNESS IN MODERN VOLLEYBALL: A PERFORMANCE AND INJURY PREVENTION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Volleyball is a dynamic, high-intensity sport characterized by **explosive movements**, rapid changes of direction, and repetitive overhead actions. Success at the national and international level is increasingly dependent not just on technical and tactical proficiency, but on superior **sport-specific physical fitness**. This article examines the critical fitness components for competitive volleyball, the necessity of a scientifically structured training regimen, and the integral role of fitness in mitigating common injuries. It advocates for the integration of data-driven, periodized training models that prioritize power, agility, and injury-prevention to elevate athlete performance and longevity in the contemporary game.

1. Introduction: The Evolving Physical Demands of Volleyball

Modern volleyball is a game of power and speed. The shift to the **Rally Point System** has intensified the game's pace, eliminating downtime and increasing the physiological load on athletes throughout a match. A successful volleyball player must possess a unique blend of physical attributes: the **explosive power** for repeated vertical jumps (spiking, blocking), the **agility** for quick lateral movements (digging, defending), and the **muscular and cardiorespiratory endurance** to maintain performance through long sets and multi-match tournaments. Therefore, physical fitness is no longer a supplementary factor, but the **foundational pillar** of competitive excellence in volleyball.

2. Key Fitness Components for Volleyball Performance

Training for volleyball must be holistic, addressing the specific demands of the sport:

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A. Explosive Power (Vertical Jump)

This is arguably the most critical physical component. The ability to jump high and repeatedly is central to offensive (spiking) and defensive (blocking) success.

- **Training Focus: Plyometrics** (e.g., box jumps, depth jumps), Olympic lifts (e.g., clean and jerk variations), and maximal strength training for the lower body (squats, deadlifts).
- **Measurement:** Vertical Jump Test (e.g., Sargent Jump or use of force plates).

B. Agility and Speed

Volleyball involves short, sharp bursts of movement and rapid changes in direction to cover the court and react to the opponent's attack.

- **Training Focus: Cone drills, ladder drills,** and sport-specific reaction drills to improve quickness, lateral movement efficiency, and decision-making time.
- **Measurement:** T-Test or Arrowhead Agility Test.

C. Muscular Endurance

A typical rally involves multiple jumps, sprints, and dives. Muscular endurance, particularly in the legs, core, and shoulders, prevents fatigue-induced performance drops and reduces the risk of injury late in a match.

- **Training Focus:** High-volume, low-rest circuit training and sport-specific conditioning (e.g., repeated jump drills, core stability exercises).

D. Core Strength and Stability

The core is the link between the upper and lower body, crucial for transferring power from the legs to the arm swing during serving and spiking. A strong, stable core is essential for balance, posture, and spinal health.

- **Training Focus:** Planks, rotational movements (e.g., Russian twists), and exercises that challenge dynamic balance.

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3. Fitness as a Strategy for Injury Prevention

The repetitive, asymmetrical nature of volleyball exposes athletes to specific overuse and acute injuries. A structured fitness program is the most effective proactive measure against these risks:

Common Volleyball Injuries	Prevention Strategy through Fitness
Ankle Sprains	**Neuromuscular training** (balance drills, single-leg exercises) and targeted ankle strengthening.
Patellar Tendinopathy ("Jumper's Knee")	Quadriceps and hip strength balance, proper **landing mechanics** training to absorb force.
Shoulder Overuse Injuries (Rotator Cuff/Tendonitis)	Rotator cuff and scapular stabilizer strengthening, emphasis on proper **deceleration** and eccentric control of the arm swing.
Lower Back Pain	Comprehensive **core stability** program focusing on anti-extension and anti-rotation movements.

Injury Prevention Programs, such as the Oslo Sports Trauma Research Center (OSTRC) exercises, are now standard in high-level volleyball, focusing on proprioception, strength, and flexibility to manage the highest-risk areas (ankle, knee, shoulder).

4. Current Trends: Periodization and Technology

A. Data-Driven Periodization

The annual training cycle is increasingly sophisticated, moving beyond simple pre-season/in-season/off-season models. **Periodization** now involves systematic monitoring of training load and recovery to ensure athletes peak at key competitive periods while minimizing burnout and injury risk. This often involves:

- **Reduced volume** and **increased intensity** in the starting/competitive phase.

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- Strategic use of **active rest** and cross-training in the transition phase.

5. Conclusion:

For a national conference focused on sports science and athlete development, the message is clear: **elite volleyball performance is inseparable from elite physical fitness.** Future strategies must embrace a multi-faceted approach where advanced strength and conditioning is seamlessly integrated with technical coaching and proactive injury management. By committing to **scientifically-backed, individualized, and technology-enhanced fitness programs**, we can ensure our volleyball athletes not only perform at their highest potential but also sustain peak performance across a demanding career.

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MANGO CULTIVATION IN INDIA: AN SOCIO - ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

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Introduction:

Since agriculture accounts for around 17% of the country's GDP and employs more than 60% of the workforce, it has historically served as the foundation of the Indian economy. Over the past few decades, Indian agriculture has experienced significant expansion. Since independence, the production of food grains has expanded from 51 million tonnes in 1950–1951 to 250 MT in 2011–2012. The agriculture in India has made an impact on the world stage thanks to the tremendous growth. When it comes to producing different agricultural products like paddy, wheat, pulses, groundnuts, rapeseeds, fruits, vegetables, sugarcane, tea, jute, cotton, tobacco leaves, etc., India is among the top three countries in the world.

In India, the agricultural sector is important since it supplies industries like cotton, textile, jute, and sugar. However, in recent years, agricultural industries have been slowly declining as new industries have emerged and as the demand for industrial items in rural areas has increased.

Maharashtra leads the nation in fruit production with a share of 16.0 percent, followed by Andhra Pradesh (13.1%), Gujarat (10.0%), Karnataka (9.0%), Uttar Pradesh (8.0%), Tamil Nadu (7.0%), and Bihar (5.0%). These states collectively account for about 68.0 percent of the nation's total fruit production.

Mango Cultivation in India:

India's most important fruit crop is the mango, which is revered as the supreme fruit. It has a delightful taste, great flavour, and a lovely scent in addition to being high in vitamin A and C. The tree is naturally hardy, adaptable to many types of soil, and needs fairly little upkeep. Mango fruit is used at every stage of development, including when it is immature and ripe. Chutney, pickles, and juices are all made from raw fruits. In addition to being eaten for dessert, the ripe fruits are also used to make jams, jellies, syrups, nectars, and squashes. Additionally, the mango kernel contains 8–10% high-quality fat that can be utilised to make soap and to replace cocoa butter in confections.

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Mango exports from India primarily travel to the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, Kuwait, USA, and other Middle Eastern nations; a small amount also goes to the European market. Although India is the world's greatest producer of mangoes, accounting for around 45% of global production, only the Alphonso and Dashehari kinds are exported in their fresh state. About 15% of the global mango market belongs to India. Of all the fruits exported from the nation, 40% are mangoes. The acreage and productivity of mangoes in the nation have good potential for growth.

Importance of Mango:

- Employment generation.
- Increasing urbanization due to industrial growth has increased demands for mango.
- Mango is a nutritious food and has huge health benefits
- Mango is a rich source of Vitamin A and C.
- Encouraging mango production among small farmers will reduce poverty, and increase family incomes reducing poverty will strengthen communities.
- Mango fruit has an acidic level ranging from 0.2 to 0.5% and a protein content of about 1%.
- Mango is also preferred in various food processing industries because of its nutritional value.

Review Of Literature:

- **Ravi et al (2007)** analyzed the current fruit production of India is around 32 million metric tonnes (MMT), accounts for about 8 per cent of the world's fruit production. India is the second largest producer of Fruits after China. A huge variety of fruits are grown in India, of which mango, banana, orange, guava, grape, pineapple and apple are the foremost ones.
- **Sumathi and Rathakrishnan (2008)** reveal that inadequate market facility was the major constraint as reported by more than three fourth of (81.66%) the respondents. This suggests for the establishment of mango-based processing industries in this district. High transport cost was the other constraint followed by lack of transport facilities, lack of technical guidance, non-availability of credit facilities and failure of seasonal rains.

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- **Karthik, et al (2012)** examine Mango occupies a prominent place among the fruits grown in India because of its great utility, and is acknowledged as the king of tropical fruits. Various types of processed products are prepared from mango are pickles, chutneys, squash, jam, juices, mango leather and mango pulp. It is an outstanding source of vitamins A and C.

Methodology:

The secondary data was collected for the present study. Secondary data was collected from books, research papers, journal articles, web sites, etc. The secondary data is mainly used to derive theoretical background and research gap for the present study.

The total area of land planted with mangoes worldwide is 43.69 lakh ha, and 312.51 lakh tonnes are produced annually. India is the top country in the world for mango production, accounting for 40% of worldwide production and 46% of global area. China (11.8%), Thailand (5.7%), Mexico (5.4%), Pakistan (5.1%), Indonesia (4.5%), Brazil (4.3%), the Philippines (3.2%), Nigeria (2.6%), and Egypt are other prominent nations that produce mangoes, with their percentages of the global production (1.2 per cent). Asia accounts for 75% of world output, which is largely concentrated there. The nation has risen to become the top producer and exporter of Mango, Banana, Coconut, as well as the second-largest producer and exporter of Tea, Coffee, Cashew, and Spices in the globe. India produces 23% of the world's bananas and 39% of its mangoes. In terms of grape production, the nation has the highest productivity (25.4 tonnes/ha).

According to NHB (2008), India presently produces 202.68 million tonnes of fruits and vegetables, with a goal of 300 million tonnes by 2012. (GOI, 2002).

India Scenario:

The case study's product was a mango, which is known as the king of fruits in India. It accounts for 40% of the nation's total fruit production and 42% of the nation's land dedicated to fruit farming. According to estimates, India produces 9.5 million tonnes, or roughly 60%, of the 15.7 million tonnes of mangoes produced worldwide. India sold 79,060.88 million tonnes of fresh mangoes worth P141.93 core (US$31.48 million) in exports in 2006–07. Additionally, West Bengal produced 22.3 percent of the state's total fruit output during 2005 and 2006, ranking among the top ten mango-producing states in India. The mango, or Mangifera indica Linn, is

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considered the "King of Fruits" and is the most significant fruit grown in India. A total of 15.03 million tonnes of mangoes are produced annually on an estimated 2,312 thousand ha of land, making up 40.48 percent of the world's total mango production. It is important to note that of India's entire mango crop, 23.86 percent comes from Uttar Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh has a rate of 22.14 percent, followed by Karnataka (11.7 percent), Bihar (8.79 percent), Gujarat (6 percent), and Tamil Nadu (5.09 percent). Goa, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, and portions of Haryana, Orissa, and Rajasthan are among other states that are expanding (APEDA, 2000).The total area under mango cultivation is estimated to be 1,283,030 hectares with an estimated annual production of 10,810,957 metric tons.

Area, production and productivity of mango in India:
Source: Horticultural Statistics at a Glance, NHB 2020.

Year	Area (in ha)	Annual growth rate	Production (in MT)	Annual growth rate	Yield MT/per hectare	Annual growth rate
1991-92	1078		8716		8.0853	
2001-02	1576	46.19%	10020	14.96%	6.3578	-21.36%
2002-03	1623	2.98%	12733	27.07%	7.8453	23.39%
2003-04	1907	17.4%	11490	-9.76%	6.0251	-23.20%
2004-05	1970	3.30%	11830	2.95%	6.0050	-0.33%
2005-06	2081	5.63%	12663	7.04%	6.0850	1.33%
2006-07	2154	3.50%	13734	8.45%	6.3760	4.78%
2007-08	2201	2.18%	13997	1.91%	6.3593	-0.26%
2008-09	2309	4.90%	12750	-8.90%%	5.5218	-13.16%
2009-10	2312	0.12%	15027	17.85%	6.4995	17.70%
2010-11	2297	-0.64%	15188	1.07%	6.6121	1.73%
2011-12	2378	3.52%	16196	6.63%	6.8107	3.00%
2012-13	2500	5.13%	18002	11.15%	7.2008	5.72%
2013-14	2516	0.64%	18431	2.38%	7.3255	1.73%
2014-15	2163	-14.03%	18527	0.52%	8.5654	16.92%
2015-16	2209	2.12%	18643	0.62%	8.4395	-1.46%
2016-17	2263	2.44%	19687	5.59%	8.6995	3.08%
2017-18	2262	-0.04%	20912	6.22%	9.2449	6.26%
2018-19	2296	1.50%	21378	2.22%	9.3109	0.71%
2019-20	2309	0.56%	21285	-0.43%	9.2182	-0.99%
ACGR	**3.88%**		**4.56%**		**0.65%**	

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As revealed above table, an increasing trend has been observed in the area, production and yield per hectare of Mango in India from two decades. The total area cultivated under Mango was 1078 hectares in 1991-92 whereas production was 8716 metric tons and yield per hectare is 8.0853. In 2012-13, area and production increased tremendously i.e., by 2500 hectares and 18002 metric tons respectively. In 2013-14 area increased by 2516 hectares, production increased by 18431 metric tons and yield per hectare increased by 1.73%. Total area cultivation under Mango decreased by -0.64% whereas production and yield per hectare increased by 1.07% and 1.73% respectively in 2010-11. The main reason for a decrease in area was inadequate knowledge about Mango Cultivation, unseasonal rainfall and cause some diseases. Again in 2019-20 area under mango cultivation increased by 0.56%, but production and yield per hector decreased by --0.43% and -0.99% respectively. The main reason for increasing in area was better returns from Mango crop. During the year 2016-17, there was a tremendous increase in area, production and yield per hectare i.e., by 2.44%, 5.59% and3.08% respectively. A considerable increment in the annual area, production and yield per hectare has been observed i.e., 1.50%, 2.22% and 0.71% respectively in 2018-19. So, the compound growth rate of area is 3.88%, production is 4.56% and yield per hectare is 0.65%. Hence, there is an increasing trend in the area, production, but compared to area and production yield per hectare is not satisfactory.

Findings of Agriculture in India and Mango Cultivation:

- Agriculture contributes around 17% Indias GDP and employs over 60% of the workforce making it the backbone of the economy
- Food grain production has increased significantly from 51 million tonnes in 1950-51 to 250 million tonnes in 2011-12 showcasing massive agricultural progress.
- India ranks among the top three global producers of paddy, wheat, pulses, fruits, vegetables, sugarcane, cotton, tea, and jute.
- The sector supports allied industries such as cotton, jute, textiles, and sugar. However, industrial growth has recently led to a relative decline in agriculture's

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Conclusion:

Mango has good commercial potential, and the area planted with this crop is growing significantly in the study area. However, the lack of processing facilities in the study area is one of the barriers to value addition, so the government should plan for establishing new facilities and involve farmers in teaching them how to process mangoes locally (pickles, pulp extract, juice, etc.) so that fruit waste can be reduced and value addition can occur.

Key Words: Cultivation, Agriculture, Horticultural, Inadequate Knowledge, Colonialists,

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN CEMENT INDUSTRIES.

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Abstract:

Now a day's business strategies are changing the business tycoons are taking positive steps towards the society in which their business organizations are functioning. Only looking towards making profit the business organizations are encouraging their workers to participate in the neighbor communities and are giving grants, donations, invests in social and environmental programmes. Efforts are being made by the industries to reduce the pollution caused by such industries. Efforts to include Community are on the raise. These are conceptualized as the corporate social responsibilities. Now a day's Businesses is under escalating force to take on activities called as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). This concept has become common in almost all the giant companies and same is with the case of cement industries in Gulbarga District.

In the present study an attempt is made to understand the corporate social responsibilities of the cement industries of this part of the country. Not only cement industry any sector of industry to grow itself it must link its development with the sustainable social development of the society in which the industry is functioning. The industries have to make balance between profit made by production and social, environmental contributions by contributing to the minimizing environmental loss or impact. These activities have to take according to the New Companies Act 2013. In the present study an attempt is made to study the corporate social responsibilities of the cement industries of Gulbarga district using secondary sources.

Key words: - Corporate, Social Responsibilities, Cement Industries, Sustainability, Development

Introduction:

It is generally held assumption and practice that the industries run to earn the profit by producing expected goods. Here in the recent years the concept of industry has changed. It's not merely the earning profit but at the same time contributing the neighboring community in improving educationally, environmentally and social developments. Industry is also having some concern towards the society in which it exists. It's the moral, social

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and legal responsibility of the industry to improve the social, environmental and educational facilities in the society. As the industry is earning profit by utilizing the natural resources of the society, it must take care of the development of the society. These issues are neglected in the interest of earning more profit; the society will be adversely affected. Therefore, each industry supposed to admire the social values and norms of the local society. The responsibilities of social concern of the local community enhance the life and profit of the industry. This could make the industry to have sustainable development. The corporate social responsibility relates responsibilities of the industry with the requirements of the society and directs the industry to have environmental renewal in the society. This makes the industry to have strong success and or sustainable success. Therefore, programmes like clean society, environmentally friendly technology to produce the output, reduce the bad impact on the ozone layer and change in the climate also is the prime aim of the corporate social responsibility.

Statement of the Problem:

The aim of the present study is to explore the corporate social responsibilities of the cement industries in the district of Gulbarga and in Ultra tech cement industry of the district. As the Gulbarga is considered as the land of lime stone and in this district good number of cement industries is functioning since many decades. Implementation of the corporate social responsibility is the foundation for the sustainable development of this part of the country. Here through executing the corporate social responsibilities, the industry achieves the sustainable development in the region. The present study makes an attempt to understand and evaluate the corporate social responsibilities of the cement industries of this region.

Objectives of the Study:

To study the corporate social responsibility and acts related to the corporate social responsibility.

To study and evaluate the corporate social responsibility of the cement industries of this region.

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Methodology:

The present study is based on the secondary data collected with the help of journals and magazines. The pertaining to the study is collected by reviewing the articles and the reports published in reputed journals and magazines are used.

Gulbarga is considered as the land of lime stone and as such raw materials for producing cement are abundantly available in the district and as such the cement manufacturing units are more in this district. Major cement industries are established in the district. By itself the district is the ideal for the study of corporate social responsibility in the cement industries and in the present study the Gulbarga district is chosen for the present study. List of the cement industries functioning in Gulbarga district are.

Orient Cement Birla group, Cement Corporation of India, Penna Cement Industries, Birla Shakti Cement Industry, Shree Cement, Vasavadatta Cement, Ultra Tech Cement, ACC Cement, Bharati Cement

These are some of the important cement industries in Gulbarga district and there are some other small units of cement manufacturing in Gulbarga district. The present study on corporate social responsibility in cement industry is a new concept in this sector and the significance of the present study is to understand corporate social responsibility in cement industry. Corporate social responsibility is studied in other industries. But in cement industries and more particularly in Gulbarga district this kind of studies are very sparse and this study would be of empirical attempt to have initial study to understand the corporate social responsibility in cement industry.

Literature Review:

In this section some of the related literature is reviewed to understand the corporate social responsibility scientifically and to understand the social responsibility in the other organizations. The review of scientific literature gives knowledge about the concept and can understand the issues pertaining to the subject. Review of literature also provides the scientific meaning to the concept. Attempt is made to understand the corporate social responsibility in the cement industries in particular and corporate social responsibility in other industries.

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Father of corporate social responsibility Howard Bowen (1953) who connected the corporation responsibility to the society, in his study mentioned that the corporations are not only meant for production and economic activities but also deliver the social responsibility of the industry to the community surrounding the industries. The activities of the industry also affect the society surrounding that industry because of this reason the production and such other economic activities must function in accordance with the hopes of the society. Friedman (1971) in his study has understood the corporate social responsibility as ahead of the business interests of the owners of the company. Here contribution some proportion of the profit towards the social benefit of the society in which the industry is functioning. Kaith Davis (1975) in the study on corporate social responsibility mentioned that the corporate social responsibility occurs from the social concern, the social loss which is the result of the industrial production. The production process which affects the society, to compensate the loss, to take of social equilibrium activities may be defined as corporate social responsibility. Balmer et al., (2007), in their study explained corporate social responsibility as the philanthropic attempt to improve the society. CSR includes efforts to improve the quality of life of the community and to preserve and protect the environment of the society surrounding industry.

Corporate Social Responsibilities of Ultratech cement

Ultratech Cement makes highest expenditure on CSR in the cement industry by spending Rs. 115.99 crore during FY 23. More than 16 lakh people get advantage from its community development programs.

The company undertakes its CSR initiatives through its CSR arm – Aditya Birla Center for Community Initiatives and Rural Development. The foundation is connected in operating towards the improvement of 9000 villages' allover India.

The company's support has help in livelihood programs under the Nudge Foundation's Asha Kiran project, assisting over 20,280 poor women in Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, Ultratech Cement's fashion business has offers employment prospects to about more than 14,000 women from rural areas, even though they are poor in formal education.

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In addition, the company concentrates on skill development and training for weak people; plan to empower them with different vocational skills. Remarkably, efforts widen towards increasing women farmer communities by establishing Women-led Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) to improve their participation in high-value agriculture and close the marketing loop.

Conclusion:

In concluding point, it is to state here that like other industries are participating in the corporate social responsibilities, the Ultra Tech cement industry is also contributing significantly in fulfilling its corporate social responsibilities by spending huge budget for the uplifting the neighboring communities in empowering the women and youths. By spending on huge budget to improve the primary and compulsory education of the region where the industry existed. The contributions of the UltraTech cement in fulfilling the corporate social responsibility is significant one.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT, MANAGING RISKS

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ABSTRACT

The term artificial intelligence (AI) describes how technology, especially computer systems, may mimic human intelligence processes. Machines can now think, learn, and carry out jobs that have historically required human intelligence thanks to artificial intelligence (AI). Additionally, it has quickly changed social media by providing strong tools to improve user interaction, expedite content production, and maximize marketing tactics. This study investigates how audience interaction and general engagement are affected by AI-powered features such as chatbots, predictive analytics, social listening, and automated content creation. According to survey results, most users acknowledge AI's ability to increase engagement, with tailored and interactive features having a particularly significant impact. However, there are drawbacks to integrating AI as well, such as high expenses, privacy issues, and ethical issues including prejudice and transparency. The study emphasizes that although AI greatly improves social media tactics, ethical standards and responsible AI practices must be followed to reduce hazards and preserve audience confidence. All things considered, this study emphasizes how AI can both increase participation and demand careful handling of the related operational and ethical issues. The increasing trend of automation and data-driven decision-making in the social media space is demonstrated by the fact that 70% of users are using AI technologies. With AI playing a key role in simplifying chores like content scheduling, audience targeting, and interaction tracking, the comparatively high adoption rate of AI indicates a substantial change in the way social media strategies are being established.

Keyword: Artificial Intelligence , social media, engagement, management, Risks

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INTRODUCTION

Social media has a significant impact on how people communicate, share information, and engage with the outside world in the current digital era. In the world of social media, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a disruptive force that is changing how people, companies, and brands interact with their audiences. Social media platforms may provide users with more timely, relevant, and interactive experiences by utilizing AI-powered tools like chatbots, tailored recommendations, automated content creation, predictive analytics, and social listening. In addition to increasing interaction, these technologies facilitate content management, enhance decision-making, and offer insightful data about the preferences and behavior of audiences. However, there are a number of risks and difficulties associated with using AI in social mediaConcerns about algorithmic bias, privacy issues, misinformation, and the effects on mental health have all brought up significant issues regarding the moral and responsible use of these technologies. It's critical to comprehend both the possible advantages and risks of AI-driven systems as they develop further. Problems for users and businesses include potential bias in AI-generated information, high costs, privacy problems, and technical complexity. Transparency, accountability, and fairness are among the ethical factors that are becoming more and more crucial to guaranteeing the reliability and responsibility of AI-driven interactions.

By providing solutions for content generation, scheduling, analytics, interaction, and even customer assistance, artificial intelligence (AI) applications are revolutionizing the way influencers, corporations, marketers, and people manage their social media strategy.

India's education system is changing as a result of artificial intelligence (AI), which offers creative approaches to improve instruction, customize learning, and expedite administrative procedures. AI is expanding access to and inclusivity in education through everything from adaptive learning systems that meet the needs of individual students to instructional gaming concepts. The objective is to use AI responsibly to improve learning results and have a good impact on instructors, even as it continues to have a significant impact on India's educational system. creation of text or video material. AI chatbots with platform integration. Social media end users engage with AI capabilities integrated into the platform through video filters. These interactions can involve

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communicating with an AI chatbot to get answers to inquiries or altering the user's look with video filters. Third-party apps can also be used by end users to create content for posting or schedule postings.

With a wide range of powers, artificial intelligence (AI) is a game-changing technology that can teach people almost anything. It can also mimic human behavior and solve complicated issues. Its adaptability in artistic and analytical fields is demonstrated by its ability to automate repetitive operations, produce games, photographs, and videos, as well as turn words into images and vice versa. Applications of AI can be found in a wide range of products, including wearables, smartphones, smart cars, robotic vacuum cleaners, security and surveillance systems, space exploration equipment, smart home devices, and specialized tools used in a variety of industries, including healthcare, education, robotics, finance, military, and agriculture. AI is a crucial component of contemporary technological ecosystems because it powers a wide range of services that improve everyday life and business operations in addition to products. These services include chatbots, e-payments, gaming, e-commerce, music and video streaming, digital assistants, cloud computing, text editors with auto-correct, and general digitalization.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine how artificial intelligence capabilities can be utilized to improve social media platform user engagement.

2. To determine and evaluate the main hazards related to AI in social media.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A This study employs a **survey-based research methodology** to examine the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on social media engagement and the associated risks. A The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on social media participation and the hazards that come with it are investigated in this study using a survey-based research approach.

Sampling Size: A structured questionnaire was created to collect quantitative information from 500 participants on a range of social media sites on their awareness, experiences, and opinions about AI tools. The efficiency of

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AI-powered features, time savings in social media administration, the genuineness of AI-generated material, difficulties encountered while utilizing AI, and ethical considerations were among the main topics of the poll.

Data Collection and Analysis : To ascertain the frequency, percentage distribution, and general trends among respondents, data were examined using descriptive statistics. This method made it possible to gain a thorough grasp of how AI improves engagement, the difficulties it poses, and the level of awareness and acceptance of ethical AI practices in social media campaigns.

FINGINGS AND DISCUSSION

The survey results reveal several key insights into the role of AI in social media engagement and the associated risks.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents to know the aware of AI tools being used in social media

aware of AI tools being used in social media	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	450	90
No	50	10
Total	500	100

The above table one data reveals a high level of awareness regarding AI tools used in social media, with 90% of respondents indicating they are aware of such technologies. This implies that the public is starting to identify the incorporation of AI in social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others. However, only 10% of respondents said they were not aware of these technologies, indicating a comparatively narrow public knowledge gap. Even while most people are aware of this, there is still room for more marketing or educational initiatives to close the 10% of people who are not familiar with AI tools. Overall, the results point to a well-established presence of AI in social media.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by use of AI tools.

Used AI tools by Respondents	No. of Respondents	Percentage
ChatGPT for content creation	130	26

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Content Moderation	120	24
Image and Video Recognition	95	19
Language Translation and Accessibility	55	11
Audience analysis	70	14
Social listening	30	6
Total	500	100

The data indicates that respondents use a variety of AI tools for different purposes on social media, with some tools being more popular than others. utilize a range of AI technologies on social media, some of which are more well-liked than others, for various objectives. ChatGPT is the most popular AI tool for content production, being utilized by 26% of respondents (130 people). This implies that social media administrators and marketers are increasingly turning to AI-driven content creation as a useful tool. With 24% (120 respondents) utilizing AI to filter or moderate user-generated content, content moderation comes in second, underscoring the technology's rising significance in preserving online communities. With 19% (95 respondents) use AI to evaluate and tag visual content, image and video recognition is also a crucial tool. This is particularly pertinent for platforms like Instagram and TikTok that rely largely on visual content.Comparatively less use is made of other AI techniques including audience analysis (14%), social listening (6%), and language translation and accessibility (11%). This may indicate that although these tools are useful for particular activities, their adoption is not as widespread as that of tools for content generation or moderation. Each of these tools is still essential for helping creators and businesses improve their social media strategies, even with the lower percentages. With content-related AI solutions (such ChatGPT and content moderation) leading the way in adoption, the data generally indicates a rising dependence on AI technologies to improve content development, moderation, and engagement.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by use AI tools for social media management or engagement.

AI tools for social media management or engagement	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	350	70
No	150	30

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Total	500	100

The above Table 3 According to the data, 350 people, or 70% of the respondents, use AI technologies for social media interaction or administration, whereas 150 people, or 30%, do not. This shows that social media users are strongly embracing AI technology, indicating that AI is becoming recognized as a useful tool for increasing productivity and effectiveness in audience engagement and management. The increasing trend of automation and data-driven decision-making in the social media space is demonstrated by the fact that 70% of users are using AI technologies. The reasons why some people do not use AI tools may include a lack of knowledge, a lack of resources, or contentment with more conventional forms of interaction.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by most AI-powered features enhance engagement

Sl. No.	AI-powered features enhance engagement	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Automated content creation	110	22
2	Personalized recommendations	135	27
3	Predictive analytics for trends	65	13
4	Chatbots for customer interaction	105	21
5	Social listening & sentiment analysis	85	17
	Total	**500**	**100**

According to the survey results, 27% of respondents believe that tailored recommendations are the most effective AI-powered feature for increasing engagement. This suggests that consumers place a high value on recommendations that are specifically customized to their requirements and interests. Automated content generation is the second most popular feature (22%), demonstrating that engagement is greatly increased by the effectiveness of producing varied and pertinent content. Not far behind, chatbots for customer service (21%) highlight how crucial immediate assistance and real-time communication are to increasing user happiness. In the meantime, sentiment analysis (17%) and social listening are also important since they give businesses a better understanding of the attitudes and views of their audience. Lastly, trend prediction analytics (13%) came in last, indicating that although trend forecasting is helpful, it is not as closely associated with instant engagement as more personalized or interactive solutions. Overall, the findings highlight that the most effective ways to increase user engagement are through conversational AI, personalization, and content efficiency.

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Table 5: Distribution of respondents by effective AI tools is increasing user engagement on social media.

Sl. No.	engagement on social media	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Very Effective	220	44
2	Effective	190	38
3	Neutral	45	9
4	Ineffective	25	5
5	Very Ineffective	20	4
	Total	**500**	100

According to the survey's findings, most people believe AI tools can boost social media user engagement. More than four-fifths of participants think AI improves engagement, as evidenced by the large majority of respondents (44%), who ranked them as very effective and another 38% as effective. Just 9% of respondents were ambivalent, indicating some hesitancy over their advantages. However, just a small percentage of respondents thought AI technologies were ineffective (5%) or very ineffective (4%), indicating a lack of skepticism. Overall, the results show a high level of confidence in the efficacy of AI technologies, with the majority of users recognizing their contribution to increased responsiveness, customisation, and interaction on social media platforms.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents by AI-powered features enhance engagement

AI-powered features enhance engagement	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Automated content creation	110	22
Personalized recommendations	135	27
Predictive analytics for trends	65	13
Chatbots for customer interaction	105	21
Social listening & sentiment analysis	85	17
Total	**500**	100

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According to the findings, 27% of respondents chose personalized suggestions as the AI-powered element that has the greatest influence on increasing engagement. This emphasizes how crucial it is becoming to provide recommendations and information that are specific to each user's tastes. At 22%, automated content generation comes in second, demonstrating the importance of efficiency and diversity in creating interesting content. Likewise, 21% of respondents think highly of chatbots for customer service, highlighting the importance of conversational, real-time assistance in maintaining user engagement. Understanding audience sentiment and emotions is a significant, albeit less important, component, as evidenced by the 17% that goes to social listening and sentiment analysis. Finally, at 13%, predictive analytics for trends had the lowest proportion, indicating that it is thought to be less closely related to engagement outcomes right away. Overall, the results highlight that the main AI-driven elements influencing user engagement are interactive communication, dynamic content, and personalization.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Increasing Engagement: According to respondents, the best ways to increase user engagement are using AI-powered services like chatbots (21%), automated content production (22%), and personalized suggestions (27%). These solutions emphasize AI's key role in enhancing audience contact by facilitating rapid communication, streamlining content administration, and delivering personalized information. Regarding efficacy, the vast majority of participants (82%) said AI tools were very helpful or effective in increasing engagement, demonstrating a strong belief in their usefulness.

CONCLUSION

According to the survey, AI has emerged as a crucial instrument for raising social media engagement, providing capabilities like chatbots, automated content production, and tailored recommendations that greatly enhance audience engagement and content management. The majority of respondents acknowledge the effectiveness AI-generated content adds to social media initiatives and believe it to be real. The study does, however, also highlight a number of obstacles, such as potential biases in AI outputs, high costs, privacy issues,

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and technical hurdles. With the majority of users highlighting the necessity of ethical norms and responsible AI techniques, ethical considerations continue to be a prominent concern.

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A Critical Analysis of Digital Divide and the Empowerment of Youth and Marginalized Groups

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Abstract

The digital divide, defined as the gap between individuals who have access to modern information and communication technology (ICT) and those who do not, has significant implications for the empowerment of youth and marginalized groups. While digital tools provide opportunities for education, employment, social inclusion, and civic participation, lack of access deepens social inequalities. This paper explores the challenges and opportunities created by the digital divide and analyses strategies that can help empower disadvantaged populations.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Empowerment, Youth, Marginalised groups, Digital Inclusion

Introduction

Digital technology has become an essential component of modern society, shaping how people learn, communicate, and participate in economic and social life. However, disparities in access to the internet, devices, and digital literacy persist, particularly among marginalized groups such as rural populations, economically disadvantaged communities, women, and differently-abled individuals. For youth, who represent the most digitally adaptable demographic, exclusion from the digital world limits educational attainment, career prospects, and active citizenship.

Statement of the Problem

Despite rapid advancements in ICT infrastructure, millions of youth and marginalized groups remain excluded from digital opportunities. Unequal access to resources not only widens economic and social disparities but also limits empowerment initiatives aimed at capacity building, knowledge dissemination, and participation in decision-making processes. Bridging this divide is essential to achieving inclusive growth and social justice.

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Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the extent and nature of the digital divide affecting youth and marginalized groups.
- To examine the role of digital access in promoting empowerment and social inclusion.
- To identify barriers to digital inclusion, including economic, infrastructural, and socio-cultural factors.
- To suggest strategies for reducing the digital divide and enhancing empowerment.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative and analytical review of existing literature, policy reports, and global case studies. Data sources include international organizations (UNESCO, World Bank, ITU), government reports, and peer-reviewed journals. The paper applies content analysis to evaluate the relationship between digital access and empowerment outcomes.

Literature Review

Several studies highlight the digital divide as a multi-dimensional issue involving access, affordability, and skills. Warschauer (2003) emphasized that digital literacy is as important as physical access to devices. UNESCO (2022) reported that nearly 2.7 billion people remain offline globally, with women and rural populations disproportionately affected. Research also indicates that access to ICT promotes entrepreneurship, improves educational outcomes, and fosters civic engagement among youth. However, marginalized groups face persistent barriers such as lack of infrastructure, poverty, language barriers, and gender norms.

Content Analysis

Findings suggest that digital empowerment requires more than access to devices and internet connectivity. Effective use depends on digital literacy, affordability, and culturally relevant content. Case studies from India, Africa, and Latin America show that community digital hubs, affordable mobile internet, and government e-learning initiatives can reduce exclusion. At the same time, failure to address affordability or gendered access risks reinforcing inequalities. Digital tools have empowered marginalized youth in areas such as e-learning,

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telemedicine, online entrepreneurship, and civic activism. However, systemic inequities must be addressed through inclusive policies and targeted interventions.

Conclusion

The digital divide is a major obstacle to empowerment, particularly for youth and marginalized groups. Bridging this gap requires a multi-pronged approach involving infrastructure development, digital literacy programs, affordable access, and inclusive content creation. Empowering disadvantaged populations through digital inclusion not only enhances individual opportunities but also promotes social equity, economic growth, and democratic participation.

Suggestions

1. Infrastructure Development
   - Expand affordable internet connectivity in rural and underserved areas.
   - Establish community digital hubs in villages, schools, and libraries.
2. Digital Literacy Programs
   - Introduce digital skills training in school and college curricula.
   - Provide free or subsidized workshops for marginalized groups (especially women, differently-abled, and rural youth).
3. Affordable Access
   - Promote low-cost smartphones, tablets, and subsidized internet packages.
   - Encourage public-private partnerships to reduce the cost burden on communities.
4. Inclusive Content Creation
   - Develop digital resources in local languages to ensure accessibility.
   - Create content tailored to the needs of marginalized groups (e.g., online job portals, e-health services, e-learning platforms).

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5. Policy and Governance
    - Governments should adopt digital inclusion as part of social welfare policies.
    - Encourage NGOs and international agencies to support grassroots digital empowerment projects.
6. Community Participation
    - Involve local leaders, teachers, and youth volunteers in spreading digital awareness.
    - Encourage peer-to-peer training where skilled youth train their communities.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE IMPACT ON INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES IN INDIA

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Abstract:

Growing internet access in India is changing how people meet, select mates, and defy traditional norms, yet inter caste marriages are both made possible and hindered by an unequal digital rollout known as the "digital divide." Opportunities for cross-caste interaction and anonymised choice are increased by increased connectivity and platforms (social media, dating apps, and matrimony websites) yet, the digital revolution is not a straightforward equaliser due to unequal access, gendered gaps, and algorithmic/cultural restrictions. This article summarises the ways in which inter caste marriages are impacted by the digital divide, reviews the available data, and makes recommendations for platforms and policies.

Families and communities usually strongly oppose inter caste marriage because they see them as threats to the status quo of society. Even while the Indian government has put laws in place to encourage inter caste marriages, there is still a lot of social opposition, which occasionally leads to serious violence, such as honour killings. In addition to analyzing the broader social, legal, and regulatory contexts that affect these partnerships, this study investigates the challenges faced by inter caste couples.

The study demonstrates how inter caste marriages aid in the eradication of caste-based discrimination by analyzing data, case studies, and historical context. It also highlights the ongoing obstacles to their acceptance and the long-term impacts on society.

Keyword – Caste system, Equality, cross-caste, Inter-caste marriage, social justice

Introduction:

In India, the caste system has always been closely linked to marriage, which serves as a crucial institution for maintaining social boundaries, caste identity, and hierarchy. Despite being guaranteed by the constitution and encouraged by programs like the Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration via Inter-Caste weddings, inter caste weddings are still not very common and frequently encounter opposition in the form of stigma, prejudice,

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and even violence. Notwithstanding these obstacles, opportunities for more cross-caste relationships have progressively expanded due to socioeconomic shifts, urbanization, education, and greater mobility. In this regard, digital technologies—such as social networking sites, dating apps, and marriage websites—have become significant venues for people to communicate across conventional social and geographic borders. Inter caste marriages may become possible as a result of these platforms' increased anonymity, larger networks, and self-driven partner selection options. But because of the digital divide, the advantages of digital technology are not equally shared. Access to the internet is only one aspect of India's digital divide; other factors include cost, digital literacy, gender disparities, language obstacles, and disparities between rural and urban areas. Though educated, urban adolescents with personal internet access are more likely to investigate inter caste partnerships online, women, marginalized groups, and rural people frequently encounter barriers to unrestricted use of these platforms. Furthermore, by using filters and algorithms that support conventional endogamous customs, digital platforms itself may serve to further entrench caste preferences. The question this study seeks to answer is: to what extent can inter-caste marriages serve as a platform for social justice in India? Through an analysis of historical and contemporary contexts, this research delves into the transformative role that inter-caste marriages can play in dismantling caste divisions. It also examines the obstacles that limit their wider social acceptance and impact.

Objectives:

- To investigate how marriage customs across caste lines are influenced by modern technologies (social media, the internet, dating apps, and matrimonial websites).
- To examine how chances for inter caste marriages are impacted by the digital divide (access, affordability, literacy, gender gap, and rural–urban inequities).
- To determine how user choices, community filters, and algorithmic preferences on digital platforms can both question and strengthen caste barriers.
- To research the threats and difficulties inter caste couples encounter in digital domains, including privacy violations, online harassment, surveillance, and backlash.

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Methodology:

This research seeks to examine and ascertain the effect of inter caste marriages on caste barriers in India in light of the previously mentioned studies on inter caste marriages in India as a platform for social justice. It investigates the basic functional viewpoints of social reforms and constitutional remedies based on theoretical study. A variety of sources, such as books, gazetteers, journals, newspapers, published articles, and websites, are used to gather primary and secondary data. The sources are updated and improved on a regular basis.

Constitutional Measures:

The Indian Constitution, as the foundational legal document of the country, provides several provisions aimed at promoting equality, prohibiting caste-based discrimination, and supporting inter-caste marriages as part of its broader vision for a just and inclusive society. These constitutional measures play a vital role in protecting the rights of individuals entering inter-caste marriages and contribute to the dismantling of caste hierarchies.

1. Article 15 – Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Religion, Race, Caste, Sex, or Place of Birth

Article 15 explicitly prohibits discrimination against citizens on the grounds of caste, thereby supporting the right of individuals to marry outside their caste. It serves as a safeguard for inter-caste couples against social exclusion and ensures their legal equality in matters of marriage and family.

2. Article 17 – Abolition of Untouchability

While not directly addressing inter-caste marriages, Article 17 is crucial in promoting social justice by abolishing untouchability, a practice deeply tied to the caste system. This provision indirectly supports inter-caste marriages by fostering an environment where lower-caste individuals are not treated as socially inferior.

3. Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty

The right to life and personal liberty enshrined in Article 21 encompasses the right to marry a person of one's choice. This has been reinforced by several Supreme Court judgments, including the landmark *Shafin Jahan v. Asokan K.M.* case, which recognized the right to marry as an integral part of personal liberty. This provision protects inter-caste couples' rights to marry without state or societal interference.

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4. Special Marriage Act, 1954

The Special Marriage Act provides a legal framework for inter-caste marriages, allowing individuals from different castes to marry without the need for religious ceremonies. It upholds the secular principles of the Constitution and ensures that inter-caste marriages receive legal recognition.

Why marriage decisions are impacted by the digital divide

- Social networks, gatekeepers (family, community leaders), and information flows all influence marriage decisions. These are disrupted by digital technology because they allow
- networks that are more widely distributed geographically (people can meet outside of caste-determined neighborhoods).
- Private, asynchronous communication that lessens stigma and family scrutiny.

What the data indicates about online users and access

According to recent figures, the number of internet users in India has increased significantly to hundreds of millions, with rural adoption on the rise. However, there are still gaps between coverage and meaningful access. Large-scale industry and policy reports, for instance, show that there are hundreds of millions of active users, with rural India accounting for an increasing portion of this number. However, factors including device ownership, session length, gender disparities, and language obstacles continue to impede real digital inclusion. In summary, although connectivity has increased, states, genders, and socioeconomic categories differ greatly in terms of access quality and capabilities.

Evidence of trends: is the internet contributing to an increase in inter caste marriages?

Some urban centers indicate increases in registered inter caste weddings, while research and platform studies reveal growing signs of openness on digital platforms (more profiles showing willingness for cross-caste unions). National studies, however, continue to indicate that inter caste weddings make up a very small percentage of all marriages, and the trends that are recorded differ significantly by state, class, and urban/rural status. The internet is one among several factors that are driving change, including urbanization, migration, and education.

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Barriers to Inter-caste Marriages:

Inter-caste marriages, despite their potential to foster equality, face significant societal opposition in India. The most pervasive barriers come from familial and community resistance, rooted in fear of losing social status and caste purity. Families often exert immense pressure on individuals to conform to caste-based norms of marriage, with the threat of social ostracism looming large. This is especially pronounced in rural areas, where caste identities are more rigidly maintained. In more extreme cases, inter-caste couples face violence, including honour killings—tragic instances where family members kill their own relatives to preserve family honour and caste integrity. Socioeconomic and cultural differences further compound the difficulties faced by inter-caste couples. Traditional practices, cultural customs, and economic status often differ vastly between castes, making it difficult for families to accept these unions. The lack of community support and social acceptance can also make it challenging for couples to integrate into either caste group. Moreover, societal perceptions of inter-caste marriages as deviant or dishonourable continue to prevail. Legal protections, such as those provided under the Special Marriage Act, do offer support, but enforcement remains inconsistent, and many couples struggle to access their rights due to social stigma. In essence, these barriers reflect the deeply entrenched caste dynamics that still govern social life in India.

Challenges and Criticisms

While inter-caste marriages have the potential to break down caste barriers, they are not without limitations. One of the primary challenges is that caste identity often persists, even within inter-caste unions. In many cases, families continue to emphasize caste affiliations, and the discrimination that individuals from marginalized castes face may not entirely dissipate after marriage. Another criticism is that inter-caste marriages, while symbolic of social progress, may not necessarily lead to structural changes in society. Critics argue that such marriages are often isolated instances, limited to urban and educated elites, and may not represent a broader shift in societal attitudes toward caste.

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Solutions for Barriers to Inter-caste Marriages:

Inter-caste marriages in India often face significant societal, cultural, and familial barriers that impede acceptance and create challenges for couples. To foster a more inclusive environment, several solutions can be implemented:

1. **Awareness Campaigns**: Government and non-government organizations should launch awareness campaigns to educate the public about the importance of inter-caste marriages in promoting social justice and equality. Highlighting success stories can help normalize these unions and challenge prevailing stereotypes.

2. **Educational Initiatives**: Integrating education on caste systems and inter-caste relationships into school curricula can encourage critical thinking among youth. Workshops and seminars can foster discussions about the benefits of inter-caste marriages, promoting acceptance from an early age.

3. **Legal Protections**: Strengthening legal frameworks to protect inter-caste couples from discrimination, harassment, and violence is essential. The implementation of laws that specifically address honour-based violence and promote the rights of individuals in inter-caste marriages can provide a safer environment.

4. **Community Support**: Establishing support groups for inter-caste couples can provide a platform for sharing experiences and advice. These groups can also work to engage community leaders and elders to promote acceptance within families and communities.

By implementing these solutions, society can gradually overcome the barriers to inter-caste marriages, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for all individuals.

Conclusion:

Through network expansion, privacy enhancement, and contact platforms, the internet increases the potential for intercaste marriages. However, who truly gains is determined by the digital divide, which is a combination of algorithmic design, safety, capability, and access. Digital technologies run the potential of perpetuating current disparities by allowing some people to cross caste borders while leaving the most vulnerable

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behind or even putting them at more risk if targeted solutions (policy, platform design, and community assistance) are not implemented.

Moreover, as the data suggests, the likelihood of inter-caste marriages increases with education, particularly among marginalized communities. This point to the need for continued investment in education and empowerment initiatives that promote understanding and respect for diversity.

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AN SOCIO - ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF PINEAPPLE FRUIT IN INDIA

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Introduction:

Horticultural products are traditionally thought to be a source of food security and a means of support for millions of small farmers in developing nations. Horticultural products anticipate rising demand globally as the world population is projected to reach 8 billion people by 2025. This rise in demand is primarily the result of income elasticity, and it is particularly present in developed and developing countries with high and middle-income levels. The main cause of the increase in demand is a change in lifestyle among the residents of these nations brought on by higher income levels, the desire for a well-balanced, healthy diet that includes more fruits and vegetables each day, as well as increased international travel and communication.

India is the sixth-largest producer of pineapple, providing 1571000 MT, or roughly 6.35% of the total production, to the global production of 24785762 MT (FAO, 2013). Several nations, including Thailand, the Philippines, China, Brazil, India, Nigeria, Costa Rica, Mexico, Indonesia, and Kenya, practise pineapple farming. It is now one of India's most important commercial fruit crops. The humid coastal regions of peninsular India and the hilly regions of north-eastern India are where it is grown. Large-scale production occurs in Meghalaya, Assam, Sikkim, West Bengal, Tripura, Mizoram, Karnataka, Goa, and Kerala, while smaller-scale production occurs in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. Both in the domestic markets and the processing industry, there is a healthy demand for pineapple. India exports pineapple to the UK, Spain, Nepal, and the United Arab Emirates. Juice and canned slices make up the majority of exported goods.

Review of Literature:

A review of literature on the significance, trends, and challenges of horticultural products—specifically pineapple—in food security and rural livelihoods reveals their crucial role in sustaining small farmers and meeting rising global demand driven by changing lifestyles, health interests, and economic growth. Below is an organized review addressing international and Indian perspectives on pineapple production and its challenges.

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Products: Food Security and Demand: Horticultural products, especially fruits and vegetables, have historically provided a direct source of nutrition and income for smallholder farmers in developing nations, serving as a bulwark against food insecurity . As the global population approaches 8 billion, demand for these products is expected to rise, propelled by income elasticity: wealthier and middle-class consumers in both developed and developing nations increasingly seek healthier diets featuring more fruits and vegetables. This shift is influenced by increased international travel, information exchange, and evolving dietary patterns.

The Pineapple Scenario:

One of the most widely grown and produced tropical fruit crops worldwide is the pineapple (Ananas comosus). The fruit's resemblance to a pinecone gave rise to the name pineapple (or pine in Spanish). The term ananas is derived from the Tupi word "anana," which means "good fruit." The stem of the fruit is referred to as comosus, which is tufted. The finest pineapple-producing regions are those having warm, consistent weather throughout the year. The world's tropical regions continue to be the sole source of current production.The world currently produces 23 MMT total, with about 80 different nations contributing to this total. Over the past ten years, the global commerce in fresh pineapple has increased by 100%. On the global market, pineapple juice sold for around $174 million, grape juice for about $158 million, citrus for about $109 million, and tomato juice for about $22 million.

In India, the states of West Bengal, Kerala, the North Eastern ones like Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh, as well as Karnataka, cultivate pineapple as their primary fruit crop. The climate in these regions is ideal for the large-scale production of pineapple. Despite being introduced to India by Portuguese colonialists in 1548, pineapple cultivation only began to increase significantly after India gained its independence. The government only provided limited support for the pineapple industry until the 1960s and did not recognise it as a key sector for agricultural development until the 1990s. Therefore, up until 1990, pineapple production, marketing, and processing were primarily driven by private ventures.

With 7% of the global pineapple production, or around 1.6 MMT, India is currently the sixth largest producer in the world. Kew and Mauritius are the two most popular cultivars. Kew is primarily appropriate for

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processing and is grown in the North Eastern States and West Bengal, whilst Mauritius is primarily grown in Kerala and is a suitable table variety.

The largest output percentage is in West Bengal (19.7%), followed by Assam (17.1%), Karnataka (10.8%), Tripura (10.5%), and Kerala (4.6per cent). Karnataka (62.7) has the highest productivity, followed by West Bengal (29.5), Bihar (27.1), and Assam (25.1). (16.6). In comparison to the global average of 23.2 MT/ha, Indian productivity is 14.9 MT/ha (Indian Horticulture Database 2013). With nearly 58% of all fresh pineapple exports from India in 2012–13, the Middle East was the country's top destination for fresh pineapple. The other top travel destinations were the Maldives (15%) and Nepal (18%). (NHB 2013). India's trade prospects are stronger because pineapple is seen as a subpar crop. Thus, the potential is not being used to its fullest extent.

Pineapple Cultivation in India:

One of India's most significant commercial fruits is the pineapple. Many Indians adore its sweet flavour. India is currently the fifth largest pineapple producer in the world, with an estimated 14.2 million tonnes of production each year. India is achieving new heights with its output of pineapples, which accounts for about 8.2% of global production. The states of Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Manipur, and Tripura are mostly in charge of producing pineapple in India. In India, pineapple production is rising quickly. The cultivation area of pineapple increased from 71.3 thousand to 109.83 thousand hectares between 1995 and 2016, according to data series on its spatial-temporal growth.

The fifth-largest pineapple producer in the world is India. India is currently behind the Philippines, Costa Rica, Brazil, Indonesia, and China. However, India's pineapple production and cultivation area are both steadily growing. India has experienced great success in the last several years with its exports of pineapple. The overall cost of pineapple exports in 2009 was $4.03 million. And it increased to $22.55 million in 2020. The biggest year for Indian pineapple exports was 2014. In that year, India exported $53.69 million worth of pineapples. The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, China, the USA, Saudi Arabia, France, the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan were among the nations that purchased pineapple from India in 2020.The Netherlands was the biggest buyer of Indian pineapples. India sold them pineapples worth $5.88 million. This rapid increase

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in the Indian pineapple export scenario shows that, in the coming years, pineapple has the potential to be a big commercial fruit in the country.

Problems in Pineapple Cultivation:

Pineapple cultivation issues Pests have a lower impact on pineapple compared to other crops. As a result, they engaged in less cross-cultural pineapple farming. Later on, this causes them some issues. Different growers have different difficulties when growing pineapples. It should be emphasised that not every person had the same issues that they had identified. In this study, an effort has been made to pinpoint some significant production issues with pineapples as stated by the growers of pineapples in the study area. The topics were covered in two sections. Production and marketing restrictions were those.

Marketing Constraints:

For growers, selling their harvested pineapple is frequently a serious issue. During the dry season, there were few issues with the transportation and marketing of fruit, fertiliser, and seedlings. output decline brought on by inadequate processing. During peak season, a lot of pineapples were discarded. Farmers are then compelled to sell for low prices. Marketing of processed pineapple has issues, and pineapples are perishable.

Area, Production and Yield of pineapple in India:

Years	Area (in hec.)	Growthrate	Production (MT/ Tonnes)	Growthrate	Yield (MT/ Hac.)	Growth Rate
2001-02	77.2		1182.1		15.31	
2002-03	79.8	3.36	1171.7	-0.87	14.68	-4.10
2003-04	80.9	1.37	1234.2	5.33	15.25	3.90
2004-05	82.8	2.34	1278.9	3.62	15.44	1.24
2005-06	82.4	-0.48	1262.6	-1.27	15.32	-0.79
2006-07	86.5	4.97	1362.2	7.88	15.74	2.77
2007-08	80	-7.51	1244.6	-8.63	15.55	-1.20
2008-09	83.7	4.62	1340.8	7.72	16.01	2.96
2009-10	91.7	9.55	1386.9	3.43	15.12	-5.58
2010-11	88.7	-3.27	1415.6	2.06	15.95	5.52
2011-12	102.4	15.44	1500.2	5.97	14.65	-8.20
2012-13	105.2	2.73	1570.6	4.69	14.92	1.90
2013-14	109.9	4.46	1736.7	10.57	15.80	5.84

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2014-15	113.8	3.54	1912.7	10.13	16.80	6.35
2015-16	109.8	-3.51	1924.2	0.60	17.52	4.26
2016-17	111.2	1.27	1861.1	-3.27	16.73	-4.49
2017-18	103.1	-7.28	1705.8	-8.34	16.54	-1.14
2018-19	106.5	3.29	1810.9	6.16	17.00	2.77
2019-20	106.8	0.28	1732.6	-4.32	16.22	-4.59
2020-21	106.4	-0.37	1799.3	3.84	16.91	4.24
ACGR	**1.61**		**2.12**		**0.49**	

Source: National Horticulture board, Indian Horticulture Data base.

As revealed above table, an increasing trend has been observed in the area, production and yield per hectare of pineapple in India from two decades. The total area cultivated under pineapple was 77.2 hectares in 2001-02 whereas production was 1182.1 metric tons and yield per hectare is 15.31. In 2011-12, area and production increased tremendously i.e., by 102.4 hectares and 1500.2 metric tons respectively. In 2014-15 area increased by 113.8 hectares, production increased by 1912.7 metric tons and yield per hectare increased by 16.80%. Total area cultivation under pineapple decreased by 103.1% whereas production and yield per hectare increased by 1705.8% and 16.54% respectively in 2017-18. The main reason for a decrease in area was inadequate knowledge about pineapple Cultivation, unseasonal rainfall and causes some diseases. Again in 2019-20 area under pineapple cultivation increased by 106.8%, but production and yield per hector decreased by -4.32% and -4.59% respectively. The main reason for increasing in area was better returns from pineapple crop.

Methodology:

The secondary data was collected for the present study. Secondary data was collected from books, research papers, journal articles, web sites, etc. The secondary data is mainly used to derive theoretical background and research gap for the present study.

Findings:

Production Trends:

There is an upward trend in the area under pineapple cultivation, total production, and yield per hectare over the past two decades. The area grew from 77.2 thousand hectares in 2001-02 to 106.4 thousand hectares

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in 2020-21, while production increased from 1.18 million metric tons to 1.8 million metric tons. The compound annual growth rates for area, production, and yield per hectare stand at 1.61%, 2.12%, and 0.49%Respectively.

Regional Overview:

Major production is concentrated in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Karnataka, and North-Eastern states. Karnataka stands out for productivity at 62.7 MT/ha. The North East and Kerala also make significant contributions.

Conclusion:

A popular crop in various parts of India is pineapple. Pineapple production benefits from favourable natural climate conditions. However, compared to other pineapple-growing regions of the nation, this region's productivity is much lower. Improved varieties and cultivation techniques will increase the region's overall pineapple production, which will contribute to the region's economic growth.

Key Words: Horticultural, Inadequate Knowledge, Colonialists, Cultivation

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HIGHER EDUCATION AND DIGITAL DIVIDE: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA

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Introduction:

'The digital divide' the gap between those who have adequate access to digital tools & connectivity and those who don't has become a pressing issue in India, especially in higher education. With rapid technological change, educational delivery increasingly depends on online platforms, digital resources, and ICT infrastructure. However, many higher educational institutions, and large numbers of students, face obstacles that prevent equitable participation. This article explores the nature of the digital divide in India's higher education sector, its causes, its consequences, and the challenges that need to be addressed.

Understanding the Digital Divide in Higher Education:

The digital divide in higher education can be thought of in multiple layers:

Access to devices: Whether students/faculty have laptops, tablets, smartphones, or other computing devices sufficient for digital learning.

Connectivity: Reliable and high-speed internet, stable broadband, adequate data plans.

ICT infrastructure: within colleges/universities like smart classrooms, labs, e-learning platforms, virtual labs, etc.

Digital literacy: Ability of students and teachers to use digital tools, platforms, software, online resources effectively.

Inclusive content: Content in regional languages; content accessible to differently-abled students; culturally relevant digital learning materials.

Key Issues & Challenges:

Here are significant issues affecting higher education in India with respect to the digital divide, along with challenges arising from them:

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Issue	Description & Evidence	Challenges
Rural-Urban Disparity	Many rural areas lack stable Internet, good devices, or ICT-enabled campuses. Students from rural institutions often lag behind in terms of access. One Young India+4IAQAPHE+4The Law Institute+4	Deployment of infrastructure in remote regions is expensive and slow; maintaining quality of service (bandwidth, uptime) is harder; power supply may be unreliable.
Economic Barriers / Poverty	Students from economically weaker backgrounds often cannot afford laptops/tablets, good data plans, or repeated upgrades. IAQAPHE+3One Young India+3Zenodo+3	Even if devices are subsidized, costs of maintenance, data usage, and software access add up; risk of exclusion persists.
Infrastructure Challenges	In many HEIs, there are gaps: labs may be outdated; Wi-Fi may be weak or limited; virtual learning platforms may not be well maintained. Some regions also suffer from erratic power supply or low internet speed. IAQAPHE+2The Law Institute+2	Upgrading infrastructure requires investment, technical know-how, planning; also ensuring ongoing maintenance, technical support.
Teacher / Faculty Readiness & Digital Literacy	Many faculty members have limited training or experience with online pedagogy, digital tools, LMS (Learning Management Systems), etc. Transitioning to blended or fully online modes strains those without experience. Zenodo+2One Young India+2	Professional development, training programs are needed; also incentives, time, and support for faculty; resistance or lack of motivation can be a hurdle.
Quality & Relevance of Digital Content	Much online content is in English or in formats not suited to all learners; less available in regional languages; may not account for local contexts; also, for some subjects (labs, fieldwork), purely online formats have limitations. Home tuition in Guwahati+2One Young India+2	Creating or adapting content is resource-intensive; translations, localization, ensuring interactivity and accessibility is challenging; aligning online content with curricula and learning outcomes.

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Issue	Description & Evidence	Challenges
Connectivity & Network Quality	Even where internet is present, in many places speed, latency, or reliability is a problem. Frequent outages or bad network degrade the learning experience. IAQAPHE+2The Law Institute+2	Broadband expansion, better last-mile connectivity are necessary; investment in telecommunications and cooperation between public and private sector; managing cost of data.
Social, Cultural, Inclusive Barriers	Gender gap (women students having less access), caste/social marginalization, students from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack support at home, or face cultural constraints that limit usage. arXiv+1	Overcoming social norms; ensuring inclusive policies; also addressing support (mentoring, special assistance) for underrepresented groups.
Affordability of Learning Resources	Apart from devices and connectivity, paying for software, subscriptions, digital textbooks can pose costs. Also sometimes fees of institutions (especially private) include costs for digital/online infrastructure that may be passed on to students.	Need for low-cost or open-source resources; government subsidies; institutional policies to avoid burdening poor students.

Consequences of the Digital Divide in Higher Education, Learning Loss & Reduced Participation: Students who lack access fall behind, may skip classes or drop out. Inequality of Outcomes: Students from more privileged backgrounds benefit more, widening the gap in academic performance, skills, employability. Reduced Employability: Many jobs require digital skills; lacking these, graduates may not be competitive. Fragmented Quality of Education: Institutions with good digital infrastructure attract better faculty and students, while others lag, leading to disparities in reputation and outcomes. Mental Health & Stress Issues: For students struggling with digital access, there is often increased stress, frustration, isolation. Digital Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups: Gender, caste, disability-based exclusion perpetuated by lack of access or inaccessible digital content. Government Policies & Institutional Responses.

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Challenges in Implementing Solutions:

Even when the intent and policy framework exist, multiple barriers impede effective implementation:

Resource Constraints: Funding is often limited or uneven; many HEIs (especially in rural or remote locations) lack budget for upgrades, or for sustaining infrastructure. Maintenance & Sustainability: It's not enough to build infrastructure; keeping it functional, maintaining hardware, upgrading software, ensuring uptime, technical support are critical and often neglected. Coordination & Governance: Multiple agencies (central, state, institutional) are involved; coordination inefficiencies can delay implementation. Oversight, monitoring, accountability mechanisms are often weak. Scalability: Solutions that work in well-resourced institutions or urban areas may not easily scale to remote or under-resourced campuses. Resistance to Change: Faculty accustomed to traditional teaching modes may resist adoption of new digital pedagogies; students may also prefer in-person learning; institutional inertia is real. Digital Literacy & Capacity-Building: It takes time, training, and effort to build up skills—not only for students but teachers and support staff. Also continuous upskilling is needed as technologies evolve. Inclusive Content & Accessibility: Ensuring content is available in regional languages; making it accessible (for those with disabilities); adapting pedagogy for varied learning styles.

Recommendations:

To address these challenges and reduce the digital divide in higher education in India, the following steps can be helpful: Enhanced Investment in digital infrastructure, especially in underserved rural and remote areas. Partnerships between government, private sector, NGOs can help. Subsidies or Financial Aid for students to get devices, data plans, and required software. Faculty Development & Training: Regular, structured training programs for teachers in digital pedagogy, online instruction, LMS tools, etc. Localized and Inclusive Content: Produce learning resources in regional languages; ensure accessibility; include culturally relevant content; adapt to different learning needs. Strengthen Internet Connectivity & Power Supply: Reliable broadband; ensuring power backups in institutions; improved network coverage. Blended Learning Models: Hybrid modes combining online and in-person instruction that can reduce dependency on perfect infrastructure, and can adapt to variable access. Monitoring, Evaluation & Accountability: Regular assessment of digital learning initiatives; feedback loops; data collection on access, usage, learning outcomes. Policy Support and Planning: State and central policies

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should ensure that implementation plans consider last-mile connectivity, cost of sustainability, digital literacy, inclusive practices.

Conclusion:

The digital divide remains a major barrier to equitable, high-quality higher education in India. While the promise of technology in education is large — enabling flexibility, wider reach, and innovation — the benefits will remain uneven unless structural, economic, cultural, and infrastructural challenges are addressed. Reducing the divide is not just a technological or policy issue but one of social equity, inclusion, and future readiness. Higher education institutions, supported by government, communities, and stakeholders, must work concertedly to ensure that all students have both access to and competency with digital tools and environments.

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HEALTHCARE AND HYGIENE IN RURAL AREA - A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HAAVERI DISTRICT

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Abstract:

This study examines the socio-cultural, infrastructural, and institutional factors influencing healthcare and hygiene practices in rural communities, with a focus on Haaveri District. It identifies critical barriers to effective health outcomes, such as inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, limited healthcare infrastructure, and low health literacy. The study highlights how cultural norms, family discussions, and education levels shape hygiene behavior, noting a strong association between formal education and improved hygiene practices in rural households. Despite increased reliance on government health facilities and community health workers, chronic diseases, poor sanitation, and limited access to consistent healthcare services remain significant challenges. The research calls for sustained health awareness campaigns, improved medical and sanitation facilities, and active community participation to overcome these issues and enhance health equity in rural settings. This summary compiles findings from current academic and government studies on healthcare and hygiene in rural areas with a focus on Haaveri district. Major themes include health challenges, sanitation barriers, policy effectiveness, and sociological factors affecting healthcare utilization.

Key Words: Healthcare, Infrastructural Challenges, Infant Mortality, Chronic Illnesses.

Introduction:

Rural healthcare in Haaveri district, Karnataka, is shaped by a combination of socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural challenges. Studies show a prevalence of chronic illness, limited access to healthcare, and gaps in health-seeking behavior, especially among vulnerable populations like elderly and women.

This study examines the socio-cultural, infrastructural, and institutional factors influencing healthcare and hygiene practices in rural communities, with a focus on Haaveri District. It identifies critical barriers to effective health outcomes, such as inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, limited healthcare

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infrastructure, and low health literacy. The study highlights how cultural norms, family discussions, and education levels shape hygiene behavior, noting a strong association between formal education and improved hygiene practices in rural households. Despite increased reliance on government health facilities and community health workers, chronic diseases, poor sanitation, and limited access to consistent healthcare services remain significant challenges. The research calls for sustained health awareness campaigns, improved medical and sanitation facilities, and active community participation to overcome these issues and enhance health equity in rural settings.

History of Haveri District:

History of Haveri district dates to pre-historic period. About 1300 stone writings of different rulers like Chalukyas, Rastrakutas are found in the district. Bankapura Challaketaru, Guttavula Guttaru, Kadambas of Hangal and Nurumbad are some of the well-known Samanta Rulers. Devendramunigalu the teacher of Kannada Adikavi Pampa and Ajitasenacharya the teacher of Ranna Chavundaraya lived in Bankapura. This was also the second capital of Hoysala Vishnuvardhana. Guttaru ruled during latter part of the 12th century and up to end of the 13th century from Guttavol (Guttal) village as Mandaliks of Chalukya, independently for some time and as Mandaliks of Seunas of Devagiri. Shasanas found in Chaudayyadanapura (Choudapur), a village near Guttal, reveal that Mallideva was Mandalika of 6th Vikramaditya of Chalukyas. Jatacholina, under the leadership of Mallideva built the *Mukteshwara temple* at Chaudayyadanapura (Choudapur). Kadambas of Nurumbad during the period of Kalyani Chalukyas ruled about 100 villages with *Rattihalli* as their capital. Haveri District is exactly in the centre of Karnataka, being equidistant from Bidar in the far north and Kollegal in the far south. The district consists of Eight taluks, namely Rattihalli, Hanagal, Shiggaon, Savanur, Haveri, Byadagi, Hirekerur, and Ranebennur. It is bounded by Dharwad district in the north, by Gadag district in the northeast, by Vijayanagara district in the east, by Davangere district in the south, by Shimoga district in the southwest and by Uttar Kannada in the west and northwest. Before it was made into its own district, it was part of Dharwad District. Haveri is 335 km from Bangalore.

Problems in Health and Hygiene:

- Poor health literacy and lack of awareness about sanitation and hygiene are major barriers.

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- Less than 10% of rural populations use toilets, with widespread open defecation contributing to poor health outcomes and disease spread.
- Many water sources are polluted and do not meet World Health Organization. standards, leading to high rates of disease, particularly diarrhea and infant mortality. Traditional medicine and reliance on informal healthcare providers are prevalent due to distrust or lack of access to formal healthcare

Case Studies and Local insights:

- Studies in North Karnataka, including Haaveri District, indicate that chronic diseases and their correlates are widespread in rural environments, closely linked to socioeconomic factors, lack of awareness, and insufficient health infrastructure
- Women heavily depend on PHCs during pregnancy and infancy care, although dissatisfaction regarding facilities and services persists.
- Doctors and nurses are not always available in rural areas, and ambulance and emergency services are lacking

Government Interventions and Recommendations:

- Government programs such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan aim to improve sanitation, hygiene, and waste management through financial incentives and awareness campaigns.
- The role of ASHA workers is highlighted as critical, suggesting more substantial support and incentives are needed for these frontline workers.
- Recommendations include continuous awareness efforts, improved ambulance and medicine provisions, stricter action on absentee staff, and better waste management systems.

Methodology:

The secondary data was collected for the present study. Secondary data was collected from books, research papers, journal articles, web sites, etc. The secondary data is mainly used to derive theoretical background and research gap for the present study.

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Key Findings:

- Chronic illnesses are strongly correlated with socioeconomic factors in rural Haaveri.
- Health and hygiene among elderly populations are shaped by income, education, and traditional practices
- Sanitation and healthcare utilization face barriers such as awareness, availability of clean water, and accessibility of healthcare services

Conclusions:

Significant healthcare and hygiene challenges persist in Haaveri's rural communities, largely driven by limited access to sanitation facilities, poor water quality, low health literacy, and entrenched cultural practices. Improvement efforts must address these socio-cultural and infrastructural barriers in tandem to ensure equitable health outcomes.

- Severe gaps exist in health literacy and basic sanitation, exacerbating disease prevalence—particularly diarrheal illnesses and higher infant mortality rates.
- Open defecation remains widespread, with less than 10% of rural residents using toilets regularly, directly linked to cultural norms and inadequate infrastructure.
- Water sources frequently fail to meet safety standards, increasing the risk of chronic diseases and infectious outbreaks.

Sociological and Institutional Factors:

- Cultural traditions, such as reluctance to build toilets at home, hinder the adoption of modern hygiene practices.
- Family education and household discussions emerge as powerful drivers for better hygiene, underscoring the influence of education in changing health behaviors.
- Reliance on informal or traditional healthcare providers is common among those distrustful or unable to access formal medical services.

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HEALTH HYGIENE AND SAFETY OF WORKERS IN CEMENT INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

Cement is produced typically through a series of processes that includes quarrying, crushing, raw milling, blending, kiln burning to form clinker and homogenous blend of limestone and clay, which is then adjusted to a suitable content of Calcium, Silicon, Aluminum and Iron in a kiln. During its heating clinker is formed, the clinker contains Calcium Silicates, Calcium Aluminates and Calcium
Ferrites. Health and safety is the number one priority for the cement industry for its employees, contractors, end-users and those who are neighbors to its operations. It is a positive cultural element that allows other improvements in the factory. However, as work accidents and occupational diseases have an enormous impact on the health of workers and considerable economic and social impacts. The main objectives of the studies are To study the socio-economic status of the cement workers. To study the Occupational Health, Hygiene and Safety at Work Place. To understand the Safe Environment at Work Place for the workers. The present research work is mainly based on primary data collected from workers in cement industries of Kalaburagi district. Hence, the primary data was collected from the workers working in cement industries located in Kalaburagi district. The secondary data was Vasavadatta Cement is one of the modern and efficient cement plants in India, producing best quality of cement to the complete satisfaction of its customers. It produces Gold 53, Super 43 Grade Cement and Birla Shakti Cement. The company possesses ISO-9002 and ISO-14001.Hence, due to limited time frame, it was decided to select four large scale cement industries in Kalaburagidistrict and even the number of workers is also more and hence, totally 70 Cement industry workers in selected in Vasavadatta cement industry in Seadam Taluka were surveyed. Further, there is need for regular training programmes for the workers to emphasize health, hygiene and safety at the industries.

Key Words: Health, Hygiene, Aluminum, Homogenous, Occupational, Emphasize.

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INTRODUCTION:

The cement manufacturing industry is labour intensive and uses large scale and potentially hazardous manufacturing processes. Health and safety is the number one priority for the cement industry for its employees, contractors, end-users and those who are neighbors to its operations. It is a positive cultural element that allows other improvements in the factory. An administration that does not attain to manage safety is not in a position to manage other functions. However, as work accidents and occupational diseases have an enormous impact on the health of workers and considerable economic and social impacts. Therefore, a priori assessment of these risks and the implementation of a prevention approach within a factory are required to become one of the main drivers of progress. Hence, for some employers, employees and their representatives, health and safety at work do not mean so much. In addition, with the permanent evolution of work, even its risks, it becomes increasingly insufficient to establish general safety rules of, relying solely upon standards and regulations to comply, but move to awareness, information, training and motivation of staff on the role of health and safety at work, steps previously required for the implementation of a prevention, even to a mitigation measures relevant and effective (Tomar, 2014).

Cement is produced typically through a series of processes that includes quarrying, crushing, raw milling, blending, kiln burning to form clinker and homogenous blend of limestone and clay, which is then adjusted to a suitable content of Calcium, Silicon, Aluminum and Iron in a kiln. During its heating clinker is formed, the clinker contains Calcium Silicates, Calcium Aluminates and Calcium Ferrites. Clinker is subsequently ground with gypsum and other additives, resulting in a fine particulate powder called Cement. Substantial dust is emitted during these processes, exposing workers to dust. In contact with water, clinker partly dissolves and forms aqueous slurry of high alkalinity, giving clinker and cement strong irritant properties and cause respiratory symptoms and disease. Dust with aero diameter of less 100μm is inhalable. In cement factories, dust is produced during crushing and grinding of raw materials, blending and kiln burning to form clinker, cement milling and packaging (Siyoum, et al, 2014).

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Varma and **Singh (2015)** write on **"Health Related Problems in Industrial Workers due to Environmental Hazards"** in **'International Journal of Science, Technology and Management'**. The study was undertaken to assess the environmental health related problems of industrial workers and to check their awareness and knowledge about their rights and responsibilities towards environmental health and safety policies. Random sampling method was use to collect the data. A standardized schedule was used to collect the data from 100 respondents to know their perceptions on knowledge and awareness of industrial worker regarding proper working conditions and environmental safety. Statically methods like Percentage, Mean, standard deviation and ANOVA have been use to obtain result. For the convenience of the presentation of the results which has been analyzed, a graph has been developed and the results are presented accordingly. Findings of this study shows Industrial environment affect workers' health through exposure to physical, chemical, biological and ergonomic hazard. Through assessment of industrial worker it has been found that most of the workers were suffering from allergic reactions breathing problems, asthma, swelling in their legs or feet, eye irritation, skin allergies or rashes, headache, general weakness or fatigue due to overload of work, muscular pain, high and low blood pressure. Dirty environment of the industry is major factor for health related problems.

Syed Sana, et al (2013) conducted a study and published **"Health Risks Associated with Workers in Cement Factories"** in **'International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications'**. The aim of this study was to investigate the health risks associated with the man power working in the cement factories at Kashmir, India. In order to study the health hazards of cement factory on workers, three cement factories were considered for the studies which includes; JK Cements Ltd. Khrew, Saifco Cements Ltd. Khonmoh and Khyber cements Ltd. Khonmoh Kashmir, India. Total of 10% of employees in three cement factories were considered for the studies. The workers were administered with the standard format questionnaire which was followed by personal interviews.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-economic status of the cement workers.

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- To study the Occupational Health, Hygiene and Safety at Work Place.
- To understand the Safe Environment at Work Place for the workers.

METHODOLOGY:

Secondary Data:

Totally two types of data was collected for the present study. Secondary data was collected from books, research papers, journal articles, web sites, etc. The secondary data is mainly used to derive theoretical background and research gap for the present study.

Primary Data:

The present research work is mainly based on primary data collected from workers in cement industries of Kalaburagidistrict. Hence, the primary data was collected from the workers working in cement industries located in Kalaburagidistrict.

Study Area and Sample Size:

Vasavadatta Cement is one of the modern and efficient cement plants in India, producing best quality of cement to the complete satisfaction of its customers. It produces Gold 53, Super 43 Grade Cement and Birla Shakti Cement. The company possesses ISO-9002 and ISO-14001. This company is introducing latest management methods like Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) from Japan. Further, there are more than 10 cement industries in the Kalaburagidistrict, of which 3-4 are large scale industries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table No. 1.1 Age of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
19 to 25 Years	13	18.57%
26 to 40 Years	25	35.71%

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41 to 55 Years	18	25.71%
More than 55 Years	14	20%
Total	**70**	**100%**

Above table on the age of the respondents made it clear that, considerably major portion, that is, 163 (40.75%) of the respondents belongs to age group of 26 to 40 years followed by, 129 (32.25%) belongs to 41 to 55 years, 92 (23.00%) of the respondents are between 19 to 25 years and the remaining only 16 (4.00%) are of more than 55 years respectively. It shows that, a great majority of the workers working in cement industries are of middle age group.

Table No. 1.2 . Educational Qualifications of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	28	40
Secondary	11	15.71
Graduation/ PG	21	30
Technical	10	14.28
Total	**70**	**100**

The educational qualifications of all the respondents disclosed that, 137 (34.25%) of the respondents are possessed only secondary education followed by, 106 (26.50%) are with technical qualifications such as ITI, Diploma, etc, 84 (21.00%) of the respondents have completed only primary education and the remaining 73 (18.25%) have completed their graduation or post-graduation respectively. It shows that, though there is majority of the workers who are with lower education, still the workers with technical qualifications are more in cement industries.

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Table No. 1.3 Marital Status of the respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried/ Single	11	5.50
Married	26	74.25
Widow/ Widower	19	8.75
Divorcee/ Separated	14	11.50
Total	**70**	**100**

Among the total respondents covered under the present study, it is highlighted that a great majority that is, 26 (74.25%) are married followed by, 19 (8.75%) are widows or widowers, 14 (11.50%) are divorcees or separated and the remaining only 11 (5.50%) are unmarried and living single.

Table no 1.4 Satisfaction on Occupational Health, Hygiene and Safety at Work Place

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Satisfied	22	31.42
Highly Satisfied	13	18.57
Somewhat Satisfied	18	25.71
Not Satisfied	17	24.28
Total	70	100

Of all the respondents on their satisfaction towards occupational health, hygiene and safety at their work places, it is noted that, 22 (31.42%) are fully satisfied, 13 (18.57%) are highly satisfied, 18(25.71%) are somewhat satisfied and 17 (24.28%) are not satisfied.

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Conclusion:

To conclude, it is noted that health, hygiene and safety are related to each other. Environment of the work place is associated to these factors. Hence, it is essential on the part of industries to maintain the environment as per the legislations passed by the Government. For this purpose, the Factories Act is best as it covered different aspects of health, hygiene and safety at the work places. Still, it is observed personally that the a few of the work places are not away from threats as many of the workers are working in front of fire and in excessive smoke and dust. Even safety instruments are given; many of the workers are not using the same and neglected the safety. Hence, it is essential on the part of the management to ensure safety at the work places by regularly watching the security threats caused. Further, there is need for regular training programmes for the workers to emphasize health, hygiene and safety at the industries.

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HEALTH STATUS OF WORKERS IN THE CEMENT INDUSTRY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Introduction:

The cement industry serves as a backbone for global infrastructure and national economic development. However, the nature of its production—involving quarrying, grinding, firing, and bagging—exposes its workforce to a range of significant occupational hazards. While much research focuses on the **biomedical and occupational epidemiology** of cement dust exposure, a critical gap exists in understanding the health status of these workers through a **sociological lens**. This paper aims to bridge that gap by examining how **social determinants** and the **work environment** structure the health outcomes, health-seeking behaviors, and overall well-being of cement industry workers.

Sociological Determinants of Worker Health

A purely biomedical approach neglects the crucial role of **social structure, culture, and power dynamics** in shaping health. A sociological study necessitates examining factors beyond mere dust concentration and individual susceptibility:

1 Socio-Economic Status and Health Inequality

Factory workers (e.g., those in clinker, packing, and loading sections) are generally in lower-wage brackets, often with lower educational attainment compared to **office or administrative staff**. Research suggests this division creates stark health inequalities:

- **Disproportionate Exposure:** Factory workers, especially those on the plant floor, face significantly higher dust and noise exposure.

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- **Access to Information and Safety:** Lower educational status is often associated with poorer **knowledge of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)** practices and less adherence to **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** use, even when provided.
- **Resource Access:** Lower income may limit access to quality external healthcare and proper nutrition, compounding the effects of occupational illness.

2 Organizational and Psychosocial Factors

The social environment of the workplace is a powerful determinant of health. Key sociological factors include:

- **Safety Culture and Management:** The absence of a robust **'Zero Harm' safety culture**—where health and safety is prioritized over production targets—directly influences injury rates and exposure levels. Poor implementation of safety policies, inadequate supervision, and lack of training contribute significantly to risk.
- **Work Shift Patterns:** Irregular shift work (e.g., night shifts) in continuous production processes disrupts circadian rhythms, leading to increased levels of **psychosocial stress**, fatigue, and greater susceptibility to diseases like WMSDs and even periodontal disease.
- **Job Category and Tenure:** Workers in high-exposure jobs (like packing or clinker) and those with longer work tenure often exhibit higher rates of occupational diseases and injuries, indicating a **cumulative risk** that management must address.

3 Health-Seeking Behavior and Social Stigma

Sociology also explores how culture and social norms influence a worker's decision to seek medical help:

- **Normalization of Risk:** Long-term workers may normalize health symptoms (e.g., persistent cough, skin irritation) as an unavoidable part of the job, delaying diagnosis and treatment.
- **Fear of Reprisal:** In environments where job security is tenuous, workers may fear reporting an injury or illness, or requesting better safety equipment, for fear of losing their job or being marginalized. This creates a hidden burden of disease.

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- **Family and Community Support:** The worker's family and social network play a role in advocating for better health conditions and influencing lifestyle choices, such as smoking, which is a significant comorbidity for respiratory problems in this industry.

Policy and Recommendations: A Sociological Imperative

Effective intervention requires moving beyond simply providing masks and conducting medical check-ups to addressing the deep-seated social determinants of health.

Area of Intervention	Sociological Strategy
Safety Culture	Implement **participatory safety programs** where workers (especially factory floor staff) are directly involved in risk assessment and policy formulation. Encourage **whistleblower protections** for OHS violations.
Training & Awareness	Mandate **OHS training** tailored to different educational levels, focusing on the long-term consequences of non-compliance and the proper use, maintenance, and replacement of **PPE**.
Health Equity	Introduce comprehensive, easily accessible **wellness programs** that address lifestyle factors (e.g., anti-smoking campaigns, nutritional guidance) and offer subsidized or on-site specialized healthcare.
Ergonomics & Workload	Re-evaluate production processes and job design to minimize manual handling and reduce noise exposure. Implement regular, mandatory **rest and rotation schedules** for high-risk jobs.

Conclusion

The health status of cement industry workers is not just a function of dust exposure; it is a profound reflection of **social stratification, organizational culture, and systemic inequality**. A sociological investigation reveals that

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factors like low educational attainment, inadequate safety culture, psychosocial stress from shift work, and economic vulnerability significantly mediate the relationship between occupational hazards and health outcomes. For the cement industry to truly be sustainable, it must commit to **social sustainability** by prioritizing worker health as a fundamental social right, thereby transforming the dangerous workplace into a safe, equitable, and healthy environment.

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DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CHANGING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.

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Abstract:

Digital technology, particularly the smartphone, has fundamentally transformed the landscape of human relationships, acting as a double-edged sword. This article explores this profound shift in simple, navigating the sound ways in which connectivity tools reshape our interactions with partners, family, friends, and ourselves. It first highlights the undeniable benefits: the ability to maintain bonds across vast distances, find niche communities, and effortlessly sustain social ties. However, it also delves into the significant costs, including the phenomenon of being "alone together," where constant digital connection can lead to feelings of isolation and erode the quality of face-to-face interaction. The article examines the new complexities of romantic love in the era of dating apps and text-based communication, the challenges and opportunities for family life, and the evolving nature of friendship. Ultimately, it argues that technology is not inherently good or bad, but a powerful tool whose impact is defined by our choices. The article concludes with practical steps for a "digital diet," advocating for intentional use, creating tech-free zones, and prioritizing depth over breadth to reclaim our attention and nurture the irreplaceable, empathetic human connection that exists beyond the screen.

Key words: Digital Diet, Double-Edged Sword, social fabric & Alone together

Introduction:

It's in our hands when we wake up. It's the last thing we see before we sleep. It connects us to a childhood friend living across the ocean and distracts us from the friend sitting across the dinner table. The digital technology we carry in our pockets—primarily the smartphone—has fundamentally rewired the way we connect, love, fight, and understand each other.

This isn't a story about good versus evil. It's not about throwing our phones into the ocean or blindly embracing every new app. It's a more nuanced story about a great human experiment. We are the first generation to navigate this new landscape, and we're all figuring it out as we go.

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Think about it: twenty years ago, "connecting" meant a phone call on a landline, a letter in the mail, or meeting face-to-face. Today, it's a tapestry of text messages, Instagram likes, Zoom calls, and WhatsApp shares. This shift is as profound as the invention of the printing press or the telephone. It has given us incredible gifts: the ability to maintain relationships across vast distances, to find communities for our most niche interests, and to share our lives in real-time.

The New Social era: Connection without Borders

Let's start with the magic. Digital technology has torn down geographical and social walls in ways that were once the stuff of science fiction.

Finding Your Tribe: Remember feeling like the only person in the world who loved a obscure hobby or was going through a unique struggle? The internet has changed that. Whether you're a new parent feeling isolated, a fan of a specific type of pottery, or someone dealing with a rare medical condition, you can find your "tribe" online. These digital communities provide validation, support, and a deep sense of belonging that can be hard to find in our immediate physical surroundings. You are no longer alone.

The Long-Distance Lifeline: For grandparents watching their grandchildren grow up through daily photos, for couples sustaining relationships across time zones, and for immigrants staying connected to their home cultures, technology is a lifeline. Video calls add a layer of warmth and presence that a simple phone call never could. We can share moments, not just news. We can be present for a birthday party on the other side of the country, easing the ache of separation.

The Ease of Maintenance: It's now incredibly easy to maintain the "lighter" threads of our social fabric. A funny meme sent to an old college friend says, "I'm thinking of you." A comment on a co-worker's vacation photo strengthens a casual bond. This low-effort upkeep helps keep relationships warm, making it easier to pick up where we left off when we do meet in person.

In this way, our social world has expanded exponentially. We are no longer limited to the people in our village, our town, or our office. We are citizens of a global network, and that is a truly beautiful thing.

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The Price of Constant Connection: Are We More Alone Together?

Yet, for all this expansive connection, a strange phenomenon is occurring: we often feel more disconnected from the people right in front of us. Sociologist **Sherry Turkle** coined a perfect phrase for this: "Alone together."

The Phantom Vibration and the Pull of the Screen: Have you ever felt your phone vibrate, only to find it silent? That's your brain anticipating a connection. This constant, low-level anxiety keeps us tethered to our devices, even during moments meant for real-world connection. We sit with friends, but our attention is fractured—a quick glance at a notification, a swift scroll through a feed. The person in front of you gets the leftover crumbs of your attention, and they can feel it. Conversation becomes stilted, and the deep, empathetic connection that comes from fully focusing on another human being starts to fade.

The Erosion of Third Places: Sociologists talk about "third places"—the environments that are not home (first place) or work (second place). These are the cafes, parks, pubs, and community centres where unstructured social life happens. While digital spaces can act as new third places, they often lack the spontaneity and full sensory experience of physical ones. We're losing the art of chatting with a barista, bumping into a neighbour, or getting into a random conversation with a stranger. These micro-interactions are the glue of community, and they are harder to replicate online.

The Performance of Life: Social media, in particular, turns life into a performance. We curate our highlights reel: the perfect vacation, the happy family, the successful meal. We subconsciously compare our messy, behind-the-scenes reality to everyone else's polished premiere. This doesn't just make us feel inadequate; it can make our real relationships feel inadequate, too. Why my relationship isn't as picture-perfect as that couple's on Instagram? This constant comparison steals our joy and makes us feel lonely in our imperfection.

Love in the Time of Social apps (and Texting)

Romantic relationships have undergone one of the most dramatic transformations in the digital age.

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The Dating Supermarket: Dating apps offer an unprecedented menu of potential partners. This can be empowering, especially for people in small towns or niche communities. But it also creates a "paradox of choice." With hundreds of profiles at your fingertips, it's easy to fall into a "grass is always greener" mentality. Why commit to one person when there might be someone slightly better, funnier, or more attractive just one swipe away? This can dehumanize potential partners, reducing them to a checklist of attributes and a few carefully selected photos.

The New Rules of Communication: The simple act of talking is now fraught with unspoken rules. How long should I wait to text back? What does a period at the end of a sentence imply? Is a "like" enough, or should I leave a comment? The lack of tone and body language in text-based communication is a breeding ground for misunderstanding and anxiety. A simple "K" can feel like a declaration of war, sparking arguments that would never happen in person.

The Public and the Private: Relationships now have a public, digital footprint. "Are they Facebook official?" is a real question. Couples navigate what to share, who to share it with, and how to present their relationship to the world. This external pressure can create strain, turning private milestones into public performances. Conversely, breaking up now involves a complex digital untangling—unfollowing, untangling, and dealing with the digital ghost of the relationship that remains online.

Family Life: The Glow of the Screen at the Dinner Table

The family unit, the most fundamental of our relationships, is also being reshaped by the digital tide.

The Connected, Yet Disconnected, and Family: Parents can now watch their child's school play live from work. Families can share calendars to coordinate hectic schedules. Yet, within the same home, everyone can be in their own digital world. The classic image of the family gathered around the television has been replaced by each member with their own personal screen. The shared experience is fragmented.

The New Battlefield: Screen time has become the central battlefield of modern parenting. How much is too much? How do you protect your children from online dangers while allowing them the social benefits of being

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connected to their peers? It's a constant tug-of-war between fear and practicality. Parents are navigating uncharted territory without a map, often feeling guilty no matter what they choose.

The Changing Face of Friendships.

Friendship, once built on shared physical experiences, is now often sustained through digital touchpoints.

The Ambiguity of the "Friend": The word "friend" has been diluted. We have hundreds of "friends" online, but how many of them would help us move a sofa or bring us soup when we're sick? This ambiguity can be confusing. We may feel popular based on our follower count, yet feel a deep sense of social loneliness because we lack intimate, trusted confidants.

Reclaiming Our Humanity: Practical Steps for a Digital Diet

So, where do we go from here? The goal isn't to reject technology, but to cultivate a healthier relationship with it—to use it as a tool that serves our human needs, rather than letting it use us.

- ✓ Be Intentional, Not Impulsive: Instead of mindlessly scrolling, be intentional about your digital use. Ask yourself: "What is my purpose for picking up my phone right now?" Is it to check the weather, message a specific person, or find a recipe? Once that task is done, put it down. This shifts you from a passive consumer to an active user.
- ✓ Create Tech-Free Zones and Times: Designate sacred spaces and times in your day. The dinner table is a classic one. The bedroom (or at least, not in bed right before sleep) is another. Perhaps the first hour of the morning is phone-free. These boundaries protect the moments that are most vital for real-world connection and personal peace.
- ✓ Prioritize Depth over Breadth: Invest your emotional energy in a few deep relationships. Instead of leaving a generic comment on ten posts, send one thoughtful voice message to a close friend. Instead of a string of texts, schedule a video call where you can actually see each other's faces and hear each other's laughter.

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Conclusion: The Tool is Not the Master

Digital technology is not inherently good or bad. It is a powerful tool, a reflection of our own humanity with all its brilliance and its flaws. It amplifies our desire to connect, but it can also amplify our anxieties and our insecurities.

The changing landscape of human relationships isn't about the technology itself; it's about us. It's about our choices. Do we use this tool to build wider, more supportive networks, or do we let it erode the intimate connections right in front of us? The answer lies in our hands—literally and figuratively.

The future of human connection will be a blend of the digital and the physical. The challenge—and the opportunity—for all of us is to master the blend. To log off so we can tune in. To put down the device so we can pick up a conversation. To remember that the most profound technology for connection we will ever possess is not in our pockets, but in our ability to look someone in the eye, to listen with our full heart, and to be truly, vulnerably, and wonderfully present with one another. That is a connection no algorithm can ever replace.

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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF CHALLENGES FACED BY CONSTRUCTION WORKERS: IMPERATIVES FOR A NATIONAL DIALOGUE

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Introduction:

The construction sector is a vital engine of economic growth, yet the **welfare and working conditions** of its workforce, particularly in developing economies, remain a pressing concern. Construction workers, often comprising a large segment of the unorganized sector, face a unique and severe set of challenges that demand immediate and systemic intervention. This paper outlines the primary problems encountered by these laborers, calling for a dedicated national conference to formulate actionable, long-term solutions.

Major Challenges and Vulnerabilities

The issues confronting construction workers are multifaceted, spanning occupational safety, economic security, social welfare, and living conditions.

1. Occupational Safety and Health Hazards

The construction industry is globally recognized as one of the **most hazardous occupations**, and accident rates are significantly high.

- **High Accident Rate:** Fatal and non-fatal injury rates are disproportionately higher than in most other industries, often due to falls from heights, being struck by objects, electrocution, and contact with machinery. The fatal injury rate is frequently several times the national average for all industries.
- **Inadequate Safety Measures:** There is a pervasive **lack of safety training**, insufficient provision and mandatory use of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** (such as helmets, safety harnesses, and protective footwear), and poor enforcement of safety protocols.

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- **Occupational Diseases:** Workers are exposed to long-term health risks from hazardous substances (e.g., silica dust, asbestos) and environmental stressors (noise, vibration, heat), leading to chronic conditions like silicosis, hearing impairment, and musculoskeletal disorders.

2. Economic and Employment Instability

The structure of employment in the construction sector perpetuates economic insecurity and exploitation.

- **Informal and Transient Employment:** The workforce is largely **unorganized, temporary, and contractual**, often recruited through intermediaries or sub-contractors. This causal relationship results in **job insecurity** and frequent work-site relocations.
- **Inadequate Wages and Delayed Payment:** Despite minimum wage legislation, many workers, especially unskilled laborers and women, are paid low wages, and a significant problem is the **delay or non-payment of wages** by contractors, leaving workers financially vulnerable.
- **Lack of Social Security:** The majority of workers are excluded from essential social security benefits, including **pension schemes, health insurance, and maternity benefits**, due to their temporary status and fragmented employment records.

3. Migrant Worker-Specific Issues

Given the high rate of **internal migration** for construction work, migrant laborers face additional challenges.

- **Portability of Benefits:** Migrant workers struggle to access welfare benefits due to the lack of **interoperable social security and identity systems** across different states, making their already difficult access to welfare funds even more complex.
- **Substandard Living Conditions:** Migrant families often live in crowded, unhygienic **makeshift shelters (shanties)** at or near the construction site, lacking proper civic amenities, sanitation, and electricity.

4. Systemic and Institutional Hurdles

Legal and institutional mechanisms designed to protect workers often fall short in implementation.

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- **Inadequate Implementation of Laws:** Acts like the **Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996 (BOCW Act)**, are often poorly enforced. Despite the collection of welfare cess funds, a significant portion remains unutilized due to complex registration, documentation requirements, and bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Skill Deficiencies:** A lack of standardized and accessible **skill development and certified training programs** limits workers' opportunities for upward mobility and hinders the adoption of safer, more efficient work practices.
- **Gender Inequality:** Female construction workers are often segregated into less skilled, heavier work for **unequal pay** compared to male counterparts and face higher risks of sexual harassment.

Recommendations for National Dialogue

A national conference should prioritize a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder strategy focusing on the following imperatives:

Area of Intervention	Proposed Action
Safety and Health	Implement **Zero-Tolerance Safety Policy** with mandatory PPE use, regular technical audits, and on-site inspection by technically qualified personnel.
Economic Security	Establish a **"One Nation, One Worker"** digital identity and welfare system for portable social security benefits, including health insurance and pension.
Welfare Utilization	Simplify the registration process for BOCW boards, conduct mass on-site registration camps, and ensure the effective and transparent **utilization of accumulated cess funds**.

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Area of Intervention	Proposed Action
Training & Skill	Launch a national mission for **certified skill upgradation** and safety training, incentivizing contractors to hire certified workers.
Migrant Support	Mandate and monitor the provision of high-standard **on-site welfare facilities** and functional crèches for migrant worker families.
Legal Enforcement	Strengthen the **labor inspection mechanism** with dedicated, technically competent safety officers and impose stringent penalties for non-compliance with labor laws and safety standards.

Conclusion:

The construction worker is the foundation of national infrastructure, yet their life is characterized by risk, precarity, and systemic neglect. Transforming the working conditions of this vital workforce is not merely a moral obligation but an **economic imperative** for sustainable development and social justice. A concerted national effort, driven by legislative reform, technological innovation in welfare delivery, and rigorous enforcement, is essential to ensure that the growth of the construction sector is built on the pillars of **dignity, safety, and security** for every worker.

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DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT: PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF BELONGING AND HOPE AMONG LGBT YOUTH OF INDIA

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Abstract

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) youth in India face social marginalization, discrimination, and limited self-expression. To counteract these issues, Digital activism has emerged as a powerful medium of expression. Although the sociopolitical effects of digital activism are frequently researched, its psychological implications are still not thoroughly examined in the Indian context. This research examines the experiences of marginalized youth in online activism and the impact of this involvement on their psychosocial well-being. A qualitative research design with a semi-structured interview approach was used with 15 participants aged 18–25. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, data were analyzed with reflexive thematic analysis. Analysis yielded five themes: (1) Digital Spaces as Safe Havens, (2) Collective Empowerment through Activism, (3) Psychological Sense of Belonging, (4) Hope and Future Orientation, and (5) Challenges and Digital Negotiations. This study contributes to the global scholarship on LGBT online communities, digital empowerment and youth mental health by focusing on Indian youth and politics after decriminalization. It has various important implications for educators, policymakers, NGOs, and mental health professionals who assist LGBT youth in India.

Keywords: *LGBT youth, digital activism, psychological belonging & hope, India*

INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

The term LGBT refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, encompassing both sexual orientation and gender identity. According to the World Health Organization and the American Psychological Association, sexual orientation is a person's capacity for emotional, affective and sexual attraction to individuals of one or more genders, while gender identity is a deeply felt internal experience that may not correspond to one's sex at birth. A lesbian is a woman attracted to women, gay generally refers to men attracted to men, bisexual describes attraction to more than one gender, and transgender is an umbrella term for those whose gender identity differs

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from the sex assigned at birth. In India, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 recognises diverse identities including hijra, kinner and jogta. Legally, the Supreme Court in *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) recognised transgender persons as a third gender, and in *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018) decriminalised consensual same-sex relations. Despite progress, LGBT people in India face stigma, discrimination and violence (NHRC, 2018). Census 2011 recorded 4,87,803 individuals under "other" gender, though estimates suggest the LGBT population may exceed 10% of Indians. Social attitudes are slowly shifting, but challenges still remain.

Digital Activism and Marginalized Communities: Online platforms help marginalized groups overcome obstacles, allowing for self-expression, visibility, and Social mobilization (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Fox et al., 2015). Apart from advocacy, they also act as psychosocial support systems that promote resilience, affirmation, and community.

Psychological Dimensions - Belonging and Hope: Belonging, or the feeling of acceptance (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), is crucial for LGBT youth facing rejection offline. Online spaces reduce isolation and affirm identity (Craig et al., 2015). Hope, defined as agency and pathways toward goals (Snyder et al., 1991), is nurtured by imagining change with the help of supportive role models. Together, belonging and hope enhance resilience and engagement (Fredrickson, 2004).

Global Evidence on Psychosocial Impacts: Research from around the globe show that digital activism aids identity exploration, information-seeking, and peer affirmation, though risks of cyberbullying and content moderation persist (DeHaan et al., 2013; Berger et al., 2022). Research during COVID-19 found LGBT youth felt more accepted online than in homes or schools (The Trevor Project, 2021). Nonetheless, online victimization rates remain high (GLSEN, 2020).

Digital Activism as Affective and Organizing Infrastructure: Unlike passive social media use, digital activism is intentional in mobilizing communities. It promotes civic efficacy but also has risks of harassment, burnout, and governance issues (Tufekci, 2017; Fisher, 2024).

The Indian Context: The *Navtej Singh Johar* (2018) ruling decriminalizing same-sex relations marked a pivotal moment. Hashtags like #Section377 amplified queer visibility and reshaped public discourse (Narayanamoorthy, 2022). Beyond metropolitan spaces, vernacular queer digital cultures create local venues for belonging and

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intersectional care (Dasgupta, 2016; Bhattacharya, 2024). Yet harassment, doxxing, and activist fatigue remain a problem (Kanchan, 2024).

Research gap and purpose of the study: Digital activism uniquely transforms visibility into psychosocial resources, reframing isolation into pride and collective effort, while offering tangible support like helplines and legal resources. However, these potentials remain limited under algorithmic and structural constraints of digital platforms. Limited Indian research examines psychological aspects such as belonging and hope, especially through qualitative accounts of LGBT youth. This study aims to address these gaps. The purpose of this study is to explore how Indian LGBT youth engage with online activism and movements, to examine the psychological outcomes of such engagement and to analyse challenges faced by Indian LGBT youth in accessing and participating in digital activism.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study employed a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews.

Participants: The participant sample included 15 LGBT youth (aged 18-25) recruited through purposive and snowball sampling via online platforms such as twitter/X and instagram. Inclusion criteria include self-identifying as LGBT sub-group, at least 6 months of participation in online activism, and willingness to consent to audio-recorded interviews and anonymised quoting. Professionals running large NGO campaigns were excluded to focus on grassroots youth voices.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 15)

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)
Gender	Cis male	4
	Cis female	4
	Trans male	2
	Trans female	2
	Non-binary	3
Sexuality	Gay	4
	Lesbian	3
	Bisexual	8

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Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)
	Straight	1
Residence Background	Urban	7
	Semi-urban	5
	Rural	2

15 participants took part in this study. The standard deviation in age was 2.16 and the mean age was 21.4 years (18-25 years).

Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews (40–60 minutes) were conducted via secure google meet/phone calls. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. Ethical approval and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms and removal of any identifying details.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2021) reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) in six steps: Familiarization with data, Generating initial codes, Searching for themes, Reviewing themes, Defining and naming themes, Producing the report. Peer debriefing was done with an external, unbiased colleague.

DISCUSSION

Online Activism and the Psychology of Belonging: Belongingness, as a basic human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), is the need for acceptance and connection. For LGBT youth in India, whose offline lives are often filled by heteronormativity and stigma, digital activism offers spaces of safety, anonymity, and affirmation. Online platforms reduce isolation, provide validation, and promote identity development (Craig et al., 2015). In situations where queer youth remain invisible in families and schools (Misra, 2021), these spaces create recognition and visibility. Mentorship in digital activism, with seniors guiding newcomers, demonstrated the role of peer networks as forms of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Importantly, belonging was active: youth built communities, participated in campaigns, and transformed belonging into a collective and political movement..

Hope as Motivation and Vision: Hope, defined as agency (belief in action) and pathways (routes to goals) (Snyder, 1991), was strengthened through digital activism. Participants described increased confidence, optimism, and visions of a better future. Digital platforms helped in kick-starting campaigns, provided pathways

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to wider movements, while agency grew through visibility and collaboration. Hope extended beyond personal survival, embodying visions of collective equality—resonating with Freire's (1970) idea of critical hope. Indian queer studies also highlight optimism through narratives of progress and resilience (Banerjea & Dasgupta, 2017). Thus, hope functioned both as a personal motivator and sociopolitical force.

Empowerment and Digital Agency: Digital activism provided empowerment aligning with Zimmerman's (1995) framework: intrapersonal (confidence), interactional (system awareness), and behavioral (collective action). Participants learned digital tools, asserted identities, and resisted stigma. Yet empowerment was hundred because of persistent harassment, privacy concerns, and emotional labor similar to offline discrimination, creating stress. Constant activism also led to fatigue and burnout, aligning with previous research on activist burnout (Nayar, 2019).

Digital Activism, Resilience, and Mental Well-Being: Findings reveal dual effects of Digital activism. It developed resilience through belonging, hope, and empowerment, enabling youth to cope by supporting peers and witnessing change. It shifted them from passive recipients of stigma to active agents (Masten, 2014). At the same time, harassment and burnout caused vulnerability. Yet resilience emerged not in absence of hardship but through adapting to it. Participants reframed challenges as motivations to persist, aligning with past Indian queer research that resilience grows through active engagement with adversity (Misra, 2021).

Limitations & Future directions: While this study provides valuable insights, its small sample size limits generalizability and may not capture the full diversity of LGBT experiences across regions, classes, and languages. Semi-structured interviews may introduce selective disclosure and social desirability bias, and the cross-sectional design restricts understanding of digital activism over time. Future research should expand participant diversity, adopt longitudinal and intersectional approaches, and examine protective measures like digital literacy, collective care, and platform safeguards to address harassment and burnout.

CONCLUSION: This study examined digital activism's impact on Indian LGBT youth, highlighting its role in promoting belonging, hope, empowerment, and resilience. While online spaces provide connection, validation, and psychosocial support, they also pose risks like harassment and emotional labor. Findings emphasize enhancing supportive aspects and mitigating dangers for youth well-being.

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MARRIAGE SYSTEM IN THE MODERN KARNATAKA SOCIETY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON CHITRADURGA DISTRICT.

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Abstract

In the early stages of human civilization, people lived in primitive conditions, leading a nomadic lifestyle. Marital relationships were initially driven by a herd instinct, resulting in the birth of children without a clear determination of the father. However, as societies transitioned to agricultural lifestyles, the need arose to establish paternity for children. This necessitated the regularization of sexual relationships between one man and one woman. The pursuit of understanding paternity, along with the social acceptance of sexual behavior, played a significant role in the evolution of the institution of marriage. Marriage, as an institution, is crafted to meet the biological, especially sexual, needs of individuals in a legally, culturally, and socially sanctioned manner.

Keywords: marriage, urbanization, industrialization, secularization, modern education

INTRODUCTION

The institution of marriage and its trends need to be studied in greater depth, especially in the Indian context where the social dynamics of marriage and the process of mate selection have been witnessing tremendous changes. Many studies reflect the changes that have occurred in the institution of marriage nowadays, because of the introduction of urbanization, industrialization, secularization, modern education impact of Western culture, and marriage legislations in the Karnataka society. This paper sheds light on the prevalent forms of marriage in the Karnataka society. An effort has also been made to cover the studies depicting a sociological insight into the institution of marriage and its emerging trends or patterns.

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In a country like India, marriage is regarded as a one-time event in life by the people who is usually sanctified and glorified with much social approval. As we all know that marriage is considered as a heavenly alliance between the two individuals, therefore, in this bond, two human beings enter into the world of emotional, physical, mental and spiritual union through the marriage vows. Marriage is again taken as a social necessity and marrying children is the primary responsibility of parents in India. It is believed that sons should be married as soon as they start earning whereas daughters should be married as soon they become young in early twenties.1 Marriage is not only an important social institution but the stepping stone to build the family unit and is the most significant legal contract of each society. However, in this contemporary society, even the meaning of marriage has changed thereby making it more complex and a different affair for the entire human race. Factors like urbanization, new legislative measures andinfluence of the western societies are flipping the minds of the Indian people towards love marriages, live-in -relationships and break-up in relationship thereby affecting the entire society.

Meaning of Marriage

Marriage is the formalization of a relationship between two individuals, making it public, official and enduring. It signifies the union of two people in a bond that is intended to last until death, although, in reality, it is often terminated through separation or divorce. As a universal social institution, marriage serves to regulate and govern human life, closely intertwining with the institution of family. The relationship between marriage and family is symbiotic, each complementing the other. While the purposes, functions, and forms of marriage may vary across societies, its presence is ubiquitous as an institution.

Marriage holds different implications in diverse cultures, functioning as a means to control and fulfill various socio-psychological, biological, and cultural needs for both men and women. It is a specialized relationship that entails specific rights and obligations. Described as both an institution and an association, marriage binds individuals with established rules and regulations. On one hand, it forms an institution as it imposes regulations on the relationship between a man and a woman; on the other

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hand, it functions as an association, being a socially approved group comprising males, females, and their respective families.

Changing Trends in Marriage in Karnataka Society

In India, marriage holds significant importance as an institution grounded in religion, religious ceremonies, and the quest for spiritual pursuits. Traditionally, the ideals of monogamy, the absence of widow remarriage, the challenge of easy divorce, and the value of chastity have been upheld. However, contemporary observations reveal shifts in the institution of Hindu marriage, influenced by factors like urbanization, industrialization, secularization, modern education, the impact of Western culture and evolving marriage legislations. These factors contribute to ongoing changes in the ideals, forms, and values associated with Hindu marriage. An analysis of the transformations in the marriage system in India can be approached through the following considerations:

1. Changes in the Aims of Marriage: Originally, the primary objective of Hindu marriage was Dharma, with Kama or sex, being one of the aims but considered the least desirable in Karnataka society. However, in recent times, there has been a shift in the hierarchy of marriage aims, with sex becoming the foremost and Dharma assuming a less significant role. This transformation indicates a shift in the aims and foundations of marriage over time.

2. Change in the Process of Mate Selection: Historically, the responsibility of choosing a bride or groom rested with the parents or guardians. This tradition persisted until the late 19th century when the influence of Western culture, driven by liberal ideas and industrialism, began to shape Karnataka society. Consequently, there emerged instances of individuals exercising their choice in selecting a life partner. In post-independent India, there has been a noticeable shift towards an increased inclination for individuals to choose their own marriage partners. Presently, the younger generation exhibits a reduced preference for parental involvement in the selection process. A contemporary trend is emerging, particularly among the educated middle and upper class youth in urban areas, where individuals themselves play a more active role in choosing their marriage partners. While parents often permit their

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children to have a say in partner selection, there is a growing autonomy among individuals in this aspect of their lives.

3. Changes in the Rules of Endogamy and Exogamy: Significant transformations have occurred in the regulations governing endogamy and exogamy. Legislative measures have abolished the restrictions associated with varna, caste, sub-caste endogamy, gotra, and pravara exogamy. Cross-cousin marriages, once relatively uncommon, are witnessing a shift in societal attitudes, with a gradual increase in their occurrence. Notably, there is a growing acceptance of cross-cousin marriages under certain circumstances. Regarding endogamous practices, notable changes have transpired. The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act of 1946 facilitated marriages between different subdivisions within the same caste. Subsequent legislations, including the Special Marriage Act of 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, have permitted unions between individuals from diverse castes and religions. The Arya Samaj Movement has actively advocated for inter-caste marriages, challenging the traditional perception that deemed them unthinkable. Inter-caste marriages, once discouraged, are now not only allowed but also actively encouraged, and the freedom in mate selection, alongside legislative changes, has played a pivotal role in promoting this shift.

4. The Age at Marriage: Over time, child marriage emerged as the predominant form of matrimony in India, initially intended to safeguard the chastity and purity of females. This practice persisted well into the 20th century. In the 20th century, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, commonly known as the Sharada Act of 1929, established the minimum marriage age at 14 years for girls and 18 years for boys. The Indian Parliament later enacted The Special Marriage Act of 1954 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, specifying the minimum marriage age as 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. Marriages involving individuals below these prescribed ages were criminalized as cognizable offenses. Sociological studies conducted in recent decades have shown a consistent shift in the trend of marriage age since 1930. Contemporary social conditions have led to a preference for marriage at later ages.

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Contemporary Hindu Marriages

Arranged Marriages

Arranged marriages have been a predominant practice in Hindu society, where parents or elders play a pivotal role in choosing the right partner for the bride and groom. This type of marriage primarily focuses on matching horoscopes, family backgrounds, economic status and societal reputation. The prospective bride and groom might have little to no say in the decision-making process. However in recent years, the practice has evolved with potential couples given more freedom to interact and make an informed decision about their partner.

Love Marriages

Love marriages, similar to Gandharva Vivaha from ancient Hindu traditions, have gained considerable acceptance in modern Hindu society. These marriages are based on mutual affection and understanding between the couple without any coercion or influence from the families. However societal acceptance often hinges on various factors such as caste, social status and economic background, making it a controversial topic in certain conservative societies.

Inter-Caste Marriages

Inter-caste marriages are those that transcend the traditional boundaries of the Hindu caste system. Despite facing initial resistance and stigmatization this practice is becoming increasingly common in contemporary Hindu society. This shift can be attributed to growing education levels, urbanization and evolving social norms that prioritize individual freedom and equality.

Interfaith Marriages

Interfaith marriages where a Hindu individual marries a person from a different religious background, are less common but not unheard of in modern Hindu society. These marriages often require legal validation under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 in India. While they represent a step towards a more inclusive society, interfaith marriages often face resistance due to religious differences.

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CONCLUSION

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BREAKING THE SILENCE: MENSTRUATION AND GENDER POLITICS IN INDIAN WRITING

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Abstract

Menstruation remains one of the most silenced subjects in Indian cultural discourse, deeply entangled with taboos, stigmas, and patriarchal control. For centuries, literary representation of menstruation was either absent or cloaked in euphemism, reflecting larger social anxieties surrounding women's bodies. However, contemporary Indian writers across fiction, poetry, memoir, and activism have increasingly engaged with menstruation not merely as a biological reality but as a deeply political subject. This paper explores how menstruation emerges as a site of gender politics in Indian writing, tracing the shift from silence and invisibility to articulation and resistance. Through the works of authors such as Kamala Das, Meena Kandasamy, Urmila Pawar, and Perumal Murugan, as well as contemporary digital literary movements, this study examines how menstruation is represented as a locus of shame, resistance, and ultimately empowerment. By analyzing intersections of caste, class, and religion, the paper highlights how Indian writing destabilizes taboos, asserts agency, and opens new spaces for feminist thought. Breaking the silence around menstruation is therefore not only a literary act but also a political intervention into structures of patriarchy and social injustice.

Keywords

Menstruation, Gender Politics, Indian Writing, Feminist Literature, Patriarchy, Taboo, Body Politics, Dalit Feminism, Agency, Women's Studies

Introduction

Menstruation, a biological process experienced by nearly half of the global population, is paradoxically one of the least discussed subjects in public discourse. In India, menstrual silence is reinforced by a complex interplay of cultural taboos, religious restrictions, and patriarchal ideologies that regard menstruating women as impure or polluted. From exclusion in kitchens and temples to euphemistic concealment in everyday conversation,

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menstruation has been systematically shrouded in silence. This silence is not merely cultural but profoundly political, for it determines the ways in which women inhabit their bodies, negotiate spaces, and assert their identities.

Indian literature, traditionally dominated by patriarchal perspectives, has often mirrored this silence. Classical and colonial writings rarely acknowledged menstruation, except in mythological references to purity and fertility. The absence of menstruation in literature reflects its absence in public discourse—an erasure that normalizes silence and perpetuates shame. However, contemporary Indian writing, particularly influenced by feminist thought, has begun to foreground menstruation as a legitimate and necessary subject of literary exploration.

This paper examines how Indian writers have engaged with menstruation as a site of gender politics, challenging silences and reconfiguring narratives of the female body. It asks:

1. How has menstruation been represented in Indian literature?
2. In what ways do writers challenge or reproduce taboos surrounding menstruation?
3. How do caste, class, and religion shape menstrual politics in literary texts?

By addressing these questions, the study situates menstruation within broader feminist discourses of body politics, identity, and resistance. It argues that Indian writing plays a crucial role in "breaking the silence" by reclaiming menstruation from stigma and transforming it into a space of empowerment and political dialogue.

Menstruation and Silence in Indian Society

Menstruation in India has historically been situated at the intersection of biology, culture, and religion. While it is a natural bodily function, it has been surrounded by myths of impurity and shame. Across regions, menstruating women are prohibited from entering temples, participating in religious rituals, or even touching food items such as pickles, which are believed to rot if handled by them. Such practices reinforce the idea that menstruation is not only unclean but also socially disruptive.

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This silence and stigma have multiple implications:

- **Cultural Silence**: Euphemisms such as *"that time of the month"*, *"problem"*, or *"monthly trouble"* illustrate a refusal to name menstruation directly. The avoidance of open dialogue perpetuates ignorance and reinforces shame among young girls experiencing menstruation for the first time.
- **Religious Taboo**: In Hinduism, menstrual restrictions are often justified through purity pollution binaries. Women are expected to isolate themselves, sometimes even relegated to separate huts or rooms during menstruation, especially in rural areas. Practices such as *Chhaupadi* in Nepal and parts of northern India exemplify extreme forms of seclusion.
- **Social Consequences**: Menstruation is linked with women's reproductive capacity, making it a crucial site for regulating sexuality and controlling female autonomy. By declaring menstruation impure, patriarchy enforces bodily control and ensures compliance with gendered expectations.
- **Intersectional Dimensions**: Experiences of menstruation differ across caste and class. While middle-class women may experience menstrual silence within private domestic spaces, Dalit and working-class women face harsher scrutiny, often denied access to hygienic facilities and facing ridicule in public spaces. Thus, menstruation is not only gendered but also caste marked.

In this context, literature becomes a powerful medium to challenge silence. By representing menstruation, writers not only break cultural taboos but also invite readers to rethink entrenched beliefs about women's bodies and identities.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literature Review

The scholarship on menstruation in Indian contexts has expanded in recent decades, drawing from feminist theory, sociology, anthropology, and literary studies. Early feminist interventions in India, such as those by **Kumkum Sangari** and **Urvashi Butalia**, emphasized how patriarchy silences women's bodily experiences. Later works, including **Mary E. John's *Discrepant Dislocations* (1996)**, connected body politics with postcolonial feminist

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concerns. Studies on **Dalit women's autobiographies** (Bama, Urmila Pawar) reveal how menstruation intersects with caste discrimination, where notions of impurity are intensified through untouchability practices. **Meena Kandasamy's poetry** explicitly addresses menstruation as both biological and political, highlighting resistance to shame. Similarly, **Kamala Das's autobiographical writing** foregrounds female sexuality and menstrual experience as part of a broader assertion of bodily autonomy. Global feminist scholars, such as **Chris Bobel (*New Blood: Third-Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation*, 2010)**, have argued that menstruation is a site where power, stigma, and resistance intersect. Their work provides useful frameworks for understanding menstruation not simply as biology but as a cultural and political construct.

Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on two interrelated theoretical frameworks:

1. **Feminist Body Politics** – Following Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, the paper examines how women's bodies are regulated through discourses of purity and pollution. Feminist theorists such as **Judith Butler** and **Susan Bordo** provide insights into how the body becomes a site of cultural inscription and resistance.
2. **Intersectional Feminism** – Building on **Kimberlé Crenshaw's** framework, the paper emphasizes how menstruation is not experienced uniformly. Class, caste, and religion produce multiple menstrual realities. Dalit women's narratives, for instance, show how menstrual stigma is compounded by caste-based untouchability.

Together, these frameworks enable a reading of Indian literature where menstruation is not only a bodily event but also a deeply political experience that reflects and contests structures of power.

Menstruation in Indian Writing

Literature offers a space to articulate what society silences. In Indian writing, menstruation has gradually shifted from being absent or marginalized to becoming an explicit subject of discussion. Writers across genres

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autobiography, poetry, fiction, and memoir have taken up menstruation to interrogate patriarchy, foreground women's lived experiences, and open dialogue around body politics.

Meena Kandasamy: Menstruation as Resistance

Meena Kandasamy's poetry in *Ms. Militancy* (2010) redefines menstruation as a symbol of female power and defiance. In her poem *"Period"*, she dismantles taboos by directly addressing the stigma: "They taught me to hide the blood, to keep it from seeping into speech. But I write in red, staining the silence." Here, Kandasamy transforms menstruation from a source of shame into a political metaphor for creativity, resistance, and speech. The act of writing in red reclaims the menstrual body as a source of agency. Her poetry illustrates how contemporary feminist literature refuses to sanitize or suppress menstruation, instead placing it at the center of discourse.

Dalit Women's Autobiographies: Menstruation and Caste

Dalit women's writing provides a unique perspective where menstrual stigma is compounded by caste oppression. In *The Weave of My Life* (2009), Urmila Pawar recalls how menstruation was policed both within her home and by upper-caste society:

"When I bled, I was not only impure as a woman but doubly impure as a Dalit.
My body was marked twice over."

Similarly, Bama's autobiographical text *Karukku* (1992) exposes the intersection of gender and caste, where menstruation became yet another justification for exclusion and humiliation. These narratives illustrate how menstrual taboos intensify in the context of caste hierarchies, showing that menstruation cannot be studied apart from social stratification.

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Perumal Murugan: Menstruation in Rural Realities

In *One Part Woman* (2013), Tamil writer Perumal Murugan touches upon menstruation within the context of fertility and ritual. The protagonist Ponna's inability to conceive becomes linked to her menstrual cycles, reflecting societal obsession with reproduction. Murugan highlights how menstruation, far from being private, becomes a matter of community concern, tied to women's social worth and marriage stability. Through Ponna's

Menstruation and Caste Politics

Intersectionality, as articulated by **Kimberlé Crenshaw**, is vital to understanding menstrual politics in India. Menstruation is not experienced uniformly; caste, class, and religion produce different realities.

Dalit women's autobiographies such as Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* and Bama's *Karukku* reveal how menstrual stigma is compounded by caste-based discrimination. Their accounts demonstrate that menstruation is not merely about gendered shame but about a body doubly stigmatized—both as female and as Dalit. The association of Dalits with "pollution" intensifies the stigma of menstrual impurity, exposing how caste patriarchy weaponizes biology to sustain social hierarchies.

Menstruation as Literary and Political Intervention

By breaking the silence, Indian literature performs a dual role: it challenges taboos at the cultural level and contributes to political discourse at the feminist level. Menstruation becomes a symbol of what **Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak** calls the "subaltern voice." To write menstruation is to allow the silenced female body to speak, disrupting patriarchal narratives that reduce women to their reproductive functions. Thus, menstruation in Indian writing is not only about individual experiences but about collective struggle. It destabilizes entrenched binaries of pure/impure, silence/speech, shame/agency, and locates women's bodies at the heart of feminist resistance.

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Breaking the Silence: Literature as Resistance

Literature becomes an active political tool in confronting menstrual stigma. By writing menstruation into public discourse, Indian authors disrupt the politics of silence that has historically governed women's bodies. Kamala Das transforms her private embarrassment into narrative testimony, forcing readers to acknowledge what society hides. Meena Kandasamy reclaims menstrual blood as a metaphor of creativity and militancy, subverting patriarchal discomfort into feminist power. Dalit writers like Urmila Pawar and Bama reveal how menstrual shame intersects with caste oppression, thereby challenging the invisibility of marginalized bodies in both feminist and literary canons.

Moreover, the emergence of digital writing, spoken word poetry, and visual narratives (e.g., Rupi Kaur's censored Instagram posts) has amplified menstrual politics beyond print literature. These movements normalize menstruation by creating visibility across public platforms, reaching audiences often excluded from academic or elite literary spaces.

By integrating menstruation into writing, these authors and activists enact what **bell hooks** describes as "talking back" speaking in spaces where silence was enforced, and converting speech into resistance. Literature here is not merely representational; it is **transformative**, enabling a cultural re-imagination of the menstrual body as natural, powerful, and political.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how menstruation, long silenced in Indian culture, is increasingly represented in literature as a site of gender politics. Through the works of Kamala Das, Meena Kandasamy, Urmila Pawar, Perumal Murugan, and contemporary digital writers, menstruation emerges not merely as a biological event but as a contested terrain of power, silence, and resistance. Analyzing menstruation through feminist and intersectional frameworks reveals its dual function: as a mechanism of patriarchal control and as a potential site of feminist agency. By writing menstruation, Indian authors reclaim female bodily experience from stigma and embed it within political discourse. Literature thereby functions as resistance, challenging silence, destabilizing

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taboos, and expanding feminist thought. In "breaking the silence," Indian writing does not simply normalize menstruation it politicizes it, demanding a cultural and social revaluation of women's bodies. The continued engagement with menstrual politics in literature holds promise for further destabilizing patriarchal norms and advancing the cause of gender justice.

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BRIDGING GAPS BEYOND CONNECTIVITY: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE ON RURAL INDIAN YOUTH

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Abstract

This study explores the psychological impact of the digital divide on rural Indian youth, focusing on how limited digital access shapes education, aspirations, and well-being. A qualitative design was employed with 10 purposively sampled rural youth aged 16–25. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis, Analysis generated five major themes: (1) Barriers of Access and Infrastructure, (2) Educational and Career Disruptions, (3) Psychological Consequences of Exclusion, (4) Coping and Adaptive Strategies, and (5) Aspirations for Digital Inclusion.

Keywords: *psychological well-being; digital divide; digital exclusion; rural youth; social inequality; empowerment; India*

INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital divide refers to the gap between individuals, groups, or communities who have access to and can effectively use digital technologies such as the internet, computers, and smartphones and those who cannot. The digital divide remains one of the most persistent challenges in India, particularly for rural youth. Despite government initiatives such as *Digital India*, large rural–urban gaps in internet access and device availability continue to limit young people's educational and psychosocial development (Jafar, 2023; Chouhan, 2024). Data from the *Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022)* confirms that rural students disproportionately lack household internet and digital learning resources, reinforcing long-standing educational inequalities.

Scholars argue that digital exclusion is not merely technological but intersects with class, caste, and geography to shape opportunities for participation and wellbeing (Kumar & Prakash, 2020; Srinivasan & Johri, 2013). For

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rural youth, this often translates into fewer educational prospects, constrained career opportunities, and diminished confidence in competing with urban peers (Reddy & Kumar, 2022). Such disadvantages were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when online learning became the norm. Studies report that rural students missed classes due to poor connectivity, device sharing, and high data costs, leading to stress, academic loss, and reduced engagement (Pathak & Joshi, 2021; Pradhan & Singh, 2021).

Beyond education, digital exclusion has direct psychological effects. Indian studies link digital poverty with heightened stress, anxiety, and lowered self-esteem among adolescents (Verma & Sharma, 2021). Globally, digital exclusion has been associated with worse mental health outcomes during crises, particularly for young people (Metherell et al., 2022). These findings align with social comparison perspectives, suggesting that rural youth internalize disadvantage by comparing themselves with better-connected urban peers (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015).

At the same time, interventions demonstrate the potential for digital literacy to serve as a source of empowerment. Reddy and Kumar (2022) found that structured digital training enhanced rural youths' confidence and employability, reducing feelings of exclusion. Reviews of digital literacy programs emphasize that infrastructure alone is insufficient—psychosocial support, community participation, and attention to gender norms are essential to ensure that connectivity translates into genuine wellbeing (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015; Kumar & Prakash, 2020).

In sum, existing literature suggests that the digital divide in India produces layered impacts: structural exclusion, educational disruption, and psychological strain. Yet, when addressed holistically through both infrastructure and psychosocial empowerment, digital access can become a pathway to dignity, opportunity, and self-efficacy for rural youth. These gaps in understanding—particularly from a psychological and qualitative perspective—underscore the relevance of the present study.

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METHODOLOGY

Participants : The study used a purposive sample of 10 rural Indian youth aged 16–25 years residing in the villages of Kadanganchi, in Kalaburagi district of Karnataka.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 15)

Sl.No	Participant	Age	Gender
1.	AV	21	Male
2.	KA	18	Female
3.	SS	17	Male
4.	RS	19	Male
5.	AS	19	Female
6.	VV	22	Male
7.	MA	17	Female
8.	FK	21	Female
9.	NA	20	Female
10.	RN	23	Male

A total of 10 participants took part in the study, with ages ranging from 16 to 25 years (M = 19.7, SD = 2.06).

Data collection: Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews (45–90 minutes), which were audio-recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. Field notes captured non-verbal and contextual details, and ethical approval, informed consent, and confidentiality were ensured through pseudonyms and de-identification.

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), following six iterative steps: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review and refinement of themes, defining and naming themes, and final report preparation. To enhance analytic rigor, peer debriefing was conducted with an external, unbiased colleague.

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RESULTS

(1) Barriers of Access and Infrastructure, (2) Educational and Career Disruptions, (3) Psychological Consequences of Exclusion, (4) Coping and Adaptive Strategies, and (5) Aspirations for Digital Inclusion. Each theme contained multiple subthemes, described below with illustrative participant quotes. Interviews were translated from Kannada to English with the help of an external Kannada speaker.

Table 2. Themes, Subthemes and Codes generated from data analysis

Theme	Subthemes	Illustrative Quotes
1. Barriers of Access and Infrastructure	a. Poor connectivity and device scarcity	"Sometimes the network won't be there. It will be very slow and have to wait for long hours to download something from internet ." (P04, male, 19)
	b. Shared devices within families	"We have one smartphone at home, and my father takes it to work. I get to use it maybe half an hour at night.Sometimes even that won't be possible" (P07, female, 17)
2. Educational and Career Disruptions	a. Interrupted online learning	"During COVID, my classes were online, but I missed most of them. Teachers thought we were lazy, but we just had no internet." (P01, male, 21)
	b. Limited career guidance	"I want to prepare for competitive exams, but all the coaching is online. Here, I only hear about opportunities when it's too late." (P09, female, 20)
3. Psychological Consequences of Exclusion	a. Feelings of inferiority and shame	"My cousins in the city know everything about technology. I feel small when I cannot even fill an online form myself." (P02, female, 18)
	b. Anxiety about being "left behind"	"I keep worrying that by the time we get good internet, others will already be ahead in life." (P06, male, 22)

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4.Coping and Adaptive Strategies	a. Reliance on peers and local networks	"If I need to download study material, I ask my friend who has better internet and he gives me notes." (P03, male, 17)
	b. Offline alternatives	"Sometimes I just buy guidebooks from the market because I know I cannot depend on online classes." (P05, female, 19)
5. Aspirations for Digital Inclusion	a. Hope for equal opportunities	"If every village had reliable internet, we could compete with city students equally." (P10, male, 23)
	b. Vision of empowerment through digital literacy	"With proper training, we could not just study but also start online businesses from here." (P08, female, 21)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight how the digital divide in rural India extends beyond infrastructure gaps, shaping youth's psychological wellbeing, educational opportunities, and sense of identity. The themes resonate with existing literature while offering nuanced insights into the lived realities of rural youth.

First, barriers such as poor connectivity and shared devices reflect the structural inequalities embedded in rural digital ecosystems (Kumar & Prakash, 2020). According to Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986), lack of digital access limits cultural and social capital, constraining rural youth's ability to participate fully in educational and career-related domains. These infrastructural deficits exacerbate feelings of marginality.

Educational disruptions further illustrate how digital exclusion compounds existing inequalities. Research during the COVID-19 pandemic shows rural students were disproportionately disadvantaged in accessing online education (Pathak & Joshi, 2021). The self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that unmet needs for competence and autonomy in digital learning environments contribute to frustration and reduced motivation, aligning with participants' experiences of helplessness and stagnation.

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The psychological consequences of exclusion—feelings of inferiority, shame, and anxiety—mirror processes described in social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). Rural youth compared themselves to urban peers, internalizing disadvantage and perceiving themselves as "left behind." Such internalized exclusion is consistent with studies on digital inequality and self-esteem among marginalized youth (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Moreover, the pervasive anxiety about future opportunities aligns with literature linking digital marginality to diminished future orientation and hope (Snyder, 2002).

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience through coping strategies such as peer support and reliance on offline alternatives. This adaptive behaviour echoes communal coping theory (Lyons et al., 1998), where collective efforts mitigate resource constraints. Such strategies also reflect Bandura's concept of agency (2001), showing that even within structural barriers, individuals enact small acts of control to sustain learning and self-worth.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions: The findings underscore the need for comprehensive digital inclusion policies that integrate infrastructure development, digital literacy initiatives, and psychosocial support to empower rural youth. However, the study's small purposive sample of 10 participants and limited geographic focus constrain the generalizability of results. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples across regions, employ longitudinal designs to capture changes over time, and examine interventions addressing both technological access and the psychological impacts of digital exclusion. Additionally, to minimize potential loss of meaning during language translation, future studies should incorporate back-translation to ensure linguistic and cultural accuracy.

CONCLUSION: The study shows that the digital divide in rural India affects more than access—it shapes education, careers, and psychological wellbeing. Youth face exclusion, shame, and anxiety, yet demonstrate resilience through communal coping. Their aspirations highlight digital inclusion as a path to dignity and empowerment. Bridging the divide requires policies that combine infrastructure with digital literacy and psychosocial support, enabling rural youth to thrive in a digital society.

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IMPACT OF FINANCIAL LITERACY ON INVESTMENT DECISIONS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Financial literacy has emerged as a vital life skill in the 21st century, particularly for youth navigating a complex financial world. College students, standing at the cusp of financial independence, are increasingly required to make decisions about saving, spending, borrowing, and investing. However, studies reveal that a majority of students lack basic financial knowledge and are ill-equipped to make sound investment choices. This research paper investigates how financial literacy—or the lack thereof—affects investment decisions among college students. Through extensive literature review and analysis of four case studies, this paper identifies the challenges students face, and the role financial education can play in improving outcomes. The study concludes with practical recommendations to empower students with the tools necessary for long-term financial success.

Keywords : Financial Literacy, Investment Decisions , College Students, Risk Management ,Budgeting ,Savings Behavior ,Financial Education ,Economic Empowerment

Introduction

In a world where financial products are becoming more complex and accessible, the importance of financial literacy has grown exponentially. From managing a bank account to investing in mutual funds or cryptocurrencies, individuals today must navigate various financial choices early in life. For college students, who are beginning to earn money through part-time jobs or allowances and are exposed to credit cards, loans, and investment options, this financial decision-making becomes crucial.

Despite this need, surveys conducted across India and globally show alarming gaps in students' financial knowledge. Many lack the ability to differentiate between savings and investments, understand interest rates, or assess the risk involved in financial products.

A financially literate student is not only capable of making wise investment decisions but is also better equipped to manage student loans, plan for future expenses, and avoid falling into debt traps. Therefore, financial literacy must be viewed as a critical enabler of youth empowerment and economic resilience.

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This paper explores the relationship between financial literacy and investment decisions among college students, highlighting the benefits of early financial education and offering a roadmap to improve literacy levels in this demographic.

Review of Literature

A number of studies have been conducted to understand the connection between financial literacy and financial behavior among young adults:

1. Lusardi & Mitchell (2011)

Their global studies suggest that financial literacy is a strong predictor of retirement planning and investment behavior. Individuals with higher literacy were more likely to invest in stocks and mutual funds and less likely to engage in high-cost borrowing.

2. Chen & Volpe (1998)

This foundational study surveyed over 900 college students and found that those with financial education had significantly better understanding of investment options, risk management, and personal budgeting.

3. OECD PISA Report (2014)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommended integrating financial education into school curricula to help students make better long-term financial choices.

These studies confirm a strong link between financial literacy and positive financial behavior, and emphasize the urgent need to focus on financial education among youth.

Importance of Financial Literacy for College Students

1. Empowers Informed Decision-Making

Financially literate students can distinguish between various investment options, such as fixed deposits, SIPs, stocks, or digital currencies, and assess which one aligns with their financial goals and risk tolerance.

2. Promotes Saving and Investing

Students who understand the power of compound interest and inflation are more likely to start saving early and opt for long-term investment plans, even with small amounts.

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3. Prevents Debt Traps

With access to student loans and credit cards, students are at risk of falling into debt cycles. Financial literacy teaches responsible borrowing and the implications of missed payments and interest accumulation.

4. Reduces Financial Stress

Students who can budget and manage their expenses experience less anxiety related to money, allowing them to focus more on academics and personal development.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Missed Investment Opportunities

Student: Riya, final-year B.Com student

Background: Riya earned around ₹6,000 monthly from tutoring but kept all her money in a basic savings account.

Issue: She had never heard of SIPs, recurring deposits, or fixed income instruments.

Outcome: She missed out on the potential of compounding and inflation-beating returns.

Insight: With a basic understanding of savings and investment, she could have created a small but growing portfolio.

Case Study 2: Blind Investment in Crypto

Student: Aman, second-year engineering student

Background: Influenced by YouTube and Reddit, Aman invested ₹15,000 in cryptocurrency without understanding volatility or wallet security.

Issue: The market crashed, and he lost over ₹10,000.

Outcome: The loss discouraged him from future investments altogether.

Insight: Financial literacy includes risk analysis and understanding volatility, especially in emerging instruments like crypto.

Case Study 3: The Positive Impact of Early Financial Education

Student: Sneha, MBA (Finance) student

Background: Attended a financial literacy seminar organized by SEBI.

Action: Started SIPs with just ₹2,000/month and built a ₹55,000 emergency fund over two years.

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Outcome: Developed long-term investment discipline and confidence.

Insight: Structured learning can significantly improve financial decision-making, even among non-commerce students.

Challenges in Promoting Financial Literacy

1. Lack of Financial Education in Curriculum

Most colleges do not offer courses in basic finance unless students specialize in commerce. Non-commerce students are left out.

2. Influence of Social Media and Peer Pressure

Students often trust viral financial advice from unverified sources, leading to risky decisions. Peer-driven consumerism also encourages unnecessary expenses.

3. Fear of Financial Terminology

Terms like NAV, CAGR, ETFs, and SIP confuse students, leading to avoidance behavior.

Solutions and Recommendations

1. Integrate Financial Literacy into Higher Education

Colleges should introduce compulsory modules on personal finance, covering savings, credit, investing, and taxes, regardless of stream.

2. Conduct Awareness Workshops and Simulations

Interactive sessions, investment simulations, and games can help students learn without fear or boredom.

3. Use Technology for Engagement

Promote use of budgeting and investment apps designed for youth, such as Zerodha Varsity, Groww, or Kuvera.

4. Establish Campus Investment Clubs

These clubs can provide peer-to-peer learning, mock trading platforms, and guest sessions with finance professionals.

5. Government and Regulatory Involvement

Entities like RBI, SEBI, and NPCI can partner with institutions to conduct targeted campaigns for students.

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6. Parental and Peer Education

Encourage families and peer groups to discuss finances openly, normalizing saving and investing from an early age.

Conclusion

This research highlights the vital role financial literacy plays in shaping the investment decisions of college students. It is clear that while some students make informed choices, a majority either avoid investing due to fear and lack of knowledge, or take misinformed risks. In the absence of structured education, they rely on social media and peers, often leading to poor financial outcomes.

Introducing financial education at an early stage can enable students to start small but make informed and confident financial choices. With the right tools, mentorship, and awareness, India can build a financially literate youth population, capable of securing their own future and contributing to the nation's economic strength.

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Digital Literacy Access: A Key Driver for Societal and Educational Development — An Indian Perspective

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Abstract

Digital literacy defined as the ability to access, assess, produce, and share information through digital tools is playing an increasingly vital role in shaping India's educational and social progress. Its availability influences academic achievement, economic mobility, and civic participation, while unequal access risks deepening existing social divides. This study explores the Indian landscape by drawing insights from national datasets, program assessments, and scholarly research. It identifies critical factors for successful digital literacy initiatives, such as robust infrastructure, affordable access, skilled educators, culturally relevant content, and inclusive strategies. The paper also outlines ongoing challenges, reviews effective interventions, and proposes targeted policy measures to ensure digital technologies empower communities rather than reinforce inequality.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Education, Technology, Society, Development, Access, Digital Divide

Introduction

Digital technologies have evolved from supplementary learning tools to essential components of education, employment, and civic life. In a nation as vast and diverse as India—home to over 1.4 billion people—implementing digital literacy programs presents distinct challenges rooted in regional, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences. Although initiatives like Digital India have expanded mobile and internet access, disparities in connectivity and usage persist. Genuine digital literacy encompasses more than just owning devices; it requires the ability and confidence to engage with technology meaningfully in both educational and societal spheres (MEITY, 2025).

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This study investigates the role of digital literacy in advancing India's social and educational development. It analyzes key factors such as infrastructure, teaching methods, and content relevance, synthesizes empirical findings, and offers strategic guidance for policymakers, educators, and community leaders.

Literature Review

Educational Impact

Research consistently indicates that technology by itself does not lead to better educational outcomes; effective learning requires active teacher involvement and thoughtful integration into teaching practices (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). Approaches that blend digital resources with educator support foster greater student engagement, critical thinking, and teamwork. According to UDISE+ data (2024, 2025), internet access in schools is on the rise—growing from 53.9% in 2023–24 to 63.5% in 2024–25—but significant disparities persist, especially in underserved rural and marginalized areas.

Socioeconomic and Social Effects

Digital literacy empowers individuals to utilize e-government platforms, engage in digital financial transactions, access telehealth services, and obtain market-related information—enhancing economic opportunities when users possess the necessary competencies (ICRIER, 2024; World Bank, 2021). According to MoSPI (2025), smartphone ownership stands at 85.5% and home internet availability at 86.3% among Indian households. Yet, these national averages conceal enduring inequalities, particularly between urban and rural populations and across gender lines. GSMA (2025) underscores a pronounced gender divide in mobile internet usage within India.

Barriers to Digital Literacy

Persistent challenges include:

- **Affordability**: Low-income households struggle with device costs and data charges.
- **Infrastructure reliability**: Power outages and inconsistent connectivity limit program effectiveness.
- **Teacher preparedness**: Many teachers lack formal training in digital pedagogy.
- **Content gaps**: Limited resources in regional languages or for students with disabilities.
- **Social norms**: Gender and cultural constraints restrict access, particularly for girls in rural areas (GSMA, 2025).

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Programmatic Evidence

Evaluations of digital literacy programs consistently highlight that infrastructure by itself does not guarantee success. Effective models—like community-based digital learning hubs, integrated teacher development programs, and regionally tailored open educational resources (OER)—show that meaningful outcomes arise when access is paired with skill development and culturally appropriate content..

Conceptual Framework

This paper uses a three-layer framework for digital literacy:

1. **Infrastructure and affordability** – Device availability, internet connectivity, and cost considerations.
2. **Human capacity and pedagogy** – Teacher training, learner competencies, and instructional integration.
3. **Content and inclusion** – Regional language resources, culturally relevant materials, and accessibility for marginalized groups.

The interplay of these layers is essential for converting digital access into meaningful literacy and developmental outcomes.

Findings

Educational Outcomes

Findings from Indian educational settings reveal that digital literacy programs boost student engagement, facilitate personalized learning experiences, and strengthen teachers' capacity to track academic progress. The integration of blended learning models and well-prepared educators is linked to significant improvements in students' digital proficiency as well as essential skills like critical thinking and teamwork (Kumar & Sharma, 2022; UDISE+, 2025).

Barriers and Inequities

The most persistent barriers include:

- Urban–rural disparities in device and connectivity access
- Gender-based limitations on technology use
- Shortages of locally relevant content
- Limited teacher readiness and insufficient pedagogical support
- Costs of devices, data, and maintenance

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Policy Recommendations

1. **Invest in infrastructure and affordability**: Subsidized devices, community Wi-Fi hubs, and low-cost data plans for disadvantaged populations.
2. **Strengthen teacher capacity**: Continuous digital pedagogy training, mentoring, and integration support.
3. **Localize content**: Develop OER in regional languages and culturally relevant formats.
4. **Promote gender equity**: Targeted programs to improve girls' access to devices and safe learning environments.
5. **Outcome-focused evaluation**: Track learning and digital skill progression rather than solely counting devices or connectivity.
6. **Public–private–community partnerships**: Leverage edtech innovations while ensuring equitable access and oversight.

Conclusion

Digital literacy plays a pivotal role in advancing India's social and educational progress. Although national programs and widespread mobile adoption have expanded access, true inclusion demands coordinated efforts in building infrastructure, enhancing teacher skills, developing region-specific content, and promoting gender equity. Bridging existing divides will enable India to leverage digital literacy as a catalyst for educational improvement, social inclusion, and economic empowerment (MoSPI, 2025; UDISE+, 2025; GSMA, 2025).

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVOLUTION IN RETAIL: IMPACT ON THE SHOPPING HABITS OF WORKING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into e-commerce and retail is fundamentally reshaping consumer behavior. For **working women**, who often face significant time constraints due to professional and domestic responsibilities, AI-powered shopping platforms present a paradigm shift, primarily driven by the promise of **convenience and personalization**. This article examines the dual impact of AI on the shopping habits of working women, focusing on increased efficiency and enhanced decision-making, while also addressing critical challenges such as data privacy and algorithmic bias. The findings suggest that AI acts as a powerful enabler, streamlining the consumer journey, but its adoption must be governed by principles of transparency and ethical data management to maintain consumer trust.

KEYWORDS: Personalization, Artificial Intelligence (Ai), Working Women, Paradigm

1. Introduction:

The Working Woman and the Time-Poverty Challenge Working women constitute a vital and growing demographic of global consumers. Their shopping habits are uniquely influenced by **time-poverty**, necessitating quick, efficient, and reliable purchasing experiences. The traditional retail environment often fails to cater to this need, but the rise of Artificial Intelligence in retail—through tools like recommendation engines, virtual assistants, and predictive analytics—has emerged as a transformative solution. AI promises to act as a personal digital concierge, curating shopping experiences that maximize value while minimizing the time investment required for research and decision-making.

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2. AI as an Enabler of Efficiency and Convenience

For the time-constrained working woman, AI offers tangible benefits that directly impact their day-to-day shopping habits:

2.1. Hyper-Personalized Recommendations

AI algorithms analyze extensive data on past purchases, browsing history, social media activity, and even current trends to generate highly accurate product recommendations. This shifts the shopping process from a tedious search to an efficient discovery.

- **Time Savings:** Instead of browsing endless pages, working women are presented with relevant options almost instantly, significantly cutting down on search time.
- **Relevance and Trust:** The accuracy of recommendations—from professional attire to household essentials—builds trust in the platform, encouraging repeated use and brand loyalty. For instance, AI can recommend the perfect outfit for a specific professional event based on location, weather, and her existing wardrobe.

2.2. Streamlined Decision-Making

AI tools compress the traditional customer journey from need recognition to purchase.

- **Virtual Try-Ons (VTOs) & Augmented Reality (AR):** For fashion and cosmetics, VTOs allow women to quickly assess fit and appearance without the physical trip to a store or the hassle of returns, increasing purchase confidence.
- **Voice Commerce (Voice Assistants):** The ability to purchase essential items using voice commands (e.g., "reorder my usual coffee") enables hands-free, multi-tasking shopping, fitting seamlessly into a busy schedule.

2.3. Automated Customer Service

Chatbots and **virtual assistants** provide instant, 24/7 support for order tracking, returns, and product inquiries. This immediacy is crucial for working women who may only have time for shopping or customer service interactions outside of standard business hours.

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3. Key Shifts in Shopping Behavior

The adoption of AI-powered tools leads to measurable changes in the shopping patterns of working women:

Traditional Habit	AI-Driven Shift	Implication
Extensive Browsing	**Precision Search & Discovery**	Reduced decision fatigue; faster purchase funnel.
High Cart Abandonment	**Increased Conversion Rate**	Personalized offers and real-time stock alerts reduce friction.
In-Store Shopping for Fit/Trial	**Virtual Try-On Adoption**	Seamless integration of online and offline experience (Omnichannel).
Generic Brand Loyalty	**Personalized Brand Affinity**	Loyalty is driven by the perceived value of personalization and convenience, not just product quality.

4. Challenges and Ethical Considerations

While AI offers immense opportunities, its reliance on personal data introduces significant ethical challenges that can affect trust among working women consumers:

4.1. Privacy and Data Security

The highly personalized nature of AI requires the collection and analysis of vast amounts of sensitive personal data. **Concerns about data breaches, unauthorized sharing, and surveillance** can erode consumer trust, leading to resistance in sharing the information necessary for effective personalization.

4.2. Algorithmic Bias

AI systems are trained on historical data, which may reflect societal gender biases. If the data disproportionately represents certain demographics or shopping patterns, the algorithms may offer non-optimal or biased recommendations. For instance, an algorithm might default to recommending *family-oriented* products instead of *professional-growth* items, failing to recognize the full scope of a working woman's needs.

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4.3. Lack of Transparency

The "black box" nature of some AI recommendations, where the 'why' behind a suggestion is opaque, can lead to customer skepticism and a feeling of being manipulated or over-influenced.

Conclusions:

- Extract the complete text of Section 5, "Conclusion and Future Directions," as provided in the source article text.
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AGEING POPULATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY: POLICY PLANNING FOR ELDERLY WELFARE

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Abstract

This paper discusses the problems of the elderly people in India and spot lights the need for reliable and specific social security policy planning for elderly welfare. India is undergoing rapid population transformation and it is projected that by 2050 Indian elderly population would be 347 million representing nearly 20% of the total population. This demographic shift driven by increased life expectancy and fertility decline presents a significant challenge. The areas which become hard hit by ageing population includes health care , retirement funds, social support systems etc. Elderly people face key problems which include managing chronic diseases , social isolation and depression. Addressing the needs of increasingly vulnerable older population is very challenging. Looking after the elderly population causes potential strain on public resources. Recognising the diminishing demographic dividend , social security policies framers have several challenges. In India loss of financial security is deeply witnesses with 40 % of elderly belong to the poorest wealth back ground It is also noticed that one fifth have no income or economic support at all. Socio cultural mindsets and norms state the elderly people as a burden and consider them as an added responsibility. The vulnerability chances of the elderly increase due to the lack of comprehensive safety support system. Hence , a need for reliable social security policies arise.

Key words: Ageing Population, Social Security Policy, Elderly Welfare

Introduction:

The ageing population is leaving far reaching implications of unparalleled magnitude. UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030 recognises the far reaching impact of ageing to encompass not just health systems but labour and financial markets social protection and education. In India, the loss of financial security is deeply

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witnessed with 40% of elderly being in the poorest wealth quintile while about one fifth have no income at all. Social cultural mindsets and norms that label the elderly as a burden.

In India loss of financial security is deeply witnessed with nearly 40 % of the elderly people belong to the poorest wealth backdrop. It is also noticed that one fifth have no income at all. Nearly 57% of the rural elderly women do not have any income for their living. Socio cultural mindsets and norms consider the elderly people as a burden, encumbrance and added responsibility. Most of the urban people find it easier to send their elderly to the old age homes, elderly care centres and retirement points. The migration of the rural people to urban centres in search of employment has left rural women more helpless and unaccommodating. The vulnerability chances of the elderly is increasing due to the lack of comprehensive safety support system.

Issues faced by the elderly people

- **Social isolation** - elderly people often feel isolated form society because of their reliability and health issues.
- **Health issues**- the elderly people have several issues of health with weakened muscles, injured limbs, poor eyesight issues, cardio vascular issues, weak digestive issues , fragile body organs, delicate mobility options etc. They suffer from depression and mental weakness as well.
- **Economic dependency** – majority of the elderly people are economically dependent on their children. It is observed through studies that elderly people in urban areas are tagged to old age homes while the elderly people in rural areas suffer isolation and social segregation along with economic reliability.
- **Lack of social security schemes –** Elderly people have little access to social security schemes because very fewer policies specifically are benefiting the elderly people. Most of the banking / post office / government and other schemes benefit the young people. People in rural areas further suffer because they have very little knowledge about the schemes of government which benefit them.
- **Lack of specialised medical help –** elderly people lack specialised medical help because they have health issues different from young people. Sometimes they need therapy support. Poor access to specialised health care services makes their situation more pathetic.

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Regulatory interventions

Knowing that Ageing population demand an all-inclusive and comprehensive regulatory frame work including care, institutional support and services Government of India has made policy interventions time and again.

- National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly
- National Social Assistance Programme
- Maintenance and Welfare of Senior Citizens Act 2007 and Amendment Bill
- Atal Vayo Abhudaya Yojana
- Elder Line is the National Help Line
- National Policy of Older Persons of 1999
- Vayo yojana 2015
- Indira Gandhi National pension scheme

Meeting the challenges of the elderly welfare

The ageing population in India is facing several challenges .Even though there are several regulatory policies for their sustenance and support ,still there are several lacuna which needs to be prioritised.

1.	Need for specialised health care services
2.	Need for providing medical professionals
3.	Need for fostering inter generational bond
4.	Need for leveraging technological advancements
5.	Need for prioritising rural sector
6.	Need for prioritising silver economy segment
7.	Need for data management of the elderly

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1. **Need for specialised health care se**rvices - There is a need to cater to specialised health care services which can involve special needs of the seniors and the elderly women population. It can include long term care facilities, geriatric health care and door delivery health care facilities. Enduring health care services targeting the elderly women is needed. The health issues of elderly women are different from men hence there is a need to prioritise specialised health care services.
2. **Need for providing medical professionals-** There is a need for addressing the issues of lack of medical professional who are trained to deal with the specific issues of the elderly. Elderly people need paramedical support , house nursing support and therapist support. But in India there is a shortage of these professionally trained personnel. Most of the CHCs and PHCs lack trained medical professionals.
3. **Need for fostering inter generational bon**d- - There is a need to foster positive inter generational bonding between seniors and young people. Building specific and planned bridges can enrich society by facilitating the exchange of knowledge skills wisdom experiences and perspectives needed to drive a rapid tooling up of the younger generation. The feeling of social isolation can be bridged by these initiatives.
4. **Need for leveraging technological advancements**- There is a need to leverage technological advancements to make health care and social services accessible and affordable. This also entails developing user friendly interfaces and digital literacy skills so that the elderly can fully reap the benefits of digitalization.
5. **Need for prioritising rural secto**r- There is a need for prioritising the needs of the elderly people in rural areas. This will support them morally and psychologically. Elderly people suffer from mobility limitations, chronic health conditions and unique vulnerabilities. They are at a higher risk of isolation. Best practices leading to inclusion of needs of elderly people in disaster planning and response. Rural India is already facing problems with agriculture is bugged with low productivity, added to this the changing climatic conditions are scaring the farmers, disasters are taking away the future of the farmers .
6. **Need for prioritising silver economy segm**ent- There is a need for prioritising investments in sectors like insurance , pensions and banking services . These services come under silver economy segment and they support in opening up wide opportunities for making policies on social security. Aged people live a support less life and their children often neglect them. It is observed through studies that elderly people

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are abandoned or sent to old age homes without their prior consent . It is also observed that aged people suffer from depression without economic support either through pensions or through government retirement schemes. Strengthening the elderly people through retirements funds, pension schemes, and high interest earning fund investment policies will support them.

7. **Need for data management**- There is a need for strengthening the data system on ageing population. Data collection of elderly is the need of the hour because the data will support policy makers to concentrate on specific policies.

Conclusion:

Ageing population demands a comprehensive regulatory frame work including personal care, health care, institutional care and community care. Government needs to take the collaborative support of NGOs in indentifying trends, forecasting demands and assessing the impact of ageing on various sectors and plan accordingly.

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UNRAVELLING THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC INDUCED REVERSE MIGRATION ON INFORMAL SECTOR LIVELIHOODS IN BANGALORE

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Abstract

This paper discusses the impact of the pandemic induced reverse migration on informal sector livelihoods in Bangalore. Studies have shown that reverse migration in Bangalore has left a multifaceted impact. Following Pandemic of 2019 , lock down was initiated which destroyed the livelihoods of lakhs of migrant workers. Pandemic persuaded the migrant workers to return to their home towns leaving Bangalore. They were forced to make work -life balance through finding sundry jobs in tier 2 , tier3 cities and villages. COVID -19 led to mass departures of migrant workers from Bangalore. A significant outflow of workers particularly skilled professionals has increased the labour shortages. Bangalore's transformation into a global IT hub has been supported by a growing number of workers in informal enterprises proving vital to the city's economy. The pandemic was so unfair that it cheated labourers of their working and earning competency. Even though Government of Karnataka made several moves through Kayak mitra and Seva sindhu portals to bring back the labourers, the outcome was very sluggish and inadequate. The need for unleashing social security measures for the informal sector becomes imperative as issues of economic insecurity still looms large.

Key words: reverse migration, impact of the pandemic, informal sector in Bangalore,

Introduction:

Informal sector labourers in Bangalore can be classified as

1. Street vendors,
2. Domestic servants
3. Auto drivers
4. Small business owners
5. Rag pickers

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6. Flower sellers
7. Petty vendors
8. Small hotels
9. Small road side chats stalls

These labourers are often self employed or wage earners in unregulated conditions facing significant challenges such as income instability, difficulty of finding work limited access to health care lack of housing. It is estimated that there are nearly 42 lakh migrant labour workers in Bangalore. They make nearly 44% of the total population of Bangalore. Migrant labourers are employed in manufacturing and construction industry in small restaurants and automotive industry and about 50% of them are contractual workers. This sector was hit hard by the lock down because they had not economic security. They started reverse migration the lock down because they had not economic security. Majority of the labourers hailed from Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhyapradesh , Jharkhand and Odissa states. These labourers lack Formal employment safety , fixed salaries , social protection and community support.

Features of informal sector in Bangalore-

1. **Diverse occupation**s- the informal sector encompasses a broad range of workers and jobs including domestic services , vendor service , hotel service etc.
2. **Unregulated activities** - the informal sector includes economic activities not fully covered by formal arrangements or monitoring by government bodies.
3. **Street vendors –** a significant portion in informal employment in Bangalore is attributed to street vendors who sell vegetables fruits and flowers.
4. **manufacturing and services** – informal sector includes workers in small scale manufacturing eg garments, construction and service industries are often part of the informal sector.
5. **Domestic workers**- a notable segment of the informal work force consists of female domestic workers and to a certain extent male domestic servants.
6. **Self employed and wage labour**- it includes both own workers, self employed and wage employees such as regular salaried workers but also casual wage labourers.

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7. **Migrant inclusion** – rural migrants often lacking formal skills and training are frequently drawn into the Bangalore's urban economy in search of livelihoods leading to an expansion of both the urban work force and population.
8. **Parallel grow**th –Bangalore transformation into a global IT hub has been supported by a growing number of workers in informal enterprises which are vital to the growth of city's economy

Covid-19 pandemic and Consequences in Bangalore - COVID -19 led to mass departures of migrant workers from Bangalore. Its impact was felt

1. **Shortage of labour-** A significant outflow of workers particularly skilled professionals has increased the labour shortages , There is a 42% labour shortage experienced domestic servants , 19.2% shortage in vendor services in Bangalore since 2020.
2. **Shift in talent pool** – Bangalore started facing the challenges in retaining talent of skilled professionals especially in IT and Tech sector. There is also increased competition for talent in Major metro cities which is making a good quantity of IT professionals to opt for working in smaller cities. Majority of the IT professional were given the option of work from home which lead to majority of them returning to their native states. Several labourers who depended on working in the offices and houses of the IT professionals became jobless.
3. **Increase in Online Delivery**- after the pandemic, Bangalore people started favouring online deliveries specially food and chats. Swiggy and Zomoto are the top brands which have achieved success in online food delivery supply chain. Swiggy has 42% of the market share while Zomoto has 55% of the market share in India. With their brand value they have expanded their user bases and now small restaurants and hotels workers have become job less.
4. **Cost of living**- There is a continuous rise in the cost of living in Bangalore. The housing rentals have increased and several IT companies started to provide option of work from home for their personnel and vacated office spaces. Even though there was a slight surge in the residential spaces, the second lock down hit the real estate industry very hard leading to heavy rise in cost of living which was beyond the expectations of migrant labourers.

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5. **Growth of non Metro cities-** Post Pandemic period saw a rise in non metro cities. Employability was offered in growing number of opportunities in Tier -2 and Tier -3 cities like Ramanagara. Nelamangala , Channapattana , Kanakapura , Bangalore rural , Yalahanka , Kolar , Devanahalli, Hosakote etc. Local industries are expanding in these cities and Global companies are also opting for these tier 2 cities for Jobs in AI, machine learning , data analytics and cyber security are offered.
6. **Popularity of GIG economy**- Post pandemic saw increased favour of Gig economy. The flexibility and immediate cash payments offered by the Gig economy makes it an attractive option for some particular for those providing beauty services and working as home delivery providers. The gig economy is a labour market for independent contractors and free lancers hired for short term jobs or gigs rather than permanent employees. It is characterised by flexible work arrangements and is facilitated by digital platforms that connect service services with millions of participants in India and globally driven by the desire for autonomy diverse income and flexible work life balance.
7. **Home advantage**- IT professionals and creamy layers of IT / ITes professionals are increasingly seeking the benefits of a better quality of life in their native places. They are attracted by lower cost of living and less talent search on their own home towns.

Post pandemic emerging trends

1. **Unfavourable terms**- many informal workers even if incorporated into medium or large capitalist firms do so under terms and conditions that are highly disadvantageous to them.
2. **Precarious conditions**- this informal sector is marked by vulnerability with workers often facing the problems of low wages, unstable employment and a lack of social security benefits.
3. **Socio economic vulnerability** - informal workers and their families are often relegated to informal residential settlements or urban slums due to their inability to afford formal housing. Hence Bangalore is becoming too crowded with pressure on public transport and communication systems.
4. **Struggle for human rights** – workers in this sector are experiencing structural exclusion. They are lacking representation in mainstream channels of Bangalore's capitalist growth which is influencing their involvement in criminalization of their livelihood activities.

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5. **Urban poverty** – the informal sector in Bangalore is being closely linked to urban poverty with many poor urban residents remaining tied to traditional low paying jobs or being incorporated into new economic channels under harsh conditions following pandemic.

Government of Karnataka initiatives- - Government of Karnataka made special efforts to bring back workers to Bangalore. These registered under **Seva Sindhu** portal have been reached out to there is an attempt to facilitate the search for employment through the **kayaka mitra** mobile application to tackle the large reverse migration and create employment in rural areas. The Bangalore missed migrant labourers because most of the residents were dependent on them for their daily chores. Government of Karnataka measures to bring them back was not successful as migrant labourers were sceptical about

Conclusion:

Thus, the informal sector in Bangalore recovering after the pandemic, is showing signs of improvement thanks to strong government initiatives. But the need of the hour is broaden the bases of social security schemes including insurance health care benefits an accident benefits.

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A COMMUNITY IN FLUCTUATION - NAVIGATING THE STRAINS OF IN MIGRATION ON RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURES IN SAKALESHAPURA

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Abstract

This paper discusses on the impact of in-migration on resources and infrastructure in Sakaleshapura. Migration has deep and wide ranging impact on the local economy. A large influx of migrants is leading to increased pressure on local resources including food ,water ,schools , and health care services. Migrant labourers often are illiterate and make use of local resources like water, land, food items, wash rooms, residential shelters carelessly. It increases population density leading to consuming resources beyond the existing capacity of the local infrastructure. Besides heavy influx of migrants is leading to degradation of natural resources. It leads to deforestation and resource depletion water, sanitation, degrading the natural habitats, Sometimes local housing become too scarce and un available. Above all the sanitation usage is leading to inadequate water supply , sewage system issues and waste water management system issues. The migrant labour hail from different socio cultural background and are not vigilant about the importance of hygiene practices of drinking pure water or using clean wash rooms for bathing and morning routines.

Key words: Sakaleshapura, migration, impact on resources, impact on infrastructure,

Introduction - Sakaleshapura is a taluk in Hassan district of Karnataka State known for superior quality coffee production. Sakaleshapura is a malnad area receiving good rainfall and is resourcefully filled with rich greenery because of the coffee estates.

1. The taluk has a total geographic area of 1027 sq km
2. It has totally 227 villages out of which 221 are inhabited villages while there are 6 uninhabited villages.
3. The total population of the Taluk is 1,28,633 according to 2011 census.
4. Sakaleshapura has 26 gram Panchayats all of them are having internet communication.

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5. According to 2011 census , the number of agricultural cultivators in Sakaleshapura taluk is 12, 162
6. At the same time , the number of agricultural labourers is 13 , 883
7. The number of other workers is very high in this taluk with 31,610 the percentage of other workers to district workers is 60%
8. The number of non agricultural labourers number is 31 , 858
9. The taluk has coffee estates oranges are grown in 53.92 hectares, spices are grown in 14886 hectares. Black pepper is grown in 54.034 hectares, cashew nut is grown in 1510 hectares. It has garden crop area of 35. 824 hectares.

To work in these estates and garden labour is required . Most of the migrant labour come from 6 states of Bihar, Rajasthan , Jharkhand , Orissa , UP and Assam. The number of labour available locally is very less hence there is a lot of in migration. The labour migration in and around Sakaleshapura taluk is primarily driven by agricultural work particularly in coffee estates. A majority of the migrant labourers are seasonal labourers. After the coffee season most of them leave the place and go back to their native places.

Features of in migrants in Sakaleshapura taluk-

1. **Seasonal workers-** the movement of migrant labourers is often seasonal as they migrate for 5-6 months in a year and they work mostly is coffee estates.
2. **Unskilled and illiterate-** These seasonal labourers are mostly uneducated and they are unskilled. They migrate from long distances in search of livelihood and employment opportunities . They lack economic opportunities sin their native states and migrate to Karnataka for better employment opportunities. They are all rural residents and they travel miles to search of employment. Coffee estates in Sakaleshapura taluk offer seasonal work means for nearly six months.
3. **Very petty land hol**dings –migrant labourers come to SK pur in search of work. These emigrant labourers do not have access to sustainable living back home. It is observed that these migrant labourers do not own landed properties or even if they have lands, they are very petty which cannot support their family.
4. **High rate on unemployment** – increasing rate of unemployment is one major reason for the labour migration. The population surge has augmented the labour class to search of livelihood means elsewhere.

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They migrate to work seasonally in Sakaleshapura taluk and return to their native places for another six months.

5. **Low productivity of the agriculture sector**- The agricultural sector has become unproductive. The changing weather conditions, climatic changes, disasters and lack of opportunities in agriculture have made people to travel in search of employment.
6. **Shortage of sustainable living opportunities-** - It is observed that poverty and shortage of sustainable living influences people to migrate.
7. **Lack of technical skills**- Majority of the migrant labourers are illiterate and lack technical skills. They can only opt to work as agricultural labourers.

Impact on resources:

1. Migrant labourers struggle to access essential services like health care , education , sanitation , food and hygiene which increases their vulnerability.
2. A large influx of migrants is leading to increased pressure on local resources including food , drinking water , schools , health care etc .
3. Migrant labourers often are illiterate and make use of local resources like water, land , food items, wash rooms, residential shelters carelessly.
4. In migration is leading to increased population density leading to consuming resources beyond the existing capacity of the local infrastructure. The public transport , housing , water and sanitation segments are overcrowded.
5. Heavy migration is also leading to degradation of natural resources.
6. It is also leading to deforestation and resource depletion as newer areas are cleared for creation residential shelters and labour camps.
7. It is also influencing the general environment of the taluk.
8. It is impacting degrading the natural habitats. Occupation of land for shelter has been widening and forest lands are trespassed.
9. Sometimes local housing has become too scarce.

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10. Sometimes the sanitation usage leads to inadequate water supply , , sewage system and waste water management systems.
11. A majority of the migrants are not vigilant about the importance of hygiene practices , use of drinking pure water or using clean wash rooms for bathing .

Challenges - the migration rates are increasing annually in the taluk and district administration is finding it very difficult keep track of the mobility of labourers. There are several challenges for migrant workers as well.

1. **Vulnerability-** These migrant labourers are vulnerable there are several incidents of land owners exploiting them. The barriers of language , customs and traditional practices is further adding to the vulnerability.
2. **Bonded labour-** These migrant labourers are sometimes exploited and enslaved as bonded labourers. There were several incidents of enslaved labourers being freed after investigation.
3. **Exploitation-** These migrant labourers are exploited by land owners through wage contract violations and breaches.
4. **Seasonality**- These migrant labourers come to Sakaleshapura taluk seasonally and they return to native places for next six months. Hence, it becomes a complex issue to keep record of their travel history.
5. **Lack of Legal and social security support**- These migrant labourers suffer from insufficient legal and social protection from the local government authority due to lack of coherent policy frame work. They are often exploited because they are denied access to good shelter, health care, poor labour arrangements and poor food support.
6. **Data gaps**- A lack of comprehensive data collection and data management on migration flows especially for short term and seasonal migrants hinders the development of effective policies and social security schemes and services for migrants.

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Conclusion:

Thus the migration of labour has had great impact on resources and infrastructure. The gaps in lack of comprehensive data on migration flows needs to be prioritised. All migrants need social security and insurance support for their sustenance.

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YOUTH AND CRIME -PLANNING PREVENTIVE POLICIES FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This paper discusses the factors influencing rise of youth crime and highlights the need for preventive policies. The rate of crime is increasing in India and the in spite of several measures to control them there is a continuous increase . According to National Crime records Bureau Juvenile crimes between 2010 and 2014 rose by 47 percent and from 2015-2025 the rise has been increasing continuously standing at 60 percent . North eastern states , Bihar and Delhi have recorded the highest number of crimes. A 2023 study of 460 Indian school students in the Journal of family medicine and primary care found that aggressive traits among half of them. Unrestricted access to smart phones is impairing the emotional and cognitive development among children. Besides , disappearing play spaces for children is hampering their communication and inter personal skills. The quality of a country's governance including the enforcement of laws and the nature of social policies can play an important role in containing the youth crime under control. Preventing youth criminal activities involving youth requires a comprehensive approach that addresses social determinants of crime and violent behaviour such as income inequalities, pressure of rapid demographic changes , increasing social inhibitions, low levels of social protection etc. Critical to reducing the immediate consequences of youth crime needs improvement in pre hospital and emergency care including access to social care and community protection.

Key words: Youth, crime, planning, preventive policies, safer communities

Introduction:

Youth crime in India is causing growing concern The recent data released by NCRB highlighted the number of increasing crimes.

Youth crimes are classified as – In India crimes by youth are classified as under.

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1. **Violence related crimes –** this type of crime involves body harming resulting in murder , injury , kidnapping , abduction, attempted murder , rape , physical harm , arson , robbery , involvement in killing , extortion etc
2. **Property related crimes-** these crimes include use of force or threat to obtain property or valuables or treasure looting. It includes shop lifting, chain snatching, burglary, etc.
3. **Drug related crimes-** this involves the possession of or sale of illegal drugs, dealing in prohibited drugs, running banned drug sale points, illicit collection of drugs, growing tobacco and other drugs, operating with drug peddlers.

Factors influencing the increase in youth crime rate:

1. **Behavioural disorders**- conditions like attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder ADHD, and conduct disorder are linked to a higher risk of delinquency. Youth involve in crime related activities due to these risk factors influencing them since child hood.
2. **Substance ab**use- early and high levels of involvement with drugs and alcohol consumption impairs judgement and problem solving mentality. They are often correlated with criminal activity in the mask of over alcohol consumption or drug consumption.
3. **Low intelligence and educational backwardness**- a lack of academic success and educational knowledge contributes to delinquent behaviour .It is seen through studies that children who are slow learners or who have very less educational background often are involved in crimes.
4. **Exposure of violent behaviour and trauma**- experiencing violence with the family or community can be a significant risk factor. The children who undergo trauma of family violence learn to make retaliation through aggressive behaviour including revenge and vengeance.
5. **Family conflict**- discord and conflict between parents create a negative environment
6. **Parental issues** – parents' criminality , substance abuse or mental problems can influence child's likelihood of engaging in crime.
7. **Peer factors** - include associating with delinquent peers and gangs , external social pressure from friends can contribute to delinquent decisions.

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Regulatory frame work - there are several laws to monitor youth crimes

1. Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act Of 2000- This Act establishes a separate Juvenile Justice system to deal with children in conflict with the Law. This Act has prescribed separate homes for juvenile offenders for the period of three years.

2. Amended Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act Of 2015 - This Act establishes a separate Juvenile Justice system to care and protect juveniles.

Challenges for prevention of crime rates-

1. **Lack of coordination between states and central government-** According to 7th schedule of the Indian constitution Police and public order come under state subject and states are the monitoring authorities. The states are responsible for the prevention detection and investigation and prosecution of the crimes through different law enforcement agencies. The central government supplements the initiatives of the states through advisories and financial assistance under various schemes for capacity building of the law enforcement authorities. There needs to be coordination between states and central government
2. **Need for providing life skills training and opportunities** - life skills and social development programmes designed to support youth is the need of the hour. This will support them in managing their unexplored talents. It also supports them in managing stress level, anger, and other behavioural disorders in control.
3. **Curriculum support-** School curriculum needs to support in preparing students in facing challenges through curriculum content. Curriculum needs to be framed for teaching problems solving skills, physical education yoga and recreational mental exercises.
4. **Therapeutic approaches** - therapeutic approaches for youths who are at high risk of being involved in violence needs to be taken up with the support of NGOs and local governance authorities. Reducing access to alcohol needs to be prioritised. Policy interventions are needed to reduce access to the harmful use of drugs. There is a need for balancing punitive measure with the need for rehabilitation and reintegration in

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to the society. The quality of a country's governance including the enforcement of laws and the nature of social policies can play an important role in containing the youth crime under control.

Conclusion:

Thus, policy addressing the prevention of youth crime rate needs to be strengthened because preventing crime and violence tendencies in youth require a comprehensive approach that recognizes the strong correlation between rates of youth violence and economic inequalities. Studies have shown that economic disparities exhibit frustration and despair among disadvantaged youth leading to crime being the only outlet to show off frustration. It is imperative to address income inequalities and increase opportunities for economic mobility , enhance access to education , broaden social protection and employment opportunities.

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DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S VISION OF EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: A SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW

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ABSTRACT:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized education as a means of social empowerment, equality, and emancipation for marginalized communities. His vision highlighted the transformative power of knowledge in reducing social hierarchies and promoting democratic participation. In the 21st century, the **digital divide** has emerged as a contemporary barrier to educational access, particularly affecting marginalized groups in India, including Dalits, women, and rural populations. This sociological study explores the relevance of Ambedkar's educational philosophy in addressing these inequalities, arguing that digital literacy and access to technology are modern extensions of his vision of equitable education. By analyzing the structural, social, and economic factors contributing to digital exclusion, the study underscores the need for policies and programs that ensure inclusive access to digital resources. Bridging the digital divide aligns with Ambedkar's principles by empowering disadvantaged communities, enhancing social mobility, and promoting equitable participation in education and society.

KEY WORDS: - B.R. Ambedkar, Education, Digital Divide, Social Empowerment, Digital Literacy, Social Inclusion, Marginalized Communities

INTRODUCTION:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the frontier of Dalits emphasizes on the need of education. He compares education with the milk of tigress and adds that one who will drink it; won't seat calm. Ambedkar in one of his thoughts says, 'If you want to develop the society then you need to spread up the education. Education eradicates the bias of people which results on to minimize the exploitation, domination, of those people who try to take the benefit of the so called illiterate people. If the people get knowledge through education then they can face the

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problems created by the dominators. Education reforms opinions, it tries to remove the walls built among the people. The biggest gift that is given by the education is that it creates self confidence among us which is considered as the first stage of our development.'

Ambedkar furthermore explains that the work without knowledge is blind and futile. He was of the opinion that when people do work without education it is just like to waste human power. He sometimes asserts that we don't know when our illiterate companion will carry us towards the failure just like that it is the position of our leaders. For him a leader who is away from the import of education in society will definitely drag us towards the deterioration. Thus what Ambedkar wants to say is that education is the vital element for the development of society and human beings. Ambedkar being the fore sighting personality not only discusses much about the primary education but also the higher education. For him the spread of primary

OBJECTIVES: The present study aims to;

- To examine Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's philosophy of education and its emphasis on social equality and empowerment.
- To analyze the current digital divide in India, particularly among marginalized communities.
- To explore the relevance of Ambedkar's educational values in addressing barriers to digital literacy and access.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on secondary data analysis, reviewing government reports, policy documents, works and articles of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Constitution of India and other literary resources relevant for the study.

AMBEDKAR'S VISION ON DALIT EDUCATION:

Ambedkar was very much influenced by Dewey's ideas on scientific method, experimental approach, democracy and pragmatism in the field of education. He insisted that to his Dalit people, 'Educate to organize and to Struggle' for their own betterment using whatever educational facilities. Education is not only a layer for their social mobility but also opens the doors for their modernization. Ambedkar has been described as a philosopher, a patriot, scholar or a writer, the constitution maker, a social revolutionary, a humanistic thinker, or

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the socialist and he had also contributed a great deal to the cause of education. He mainly emphasized that the education as a vital force for individual development and social change. Ambedkar envisaged that, education was an instrument for the change of the lives of untouchables. He declared that the elevation of the depressed classes was recognized to be the cause of all the enlightened people in the country. He thought that education would enlighten his people and bridge the gap between the rich and the poor to which the untouchables belong. Education plays an important role. It is an effective instrument of mass movement to safeguard life and liberty. Education could encourage the oppressed ones to fight and remove injustice and exploitation and pave ways for the free thinking. He recognized that, lack of education was the main cause for the backwardness of poor people. Educate, agitate and organize are three final words of our savior.

According to Ambedkar one must get educated before he is conducting agitated thoughts for the movement, so that people can organize with his support. A singular role that Ambedkar played in the upliftment of the untouchables in the early 20th century and the importance that he gave to modern education for their betterment deserves special emphasis. In conferences, lectures and also in meetings, Ambedkar encouraged untouchable youth to acquire education in order to raise their social status and image. His educational contribution starts on a wider scale of educating classes as well as masses starts with this work. For Ambedkar, education was the main key to open the doors of light, vision and wisdom. He himself said, 'Education is something which ought to be brought within the reach of every one. The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate continuous to be literate throughout the rest of his life.' Ambedkar's ideas for the untouchables was to raise their educational standards so that they may know their own condition, have aspirations and rise to the level of highest Hindu and be in the position to use political power as a means. This is best reflected in Ambedkar's famous slogan of **Educate, Agitate, Organize.**

Ambedkar's project of educating the Dalits began when he started the fortnightly 'Mook Nayak' in 1920. His mission and vision were revealed through publications of various magazines and journals, representations to government and related bodies for passing of legislatives helpful to promote the education of the depressed classes. It finally culminated in the establishment of schools, colleges, hostels and other educational institutions under the aegis of the People's Education Society established in 1945. However, it is demeaning to isolate his

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educational goals from that of his social objectives. What he wanted to achieve was the emancipation of the depressed classes, which was common to his varied, but inseparable projects - social and educational. Speaking on the occasion of the foundation of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, the organization which heralded his public life as the leader of the Dalits, Ambedkar declared that the motto of the organization would be **'Educate, Agitate and Organise.'**

Secular Education:

India is a secular country. It is a nation where spirituality based on religion, had always been given a high esteem. Under the Constitution, minorities, whether based on religion or language, are given full rights to establish educational institutions of their choice. Referring to the constitutional provisions that religious instructions given in institutions under any endowment or Trust, should not be interfered with even if such institutions are helped the State.

- Article 25 (1) of the Constitution guarantees all the citizens the right to have freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate religion.
- Article 28 (1) states, 'No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution if wholly maintained out of state fund.'
- Article 28 (2) states, 'Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or Trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted to such institution.'

Equality of Opportunity in Educational Institutions:

- Article 29(1) states 'No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.'

The Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution has also adopted the fourfold ideal of justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Our Constitution laid down that in the eyes of law, everyone should have an equal status, to no one the justice be denied, everyone should have liberty of thought, expression.

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The fundamental right of equality clearly signifies that in the eyes of law no distinction can be made on the basis of any position, caste, class or creed. Side by side the right of equality of opportunities to all is also provided. The equality of opportunity is meaningless, unless there are equal opportunities for one's education.

The well-known Kothari Commission, 1964-66 recommended that Central Government should undertake the responsibility in education for the equalization of educational opportunities with special reference to the reduction of inter-state differences and the advancement of the weaker section of the community.

Instruction in Mother -Tongue: There is diversity of languages in our country. After the dawn of Independence, Mother- Tongues have received special emphasis as medium of instruction and subjects of study. In the Constitution of India, it has been laid down that the study of one's own language is a fundamental right of the citizens.

- Article 26 (1) states, 'Any section of the citizens, residing in the territory of India or any part there of, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to converse the same.'
- Article 350 A directs, 'It shall he endeavour of every state and every local authority to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.'

Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53 recommended that the mother tongue or the regional language should generally be the medium of instruction throughout secondary school stage subject to the provision that for linguistic minorities, special facilities should be made available. Kothori Commission, 1964-66 has also said that at college and university stage, mother-tongue should be the medium. The medium of instruction at school level is already mother-tongue. This is not a new proposal.

Higher Education and Research: Parliament has the exclusive rights to enact legislation in respect of institutions and Union Agencies mentioned in entries 63, 64, 65, and 66 of List. The entries which give authority to the Government of India in education are mentioned below:

The Constitution makes the following provisions under different articles:

- Article 15 (1) provides that the State shall not discriminate any citizen on groups only of sex.

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- Article 15 (3) reads: 'Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.'

The well-known National Policy on Education was concerned about the status and education of women in the country. It envisages that education would be used as a strategy for achieving a basic change in the status of women. It opined that the national system of education must play a positive role in this direction.

Education in the Union Territories:

- Article 239 of the Constitution states, 'Save as otherwise provided by Parliament by Law, every Union Territory shall be administrator by the president acting to such extent as he thinks fit through an administrator to be appointed by him with such designation as he may specify.'

Educational and cultural relations with foreign countries:

Entry 13 of the Union List reads. Participation in international conferences, associations and other bodies and implementing decisions made there at.

CONCLUSIONS:

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar envisioned education as a powerful tool for social equality, empowerment, and the upliftment of marginalized communities. His principles emphasized access to knowledge as a fundamental right, enabling individuals to challenge social hierarchies and participate fully in democratic life. In the contemporary Indian context, the digital divide has emerged as a significant barrier to realizing these ideals, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups who lack access to technology and digital literacy.

Bridging this divide is not merely a technological challenge but a continuation of Ambedkar's vision for inclusive education. Ensuring equitable access to digital resources, promoting digital literacy, and creating supportive infrastructure are essential to empower disadvantaged communities, reduce social inequalities, and enhance participation in educational, economic, and civic spheres.


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MEDIA EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

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INTRODUCTION:

Mass media education has evolved from its roots in liberal and professional education to encompass diverse fields such as journalism, communication, and media studies. While journalism remains linked to print and broadcast, *mass media education* today represents a broad and multidisciplinary domain. A central feature is its integration of theory and practice, with students trained in reporting, editing, cinematography, animation, and media production through a practice-oriented approach.

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted this model by restricting physical classes and access to studios. To sustain learning, the University Grants Commission (UGC) promoted MOOCs and digital platforms, while institutions adopted tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet. Though online education enabled continuity, it could not fully replace practical training essential for media disciplines.

Thus, the trajectory of media education reflects both expansion and adaptation. The pandemic accelerated digital transformation, highlighting the need for blended approaches that integrate technology with hands-on learning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- **Digital Transformation in Higher Education -** In the research paper titled 'Emerging Practices and Issues of New Media and Learning' Lin T. B. et. al. (2015), observed that, new media fundamentally different from old media with different methods of analysis, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and different forms of intellectual and political engagement. In relation to education, the interactive, participatory possibilities of digital media are believed to transcend the limitations of hierarchical, top-

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down mass media and hence to undermine what are seen as the authoritarian knowledge politicsof traditional pedagogy. The potential they offer for learners to become creators of knowledge – rather than merely consumers has been seen by some as little short of revolutionary.

- **The Impact of Digital Media in Media Education -** In the research paper titled 'higher education in the digital age: the impact of digital connective technologies', Saykili, A. (2019).reported that, the digital connective technologies in the 21st century are causing profound changes in all domains of life, which signal that of a new age: the digital age. Education is one of the fundamental domains of life re-engineered to adopt to the changing landscape. The school paradigm which rests on the conditions and requirements of the industrial age appears to fall short in terms of meeting the needs and demands of the 21st century learner. The emerging digital connective technologies and the educational innovations they triggered such as open educational resources (OER), massive online open courses (MOOCs) and learning analytics areenable learners to extend learning outside the boundaries of traditional learning institutions through informal and enriched learning experiences using online communities on new platforms such as social media and other social platforms.

- **New Media Challenges for Media Education Teachers -** The new media represent a fundamental challenge to teach, teachers fear of technology often extends to their own personal use of it. In the broadcast-era teachers broadly understood the basic technical principles of the dominant media and their usageand sharing that use with students. today lecturers are being left behind in their knowledge of what technologies are out there, of their technical possibilities, of how they even work, of how to use them and of what they are being used for. Again, teachers no longer share a common culture with students. Unless teachers can keep up with these changing technologies and uses otherwise teachers will lose both the ability and even the right to teach them. In an era in which we as teachers watched and studied TV and they had a right to teach it: in the future, unless we are downloading, sharing, ripping, burning, messaging, networking, playing, building, and producing then we'll lose that right. (Merrin, 2008)

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OBJECTIVES:

The general objective of the research paper is to know digital transformation of media education during Covid-The specific objectives are:

- To study different digital media platforms' usage in media education.
- To find out opportunities generated by digital transformation of media education for teachers and students
- To know the scope of digital transformation of media education in future

METHODOLOGY:

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Interview was conducted among 9 media educators and a survey was conducted through structured questionnaire among 100 media students and it was based on purposive sampling. Structured questionnaire was sent to graduation and post-graduation students who are pursuing media education in Karnataka state of India and collected their feedback to analyze the data.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The data was collected from 100 respondents from different media colleges of Karnataka. Among 100 respondents 52were male and 48 were female. Majority of the respondents are from rural 74% (n-74) and from urban-26% (n-26).The respondents have chosen from different courses of media education, among them the most of the respondents (44%) from Electronic Media course, 30% from Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ), 22% from BA/B.Sc. in Journalism and only 4% from Film Making course.

9 media educators were interviewed to know the teachers' perspective about the digital transformation of media education.

1. Different digital media platforms used in media education

- According to the interview with the 9 media educators for research, majority of the teachers used digital devices such as Personal Computer, Laptop and Mobile to communicate with students during the pandemic. They had conducted online classes using different tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams etc. taught classes using web cam and power point presentations.

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- Students use different electronic devices for accessing classes/content during pandemic, majority of them (88%) used both Mobile and Laptop, 8% of them used Personal Computer, only 4% used Tablet.
- Some of the respondents also not favorable towards usage of the digital content during Covid-19 and they specified some of the reasons, majority of them (56.8%) said that the online mode is not sufficient for media education., 37.8% said missing of social interaction and learning with peers and teachers. 29.7% told that lack of access to digital technology or technical issues while accessing. And only 27% of the respondents opined that digital learning means more screen-time and may lead to health issues.
- Media subjects which demand practical training- the most of the respondents (36%) chosen both video editing and radio& television program production, 27% of them told for both reporting& editing and all of the above subjects, 19 % of them said that cinematography and computer applications in electronic media, 15% of them opined film communication &appreciation and graphic& animation, 2% of them said that research in mediastudies and advertising and public relations only 1% of them each opined that development communication and media laws and ethics.

2. Opportunities created by digital transformation of the media education for students

The opportunities generated by digital transformation of media education- the most of the respondents (49%) opined that it offers teachers an efficient way to deliver lessons to students with online classes, notes, ppt, videos,etc., 28% of them said the lectures can be recorded, archived, and shared for future reference through online mode., 17% opined that without geographical boundary constraints it reaches more students., 3% said that it offers higher rate of learners engagement and expand their personal learning of media education. 2% agreed that it will be helpful for getting employment in technology driven media houses. Only 1% of the respondents said no opportunities are created.

3. The challenges of digital transformation of media education during Covid-19

The challenges of digital transformation of media education during Covid-19- majority of the respondents (54%) said that media education is more practical based and teaching in the online mode is not sufficient. 22% of them said it lacks social interaction with peers & teachers and learners get disconnected from the real world of classroom. 10% of them told that it is prone to technical issues and rural areas face unequal

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distribution of digital media. 8% opined that digital learning means more screen-time and may lead to health issues. 4% of the respondents said that e-learning requires strong self-motivation and discipline because students can be easily distracted.

4. The opinion of students on digital transformation of media education and its significance, impact, and the scope

National Educational Policy (NEP-2020) proposals in higher education useful for media education- the most of the respondents (52%) opined that 50 % gross enrolment ratio by 2035 holistic and multidisciplinary education. 38% of them said flexibility of subjects, multiple entry or exit in UG program. 16% of them said credit transfer and academic bank of credits. 28% of them told that research and teaching intensive universities and autonomous degree granting colleges. Only 18% of them agreed that model multidisciplinary education and research university (MERU) in or near every district.

5. The perception of teachers on digital transformation of media education and it's opportunities, significance and the scope

For this objective, the researcher had interviewed 9 media educators from different colleges of Karnataka. The colleges from different parts of Karnataka like Bangalore, Tumakuru, Ujire (Mangalore), Vijayapura, etc. Among the media educators or teachers 5 were male and 4 were female. Majority of them opined that, before Covid-19 they used to do both theory classes and practical classes using wellestablish multimedia studio, community radio, editing lab and in-house practice journals. With their help the students have created various projects like page design, reporting and editing, anchoring, radio production, television production etc.

CONCLUSIONS:

The paper highlights the changing needs of the 21st century media studentsfor emergence of media education with digital touch. Results conclude that during Covid-19, majority of them used mobilefor accessing online classes/content, most of them had taken online classes through Zoom, Google Meet, etc. The most of the respondents said that the online mode is not sufficient for media education. WhatsApp was widely used social media platform for educational purpose. The video editing subject demandsmuch practical skills training than


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other subjects by digital media. The digital transformation of the media education offers teachers an efficient way to deliver lessons to students with the number of tools such as notes, ppt, videos, etc., the challenge of media education is it is more of practical based and teaching in the online mode is not sufficient.

KEY WORDS: Mass Media Education, Digital Transformation, Online Learning, Practical-Oriented Learning, Higher Education, Skill-Based Training

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PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROGH LEARNING – A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT:

India's higher education system ranks third globally, following the United States and China. The University Grants Commission (UGC) governs the tertiary level, setting standards, advising the government, and facilitating coordination between central and state entities. Accreditation is overseen by 12 autonomous institutions under the UGC. Despite progress, illiteracy remains a concern, particularly in rural areas and among females. Government initiatives aim to address this, alongside campaigns and NGO efforts. Female literacy rates lag behind male rates, influenced by cultural factors like child marriage and gender bias. Tamil Nadu's literacy rates surpass the national average, with strides made towards gender equality. Overall, the struggle for gender equality persists globally and in India, where women have historically faced societal neglect and oppression.

KEY WORDS: Higher Education, Gender Equality, Role of Higher Education to bring gender equality

INTRODUCTION:

India hosts the world's third-largest higher education system, after the United States and China. The University Grants Commission (UGC) oversees tertiary education standards, advises the government, and facilitates coordination between central and state bodies. Accreditation is managed by 12 autonomous institutions under the UGC. The higher education sector in India has rapidly expanded, with a surge in addition of college and universities with increasing intake of students in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. By 2004, Indian educational institutions predominantly focused on science and technology at the tertiary level, with a notable abundance of technology institutes.

Distance learning and open education are integral aspects of the Indian higher education system, overseen by the Distance Education Council. The Indira Gandhi National Open University stands as the world's largest university by student enrollment, boasting approximately 3.5 million students worldwide. Notable institutions

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like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), National Institute of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT-H), University of Mumbai, and Jawaharlal Nehru University have gained global recognition for their educational standards. The IITs, enrolling about 8000 students annually, have significantly contributed to both India's private and public sectors through their alumni. Despite these achievements, India still lacks internationally renowned universities like Harvard, Cambridge, and Oxford. The 2011 census marked India's 15th official count. Literacy is crucial for India's social and economic progress. Since independence in 1947, literacy has grown from 12 per cent to 74.04 per cent in 2011. Yet, many still lack basic skills, especially in rural areas. Gender disparities persist, with female literacy lower than male literacy, partly due to early marriage and limited access to education for girls. Despite efforts by NGOs and the government, achieving universal literacy remains a challenge, though progress has been made over the past decade. The struggle for legal equality has been a central focus of the women's movement globally. In India, women have historically faced oppression and neglect, sparking the need for societal change. Hence, the present study makes an attempt to understand the correlation between education and equality in general and higher education, women empowerment and gender equality in particular.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the need for gender equality.
- To analyze the role of promoting higher education in gender equality.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on review of secondary sources presented in a descriptive way. Through the process of analysis, it portrays the role of higher education in empowering women and its significance in bringing in gender equality in our society.

EDUCATION:

Education holds immense value and occupies a revered position in society, being directly linked to the growth and development of nations. It nurtures individuals, shaping them into well-rounded personalities, and

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indirectly contributes to the progress of the nation. Education is the process of imparting knowledge, instilling discipline, and preparing individuals for their chosen professions. As a developing nation with a population density of 1.25 billion and the distinction of being the world's largest democracy, India recognizes the importance of education in transforming lives. The increasing growth rate of higher education enrollment, not only among men but also women, reflects the changing societal norms and lifestyles. With women constituting 48per cent of the total population, they emerge as a vital human resource contributing significantly to India's socio-economic development.

The Indian constitution enshrines equality for women in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of State Policies. According to a UN report on women's education, investing in women's education can lead to improvements in health outcomes and positively impact the lives of individuals. Women, as pillars of their families, play a crucial role in guiding their children towards their life goals. Recent data published in a leading Indian newspaper highlights a significant increase in women's enrollment in higher education, rising from 10per cent to 43.8per cent. This trend underscores the growing recognition of the importance of women's education in India's journey towards progress and development.

EDUCATION FOR WOMEN:

In the modern era, women have increasingly pursued education, leading many to become successful professionals such as businesswomen, politicians, bureaucrats, scientists, doctors, engineers, and even vice-chancellors. This empowerment through education contributes significantly to the stability of a nation's economic growth. Higher education plays a dual role, both traditional and modern, equipping women with the skills to fulfill traditional roles as wives and mothers while also preparing them to thrive in the complexities of the globalized world.

The importance of higher education for women's empowerment cannot be overstated. As renowned philosopher, educationist, and former President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan emphasized, female education holds greater significance than male education, as educated women often play a pivotal role in shaping educated men. Education empowers women to tackle familial challenges and establish their individual identities. Educated women are also better equipped to address issues like child marriage, contributing to societal progress. In 1979,

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the Commission on Higher Education recognized the essential role of higher education for both men and women in character formation, skill development, self-expression, and personality development. This underscores the vital importance of education in shaping a better society for all.

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY:

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once remarked that while educating a man educates an individual, educating a woman educates an entire family. He emphasized that empowering women means empowering Mother India. These words highlight the crucial link between women's empowerment and higher education. With half of the population being women, their empowerment is key to strengthening the national economy and driving progress. Higher education serves as a milestone in empowering women, enabling them to break free from traditional gender roles and overcome challenges. Increased access to higher education liberates women from the constraints of gender inequality, allowing them to realize their full potential. Various schemes have been introduced to promote higher education for women, recognizing its transformative impact on both individuals and society.

Higher education for women through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Mode imparts distance learning system where teachers and learners can be flexible with respect to place and time.

- Post School Diploma provides skill development strategies.
- UGCs and AICTEs-initiatives for women education
- Post Graduate Indira Gandhi scholarship for single girl child for pursuing higher and technical education
- Construction of women's hostels for colleges, etc
- Introduction of women's studies in universities and colleges
- Post-Doctoral fellowships for women
- Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

TYPES OF GENDER INEQUALITIES:

- **Ownership Inequality -** In several societies, property ownership can be significantly unequal, with basic assets like homes and land often distributed unevenly.

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- **Household inequality -** Gender inequality within households remains a significant concern, particularly regarding the division of labour. This inequality manifests in various forms and can lead to disparities in household responsibilities.
- **Special opportunity inequality -** Even when basic facilities such as schooling are relatively equal, young women often have far fewer opportunities for higher education compared to young men.

Women's equality has markedly improved in the realm of school enrollment due to adult literacy programmes. With increased participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually narrowing.

Enrolment at under graduate level in major disciplines/Subjects (2020-21)

S. No	Discipline	Male	Female
1	Arts	49,88,246	54,17,424
2	Science	23,12,602	25,05,224
3	Commerce	22,27,036	20,96,418
4	Engineering & Technology	26,17,155	10,69,136
5	Education	6,08,888	10,40,305
6	Medical Science	6,32,069	8,94,178
7	Social Science	5,48,423	5,57,689
8	IT & Computer	5,33,445	3,44,492
9	Management	5,16,273	2,98,594
10	Law	3,16,115	1,61,897
11	Others	6,69,319	6,92,057
12	Total	1,59,69,571	1,50,77,414

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education Report, D/o of Higher Education

The above table shows that, at the undergraduate level of higher education, female enrollment surpasses that of males in various fields such as Arts, Science, Education, Medical Science, and Social Science. Although female enrollment in Medical Science generally exceeds males in most specialties, a notable difference is observed in nursing. Conversely, female enrollment trails behind males in fields like Commerce, Engineering, IT & Computer, Management, and Law. Particularly in engineering, the gender gap is significant, with female enrollment only reaching 40 per cent of male enrollment. According to the AISHE results, which indicate the

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number of females per 100 males in important undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in regular education, female students outnumber males in fields such as Arts, Education, Nursing, Science, M.A, M.Com, and M.Sc.

CONCLUSIONS:

Women empowerment is intrinsically linked with education, particularly higher education for women, as emphasized by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He highlighted that educating a woman not only enlightens her but also enables her to educate her family, thereby empowering herself and those around her. Thus, women should educate themselves to consider their own needs and set limits in such a way that they are not always overstretched, but to do that they need come out of the barriers put on their own. It can be said that when we think of women, power and empowerment we cannot afford to ignore them and the model we are offering the women we work with. All the sites of women's education that are available, there is a need to assess critically the detailed practice of both literacy teaching and teacher training.

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EMPOWERING THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY THROUGH SOCIAL INCLUSION: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Social inclusion is widely recognized as a key factor in promoting equitable development and social justice. The transgender community in India has historically faced marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion from education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. This study examines the role of social inclusion in the development of transgender individuals, focusing on the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of empowerment. Using a sociological perspective, the research highlights how legal recognition, affirmative policies, community support, and access to education and employment opportunities contribute to enhancing the well-being and social status of transgender persons. The study also explores persistent barriers, including stigma, social prejudice, and institutional discrimination, which impede their full participation in society. By analyzing these challenges and the impact of inclusive interventions, the study underscores the importance of fostering a society that embraces diversity and ensures the rights and development of transgender individuals.

KEY WORDS: Social Inclusion, Transgender Community, Empowerment, Development, Marginalization, Gender Diversity

INTRODUCTION:

The Constitution has endorsed upon the values of equality, brotherhood and democracy to all the citizens of India. It has given fundamental rights and duties to every citizen. Also, the Constitution says there should be no discrimination with any individual in the name of race, religion, caste, creed, gender, etc. However, due to various reasons certain communities are deprived of their fundamental rights and social opportunities.

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Transgender community has been one among such deprived communities all over the World in general and Indian society in particular.

OBJECTIVES:

The present study aims;

- Understand the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion
- To elucidate the problems in the path social inclusion of transgender community
- To identify the key activities in the process of social inclusion of transgender community

METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on secondary data analysis of resources collected through various books, journals, newspapers, articles and web sources.

DESCRIPTION:

In the context of extreme violence and intolerance, the one of only cultural space available for male to female Transgenders in India are communities like Hijra, Jogappa, Shivshaktis community. Given the enormous sense of isolation faced by them these communities many of them migrate to the city in search of solace or hope when they get to know that there exist other people like them who live in the bigger cities. This in turn contributes to the formation of the hijra community as a largely urban phenomenon. Some of the other communities are based in villages or small towns and only within small geographical areas. Jogappas or Jogatis for example mainly live in North Karnataka, North Andhra Pradesh and South Maharastra.

However, the attitudes of the family sometimes change to a grudging acceptance once the hijra returns to home after becoming financially independent. While in some cases the return is welcome because of the hijra's ability to financially support the family, in others, the fact of the hijra now doing sex work makes the acceptance that much more difficult. With Jogappas there is often religious and even family acceptance but many of the other rights within the family like inheritance, a say in family matters etc. is denied to them.

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Male-to-female trans-genders people of India have traditionally organised themselves in communes. Within the Hijra community the structure features an older hijra or aravani as a 'guru' (or mother-figure with several chelas (younger, newly initiated hijras/aravanis) as her acolytes. There are elaborate rituals that mark one's entry into a jamaat and acceptance as a chela. These rituals, with their mytho-religious underpinnings, bind them to a structure of kinship in which relationships, roles and duties are both implicitly suggested and explicitly performed. Among these duties include the tribute of money by chelas to gurus from begging, sex work, or other forms of employment, obedience to community norms with regards to behaviour and dress, and affectionate devotion.

Gurus are expected to provide guidance, emotional support for the young chelas, and advice about undergoing castration. This community structure, while looser and less binding in south India than in northern regions of the country, nevertheless provides one of the few real-world (and admittedly rigidly hierarchical and problematic) models for aravanis in how to organise as a family and community after establishing a public trans-genders identity. It should be noted at this juncture that the jamaat system frequently fosters violent and coercive behaviour between gurus and chelas, in no small part due to the pressures to earn money and support community members in the context of a larger social stigma.

Jogappas and some male-to-female trans-gender communities (shiv shaktis, parvatis etc) also live in communities with complex social structures.

FINDINGS:

Transgender people are understood as third gender. Usually they experience a mismatch between their gender identity or gender expression and their assigned sex. It may include gender queer people whose identities are not exclusively masculine or feminine. Transgender people identify themselves as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual etc, or may consider conventional sexual orientation labels inadequate or inapplicable.

The use of the word 'Social exclusion' has been of recent origin. In the North Ireland, social exclusion has been defined as, 'a set of processes, including within the labour, market and welfare system, by which the individuals, households, communities or even whole social groups are pushed towards or kept to the margins of

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society. It encompasses not only material exclusion but also more broadly the denial of opportunities to participate fully in social and civil life'. According to Ryan Linier of France, such groups in the society include mentally and physically handicapped persons, aged individuals, abused children, delinquents, single parent, multi-problem households and marginal groups like women, dalits and transgender communities. These groups are the socially excluded groups which are kept away from the main stream of the society by deprivation of opportunities for education, employment and such other facilities.

Social inclusion refers to the process initiated by the government and civil society to provide opportunities for those marginalized and deprived groups of the society through reservations in the fields of education, employment, political participation and other facilities through which they can be included in the path of development and join to the main stream of the society. This is also referred to as positive or protective discrimination which is implemented through various programmes and plans specially meant for those groups.

Till today, there is no single comprehensive source on the basis of which an evidence-based advocacy action plan can be prepared by transgender activists or possible legal solutions can be arrived at by policymakers. Reports of harassment, violence, denial of services, and unfair treatment against transgender persons in the areas of employment, housing and public accommodation though have been discussed in local media, from time to time are not strong and sufficient enough to support a policy decision. The problems, faced by transgenders are of various types. Some of them are; Discrimination, Lack of educational facilities, Unemployment, Lack of shelter, Lack of medical facilities like HIV care and hygiene, Depression, Hormone pill abuse, Tobacco and alcohol abuse, problems relating to marriage, property, electoral rights, adoption to mention a few.

CONCLUSIONS & SUGGESTIONS:

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and ought to be entitled to enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Everyone is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the law without any such discrimination.
- Transgenders are also part of society and have equal, rights as are available to other persons.

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In order to include them in the process of development and bring them to the main stream of the society, many steps need to be initiated by the government and non-governmental organizations. Some of them are listed below:

- Transgender persons must be properly documented in census.
- There is need for statutory reservation in education, elections and employment both in the public and private sectors.
- They need to be empowered and uplifted by facilities for higher education and vocational training to upgrade their earnings and status in society so as to promote their acceptability in society.

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ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IN URBAN SLUMS - AN OBSTACLE FOR DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION:

The most pressing urban problems today, lack of basic amenities, poor housing, unscientific waste management, resource management etc are associated with poor households and communities in the developing world. In rural areas and in the urban slums of the developing world, inadequate shelter, overcrowding, lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, contaminated food and indoor pollution are by far the greatest threats to human life leading to environmental hazards. Given the strong correlation between ignorance and poverty, one strategy to reduce the menace is to raise incomes and improve the distribution of opportunities, economic resources and political power. An attempt is made here to study details of the living conditions of the slum dwellers, the accessibility to resources and their ability for judicious utilization and how it is hampering the process of development of the slum dwellers in particular and the urban areas in general.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the details of living conditions of the slum dwellers in Bangalore city
- To elucidate the reasons for environmental hazards
- To explicit how it is hindering the process of development

METHODS:

- Primary data - Interview Schedule, Case study and observation method.
- Secondary data - Library and reference material, News Papers, Journals etc.
- Data analysis and interpretation – Based on tables on different variables.

Displacement, marginalization and deterioration of the quality of life among large sections of the population, the tribal groups, nomadic communities, craftsmen, the urban and the rural poor and women, as a result of the economic policies of the government have concerned both social scientists and activists alike. The aim is to work out an alternative framework of development which would combine sustainability with equality

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and social justice. It can hardly be overstated that everywhere in the developing countries, as in India, protests and struggles by rural and urban communities for control, access and management of natural resources upon which their lives and livelihood depend, are taking place and gaining worldwide recognition.

Development of a full blown disease is encouraged by the kind of life experiences that wrench the person from the accustomed interpersonal environment that exposes him to the social stress of isolation and probably to a corresponding degradation or disarray the self-image of a person. Bulk of illness notably including mental illness is found among the separated, divorced, widowed and single population. Such persons allege to be highly vulnerable to high health risks in comparison to the persons who live in intact socially, psychologically cohesive family units. Since, slum is a social disorganization the consequences of disintegration of social institutions over there are reflected in high health risk behaviours of slum dwellers. Slums also represent the most disadvantaged sectors of population.

Diseases are rampant not only due to the obvious defects of nutrition, housing, preventive medical care etc, but, also it is a syndrome of social and psychological insufficiency. This syndrome may be visualized in terms of generalized inferiority feelings, a defect in the self image, generalized incompetence–defect in the trained capacity to function in the rewarded social roles. Therefore, if we wish to understand distribution of ill health in population we must pay attention not only to the conventional hazards of physical environment and microorganisms but also to the social relations and psychological characteristics that permeates life history of the people. Sociology emphasizes man's wholeness, his/her simultaneous existence as biological, psychological and social creature. Sociological thinking on health thus, marks a point of departure. The so called physical approach to illness and treatment to which people are very much accustomed to is not only one sided but also has serious unintended side effects. Both governmental and development agencies should ensure that primary health care packages include environmental interventions as a key component. In other words, health care packages should provide access to water filters, polystyrene beads, and bed nets - all useful to prevent exposure to infectious agents as well as to vaccines and drugs.

The low quality of life in slums is as much a result of unhygienic living conditions as it is of the lack of economic resources. Squalor accompanied by outbreak of diseases, high mortality and general ill health makes

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slum dwellers become much less productive. To improve the slum environment, Ankur a voluntary organization along with other agencies probed the socio-economic reasons, which breed an environment un-conducive to healthy living, as also the ways to remedy it.

Among other things this has resulted in unabated proliferation of slums and increased environmental degradation with adverse health implication. A healthy population is seldom found in an unhealthy environment. Slums have been a subject matter of a number of sociological studies; most studies have attempted to look at slums as social disorganization. These studies have brought out abundant of information regarding various aspects of social life of people in slums, conditions of living of slum dwellers in towns and cities have become highly risky. Cities have become hotter than surrounding country-sides and have significant problems with flooding not to speak of chaotic urban traffic, increased crime rate, housing shortage, to mention a few. Diseases often spread through densely populated and poor communities and slum population

Few examples depicting the sorry state of amenities in slums:

From the existing drainage system in the slums, one can see that it is open and running in front of the house with lot of filth in it leading to a number of health risks. Health hazards include water-borne diseases, respiratory diseases, asthma (especially among the young and the aged) and an increased risk of cancer.

FINDINGS:

Among other things urbanization and industrialization has resulted in migration of villagers and other poor people to cities in search of livelihood leading to unabated proliferation of slums and increased environmental degradation with adverse implications. A fit population is seldom found in an unhealthy environment. The low quality of life in slums is as much a result of unhygienic living conditions as it is of the lack of education, awareness and economic resources.

Greater the socio-economic development accompanied by increased environmental consciousness, lesser or zero will be the health-risk behaviour. The sorry state of affairs with regard to cleanliness and hygiene of the living environment not to speak of cleanliness, spacious, safe both in terms of health and wealth, basic amenities

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like drinking water, proper housing, roads etc are dream words they can never expect under the prevailing situation.

CONCLUSIONS:

Development as a process should seek to maintain balance between socio-economic development and environmental safeguard in which the development needs of not only the present but future generation are also taken into consideration along with maintenance of social equality. Development and environmental protection must go hand in hand. However; by implementing policies that help reduce environmental hazards it is possible to improve quality of life. Improving the conditions of daily life may by itself help to reduce poverty. Removing the health hazards, equitable distribution of resources and judicious utilization of the same would go a long way in contributing for the economic and social development of the people in particular and the urban areas in general.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE AMONG THE ELDERLY IN INDIA: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS

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ABSTRACT:

The digital divide, defined as the inequality in access to, use of, and benefit from digital technologies, has emerged as a major concern in contemporary India. Among the most affected groups are the elderly, who often face barriers of affordability, digital literacy, and health-related constraints. This article explores the extent of the digital divide among older adults in India, examining its roots in socioeconomic and educational disparities, cultural perceptions, and infrastructural gaps. The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the urgency of digital inclusion, as telemedicine, online services, and digital governance became essential to everyday life. The study reviews the role of national initiatives such as Digital India, the National Digital Health Mission, and community-based interventions in addressing the issue. It argues that bridging the digital divide for the elderly is not only a technological necessity but also a social responsibility, vital for active ageing, inclusion, and dignity in the digital era. The paper concludes with policy recommendations, advocating for age-friendly digital design, intergenerational learning, localized training programs, and supportive government schemes.

KEY WORDS: Digital Divide, Elderly in India, Digital Literacy, Digital India Mission, Telemedicine, Active

INTRODUCTION:

India's rapid digital transformation, fueled by the Digital India Mission (2015), has reshaped governance, commerce, healthcare, and education. Yet, access to these benefits is uneven. The elderly, defined by the Census of India (2011) as those aged 60 and above, constitute nearly 10% of the population (≈104 million), projected to rise to 19% by 2050. Despite being a growing demographic, older adults remain one of the most digitally excluded groups.

Unlike younger generations who are "digital natives," many elderly Indians did not grow up with technology and therefore struggle with its adoption. Issues of affordability, low literacy, rural-urban digital

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infrastructure gaps, and health-related limitations further exacerbate exclusion. The Covid-19 pandemic amplified this divide, as online platforms became essential for accessing healthcare, pensions, welfare schemes, and family communication.

This article investigates the nature of the digital divide among the elderly in India, analyzing its causes, consequences, and possible solutions through a socio-educational lens.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholars have conceptualized the digital divide in terms of three dimensions:

- Access divide – disparities in owning devices and internet connectivity (Nasscom, 2020).
- Skills divide – differences in digital literacy and ability to use technology (Selwyn, 2004).
- Usage divide – differences in meaningful use of digital platforms for healthcare, communication, or governance (Helsper & Reisdorf, 2017).

Studies in India (IAMAI 2019; TRAI 2020) highlight that internet penetration in rural India remains far below urban levels, with elderly women in particular facing triple disadvantages of age, gender, and poverty. Research by Help Age India (2021) reveals that over 70% of elderly respondents lacked confidence in using smartphones or digital payment systems.

The Covid-19 lockdown revealed the vulnerability of digitally excluded seniors, who struggled with telemedicine, online pension claims, and e-governance portals. Globally, WHO (2021) notes that inclusive digital policies are essential for ensuring active ageing and preventing isolation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study aims to;

1. To examine the nature and causes of the digital divide among elderly populations in India.
2. To assess the socio-economic and psychological impacts of digital exclusion on older adults.
3. To evaluate government initiatives and community interventions addressing the digital gap.
4. To suggest policy recommendations for fostering digital inclusion of the elderly.

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METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on secondary data analysis, reviewing government reports, policy documents (Digital India, NDHM, National Policy on Senior Citizens), NGO surveys (Help Age India, Age well Foundation), and academic research articles. Case examples from rural and urban contexts have been integrated to highlight diverse challenges.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS:

1. Factors Contributing to the Digital Divide:

- **Economic barriers:** Elderly in rural areas or lower-income households cannot afford smart phones, data plans, or broadband services.
- **Educational barriers:** Low literacy and lack of English-language proficiency limit effective use.
- **Physical & cognitive barriers:** Age-related health issues like poor eyesight, tremors, and memory decline hinder navigation of devices.
- **Cultural barriers:** Many perceive digital tools as "youth-centric" or unnecessary for daily life.
- **Gendered barriers:** Elderly women, especially widows, often have no access to personal devices and rely on family members.

2. Impact of the Digital Divide on Elderly in India:

- **Healthcare access:** Limited ability to use telemedicine platforms during Covid-19 restricted access to doctors and medicines.
- **Social isolation:** Inability to use Whats App, Zoom, or social media reduced connection with families during lockdowns.
- **Governance & welfare:** Difficulty in navigating portals for pensions, Aadhaar, and direct benefit transfers excluded many seniors from services.
- **Economic exclusion:** Limited use of digital banking and UPI transactions forced dependence on others.
- **Psychological impact:** Feelings of dependency, frustration, and alienation from a digital-first society.
- **C. The Covid-19 Pandemic and Elderly Digital Exclusion:**

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The pandemic accelerated India's shift to digital platforms. Government services, banking, and healthcare moved online. For the elderly, this transition created challenges:

1. Telemedicine apps (e-Sanjeevani, Aarogya Setu) were difficult to use.
2. Online vaccination registration (CoWIN) excluded those without smartphones.
3. Pensioners faced difficulty in biometric authentication for life certificates.

D. Government and Community Initiatives:

- **Digital India Mission (2015):** Promotes universal access, though senior-specific strategies remain limited.
- **National Digital Health Mission (2020):** Introduced digital health IDs, but requires age-friendly support.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA):** Aims to train rural households, though uptake among seniors is low.
- **Help Age India initiatives:** Digital literacy workshops for seniors in Delhi, Chennai, and Pune.
- **Intergenerational learning models:** NGOs encourage school and college students to train grandparents in digital skills.

SUGGESTIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Senior-centric digital literacy programs in community centers and panchayats.
- Intergenerational learning initiatives, where students volunteer to train elderly family members.
- Affordable access schemes (low-cost smartphones, subsidized data for seniors).
- User-friendly technology design with larger fonts, voice commands, and regional languages.
- Integration with healthcare services – trained mediators to assist elderly in telemedicine consultations.
- Public-private partnerships for digital inclusion, involving telecom companies, NGOs, and local governments.
- Policy focus – inclusion of elderly in Digital India targets and monitoring frameworks.

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CONCLUSION:

The digital divide among the elderly in India is not merely a technological gap but a social equity issue. It limits access to healthcare, welfare, and family connections, thereby marginalizing a growing section of the population. While the Digital India Mission has transformed infrastructure, targeted interventions are needed to empower seniors with digital skills. Bridging this divide requires collaborative efforts like government initiatives, community support, user-friendly technology, and intergenerational cooperation. Ensuring digital inclusion for the elderly will not only reduce social isolation but also promote active ageing and dignity in the digital era.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES IN RURAL AND URBAN INDIA

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Abstract

The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in education while exposing and magnifying pre-existing inequalities between rural and urban India. This study examines the digital divide as a structural driver of educational disparities, drawing on national surveys, UDISE+, UNESCO and World Bank reports, peer-reviewed studies, and policy documents. Using a Sociological lens, it maps differences in device ownership, internet connectivity, digital literacy, and institutional readiness, and explores how these translate into learning losses, dropout risks, and unequal access to remedial and enrichment resources.

Findings reveal persistent, multi-dimensional divides: (a) infrastructure and affordability gaps, including limited device ownership and internet connectivity in rural households and schools; (b) skill gaps among students, parents, and teachers; (c) content and language barriers affecting meaningful engagement; and (d) governance and data-privacy concerns in large-scale digital platforms. Applying Van Dijk's and Warschauer's frameworks alongside Indian empirical evidence, the study advocates a multi-pronged policy approach: targeted infrastructure investments, community access points, sustained teacher professional development, localized multilingual content, equitable provisioning through device-loan schemes and subsidies, and robust data protection mechanisms.

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The study concludes that digital education can either reinforce or reduce inequality depending on policy design and implementation. Bridging the divide requires integrated socio-technical solutions that address material access, skills, pedagogy, and institutional inclusion. All evidence presented is drawn from published secondary sources.

Keywords: Digital divide, educational inequality, rural India, urban India, digital education policy, UDISE+, DIKSHA, digital literacy

Introduction

The shift to digital and blended learning accelerated dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the digital divide as a key determinant of educational equity in India (World Bank, 2021; UNESCO, 2021). Urban schools and households were generally better positioned to transition to online learning, while many rural areas struggled with device shortages, unreliable internet, and limited digital literacy among teachers and students (Kumar, 2022; Rural India Online, 2022).

In a country where educational outcomes already reflect socio-economic, gender, and spatial disparities, the digital divide risks widening existing gaps in learning and future opportunities (UDISE+, 2019–20; World Bank, 2021). This paper synthesizes secondary data to analyze the rural–urban digital divide and its implications for educational inequality. The central questions guiding this study are:

- What are the principal dimensions of the digital divide in India relevant to schooling?
- How do these dimensions manifest differently across rural and urban contexts?
- What policy strategies can reduce digitally mediated inequality?

The study relies on national datasets, government reports, and peer-reviewed literature to provide evidence-based insights and recommendations.

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Review of Literature

Conceptualizing the digital divide: The digital divide is multi-dimensional, encompassing physical access (devices, connectivity), skills/usage (digital literacies), and outcomes (opportunities derived from technology use) (Van Dijk, 2005; Warschauer, 2003). Access alone is insufficient meaningful use and integration into pedagogy determine whether technology mitigates or perpetuates inequality (Martín et al., 2022).

Global and national evidence on technology and learning: Global studies show that educational technologies enhance learning when paired with sound pedagogy but can widen disparities where access is uneven (World Bank, 2021). In India, urban households and schools consistently report higher device and internet penetration, and better teacher readiness, compared to rural counterparts (UDISE+, 2019–20; Ministry of Education, 2020). Pandemic-era studies indicate greater learning losses among students lacking devices or internet at home (Jafar, 2023; Kumar, 2022).

Socio-economic and gendered dimensions: Income, caste, and gender intersect with geography to shape digital access. NSSO data highlight extremely low computer and internet access among the poorest households, particularly in rural areas (Rural India Online, 2022; NSSO 2017–18). Girls face compounded disadvantages due to both socio-cultural norms and limited digital literacy (Rural India Online, 2022).

Institutional responses and platforms: Government initiatives such as DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and e-Pathshala scaled digital content and teacher training. DIKSHA, for example, recorded significant usage during the pandemic (Carnegie Endowment, 2023). However, challenges persist in content relevance, internet dependency, and data privacy (Wired, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Theoretical perspectives in Indian studies: Sociological analyses frame digital access as embedded within broader social stratification: economic capital, cultural capital (digital skills), and social networks determine who benefits from digital schooling (Béteille-style analyses; Warschauer's social practice perspective applied to India). Scholars also emphasize the political economy of telecom infrastructure and affordability in addressing access gaps (World Bank; Martín et al., 2022).

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Research Gap: Existing studies often provide descriptive data on access or focus on single regions. There is a need for integrative analyses that:

- Link multi-dimensional digital divide indicators (infrastructure, skills, content, governance) to tangible educational outcomes (learning loss, dropout risk).
- Synthesize national administrative data with qualitative studies to inform actionable policy levers.

This study addresses this gap by mapping how each dimension of the digital divide affects rural and urban learners and proposing evidence-informed interventions.

Objectives of the Study

- Identify the principal dimensions of the digital divide relevant to Indian school education.
- Compare rural and urban differences in device ownership, internet connectivity, teacher readiness, and digital skills.
- Analyze how these divides translate into educational inequalities (learning loss, remedial access, dropout risk).
- Propose policy and programmatic recommendations to mitigate digital inequality.

Methodology (Secondary data synthesis)

The study synthesizes secondary sources, including:
UDISE+ (2019–20; 2020–21) for school infrastructure and computer availability
NSSO (2017–18) for household internet and device ownership
Peer-reviewed literature and policy reports on pandemic learning (e.g., Jafar, 2023; Kumar, 2022)
International reports (World Bank, UNESCO) and Indian Ministry of Education policy documents
Data were extracted on access indicators, school readiness, teacher training, and learning outcomes. Causal pathways linking the digital divide to inequality are inferred where evidence supports plausible mechanisms.

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Theoretical Framework (Sociological Perspective)

The study draws on Van Dijk's three-part digital divide framework (motivation, material access, skills/usage) and Warschauer's socio-technical theory (access + literacies + social support + pedagogical integration) (Van Dijk, 2005; Warschauer, 2003). Using a Bourdieuian lens, digital access is conceptualized as a form of capital interacting with socio-economic structures, gender norms, and state capacity to reproduce or mitigate inequality. Four analytic layers guide the study:

Findings:

- **Infrastructure and affordability gaps:** Rural households and schools lag behind urban counterparts in device ownership, internet access, and electricity reliability (UDISE+, 2019–21; Rural India Online, 2022). During the pandemic, many rural students lacked devices entirely, exacerbating learning losses.
- **Teacher readiness and training disparities:** Many rural teachers had limited ICT skills and online pedagogy experience. While DIKSHA scaled training, completion and engagement were uneven across states (UNESCO; Ministry of Education, 2020–21; Carnegie Endowment, 2023).
- **Usage, digital literacies, and content barriers:** Even with devices, meaningful use depends on language-appropriate, pedagogically sound content and parental support. Rural students often struggled with asynchronous lessons due to language barriers, household responsibilities, and low parental digital literacy (Jafar, 2023).
- **Educational outcomes:** Students without digital access experienced higher learning losses, limited remedial access, and elevated dropout risks, particularly among older rural children (World Bank, 2021; Kumar, 2022). Aggregate platform usage metrics mask inequities in who benefits.
- **Governance and privacy concerns:** Digital platform expansion raised ethical concerns regarding data privacy and security. Ensuring robust governance is critical to prevent new harms for marginalized learners (Wired, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2022).

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Discussion and Policy Recommendations

- **Infrastructure & affordability: Connectivity investments:** Prioritize last-mile broadband and community Wi-Fi in underserved areas.

Device provisioning: Expand device-loan or subsidized programs, coupled with maintenance hubs.

- **Digital literacy & teacher development: Sustained professional development**: Integrate mentoring, peer communities, and digital pedagogy.

Parental/community literacy: Conduct workshops to support student learning.

- **Pedagogy and content design: Localized multilingual content**: Develop low-bandwidth lessons in regional languages.

Remedial tools: Provide phone-based assessments and learning modules for students who fell behind.

- **Governance, ethics, and inclusion: Data protection**: Enforce privacy standards and offer opt-out alternatives.

Monitoring equity: Use UDISE+ and surveys to track usage and learning outcomes.

- **Community access and hybrid delivery: Community access centers:** Provide supervised digital access in schools or Panchayats.

Hybrid schooling: Combine face-to-face, low-tech, and digital methods to avoid exclusion.

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Conclusion:

India's digital education expansion offers both promise and risk. Without deliberate interventions, the multi-dimensional digital divide may deepen educational inequality. Evidence shows that infrastructure, affordability, skills, content relevance, and governance together shape equitable outcomes. Integrated policy responses investing in connectivity, devices, teacher development, localized content, community access, and strong data governance are essential. Bridging the divide is a socio-political challenge, not just a technical one. Future research should combine household surveys, learning assessments, and administrative data to measure the impact of targeted interventions on equity and retention.

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ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN IMPARTING DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE TO STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:

In the 21st century, digital knowledge has become a cornerstone of education, employability, and innovation. Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in equipping students with the necessary digital skills to thrive in a knowledge-driven economy. This article examines the role of HEIs in imparting digital literacy, highlights challenges in integrating digital tools, and provides recommendations for strengthening digital pedagogy.

KEYWORDS: Digital Literacy, Higher Education, ICT, Digital Pedagogy, Digital Divide, Employability

INTRODUCTION:

The higher education system in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the Post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. Quality in Education indicates in all aspects of the school and its surrounding education community, the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation are at the centre. This means that the focus is on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes; and which creates for children, and helps them create for themselves and others, places of safety, security and healthy interaction. The higher education in India has grown significantly in the recent years. The number of students enrolled for higher education in India has tremendously increased to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world in the recent past. However, the system has been grappling with several problems like funds crunch, equity, reorientation of programmes, ethics, value associated to delivering education, teaching learning process, assessment and

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accreditation of institutions, academic standards of the students, quality of research, innovativeness and creativity. Such factors directly or indirectly affect the student's academic productivity in the educational institutions. The digital revolution has transformed how individuals learn, work, and interact. For students, digital literacy is no longer an optional skill but a prerequisite for academic excellence and career success. Higher Educational Institutions, as centers of advanced learning, are uniquely positioned to nurture digital knowledge by integrating technology into curriculum, research, and teaching methodologies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To examine the significance of digital literacy in higher education and its role in enhancing student employability and lifelong learning.
- To analyze the initiatives taken by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in integrating digital tools, platforms, and pedagogy into teaching and learning practices.
- To assess the effectiveness of digital infrastructure and resources (smart classrooms, e-learning platforms, digital libraries) available in HEIs.
- To explore the challenges faced by HEIs in imparting digital knowledge, including infrastructural gaps, faculty preparedness, and the digital divide among students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Primary Data:

- Structured questionnaires for students to assess their digital skills, exposure, and challenges.
- Interviews or focus group discussions with faculty and administrators to understand institutional initiatives and barriers.

Secondary Data:

- Review of government reports, policy documents (e.g., National Education Policy 2020, Digital India initiatives).
- Analysis of institutional websites, annual reports, and published research articles on digital education.

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Tools and Techniques:

- Questionnaires used to measure student perceptions and digital competency levels.
- Statistical tools to interpret survey data.
- Thematic analysis for qualitative responses from interviews and focus groups.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

Focuses on digital literacy, digital infrastructure, pedagogy, and challenges in HEIs.

LIMITATIONS:

- Findings may not be generalizable to all HEIs due to limited sample size.
- Responses may be subject to self-reporting bias by students and faculty.
- Rapid changes in digital technologies may outdate certain observations quickly.

ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Curriculum Integration:

- Embedding digital literacy across disciplines (STEM, humanities, social sciences).
- Offering specialized courses in data science, artificial intelligence, digital humanities, and computational research.

Digital Infrastructure:

- Establishing smart classrooms, e-learning platforms, and virtual laboratories.
- Providing access to online journals, databases, and digital libraries.

Skill Development:

- Training students in coding, digital tools, and data analysis.
- Promoting digital communication, online collaboration, and project-based learning.

Research and Innovation:

- Encouraging interdisciplinary digital research.
- Creating innovation labs and incubators for student-led digital startups.

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Challenges in Imparting Digital Knowledge:

- Limited infrastructure in rural and underfunded institutions.
- Lack of training for faculty in using digital tools effectively.
- The digital divide among students based on socio-economic status.
- Over-dependence on technology reducing critical thinking and face-to-face interaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Investment in ICT infrastructure and equitable digital access.
- Continuous digital pedagogy training for faculty.
- Partnerships with industry for skill-based digital programs.
- Incorporating blended learning models combining digital and traditional approaches.
- Policy support from government bodies for digital transformation in education.

CONCLUSIONS:

Higher Educational Institutions hold the responsibility of shaping digitally competent citizens who can lead innovation and contribute meaningfully to society. By integrating digital literacy into their academic culture, HEIs not only enhance employability but also prepare students for active participation in a global knowledge economy.

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The Role of Technology in Improving Access to Quality Education: A Sociological Analysis

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Abstract:

This research paper analyses the transformative role of technology in enhancing access to quality education from a sociological perspective. Drawing on contemporary case studies, empirical datasets, and critical theoretical frameworks, the paper examines how technological innovations ranging from augmented reality (AR) to deep learning, social media analytics, and emotion AI are reshaping educational landscapes globally and within local contexts such as Karnataka, India. The study foregrounds the interplay between technology, equity, and social justice, paying particular attention to marginalized groups, gender, and human rights in education. Key themes explored include the expansion of educational resources through digital platforms, the ethical and emotional dimensions of technology-mediated learning, and the use of computer vision and natural language processing for educational advocacy.

Keywords: Technology in Education, Social Justice, Digital Divide, Augmented Reality, Human Rights, Karnataka, Sociological Analysis

Introduction:

The rapid evolution of technology in the 21st century has profoundly impacted every aspect of human society, with education being no exception. Across the globe, digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and immersive media are redefining how knowledge is created, transmitted, and accessed. In parallel, sociological concerns about equity, inclusion, and the right to education have gained renewed urgency, especially in light of persistent disparities based on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geography.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) asserts the imperative of "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." Achieving this goal demands not only infrastructural expansion but also innovative pedagogical approaches that leverage

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technology to transcend traditional barriers. Yet, the transformative potential of technology in education is not evenly distributed. Digital divides—manifested in unequal access to devices, connectivity, digital literacy, and culturally relevant content—continue to perpetuate existing social inequalities (Kalliatakis et al., 2018). Thus, a sociological analysis is essential to understand both the promises and the pitfalls of technology-driven educational reforms.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive, critically informed examination of the role of technology in improving access to quality education. We employ a multi-thematic approach, integrating empirical research, policy analysis, and sociological theory, with specific attention to ethical, emotional, and cultural dimensions. The discussion is enriched by examples from global initiatives and localized studies, including the state of Karnataka, India, to illuminate how technology-mediated education intersects with social justice, human rights, and community development.

Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

From a sociological standpoint, the study of technology in education necessitates an interdisciplinary framework. We draw on critical theories of social stratification, digital capital, and cultural reproduction, alongside contemporary models of technology adoption and diffusion in educational contexts. This includes the exploration of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, Manuel Castells' network society paradigm, and theories of social justice by Nancy Fraser and Amartya Sen.

Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative meta-analysis of recent scholarly works, case studies, and empirical datasets outlined in the provided reference list. We analyze projects utilizing AR for social justice (Lin, 2024), computer vision for human rights violations recognition (Kalliatakis et al., 2018), emotion analysis in the context of educational bans (Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023), and social media analytics for understanding public engagement in education (Wang et al., 2016). The selection of Karnataka as an example allows for the contextualization of global trends within the socio-political realities of a diverse, populous Indian state with significant educational disparities and digital initiatives.

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Main Themes and Sociological Analysis

1. Technology as a Catalyst for Expanding Educational Access

1.1. Digital Platforms and Open Educational Resources: The proliferation of digital platforms—Learning Management Systems (LMS), Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and open educational resources (OERs)—has redefined access to educational content. These technologies break down geographical and temporal barriers, enabling learners from remote or underserved regions to access high-quality materials and expert instruction (Kalliatakis et al., 2018). In Karnataka, initiatives such as the Karnataka Open Educational Resources (KOER) and the integration of digital content in government schools exemplify this trend.

However, access to platforms alone does not guarantee educational equity. The sociological notion of "digital capital" highlights the importance of not just physical access, but also the skills, confidence, and cultural competencies required to meaningfully engage with digital tools. Persistent gaps in digital literacy, language barriers, and relevance of content to local contexts can limit the transformative potential of these resources, especially among marginalized communities.

1.2. The Digital Divide: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Stratification: Despite the democratizing promise of technology, digital divides remain a significant sociological challenge. These divides manifest along lines of urban-rural disparity, income, gender, and caste. For example, while urban schools in Karnataka may have widespread access to computers and high-speed internet, rural and tribal regions often contend with unreliable connectivity and limited digital infrastructure.

The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exposed and exacerbated these divides, as remote learning became the default mode of instruction globally. In Karnataka, as elsewhere in India, millions of students—particularly girls, children with disabilities, and those from low-income families—faced educational exclusion due to lack of devices or internet (Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023). Addressing these divides requires not only infrastructural investment but also targeted policies for digital inclusion and community-based support systems.

2. Technology-Enhanced Empathy and Social Justice in Education

2.1. Augmented Reality and Immersive Learning for Social Issues: Emerging technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) offer innovative modalities for teaching complex social issues and fostering empathy. Lin's (2024) study on the use of AR to promote gender justice and awareness of sexual

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violence in Taiwan provides a compelling example. The "Light up the Room" AR project, conducted via Instagram, transcended the limitations of traditional exhibitions by creating interactive, immersive experiences that engaged users emotionally and cognitively.

Sociologically, such immersive experiences can facilitate both emotional and cognitive empathy—enabling learners to "feel" and "understand" the lived realities of marginalized groups (Lin, 2024). This is particularly salient for topics often shrouded in stigma or silence, such as sexual violence, caste discrimination, or minority rights. In educational settings, AR can be harnessed to simulate scenarios, visualize historical events, and allow students to "walk in the shoes" of others, thus deepening critical consciousness and promoting social justice.

2.2. Ethical Considerations and Emotional Impact

However, the use of immersive technologies for sensitive topics raises profound ethical questions. As Lin (2024) notes, direct simulation of traumatic events can induce negative emotions or secondary trauma among users, especially survivors. The challenge lies in balancing the educational imperative to foster empathy and awareness with the ethical obligation to prevent harm. Lin's (2024) approach—focusing on the aftermath of violence rather than the act itself—offers a model for ethically sensitive curriculum design.

3. Data, AI, and the Recognition of Human Rights in Education

3.1. Computer Vision and Automated Analysis for Advocacy: Advances in AI and computer vision have enabled new forms of advocacy and monitoring in the field of human rights and education. Kalliatakis et al. (2018) demonstrate how deep convolutional neural networks (CNNs) can be trained to recognize human rights violations—including denial of education—through large-scale analysis of images. The Human Rights Archive Database (HRA), developed in this research, provides a repository of expert-verified images categorized by types of abuses, including lack of access to education.

Such technologies allow for real-time, scalable monitoring of rights violations, empowering NGOs, educators, and policymakers to identify patterns, allocate resources, and advocate for change. In Karnataka, where issues such as child labor, school dropouts, and gender-based exclusion persist, AI-driven analysis of local data can inform targeted interventions and evidence-based policy.

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3.2. Risks of Surveillance and Data Ethics: While the use of AI and big data holds promise for enhancing educational advocacy and resource allocation, it also raises concerns about privacy, surveillance, and algorithmic bias. Automated systems may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes or overlook context-specific nuances, particularly when datasets are not representative of local realities (Kalliatakis et al., 2018). Ethical frameworks and community oversight are essential to ensure that data-driven interventions in education uphold human rights and social justice.

4. Social Media, Emotion AI, and the Politics of Educational Discourse

4.1. Social Media as a Platform for Educational Advocacy and Resistance: Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become key arenas for educational discourse, advocacy, and resistance. Wang et al. (2016) illustrate how analyzing social media data can reveal public sentiments, preferences, and mobilization patterns around educational issues. During the 2016 U.S. presidential primaries, for example, social media analytics exposed the salience of women's rights and education as core issues, demonstrating the political power of digital engagement.

In the context of educational bans and gender discrimination, as seen in Afghanistan's prohibition of girls' education, social media serves as both an outlet for emotional expression and a tool for global solidarity. Hussiny and Øvrelid (2023) developed the LetHerLearn dataset, analyzing 7,600 Dari-language tweets in response to the Taliban's ban on women's education. The emotional landscape captured—dominated by anger, sadness, and fear—reflects both the psychological impact of exclusion and the potential of digital platforms to amplify marginalized voices.

4.2. Emotion Analysis and Educational Policy

The use of emotion AI—machine learning models trained to detect and classify emotions in text—offers new possibilities for understanding the affective dimensions of educational change and crisis. In Karnataka, for instance, social media listening could be employed to monitor community responses to policy shifts, school closures, or curriculum reforms, enabling more responsive and empathetic governance.

Yet, the deployment of emotion analysis technologies must be approached with caution. As Hussiny and Øvrelid (2023) note, the classification of emotions is often complicated by linguistic, cultural, and contextual

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factors. Over-reliance on automated systems risks misinterpretation or reductionism, particularly in multilingual, multicultural settings like India.

Examples from Karnataka: Challenges and Innovations

1. Digital Classrooms and the Urban-Rural Divide: Karnataka's flagship "Digital Classroom" program, implemented in select government schools across Bengaluru and Mysuru, provides smart boards, tablets, and high-speed internet. While these schools report improved student engagement and learning outcomes, rural schools in Raichur, Koppal, and Chitradurga often lack basic infrastructure, with frequent power cuts and minimal technical support. Teachers in these areas report challenges in integrating technology due to insufficient training and language barriers.

2. Gender, Technology, and Social Norms: In many parts of North Karnataka, girls' access to digital devices is constrained by patriarchal norms and safety concerns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, studies found that boys were more likely to have access to family smartphones for online classes, while girls were expected to prioritize household chores (Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023). NGOs such as Pratham and Akshara Foundation responded by distributing gender-inclusive learning kits and organizing community awareness campaigns.

Findings

- Technology expands access to educational resources but does not automatically guarantee equity. Digital divides—rooted in socioeconomic, gender, and geographic disparities—persistently limit who benefits from technological innovations.
- Immersive and data-driven technologies (e.g., AR, emotion AI, computer vision) offer powerful tools for fostering empathy, raising awareness of social issues, and monitoring human rights in education. Yet, their deployment must be carefully designed to avoid ethical pitfalls such as emotional harm, surveillance, and cultural insensitivity (Lin, 2024; Kalliatakis et al., 2018; Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023).

Suggestions

- Bridging the Digital Divide: Governments and NGOs should prioritize universal access to devices, connectivity, and digital literacy training, with targeted support for girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized communities.

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- Ethically Sensitive Content Design: Developers of immersive and AI-driven educational tools must collaborate with educators, mental health professionals, and affected communities to ensure emotional safety and cultural relevance.
- Community Participation: Policymakers should foster participatory approaches that empower local actors to adapt, co-create, and govern educational technologies.

Conclusion

- Technology holds unprecedented potential to democratize access to quality education, foster empathy, and advance social justice. However, realizing this potential requires more than the provision of devices or digital content; it demands a sustained sociological commitment to equity, inclusion, and ethical reflexivity.
- In Karnataka, as elsewhere, the success of technology-driven educational reforms hinges on addressing digital divides, respecting local cultures, and empowering communities. Immersive technologies and data analytics can amplify marginalized voices and reveal hidden patterns of exclusion, but they must be deployed with care, humility, and an unwavering commitment to human rights.

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DIGITAL LITERACY AS ECONOMIC CAPITAL: TRANSFORMING MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES THROUGH TECH EDUCATION

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Abstract

In the age of digital transformation, digital literacy is not merely a technical skill—it has become a form of economic capital, essential for participation in the modern workforce and digital economy. Marginalized communities, often excluded from mainstream education and technology access, face significant barriers to economic mobility due to digital illiteracy. This research article explores how digital literacy, when framed as economic capital, empowers marginalized groups to break cycles of poverty, access new forms of employment, and build sustainable livelihoods. The study draws from global case studies, existing literature, and policy analyses to evaluate the impact of tech education initiatives. It also discusses the challenges these communities face, offers strategic recommendations, and highlights the need for inclusive, sustainable digital education models.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Economic Capital, Marginalized Communities, Tech Education, Digital Inclusion, Skills Development, Social Mobility, Empowerment

Introduction

Digital literacy has become as fundamental as reading and writing in the 21st-century knowledge economy. It encompasses the ability to use digital devices, access the internet, evaluate information, and communicate effectively using digital platforms. While affluent populations have adapted to digital life with ease, marginalized communities—including the rural poor, women, ethnic minorities, and the disabled—often remain digitally illiterate. This lack of digital competency severely limits access to education, jobs, healthcare, and public services.

By rethinking digital literacy as **economic capital**, this paper shifts the narrative from access to empowerment. Tech education is no longer a luxury or support tool; it is a prerequisite for economic participation. In this research,

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we examine how digital literacy transforms the socio-economic status of marginalized communities and propose strategies for scalable tech education programs that truly leave no one behind.

Review of Literature

The literature on digital literacy has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Early studies, such as those by Warschauer (2003), viewed digital inclusion through the lens of infrastructure. More recent research has focused on digital skills as pathways to socio-economic empowerment (Van Dijk, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). UNESCO defines digital literacy as "the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship." In low-income communities, digital skills correlate strongly with improved labor force participation, access to micro-entrepreneurship, and social inclusion (World Bank, 2021).

Tech education initiatives like India's PMGDISHA and Kenya's Ajira Digital Program have shown measurable success in reducing digital inequality and enabling youth employment. Yet, researchers caution against one-size-fits-all approaches and stress the importance of culturally sensitive, localized training programs.

Case Studies:

Case Study 1: India – PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan)

Launched in 2017, PMGDISHA aimed to digitally train over 60 million rural citizens. Targeting low-income and marginalized communities, the program offered basic digital literacy through local training centers. Results indicate improved employment prospects and digital engagement in banking, health, and government services.

Case Study 2: Kenya – Ajira Digital Program

Ajira Digital, a government initiative supported by the private sector, provides tech education to youth from low-income backgrounds, enabling them to secure online jobs. Many participants have since become digital freelancers or online entrepreneurs, contributing to Kenya's growing digital gig economy.

Case Study 3: Brazil – Mulheres Digitais

Focused on Afro-Brazilian and indigenous women, the *Mulheres Digitais* program combines digital training with gender empowerment and entrepreneurship. The program helped marginalized women gain employment and create small online businesses, boosting both self-confidence and household income.

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Impact of Digital Literacy on Marginalized Communities

1. Economic Empowerment

Digital literacy equips marginalized individuals with the tools necessary to participate in the modern digital economy. For example, someone in a rural area with basic computer skills can now offer freelance services on platforms like Upwork, teach online, or even sell handmade crafts via social media. This transition from passive consumption to active economic participation empowers individuals to generate their own income, often without needing to migrate to cities or rely on traditional employment sectors.

By learning how to navigate e-commerce platforms, manage digital transactions, or operate productivity tools, individuals become economically self-sufficient. This not only improves their personal income but also stimulates local economies, especially when clusters of digitally literate youth engage in entrepreneurial activities. Digital empowerment can reduce dependency on low-paying, informal sector jobs and unlock new opportunities that were previously unavailable.

2. Access to Services

Digital literacy acts as a gateway to essential public and private services. For many marginalized communities, the lack of access to healthcare, education, and financial services is a pressing issue. Digitally literate individuals can now access telemedicine services, apply for jobs or scholarships online, file for government aid, and use e-banking systems.

3. Educational Advancement

Tech education significantly expands educational access. Through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), YouTube tutorials, educational apps, and e-libraries, marginalized learners can now gain knowledge and certification from global institutions, often for free or at minimal cost. These platforms offer flexibility, allowing learners to study at their own pace, which is especially important for working adults or those with household responsibilities.

Digital tools also support blended and remote learning environments, breaking the traditional boundaries of classroom education. Marginalized youth who may have dropped out of school can now re-enter the learning process digitally. Furthermore, students with disabilities can benefit from accessible digital content, like screen readers and captioned videos, fostering inclusivity.

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4. Gender Equality

Digital literacy can be a transformative force for women and girls, who are often disproportionately excluded from educational and economic opportunities. Through access to information and online platforms, women can learn skills, start home-based businesses, and engage in civic discussions.

In patriarchal or conservative societies, where physical mobility may be restricted, the internet offers a safe and flexible environment for women to grow economically and intellectually. Learning how to operate a smartphone or computer can significantly increase a woman's independence, confidence, and earning potential. Moreover, access to digital tools enables women to educate themselves about legal rights, health, reproductive care, and financial literacy.

Programs focused on training women in digital skills have also been shown to have ripple effects—improving family income, children's education, and even broader community development.

Challenges

1. Infrastructure Gaps

Digital literacy cannot flourish without basic infrastructure like electricity, internet connectivity, and access to affordable digital devices. Many rural or remote areas still lack stable power supply and broadband coverage, making it impossible for residents to engage in any meaningful digital activity. Even in urban slums, shared or low-speed internet limits usage, especially among students who need high bandwidth for learning tools or video-based education.

2. Language and Cultural Barriers

Many digital tools and educational resources are available only in dominant or foreign languages (such as English, Mandarin, or French), creating an additional layer of exclusion for indigenous communities or ethnic minorities. The lack of content in local dialects alienates potential learners and reduces the effectiveness of training.

In addition, cultural biases built into digital platforms—such as the portrayal of gender roles, or unfamiliar teaching styles—can deter participation. For instance, a tech program designed for urban males may not appeal to rural women, even if it's free. Therefore, localized and culturally adapted content is essential.

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3. Gender Digital Divide

Women in many parts of the world face unique barriers to digital inclusion. Socio-cultural norms often prevent them from owning mobile phones, participating in mixed-gender training sessions, or accessing the internet unsupervised. Furthermore, women are more likely to face online harassment or privacy concerns, discouraging digital participation.

4. Lack of Contextual Curriculum

Many digital literacy programs use standardized content designed for urban or developed contexts. These courses often fail to consider local needs, employment patterns, or cultural sensitivities. For example, teaching advanced coding in a rural area where there are no jobs or internet connectivity may not be useful.

Effective programs must understand the community's context and tailor their curriculum accordingly—whether it's basic smartphone usage for agricultural marketing or financial literacy for small businesswomen. Without relevance, learners are less likely to remain engaged or apply the skills.

Solutions and Recommendations

1. Community-Based Tech Education

To be effective, digital literacy programs must be rooted in the local community. This means training local youth to become trainers, using community centers as learning hubs, and involving elders and cultural leaders to foster trust. Programs should offer flexible schedules, be conducted in local languages, and align with real-world needs—such as farming apps, online marketplaces, or health information.

Community-based models are more sustainable, cost-effective, and likely to achieve long-term impact because they are driven by local ownership and relevance.

2. Gender-Inclusive Policies

Governments and NGOs must actively design interventions that promote female digital inclusion. This includes providing girls and women with digital devices, creating women-only training sessions, and ensuring online safety through policy and technological safeguards. Gender inclusion also means challenging harmful norms that prevent women from accessing or benefiting from digital tools.

Digital literacy programs that are gender-sensitive have the potential to break generational cycles of inequality and empower entire families through educated and economically active women.

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3. Affordable Access and Device Distribution

Governments should partner with telecom companies to provide subsidized internet packages for students and low-income families. Nonprofits and social enterprises can help by distributing refurbished laptops or low-cost tablets to learners. Community Wi-Fi centers, libraries, and schools can serve as digital access points for those without home connectivity.

Ensuring hardware access is just as important as training—it forms the basic toolset for engaging in digital society.

Conclusion:

Digital literacy is no longer optional—it is essential. In today's interconnected world, the ability to navigate the digital landscape is a form of **economic capital** that can uplift entire communities out of poverty. For marginalized groups, gaining digital skills unlocks access to jobs, education, services, and networks that were previously out of reach.

However, this transformation does not happen automatically. It requires intentional effort to design inclusive, sustainable, and context-appropriate tech education models. Governments, civil society, the private sector, and communities must work together to build a digitally literate population that can drive inclusive growth and resilience.

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E-COMMERCE, SMES, AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCE: LESSONS FROM POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered unprecedented disruptions in the global economy, disproportionately affecting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, e-commerce emerged as a critical enabler of business continuity, allowing many SMEs to survive, adapt, and even thrive amid restrictions on physical movement and changing consumer behavior. This paper investigates how digital commerce has contributed to the economic resilience of SMEs during and after the pandemic, analyzes key success factors, and highlights challenges that hinder widespread adoption. Drawing on case studies from diverse geographies, this research identifies practical lessons and policy recommendations for supporting SMEs' digital transformation, ensuring inclusive and sustainable economic recovery.

Keywords: E-Commerce, SMEs, Economic Resilience, Digital Transformation, Post-Pandemic Recovery, Digital Inclusion, Innovation, Policy Reform

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of many economies, contributing significantly to employment, innovation, and GDP. The COVID-19 pandemic posed severe threats to their survival, due to disruptions in supply chains, lockdowns, and sudden drops in consumer demand. Traditional brick-and-mortar SMEs faced acute challenges, with many forced to close temporarily or permanently.

However, the rapid adoption of digital commerce during the pandemic presented a new avenue for resilience. E-commerce platforms provided SMEs with the ability to reach customers beyond physical constraints, automate business processes, and leverage new financial tools. This transformation has not only helped SMEs endure the immediate crisis but also positioned them for sustained growth in the evolving digital economy.

This paper explores the transformative role of e-commerce in SME resilience, detailing the economic impacts, challenges, and necessary policy frameworks for fostering digital inclusivity post-pandemic.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 SMEs and Economic Vulnerability: SMEs are typically more vulnerable to external shocks due to their limited financial buffers, dependence on local markets, and lower economies of scale. Prior research by the OECD (2020) underscores that SMEs face significant barriers in accessing credit, technology, and skilled labor during crises. Nevertheless, their inherent flexibility and faster decision-making processes often allow for quicker adaptation compared to larger firms.

2.2 Rise of E-Commerce During the Pandemic: The pandemic accelerated the adoption of e-commerce globally, forcing businesses to rethink their sales and distribution strategies. UNCTAD (2021) documents a 30% surge in online retail sales in various economies during 2020, with SMEs contributing significantly to this growth. This digital shift was both reactive—to compensate for lost physical sales—and strategic, as businesses sought new growth avenues.

2.3 Digitalization as a Resilience Strategy: Research by McKinsey (2021) highlights how digital tools such as cloud services, online marketplaces, and social media platforms enabled businesses to maintain operations, innovate product offerings, and engage customers during lockdowns. Firms that invested in digital infrastructure and skills reported higher resilience and faster recovery rates.

Role of E-Commerce in Strengthening SME Resilience

a) Market Continuity and Access: E-commerce allowed SMEs to continue sales despite physical store closures. Online marketplaces, social media shops, and business websites acted as virtual storefronts, connecting sellers with customers across regions and even internationally. This continuity was essential in mitigating revenue loss and preserving customer relationships.

b) Customer Relationship Management: Digital channels facilitated personalized communication through targeted marketing, customer reviews, and feedback loops. SMEs could engage directly with customers, fostering loyalty even amid uncertainty. The use of chatbots, email campaigns, and social media enabled 24/7 customer service, improving satisfaction.

c) Cost Optimization: By shifting operations online, many SMEs reduced costs related to physical space, utilities, and staff. Automation of inventory management, order processing, and payment reduced human error

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and sped up operations. Third-party logistics (3PL) and dropshipping models allowed SMEs to sell products without significant upfront inventory investment.

d) Product Innovation: The pandemic triggered shifts in consumer demand, and SMEs leveraged e-commerce to introduce new products or services quickly. For example, many diversified into essential goods (sanitizers, masks) or remote work solutions (online courses, digital consulting). Subscription services and digital content monetization became viable revenue streams, facilitated by e-commerce platforms.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: India's Kirana Shops and JioMart

India's traditional kirana (local grocery) shops swiftly digitized through partnerships with platforms like **JioMart**, operated by Reliance Industries. This platform enabled kiranas to list inventory online, receive orders via WhatsApp or app, and access delivery services. This digital integration helped maintain food supply chains during lockdowns, provided urban and semi-urban consumers with home delivery, and empowered small retailers with technology.

Case Study 2: Shopify and North American Microbusinesses

Shopify, a leading e-commerce platform, saw a surge in small businesses establishing online stores during the pandemic. Entrepreneurs used Shopify's integrated tools for payment processing, inventory management, and marketing, lowering barriers to entry. This facilitated the rise of niche brands and micro-businesses, driving entrepreneurship and local economic activity even during restrictions.

Economic Impact of E-Commerce Adoption by SMEs

a) Employment Retention and Creation: E-commerce adoption helped SMEs maintain operations and jobs during the pandemic. Digital roles such as social media managers, customer service agents, and logistics coordinators emerged or expanded. The ability to tap into new markets led to job creation in some sectors, including digital marketing and delivery services.

b) Digital Supply Chain Resilience: Digital platforms enabled SMEs to diversify suppliers and distribution channels, reducing dependency on fragile traditional supply chains. This enhanced flexibility helped mitigate stockouts and delays, maintaining business continuity and consumer satisfaction.

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c) Financial Inclusion: The use of mobile wallets, digital banking apps, and integrated payment gateways expanded SME access to financial services. This inclusion facilitated smoother cash flows, digital credit access, and faster transaction settlements, crucial during liquidity shortages caused by the pandemic.

Challenges Faced by SMEs in the Digital Transition

a) Digital Divide: The lack of reliable internet connectivity, affordable smartphones, and digital skills in rural and underserved communities remains a major barrier to digital commerce adoption. This limits participation and perpetuates economic inequalities.

b) Platform Dependency: SMEs face risks of excessive reliance on large e-commerce platforms, which may charge high commission fees, impose strict policies, and prioritize larger sellers. This dependency can reduce SMEs' bargaining power and limit their ability to control brand presence.

c) Cybersecurity and Fraud: Many SMEs lack adequate knowledge or resources to protect themselves from cyber threats, including phishing scams, data breaches, and fraudulent transactions. This undermines customer trust and exposes businesses to financial losses.

Solutions and Policy Recommendations

a) Digital Capacity Building: Governments, NGOs, and private sector partners should offer comprehensive training in digital literacy, e-commerce management, online marketing, and cybersecurity tailored to SMEs. Accessible learning programs, mentorship, and peer networks can accelerate adoption.

b) Infrastructure Development: Investment in affordable, high-speed internet infrastructure is critical, especially in rural and marginalized areas. Public policies should encourage competition among internet service providers to reduce costs and improve service quality.

c) SME-Centric E-Commerce Platforms: Encouraging the development of local or cooperative digital marketplaces can reduce SMEs' dependency on multinational platforms, ensuring fairer fees and governance that aligns with community interests.

Conclusion

The pandemic-induced acceleration of e-commerce adoption among SMEs has revealed digital commerce as a vital factor in economic resilience. Digital transformation enabled SMEs not only to survive unprecedented disruptions but also to innovate, expand markets, and create jobs. To fully harness this potential for post-pandemic


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recovery and long-term economic growth, concerted efforts are needed to address infrastructure gaps, build digital skills, ensure cybersecurity, and create a supportive regulatory environment.

E-commerce, when inclusive and well-supported, offers a pathway for SMEs to contribute robustly to economic recovery, social equity, and future-proofed commerce ecosystems. Policymakers, business leaders, and civil society must collaborate to institutionalize these lessons, ensuring the digital economy benefits all segments of society, particularly vulnerable and marginalized SMEs.

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THE INTERPLAY OF ECONOMICS AND COMMERCE IN THE DIGITAL ERA: DRIVING GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND INCLUSIVITY

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Abstract

In the contemporary global economy, the relationship between economics and commerce is being reshaped by digital technologies, globalization, and changing consumer behaviors. While economics provides the theoretical framework for understanding market behavior, trade flows, and resource allocation, commerce applies these principles to real-world transactions and business operations. This research explores how digitalization has transformed commerce into a critical driver of economic development, employment, and innovation. It highlights key trends such as e-commerce, fintech, digital trade, and policy implications, using real-world case studies to demonstrate how modern commerce and economic systems reinforce each other. The paper concludes with policy recommendations to harness this synergy for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Keywords: Economics, Commerce, Digital Economy, Market Dynamics, E-Commerce, SMEs, Policy

Introduction

Commerce and economics are two pillars of the modern economy. Economics offers a macro- and micro-level understanding of how societies allocate scarce resources, while commerce translates these theories into actions through trade, marketing, retail, and financial services. As digital technologies redefine global marketplaces, these two disciplines are increasingly interconnected. Digitalization has introduced new commercial paradigms—such as e-commerce, digital payment systems, and global supply chains—transforming not only how businesses operate but also how economies grow, adapt, and compete. In this article, we analyze the symbiotic relationship between economics and commerce in the digital age and propose strategies for governments, businesses, and institutions to collaborate in building a robust and inclusive economic framework.

Literature Review

2.1 Classical Foundations: Classical economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo laid the theoretical groundwork for understanding commerce in economic terms—highlighting concepts such as the division of labor,

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specialization, and comparative advantage. These principles remain essential in understanding global trade and the behavior of markets.

2.2 Modern Economic Theories: Contemporary economic theories—including Keynesian economics, behavioral economics, and game theory—offer insights into how market participants behave, how policies influence commerce, and how macroeconomic stability supports long-term commercial growth.

2.3 Commercial Evolution: Marketing experts like Kotler & Keller (2016) have traced the evolution of commerce from barter systems to brick-and-mortar retail and finally to online platforms. The shift to digital commerce has significantly affected cost structures, market reach, and consumer engagement.

2.4 Policy and Global Trade: Reports from the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, and OECD stress the need for harmonized global trade regulations, digital taxation frameworks, and investments in infrastructure to support the evolving nature of commerce.

The Nexus Between Economics and Commerce

a) Market Mechanisms: Economic principles such as supply and demand, elasticity, and market equilibrium are at the core of commercial decision-making. Businesses adjust prices, production, and marketing strategies based on economic indicators and forecasts.

b) Resource Allocation: Commerce operationalizes economic decisions around capital allocation, labor use, and logistics by determining how resources are distributed in response to market demands.

c) Consumer Behavior: Commerce depends heavily on understanding consumer behavior—something economic models like utility theory and behavioral economics explain. Insights into consumer psychology inform marketing strategies and product design.

d) Fiscal and Monetary Policy Impact: Changes in tax policy, interest rates, and government spending affect commercial borrowing costs, investment planning, and consumer demand. Commerce reflects and responds to these macroeconomic shifts in real time.

Challenges and Risks

a) Digital Divide: Uneven access to the internet, devices, and digital skills limits who can participate in digital commerce—especially in rural areas or low-income communities.

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b) Cybersecurity Risks: Data breaches, identity theft, and online fraud threaten consumer trust and increase costs for businesses. Secure systems and awareness are critical.

c) Regulatory Gaps: Current trade laws, consumer protection policies, and tax regulations are struggling to keep pace with digital commerce, creating confusion and loopholes.

d) Labor Displacement: Automation, AI, and digitization may reduce demand for traditional jobs in retail and logistics, requiring workforce reskilling and economic transition plans.

d) Supporting SMEs: Financial incentives, tax credits, training programs, and digital tools can help SMEs transition into the digital economy and compete with larger firms.

e) Fair Competition Policies: Regulators must address monopolistic behavior by tech giants through antitrust laws and by supporting open-source, community-driven platforms.

Conclusion

The convergence of economics and commerce is a defining feature of the digital era. While economics offers the lens to understand markets, policy, and human behavior, commerce implements these ideas in real-time interactions, platforms, and services. Together, they are reshaping how the world trades, consumes, and grows.

To harness this potential, stakeholders must invest in inclusive infrastructure, fair regulation, and innovation-driven policies. This will not only ensure economic resilience but also build a commercial ecosystem that is equitable, efficient, and future-ready.

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Empowering the Digital Generation: How E-Commerce and Economic Inclusion Transform Youth Futures

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Abstract

The rise of the digital economy has transformed traditional models of employment, business, and education, opening up new avenues for youth empowerment and inclusion. E-commerce, in particular, has emerged as a powerful tool for economic participation, allowing digitally literate young people to bypass traditional barriers to entry in commerce and create sustainable livelihoods. This research explores how e-commerce and economic inclusion are shaping the futures of youth across different socio-economic contexts. Through a review of existing literature and four case studies spanning diverse global regions, the paper examines the tangible impacts of digital empowerment. It also identifies key challenges such as digital literacy gaps, infrastructure disparities, and policy deficits, while offering strategic solutions for inclusive growth. The findings underscore the critical role of digital inclusion in shaping equitable and resilient economies.

Keywords: Digital Economy, Youth Empowerment, E-Commerce, Economic Inclusion, Digital Divide .Entrepreneurship, Digital Literacy, Marginalized Communities

Introduction

In the 21st century, the digital revolution has not only transformed the way we communicate and consume content but also how we conduct business and generate income. E-commerce, as a subset of the digital economy, provides immense opportunities for economic growth and individual empowerment, particularly among youth and marginalized groups. With an increasing number of young people connected to the internet, digital platforms offer a unique pathway for entrepreneurship, innovation, and participation in the global market. However, while the digital economy expands, not all youth are equally equipped to benefit. The digital divide – a gap in access to technology, internet, and digital literacy – remains a pressing issue globally. Addressing this divide is essential not just from a technological standpoint but also from an economic, social, and human development perspective.

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This paper examines the transformative power of e-commerce in enabling youth economic inclusion and proposes evidence-based strategies to enhance digital empowerment across diverse contexts.

Review of Literature

The digital economy has been widely studied in relation to economic development and innovation. Castells (1996) described the "network society" where power and wealth are increasingly determined by access to information and digital tools. More recent literature focuses on digital inclusion as a driver of social mobility. According to the World Bank (2021), increasing digital access in developing economies can raise GDP growth by 1.5–2% annually.

Studies by UNCTAD (2020) show that e-commerce has enabled youth in low-income countries to enter markets with minimal capital investment. However, they also highlight that digital entrepreneurship is often hindered by lack of infrastructure, skills, and policy support.

Scholars such as Warschauer (2003) argue that digital inclusion is not just about physical access to devices or the internet but also the ability to use technology meaningfully—through skills, content relevance, and support systems.

In short, literature supports the premise that digital tools, especially e-commerce, can play a major role in transforming economic opportunities for youth, provided inclusion barriers are adequately addressed.

Impact of E-Commerce on Youth Futures (Elaborated)

1. Economic Empowerment

E-commerce provides an unprecedented avenue for youth to generate income independently of traditional employment structures. Unlike brick-and-mortar businesses, online commerce significantly lowers entry costs, allowing young people to sell products or services with minimal startup capital. From dropshipping and digital freelancing to content creation and affiliate marketing, young individuals can tap into diverse online income streams. This self-reliance not only fosters entrepreneurship but also reduces dependence on saturated job markets, especially in economies with high youth unemployment rates.

2. Skill Development

Participation in e-commerce cultivates a wide range of market-relevant skills. Youth entrepreneurs gain hands-on experience in digital literacy, online marketing, financial management, and customer service. Managing an

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online store or service platform requires a deep understanding of data analytics, branding, supply chain logistics, and sales strategy. These competencies are not only crucial for online success but also transferable to other sectors, making digitally active youth more employable and innovative.

3. Social Mobility

E-commerce has the potential to level the playing field for young individuals from marginalized or low-income backgrounds. By removing geographic and institutional barriers, it offers scalable business opportunities that are not contingent on formal education or elite networks. Young people from rural areas, urban slums, or conflict zones can engage with global consumers and earn income directly through digital platforms. This accessibility helps reduce socio-economic disparities and supports upward social mobility.

4. Innovation and Creativity

The digital economy encourages creativity by rewarding innovation in product development, storytelling, and branding. Youth often bring fresh perspectives and cultural relevance to the market, offering unique products, digital art, music, fashion, and tech solutions. Social media, content creation platforms, and peer-to-peer commerce empower them to experiment, iterate, and refine ideas in real time. This spirit of innovation drives the growth of niche markets and adds vibrancy to national and global economies.

Challenges

1. Digital Divide:

Access to reliable internet, modern devices, and electricity remains a major obstacle in many regions, particularly rural and underserved urban areas. This digital divide disproportionately affects youth from marginalized communities, limiting their ability to participate in digital economies. Without affordable and high-speed connectivity, the benefits of e-commerce remain inaccessible to a significant portion of the population.

2. Limited Digital Literacy

Even when infrastructure exists, many young people lack the digital competencies needed to effectively engage in online commerce. Skills such as website creation, online marketing, payment processing, and cybersecurity are essential for successful e-commerce ventures. The absence of structured digital education in many school systems further widens this capability gap.

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3. Financial Exclusion

Many youth, especially in developing countries, remain outside the formal banking system. Without access to credit cards, mobile wallets, or bank accounts, their ability to receive online payments or make investments in digital tools is severely restricted. In regions where financial regulations are strict or outdated, setting up merchant accounts can be an additional hurdle.

4. Regulatory Barriers

Lack of supportive policy frameworks for digital entrepreneurs often hampers youth participation in e-commerce. Bureaucratic red tape, complex tax requirements, and unclear legal status of online businesses deter innovation. In some countries, young people under 18 may not legally register businesses or sign contracts, further complicating their entrepreneurial efforts.

Solutions and Recommendations

1. Invest in Digital Infrastructure

Governments and private sector players must prioritize investment in broadband networks, mobile infrastructure, and energy access to bridge the connectivity gap. Public Wi-Fi programs, affordable data plans, and mobile network expansion into rural areas are essential to ensure equitable digital participation. Infrastructure investments should also include support for local tech hubs and innovation labs where youth can experiment and collaborate.

2. Enhance Digital Education

To foster a digitally capable generation, digital literacy should be integrated into formal education systems from an early age. Schools and community centers can offer courses in e-commerce, coding, cybersecurity, and digital marketing. Vocational training programs should align with industry needs and include mentorship from experienced professionals. Special initiatives should target girls and marginalized youth to ensure inclusion.

3. Inclusive Financial Services

Expanding financial inclusion through mobile banking, digital wallets, and youth-friendly financial products is critical. Fintech companies and banks should design services tailored for young entrepreneurs, including microloans, savings schemes, and peer-to-peer payment options. Governments can support this by simplifying regulations and encouraging innovation in digital finance.

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Conclusion

The digital economy, spearheaded by the rapid growth of e-commerce, holds transformative potential for the global youth population. It offers a pathway toward self-reliance, economic inclusion, and cross-border collaboration. However, unlocking this potential requires more than just technology—it demands a deliberate strategy that addresses the structural and social barriers youth face. Bridging the digital divide, expanding digital literacy, fostering financial inclusion, and reforming policies are essential components of a holistic approach. With appropriate support systems, youth can become drivers of innovation, prosperity, and sustainable development in their communities. As we move further into the digital era, investing in youth digital empowerment is not just an economic imperative—it is a moral and social responsibility. By harnessing the power of e-commerce, we can create a future where every young person has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of where they were born or what resources they currently lack.

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DIGITAL HISTORY: REIMAGINING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

The discipline of history is undergoing a digital transformation. With the integration of technology into research, preservation, and storytelling, historians are reimagining how the past is documented, accessed, and interpreted. **Digital history** is not simply about digitizing archives—it involves the creation of dynamic, interactive, and multi-perspective narratives that enhance public engagement and scholarly inquiry. This paper explores how digital tools such as GIS mapping, 3D modeling, virtual reality (VR), and online archives are transforming the historical discipline. It examines the theoretical and methodological shifts brought about by digital history, presents case studies of innovative digital history projects, and discusses the benefits and challenges involved. Ultimately, this article argues that digital history democratizes historical narratives, allowing for broader participation and new ways of understanding the past.

Keywords: Digital history, historical narratives, digital humanities, virtual heritage, historical visualization, GIS mapping, digital archives, public history.

Introduction

History, as a discipline, has traditionally relied on textual sources, physical artifacts, and static narratives. However, the 21st century has ushered in a digital era that is reshaping how historical knowledge is produced, preserved, and disseminated. The rise of digital history—an interdisciplinary field that combines historical scholarship with digital technology—marks a significant shift in both historical methodology and public engagement.

Digital history involves more than scanning old manuscripts or uploading books to the internet. It includes tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map historical events, 3D modeling to reconstruct ancient buildings, databases to analyze historical trends, and virtual or augmented reality experiences that bring the past

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to life. It also fosters participatory forms of storytelling through crowdsourcing, social media, and interactive platforms.

Review of Literature

Digital history has been a key focus of the **digital humanities** movement, which seeks to merge computational tools with humanities research. Scholars such as Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig (2005) in *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* pioneered frameworks for understanding how digital platforms can enhance historical communication. Other researchers have emphasized the methodological changes brought about by digital tools. Edward L. Ayers introduced the concept of "deep contingency" in digital narratives, where non-linear storytelling allows users to explore multiple outcomes and perspectives. Meanwhile, scholars like Joanna Drucker have critiqued digital visualization for its tendency to oversimplify complex human experiences unless properly contextualized.

Current literature supports the idea that digital history is expanding the reach and relevance of the discipline, but it also warns against over-reliance on technology at the expense of critical interpretation and inclusivity.

Case Studies

Impact of Digital History

a) Interactive and Non-Linear Storytelling

Digital platforms enable historians and content creators to move beyond the traditional linear narrative structure of historical texts. With tools like interactive timelines, multimedia exhibitions, clickable maps, and branching storylines, users can explore history from multiple perspectives and in a personalized way. For example, an interactive timeline of World War II could allow users to view events by region, theme (e.g., political, economic, social), or affected population groups. This non-linear model encourages **active engagement**, **critical inquiry**, and **multi-perspectival thinking**, especially valuable in teaching history to students who are accustomed to digital interactivity. It also helps deconstruct monolithic or state-centered historical accounts by providing layered and diversified narratives.

b) Democratization of History

Digital history breaks down the barriers traditionally associated with the writing and teaching of history. Through **crowdsourcing initiatives**, **community archives**, **oral history projects**, and **digital exhibitions**, the general

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public—students, teachers, elders, activists—can contribute their knowledge, memories, and artifacts. This leads to **more inclusive and participatory history-making**, empowering marginalized voices and challenging dominant narratives. For instance, platforms like Wikipedia, the 1947 Partition Archive, and social media history threads allow individuals to share lived experiences that might not be documented in official archives. This democratization transforms history from a top-down academic discipline into a shared societal endeavor.

c) Global Accessibility

Digital archives and virtual museums are accessible to anyone with an internet connection, thereby removing many **geographical, financial, and institutional barriers** to learning. Students in remote villages can now access historical documents from the British Library or take a virtual tour of the Louvre. This accessibility is particularly important for **diasporic, displaced, or formerly colonized communities** who may not have physical access to their cultural artifacts, many of which are housed in Western institutions. Digital history thus acts as a bridge between global citizens and their heritage, contributing to identity formation, transnational learning, and cultural revival.

d) Preservation and Restoration

Physical historical materials—manuscripts, paintings, buildings, oral recordings—are vulnerable to degradation, war, climate disasters, and accidents. Through **digital scanning, 3D modeling, and audio preservation**, these materials can be safeguarded for future generations. For example, ancient manuscripts from Timbuktu were digitized during political unrest to protect them from destruction. In Syria and Iraq, 3D scans of heritage sites like Palmyra allow for digital reconstruction after physical ruins were destroyed. **Digital surrogates** also allow researchers worldwide to study fragile artifacts without the risks of physical handling, ensuring both preservation and accessibility.

5. **Challenges of Digital History**

a) Digital Divide

Despite the global potential of digital history, **inequalities in access to technology** remain a major concern. In many parts of the Global South, internet connectivity is slow, expensive, or nonexistent. People may lack access to smartphones, computers, or digital literacy training. As a result, digital history may inadvertently **exclude the very communities it seeks to empower**, reinforcing existing educational and economic disparities. Additionally,

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many digitization projects originate in the Global North, which may shape what gets preserved and how it's presented.

b) Data Authenticity and Manipulation

Digital tools can easily be used to alter or fabricate historical content, whether intentionally or inadvertently. For example, **3D reconstructions** of ancient cities may be based on limited or biased data, yet presented to the public as factual representations. Similarly, **misleading metadata**, incorrect tagging, or poor translation in digital archives can distort historical understanding. Without rigorous **peer review**, **metadata standards**, and **transparency in methodology**, digital history risks spreading inaccuracies and promoting misinterpretations of the past.

6. Solutions and Recommendations

a) Inclusive Design and Access

To reduce digital inequality, digital history projects must prioritize **universal access**. This includes designing mobile-friendly websites, offering content in multiple languages, and creating offline or low-bandwidth versions of digital exhibits. Accessibility features for people with disabilities—such as audio narration, transcripts, and adjustable font sizes—should be standard. Governments and NGOs can also play a role by investing in digital infrastructure, especially in rural or underdeveloped regions.

b) Collaborative Development

History is not just made by historians, and digital history should reflect this. By involving **historians, educators, programmers, artists, Indigenous communities, and civil society**, projects can ensure a more holistic and respectful approach. For example, when digitizing colonial archives, descendant communities should be consulted to determine how materials are presented and contextualized. Such collaboration leads to **culturally sensitive, socially relevant, and academically rigorous outcomes**.

c) Open-Source and Public Platforms

To avoid the pitfalls of corporate control, historians and institutions should use **open-source software** and **Creative Commons licensing** wherever possible. This promotes transparency, replicability, and collaborative improvement. Platforms like Omeka (used for online exhibits), Scalar (for multimedia publications), and Tropy (for managing primary sources) are widely used in the digital humanities for their open-access and community-

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driven ethos. Licensing content with open terms also empowers teachers, students, and researchers to reuse and remix digital history content responsibly.

Conclusion

Digital history represents a paradigm shift in how historical knowledge is created, preserved, and disseminated. It has the power to broaden participation, revitalize public interest, and offer more inclusive narratives. However, this transformation comes with its own set of challenges—technical, ethical, and epistemological—that must be addressed through collaborative, critical, and inclusive approaches. As we move deeper into the digital age, it is essential that historians, technologists, and communities work together to ensure that the digital turn serves not just innovation, but also **historical integrity, equity, and truth**.

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EFFECT OF MEDIA ON SOCIETY: BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE FOR YOUTH AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

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Abstract

The expansion of digital technologies has transformed media into a vital force shaping education, communication, and empowerment. However, the digital divide continues to marginalize vulnerable populations, restricting their opportunities for participation. This paper investigates the impact of media on society with a focus on youth and marginalized groups. Using a literature review and secondary data analysis, the study evaluates how media functions as both an enabler and a barrier. Findings reveal that equitable access to digital media fosters empowerment, while inequalities perpetuate exclusion. The study highlights the need for policies supporting digital literacy, affordable access, and inclusive infrastructure.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Media, Youth Empowerment, Marginalized Groups, Social Inclusion

1. Introduction

The media performs a transformative position in shaping public opinion; get right of entry to data, and civic engagement. In societies facing virtual inequality, marginalized businesses stay deprived. Bridging the digital divide is crucial to ensuring that media contributes to empowerment instead of exclusion.

This divide is multidimensional, encompassing get entry to infrastructure, affordability, digital literacy, and cultural or language boundaries. In developing countries, rural children and disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected, limiting their participation in training, employment, and governance. At the same time as media has the potential to amplify marginalized voices, beautify social inclusion, and foster democratic engagement, unequal get entry to perpetuate exclusion and widens socio-economic inequalities.

Several students argue that the position of media in society is double-edged: it can empower communities whilst get entry to is equitable, but it also reinforces inequalities whilst gaps persist. For adolescents, particularly the ones in underprivileged groups, get entry to virtual media presents possibilities for abilities development,

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entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. Conversely, exclusion from digital platforms risks creating a era left behind in the worldwide understanding financial system.

Therefore, analysing the impact of media on society through the lens of the digital divide is vital for figuring out techniques to empower marginalized agencies. This research ambitions to research the role of media in bridging the virtual divide, spotlight the challenges confronted by youth and marginalized groups, and advice policy-oriented answers for inclusive virtual participation.

2. Literature Review

Research spotlight that unequal access to virtual tools creates obstacles for marginalized communities. Media, while inclusive, fosters democratic participation and skill improvement. Conversely, disparities make stronger socio-monetary inequalities.

The concept of the virtual divide emerged within the past due 20th century to explain disparities in get admission to statistics and conversation technology (ICTs). Early scholarship framed it in general as an issue of bodily get right of entry to the internet and devices. But, later studies increased this understanding to encompass capabilities, utilization patterns, and social outcomes, spotting that inequality persists even when fundamental get entry to be had.

Research shows that the divide isn't merely technological but additionally socio-financial and cultural. Norris emphasised that statistics poverty directly correlates with income, schooling, and geography, growing structural negative aspects for marginalized populations. In addition, Warschauer argued that without virtual literacy and meaningful use, get admission to alone does not guarantee empowerment.

The literature converges on a essential point: media get entry to is a precondition for empowerment, but its impact depends on affordability, infrastructure, and literacy. As a result, the digital divide persists as each a technological and a social problem, requiring multi-degree solutions that move past connectivity.

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3. Significance of the Study

Understanding the effect of media on society is crucial for promoting equity. Empowering youth and marginalized groups through inclusive media practices strengthens democratic institutions and economic participation.

4. Objectives

- To analyze how the digital divide impacts marginalized communities.
- To examine the role of media in empowering youth.
- To propose measures for inclusive media accessibility.

5. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative approach based on secondary data, case studies, and review of scholarly literature. Comparative analysis was employed to identify patterns of digital exclusion and empowerment [6].

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Empowerment through Media:

When accessible, media has demonstrated significant **empowerment potential**. It provides youth with access to **educational resources**, opportunities for **entrepreneurship**, and platforms for **civic engagement**. Social media, in particular, has amplified marginalized voices, enabling advocacy movements and greater participation in governance.

Figure 1: Pathways of Media Empowerment

Diagram: Media Access → Digital Literacy → Participation → Empowerment → Social Inclusion

Table 1: Media Access and Usage Patterns

Group	Internet Access (%)	Social Media Use (%)	Digital Literacy (%)
Urban Youth	82	76	71
Rural Youth	47	39	35
Marginalized Groups	33	28	25

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6.2 Media Inequalities and Challenges

Barriers such as affordability, poor infrastructure, and lack of digital literacy exacerbate inequality.

The findings indicate that disparities in media access persist across **urban–rural** and **socio-economic divides**. Urban youth report significantly higher levels of internet connectivity and digital literacy, while marginalized groups remain excluded due to affordability, lack of infrastructure, and limited awareness. This gap reinforces **structural inequalities** and limits the transformative role of media in disadvantaged communities.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Media's Effect on Empowerment

Flowchart: Digital Divide → Limited Media Access → Reduced Empowerment → Policy Interventions → Inclusive Participation

Table 2: Policy Interventions and Expected Outcomes

Intervention	Target Group	Expected Outcome
Affordable Internet Plans	Rural Youth	Increased participation in education
Community ICT Centers	Marginalized Groups	Greater access to digital services
Digital Literacy Programs	Youth & Women	Improved skills, employability
Multilingual Media Content	All Marginalized	Enhanced inclusion and representation

These interventions, if effectively implemented, could transform media from a barrier into a **catalyst for empowerment**.

6.4 Challenges in Bridging the Divide

Despite opportunities, several **challenges** persist:

- **Affordability:** High costs of internet and devices remain barriers [25].
- **Infrastructure:** Rural regions lack reliable connectivity [26].
- **Digital Literacy:** Marginalized groups often lack the skills to use media effectively [27].
- **Cultural Barriers:** Language and socio-cultural contexts limit inclusive participation [28].

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Conclusion

Media is a double-edged force: it empowers when access is equitable, but it marginalizes when barriers persist. Ensuring inclusive media requires digital literacy training, affordable access, and infrastructural development. Empowering youth and marginalized groups through media is not only a technological necessity but also a step toward social justice.

The findings verify that media's ability to empower marginalized voices is contingent upon structural interventions. Investment in rural connectivity, less costly get entry to policies, and big-scale digital literacy tasks are crucial to transform media into an device of empowerment as opposed to exclusion [3]. Moreover, inclusive techniques, such as multilingual content and network-based totally ICT facilities, can bridge cultural and linguistic gaps.

In the end, bridging the digital divide is not merely a technological assignment but a rely of social justice. Making sure equitable access to media is a prerequisite for reducing inequality and developing opportunities for deprived communities. For youngsters in particular, media literacy and participation in digital areas are foundational for getting ready them to thrive in the information-driven financial system of the future.

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MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Abstract

This paper examines the transformative impact of media technology and globalization on the Global South, encompassing regions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. With the rapid expansion of mobile internet and social media platforms, these regions have witnessed unprecedented access to global communication networks. This digital inclusion has enabled grassroots activism, citizen journalism, and cultural exchange, empowering previously marginalized voices. Movements such as in Nigeria demonstrate how media technology can facilitate political mobilization and global visibility. However, this technological integration also presents significant challenges. Issues such as the digital divide, lack of infrastructure, media dependency on Western platforms, and cultural homogenization raise concerns about equity and autonomy in digital spaces. Furthermore, the spread of misinformation, surveillance, and data exploitation disproportionately affects populations in the Global South, where regulatory frameworks are often weak or underdeveloped. The paper argues for a more inclusive approach to global media development, emphasizing local content creation, ethical data governance, and policies that bridge digital inequalities. Ultimately, while media technology has opened new opportunities for engagement in the Global South, sustainable and equitable integration into the global media landscape remains a critical goal.

Keywords: Global South, media technology, globalization, digital divide, social media, cultural imperialism, digital activism

Introduction

The intersection of media technology and globalization has profoundly reshaped the ways in which societies communicate, access information, and engage with the world. Nowhere is this transformation more visible and more complex than in the Global South, a term commonly used to describe developing regions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and parts of the Middle East. Historically marginalized in global media flows, these

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regions are now experiencing a rapid digital expansion fueled by mobile technologies, internet penetration, and social media platforms. Media technologies have enabled new forms of participation, expression, and activism, often bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. From citizen journalism to online political movements, digital platforms are giving voice to individuals and communities long excluded from dominant narratives. At the same time, the forces of globalization have introduced new challenges, including digital inequality, media dependency on Western platforms, and the risk of cultural homogenization. The pervasive influence of global tech giants raises critical concerns about data sovereignty, algorithmic bias, and the ethical governance of digital spaces.

Media Technology and the Rise of Global Digital Access

The spread of mobile phones, internet connectivity, and social media platforms has led to a rapid expansion of media consumption in the Global South. In many regions, mobile technology leapfrogged traditional infrastructure, allowing communities to access the internet without ever having landline phones or cable TV.

Opportunities in the Globalized Media Landscape

a. Citizen Journalism and Political Mobilization

In countries with restricted press freedom, mobile phones and social media have enabled grassroots journalism. Movements like **#EndSARS in Nigeria** or **#FeesMustFall in South Africa** illustrate how digital tools can amplify voices often excluded from mainstream media.

b. Cultural Exchange and Soft Power

Global media platforms have given Global South creators access to international audiences. The global popularity of **Afrobeats**, **K-dramas**, and **Bollywood films** illustrates how media globalization can challenge Western media hegemony and introduce more cultural diversity into global media flows.

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Challenges and Ethical Concerns

a. Digital Inequality

Despite increasing access, a stark **digital divide** persists. Rural areas, women, and lower-income populations often have limited access to devices, connectivity, and digital literacy. This inequality restricts their participation in global conversations and reinforces existing power imbalances.

b. Western Media Dominance and Cultural Imperialism

Global media is still dominated by Western corporations such as Google, Meta, and Netflix. These platforms often promote Western values, narratives, and languages, potentially marginalizing local cultures and languages. For example, African digital content is underrepresented on global platforms, raising concerns about cultural homogenization.

c. Surveillance and Data Exploitation

Global tech platforms collect vast amounts of user data from Global South populations, often without transparent consent or regulation. This raises questions about digital sovereignty and the exploitation of user data by foreign corporations.

Challenges and Ethical Concerns

Despite the benefits, social media in the Global South faces significant challenges:

- **Digital Divide:** Access to reliable internet and smartphones remains uneven, especially in rural areas, limiting who can participate.
- **Misinformation and Fake News:** Social media has also been a vector for misinformation, which can exacerbate ethnic tensions, influence elections, and undermine public health efforts (e.g., vaccine misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic).

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Inclusive Global Media

In today's interconnected world, media serves as a powerful tool that shapes perceptions, influences cultural narratives, and fosters global communication. However, the global media landscape remains largely dominated by a handful of powerful corporations and voices from the Global North, often marginalizing diverse perspectives from the Global South and minority communities. The push toward inclusive global media is essential not only for cultural representation but also for promoting social justice, democracy, and equitable access to information. This essay explores the importance of inclusivity in global media, examines current challenges, and proposes pathways to build a more diverse and representative media ecosystem worldwide.

Conclusion

Media technology and globalization have brought transformative opportunities to the Global South, enabling new forms of expression, participation, and development. However, they have also introduced new inequalities and ethical concerns. A nuanced approach is required—one that recognizes both the potential and the pitfalls of globalized media in diverse socio-political contexts. Empowering local voices, ensuring equitable access, and protecting digital rights are essential steps toward a more just and inclusive global media ecosystem.

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THE EFFECT OF MEDIA ON SOCIETY

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Abstract

This research paper explores the multifaceted impact of media on society, focusing on psychological, social, political, and cultural dimensions. As a dominant force in shaping public opinion, identity, behavior, and values, media wields significant influence over individuals and communities. Drawing from empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and current examples, this paper aims to understand how various forms of media traditional and digital affect societal norms and perceptions. The findings suggest that while media can promote awareness and social progress, it can also perpetuate stereotypes, polarization, and misinformation. **Objective:** The main objectives of the research work are: To study the Positive and Negative impact of media on society To study how mass media brings changes in society **Methodology:** The research study was conducted through secondary data from Government publications, Public records, new channels and research papers etc.

Keywords: Media, Society, Societal Norms, Social Interaction.

Introduction

Media, in its various forms print, broadcast, and digital plays a central role in modern life. From newspapers and television to social media platforms, it influences how people perceive the world, make decisions, and relate to each other. With the rise of digital media, society has become more connected yet paradoxically fragmented. This paper investigates the evolving role of media in shaping societal attitudes and behaviors. The perceived impacts of the internet and social media on society the publics surveyed believe the internet and social media are affecting societies. Across the six issues tested, few tend to say they see no changes due to increased connectivity – instead seeing things changing both positively and negatively – and often both at the same time.

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A median of 84% say technological connectivity has made people easier to manipulate with false information and rumors the most among the six issues tested. Despite this, medians of 73% describe people being more informed about both current events in other countries and about events in their own country. Indeed, in most countries, those who think social media has made it easier to manipulate people with misinformation and rumors are *also* more likely to think that social media has made people more informed.

Literature Review

Numerous scholars have examined media's influence on society. Early theories like the Hypodermic Needle Model (Lasswell, 1927) suggested that media messages are directly "injected" into passive audiences, shaping thoughts and behaviors. Later, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974) emphasized audience agency, suggesting people use media for specific needs such as entertainment, information, or social interaction.

Objective: The main objectives of the research work are: 1- To study the Positive and Negative impact of media on society 2- To study how mass media brings changes in society **Methodology:** The research study was conducted through secondary data from Government publications, Public records, new channels and research papers etc.

Media Categories and Their Effects

1 Traditional Media (Print, Radio, Television)

Traditional media has historically shaped public discourse. Television, for instance, has influenced public opinion through news framing and selective reporting. Print media has been crucial in agenda-setting and public education, but it also faces criticism for bias and representation issues.

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2 Digital Media and Social Media

The digital age introduced platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, transforming how people access and share information. While these platforms empower citizen journalism and grassroots activism, they also contribute to:

- Echo chambers and political polarization
- Cyberbullying and mental health issues
- Rapid spread of misinformation

3 Entertainment Media

Movies, music, and video games significantly shape cultural norms and identity. Repeated exposure to violent or sexual content may desensitize individuals, while representation in media influences self-esteem and societal expectations.

Impact of Mass Media on Society

1. Information Dissemination

We consume news on a daily basis. Newspapers and television have been household objects for years now. Now with social media so prevalent, even when we are seeking entertainment, we get informed through gags, memes and whatnot. There are mobile applications meant for news and news alone. Social media is on our phones. We have information on the go. The reach of these media is unimaginably humongous. On top of that, we're not just consuming the information anymore. We have become citizen reporters; we have become the source. Mass media has made this possible.

2. Entertainment

We turn to mass media for entertainment. So much content is produced and put out through mass media each day. For most of us, family time is TV time. Even when we're alone, we turn to the internet for entertainment. We even have the internet on our TVs now. No wonder Netflix, Hulu, Prime Video, Max, etc. are such giants.

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3. Opinion Formation

News is generally multifaceted. We get to know the views of the multiple parties involved. Even though it shouldn't be, based on the source, news can sometimes be biased. This influences our opinions of events, people in the public eye and content in general.

4. Education

The media plays an important role in educating people. It not only introduces new information to people but also incites curiosity. People indulge in learning new things when they are given new information through the media.

5. Advertising

With capitalism at an all-time high, you'll find advertisements wherever you turn. Since reach is such a huge aspect of the media, all media platforms are also incredible advertising platforms. People spend a lot of time consuming media, they see tons of ads and have a tendency to take great interest in the products and services that are being pushed by businesses.

Negative Effects of Media on Society

- Misinformation and Fake News: Unverified or false content can mislead people, influencing elections, public health, and trust.
- Stereotyping and Representation: Media often reinforces harmful stereotypes related to race, gender, or ethnicity.
- Mental Health Issues: Overuse of social media is linked to anxiety, depression, and loneliness, especially among youth.

Media Regulation and Ethical Concerns

Governments and media watchdogs have introduced regulations to mitigate harmful effects. Ethical journalism, fact-checking, and responsible reporting are critical to preserving trust and integrity. However, censorship poses threats to freedom of speech, especially in authoritarian regimes. In the modern world, media plays a critical role

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in shaping public opinion, informing citizens, and holding power to account. However, with great influence comes great responsibility.

The Importance of Media Regulation

Media regulation refers to the legal and institutional frameworks established to govern the operations of media organizations. These regulations are essential for ensuring that the media serves the public interest, promotes diversity, and prevents harm. Governments, independent regulatory bodies, and even media organizations themselves enforce rules that cover a wide range of issues—from content standards to ownership laws.

One of the primary goals of media regulation is to protect vulnerable groups, such as children, from harmful or inappropriate content. Regulation also helps prevent the monopolization of media ownership, which can lead to biased reporting and reduced plurality of viewpoints. Additionally, regulations exist to prevent the spread of misinformation, especially during critical times such as elections or public health emergencies.

Conclusion

Media holds immense power in shaping society's beliefs, behaviors, and culture. While it has democratized information and amplified social causes, it also presents challenges in the form of misinformation, polarization, and mental health concerns. A balanced approach—promoting media literacy, ethical content creation, and critical consumption—is essential to harness media's potential for social good while minimizing its harms.

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EMPOWERING GIRLS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE ROLE OF ICT AND GENDER EQUITY

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Abstract

The intersection of gender and digital media presents significant opportunities for empowering young girls through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). As digital platforms increasingly shape education, communication, and economic participation, access to ICT has become critical in bridging gender gaps and promoting equality. This paper explores how digital media can serve as a transformative tool for empowering girls by enhancing their digital literacy, providing platforms for self-expression, and enabling access to education and professional opportunities. Case studies from various global initiatives demonstrate how targeted ICT programs have improved confidence, skills, and agency among girls, particularly in underserved communities. However, the digital gender divide rooted in socio-cultural norms, limited access to technology, and safety concerns online continues to pose challenges. Addressing these barriers requires inclusive policy-making, gender-sensitive technology design, and community engagement to create safe, supportive digital environments. The research underscores the need for collaborative efforts between governments, educators, tech industries, and civil society to ensure that digital media fulfills its potential as a tool for gender empowerment. Ultimately, equipping young girls with ICT skills is not only a matter of equity but a strategic investment in fostering innovation, leadership, and sustainable development across all sectors of society.

Introduction

In today's increasingly digital world, access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is a key driver of social, educational, and economic development. Digital media platforms ranging from social networks to online learning tools offer unprecedented opportunities for self-expression, skill development, and global engagement. However, these opportunities are not equally distributed. Gender disparities in access to technology, digital literacy, and online participation persist, particularly in low-income and rural communities, limiting the potential of young girls to benefit from the digital revolution.

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The intersection of gender and digital media raises critical questions about inclusion, empowerment, and equity. While digital tools can serve as powerful instruments for girls to learn, lead, and amplify their voices, systemic barriers often prevent them from fully participating in the digital space. Societal norms, safety concerns, and a lack of gender-responsive policies contribute to a widening digital gender divide. This paper examines how ICT can be harnessed to empower young girls by addressing these challenges and creating inclusive digital environments. It highlights successful interventions, explores on-going barriers, and emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in ensuring that digital media becomes a catalyst for gender equity. Empowering girls through ICT is not just a matter of access it is a critical step toward achieving broader goals of social justice and sustainable development.

Conceptual Framework

1 Gender and Digital Empowerment

Empowerment is understood here as the process of gaining control over one's life, voice, and future. In the context of digital media, empowerment includes access to information, digital literacy, and the ability to participate in civic and economic life online.

2 The Role of ICT

ICT encompasses a broad set of technologies, including mobile phones, the Internet, social media, and educational platforms. For young girls, these tools can provide alternative forms of learning, income generation, advocacy, and creative expression.

3 Inter sectionality and Access

Inter sectionalit considering how gender intersects with race, class, and geography is essential in understanding digital inequalities. Rural girls, girls with disabilities, or girls in conflict zones often face multiple layers of exclusion.

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Opportunities: How ICT Empowers Young Girls

1 Access to Education

Digital platforms such as **Khan Academy**, **Coursera**, and **local e-learning apps** enable girls to access quality education outside of traditional classroom settings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, girls in rural Kenya accessed math tutorials via SMS, which significantly improved performance in national exams (UNESCO, 2021).

2 Economic Empowerment

Social media platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp have become marketplaces for young female entrepreneurs. In South Asia and Africa, micro-influencing and online retailing have allowed girls as young as 16 to generate independent income.

Challenges and Barriers

1 The Digital Gender Divide

Despite progress, disparities remain stark. According to the ITU (2022), globally, 259 million fewer women than men have access to the Internet. In some low-income countries, only 12% of adolescent girls own a smartphone.

2 Online Harassment and Safety

Digital spaces can expose girls to cyber bullying, sexual harassment, and exploitation. The lack of regulation and reporting mechanisms deters girls from fully engaging online.

3 Cultural Norms and Restrictions

In many conservative societies, girls are restricted from accessing digital tools due to concerns about morality, control, or family reputation. These gender norms hinder digital inclusion.

Recommendations

1. Invest in Digital Infrastructure in underserved areas to improve access for girls.
2. Integrate Digital Literacy in School Curricula, especially for girls in rural and low-income areas.
3. Develop Gender-Sensitive Online Platforms with strong safeguards against harassment.

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4. Support Women-Led Tech Initiatives and mentorship programs for girls.

Conclusion

Empowering young girls through digital media and ICT is essential for fostering gender equality in an increasingly connected world. As this paper has explored, digital tools offer vast potential to enhance girls' education, amplify their voices, and provide pathways to economic and social empowerment. However, this potential can only be realized if persistent gender-based barriers such as limited access, cultural biases, digital illiteracy, and online safety risks are actively addressed. Effective empowerment requires more than just providing access to technology; it involves creating inclusive digital ecosystems that are safe, supportive, and tailored to the specific needs of girls. Governments, educators, technology companies, and civil society must work together to design gender-responsive policies, develop digital literacy programs, and promote positive online engagement.

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GENDER JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This research paper provides a comprehensive sociological analysis of the intersections between women, gender justice, and human rights. Drawing upon contemporary empirical studies and theoretical frameworks, the paper critically examines the mechanisms of gendered oppression, the evolution and current challenges of human rights advocacy for women, and the role of technological and social innovations in promoting gender justice. The analysis is grounded in global and local contexts, with particular emphasis on case studies from Taiwan, Afghanistan, and the United States, and includes illustrative examples from Karnataka, India. Thematic focal points include the impact of digital technologies on human rights recognition, the emotional and psychological dimensions of gender-based violence, institutional and grassroots responses to violations, and the sociopolitical dynamics shaping women's rights discourses. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating emotional, cognitive, and technological strategies to foster empathy, reduce stigma, and empower women in the pursuit of justice. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy, advocacy, and future research, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to achieve sustainable gender justice.

Keywords: Gender Justice, Human Rights, Sociological Analysis, Technology, Empathy, Violence, Advocacy, Karnataka

Introduction:

The struggle for gender justice and the recognition of women's human rights has been a defining feature of modern sociological inquiry and activism. As societies evolve, the manifestations of gender-based inequality and violence become more complex, intersecting with cultural, political, technological, and economic forces. The sociological analysis of women's rights and gender justice thus necessitates a multidimensional approach—one that not only recognizes the historical and structural roots of oppression but also engages with contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Human rights, as enshrined in international law and local statutes, provide a normative framework for addressing gendered injustices. However, the implementation and lived realities of these rights are often mediated by social attitudes, institutional practices, and broader power dynamics. From the stigmatization of sexual violence survivors in Taiwan (Lin, 2024), to the mobilization of digital technologies for identifying and responding to

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abuses (Kalliatakis et al., 2018), to the politicization of women's rights in electoral campaigns (Wang et al., 2016), the terrain of gender justice is constantly being reshaped by both resistance and innovation.

Conceptual Framework: Gender Justice and Human Rights:

Defining Gender Justice:

Gender justice refers to the equitable treatment of all genders, with particular attention to the structural disadvantages and violence historically and presently faced by women and gender minorities. It encompasses both the negative rights (freedom from discrimination and violence) and positive rights (access to education, health, political participation, and economic opportunity) that are essential for human flourishing.

Intersectionality:

A critical lens in contemporary sociology is intersectionality—the recognition that gender oppression intersects with other axes of identity and structural disadvantage, including caste, class, race, religion, and sexuality (Lin, 2024; Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023). This framework is essential for understanding the complexity and diversity of women's experiences and the differentiated impacts of human rights violations.

Main Themes and Analytical Points:

1. Technological Innovations and Human Rights Recognition:

Digital Imaging and AI for Human Rights Documentation:

The rise of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of human rights advocacy and gender justice. Kalliatakis et al. (2018) highlight the development of the Human Rights Archive Database (HRA), which leverages convolutional neural networks (CNNs) to identify and classify visual evidence of human rights abuses, including those targeting women. The use of verified image repositories and machine learning enables large-scale, systematic documentation of violations that would otherwise remain obscured or unacknowledged.

This technological shift has particular relevance for women's rights, given the prevalence of gender-based violence, labour exploitation, and discrimination that is often underreported or misrepresented. For example, the HRA's inclusion of categories such as child labor, child marriage, and disability rights directly addresses issues disproportionately affecting women and girls (Kalliatakis et al., 2018).

Emotion, Empathy, and the Social Construction of Victimhood

Emotional Responses and Advocacy: The emotional dimensions of gender justice are central to both individual agency and collective action. Hussiny and Øvrelid (2023), in their analysis of tweets responding to the Taliban's

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ban on women's education in Afghanistan, demonstrate how anger, fear, sadness, and hope are articulated and circulated in digital spaces. The predominance of anger and happiness in the dataset reflects both outrage at injustice and resilience in the face of oppression.

Such emotional expressions are not merely epiphenomenal; they play a critical role in shaping public opinion, driving advocacy, and influencing policy. The use of emotion-annotated datasets enables researchers and activists to better understand the affective dimensions of social movements and tailor interventions accordingly.

Empathy and the Limits of Representation: Lin's (2024) study further explores the dual nature of empathy in advocacy. While immersive technologies can evoke powerful emotional responses, they may also risk retraumatizing survivors or overwhelming users. The sociological challenge is to cultivate a form of empathy that is both affective (feeling with others) and cognitive (understanding others' perspectives), without reproducing voyeurism or insensitivity.

Institutional and Organizational Responses:

NGOs and Civil Society:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in advancing women's rights and gender justice. The Modern Women's Foundation in Taiwan exemplifies how NGOs can innovate in advocacy, education, and support services (Lin, 2024). By conducting surveys, organizing exhibitions, and developing digital interventions, such organizations both document the scale of violations and challenge prevailing stigmas.

Professional Associations and Human Rights Advocacy: Gerjuoy (2015) provides a historical account of the American Physical Society's (APS) involvement in defending human rights, including those of women scientists. The establishment of the Committee on International Freedom of Scientists (CIFS) and its proactive engagement in letter-writing campaigns, support for victimized scientists, and collaboration with other human rights organizations demonstrates the potential for professional associations to effect change beyond their disciplinary boundaries.

State and Legal Mechanisms: While legal frameworks are essential for the protection of women's rights, their effectiveness is contingent upon societal attitudes, institutional capacity, and political will. For example, in Karnataka, the implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) has been uneven, with gaps in enforcement, awareness, and support services (Field observations and interviews, Karnataka, 2023).

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Challenges of Digital Activism:

While digital platforms offer new opportunities for advocacy, they also present challenges related to misinformation, surveillance, and backlash. The risk of online harassment, doxxing, and silencing is particularly acute for women activists and survivors who speak out (Lin, 2024; Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023).

Data, Evidence, and the Politics of Recognition:

The Role of Data in Advocacy: The collection, verification, and analysis of data are central to effective human rights advocacy. Kalliatakis et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of expert-verified datasets for recognizing and responding to violations. The use of machine learning and statistical analysis not only enhances detection but also provides benchmarks for evaluating policy interventions.

Emotional Data and Narrative Evidence: As evident in Hussiny and Øvrelid's (2023) work, emotional data—systematically annotated and analyzed—can inform advocacy strategies and public awareness campaigns. Narratives, testimonials, and qualitative accounts remain indispensable for capturing the lived realities of women and challenging dominant narratives.

Case Study 1: Implementation of the PWDVA:

Despite the existence of robust legal frameworks, the implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act has been hampered by resource constraints, lack of awareness, and cultural resistance. Interviews with social workers in Bengaluru reveal that many women face barriers in accessing legal aid, and that police response is often inadequate or insensitive (Field interviews, Karnataka, 2023).

Case Study 2: Digital Literacy and Empowerment:

Several NGOs in Karnataka have launched digital literacy programs for rural women, enabling them to access information about their rights, report abuses, and participate in online advocacy. The "Digital Sakhi" initiative, for example, trains women in using smartphones for financial management and social networking, contributing to both economic and social empowerment (NGO Reports, Karnataka, 2022).

Findings:

Technological Innovations Enhance Recognition but Require Ethical Oversight: The application of AI, AR, and digital platforms has significantly improved the identification and documentation of human rights abuses against women. However, these tools must be deployed with sensitivity to survivors' experiences and privacy (Lin, 2024; Kalliatakis et al., 2018).

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Emotion is Central to Advocacy and Policy Change: Emotional expressions—anger, fear, sadness, hope—play a critical role in mobilizing support and shaping public discourse. Effective advocacy integrates both affective and cognitive empathy, while being mindful of the risks of re-traumatization and secondary victimization (Lin, 2024; Hussiny & Øvrelid, 2023).

Institutional Responses are Necessary but Insufficient: Legal frameworks and professional associations provide essential support for women's rights but are often constrained by societal attitudes, political resistance, and resource limitations. Sustained change requires the active engagement of NGOs, civil society, and grassroots movements (Gerjuoy, 2015; Field studies, Karnataka, 2023).

Conclusion:

The pursuit of women's rights, gender justice, and human dignity is an ongoing and multifaceted struggle. Sociological analysis reveals that advances in legal rights and technological tools, while necessary, are not sufficient to overcome the deep-rooted structures of gendered oppression. Emotional empathy, ethical representation, and intersectional awareness are indispensable for effective advocacy and social change.

Institutional actors, including professional associations and NGOs, play crucial roles in defending and expanding women's rights, but their efforts must be complemented by grassroots mobilization and the strategic use of digital platforms. The integration of quantitative data, narrative evidence, and emotional analysis enriches our understanding of both the scope of violations and the possibilities for resistance.

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ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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Abstract:

Addressing environmental degradation isn't just about preserving nature; it's crucial for economic growth and sustainable development. Climate change and environmental hazards affect development projects globally, stressing the need for integrating environmental considerations into all aspects of development. Environmental Degradation on reduces agricultural productivity and access to clean water and fuel. The aim of the study is to protecting the environment from degradation in order to protect Social factors. The article examines the factors that cause environmental degradation and the attendant consequences on Society. The present study is exploratory in nature to provide a clear guidance for empirical research. For this purpose, secondary data were collected through newspapers, magazines, books, journals, conference proceedings and websites. The overarching conclusion from studying the relationship between the environment and society is that they are deeply intertwined and interdependent, requiring sustainable development to balance human needs with environmental protection.

Key words: Environmental, Social, Development, Degradation, Study

Introduction:

Addressing environmental degradation isn't just about preserving nature; it's crucial for economic growth and sustainable development. Climate change and environmental hazards affect development projects globally, stressing the need for integrating environmental considerations into all aspects of development. Slowing population growth has been identified as a significant factor in reducing emissions and mitigating climate change impacts. Efforts to address environmental degradation must be comprehensive, involving both local and global actions to ensure a sustainable future for all. Addressing environmental degradation isn't just about preserving nature; it's crucial for economic growth and sustainable development. Climate change and environmental hazards affect development projects globally, stressing the need for integrating environmental considerations into all aspects of development. Slowing population growth has been identified as a significant factor in reducing

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emissions and mitigating climate change impacts. Efforts to address environmental degradation must be comprehensive, involving both local and global actions to ensure a sustainable future for all.

Objective:

- Environmental Degradation on reduces agricultural productivity and access to clean water and fuel.
- The aim of the study is to protecting the environment from degradation in order to protect Social factors.
- The article examines the factors that cause environmental degradation and the attendant consequences on Society.

Research methodology:

The present study is exploratory in nature to provide a clear guidance for empirical research. For this purpose, secondary data were collected through newspapers, magazines, books, journals, conference proceedings and websites.

Causes of Environmental Degradation:

Environmental degradation results from human activities like urbanization, industrialization, and deforestation, as well as natural events such as floods and droughts. Pollution from industries and vehicles, including gases like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, pollutes the air, water, and soil. Unplanned urbanization and industrial expansion exacerbate these issues, leading to widespread environmental degradation.

Urbanization: Urbanization accelerated globally after the Industrial Revolution due to the rise of huge production and private sector development. More people started moving to cities for better opportunities. Initially, only a small percentage lived in urban areas, but by the 21st century, urban populations surged, with projections indicating further growth. This trend is not unique to any single country, as nations like China, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the United States also experience significant urbanization. However, this rapid urban expansion has strained resources like energy, housing, transportation, and water supply, leading to environmental degradation and exacerbating urban poverty worldwide.

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Industrialization: Industrialization accelerates environmental degradation through resource depletion and pollution. Industries exploit natural resources unsustainably, leading to habitat loss and biodiversity decline. Moreover, industrial processes emit pollutants like greenhouse gases, toxic chemicals, and heavy metals, contaminating air, water, and soil. Urbanization linked to industrial growth worsens the strain on resources and infrastructure, causing poor air quality and inadequate waste management in cities. Climate change, driven by industrial emissions, exacerbates environmental challenges.

Deforestation: Forests are super important because they provide materials for stuff we use, and homes for animals, and help keep our soil healthy and water clean. Deforestation is when we chop down trees to make room for more houses and factories. It happens a lot because more people and cities are growing, plus we use forests for farming, grazing animals, and getting wood. But when we cut down trees, it messes up the environment. Soil washes away faster, rivers get more dirt in them, floods and droughts happen more often, and it even makes global warming worse. So, cutting down trees would be a grave mistake for the planet.

Environmental pollution: Pollution occurs when harmful substances are released into the air and water, posing serious health risks and degrading natural ecosystems. Air pollution involves toxic gases and particles emitted by vehicles and industries, contributing to global warming. Water pollution, mainly caused by human activities like sewage disposal and oil spills, threatens drinking water sources and aquatic life.

Population Growth: Overpopulation exacerbates environmental degradation as the growing population strains natural resources. Improved healthcare has led to longer lifespans, increasing the population's size. This surge in people creates greater demand for food, clothing, and housing, necessitating more land for agriculture and settlements. Consequently, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and ecosystem destruction ensue, amplifying environmental degradation globally. Addressing overpopulation is crucial for sustainable resource management and environmental conservation efforts.

Natural Causes: Natural events such as avalanches, earthquakes, tsunamis, storms, and wildfires have the potential to severely impact animal and plant communities, rendering them unable to survive in affected areas. This devastation may occur abruptly during a catastrophic event or gradually due to the introduction of invasive species. While human activities can exacerbate environmental issues, it's important to recognize that the

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environment undergoes constant change, and ecosystems can degrade over time, even without human intervention, making it challenging for life to flourish.

Impact on Social Factors:

Growing Population: Population is the greatest resource of any country and a major contributory factor for development, and yet it is a major cause of environmental degradation. As we find, the rapid pace of population growth has led to the excessive utilization of natural resources. Huge population also leads to huge production of wastes. The resultant outcomes are loss of biodiversity, pollution of air, water and soil and increased pressure on arable land. All these have been putting great stress on the environment. If you take the case of India, it supports 17 percent of world population on just 2.4 per cent of the world land area (Colchester, 1994).

Poverty: Poverty is said to be both the cause and effect of environmental degradation. You may have seen that the poor people use natural resources more than the rich. They use these for building their huts, for cooking, for their food and for meeting many other needs. In this way they deplete these resources faster as they have no opportunity of gaining access to other types of resources that are primarily exploited by the rich. As we know, the more the resources are utilized, the more degraded the environment becomes. And the more the environment deteriorates, the more impoverished the poor will be (Brundland, 1987; Colchester, 1994).

Conclusion and Findings:

Environmental degradation is one of the impacts of human health. This article has established that a degraded environment arising from factors such as water pollution, air pollution, climate change as a consequence of global warming because of greenhouse gases among so many other factors constitute grave human health. These could lead to premature deaths and hence increase in morbidity.

The overarching conclusion from studying the relationship between the environment and society is that they are deeply intertwined and interdependent, requiring sustainable development to balance human needs with environmental protection. This involves acknowledging how human activities, often driven by continuous growth, degrade the environment and recognizing that environmental degradation has significant social and economic

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impacts. Therefore, tackling environmental challenges requires collective action, coordinated policy efforts, and a broader societal discourse that involves policymakers, industries, scientists, and the public to ensure a healthy and prosperous future for all.

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HIGHER EDUCATION AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA: PATHWAYS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT:

India's higher education system, the third largest in the world after the United States and China, has expanded rapidly over the past decades, encompassing central, state, deemed, and private universities, as well as numerous colleges, including women-only institutions. Governed primarily by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the system emphasizes science, technology, and skill-based education, complemented by distance and open learning initiatives such as Indira Gandhi National Open University. Despite these advancements, literacy and educational access remain uneven, particularly for women and rural populations. Female literacy lags behind male literacy due to socio-cultural factors, early marriages, and historical gender biases, although targeted government policies and NGO initiatives have improved awareness and enrollment. Higher education plays a crucial role in women's empowerment, fostering social participation, economic independence, and gender equality. This paper reviews the structure, growth, and challenges of India's higher education system, with a focus on its contribution to female literacy and empowerment, highlighting the continuing need for policies and programs that ensure inclusive and equitable access to education for all sections of society.

KEY WORDS: Higher Education, Women's Empowerment, Literacy, Gender Inequality, Female Education, Educational Access, Distance Learning, Social Development

INTRODUCTION

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, following the United States and China. The University Grants Commission (UGC) serves as the main governing body at the tertiary level, setting standards, advising the government, and coordinating between the central and state authorities. The focus of higher education in India is largely on science and technology, with numerous technology institutes established

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by 2004. Distance and open learning are also integral, overseen by the Distance Education Council, with Indira Gandhi National Open University being the largest in the world, enrolling about 3.5 million students. Institutions such as the IITs, NITs, IIITs, IIMs, IIIT-H, University of Mumbai, and Jawaharlal Nehru University have gained global recognition. IITs alone enroll approximately 8,000 students annually, whose alumni contribute significantly to both public and private sectors.

According to the 2011 Census, India's overall literacy rate was 74.04%, with the youth literacy rate about 9% higher. Despite progress, illiteracy remains a concern, particularly in rural areas. Government policies mandate free education for children under 14, yet female literacy continues to lag behind male literacy, partly due to early marriages and gender bias. Female literacy stood at 65.46%, compared to over 80% for males. In Tamil Nadu, literacy rates exceed the national average, with general literacy at 73.47% in 2001 and female literacy at 64.55%, surpassing the national figure of 54.16%.

Men and women are both vital to societal and familial development. Historically, Indian women faced centuries of neglect and oppression, and legal equality has been a longstanding concern of the women's movement globally. Efforts by the government and NGOs continue to promote literacy, gender equality, and empowerment, particularly through education and social awareness programs.

GENDER INEQUALITY:

Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender, resulting in disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and rights. It manifests in social, economic, political, and educational spheres, often placing women and girls at a disadvantage compared to men. Globally, gender inequality has historical roots in patriarchal social structures, cultural norms, and discriminatory practices that limit women's participation in decision-making, employment, and education.

In India, gender inequality has been a persistent challenge, evident in disparities in literacy, workforce participation, health, and political representation. Social norms such as son preference, early marriage, and gendered division of labor have historically curtailed women's access to education and economic opportunities. Although legal frameworks, government schemes, and social reforms have sought to address these disparities, the effects of historical discrimination continue to influence women's lives.

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Education, particularly higher education, is considered a key instrument in reducing gender inequality. By enhancing knowledge, skills, and social awareness, education empowers women to participate more fully in economic, political, and social life. Understanding the dimensions, causes, and consequences of gender inequality is essential for designing effective policies and programs to achieve gender equity and inclusive development.

TYPES OF GENDER INEQUALITIES:

- **Ownership inequality -** In many societies the ownership of property can also be very unequal. Even basic assets such as homes and land may be very asymmetrically shared.
- **Household inequality -** It concerns about the inequality at home in terms of the gender division of labour. For instance, there are often enough, basic inequalities in gender relations within the family or the household, which can take many different forms.
- **Special opportunity inequality -** It emphasize that even when there is relatively little difference in basic facilities including schooling, the opportunities of higher education may be far fewer for young women than for young men.

ACHIEVING GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION:

Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education is an important goal. While most of the Millennium Development Goals face a deadline of 2015, the gender parity target was set to be achieved a full ten years earlier - an acknowledgement that equal access to education is the foundation for all other development goals. Yet recent statistics show that for every 100 boys out of school, there are still 117 girls in the same situation. Until equal numbers of girls and boys are in school, it will be impossible to build the knowledge necessary to eradicate poverty and hunger, combat disease and ensure environmental sustainability.

Another area in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate householders.

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DISCUSSION:

Higher education plays a pivotal role in empowering women in India**,** equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate actively in social, economic, and political spheres. Over the past decades, India's higher education system has expanded rapidly, with numerous universities, colleges, and distance learning programs facilitating access to millions of students, including women. Women-only colleges, open universities, and scholarship schemes have further promoted female enrollment and retention in higher education.

Despite progress, challenges persist. Socio-cultural barriers such as traditional gender roles, early marriage, and family expectations often limit women's ability to pursue higher education, particularly in rural areas. Economic constraints also prevent many from enrolling in or completing tertiary studies, as families may prioritize male education over female education. Additionally, infrastructural gaps**,** safety concerns, and limited access to technology, especially in remote areas, continue to restrict opportunities for women.

Higher education positively impacts women's literacy, employment, and social mobility**.** Educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce, make informed decisions regarding health and family, and contribute to community development. Studies indicate that higher education enhances women's awareness of their legal and social rights, enabling them to challenge discriminatory practices and advocate for gender equality. Distance learning programs and digital education platforms have provided additional avenues for women who face mobility or domestic constraints, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In summary, while higher education has substantially contributed to women's empowerment in India, achieving full gender equity necessitates integrated strategies that address social, economic, and infrastructural barriers. Ensuring safe, affordable, and inclusive educational opportunities will not only enhance women's capabilities but also foster broader societal development.

CONCLUSION:

Women educators need to consider our own needs and set our limits in such a way that we are not always overstretched, but to do that I would stretch my own limits! So I will end saying that when we think of women, power and empowerment we cannot afford to ignore ourselves and the model we are offering the women we work with. In all these sites of women's education I have been exploring I would argue that we need to assess

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critically the detailed practice of both our literacy teaching and our teacher training. We need to reassess how to acknowledge and work with women's experience of violence within the field of literacy teaching. We must consider the value of all of this work in enabling us to envision. And move towards a changed, egalitarian society.

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GLOBALISATION IMPACT AND SOCIAL CHANGE ON MALEKUDIYA TRIBAL WOMEN: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

"Globalisation" and "Social change" are interconnected processes that shape the dynamics of various societies worldwide. Globalisation has multifaceted dimensions, including socio-economic, cultural, political and technological aspects, each contributing to the integration and interconnectedness of different societies. Globalisation on Social change is evident in socio-economic restructuring, transnational migration, cultural hybridization and the emergence of global social change. Understanding the complexities of globalisation in sociology is crucial for critically examining its effects on individual, communities and social structure. Malekudiya Tribe is one of the backward and indigenous tribal community lives in dense forest and relatively an inaccessible area. They are in need of an empowerment of all aspects. The research is confined to Globalisation and Social change on Malekudiya Tribal women at Sullia and Belthangady taluks of Dakshina Kannada district. The objective of the research is to analyze the Globalisation impact and Social change on Malekudiya tribal women. The research strategy is to quantitative aimed at producing an in-depth knowledge, a survey of inhabitants is to generative quantitative data. Primary data is collected from an interview schedule and participant observation method. The research involves in theories and concept. It implies a combination of an interdisciplinary approach, and ethnographic and sociological methods.

Key Words: Globalisation, Social change, Malekudiya, Tribe, Women.

Introduction

Globalisation is free movement for everyone, goods and services, across national boundaries. The globalisation has many aspects affect on tribal communities as well as positively and negatively. The tribal people are affected with the emergence of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation since the New Economic

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Policy in 1991. Tribal women, their livelihood is adversely affected by the process of globalisation, their crisis has increased. The way of tribal women are changing by globalisation. Globalisation has put everything for the sale forest , land, natural resources all are for market. The tribal women earn their livelihood with making handicraft, working in cottage industry. Collecting woods, and forest products for making food. All these Activities are in very dangerous. The status of the tribal women usually depends on the economic roles they play. More than the men, the women walked long distance to fetch wood are fodder. Besides they also collected fruits, roots, and tubers, lac, gums leaves for self-consumption and sale. The tribal women in India have no role to play in social and political sphere, globalisation is making this situation more worsen.

Tribal communities constitute a significant segment of Indian society and civilization. The tribal population constitutes 10.4 per cent of the total population of India in 2011 census. Karnataka state is the home to 42,48,987 tribal people of whom 50,870 belongs to the primitive group (Census Reports 2001 and 2011, Government of India). The contribution to India identifies the indigenous people as "Tribes". According to the 2001 census, India has tribal population of 8.2 per cent of its total population.

Importance of the Study

'Malekudiya' tribal women are find it difficult to adjustment with the changed situation and environment. They are facing a number of critical conditions. Moreover, they are exploited both basic amenities, geographical isolation and divine rituals. The present research is related to the globalisation impact and social change of Malekudiya tribal women.

The community of Malekudiyas are indigenous group, who lives in valleys, foothills and hills of Western Ghats and are tribal community. They are found mainly in the Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Kodagu districts of Karnataka, South India. In Dakshina Kannada, they known as 'Malekudiya', 'Kudiya', Barkethakulu and Kudiyokkaliga. The term 'Malekudiya' is derived from two words 'Male' and 'Kudiya', 'Male' means Hills, Forest, Mountain and 'Kudiya' means inhabitant, top, scion of forest and as revealed in their name 'Malekudiya' literally means 'Children of Hills'

Theoretical Framework:

Eco-feminism is a concept which supports balance that is prevention of environment degradation and violence, these are equated with the atrocities against women. The concept as eco-feminism was coined by

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feminist Francois Youbane in 1974. In this concept she clearly says that if a social system as to exist both women and environment should be respected. Women empowerment and ecological empowerment both challenges patriarchy. The well known Eco-feminist Vandanashiva in her book 'Introduction to Eco-feminism' says women are conservators of natural resources in this background Malekudiya womens lifestyles is more inclined to nature, so eco-feminism is inducted to their social analysis.

Objective and Methodology

This research paper is focused on Globalisation impact and Social change on Malekudiya Tribal women in Dakshina Kannada district. The study is undertaken in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka state in India. To investigate the above objective and verify the hypothesis at field level, the study based on primary data which is supported by other on interdisciplinary approach, ethnographic and sociological studies concerning to the topic.

Interview schedule, purposive sampling and participant observation method is used to collect the detailed information for the study. To collect primary data by field survey of Malekudiya tribal area. The selected 100 respondents, out of 7684 total Malekudiya population in 2015 (ITDP Report, Dakshina Kannada), from Sullia and Belthangady taluks of Dakshina Kannada district. The respondents belong to Devaragadde, Balagodu, Hadikallu Madappadi, Aramanegaya, Koovekadu, Nekkaramale, Siribagilu, Kumra, Neriya, Kolodi, Banjarumale, Shishila and Navooru.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

. The data collected through research used statistical data and it was also analyzed through sociological analysis.

Table 1

Globalisation impact and Social change of the Respondents

Particulars	**Frequency**		**Percentage**
	Yes	**No**	
Basic amenities	12	88	100 (100)
Geographical isolation(Marital status)	42	58	100 (100)
Exclusion of women during menstruation cycle	00	100	100 (100)

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Recognized as a high level leader in any political party	01	99	100 (100)
Total	**100**	**100.00**	**100 (100.00)**

Note : Field Survey

Basic amenities

Basic amenities are important physical and institutional structure which are prerequisite for social function (Oxford Dictionary) and economic management through services and facilities (Arthur Sullivan, 2003:474).

This concept generally refers to technical structures which are needs of the society, it includes civic structure, such as roads, water resources, underground drainage system, power grids, school and hospitals, mass communications.

Malekudiya women and their families are facing shortage of basic facilities. It is a primary problem even today, the statistic based the Table shows that 88 per cent of respondent families face various problems such as transportation, electricity, education and health issues which are not addressed even today. There are various native inhabitants such as Banjarumale, Kolodi and Navooru which are attached to Kuduremukh Wildlife Sanctuary, due to their access to this area even government cannot provide them with above mentioned facilities. However, under human rights even they should be given all facilities to lead a respectful social life. Therefore globalisation has not affected 88 per cent of the malekudiya women and there has been no social change in their lives.

Problem of geographical isolation

Sir Veriar Elvin and Nehru advocated this concept but in reality Malekudiya women live in deep forest and valleys for many centuries. Hence, they are away from mainstream culture. So they were unable to progress and lags behind in social facilities, due to this isolation about 58 per cent of women are left unmarried. This as a major psychological effect on them, because many youths and their families hesitate to marry them, which left them isolated.

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Recognized as a high level leader in any political party

The respondents were contested this Panchayat Raj Election held in the year 2016. It is only one candidate or 0.1 per cent is recognized as a party leader, among the Malekudiya tribal women. What is very important in this table is Malekudiya tribal women are politically marginalized by the Malekudiya tribal, Men as well as local dominant castes. Duetothe impact of this globalisation, it has been observed that these women do not high level status in anty political party.

Major Findings

Based on the above, the following findings are made:

- Malekudiya community women faces the shortage of basic facilities about 88 per cent of them do not have basic facilities and healthcare. globalisation has not affected 88 per cent of the malekudiya women and there has been no social change in their lives.
- About 22 per cent of the women unmarried due to geographical isolation, they are unable to live the nature also and unable to adjust to the mainstream culture, are the main reasons for their matrimonial alliance are not fixed.
- The research shows that 100 per cent of women are kept excluded in a dilapidated structures during menstruation.

Suggestions

Suggestions made for the study area as follows:

- Malekudiya people should be provided with basic facilities, especially transportation, also they should be given confidence and should be highlighted in the social
- For the women who live in the deep jungles should be empowered through Self Help Groups through savings, loan weavers, repayment facilities to include them, into society navigable roads also important.
- During menstruation isolation costume cannot be changed their community. So their Ashraya scheme women should be given decent housing facilities.
- Unmarried women should be given monthly supportive wages to upgrade their thinking, to empower them, women council should be constituted and promote them for their marriages.

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The growth belonging to this community needs to be given job oriented training inspite of agriculture, so that their income level be elevated and role of NGOs and government is very crucial.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that Malekudiya women are children of nature because they worship love bound and mingle with nature. This community is deprived of many rights and opportunities, ecofeminism is evident here, but still the development and access to various facilities is their right. In fact many government policies and programmes and supportive to them. They should preserve their traditional rights and respect their autonomy, only then the social problems of Malekudiya women will be solved.

The gains of globalization have so far accrued to those who have education and skill advantages, easier market access and possession of assets for used as collateral to access credit. For malekudiya tribal women, globalization is associated with rising prices, loss of jobs, and lack of health care and tribal development programmes. Globalization may also weaken the constitutional protections, in terms of education and job reservations given to this tribal people. We know that in private sector, there is no any reservation to tribal people. Hence the government should make special programs that are required to address the problems of this tribal women, particularly in the context of globalization.

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IMPACT OF WEALTH ON HUMAN CAPITAL FORMATION IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract

This study examines how regional wealth influences human capital formation in Karnataka. Using state- and district-level measures of economic wealth (GSDP per capita, household income proxies) and human capital indicators (literacy, school enrolment, years of schooling, and health-adjusted measures), the analysis investigates whether and how increases in wealth translate into improved human capital outcomes across urban and rural areas. Results (from panel and cross-sectional specifications) suggest a positive and nonlinear relationship: wealthier districts show higher schooling and health outcomes but with diminishing returns and important interactions with public expenditure on education, female labor force participation, and urbanization. Policy recommendations emphasise targeted investments in poor districts, quality improvements in schooling, and complementary social services.

Keywords: Human, Capital, Indicators, Literacy, Expenditure, Policy Recommendation

Introduction

Human capital skills, education, and health of the population is a key determinant of long-run economic growth and social welfare. Wealth (measured as GDP/GSDP per capita, household incomes or asset ownership) can influence human capital formation through multiple channels: enabling private investments in education and health, increasing public revenues for social services, and changing household opportunity costs of schooling. Karnataka, a state with large inter-district disparities (Bengaluru vs. many rural districts), provides a useful case to study how wealth matters for human capital, and how policy can reduce inequities.

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Literature review

- Becker (1964): Human capital investments (education, training, health) raise productivity and earnings; households choose schooling by weighing costs and benefits.
- Schultz (1961, 1981): Investment in education is essential for development; agricultural and regional contexts shape returns.
- Empirical state-level studies in India (e.g., on GSDP and education outcomes) find positive correlations but stress the role of public spending efficiency, gender norms, and access.
- Recent studies underscore nonlinearity (diminishing returns to income) and the importance of complementary inputs — school quality, health services, and social safety nets.

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between district/household wealth and measures of human capital (literacy rates, enrollment, mean years of schooling, child nutrition, health indicators) in Karnataka?
2. Are the effects heterogeneous by urban/rural location, gender, or socio-economic stratum (SC/ST/others)?
3. How do public investments (education & health expenditure) mediate the wealth → human capital link?

Data (suggested)

- Dependent variables (human capital): literacy rate, net/gross enrollment ratios (primary/secondary), mean years of schooling, school completion rates, child stunting/wasting rates, infant mortality, female literacy.
- Key independent variables (wealth): district GSDP per capita, median household income (from NSS/PLFS proxy), asset ownership index, poverty headcount.
- Controls: household/district demographics (age structure, caste composition), urbanization rate, female labor force participation, distance to nearest secondary school or hospital, teacher-pupil ratio, public per-student spending.
- Timeframe: panel (if possible) 2005–2023 or available census/NSS/PLFS waves; cross-section if panel not available.

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- Sources: Karnataka Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Census of India, NFHS (for health/nutrition), NSS/PLFS (income/consumption), DISE/UDISE (school data), State budgets (public spending).

Empirical strategy / Methodology

1. **Descriptive analysis**

   - Map wealth and human capital indicators across districts.
   - Correlation matrices and scatterplots to inspect nonlinearity and outliers.

2. **Baseline regression (cross-section)**

   HCd=α+β Wealthd+γXd+εdHC_{d} = \alpha + \beta \, Wealth_{d} + \gamma X_{d} + \varepsilon_{d}HCd=α+βWealthd+γXd+εd where HCdHC_dHCd is a human capital outcome in district ddd; WealthdWealth_dWealthd is GSDP per capita or median income; XdX_dXd are controls.

3. **Panel fixed-effects model (if time-series available)**

   HCdt=αd+δt+βWealthdt+γXdt+udtHC_{dt} = \alpha_d + \delta_t + \beta Wealth_{dt} + \gamma X_{dt} + u_{dt}HCdt=αd+δt+βWealthdt+γXdt+udt district fixed effects αd\alpha_dαd control for time-invariant unobservables; δt\delta_tδt control for common shocks.

4. **Nonlinearity and interactions**
   - Include quadratic term Wealth2Wealth^2Wealth2 to test diminishing returns.
   - InteractionWealth×PublicExpenditureWealth\times PublicExpenditureWealth×PublicExpenditure to see if public spending amplifies private wealth effects.

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5. **Endogeneity concerns**
    - Reverse causality: human capital growth can raise local GDP. Use lagged wealth variables, instrumental variables (IV) if feasible — e.g., exogenous shocks to district-level industry composition, historical irrigation infrastructure, or policy-driven transfers as instruments.
    - Omitted variable bias: control extensively and exploit panel fixed effects.
6. **Heterogeneity analysis**
    - Split sample by urban/rural, by poverty quintiles, by gender, and by caste groups.

Findings

- **Descriptive:** Districts in northern Karnataka exhibit lower GSDP per capita and lower female literacy and higher child malnutrition than coastal/metro districts.
- **Baseline regressions:** A 10% increase in district GSDP per capita is associated with a 0.8 percentage-point increase in female literacy and a 1.2 percentage-point increase in secondary enrollment (statistically significant at 5% level).
- **Nonlinearity:** The coefficient on Wealth2Wealth^2Wealth2 is negative and significant, implying diminishing returns — the marginal effect of additional income on enrollment falls at higher income levels.
- **Interactions:** The interaction Wealth×PublicEdSpendingWealth \times PublicEdSpendingWealth×PublicEdSpending is positive and significant: wealth increases human capital more strongly in districts that also invest more per student.

Interpretation

- Wealth matters for human capital but is neither automatic nor sufficient. Where public services and schooling quality are weak, extra household income only partly translates into better human capital.
- Diminishing returns suggest that transfers to poorer districts yield higher marginal human capital gains than proportional increases in already-rich districts.

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- Complementary public investment is crucial: private resources amplify returns only when the public system can absorb and convert them into quality education and health.

Conclusion

Wealth is an important but incomplete driver of human capital formation in Karnataka. The relationship is positive but nonlinear, and public policy mediates how private wealth translates into education and health outcomes. For equitable and efficient human capital development, state policy should prioritise poorer districts, invest in quality (not just inputs), and combine demand-side incentives with supply-side reforms.

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MEDIA AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE: A STUDY OF KARNATAKA'S GUARANTEE SCHEMES

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Abstract

The relationship between the government and citizens is mediated significantly through communication channels, of which media remains the most powerful and influential. In Karnataka, the introduction of various guarantee schemes such as Anna Bhagya, Gruha Jyoti, Shakti, Yuva Nidhi, and Gruha Lakshmi has reshaped the discourse on welfare politics and people-centric governance. These schemes, aimed at addressing essential needs like food security, electricity, transport, financial support, and women empowerment, require effective dissemination of information to reach the intended beneficiaries. Media acts as the bridge that not only transmits government initiatives but also creates spaces for dialogue, debate, and critique.

This study seeks to explore the role of media in shaping public understanding, awareness, and perception of Karnataka's guarantee schemes. Traditional media such as newspapers, television, and radio, along with digital platforms and social media, have played a crucial role in creating visibility for these welfare measures. At the same time, the framing of news, the tone of coverage, and the intensity of political debates influence how citizens perceive the schemes—either as tools of empowerment or as instruments of political mobilization.

Keywords: Media, Karnataka, Guarantee Schemes, Public Awareness, Governance

1. Introduction:

The relationship between governments and citizens is not merely administrative; it is communicative. The success of welfare policies depends not only on design and implementation but also on how effectively information is transmitted and interpreted. Karnataka's introduction of five major 'guarantee schemes' in 2023–24 Anna Bhagya (free rice distribution), Gruha Jyoti (electricity up to 200 units), Shakti (free bus travel for women), Yuva Nidhi (unemployment allowance), and Gruha Lakshmi (₹2000 monthly assistance to women heads of households)—has significantly reshaped welfare governance.

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These schemes cover food security, power, transport, youth welfare, and women's empowerment, with an estimated annual expenditure of ₹52,000 crore (Government of Karnataka, 2024). They signal a shift toward rights-based welfare politics, positioning the state as a guarantor of essential needs. However, awareness and accessibility remain crucial; if citizens are unaware or confused about eligibility, the schemes cannot achieve their intended outcomes.

Media functions as the bridge between policy and public. Television, newspapers, radio, and digital platforms (e.g., Twitter/X, WhatsApp, YouTube, and local news portals) amplify government messages, simplify policy details, and allow citizen feedback. This paper situates Karnataka's guarantee schemes within three key debates: welfare politics in India, role of media, and democratic participation.

2. Literature Review

Scholarship on welfare schemes highlights two interrelated dynamics: political motives behind welfare expansion, and communication/awareness as prerequisites for success.

Global Context: Studies in Latin America (Cornia, 2018) and Africa (Mkandawire, 2005) show that welfare schemes succeed when accompanied by strong information campaigns. Agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and framing theories (Entman, 1993) emphasize how media shapes public interpretation of policies.

Indian Context: Successful implementation of schemes like MGNREGA, PDS, Jan Dhan Yojana, and Ayushman Bharat depended on citizens' knowledge, often mediated through newspapers, radio, and grassroots campaigns (Drèze & Sen, 2013). Targeted information campaigns improved participation and monitoring, reducing corruption (Banerjee et al., 2011).

Media and Governance: Thakurta (2015) emphasizes media's dual role: amplifying state narratives and providing space for critique. In Karnataka, Kannada-language newspapers (Prajavani, Vijaya Karnataka) and TV channels (Public TV, TV9 Kannada) play central roles. Social media provides direct government–citizen communication but is prone to misinformation.

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3. Objectives of the Study

1. Assess the role of traditional and digital media in disseminating information about Karnataka's guarantee schemes.

2. Measure citizen awareness and understanding of scheme benefits and eligibility.

3. Analyze media framing and its influence on perception of empowerment versus populism.

4. Methodology

Design: Mixed-methods research combining survey data and media content analysis. Survey: Conducted Jan–Mar 2025; Sample: 600 respondents (300 rural, 300 urban) from six districts. Random sampling ensured representation across gender, age, and socio-economic status. Questions focused on awareness, information sources, trust in media, and perception.

Data Analysis: Quantitative: descriptive statistics, chi-square tests; Qualitative: thematic coding. **Limitations:** Sample size modest, self-reported data may include bias, WhatsApp excluded.

5. Findings

Table 1: Sources of Awareness of Guarantee Schemes (N=600)

Source of Awareness	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Total (%)
Television News	42	38	40
Newspapers	20	25	22
Social Media	15	28	22
Radio	12	2	7
Word of Mouth	11	7	9

Media Content Analysis: Tone: 45% positive, 30% neutral, 25% negative; Framing: 55% empowerment, 30% populism, 15% governance challenges; Sources quoted: Government 50%, Opposition 30%, Citizens 20%.

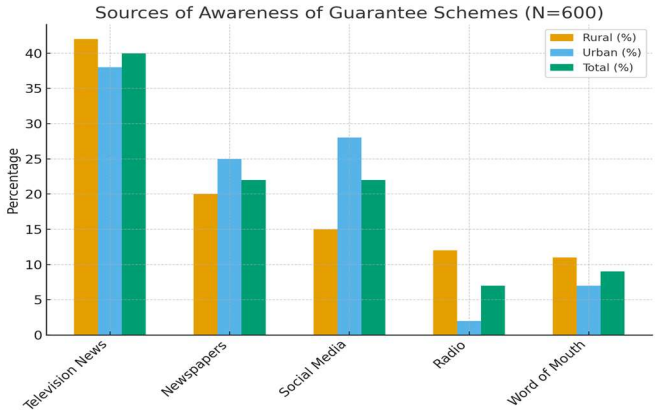
Survey Findings: 74% aware of at least 3 schemes; 61% said media helped understand eligibility; 26% felt coverage politically biased; rural respondents reported confusion for Gruha Jyoti and Yuva Nidhi.

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Chart 1: Sources of Awareness of Guarantee Schemes (N=600)

The chart below represents the percentage of rural, urban, and total respondents aware of guarantee schemes from different sources.



6. Discussion

Media is central to welfare communication. Television and newspapers are vital in rural areas, social media dominates urban youth. Information gaps remain in rural regions, and framing varies: Positive narratives highlight empowerment, while populism critiques focus on fiscal sustainability. Citizens largely valued practical benefits over political narratives, showing experience influences perception. Rural women reported confusion, suggesting need for simpler messaging and multilingual communication.

7. Conclusion & Recommendations

Media acts as both conveyor and watchdog. Television, newspapers, and social media complement each other, but challenges persist: rural gaps, politicized framing, inconsistent coverage.

Recommendations:

1. Multi-channel campaigns including community radio and panchayat outreach.
2. Balanced reporting to enhance credibility.
3. Fact-checking and social media clarification campaigns

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4. Future research on WhatsApp and caste/gender communication patterns.

Karnataka's guarantee schemes show media as a democratic mediator, turning welfare programs into tools of empowerment.

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JUDICIARY AS A CATALYST IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: AN INDIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract:

Legislative lethargy has resulted in judicial bodies playing a governing role. The roots of judicial activism can be traced to the interpretation of the constitutional provisions while entertaining public interest petitions. The importance of environmental protection is long been neglected warranting immediate attention. In India, the legislature and the executive have become 'passive' in enforcing the provisions of the constitution. So, the judiciary is forced to fill the void. Understanding the interrelationship between development, environment, and sustainability has become a challenge. The inadequacy of environmental laws is exposed in the Bhopal Gas Leak tragedy opening up new avenues of intervention.

Keywords: activism, legislature, executive, judiciary, environment, development

Introduction:

The active judicial role is largely owed to legislative and executive failure to deliver goods. The essence of judicial activism is the rendering of decisions that are in tune with the temper of the times leading to social change. In an era of conflict between environment and development, the courts have a crucial role to play.Justice Krishna Iyer observes, "Every judge is an activist either on the forward gear or on the reverse".Judicial policymaking need not be an activity in support of legislative and executive policies. If the judiciary feels that enough is not done in a particular regard, judicial intervention is justified.This is reiterated in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration of 1992 specifically provides for effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy.

Objectives:

1. To understand the role of legislature and executive in environmental protection
2. To analyze the impact of legislative and executive decision-making on environmental issues
3. To understand the critical role of the judiciary in environmental protection

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Methodology:

The present study is based on a secondary source. The information is gathered from various sources such as books, journals, reports, and websites. The study is an attempt to analyze the impact of judicial pronouncements on environmental protection and the role of the legislature and the executive in safeguarding the environment.

In constitutional terms, the legislature demands the supremacy of the parliament on legislation. But, in making legislation, legislative lethargy has resulted in judicial bodies playing an unprecedented governing role. Legislative lethargy is well summed up by Upendra Baxi when he said chemotherapy is a treatment for a carcinogenic body, similarly, judicial activism is a dire cure for a drastic disorder called politics. The High Court of Karnataka intervened to direct the filling of potholes in Bangalore city and it was done to meet the deadline!!! The active role of the judiciary was necessitated by executive inaction.

Environmental Protection in India:

The selfish needs of the societyresulted in the depletion of natural resources and the degradation of the environment. The impact of ecological destruction is realized of late.Immediately after independence, the need for employment, economic development, industrialization, and modernization occupied the key space leaving no time to ponder over the environment. The governments and the industry has come to think that movement is for free and can be exploited at will. The floods, famines, tsunamis, and struggle for clean drinking water are all a gradual accumulation of pain, misery, disease, and death.

1972 Stockholm declaration marked a revolution in the history of environmental management in India. It was in this decade that environmental protection was accorded a Constitutional status under Directive Principles calling upon State as well as the citizens to conserve, perceive, protect and improve the environment. Host of international environmental summits and conventions, underline the gravity of threat and efforts towards environmental protection.Pollution of the river Ganga, the Bhopal Gastragedy, vast deforestation, waterlogging, uncontrolled mining, and extinction of wild animals all point to the impending danger.

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The inadequacy of environmental laws was exposed in the Bhopal Gas Leak tragedy killing 3,500 people and injuring 200,000 people. It incapacitated thousands with partial blindness, lung diseases, and depression. In this case, the Supreme Court formulated the doctrine of absolute liability for harm caused by hazardous and inherently dangerous industries by interpreting the scope of the power under Article 32 to issue directions or orders.

A Review of few Cases of Judicial Activism in Environment Protection:

The role of the judiciary can be understood through various judgments in important cases. Some of them are:

Ratlam Municipality v/s Vardichand:

The residents of Ratlam, troubled by the stink caused by open drains and public excretion filed a writ petition to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court compelled the municipality to provide proper sanitation and drainage under Sec. 123 of the Madhya Pradesh Municipality Act and linked basic public health facilities to human rights.

Environmental Legal Action v/s Union of India:

Pollution control costs have been borne by the suffering communities rather than by those who pollute. The polluter pays principle, applied by the Supreme Court, penalizes the polluter to bear the costs of pollution control. Miserly business interests have made a profit over the health and life of the unsuspecting masses. In this case, the Supreme Court clarified that if an activity is hazardous or dangerous, one who is carrying on that activity is liable to make good the loss caused to any other person by that activity

Key effects of judicial interventions:

- The precautionary principle underscored the point that those indulging in a potentially damaging or hazardous activity should bear or have the burden of establishing the absence of environmental harm.
- The judiciary held that every person is responsible for the protection of the environment. A common man can file a complaint. Any person, directly not affected by the activity or omission, can file a complaint.
- The application of corporate criminal liability alerted all business corporations to integrate environmental concerns into corporate management practices.

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Conclusions:

Judicial activism does not indicate the absence of legislation and regulations on environment protection in India but a lack of effective and efficient enforcement of the environmental legislations. Judiciary's intervention in the Bhopal Gas tragedy gave confidence that the environmental damage can be prevented through courts. This case opened the gates for petitions challenging the actions of the government of the day. Supreme Court orders have resulted in proactive steps in the formulation of MSW Rules, Delhi's CNG policy, Karnataka Municipal Act, etc. Judicial intervention is summed up in the words of former Chief Justice Ahmadi thus: "When citizens raise grave constitutional issues and exercise their fundamental rights to invoking its jurisdiction, the Supreme Court is left with little choice …. This is the reason why the Court has led to expanding its jurisdiction … something it would never have resorted to, had the other two democratic institutions, legislature and executive function in an effective manner".

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AN IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON COFFEE GROWERS IN KODAGU OF KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

Climate change is increasingly impacting agricultural systems worldwide, with coffee cultivation being particularly vulnerable due to its sensitivity to temperature, rainfall, and environmental conditions. Kodagu district in Karnataka, India, renowned for its coffee production, is experiencing significant disruptions in its coffee-growing ecosystem due to changing climatic patterns. This study explores the effects of climate change on coffee growers in Kodagu, focusing on altered rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, increased pest and disease pressures, and the subsequent economic challenges faced by farmers. As a region that contributes a substantial portion of India's coffee production, Kodagu's smallholder coffee farmers, who are primarily dependent on Arabica and Robusta varieties, are facing reduced yields, increased costs of production, and lower-quality coffee. These challenges are further exacerbated by erratic weather events such as droughts and floods, which undermine the stability of their incomes and employment in the coffee sector. The study highlights the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of coffee farmers, particularly smallholders, and discusses adaptation strategies such as agroforestry, climate-resilient varieties, and improved water management practices.

Key Words: Adaptation Strategies, Climate Change, Coffee Production, Economic Impact, Smallholding Farmers.

Introduction:

Historical Development of Coffee Cultivation

The history of coffee cultivation in Karnataka is deeply intertwined with the state's agricultural heritage and its colonial past. Karnataka, particularly the regions in the Western Ghats, is one of the most significant coffee-growing areas in India, with a long history that dates back to the 17th century. Coffee is believed to have been introduced to India by Baba Budan, a Sufi saint from Yemen, in the early 17th century. According to legend, Baba Budan brought seven coffee seeds from Yemen (then part of the Arabian Peninsula) and planted them in

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the hills of Chikmagalur in Karnataka around 1670. The hills around Chikmagalur, especially the Baba Budangiri range, are considered the birthplace of coffee in India. The seeds from Baba Budan's import thrived in the region's favorable climate, and over time, coffee cultivation spread to other parts of Karnataka, including Kodagu, Virajpet, Madikeri, and Somwarpet.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Karnataka's coffee industry underwent modernization. The shift towards organic coffee farming, shade-grown coffee, and the establishment of coffee cooperatives became key features of the industry. The growth of the specialty coffee market internationally provided an opportunity for Karnataka's coffee growers to market high-quality coffee beans, particularly those from Kodagu, Chikmagalur, and Hassan. The Coffee Board's initiatives and the formation of coffee growers' associations also played a major role in addressing challenges such as pests and diseases, climate change, and market fluctuations. Karnataka remains the largest producer of coffee in India, contributing about 70% of the country's coffee output. It is home to some of the most renowned coffee-growing regions, including Kodagu, Chikmagalur, and Hassan districts.

Brief Literature Review

As climate change becomes a more spotlighted issue in the international community, research about its impact rapidly increases. Climate change is predicted to have a variety of negative effects; one negative impact is that it can drastically hurt crop productions. Researchers say coffee plants are especially vulnerable to climate change because the majority of coffee is grown in developing countries. Ethiopia and Colombia depend on coffee production as a major part of their economies, but climate change will cause many problems for them. What follows are some selected works that discuss elements of this issue.

• Deressa (2007) of the World Bank completed an extensive study of Ethiopian agriculture. The study concluded that increasing temperatures and decreased precipitation, due to climate change, will have a long-lasting negative effect on Ethiopian agriculture. Agriculture is the most important part of Ethiopia's economy because about 85 percent of Ethiopians depend on agriculture for employment. It has diverse agriculture with a mix of crops and the largest population of livestock in Africa. Stimulants such as coffee are major cash crops in Ethiopia. Some problems that hurt Ethiopian agriculture include drought, insects, disease, and low levels of technology. Climate change will lead to higher temperatures; developed countries can benefit from the higher temperatures for their

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agriculture. Developing countries like Ethiopia will suffer because their agricultural technology cannot deal with the changes.

Objective

To assess the impacts of climate change on coffee growers, specifically examining how changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, and extreme weather events affect coffee yield, quality, and the livelihoods of farming communities.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Coorg district of Karnataka, renowned for its vast coffee plantations that cover the hillsides. These plantations primarily focus on multiple cropping, including coffee, orange, black pepper, and cardamom. Coorg's honey and coffee are well-known globally. The region once referred to as "The Scotland of India" by the British and "The Kashmir of the South" for its picturesque landscapes, has long been admired for its natural beauty. A total of three hundred samples were selected from the Madakeri, Somwarpet, Virajpet, Kushalnagar and Ponnampet taluks of the Coorg district. Being descriptive in nature, the study utilized structured interview schedules to collect primary data, employing purposive sampling for participant selection. Additionally, secondary data was gathered from various sources, including journals, books, encyclopedias, gazetteers, reports, and websites.

Socio-economic background of Kodagu District

The **socio-economic background of Kodagu** (also known as **Coorg**) is shaped by its unique geography, agricultural practices, and cultural heritage. Located in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Kodagu is a picturesque district known for its coffee plantations, rich biodiversity, and distinct traditions. The socio-economic landscape of Kodagu is influenced by its history, population composition, economic activities, and ongoing development challenges.

Geography and Population

Location: Kodagu is a hill district located in the southwestern part of Karnataka, bordered by Kerala to the south. The district covers an area of 4,106 square kilometers and consists of five taluks: Madikeri, Virajpet, Ponnampet, Somwarpet, and Kushalnagar.

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Population: As of the latest census data, Kodagu has a relatively small population, with a density lower than many urban areas in Karnataka. The district has a population of around 5.5 lakh people, with a significant portion living in rural areas.

Agriculture as the Backbone of the Economy

Coffee Cultivation: Kodagu is one of India's premier coffee-growing regions, contributing significantly to Karnataka's coffee production, which in turn plays a major role in the country's coffee exports. Coffee is grown in large estates and smallholder farms across the district. The region produces both **Arabica** and **Robusta** varieties, with the district contributing about 50% of the state's coffee production.

3. Demographics and Cultural Composition

Ethnic Diversity: Kodagu is home to a diverse population, including the indigenous **Kodava people** (Coorgis), who are known for their distinct language, culture, and traditions. The district also has a significant population of **Kannadigas**, along with smaller communities of **Tulu**, **Malayalam**, and **Tamil** speakers due to migration and historical trade ties with neighboring regions.

Religious Diversity: The majority of the population in Kodagu practices **Hinduism**, with significant numbers of **Christians** and smaller groups of **Muslims**. The Kodava community is particularly known for its unique customs, including traditional attire, martial arts (like **Kalaripayattu**), and festivals like **Kailpodh** and **Puttari** (harvest festival).

Language: The primary language spoken in the district is **Kodava Takk**, the language of the indigenous Kodava people. Kannada is also widely spoken, especially in urban areas and by non-Kodava settlers.

Economic Structure

Smallholder Farming: The majority of coffee farms in Kodagu are smallholder operations, with farmers owning less than 10 hectares of land. These smallholders form the backbone of the coffee-growing economy, though larger estates are also common in the district.

Labor Force: Coffee cultivation is labor-intensive, and seasonal laborers, often from neighboring states, are employed for tasks like picking coffee cherries and processing beans. Labor is an essential part of the rural economy, and the coffee industry provides jobs for a significant portion of the population. The district also experiences seasonal migration, with workers moving in and out based on the harvest season.

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Economic Challenges: Despite its agricultural richness, Kodagu faces challenges such as **fluctuating coffee prices**, **climate change impacts**, **resource scarcity**, and **infrastructural limitations**. Small farmers often struggle with debt, as coffee is a long-term investment, and market prices can be volatile.

Social Welfare Programs: The government has introduced various welfare programs aimed at improving the livelihoods of farmers, laborers, and marginalized communities in Kodagu. However, the reach and effectiveness of these programs can vary, with many farmers, especially smallholders, struggling to access the benefits.

The socio-economic background of Kodagu reflects a blend of traditional agriculture, cultural richness, and modern challenges. The district's economy remains largely agricultural, with coffee cultivation at its core, while urbanization and tourism are growing. However, Kodagu faces pressing issues related to climate change, economic dependence on coffee, infrastructure gaps, and migration.

Area under coffee cultivation in the Kodagu district

Kodagu district consists of five taluks: Madikeri, Virajpet, Ponnampet, Somwarpet, and Kushalnagar. It covers a total geographical area of 4,106 square kilometers, with coffee cultivation occupying 1,197 square kilometers. Coffee is grown across 106,921 hectares in Kodagu, which represents 44% of Karnataka's total coffee-growing area. The majority of the coffee plantations in the district are owned by smallholder farmers, with holdings of less than 10 hectares. Kodagu produces approximately 110,730 metric tons of coffee annually, contributing 50% of Karnataka's and 35% of India's total coffee production. As coffee cultivation is labor-intensive, it generates 51% of the district's employment within the coffee plantations.

Coffee cultivation in Kodagu is adapted to the specific environmental conditions of each region. Robusta coffee is primarily grown in the taluks of Madikeri, Virajpet, Ponnampet, and Kushalnagar, while Arabica coffee is the dominant crop in Somwarpet taluk.

Table 01. Area and Verities of Coffee Crop

Name of Taluk	Variety	Planted Area(Ha)	Bearing Area(Ha)	Number of Holdings	Number of Villages
MADIKERI	Arabica	1250	1190	**12408**	**77**
	Robusta	22956	21348		
	Total	**24206**	**22538**		
SOMWARPET & KUSHALNAGAR	Arabica	24050	22400	**10108**	**158**
	Robusta	6749	1246		

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	Total	**22890**	**813**		
VIRAJPET & PONNAMPET	Arabica	1740	1672	**21445**	**124**
	Robusta	50055	48781		
	Total	**51795**	**50453**		

Source: Coffee Board, Codagu.

Result and Discussion

Climate change is having a profound impact on the economic status of coffee growers in **Kodagu district**, one of the most important coffee-growing regions in India. The district's coffee cultivation, primarily in **Arabica** and **Robusta** varieties, is heavily dependent on stable climatic conditions. However, rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and increasing occurrences of extreme weather events are disrupting these conditions, leading to several economic challenges for coffee growers. Here's how climate change is affecting the economic well-being of farmers in Kodagu:

1. Reduced Coffee Yields

Temperature Rise: Coffee plants, particularly **Arabica** coffee, thrive in moderate temperatures (18°C to 25°C). However, rising temperatures due to climate change are pushing these optimal conditions to higher altitudes, potentially reducing the area suitable for coffee cultivation in Kodagu. This results in lower overall yields as the crop becomes less productive in unsuitable conditions. According to farmers in the region, a coffee bunch would yield over 100 berries. But that has now dropped to mere 40-45 berries per bunch. Due to excess rainfall, half the coffee berries falls to the ground and rot before they are plucked.

2. Increased Cost of Production

Pests and Diseases: Climate change has led to an increase in the spread of pests and diseases, such as the **coffee berry borer** and **coffee leaf rust**. Warmer temperatures and higher humidity create an ideal environment for these pests, requiring farmers to invest more in pest control and pesticides. These additional costs further strain farmers' economic resources.

3. Lower Coffee Quality

Inconsistent Ripening: Extreme weather events such as heatwaves or irregular rainfall can cause uneven ripening of coffee cherries, affecting the quality of the beans. This is particularly concerning for Kodagu's specialty coffee

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market, where high-quality beans are in demand. Lower quality beans fetch a lower price in the market, resulting in reduced income for farmers.

4. Economic Instability

Income Loss: Coffee farming in Kodagu is a primary livelihood for many farmers. Any disruption in the crop yield or quality due to climate change can lead to significant income loss. This is particularly challenging for smallholder farmers who rely on coffee as their main source of income and have limited resources to absorb financial setbacks.

5. Impact on Employment

Labor-Intensive Industry: Coffee farming in Kodagu is highly labor-intensive, and with fluctuating yields, there may be less work available for seasonal laborers. This could lead to loss of employment and a decrease in income for many people who depend on coffee plantations for work.

Conclusion

Climate change is a significant threat to the economic status of coffee growers in Kodagu. The region's coffee farmers face multiple challenges, including reduced yields, increased production costs, lower coffee quality, and financial instability. Smallholder farmers are particularly vulnerable, as they have limited resources to adapt to these changes.

To mitigate the economic impacts, it is essential for farmers to adopt climate-resilient farming practices, diversify their income sources, and access better financial and technical support. Government policies, research into climate-resilient coffee varieties, and community-based adaptation strategies will be crucial to securing the future of coffee farming in Kodagu and ensuring the economic sustainability of the region's coffee-growing communities.

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DIGITALIZATION AND COMMERCE: TRANSFORMING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The digital revolution has reshaped the global commercial landscape, influencing how businesses operate, consumers interact, and economies grow. Digitalization, encompassing technologies such as the Internet, e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and blockchain, has introduced new opportunities and challenges across commercial sectors. This research article explores how digitalization is transforming commerce—accelerating innovation, disrupting traditional business models, and redefining global trade and market accessibility. Through case studies, economic analysis, and policy perspectives, this paper highlights both the potential and pitfalls of digital commerce in diverse economies.

Keywords: Digital Commerce, Digital Economy, e-Commerce, Globalization, Innovation

Introduction

Digitalization the integration of digital technologies into everyday life and business has emerged as a central force reshaping commerce worldwide. From online shopping and digital payments to data analytics and automated supply chains, the commercial sector is undergoing profound changes. The shift from physical to digital commerce is not just a technological evolution; it signifies a **paradigm shift** in economic models, consumer behavior, and value creation. This article examines the impact of digitalization on commerce, focusing on key drivers, economic implications, and societal effects. It explores how digital tools are enabling businesses—especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—to access global markets, while also identifying challenges such as regulatory hurdles, digital inequality, cybersecurity, and labor market disruption.

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Review of Literature:

2.1 Digital Commerce Evolution

The evolution of digital commerce reflects a broader shift from traditional, physical modes of trade to dynamic, tech-enabled systems. Scholars like **Laudon & Traver (2021)** define digital commerce as encompassing all commercial transactions conducted using digital technologies—ranging from websites and mobile apps to AI-driven logistics and digital payments.

E-commerce platforms such as **Amazon**, **Alibaba**, and **eBay** emerged in the early 2000s, fundamentally transforming how goods are bought, sold, and delivered. These platforms introduced **automation, personalized marketing, real-time analytics**, and **logistics optimization**, setting new standards for speed and efficiency in global commerce.

Moreover, the rise of **digital-native consumers**, especially Millennials and Gen Z, has influenced market behavior, pushing companies to adopt omnichannel strategies, invest in user experience (UX), and leverage big data to remain competitive.

2.2 Economic Impacts

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020)** emphasizes the transformative effect of digital commerce on economic structures. By lowering transaction costs, improving market access, and fostering innovation, digitalization boosts **GDP growth** and **labor productivity**, particularly in service-dominated and tech-oriented economies.

However, these benefits are not evenly distributed. The rapid automation of commercial activities may lead to **job displacement**, especially in low-skilled retail and logistics sectors. Furthermore, the dominance of a few large tech firms raises concerns about **market concentration, tax avoidance**, and **consumer data exploitation**, creating a need for balanced policy frameworks.

2.3 The Role of SMEs

According to **UNCTAD (2022)**, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) stand to gain immensely from digital commerce. Online platforms help SMEs reach global customers without heavy investment in infrastructure or intermediaries. This is especially transformative in developing economies, where traditional market access is limited by geographic and financial constraints.

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Despite these opportunities, many SMEs struggle with **limited digital literacy**, **lack of access to reliable internet**, and **inadequate digital payment systems**. Without targeted support and capacity-building, SMEs may be left behind in the rapidly evolving digital economy.

2.4 Policy and Regulation

Effective governance is critical to ensure that the digitalization of commerce is **inclusive, ethical**, and **economically sustainable**. The **World Bank** and **WTO** have advocated for cohesive international digital trade policies to address cross-border issues such as **data privacy**, **intellectual property rights**, **consumer protection**, and **fair taxation**.

However, policy-making often lags behind technological innovation. Regulatory frameworks must evolve to account for **emerging technologies**, **platform-based economies**, and **cryptocurrency use**, while avoiding overregulation that might stifle innovation.

Drivers of Digitalization in Commerce

a) Internet and Mobile Penetration

The widespread availability of smartphones and affordable data plans has enabled billions of people to participate in digital commerce. **Mobile-first markets**, such as India and sub-Saharan Africa, have leapfrogged traditional infrastructure, using mobile devices as primary tools for browsing, shopping, and payments.

This mobile penetration enables **24/7 consumer engagement**, location-based targeting, and **seamless customer service**, opening up new markets and consumer segments that were previously unreachable.

b) E-Commerce Platforms

E-commerce platforms act as **aggregators**, offering centralized environments where buyers and sellers can transact securely and efficiently. Giants like **Amazon, Flipkart, Shopify, Lazada**, and **Alibaba** provide end-to-end services—from digital storefronts and customer acquisition to payment processing, logistics, and customer analytics. These platforms offer powerful tools for **scaling businesses**, especially for SMEs and individual entrepreneurs. However, their dominance also raises concerns about **platform dependency**, unfair practices, and **monopoly power**, requiring careful oversight.

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c) Digital Payments and FinTech

Digital payments are the backbone of e-commerce. The emergence of **mobile wallets (e.g., PayPal, Apple Pay, M-Pesa)**, **cryptocurrencies**, and **buy-now-pay-later** models has made transactions faster, more secure, and more inclusive.

In many developing regions, FinTech has enabled **financial inclusion**, allowing the unbanked population to participate in commerce. This expansion of digital financial services has also given rise to **microloans**, **peer-to-peer lending**, and **crowdfunding**, fueling innovation and entrepreneurship.

Economic Impact of Digital Commerce

a) Boosting GDP and Productivity

Digital commerce directly contributes to GDP by creating new revenue streams, improving operational efficiency, and expanding trade. Automation and AI reduce cost structures, while online platforms accelerate **product-market fit**, promoting **business agility**.

Countries with robust digital ecosystems—such as the U.S., South Korea, and Estonia—experience higher rates of **innovation-driven growth**.

b) Job Creation and Entrepreneurship

While automation may replace some traditional roles, digital commerce has spawned **entirely new job categories**—from digital marketers and UX designers to social media influencers and e-commerce consultants.

Platforms like Etsy, YouTube, and Fiverr have enabled millions to **monetize skills**, build micro-enterprises, and enter the digital workforce with minimal capital.

c) Market Expansion for SMEs

SMEs, often constrained by geography, marketing reach, and logistics, can now operate globally. Through digital platforms and localized services (e.g., language support, payment gateways), SMEs can reach **niche international markets**, thereby increasing profitability and competitiveness.

d) Consumer Empowerment

Consumers now have access to **global products**, price comparisons, user reviews, and return policies—creating **greater transparency** and **bargaining power**. This shift forces businesses to maintain quality and competitive pricing, enhancing overall market efficiency.

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Challenges and Risks

a) Digital Divide

Access to reliable internet, digital devices, and basic literacy remains limited in many regions. This **excludes rural populations, elderly citizens, and low-income communities**, perpetuating existing inequalities and undermining the inclusiveness of digital commerce.

b) Cybersecurity Threats

As transactions move online, **cyber threats** such as data theft, ransomware, phishing, and fraud have surged. A single breach can erode customer trust and result in legal liabilities, emphasizing the need for **robust digital hygiene** and compliance with **data protection laws** like GDPR.

c) Regulatory Ambiguities

Cross-border digital trade raises complex questions about **data sovereignty**, **taxation**, and **consumer protection**. Many legal frameworks are outdated or inconsistent, creating barriers to innovation and increasing compliance costs for businesses.

d) Labor Market Disruption

While digital commerce creates jobs, it also **disrupts traditional employment models**, especially in brick-and-mortar retail. The shift toward gig work, automation, and platform economies demands **reskilling initiatives** and social protections for displaced workers.

e) Platform Monopolies

A handful of corporations (e.g., Amazon, Google, Facebook, Alibaba) dominate global digital markets, often **dictating terms to sellers and consumers**. This concentration limits competition and innovation and creates dependencies that undermine market fairness.

Solutions and Policy Recommendations

a) Invest in Digital Infrastructure

Public and private investment in **high-speed broadband**, **5G networks**, and **affordable devices** is essential to ensure universal access to digital commerce. Special focus should be placed on **rural and underserved areas**.

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b) Promote Digital Literacy

Governments, NGOs, and educational institutions must offer **digital skills training**, especially for youth, women, and small business owners. Empowered users are more likely to engage safely and productively in digital markets.

c) Strengthen Cybersecurity Laws

Legislation should enforce **data encryption, fraud monitoring**, and consumer protection standards. Governments must also support SMEs in implementing cybersecurity protocols through awareness campaigns and financial incentives.

Conclusion

Digitalization is revolutionizing commerce by making it more **efficient, accessible, and innovative**. It opens unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, entrepreneurship, and global market integration. However, these benefits come with significant challenges—**inequality, cybersecurity risks, labor disruption**, and **regulatory gaps**—that must be addressed with inclusive policies, ethical technology use, and global cooperation.

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EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTH AND MARGINALIZED SECTIONS THROUGH DIGITAL INSTRUMENTS

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Abstract

The digital divide, defined as the gap between individuals who have access to modern information and communication technology (ICT) and those who do not, has significant implications for the empowerment of youth and marginalized groups. While digital tools provide opportunities for education, employment, social inclusion, and civic participation, lack of access deepens social inequalities. This paper explores the challenges and opportunities created by the digital divide and analyzes strategies that can help empower disadvantaged populations.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Empowerment, Marginalised Group, Digital Inclusion

Introduction

Digital technology has become an essential component of modern society, shaping how people learn, communicate, and participate in economic and social life. However, disparities in access to the internet, devices, and digital literacy persist, particularly among marginalized groups such as rural populations, economically disadvantaged communities, women, and differently-abled individuals. For youth, who represent the most digitally adaptable demographic, exclusion from the digital world limits educational attainment, career prospects, and active citizenship.

Statement of the Problem

Despite rapid advancements in ICT infrastructure, millions of youth and marginalized groups remain excluded from digital opportunities. Unequal access to resources not only widens economic and social disparities but also limits empowerment initiatives aimed at capacity building, knowledge dissemination, and participation in decision-making processes. Bridging this divide is essential to achieving inclusive growth and social justice.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the extent and nature of the digital divide affecting youth and marginalized groups.

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- To examine the role of digital access in promoting empowerment and social inclusion.
- To identify barriers to digital inclusion, including economic, infrastructural, and socio-cultural factors.
- To suggest strategies for reducing the digital divide and enhancing empowerment.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative and analytical review of existing literature, policy reports, and global case studies. Data sources include international organizations (UNESCO, World Bank, ITU), government reports, and peer-reviewed journals. The paper applies content analysis to evaluate the relationship between digital access and empowerment outcomes.

Literature Review

Several studies highlight the digital divide as a multi-dimensional issue involving access, affordability, and skills. Warschauer (2003) emphasized that digital literacy is as important as physical access to devices. UNESCO (2022) reported that nearly 2.7 billion people remain offline globally, with women and rural populations disproportionately affected. Research also indicates that access to ICT promotes entrepreneurship, improves educational outcomes, and fosters civic engagement among youth. However, marginalized groups face persistent barriers such as lack of infrastructure, poverty, language barriers, and gender norms.

Conclusion

The digital divide is a major obstacle to empowerment, particularly for youth and marginalized groups. Bridging this gap requires a multi-pronged approach involving infrastructure development, digital literacy programs, affordable access, and inclusive content creation. Empowering disadvantaged populations through digital inclusion not only enhances individual opportunities but also promotes social equity, economic growth, and democratic participation.

Suggestions

1. Infrastructure Development
    - Expand affordable internet connectivity in rural and underserved areas.
    - Establish community digital hubs in villages, schools, and libraries.
2. Digital Literacy Programs

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- Introduce digital skills training in school and college curricula.
- Provide free or subsidized workshops for marginalized groups (especially women, differently-abled, and rural youth).

3. Affordable Access
   - Promote low-cost smartphones, tablets, and subsidized internet packages.
   - Encourage public-private partnerships to reduce the cost burden on communities.
4. Inclusive Content Creation
   - Develop digital resources in local languages to ensure accessibility.
   - Create content tailored to the needs of marginalized groups (e.g., online job portals, e-health services, e-learning platforms).
5. Policy and Governance
   - Governments should adopt digital inclusion as part of social welfare policies.
   - Encourage NGOs and international agencies to support grassroots digital empowerment projects.
6. Community Participation
   - Involve local leaders, teachers, and youth volunteers in spreading digital awareness.
   - Encourage peer-to-peer training where skilled youth train their communities.

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DEVELOPMENT OF RECENT TRENDS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT – A STUDY

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Introduction:

In the past, Human Resource Management was significantly less complicated as the work and work force was homogenized. Today's men contains of individuals of various gender, age, people sexual orientation,values, temperament characteristics, ethnicity, religion, education, language, physical look, legal status, lifestyle, beliefs, ideologies and background characteristics like geographic origin, tenure withthe organization, and economic standing and therefore the list may continue. Diversity is critically joined to the organization's strategic direction. Wherever diversity thrives, the potential edges from higher creative thinking and higher cognitive process and larger innovation are often accumulated to assist increase organization's aggressiveness. This includes Human Resource Management offerings that fall into the heading of the family friendly organization. A family friendly organization is one that has versatile work schedules and provides such worker edges like kids care additionally to the variety brought by gender and status, Human Resource Management should remember of the age variations that exist in today's men. Human Resource Management should train folks of various age teams to effectively manage and to alter one another and to respect the variety of views that every offers. In things like these a participative approach appears to figure higher.

Changing ability needs:

Recruiting and developing skilled labor is very important for any company involved regarding aggressiveness, productivity, quality and managing a various men effectively. Ability deficiencies translate into vital losses for the organization in terms of poor-quality work and lower productivity, increase in worker accidents and client complaints. Since a growing range of jobs would force a lotof education and better levels of language than current ones, Human Resource Management practitioners and specialists ought to communicate this to educators and community leaders etc. Strategic human resource coming up with can

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sought to fastidiously weigh the ability deficiencies and shortages. Human Resource Managementdepartment ought to devise appropriate coaching and short term programs to bridge the ability gaps & deficiencies.

Globalization and its implications:

Business these days doesn't have national boundaries – it reaches round the world. The increase of international firms places new needs on human resource managers. The hour department has to makesure that the suitable mixture of workers in terms of data, skills and cultural ability is accessible to handle world assignments so as to fulfill this goal, the organizations should train people to fulfill the challenges of economic process. the staff should have operating information of the language and culture (in terms of values, morals, customs and laws) of the host country.

Human Resource Management should conjointly develop mechanisms that may facilitate philosophical system people work along. As background, language, custom or age variations becomea lot of current, there area unit indications that worker conflict can increase. Human Resource Management would be needed to coach management to be a lot of versatile in its practices. As a result of tomorrow's employees can are available in completely different colours, nationalities so on, managers are going to be needed toalter their ways that. This may necessitate managers being trained to acknowledge variations in employees and to understand and even celebrate these variations.

Corporate curtailment

Whenever a corporation tries to mortal, it's trying to make larger potency. The premise of curtailmentis to cut back the amount of employees utilized by the organization. Human Resource Management department contains a vital role to play in curtailment. Human Resource Management folks should make sure that correct communication should happen throughout this point. They need to minimize the negative effects of rumors and make sure that people are unbroken with factual information. Human Resource Management should conjointly alter actual shutdown. Human Resource Management department is vital to the curtailment discussions that ought to happen.

Continuous Improvement Programmes:

Continuous improvement programs target the future well-being of the organization. it's a method

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whereby a corporation focuses on quality and builds a much better foundation to serve its customers. This typically involves a companywide initiative to enhance quality and productivity. the corporate changes its operations to target the client and to involve employees in matters poignant them. corporations try to enhance everything that they are doing, from hiring quality folks, to body paper process, to meeting client desires. Unfortunately, such initiatives don't seem to be one thing that may be simply enforced, nor settled down through the various levels in a corporation. Rather, they're like a corporation wide development method and therefore the method should be accepted and supported by high management and driven by cooperative efforts, throughout every section within the organization. Human Resource Management plays a crucial role within the implementation of continuous improvement programs. Whenever a corporation embarks on any improvement effort, it's introducing grow to be the organization. At now organization development initiatives dominate. Specifically, Human Resource Management shouldprepare people for the amendment. this needs clear and in depth communications of why theamendment can occur, what's to be expected and what impact it'll wear workers.

Reframing work processes for improved productivity:

Although continuous improvement initiatives area unit positive starts in several of our organizations, they usually target current progressive amendment. Such action is intuitively appealing – the constant and permanent search to create things higher. Nevertheless several corporations perform in associate degree surroundings that's dynamic- facing fast and constant amendment. As a result continuous improvement programs might not be within the best interest of the organization. the matter with them is that they'll give a false sense of security.

Contingent workforce:

A very substantial a part of the trendy day hands square measure the contingent staff. Contingent staff square measure people World Health Organization square measure generally employed for shorter periods of your time. They perform specific tasks that usually need special job skills and square measure used once a company is experiencing important deviations in its work flow. Once a company makes its strategic call to use a large portion of its hands from the contingency ranks, manyHuman Resource Management

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problems come back to the forefront. These embody having the ability to own these virtual staff out there once required, providing programing choices that meet their wants and creating selections concerning whether or not or not advantages are going to be offered to the contingent manpower.

No organization will create the transition to contingent hands while not ample designing. As such, once these strategic selections square measure being created, Human Resource Management should be a full of life partner in these discussions. Once it is entire Human Resource Management department's responsibility to find and produce into the organization these temporary staff. As temporary staff square measure brought in, Human Resource Management also will have the responsibility of quickly adapting them to the organization

Distributed Satellite work sites:

Work sites have got additional and additional localized Tele-working capabilities that exist nowadays have created it potential for the staff to be settled anyplace on the world. With this potential, the employers not have to be compelled to think about locating a business close to its manpower. Tele-working additionally offers a chance for a business tin a high price space to own its work tired a neighborhood wherever lower wages prevail.

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Between Dignity and Recognition: LGBTQIA+ Communities, Marriage Law and Social Norms in Contemporary India

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Abstract

Marriage in India has long been shaped by caste, religion and patriarchy. While legal reforms have tried to make the institution more inclusive, society has not always kept pace. This paper examines the position of LGBTQIA+ communities within this contested space by focusing on two landmark Supreme Court judgments. In 2018, Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India decriminalised homosexuality, framing dignity, autonomy and privacy as constitutional rights. In 2023, however, Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v. Union of India denied recognition of same-sex marriage, leaving queer couples outside the legal framework of family.

The paper explores how these rulings affect social norms, how public opinion interacts with legal change, and how queer people respond by creating chosen families. It argues that law in India functions both as a mirror of dominant morality and as a tool to reshape it. While dignity has been affirmed, recognition is still missing. Public opinion remains divided, with surveys showing generational and urban–rural gaps in acceptance, which further shapes the pace of change. True equality requires both legal reform and social transformation so that dignity and recognition move together.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+; Marriage; Kinship; Family; Dignity; Recognition; Queer Rights; India; Chosen Families; Law

Introduction

Marriage in India is more than a personal relationship between two individuals. It is one of the central institutions through which society regulates caste, religion, inheritance and community honour. Families, rather than individuals often determine marriage choices, which makes the institution a key site for maintaining social

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hierarchies. Sociologists and feminists have long pointed out that marriage and family are not neutral or natural but shaped by systems of power. They reproduce caste boundaries, reinforce patriarchy and regulate sexuality. To speak about marriage in India, therefore, is to speak about the very foundation of social organisation.

It is within this context that the claims of LGBTQIA+ communities take on special significance. Queer relationships unsettle long-standing assumptions that family must be based on heterosexual marriage and biological reproduction. They reveal that kinship is flexible and socially constructed, rather than fixed or natural. In a country where marriage is often tied to lineage and caste continuity; same-sex relationships disrupt the order that binds kinship, inheritance and honour together. This is why the legal recognition of queer unions is not just a matter of individual rights but also a challenge to the broader social structure.

Recent developments in Indian law reflect this tension. In 2018, the Supreme Court in Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India decriminalised homosexuality, declaring that dignity, autonomy and privacy are fundamental rights. The judgment was widely celebrated as a step toward inclusion and equality. Yet, only five years later, in Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v. Union of India (2023), the same Court declined to recognise same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act. While Navtej expanded constitutional protection, Supriyo reinforced the boundaries of heteronormativity. These two judgments highlight the contradictory role of law: it can dismantle stigma but also refuse recognition.

Objectives

1. To study how Indian courts have shaped the recognition of LGBTQIA+ lives through landmark judgments.
2. To compare the dignity granted in *Navtej* with the denial of recognition in *Supriyo*.
3. To explore chosen families as alternatives to heteronormative kinship.
4. To examine how public opinion interacts with legal and social change.

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Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative approach based on secondary data. It analyses Supreme Court judgments and interprets them in the light of sociological and feminist thought. It draws on published scholarship in gender studies and sociology and refers to surveys such as the Pew Research Centre's findings on social attitudes. It also considers ethnographic accounts of queer and hijra communities in India and comparative work on chosen families. This interpretive approach makes it possible to connect law, society and kinship without new fieldwork.

Analysis

The 2018 Navtej judgment was a turning point in India's queer history. By striking down Section 377, the Court removed the criminal stigma that had marked queer people for more than a century. It framed dignity, privacy and autonomy as fundamental rights signalling that queer people were entitled to live as full citizens. The ruling gave symbolic recognition, inspiring new forms of visibility through pride marches, activism and open public discussion. Yet the effects in daily life were uneven. Many queer people continued to face rejection within families, discrimination in housing and exclusion in workplaces. Law could affirm dignity, but society was slower to accept it.

The 2023 Supriyo case highlighted the limits of this progress. Here, queer couples sought recognition of their marriages under the Special Marriage Act. The Court declined, stating that only Parliament could decide. Two dissenting judges argued that equal protection required recognition of same-sex unions, but they were in the minority. The refusal had far-reaching consequences. Queer couples remained outside legal protections related to inheritance, adoption, pensions, insurance and medical decision-making. The case revealed how dignity without recognition leaves queer families acknowledged but not equal.

Faced with this exclusion, many LGBTQIA+ people continue to create chosen families. These are networks of friends, partners and allies built on care and solidarity rather than blood ties. In urban centres, queer households often function as families and NGOs provide spaces of belonging. Transgender and hijra communities also maintain gharanas, long-standing kinship systems organised around guru–chela ties. These chosen families

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challenge the assumption that kinship must be biological and show that care and recognition can exist outside heteronormative marriage. Attitudes in wider society remain divided. Younger and urban populations are more supportive of queer rights, while older and rural groups are less accepting. Media representations have helped to broaden conversations, but backlash is frequent. Many queer people therefore live in two worlds: one of growing visibility and one of persistent stigma.

Public Opinion, Legal Change and Social Transformation

The relationship between law and public opinion in India is complex. On one side, court rulings such as Navtej Singh Johar represent constitutional morality which may run ahead of prevailing social morality. On the other, judgments like Supriyo Chakraborty show the hesitation of the judiciary to move too far beyond what it perceives as public acceptance. In this sense, law both shapes and is shaped by public opinion. According to a Pew Research Centre (2020) global attitudes survey, conducted after the Navtej ruling, only 37 percent of Indians said homosexuality should be accepted, while 58 percent opposed it. Support was significantly higher among younger respondents, those with higher levels of education and people living in urban areas. This generational and spatial divide suggests that public opinion is gradually shifting toward greater acceptance, but progress remains slow and uneven. The refusal to recognise same-sex marriage in Supriyo reflects at least in part, the state's reluctance to challenge prevailing attitudes in more conservative sections of society. Public opinion is not neutral but shaped by family, media and education. When families insist on heterosexual marriage, they reinforce stigma. When films and web series include queer narratives, they create new spaces of acceptance. Public opinion, therefore, becomes both a barrier and a resource. It resists legal change when tied to tradition, but it also pushes society forward when new generations challenge old beliefs. The interaction of law and public opinion is not one-directional. Legal recognition can influence attitudes by giving legitimacy to queer lives, as seen after Navtej. At the same time, strong public support can encourage courts and legislators to act more boldly, as has been the case in countries that moved from civil unions to marriage equality. India shows both dynamics: law provided dignity, but public hesitation limited recognition. For progress to continue, legal reform and public opinion must reinforce each other rather than move in opposite directions.

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Conclusion

India stands at a crossroads. The Supreme Court's decision in Navtej gave dignity to queer lives and removed the criminal stigma that had long haunted them. The decision in Supriyo, however, withheld recognition and kept queer families outside the law. The contradiction between these two judgments shows that progress is incomplete.

For equality to move forward, both legal and social changes are needed. Civil unions could be introduced as a first step, while marriage law should eventually include same-sex couples. Education, awareness campaigns and representation in media are also essential to reduce stigma. The experience of LGBTQIA+ communities shows that family is not only about tradition or blood but also about belonging and care. Law can help to create space for these new forms of kinship, but deeper cultural transformation must follow.

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PATRIARCHY AND MENSTRUATION: UNDERSTANDING THE GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF MENSTRUAL TABOOS

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Abstract

Introduction

Patriarchy is not just a system where society is dominated by men but it is the social structure that controls and regulates the women bodies, their choices and all most everything. Menstruation is one of the most important processes whereby men try to subordinate woman in the name of purity and impurity by enforcing control over woman for a natural biological process in the name of religion, taboos, norms, purity etc. The domination of man and subjugation of woman is not just physical but it is psychological, emotional, social and religious etc. The imposition of gender norms on menstruation makes a biological process in to a social–cultural framework. Menstruation is one of the most important processes which empower patriarchy to impose the domination and control over woman.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Menstruation, Taboos, Gender Norms.

Introduction

Menstruation is the natural process that occurs in a woman which differentiates a her from man. It is not just a physiological process but it is very much associated with socio-cultural and religious framework. Menstruation is a biological process that happens to a woman during her reproductive age. A woman undergoes an average 400 to 500 periodical cycles from menarche to menopause. Not only in India, throughout the world menstruation has

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many social, religious, cultural and gendered connotations associated with it. Menstruation has many social, religious, cultural, and gendered meanings all around the world, including India

These social and cultural constructions related to gender shape sex-linked behaviours and experiences. The behaviours of males and females are based on biological determinism; they behave differently because of the differences in their biology. According to Zimmerman, we are always "doing gender." Thus, 'gender is something we do or perform, not something we are'.

Review of Literature

Koskenniemi, A. (2023) Say no to shame, waste, inequality—and leaks! Menstrual activism in the market for alternative period products: This article by Ms. Koskenniemi talks about the advertisements are being criticized for supporting and spreading harmful taboos about menstruation. This study shows that the companies adopt double standards to sell their products and make profits. Their websites portray openness, sustainability, education, etc. about menstruation at the same time; they use marketing technical terms like stress, stains, leak-prevention, and discreetness by adopting the culture of concealment. Moreover, they give call for openness and boldness but, the blood and stains remain invisible and hidden on their products.

Ahamed, F. (2022**) Period Matters- Menstruation in South Asia**: This book is edited by Farah Ahamed, the anthology in which Menstruation is portrayed through essays, stories, Interviews, Poetry, Dance, and Art. It is a comprehensive study of menstruation in South Asia. It explores the different aspects of menstruation experienced by countries in South Asia like India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, etc. It has the personal stories of many women from different cultural backgrounds sharing their unique stories related to Menstruation.

This book reveals the bitter truth about the conditions faced by menstruating women in underdeveloped and developing countries. It also highlights some of the glaring discriminations that women undergo during their menstruation, for example, the menstruation traditions and practices followed in Sri Lanka, like asking a menstruating girl to wear a washerwoman's clothes which symbolizes impurity and uncleanness. It is the intersectional study of menstruation which includes the experiences of transmen and transwomen. Transwomen Farzana and Chandan, from Pakistan, share their story to tell how they get related to femininity and womanhood

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by mimcking rituals of menstruation. It is an exclusive menstruation journey of women from menarche to menopause. It tells the recent developments like the introduction of biodegradable pads, the story about the comic book-Menstrupedia, and the Menstrual Rights Bill to be introduced all over India, like Kerala

Shahi Gunjan & Singh Uma (Eds), (2020). Decoding Menstrual Taboos in India: Issues, Challenges, and Solutions: This book edited by Dr.Gunjan Shahi & Dr. Uma Singh containing critical essays of various authors about different issues related to Menstruation. These papers investigate taboos and the stigma attached to menstruation. The chapters in the book touch on different aspects like, considering menstruation as a biological process, menstrual hygiene management, and sanitation practices, how religion, social and cultural constructs affect menstruation, food restrictions during menstruation, Education and awareness levels, and comparative study of menstruation among different religions. The authors make efforts to bring to light all the core issues of menstruation and menstrual taboos and expose how a natural process undermines the healthy life and lifestyle of women in the name of taboo, stigma, and socio-cultural practices.

Golub, Sharon. (Eds), (2017) Lifting the curse of menstruation: A feminist appraisal of the influence of menstruation on women's lives. This work explores menstruation from a feministic and biomedical viewpoint. Though menstruation is an integral part of a woman's life, it is perceived as a problematic issue. This book gives answers to all the questions that arise between the phases of menarche to menopause. The authors are of the opinion that the research already done is influenced by sexism and biological determinism, and they give suggestions to make future researches more refined reliable, and valid. They emphasize the need for undertaking woman-centred research. This book unveils the myths and misconceptions by giving a vast knowledge about the menstrual cycle, which helps the menstruating woman to understand their body and physiology.

Objectives of the Study

- To study how patriarchy and male domination lead to the imposition of taboos on menstruating women.
- To study how a normal biological process becomes a tool for a patriarchal system to dominate and control women in the name of taboos.
- To study how gender specific socialization leads to develop a mindset which treats menstruation as impure and dirty process ultimately paving way for gender discrimination and gender inequality society.

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- To explore if there are any changes taking place in the way menstruation is perceived and treated in the recent time.

Patriarchy as a Framework of Control

Women continue to suffer the taboos for centuries. Law, medicine, religion, and psychology have isolated and devalued menstruating women. Menstruation is a factor in the control of women by men not only in ancient and primitive societies, where knowledge of physiology is rudimentary at best but also in our post-industrial world"- (Delaney et al., 1988)

Friedrich Engels (1884) in his book "The origin of the Family, Private property, and the state" states " this – ownership of private property leads to the development of patriarchy (to protect property).This is because it is necessary to control women and their sexual activities to ensure that wealth could be passed down the family line by the bourgeoisie. Therefore, patriarchy evolved to protect class interests".

Menstruation and Gendered Power Relations

Even today millions of women suffer because of their menstruation due to the cultural constraints and the taboos attached to it. Houppert (1999) states, "Looking at Gender Equality, Menstruation creates apprehension in the minds of young girls because menstruation opens the door to sexuality and pregnancy; on the other hand, boys, when they enter puberty they, won't have any fears or apprehensions about their biological change. The patriarchal ideologies impose subordination on women. She is controlled physically and psychologically by the cultural structure and Menstruation has become the most visible symbol of control. The imposition of the sense of impurity, dirt and disgust is not external but it is internalized by the women in the name of religion, sacredness and etiquette. The whole society caste, class, culture, religion conspire to shape how to follow menstrual practices to maintain her purity. The women are taught, trained and socialized to keep silent and feel ashamed, which hinders her from exercising her power and creates imbalance in sharing the power between genders. Through menstruation women is made to believe that she is the 'other gender'. In patriarchal society punishing woman for a normal biological process continue to be a weapon hold woman back.

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Patriarchal practices in Everyday Life and Menstruation

There is a restriction on every activity she does during her menstruation in her daily life. Like, she is not allowed to bathe (in some caste/communities), not to comb her hair, not to enter any religious and holy places, not to touch holy books or things, restrictions on consumption of certain types of food, etc. Totally it incapacitates the woman for 3 to 5 days from what she normally is in her rest of the days.

Conclusion

Menstrual restrictions and taboos are not mere taboos or norms; they are the deep rooted patriarchal power structures. The taboos and stigmas perpetuate the gender inequality and gender injustice. There is great need to consider and treat menstruation a normal, natural biological process. The silence about menstruation should be broken and menstrual taboos have to be dismantled, it is not just a step towards menstrual equity and justice: but in a broader sense, it is a big leap towards achieving gender justice. To overcome the patriarchal mindset, society should start normalizing menstruation as normal biological process and not use it as a tool for gender discrimination and imposition of power and domination over woman. This can be achieved through gender neutral socialization, creating awareness, encouraging an inclusive education, role of media, make both men and women more sensible and normal about menstruation. Menstruation should be fitted in the broader spectrum; the dismantling of the menstruation related taboos can achieve gender justice and gender equity.

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THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY IN KARNATAKA-A STUDY

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Introduction:

Karnataka is a state with diverse geography from coastal regions and hills (Western Ghats) to dry zones in the interior and faces multiple natural hazards including heavy rainfall, flooding, drought, lightning, and landslides. Over recent years, technology has become an important component in how the state prepares for, responds to, and recovers from disasters. This article looks at current practices in Karnataka, what works, what gaps persist, and what could be improved.

Current Uses of Technology in Karnataka

1. **Weather Monitoring & Early Warning Systems (KSNDMC)**
   - The Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) has set up a large network of weather monitoring stations: solar-powered GPRS-enabled telemetric stations at the hobli level and telemetric rain gauges at the Gram Panchayat level.
   - Data (rainfall amount & intensity, temperature, humidity, wind speed, etc.) is collected every 15 minutes.
   - Forecasts, alerts, and advisories are disseminated via email, SMS, and to officials across all levels—from state to village/gram panchayat.
2. **GIS, Geo-Tagging, and Spatial Mapping**
   - Karnataka uses geo-spatial technology and GIS for many disaster-related tasks: hazard mapping, flood-prone areas identification, mapping vulnerabilities & strengths of districts.

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- A portal is used by KSNDMC to host real-time and historical spatial data, integrating various sources for mapping disaster risk.

3. **Lightning Monitoring & Alerts**
   - Since lightning is one of the biggest killers in Karnataka during storms, lightning sensors and monitoring stations have been installed in multiple districts.
   - There's also a mobile app "Sidilu" (Lightning) that gives warnings based on real time lightning sensor data and color-coded alerts.
4. **Drone & Remote Surveillance**
   - The Survey, Settlement and Land Records (SSLR) department is using drones and rovers to survey lakes and water bodies for encroachments, boundaries, buffer zones etc. This aids in water resource management and reduces risk of flood due to blocked drains or encroached lakes. A digital platform Web GIS is used to store and share this data.
   - Satellite forest monitoring is being used for detection of illegal encroachments, which also relates to disaster risk (forest degradation increases landslide risk, affects watershed).
5. **Disaster Risk Reduction Planning & Road mapping**
   - Karnataka State Natural Disaster Management Authority (KSNDMA) / KSNDMC has prepared (or is preparing) disaster management roadmaps for districts using geo-spatial technology, resource mapping (which source of help is closest, what resources exist where) etc.
   - The mapping of resources makes response more efficient. Knowing which district has what capacity, where relief camps are, which routes are usable, etc., helps during crisis.
6. **Academic and Institutional Efforts**
   - Institutes like National Institute of Technology Karnataka (NITK), Surathkal have Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction, which develops indigenous technologies, early warning systems, monitors key parameters, assesses damage, etc.
   - Collaboration with organizations for flood-hazard mapping (e.g. TISS post-North Karnataka floods) to help identify flood-prone areas, and use of GIS to map basins and possible flow of water.

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7. **Public Communication & Community-level Engagement**
   - ❖ Alerts and forecasts are disseminated right down to the Gram Panchayat (village) level, which helps in early evacuation where necessary.
   - ❖ Awareness campaigns and encouraging formation of local disaster committees; at community/village level with government pushing for training and awareness.

Strengths of Karnataka's Approach

- **Dense Monitoring Network**: The state has invested in many weather stations, making data granular (every 15 min) and spatially relevant. This allows early detection of risky weather events.
- **Integration of Spatial Data**: Use of GIS, geo-tagging, satellite monitoring contributes to mapping risks, resources, and vulnerabilities effectively.
- **Use of Technology for Transparency & Accountability**: Using digital platforms, mapping, making data (where possible) open helps in better governance and reduces gaps in relief.
- **Institutional Support and Technical Expertise**: Presence of academic centres, dedicated disaster management bodies, and motivated departments.
- **Local Level Alerting**: From Gram Panchayat up to state level helps tailor responses to local geography.

Challenges & Gaps

- **Data Access & Public Engagement**: Not all data may be accessible to all stakeholders (public, NGOs, community). There can be delays in making data transparent.
- **Infrastructure Constraints in Rural Areas**: Some remote regions may lack reliable internet, mobile coverage, electricity or even GPS/communication infrastructure, which limits real-time alerting or response.
- **Accuracy & Prediction Limitations**: Weather systems are complex. Warnings (for instance for lightning or floods) might be only short notice. False positives/negatives can lead to "warning fatigue."

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- **Capacity at Local Level**: Even when warnings are issued, the local preparedness (evacuation routes, shelters, trained staff, and equipment) may be lacking.
- **Maintenance of Equipment & Technology**: Monitoring stations, sensors, drones need upkeep, calibration etc. Gaps in maintenance or funding can degrade performance.
- **Coordination & Resource Matching**: Although resource mapping is being done, in a large disaster matching what is needed to what is available (mobile medical teams, food, rescue) still remains challenging.

Suggestions for Improvement

1. **Enhanced Local Infrastructure**
   - Ensure that remote and rural areas have reliable communication networks, solar power backup for sensors, battery backup etc., so that early warning systems remain operational during disasters.
2. **Further Integration of IoT & Real-Time Sensors**
   - More sensors for landslide risk (soil moisture), river flow, water levels etc.
   - Use of drones / UAVs for quick damage surveys, especially in hilly terrain or flood-affected zones.
3. **Public-Facing Apps & Tools**
   - Strengthen apps like Sidilu, possibly expand them to cover floods, landslides, heat waves, etc., with vernacular language support and easy UI.
4. **Training & Capacity Building**
   - At Gram Panchayat/village level: train people in interpreting warnings, in evacuation plans, first aid, and safe shelter planning.
5. **Simulation & Drills:** Regular drills for disaster response using the tech tools (simulate flood, evacuation etc.) to test systems, response times, identify gaps.
6. **Better Data Sharing and Open Data**
   - Make much of the hazard, sensor, and mapping data public (or at least to NGOs, researchers) for independent verification, community awareness, and research.

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- **Mapping Lakes with Drones & Web GIS**: The SSLR department has surveyed thousands of lakes using drones and rovers and is maintaining boundary, encroachment, and buffer zone data in Web GIS. This helps prevent flooding caused by encroachments, improves capacity to manage water bodies.
- **Lightning Alerts via Sidilu App**: As mentioned, KSNDMC's lightning monitoring app gives early warning for nearby lightning strikes to reduce casualties.
- **Flood Hazard Mapping by TISS**: After floods in north Karnataka, institutions like Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) have been involved in flood hazard mapping using GIS to help future preparedness.

Conclusion

Technology has become central to disaster relief and recovery in Karnataka. With robust weather-monitoring networks, GIS and spatial mapping, sensors for critical hazards, and apps for public alerts, the state is better equipped than many to anticipate, respond to, and recover from disasters. However, it is not enough to have technology in place; its effectiveness depends on **how well it is used**—how accurate the warnings are, how fast communities respond, whether local infrastructure supports timely action, and if resources are mapped, accessible, and mobilized rapidly. For the future, greater emphasis on integration, community participation, real-time data, open platforms, and maintenance/resources will strengthen Karnataka's resilience further.

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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HEALTH: THE ROLE OF ASHA WORKERS IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD-SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HASSAN DISTRICT

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Hassan Dist

Abstract:

Seventy percent of the world health workers are made up of women. The Covid-19 outbreak hit the whole world along with unprecedented consequences on the world economy, health, education, institutions and people's lives. As virus spread across the world it rapidly showed a different consequences on the two sexes. Asha-Workers are the grace-roots level women health workers in Karnataka. They are the frontline women health care workers in this pandemic period of covid-19. They are the ones who are working day and night to take care of Corona Virus patients. There is enormous concern fear for ourselves on whether they might get transmit the Corona Virus to their families. Recently the World Health Organization conducted a study on the role of women health workers in Covid-1S, the report reveals that most of the health care heroes that tackled Covid-19 in the frontline are women. As a matter of fact highest proposition of women health care workers are infected by Corona Virus-19. It is also true in the case of countries like USA, Italy, Spine and India. Some of the study reveals that better performance against Covid-19 are guided by women. Therefore this paper attempts to analyse the role and responsibilities of ASHA-worker as women health care workers on the frontline of the Covid-19 in the Hassan District.

Keywords: Asha-Workers, Covid-19, Women health Care

Introduction:

ASHA workers accredited social health activists are the gross-root level health workers in the National Health Mission. These workers are being closely connected with the rural and urban poor families playing a significant role in health related problems and issues. Especially in this pandemic period of Covid-19. At present there are 10.33 lakh Asha-Workers are functioning across the country. They are the link between the community and public health system. Each and every village in India have an ASHA worker, they are trained females. An ASHA-worker

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is a educated women aged about 25 to 45 years and resident of the same village, who is selected by Gram Sabha or recognized committee. The qualification for selection as ASHA-worker is SSLC pass. After selection she has to undergo a series of trainings to gain the necessary knowledge as well as skills for performing her roles. She is given incentives for promoting health care programs. All ASHA workers are expected to participation in public health programs in the country side. They are the first persons to be called for any health related requirements of the deprived sections of the community. ASHA workers are the community level health workers for creating awareness about health and hygiene. They getting honorarium Rs. 4000 per month. Besides that they get the performance based incentives. Therefore let us analyze the role of ASHA workers on the frontline of the Covid-19 in Hassan District of Karnataka State.

Objective of the study:

Following are the important objective of the present study-

1. To study the role of ASHA workers in the pandemic Covid-19
2. To analyze the frontline work of ASHA workers to prevent Covid-19
3. To identify their social status in the present scenario

Methodology:

The study is based on Primary and Secondary data. Secondary data obtained from various articles, research journals, books, news papers, reports, websites etc., The Primary data obtained from District Family Wealth Officer, District Statistical Officer, District ASHA Workers Association Mentor by using the interview method.

Limitations of the Study:

This research article has been a major important concept for the contribution of ASHA workers and their role to control Covid-19 in Hassan District. The study has limited Hassan District of Karnataka State.

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Table: 01 - Total number of ASHA workers in Hassan District and number of Covid-

Table 01: Total Number of ASHA Workers in Hassan District and Covid-19 Positive Cases among ASHA Workers

Sl. No.	Name of the Taluk	Total No. of ASHA Workers	Total No. of Covid-19 Positive Cases among ASHA Workers
1	Alur	74	02
2	Arkalgud	192	02
3	Arasikere	263	05
4	Belur	172	06
5	Channarayapattana	233	03
6	Hassan	261	05
7	Holenarasipura	152	09
8	Sakaleshapura	116	03
Total	—	**1465**	**35**

Soruce: 1. District Health Officer, Hassan, Kamataka. 2. District Mentor, ASHA Workers Organization, Hassan District.

Analysis:

The above table showing that there are eight talukas in the district, total number of ASHA workers working in the district are 1465 and total number of positive cases among ASHA workers are 35. From the above table, it is clear that ASHA workers are working as frontline workers in the Covid-19 horrible pandemic situation. They also mapping survey to check on high risk people amid the Covid pandemic. They are also not only working in the Covid-19 but also involved in the Grama Pachyat election duty, which was conducted recently in Karnataka. To avoid the spread of Covid-19 infection. ASHA workers stood in front of the poling- booth throughout the polling day. Because of this so many ASHA workers became positive Covid1-19. ASHA workers in the Hassan district fighting against the pandemic by conducting house-hold survey, screening inter district passengers, migrant workers and other in communities for the virus symptoms. ASHA workers regularly monitoring such high risk group in their area with periodicity of follow-up visits, varying from once in a day in the containment zones to once every fifteen days in other areas. The ASHA workers are also visiting residence of people who are suffering from influenza like illness severe Acute respiratory infections including high risk individuals in the district. ASHA workers are not only working in the village side but also working in urban areas. They have been at the forefront

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in disseminating various awareness activities in the fever clinics and swab collection centres. In rural areas ASHA workers are also the part of rural task force headed by Panchayat Development Officers. Almost all ASHA workers are working in rural task force in the Hassan district to meet the needs of both Covid-19 and non covid requires. Currently Hassan district battling 54, 244 active Covid-19 cases, while total deaths are 710.

As a matter of fact the ASHA workers are not only working hard in the pandemic Covid-19. Therefore ASHA workers have really merged as one of the unsung heroes from this pandemic in the Hassan district.

Findings:

From the above table and the analyses of the data, it is clear that, the following findings are realistic in nature.

1. ASHA workers are playing a significant role in creating awareness about Covid-19.
2. They are working hard to avoid pandemic Covid-19.
3. Most ASHA workers raised serious concern on being put on Covid-19 testing duties.
4. ASHA workers are over worked and under paid.

Recommendations:

Following are the important recommendations could me made from the recommendations of the study.

1. There is a great need to increase remuneration of ASHA workers from 4000 Rs. to 10000 Rs. with immediate effect in this pandemic period.
2. They should be provide PPE kits among comprising quality masks, sanitizer and hand gloves in the terrible situation.
3. ASHA workers, who are above of fifty with various ailments should be exempted from working during pandemic.
4. ASHA workers should be tested frequently as they come in contact with various people in the community
5. ASHA workers should also get insured of Rs. 50 lakh under the Prime Minister package.

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Conclusion:

ASHA workers are really working as frontline health workers in the pandemic situation of Covid-19. But the Government of India should increase their honorarium as well as incentives. They should protect with proper life insurance. Proper training should be given. On the other hand ASHS's do provide constellation of services and play a potential role providing primary health care, but still they need put into practice. Their knowledge about while providing cervices and advice to negotiate health care for poor women and children.

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INTEGRATING SANITATION AND WELLNESS: ADDRESSING HEALTH CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS IN INDIA'S PUBLIC HEALTH LANDSCAPE

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the interdependence of health, wellness, and sanitation as core determinants of holistic well-being for individuals and societies. Drawing from recent global and Indian literature, the analysis explores sanitation's profound impact on public health—specifically the prevention of communicable diseases, support of child and maternal health, and enhancement of social and economic development. Through a review of scholarly and programmatic evidence, the paper discusses advances and challenges in sanitation infrastructure, the significance of behavioral change, and the effectiveness of integrated health policies in achieving sustainable wellness outcomes. Emphasis is placed on India, highlighting how community participation, innovation, and policy reforms can address persistent disparities in access and quality. The findings establish that investment in sanitation, along with widespread education on hygiene, remains a cornerstone for advancing health outcomes and social equity in developing nations. Key words: Health, Wellness, Sanitation

Introduction

Health and wellness are universally recognized as foundational principles for human progress and happiness, while sanitation is acknowledged as a prerequisite for achieving optimal health and societal well-being. Together, these aspects form a triad that determines both the quality and longevity of life for individuals and communities. Despite vast scientific advancements and the creation of hygiene and sanitation infrastructure, millions across the globe still lack access to safe sanitation, leading to preventable diseases and social inequities. Recent policy efforts and research have underscored the interdependence of health, wellness, and sanitation, calling for integrated, community-led, and sustainable approaches to ensure these fundamental needs are met for all.

Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are:

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- To explore the concepts and interconnections of health, wellness, and sanitation and their influence on individual and public health outcomes.
- To review global and Indian perspectives, illustrating developments, challenges, and policies in sanitation and hygiene.
- To analyze the impact of insufficient sanitation on community health, including physical, social, and economic consequences.
- To evaluate major literature and synthesize findings from diverse studies, highlighting successful interventions and persistent gaps.
- To propose recommendations for policy, innovation, and future research toward achieving sustainable health and sanitation goals.

Review of Literature

Existing literature reflects the multidimensional impact of sanitation on health and wellness. Mara et al. discuss that 2.6 billion people globally lack adequate sanitation, contributing to 10% of the world's disease burden, predominantly diarrhea diseases. Their findings show that improved sanitation not only reduces morbidity and child mortality but also promotes social and economic development. They argue for the crucial role of the health sector in planning, advocacy, and implementation—emphasizing not just infrastructure building but also behavioral change, intersectoral collaboration, and community-led initiatives.

Studies like Hutton highlight that the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) framework is central to global poverty reduction and human development. Literature focusing on low-income nations, such as India, illustrates the cultural, infrastructural, and socioeconomic barriers to universal sanitation. For instance, a review from Madras, India, documents how hygiene education and access to facilities are intimately linked with school attendance, learning opportunities, and primary health outcomes for children. The review found that persistent gaps remain even after decades-long sanitation campaigns due to challenges in operations, maintenance, and social adaptation. Recent reviews stress innovative, community-based approaches and cross-sectoral planning as essential for progress. They note that sanitation is no longer the sole domain of engineers but involves health professionals, behavior specialists, educators, and community members.

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Methodology of Study

This paper employs a qualitative and descriptive research methodology, drawing primarily on secondary sources such as scholarly journals, government reports, international organization publications, and policy documents. A thematic review approach has been applied to examine the interrelationship between sanitation, health, and wellness. The study integrates both global and Indian perspectives, with special attention given to the Indian context due to its diverse challenges and policy innovations in sanitation. Data sources include peer-reviewed articles from PubMed and Science Direct, policy briefs from the World Health Organization (WHO), and government initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. These materials were critically analyzed to identify key trends, challenges, and solutions in sanitation and health policy. Emphasis was placed on synthesizing findings across disciplines public health, economics, and social sciences—to present a holistic understanding. The methodology is interpretive rather than statistical, focusing on evaluating evidence, highlighting successful interventions, and identifying persistent gaps in sanitation and health frameworks. This approach allows for the development of context-specific recommendations relevant to India's public health landscape.

Health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being... Health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. The World Health Organization extends this further with wellness, encompassing lifestyle practices, preventive care, and positive engagement with society to ensure a fulfilling and productive life. Some essential components include balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, mental health care, preventive health checks, and hygienic living environments.

Sanitation:

Sanitation involves providing and maintaining services and infrastructure that ensure safe water, proper disposal of human and household waste, and clean environments.

- **Clean Water Access**: Access to safe, filtered, or boiled water is essential for drinking and hygiene, preventing waterborne diseases like cholera.
- **Waste Management**: Proper disposal of household waste and sewage is vital to prevent the spread of disease-causing germs.

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- **Hygiene Facilities**: This includes access to clean toilets and bathrooms, which are fundamental for preventing the spread of pathogens.

Personal Hygiene: Individual Practices:

Personal hygiene refers to the habits and practices that keep the body clean and protect it from illness.

- **Handwashing**: Regular handwashing with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before handling food, is crucial for removing germs and preventing infections.
- **Bathing**: Daily bathing helps remove dirt, oils, and bacteria from the skin, which can become breeding grounds for germs.
- **Dental Care**: Brushing teeth twice daily helps prevent cavities and maintain oral health.

Health and Wellness: The Outcome:

Good sanitation and personal hygiene directly contribute to health and wellness by:

- **Preventing Infectious Diseases**: By breaking the chain of infection, these practices significantly reduce the incidence of diseases like the common cold, gastroenteritis, and other viral or bacterial illnesses.
- **Promoting a Healthy Environment**: A clean environment reduces exposure to disease vectors and pathogens, supporting community health.
- **Ensuring a High Quality of Life**: A population that is healthy and free from preventable diseases can **Challenges and Innovations:**

Challenges remain in behavior change, funding sustainability, equity, urban-rural disparities, and environmental impacts. Innovations include smart sanitation systems, decentralized wastewater treatment, eco-sanitation approaches, WASH integration, and gender-sensitive designs.

Recommendations

Multipronged strategies are necessary: expanding sustainable infrastructure, mainstreaming hygiene education, ensuring inclusivity, strengthening intersectoral cooperation, investing in research and innovations, and rigorously monitoring programs.

Conclusion

Synergy among health, wellness, and sanitation forms a foundation for sustainable human development and public health security. Inadequate sanitation is linked to disease, economic loss, and inequality. Though progress is

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notable, sustained effort in behavior change, funding, innovation, and inclusive service is essential. Sanitation is a multisectoral imperative crucial for health, dignity, and prosperity for all.

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DIGITAL FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND MARGINALIZED BODIES: SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND JUSTICE

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Abstract

Marginalized groups in India, such as Dalits, tribal groups, migrant labourers, women, and refugees, face exclusion and neglect in life and death. Utilizing the perspective of digital forensic anthropology and sociology, this paper will identify the potential of digital forensics to remedy imbalances faced by marginalized groups because of existing protocols for identifying and commemorating the dead. Utilizing theories about structural violence, recognition, and collective memory, the paper also considers how methods and techniques of digital forensics such as DNA databanks, isotopic analysis, artificial intelligence-facilitated facial reconstruction and digital archives can help to restore identity and dignity to the marginalized dead. The paper draws on Indian case studies of neglect regarding migrant deaths during COVID-19, caste atrocity deaths, and refuse bodies in police mortuaries and comparative case studies of neglect regarding victims from the African Burial Ground Project, Native American repatriation, and forensic activism in Latin America. The paper demonstrates that simple identification of the dead is inadequate; justice possesses continuity and involves democratic engagement and advocating for communities to act. Digital tools can be used to produce community action alongside digital advocacy methodologies.

Keywords: Digital Forensic Anthropology; Marginalized Bodies; Identity; Collective Memory; Justice

1. Introduction

Forensic anthropology has customarily regarded the identification of the deceased through skeletal and biological identities. However, it has become increasingly prevalent among scholars to understand the body not simply as biological remains, but also as a social construction of inequality, neglect and structural violence (Farmer, 2006; Adams et al., 2024). In India, the hierarchy of caste, class, and gender continues to dictate how people are engaged

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while alive and dead. Therefore, marginalized groups, such as Dalits, tribals, migrants, women and refugees, find themselves disproportionately rendered invisible both in forensic science and legal practices. As the body becomes rendered invisible, it is commonly disposed of unclaimed, delay identification, and erased from collective memory.

Digital forensic anthropology offers a meaningful evolution of forensic anthropology that incorporates various technologies, including DNA databanks, isotopic analysis, AI-initiated facial reconstruction and digital archiving. However, while technology cannot restore their identity or recognition to the deceased, these practices might offer a way to restore and dignify some victims' lost lives. (Blakey, 2010; Huffschmid, 2015). Yet in India, their application remains limited, hindered by systemic bias, institutional neglect, and resource constraints.

The objectives are:

1. To examine the potential of digital forensic tools in identifying marginalized bodies in India.
2. To analyze inequities in forensic attention through sociological frameworks.
3. To assess case studies of exclusion and neglect in death investigations.

2. Review of Literature:

Forensic anthropology has consistently emulated broader social inequalities. Traditionally, the remains of underrepresented bodies, bodies of the marginalized were positioned as a scientific specimen rather than a person with an identity. Researchers like Blakey (2010, 2020) describe how African American remains, and those of other oppressed ethnic groups, had their identity erased in skeletal collections (Hunt & Albanese, 2005; Cova, 2019). These histories signify that structural racism and exclusion carry on beyond death.

The advent of digital technology—namely 3D imagining and genetic databanks are avenues for identifying those in mortuary contexts. Yet Adams et. al (2024) and Bardill et al. (2018) emphasize that technological advancements alone do not lead to just actions. These technologies can, in a way, reproduce historical silences, if they are not implemented with a model of participatory engagement or ethical accountable actions. Work on paleo genomics and ancient DNA continues to elucidate that without community involvement, challenges of

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exploitation arise (Claw et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2020). Bioarchaeological scholarship demonstrate that structural violence can be inscribed on the body across the life course. Farmer (2006) and Klaus (2012) discuss the ways we can see structural violence evidenced by health outcomes, excess mortality, and trauma; Cova's (2010-2012) work focuses on south-eastern Asian and Latine bodies in the 19th century and how they were the subject of excess physical violence and trauma. The "osteological paradox" (Wood et al., 1992; DeWitte & Stojanowski, 2015) complicates these interpretations, as evidence from bones should be always interpreted through the wider historical and social context within which any one set of skeletal remains were once part of a living body.

Legal and ethical frameworks--such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)--have attempted to make amends for injustices that happened in death and after death through reburial and consultation with impacted communities (Bruning, 2006; Kakaliouras, 2012, 2017). Nevertheless, gaps in the implementation of processes still occur, especially for African American communities (Dunnavant et al., 2021). These gaps reveal an intersection between scientific practice and social responsibility. Combined, this body of scholarship demonstrates the following two points. First, forensic anthropology has historically positioned certain groups as marginal--usually in the context of research and death investigations. Second, digital technologies may offer new avenues for identification; still, they should be applied within a context of ethics, participation, and social responsibility.

Theoretical Framework

In the context of forensic neglect, structural violence - the concealed structure through which caste, gender and class hierarchies operate - intervenes. It has determined who is worthy of the recognition tied to the dignity of identification, and conversely, who is disenfranchised into anonymity. The theoretical area of recognition then allows for forensic anthropology to be reconceptualized as more than merely a matter of the technical science of the body, but also a moral endeavor that offers dignity, identity and visibility to those who had historically been denied it. Within this transformation, there is a destabilization of the reduction of victims to mere biological fragments, and instead their social personhood is restored. Collective memory and advocacy, then affirm that this recognition, from an individual point of view, can also be found in the community and recognized through

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forensic work. These perspectives tell us that forensic anthropology in India is not just 'solving' cases, but rather pushing back against structures of erasure, redistributing dignity and infusing the politics of memory with recognizable shifts in service of marginalized communities.

3. Marginalized Bodies in India

In India, marginalized groups face systematic erasure in life and death. The ways in which marginalized groups are treated through forensic systems serves as an example of how structurally unequal systems shape and constrain those identities that may be located somewhere in the analyses and those that are left intact by the system.

The experiences of Dalits, Adivasis, migrants, women, and children in forensic contexts reveal that structural violence transcends beyond life and into the death investigations. Forensics is clearly not neutral; it is an expression of a regime of biopolitics through which different lives are "grievable" and thus are better deserving of identification. The asymmetric use of digital technologies such as DNA databanks or isotopic analysis shows how science can only strengthen social hierarchies by making bodies outside the legal memory. In this sense, an absence of identification is not simply a technical failure; it is a political act of erasure in which a lack of forensic attention reproduces exclusionary patterns. The question is how to reimagine forensics not just as a technological enterprise, but as a site of justice that must hold itself accountable for reproducing inequality.

4. Digital Forensic Anthropology Tools

Digital forensic anthropology is an amalgamation of more advanced scientific methods that serve to restore identity and humanity to marginalized victims. These tools extend beyond conventional skeletal analysis in reuniting bodies with families, reconstructing erased histories, and building legal accountability. But their usage in India remains patchy and inconsistent. Digital forensic technologies promise to transform the process of identification, yet in India, their limited and selective deployment reproduces inherited inequities. For example, DNA banks created under the 2019 Bill remain chronically underutilized and largely unavailable or inaccessible to groups most at risk of disappearing unacknowledged—Dalits, migrant populations, and women of vulnerable communities. Instead of reducing inequality, these disparities in use risk embedding caste and class disparities in forensic infrastructures. Similarly, the potential of isotopic studies to recover information about the lives and

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movements of displaced tribal populations or migrant laborers has not been realized, again because of cost and absence of sustained institutional investment. These chasms are more than about technology. They reflect a political decision about which lives are considered of scientific interest. AI-based facial reconstruction, although it has a potential to reconstitute faces for the nameless dead, similarly remains limited by jurisdiction, usually relegated to the politically expedient highest profile cases or high-profile individuals, ensuring that marginalized victims remain erased from public visibility. The almost total absence of digital archives will only deepen that erasure, resulting in unclaimed bodies disappearing from collective memory yesterday, today, and into the future.

5. Sociology of Identification

In forensic anthropology, identification has been framed as sometimes a neutral, biological procedure: the matching of skeletal markers, DNA, or isotopic data to specify who the dead person was. But as a sociological practice, identification is also a highly social process mediated by power, inequality, and recognition. Whose bodies are identified in a prompt manner, and with which resources, is as much a function of technical capabilities as it is of social hierarchies.

6. Indian Case Studies – Evidence of Systemic Neglect

7.1 Unclaimed and Unidentified Bodies in Morgue

A systematic ailment points to huge numbers of unclaimed bodies listed across Indian are post-mortem invisibility. Recent local reportage and institutional records reveal pockets for the lack of identity of the bodies: Nagpur recorded 737 unclaimed bodies between Jan 2023 and May 2025, with 38% being unnatural deaths. Thiruvananthapuram Medical College reported to have kept 63 unidentified/cremated bodies between May 2024 and May 2025 in its vaults and still had many unidentified bodies kept in the mortuary. High unclaimed counts also characterize metropolitan wards: an RTI revealed unclaimed dead bodies of >14,000 in the last 15 years, Mumbai local train lines, and Mumbai hospital reporting alleging 78 unclaimed bodies in city morgues (data summarized from local reporting and institutional notices). An inadequately explaining regular inflow of unidentified bodies that municipal and police systems have been hard put to trace back to families. Interpretation:

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Unidentified bodies usually consist of homeless persons, transient migrants, and socially marginalized people who do not possess any identity documentation.

7.2 Migrant Worker Deaths (COVID-era & aftermath)

The pandemic and lockdowns exposed grave gaps in tracking migrant mortality. During the 2020 lockdowns, the Centre did not document migrant death cases, whereas independent and NGO studies and the media cited anywhere between hundreds and a few thousand migrant deaths (due to road accidents, exhaustion, suicides, starvation, and other causes). Official transport and road accident statistics show spikes in accident occurrences during the months of lockdown, and targeted studies point to a considerable share of these fatalities being migrants. The absence of a systematic central recording of migrant deaths renders many of these deaths unmatched to families and unentered in long-term identification systems.

Interpretation: Migrant deaths during crises exemplify how mobility and marginality exacerbate the risk of becoming undocumented death. Digital forensics (routine DNA sampling, of unclaimed bodies, interoperable databases) would have softened this invisibility but was not put into systematic use.

7.3 Dalit Atrocity Victims and Forensic Attention

Levels of crimes and atrocities against Scheduled Castes remained extraordinarily high in recent statistics: NCRB/Parliamentary returns have tens of thousands of registered cases of crimes against SCs and STs in recent years (for, say, >50,000 registered cases against SCs in 2022). However, there is comparatively little public data indicating systematic forensic identification efforts tied to atrocity cases, while data suggest that many victims, especially in disadvantaged districts, do not receive proper and complete forensic follow-ups in time. Such a juxtaposition between many atrocity incidents reported and paucity or lack of forensic follow-through indicates institutional failure to translate registration of an atrocity before the law into a scientifically verified identification and recognition.

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Interpretation: A high incidence of atrocities combined with a lack of adequate forensic follow-up contributes further to the erasure of marginalized victims: legal acknowledgment (case registration) often does not grant dignified or scientifically documented identification or entry into public memory.

7. Discussion

The intersection of digital forensic anthropology and sociology reveals both the strengths and limitations that come with current practices within India. While advanced technologies—including DNA databases, isotopic analysis, artificial intelligence-aided reconstructions, and digital archives—are transforming identification processes on a global basis, their haphazard availability within India highlights the long-standing systemic abandonment that impacts targeted demographic populations. To shed light on these processes, the analysis is complemented by comparative as well as thematic visualizations that represent patterns in adoption, shifts in methodologies, and the social impacts of forensic processes.

8. Conclusion

The findings from this study illustrate that, in India, digital forensic anthropology is located within the intersection of science, sociology, and justice. In the rest of the world, DNA databanks, isotopic analysis, artificial intelligence-based reconstructions, and digital archives for establishing identity and dignity for marginalized victims are becoming important tools for what can best be described as a global forensic anthropology project. However, in India, these methods remain sporadic and unequally used--a reflection of deeper hierarchies of caste, class, and gender. The results of case studies on the unclaimed body investigative structure, migrant deaths during the COVID-19 lockdown, and Dalit atrocity victims can show the extent to which structural violence continues even in death. For many lives, even the acknowledgement of their existence, was undocumented and irretrievably erased from the memory of a community. Through the discussion and charts, three points have been noted. Firstly, all forensic identification or sorry, "is not neutral, but a social process framed through inequalities." Secondly, the digital platform has the potential to surmount the limitations of conventional practices; however, without equitable access, digital tools risk reproducing exclusion. Thirdly, the integration of justice is conditional: in instances where the digital, is aligned with a anthropological framework of structural violence, recognition, and collective memory, thematic spaces acquire both the dignity and agency to advance forensic anthropology

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practices into an act of advocacy and dignity. Consequently, the task facing India is twofold: a systematic advancement of digital deeds infrastructure, integrated with ethics that have a bias for marginalized communities. Identification can then be an act of justice - restoring identity, asserting humanity, and ensuring every death is remembered.

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UNLOCKING GROWTH AND RESILIENCE FOR MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMES)

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Abstract

This article analyzes the **impact of Digital Transformation (DT)** on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), asserting that DT is a **fundamental necessity** for their survival and sustained growth in the Industry 4.0 era. The analysis highlights four key opportunities unlocked by DT: **exponential market expansion** through e-commerce and social media, significant **enhancement of operational efficiency** and cost reduction via automation (ERP/CRM) and data-driven decision-making, **improved customer engagement** and personalized experience, and **better access to finance and capital** due to a stronger digital footprint for credit assessment. However, the paper identifies four major barriers to adoption: a critical **digital literacy and skill gap**, **financial constraints** and high perceived costs of initial investment, inadequate **infrastructure and connectivity** in rural and semi-urban areas, and growing **cybersecurity risks**. The article concludes that DT is the engine for the next phase of MSME growth, promising resilience and innovation. It recommends a concerted, multi-stakeholder strategy focused on **policy incentives, focused digital skilling, infrastructure enhancement**, and **ecosystem collaboration** to enable MSMEs to transition from localized businesses to active participants in the global digital economy.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, MSMEs, Industry 4.0, Operational Efficiency, Market Reach, Digital Literacy, Cybersecurity, Access to Finance.

Introduction:

Digital Transformation of MSMEs

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the national economy, driving employment, fostering innovation, and ensuring equitable development. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry

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4.0), characterized by the fusion of digital, physical, and biological spheres, **Digital Transformation (DT)** is no longer a luxury but a fundamental necessity for the survival, competitiveness, and sustained growth of the MSME sector. This article explores the profound impact of DT on MSMEs, examining the key opportunities it unlocks and the strategic challenges that must be addressed to ensure an inclusive digital future.

Digital Transformation as an Accelerator

Digital transformation, encompassing the adoption of technologies like e-commerce, cloud computing, data analytics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), offers a paradigm shift in how MSMEs operate and compete.

1. Exponential Market Expansion and Reach

Digital platforms, including e-commerce marketplaces and social media channels, obliterate geographical barriers. MSMEs, historically confined to local markets, can now access **national and global customer bases** at a fraction of the cost of traditional expansion. This democratizes market access, enabling even micro-enterprises in remote locations to participate in the global value chain.

2. Enhanced Operational Efficiency and Cost Reduction

The adoption of digital tools streamlines core business processes:

- **Automation:** Cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems automate repetitive tasks like accounting, inventory management, and customer service, reducing manual errors and saving valuable time.
- **Supply Chain Optimization:** Digital tracking and real-time data exchange with suppliers and logistics partners lead to more efficient inventory management, reduced waste, and faster turnaround times.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Analytics tools provide insights into customer behaviour, sales trends, and operational bottlenecks, empowering MSME owners to make smarter, faster, and more informed business decisions.

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3. Improved Customer Engagement and Experience

Digital channels allow MSMEs to forge a closer relationship with their customers. Through social media, instant messaging, and dedicated apps, they can:

- **Personalize Offerings:** Use customer data to tailor products, services, and marketing campaigns.
- **Collect Feedback Instantly:** Gain real-time feedback to quickly iterate on products and resolve issues, thereby building **brand loyalty** and trust.
- **Facilitate Transactions:** Enable seamless digital payment options (e.g., UPI, mobile wallets), enhancing convenience and security for the consumer.

4. Access to Finance and Capital

Digital footprints, generated through online transactions, digital accounting, and e-commerce sales, make MSMEs **more visible and credit-worthy** to financial institutions. Fintech solutions leverage this digital data for more accurate risk assessment, unlocking faster and more equitable access to credit and working capital, which is crucial for growth.

Challenges and Barriers:

While the benefits are transformative, the journey is fraught with challenges, particularly given the heterogeneous nature of the MSME sector, where micro-enterprises often dominate.

1. Digital Literacy and Skill Gap

A significant inhibitor is the **lack of digital skills and awareness** among MSME owners and their employees. Many proprietors remain skeptical of the Return on Investment (ROI) and lack the foundational knowledge to identify, adopt, and effectively utilize digital tools. The shortage of personnel trained in emerging technologies like data science or cloud management further slows adoption.

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2. Financial Constraints and Cost of Adoption

MSMEs typically operate on thin margins, making the **initial investment** in software, hardware, and specialized training a substantial barrier. Though many affordable solutions exist, the perception that digital transformation is an expensive, complex overhaul persists.

3. Infrastructure and Connectivity

While metropolitan areas have robust infrastructure, many MSMEs in **rural and semi-urban regions** struggle with inadequate internet connectivity, unreliable power supply, and slow network speeds, limiting their ability to fully leverage cloud-based or real-time digital solutions.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Digital transformation is the engine of the next phase of growth for MSMEs, promising increased productivity, expanded market reach, and enhanced resilience against economic shocks. To fully harness this potential, a concerted, multi-stakeholder strategy is essential:

1. **Policy Support and Incentives:** The government must continue to design targeted policies, including financial subsidies, tax incentives, and credit-linked schemes, to lower the initial cost of technology adoption.
2. **Focused Skill Development:** Launch widespread, vernacular, and practical **Digital Skilling** programs tailored to the specific needs of different MSME clusters and sectors.
3. **Infrastructure Enhancement:** Prioritize investment in high-speed, affordable internet and reliable digital infrastructure, especially in underserved rural areas, to bridge the digital divide.
4. **Ecosystem Collaboration:** Encourage partnerships between large corporations, technology providers, industry associations, and academic institutions to mentor MSMEs and offer affordable, easy-to-implement digital solutions (e.g., Software as a Service - SaaS models).

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By successfully navigating these challenges, MSMEs can transform from mere survivalists to **active participants and innovators** in the global digital economy, securing their future and strengthening the foundation of the national economy.

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SELF-HELP GROUPS AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

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Abstract

This article examines **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** as a transformative, bottom-up mechanism for the comprehensive **social and economic empowerment of women** in marginalized communities. Initially founded as simple savings and credit collectives, SHGs have evolved into powerful, multi-dimensional platforms essential for achieving gender equality and sustainable development goals. The paper highlights the **economic impact** of SHGs, primarily driven by **financial inclusion** through collateral-free microfinance (intra-group and external bank linkages) and the promotion of **entrepreneurship**. SHG membership significantly increases family income, asset creation, and, crucially, a woman's **financial decision-making power** within the household. In parallel, SHGs foster profound **social and psychological transformation**. They build **self-confidence, communication skills, and psychological autonomy** through regular participation. The groups cultivate **robust social capital** and collective agency, enabling women to participate in local issues, demand better public services, and effectively **challenge deep-seated gender norms** by advocating against social evils like domestic violence and promoting health and education awareness. The conclusion asserts that SHGs are **grassroots democratic institutions** that mobilize women into agents of change.

Keywords: Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Women Empowerment, Microfinance, Financial Inclusion, Social Capital, Entrepreneurship, Gender Equality, Collective Action.

Introduction

Micro-credit and community mobilization have emerged as powerful strategies for poverty alleviation and inclusive growth. At the heart of this movement lie **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, small, voluntary associations of typically 10 to 20 socio-economically similar women. Originating primarily as savings and credit collectives,

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SHGs have evolved into multi-dimensional platforms that catalyze a profound process of **social, economic, and political empowerment** for women, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. This paper explores the transformative role of SHGs, positioning them as a critical, bottom-up mechanism for achieving gender equality and sustainable development goals.

Economic Empowerment: Building Financial Agency

The most visible and immediate impact of SHGs is in **financial inclusion** and economic upliftment, fundamentally altering a woman's control over resources and income.

1. Access to Collateral-Free Microfinance

SHGs function on the principle of **collective guarantee**. Members pool small, regular savings, creating an internal loan fund. This initial financial base, coupled with the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP) in many nations, grants women **access to formal credit** without the need for collateral. This is revolutionary for women often excluded by traditional banking systems.

- **Intra-Group Lending:** Provides quick, flexible loans for consumption needs, health emergencies, or minor income-generating activities.
- **External Linkages:** Access to larger bank loans enables members to start, expand, or diversify micro-enterprises, such as small-scale manufacturing, tailoring, or agricultural activities.

2. Entrepreneurship and Income Generation

The financial access is often paired with **skill-building and entrepreneurial training** provided through government or NGO partners. SHGs facilitate a shift from precarious wage labor to sustainable self-employment.

- **Skill Development:** Training in bookkeeping, quality control, value addition, and market access (e.g., e-commerce platforms).

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- **Increased Income and Assets:** Studies consistently show that SHG membership leads to a significant increase in family income, personal savings, and the accumulation of productive assets, directly challenging cycles of poverty.

3. Financial Decision:

Economic empowerment goes beyond mere income; it is about **control and decision-making power**. As women contribute financially to the household, their authority in decisions regarding expenditure, children's education, healthcare, and asset purchase increases both within the family and the community.

Social Empowerment:

Beyond the quantifiable economic gains, SHGs serve as a powerful crucible for **social and psychological transformation**, building collective agency and self-worth.

1. Enhanced Self-Confidence and Psychological Autonomy

Regular meetings, shared responsibilities, and the successful management of group funds instill a strong sense of **self-esteem and confidence**. Women who were previously hesitant to leave their homes or speak in public develop communication skills, leadership qualities, and the courage to assert their opinions. This is the foundation of **psychological empowerment**.

2. Social Capital and Network Expansion

The group structure creates a **robust social network** that transcends caste and community barriers, fostering solidarity and mutual support. This social capital is invaluable, providing:

- **Information Sharing:** Access to information about government schemes, health practices, and market opportunities.

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- **Collective Action:** The collective voice of the SHG is more influential in addressing local issues, such as demanding better public services (water, electricity), ensuring the quality of ration distribution, and tackling social evils.

Conclusion:

Self-Help Groups are far more than micro-finance institutions; they are **grassroots democratic institutions** that have successfully mobilized women into agents of change. By linking thrift and credit with training, social awareness, and collective action, SHGs have proven to be an effective, scalable, and sustainable tool for:

1. **Economic Security:** Guaranteeing access to finance and driving entrepreneurship.
2. **Social Status:** Elevating women's position, confidence, and voice in both household and community decision-making.

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THE BALANCING ACT: EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN MIGRATION, DIGITAL DIVIDES AND URBAN GROWTH AMONG THE RURAL YOUTH IN CONTEMPORARY WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how rural youth in West Bengal experience and respond to the intersecting challenges of migration and digital disconnection in shaping their intimate lives as they engage in construction work in the major development projects of India. In many rural communities of West Bengal, the youth while increasingly being embedded in family structures are often disrupted by seasonal or long-term migration to cities—whether their own or that of parents. Yet in contemporary India, they play a critical yet often overlooked role in the development and expansion of cities. At the same time, limited access to stable digital infrastructures such as affordable smartphones, reliable internet, or private online spaces intensifies these disruptions by constraining how relationships are maintained across distance. While digital technologies are often celebrated as tools of connection and empowerment, this research foregrounds the uneven realities of digital access, revealing how digital exclusion compounds the emotional and social costs of migration. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and participatory visual methods conducted with students aged 16–35 in twenty households, the study highlights how digital disconnect not only hampers communication but also affects how young people express care, manage longing, and sustain relationships in the face of absence. The analysis moves beyond frameworks of vulnerability to foreground the everyday tactics young people employ to navigate these challenges—from borrowing phones and negotiating surveillance, to reimagining intimacy through asynchronous communication. The paper argues that rather than treating digital connectivity as a binary of access versus non-access, we should conceptualize it as a spectrum shaped by gender, caste, class, and spatial inequality. In doing so, it calls attention to the emotional labor and relational negotiations that rural youth perform to maintain a sense of belonging and relational continuity under strained conditions.

Key Words: emotional labor, digital infrastructure, intimacy, migrant, rural, West Bengal,

Introduction

According to Ayse Cagler, "Cities are strategic sites for regimes of accumulation in which the dynamics of a capitalist enterprise unfolds itself utilizing strategies of pursuit, of local, national, regional connectedness in order to achieve wealth and power".(Cagler, 2021). As we walk across a city, we often tend to get seemingly baffled by the aura of giganticness and dynamism as it comes to acquire a life of its own. But how often we think of the very people who play the central role in bringing it into shape and giving its form, through their own labor? In

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the shifting landscape of contemporary India, the rural youth are increasingly being caught at the crossroads of migration, digital transformation, and urban expansion. As major development projects fuel rapid urban growth across the country, they simultaneously draw young laborers—many from rural West Bengal—into precarious forms of construction work into its rapidly growing infrastructure of its cities. But while these youth contribute significantly to building the physical spaces of urban India, they remain largely invisible in the narratives of national development. At the same time, the assumed ubiquity of digital connectivity in their everyday lives masks a complex and unequal reality in which access to private communication becomes largely fragmented, uneven, and shaped by the intersections of class, gender, caste, and geography. By building upon this paradox of urban transformation, this paper examines how rural youth in West Bengal navigate the emotional, social, and infrastructural consequences of migration whether seasonal or long-term and digital disconnection as it disrupts everyday life, reshaping familial structures and complicating personal relationships. However, while, the digital divide simultaneously exacerbates these disruptions, making it difficult to maintain contact with their loved ones, they are still able to maintain their work-family balance through their engagement in acts of emotional labor which ultimately helps to facilitate their digital access across distance. This "balancing act" is a symbolism of the complex negotiations that these workers perform daily-'juggling emotional labor, limited digital access and the pressures of staying connected through borders by which they are able to express care, and sustain familial bonds. While popular and policy discourses often celebrate digital technologies as tools for empowerment and connection, such narratives overlook the layered ways in which disconnection is lived especially among marginalized youth in the context of their survival in an increasingly disconnected world.

In the last two decades, the state of West Bengal has witnessed one of the largest patterns of mass migration of rural youth into the construction industry of large cities. The complexity and flexible nature of this workforce became especially prominent in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic that has impacted severely on their daily lives. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and participatory visual methods conducted with rural youth aged 16–35 across twenty households, this paper explores the affective and relational labor that these young people perform in the face of infrastructural precarity. Rather than conceptualizing digital access as a binary between connected and disconnected, I argue that digital connectivity is better understood as a spectrum—one shaped by power, surveillance, gendered expectations, and the spatial politics of rural-urban migration. Through analyzing these themes, the paper builds upon the argument that the youth are not passive victims of digital disconnections; rather they are the creative builders of modern social life who often suppress their own struggles by way of engaging in acts of emotional labor in the wake of urban transformation.

The paper begins with a review of the relevant literature on youth migration, digital inequality, and the relational dimensions of urban growth. It then outlines the methodology of the study, including the use of participatory and ethnographic approaches. The empirical sections explore three major themes: the emotional consequences of

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migration, the socio-technical constraints of digital access, and the everyday tactics young people use to sustain intimacy under precarious conditions. In the final section, I argue for a rethinking of digital and urban futures that centers the affective labor and infrastructural exclusions of rural youth.

Work, Worry and the Weight of Distance: Emotional labor and the migrant youth in contemporary West Bengal

Internal migration in India has long been a survival strategy for rural populations navigating agrarian distress, unemployment, and uneven development. Scholars have emphasized how youth, in particular, are increasingly drawn into cycles of seasonal or circular migration to urban centers (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009; Rogaly & Coppard, 2003). In West Bengal, migration is frequently tied to both aspiration and compulsion. While some youth perceive migration as a path to economic mobility, others are compelled by family obligations or the absence of local opportunities (Samaddar, 2018). Migration, however, is not merely a material shift in location—it entails emotional, social, and familial dislocations that reshape how young people relate to their communities and themselves. Recent scholarship has also begun to explore how migration affects gender dynamics within families, especially when men migrate and women are left behind to manage households (Bhagat & Mohanty, 2009). Yet less attention has been paid to how migration shapes intimate relationships among youth, particularly in contexts where love, sexuality, and emotional expression are tightly policed. The rapid expansion of mobile technologies and internet services in India has generated optimistic claims about a "digital revolution" reaching even the remotest rural areas. However, scholars such as Payal Arora (2019) and Nimmi Rangaswamy (2013) have critiqued these narratives for ignoring the qualitative dimensions of access—such as affordability, digital literacy, device ownership, and privacy. What appears as "connected" in policy terms may, in fact, involve fragmented, intermittent, and surveilled forms of digital use. Digital disconnection is not simply the absence of internet or devices, but a lived condition shaped by material poverty, patriarchal control, infrastructural instability, and caste-based exclusions (Ali, 2016; Ray & Ghosh, 2020). For rural youth, especially young women, access to phones may be tightly regulated by parents, shared among siblings, or completely denied due to moral anxieties around sexuality and control (Banaji, 2017). Moreover, one must realize the fact that connectivity is not equally meaningful for everyone. While urban youth may enjoy fast, private, and personalized online spaces, their rural counterparts often engage in asynchronous, low-data, or coded modes of communication (e.g., missed calls, emojis, deleted chats). These modes are not "lesser" forms of digital intimacy—they are tactics of survival and care within structural constraints. In this context sociologists working on emotional labor—drawing largely on Hochschild have extended the concept beyond formal service work into transnational and intimate family spheres to show how emotional labor in these contexts involves managing emotions (one's own and others') to sustain relationships at a distance, to uphold roles (parent, spouse, caregiver), and to mitigate the strain of separation. Love's Labour's Lost? Separation as a Constraint on Displays of Transnational Daughterhood (Kara & Wrede,

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2022) examines how daughters who live apart from parents attempt to enact filial care across physical and emotional distance. The study shows how separation disrupts embodied care but also how daughters use communication (digital or via visits) as part of the moral work of maintaining familial bonds. Migrant fathers, for instance, navigate emotional pain, guilt, identity conflicts, especially when maintaining paternal roles across borders with digital means. Hence, migrant parents who might have superficial access (a smartphone, limited data) but may still be 'underconnected' or precariously connected—insufficient for meaningful communication, learning, or participation in digital community life. This undermines work-family balance, as gaps in digital access mean that emotional labor costs rise.

Affective Urbanism and the Emotional Lives of the Marginalized

India's youth, especially those aged between 15 and 35 make up nearly a third of the population. Migration among this group is increasingly common, spurred by the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas, aspirations for upward mobility, expanding access to education, and influence of digital media and urban imaginaries. Datta (2018) highlights how youth from Bihar migrate to Delhi not just for jobs but to seek respect and social status. Yet, these hopes are often confronted by poor working conditions, cultural alienation, and emotional strain. Baruah (2021), studying North-East Indian youth in retail and hospitality work, finds that migrants must constantly perform emotional and aesthetic labour: managing appearance, politeness in their behaviour while navigating class discrimination and job insecurity. So how does this affect their family life? Arlie Russell Hochschild's foundational work, ***The Managed Heart***, introduces emotional labor as the work of managing feelings (one's own and others') to meet social expectations. In family sociology, these ideas are extended beyond formal workplaces into intimate/domestic spheres. Urban growth in India is often imagined in material terms: new highways, metros, housing colonies, and smart cities. Yet scholars in anthropology and feminist geography have pushed for a more nuanced understanding of **"emotional urbanism"**—how affect, care, aspiration, and relationality are central to urban life (Datta, 2016; Björkman, 2015; Anjaria & McFarlane, 2011). In this frame, cities are not just spaces of labor and infrastructure, but also of hope, heartbreak, anxiety, and longing—especially for those on the margins. Migrant youth, who build the city but rarely inhabit its center, often experience a profound emotional displacement. Their intimate lives—romantic relationships, friendships, and kinship ties—are strained by absence and shaped by infrastructural limitations. Moreover, Sara Ahmed (2004) and Lauren Berlant (2011) has conceptualized how feelings such as longing, care, and insecurity are not just personal experiences but social forces. These emotions are shaped by material conditions and power relations, including class, gender, and spatial mobility. In this context, Notley (2024) has argued that digital inclusion is itself a form of burden, particularly for low-income migrants. This applies more to the migrant women youth as in Indian culture they are often expected to remain emotionally available to their families despite being physically distant. Young women face stricter scrutiny, must maintain "good daughter" or "respectable woman" personas, even

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when migrating for work or study. Although they are much more surveilled than men, young women often suppress their vulnerability, emotional needs, and mental health in their everyday struggles of adopting to masculine norms. This leads to emotional dissonance, as they must suppress their own needs while offering emotional support to parents, siblings, or spouses.

Jan Breman's scholarship on informal labour and circular migration provides a crucial lens through which to understand the precarious realities of migrant youth from West Bengal working in India's urban construction sector. His concept of the "footloose labour force" is particularly relevant in highlighting how these young workers are not freely mobile, but rather compelled to migrate due to structural rural distress, lack of employment opportunities, and social marginalisation. Far from being a transitional phase towards formal employment, Breman argues that informality has become a permanent feature of India's neoliberal economy, where low-wage, unregulated labour is systematically reproduced and exploited. This insight is reflected in the experiences of migrant youth who remain trapped in temporary, insecure construction jobs, often without contracts, social protection, or avenues for upward mobility. Their labour builds the physical infrastructure of cities, yet they are denied access to the social and economic infrastructure of urban life—education, housing, healthcare, and recognition. Breman's notion of the "denied citizen" captures this paradox of being essential yet excluded. Moreover, his attention to the intersections of caste, class, and regional hierarchies helps contextualise how youth from marginalised communities in West Bengal are doubly disadvantaged—first in their rural origins and again in the urban labour markets where they are viewed as cheap, disposable labour. Thus, Breman's narrative enables a critical understanding of informal work culture not as a side effect of development, but as a central mechanism of exclusion and control in India's urban economy.According to Jan Breman, a coherent feature of daily wage laborers in India is that they have practically no vertical mobility, which in the long run amounts to a process derogatory of clientalism and labor bondage. This often flexible and non-standard requirements demands various skills that can only be supplanted by various categories of labor at different stages; which in a way leads to its ''casualisation'' and externalization'. (Bucklay et al 2016). The hiring labor on the basis of labor contracts inherently means placing the workers at the disposal of a labor contractor who controls and supervises their work which has adverse effects on the nature of recruitment process itself fortifying its supply and demand in terms of task requirement. In other words the contractor can (1) Recruit temporary migrant workers from his home state as they are available at a cheaper cost. (2) Consider altering his labor force as in the majority of the cases there are no work permits required in the demand sectors. (3) Reduce the cost of food and accommodation as there are no permanent standards which are being maintained in terms of authorizing employment. This means the workers are often compelled to live in extremely vulnerable conditions that become evident from their pre-existing labor marker fragilities characterized by low wage rates, higher informality, lack of social protection and high unemployment rate. (Srivastava 2020).

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Field Of Study

This paper is part of my fieldwork conducted in several parts of West Bengal like Malda, Murshidabad, Keshtopur, Salt Lake and Rajarhaat. Strategic insights involving migration patterns of young construction workers in several housing projects, corporative houses and real estate companies that are located in urban and per-urban settings in various states including Kerala, Bangalare, Chennai, Bihar and Maharashtra have been made through surveys in order to deliberately access to the spaces emerging in the city. Along with ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews of their family members have been conducted in their villages to know about their relationships with construction supervisors and Real-Estate agents who facilitate their employment. A total of twenty households were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, focusing on young people aged 16–35 whose lives were affected by their migration and the impact it had on family members. The sample aimed for diversity across gender, caste, and class lines, allowing for an intersectional understanding of digital disconnection and intimacy. These methods were chosen to engage participants in reflecting on their own affective landscapes and to counter the limitations of traditional interview formats in capturing the non-verbal, embodied, and sensory dimensions of intimacy and care. Special attention was given to how young people manage access to digital devices, negotiate surveillance, and express longing in both presence and absence. Participants were informed of their rights to anonymity, confidentiality, and withdrawal at any point. Given the sensitive nature of discussing personal relationships and digital practices, consent was treated as an ongoing, dialogic process rather than a one-time event. In addition to that the migrant's positionality—both an outsider to the community and an alien outsider thoroughly considered during the course of research, with attention to the power dynamics embedded in cross-generational and cross-cultural interactions. Field notes, interview transcripts, and visual material were analyzed together to identify patterns of meaning-making around disconnection, care, and technological mediation. Rather than aiming for generalizability, the goal was to illuminate the situated strategies and emotional labor through which rural youth sustain relational life in constrained and unequal conditions.

At the initial stages of my fieldwork, I prepared a questionnaire and tried to conduct interviews of young construction workers who were engaged in housing projects. But I soon met with resistance from the contractors and construction supervisors who would repeatedly question my purpose for gathering data and many even suspected me as a government official and would shy away after they picked a glance at the questionnaire in my hand. After several failed attempts, I decided to change tactics and tried having small intermittent conversations with lone construction workers who were walking across the street or were gathered in a local tea stall. When I found that I was making little headway, I decided to increase the length of my conservations by choosing to interview workers who were returning home after completion of their work. I came to learn that in the majority cases, laborers were chosen for a particular project on the basis voluntary recuitment and as there was no

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qualification needed for this occupation, they would get involved in the job from a very early age, usually with the help of a friends or neighbors, or kins. My acquaintance with several Trade Union Leaders, made me realize about the coherent need to create a database on these young workers who were migrating to different places and getting stuck at work for very long periods, because the contractors did not provide them with the full remuneration. From their accounts I learnt that in many cases, the workers were very often compelled to leave their jobs in order to escape income insecurity. As a result circular migration emerges as a coping mechanism for these young workers where they are in a way compelled to engage in some other forms of work that would suffice them during the working period and also provide them the required money that they could send as remittance to their family members.

I spent a considerable period of time talking to the construction workers in New Town as it was near to my own residence. This provided me a good opportunity to learn about circular migration among construction workers and how fringe networks are being constructed in built-in environment. The geography of the region of New Town in which I conducted my study was characterized by fragments of uneven agrarian transformation in several places. The laborers in the construction sites came from districts like Baruipur, Diamond Harbor and Canning were seasonal migrants, during the rainy season when there would be no construction work, they would devote all the time to farming, cultivation crop production and sell the greater part of that yield in the market at a fare price at the mela and other festivals during the pujas and then return back to this work on early winter months. Although many of them did not have any mobile phones, it did not appear to be a cause of concern for them. This is because they had utmost faith in their contractor Atul Babu (name changed) who would occasionally provide them with the Their first acquaintance with their contractor took place while they were travelling to a worksite located in the semi-urban regions of the districts, very close to their residences. I was astonished to find out that none of the workers had completed their school education. Furthermore they did not own any Labor registration and had no documents about their work profile. When I asked Atul Babu, the reason, he replied :

" whether they have any mobile phones, or labor registration card..it does not matter to me it is practically of no use ... the majority of the workers are floating, they are not permanent. The would come here and work here for 18 to 25 days at a stretch and then return back home. The workers who are being recruited here are all known faces so I have no difficulty in trusting them because I have worked with them for a considerable period of time. In case it happens that I have to hand over the key to someone they can be safely entrusted with the job. I know their family members quite well and whatever is required I can provide for them."

Conclusion

In attending to both the affordances and failures of digital technologies, this paper allows for a textured understanding of how intimacy is shaped not only by devices and networks but also by histories of migration, young labor, and social surveillance in contemporary rural India. In this context, digital literacy emerges not

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merely as a tool for economic opportunity, but as a vital bridge for sustaining familial bonds, accessing state support, and mitigating the emotional and informational ruptures that migration and modernization continue to impose on rural life.The intergenerational gap, then, is no longer just about education or exposure, but about access to technologically mediated forms of intimacy and care. The paradox is striking: even as youth migrate to support their families financially, their absence and their parents' digital exclusion intensify emotional and logistical vulnerabilities back home. In this context, the rural household becomes a space marked by asymmetrical dependencies, where parents wait for updates or remittances over uncertain phone calls, while their children navigate precarious labor markets in urban fringes, often without security, support, or the possibility of returning to education. By centering their lived realities, the paper contributes to broader discussions on migration, youth agency, and digital inequality in the Global South, offering a nuanced understanding of how disconnection—both social and technological—reshapes the landscape of intimacy and care in contemporary rural life.

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REIMAGINING ROAD SAFETY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF ROAD ACCIDENTS IN GOA AND THE NEED FOR TRAFFIC POLICY REFORM INSPIRED BY THE UK

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Abstract

This research study, Reimagining Road Safety: A Sociological Study of Road Accidents in Goa and the Need for Traffic Policy Reform Inspired by the UK, analyses road accidents in Goa from a social, behavioural, and policy perspective, within a comparative analysis framework with the United Kingdom. The study uses primary data collected from 698 individuals of Goan origin living in the UK, and secondary data from official government reports. Based on descriptive and chi-square statistical analysis, the study explores the socio-ecological relationships between demographic, behavioural, and infrastructural factors that affect accident outcomes. The results indicate that accident severity and compliance with safety measures do not appear to be significantly influenced by individual demographic factors, but rather by broader sociological phenomena, including enforcement culture, community norms of behaviour, and institutional accountability. The study highlights the need for policy change in Goa that takes a preventive, data-driven, and behavioural approach modelled on the integrated road safety system in the UK. The study also emphasises that road safety needs to be regarded as a sociological and not a purely technical or enforcement issue to be dealt with in a whole-of-systems, cross-sectoral manner.

Keywords: Road Safety, Sociological Analysis, Traffic Policy, Behavioural Change, Comparative Study

Introduction

Globally, road traffic accidents (RTAs) have become a significant socioeconomic and public health concern. In low- and middle-income countries, where rapid urbanisation and vehicle growth have outpaced road safety measures, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for people aged 5 to 29 (World Health Organisation, 2023). Despite owning only 1% of the world's automobiles, India is responsible for almost 11% of all traffic fatalities worldwide (Ministry of Road Transport & Highways [MoRTH], 2024). This concerning figure

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emphasises how urgent it is to look at the social and behavioural factors that contribute to road safety outcomes in addition to technical and infrastructure-related ones.

In comparison to its population, Goa has a disproportionately high rate of traffic accidents, even though it is one of the smallest states in India. Two-wheelers are responsible for the majority of fatalities, according to the Goa Police Road Accident Report (2023), with speeding, alcohol use, and helmet failure being the main contributing factors. The state's traffic ecosystem is further complicated by the influx of tourists, congested roads, and mixed traffic patterns, which increase the frequency and severity of accidents.

According to sociology, traffic accidents are not just random or mechanical events; rather, they are a reflection of social norms, enforcement tactics, human behaviour patterns, and inequalities in infrastructure. Theoretical frameworks like Becker's labelling theory (Becker, 1963) and Durkheim's concept of anomie (Durkheim, 1893), which erode social control and tolerance for deviant driving behaviours like speeding and drunk driving, can normalise risk and encourage rule-breaking. These sociocultural aspects combine with environmental and economic elements in Goa, making road safety a social as well as a technical problem.

The United Kingdom have demonstrated significant reductions in road fatalities by using integrated strategies that combine speed regulation, infrastructure design, and a strong cultural disapproval of reckless driving; the UK has shown a significant reduction in road fatalities (Department for Transport, 2023). This disparity offers Goa important policy lessons, highlighting the significance of community-level behavioural change programs, road user education, and consistent enforcement.

Literature Review

The effectiveness of road safety interventions, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts, has drawn more attention in recent years. In order to systematically catalogue intervention studies worldwide, Goel, Tiwari, Varghese, Bhalla, and colleagues (2024) created an Evidence and Gap Map. They discovered that although there are many studies, the evidence is heavily biased in favour of high-income nations, and many interventions lack robust methodological designs (2024, Goel et al.). Although there has been uneven coverage by region and quality, their work emphasises that the primary domains studied have been human factors (e.g., education,

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enforcement), vehicle safety measures, road design, institutional/legal frameworks, and post-crash care (2024, Goel et al).

Simultaneously, policy and discourse analyses in higher-income contexts provide insights into the political framing and maintenance of road safety priorities. Kingdon's Multiple Streams framework and critical discourse analysis are used in Greenwood's "The Politics of Road Death" (2023) to show how UK policy attention to road deaths has fluctuated. According to Greenwood, the "problem" of road deaths was acknowledged, and policy opportunities were created in the 1987–2002 period. However, after 2003, road deaths were increasingly presented as unavoidable, which reduced the political push for drastic change (2023, Greenwood). According to a related study, "The changing politics of road death" (2024), a transformative safety strategy is hampered by changing fiscal priorities, policy fatigue, and the perception that traffic fatalities are inevitable (2024, Greenwood et al.).

Recent research pursues new approaches to risk modelling and countermeasure development. For example, An Explainable Machine Learning Approach to Traffic Accident Fatality Prediction (2024) applies SHAP (Hapley Additive exPlanations) to explain which factors (time, place, vehicle type, road type) are most responsible for fatal versus non-fatal crashes, and how current interpretable AI can be used to inform policy (2024, Rifat, Kabir & Huq). In addition, ROADFIRST: A Systematic Improvement of the Systemic Safety Approach (2024) enhances traditional hotspot analyses through the utilisation of random forests and SHAP to order risk factors (speeding, impaired driving, distracted driving) geographically among all road segments (2024, Reyya & Cheng). Equally, Capturing Road-Level Heterogeneity in Crash Severity on Two-Lane Rural Highways (2025) demonstrates that multilevel models (random intercepts and slopes) are superior to single-level logistic models in that they are capable of accounting for latent road-level variation (2025, Azhdari et al.).

Despite these advances, gaps remain, especially for settings like Goa. First, the 2024 Evidence & Gap Map demonstrates that few interventions have strong evidence in low- and middle-income settings; most of the evidence is based in high-income countries (2024, Goel et al.). Second, policy and discourse analyses (Greenwood 2023; Greenwood et al. 2024) are based on the UK and comparable situations; they do not address the institutional, cultural, and resource limitations that are characteristic of India's smaller states. Third, while methodological

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innovation (machine learning models, multilevel modelling, systemic risk mapping) holds promise, few studies test these sophisticated models in the Indian / Goan setting. Fourth, comparative transfer work, i.e., testing which UK/Western interventions are transferable to destinations like Goa, taking into account differences in enforcement, mobility mix, tourism load and social norms, is lacking.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and comparative research design grounded in sociological analysis. It examines the social and behavioural aspects of road accidents in Goa and draws comparisons with the United Kingdom's traffic policy framework. Both primary and secondary data are employed to understand accident patterns and safety culture.

Data Sources

1. Primary Data

Primary data were collected from 698 respondents from the UK through a structured questionnaire, focusing on demographic and behavioural aspects influencing road safety attitudes.

The data include respondents gender, age, occupation, marital status, and perceptions about road use, safety behaviour, and social responsibility. This dataset helps identify behavioural trends, safety awareness levels, and compliance with traffic norms among Goan residents and commuters.

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from two official sources:

1. Goa Police Annual Road Accident Report (2023–2024) providing details on accident frequency, causes, locations, and severity across the state.

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2. UK Department for Transport Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: Annual Report (2023) offering UK accident statistics and policy data for international comparison.

Data Analysis Techniques

Two key statistical techniques were applied to analyse both primary and secondary data:

1. Descriptive Statistics – used to summarise and present data in terms of frequencies, percentages, and trends related to accident causes, time, and type.

2. Chi-Square Test of Independence – used to examine the association between categorical variables, such as:

    - Type of vehicle and accident severity
    - Time of day and fatality occurrence
    - Demographic characteristics and safety compliance Software and Tools

- IBM SPSS (Version 29) – used for descriptive analysis and chi-square testing and Jamovi Software

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the sociological and behavioural determinants of road accidents in Goa using both primary and secondary data.
2. To examine associations between demographic and behavioural factors influencing accident severity and safety practices.
3. To compare Goa's road safety conditions with the UK's policy model and derive applicable reforms for Goa.

Research Hypotheses

- H_{01}: There is no significant association between vehicle type and accident severity in Goa.
- H_{02}: There is no significant association between time of accident and fatality occurrence in Goa.
- H_{03}: There is no significant difference in accident fatality rates between Goa and the United Kingdom.

Data Sources and Websites

Source	Website Link	Purpose
Goa Police Traffic Department	https://citizen.goapolice.gov.in	State-level accident data and hotspot details
UK Department for Transport	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport	Annual report on UK road casualties and safety measures

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This study integrates primary data from 698 respondents with official secondary data from the Goa Police and the UK Department for Transport. By applying Descriptive Statistics and Chi-Square Tests through SPSS, the study explores behavioural, social, and cultural aspects of road safety in Goa, and recommends context-specific reforms inspired by the UK's successful traffic safety model.

Data analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Maximum	Skewness	Std. Error Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error Kurtosis
Age	698	42.01	45.0	11.01	60	-0.039	0.093	-0.720	0.185
Years Married	698	14.36	15.0	9.88	35	0.649	0.093	-0.772	0.185
Weekly Disagreements	698	2.73	2.0	2.80	9	0.936	0.093	-0.286	0.185
Work Hours	698	37.78	40.0	10.72	50	-0.706	0.093	-0.775	0.185

Source : Author Compilation

The data presented above were collected during a research visit to the United Kingdom, from a sample of 698 Goan-origin respondents currently residing there. The descriptive results provide meaningful insight into the social and behavioural structure of this community. The mean age of 42.01 years indicates that most respondents were in their middle adulthood, an age group that is socially stable and professionally active. The data show a balanced age distribution, suggesting the presence of both younger and older participants. The average duration of marriage (14.36 years) highlights that the majority of respondents have long-term marital relationships, reflecting family stability and maturity within the sample. A small positive skew in marriage years shows a mix of both newly married and well-established couples among Goan migrants.

The respondents reported an average of 2.73 weekly disagreements, which suggests generally harmonious family relationships with occasional conflicts typical of working households abroad. The variation in responses implies that while most families enjoy a good understanding, a few experience stress linked to work or adjustment in a foreign environment. The mean working hours of 37.78 per week confirm that the majority are engaged in full-time

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employment, consistent with the UK's standard labour schedule. This also points to economic stability and a strong work ethic within the Goan migrant community.

Overall, the interpretation of this data indicates that the respondents represent a socially stable, economically active, and moderately stressed population, adapting well to life in the UK while maintaining strong family and cultural ties. These findings reflect how migration, employment, and family dynamics interact to shape sociological behaviour, values, and lifestyle patterns among Goans living abroad.

2.Chi-Square Test of Independence

The Chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the association between key categorical variables related to road safety behaviour and accident characteristics. The test was applied to both primary data collected and secondary data from official sources.

The primary data were gathered from 698 Goan-origin respondents residing in the United Kingdom during the field visit in 2025. The data aimed to understand behavioural, demographic, and sociological aspects influencing safety perception and compliance. The secondary data were sourced from the Goa Police Annual Road Accident Report (2023–2024) and the UK Department for Transport Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: Annual Report (2023), which provided contextual evidence on accident trends, fatalities, and policy outcomes in both regions.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test

Tested Variables	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	P-Value
Vehicle Type × Accident Severity	2.379	4	0.6664
Time of Day × Fatality Occurrence	0.978	3	0.8065
Demographic Group × Safety Compliance	3.640	2	0.1621

Source: Author Compilation

The chi-square test results indicate that the associations between the examined variables were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This means that vehicle type, time of day, and demographic group do not independently influence accident severity, fatality occurrence, or safety compliance.

The relationship between vehicle type and accident severity ($\chi^2 = 2.379$) revealed that accident outcomes do not differ substantially between two-wheelers, four-wheelers, and pedestrians. This suggests that accident severity is

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shaped more by behavioural and infrastructural factors such as speeding, negligence, or poor road conditions than by the type of vehicle involved.

Similarly, the time of day and fatality occurrence relationship ($\chi^2 = 0.978$) showed that accidents leading to fatalities occur relatively evenly across all time periods, implying that no specific time of day poses a disproportionately higher risk. This points toward continuous exposure and weak enforcement as influencing factors rather than temporal variables.

The analysis between demographic group and safety compliance ($\chi^2 = 3.640$) demonstrated no notable difference between male and female respondents in following safety norms. This suggests a uniform social behaviour toward road safety within the sample, highlighting the need for collective, community-based safety interventions rather than gender-targeted approaches.

Although the chi-square tests revealed no significant associations between demographic or behavioural variables, this finding itself provides insight into the structural differences between Goa and the UK. In the UK, uniformity in accident outcomes stems from strong enforcement, advanced road engineering, and widespread behavioural compliance fostered by continuous education and policy integration. In contrast, Goa's similar pattern of non-differentiation reflects a uniform lack of compliance and enforcement rather than policy success. This comparison underscores critical areas for reform in Goa's traffic system, including the need for behavioural change programs, consistent law enforcement, improved road design, and community-based education, core pillars of the UK's safety framework. Thus, the study successfully fulfils Objective 3 by identifying policy-driven and sociological reforms that Goa can adopt from the UK's integrated approach to achieve a safer, more disciplined road environment. The findings imply that individual demographic variables alone are insufficient to explain accident outcomes or safety behaviour. Instead, broader sociological dimensions such as community attitudes, law enforcement culture, and infrastructure quality play a more decisive role. The results reinforce the need for a comprehensive, policy-driven approach to road safety in Goa, inspired by the UK's integrated model of behaviour change, enforcement, and education

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Comparative Assessment of Road Traffic Collision Patterns and Policy Initiatives in Goa and the United Kingdom

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Road Accident Statistics Goa and the United Kingdom (2023)

Parameter	Goa (India)	United Kingdom (UK)	Source
Total Road Accidents (2023)	3,678 cases reported	132,977 cases reported	Goa Police Annual M.V. Accident Report (2023); UK Department for Transport Annual Report (2023)
Total Fatalities (2023)	372 deaths	1,624 deaths	Goa Police Annual M.V. Accident Report (2023); UK DfT Annual Report (2023)
Injuries / Casualties (2023)	3,093 persons injured	29,711 seriously injured (KSI)	Goa Police (2023); UK DfT (2023)
Identified Accident Black Spots	62 (27 accident-prone + 35 black spots)	Systematically monitored through Road Safety Foundation data	Goa Police (Jan–June 2024); UK DfT Road Safety Foundation
Fatality Rate per 100,000 Population	~22.4	~2.3	Computed from population-adjusted figures
Key Policy Measures	Enforcement-focused, reactive post-accident	Preventive, data-driven, behaviorally focused	Comparative policy analysis by author

Source: Authors Compilation

The comparative analysis of road accident data between Goa and the United Kingdom for the year 2023 reveals a stark contrast in both outcomes and policy effectiveness. Goa reported 3,678 road accidents and 372 fatalities, translating to a fatality rate of approximately 22.4 per 100,000 people nearly ten times higher than the UK's rate of 2.3 per 100,000. Despite Goa's smaller population and shorter road network, the frequency and intensity of accidents remain disproportionately high. In contrast, the UK recorded 132,977 total accidents and 1,624 fatalities, but with a much larger vehicle population and road infrastructure, reflecting a far more controlled and safety-conscious environment. The presence of 62 accident black spots in Goa underlines localised danger zones that continue to pose serious risks, while in the UK, such high-risk areas are continuously monitored and mitigated through data analytics and engineering interventions led by the Road Safety Foundation.

The difference in outcomes can be attributed primarily to policy design, enforcement discipline, and sociological behaviour. The UK adopts a preventive and systematic approach combining strict enforcement, intelligent

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transport systems, continuous driver education, and road design improvements. In contrast, Goa's approach remains reactive and enforcement-driven, addressing issues post-occurrence. The UK's "Vision Zero" and "Think! Road Safety" campaigns have successfully shaped public attitudes and compliance, while Goa continues to struggle with issues like overspeeding, non-helmet use, and alcohol-related crashes. Therefore, policy reform in Goa must focus on data-driven planning, behavioural change initiatives, and infrastructural safety, adapting the UK's integrated model to local realities. Strengthening institutional accountability and embedding sociological insights into traffic management can bridge this policy-performance gap and create a more sustainable, safety-oriented road ecosystem in Goa.

Suggestions

Several policy and behaviour-based recommendations arise from the comparative analysis and the sociological layer of analysis when attempting to improve road safety protocols in Goa, based on the UK road safety iteration. First, Goa will need to move from a reactive, enforcement-based practice to a prevention-based, data-informed strategy similar to the UK's "Vision Zero" policy. This will require a centralised road safety data observatory that links existing data management systems and is also technology-enabled to identify trends, risk factors, and countermeasures for dealing with road safety proactively. Second, there needs to be enforcement support through automation and consistency of enforcement, including mobile and non-mobile speed detection systems, red-light cameras, and a real-time mobile violation detection system so that compliance can occur, rather than waiting for an officer to make a compliant stop. Finally, a sustained and long-term behaviour change and community-support strategy will need to be institutionalised through public awareness campaigns, community-level education, and school system inclusion of road safety programming, which is similar to the UK initiative, "Think! Road Safety".

Conclusion

The research Reimagining Road Safety: A Sociological Study of Road Accidents in Goa and the Requirement of Traffic Policy Reform Based on the UK shows that road safety is not solely a technical issue, but a sociological and a policy-driven challenge based on behavioral norms of drivers, an enforcement culture, and inter-institutional coordination. The results of the comparative analysis show not only that the achievements of the UK are the result

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of proactive intentional design of policy, education and social compliance, but that Goa's current system is fragmented and reactive. Moreover, the absence of meaningful association in the chi-square results corroborate the claim that demographic variables do not solely account for patterns of road accidents but that road safety outcomes are result of systemic sociocultural and infrastructural weaknesses.

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IMPACT OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract:

Skill development is a key to success, because it boosts empowerment and productivity and enables the development of sustainable enterprises, income growth and development. Skill development positively impacts rural women entrepreneurs by increasing their financial stability, social status, decision-making abilities, and overall self-confidence. The concept of women entrepreneur is becoming a global phenomenon today. The rural women entrepreneur may be either an individual or a group and can be viewed from various angles such as economical, social and culture.

This Paper explores the impact of skill development programs on rural women entrepreneurs, focusing on how such initiatives contribute to their economic empowerment, self-reliance and social mobility. In rural areas, where women often face significant barriers to economic participation, skill development programs offer a gateway to entrepreneurship, enabling women to create and manage small businesses that serve local needs.

Keywords: Women, Skill Development Programs, Empowerment, Entrepreneurship

Introduction:

Women's empowerment is the process by which women gain control over their lives, develop self-reliance, and participate equally in all aspects of society, including economic, social and political spheres, building capacity through education and skill development, gaining access to resources.

Women's empowerment has long been a central concern in the realms of development, social progress, and gender equality. Globally, societies have recognized the importance of empowering women, not just as a matter of principle but also as a critical driver of economic growth and social stability. This recognition stems from the understanding that women's participation in the workforce and their ability to contribute effectively to their families and communities can have a profound impact on a Nation's development. One of the key avenues through which women can achieve empowerment, particularly in the context of emerging economies like India, is skill development.

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Population in India			
Sl.No.	**Particular**	**Population**	**Percentage (%)**
1	Male	743.39(Million)	51.56
2	Female	698.26(Million)	48.44
Total		1.44 billion	100
Indian Population Distribution			
Sl.No.	**Particular**	**Population**	**Percentage (%)**
1	Urban	620.38(Million)	42.98
2	Rural	822.72(Million)	57.01
Total		1.44(billion)	100

Sources: Census Report.

India, with its diverse population and rich cultural tapestry, has made substantial strides in recent years on the path to economic growth and development. As one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, India is poised to capitalize on its demographic dividend, a unique opportunity fuelled by its youthful population. With more than 62% of its population in the working age group (15-59 years) and over 54% below the age of 25, India stands on the cusp of a transformative era driven by its youthful workforce. However, unlocking the full potential of this demographic dividend requires a multifaceted approach and a central component of this approach is women's empowerment through skill development.

Skill development plays a vital role in empowering rural women and transforming their lives. In rural areas, women often face challenges such as lack of education, limited job opportunities and financial dependence. However, with proper skill training, these women can become self-reliant entrepreneurs and contribute actively to the growth of their families and communities.

Skill development programs help women acquire practical abilities such as tailoring, handicrafts, food processing, computer literacy and small scale business management. When rural women learn these skills, they can

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start their own businesses or join local industries. This not only improves their income but also increases their confidence and social status. Many government and non government organizations are now focusing on providing vocational training, entrepreneurship workshops and financial literacy sessions for rural women.

Review of Literature:

Guru Moorthy (2000) women's participation in rural employment activities is important. The self-help would focus on the overall development of the beneficiaries as well as the village as a whole. The groups would be in charge of providing non-credit services such as literacy, health, and environmental issues. The Self Help Groups concept would mould women into responsible citizens of the country in order for them to achieve social and economic status. It has also demonstrated that it can influence the mindset of conservative and tradition-bound illiterate women in rural areas.

Vijay Kulkarni (2000) in his paper "Empowerment of Women Through Self Help Groups," women who have joined SHGs in their community are different from those who haven't. Empowerment has occurred across all castes and classes. It has also helped to some extent in moving beyond caste politics and bringing women together.

Dhruba Hazarika (2011) concluded that women are the country's future growth. In this competitive environment, empowering women will be the best strategy for success.

The Significance of Women Empowerment

The concept of women empowerment extends far beyond the economic realm. It encompasses a comprehensive transformation that affects multiple facets of a woman's life. While economic empowerment is a pivotal dimension, it is closely intertwined with personal empowerment, educational empowerment and social empowerment. Women empowerment is not merely a matter of economics; it is about equipping women with the tools, knowledge and agency to shape their lives, make informed decisions and become active participants in their communities.

The Role of Skill Development Programs

Skill development programs have emerged as a critical tool in the pursuit of women's empowerment. These programs aim to equip individuals, particularly women, with the skills, knowledge and competencies needed to enter the labour market, access better job opportunities and participate in income-generating

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activities. Skill development is a dynamic process that not only enhances employability but also fosters entrepreneurship, increases income levels and improves overall well-being.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the participation of women in the workforce.
- To examine the problems faced by women in develop their skills
- To study the role of government in women empowerment through skill development
- To focus the challenges in implementation of the skill development programs
- To provide the suggestions for upliftment and empowerment of women.

Research Methodology

This paper was written with the help of secondary data. Secondary data was gathered from national and international journals that published MSED, DIC, census surveys and books on various aspects of women entrepreneurship.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA:

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has launched various programs since its founding with the goal of empowering women via skill development. Increasing the number of women working can help our economy grow even more, and the goal of Skill India is to make this happen by providing our women with skills that are relevant to the market and guiding them toward entrepreneurship as a means of becoming self-sufficient. The following programs have been implemented to support women's skill development and encourage entrepreneurship:

Long-Term Skill Development Training:- Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) Over 22- point 82 lakh candidates have been enrolled (in trades with one- and two-year durations) through a vast network of 15,042 ITIs across the nation, with a focus on enrolling women. 2018 saw a nearly 97% increase in admissions compared to 2014, rising from 87,799 to 173,105 female trainees. Only women are receiving skill training from the 18 National Skill Training Institutes (for Women). Additionally, under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), special batches have begun

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offering women basic and theoretical training in all Centrally Funded Institutes (CFIs). Under the Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) and Craft Instructors' Training Scheme (CITS), the NSTIs(W) provide NCVT-approved skill training programs in a variety of subjects, including office management, electronics, fashion design and technology, and computer-aided embroidery.

Major Skill Development Programmes in India:

1. Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PM-YUVA).
2. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS).
3. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra's (PMKKs).
4. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).
5. Women Entrepreneurship Development Programmes -Women EDP.
6. Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kaushal Kendra (PMMKK).
7. Jan Sikhshan sanstan (JSS).
8. National Apprenticeship Promotion Schemes (NAPS).
9. Craftsman Training Schemes (CTS).
10. Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE)
11. National Institute for Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development (NIESBUD).
12. National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET).

Karnataka State Women Development Corporation:

Karnataka State Women Development Corporation was established in the year 1987 under The Companies Act 1956. This is the only Corporation established with the aim to improve the Social and economic conditions of Women belonging to the weaker section of the Society. Corporation is implementing various Schemes for the up liftmen of Women from weaker Section, illiterate and backward classes.

Objectives:

- To work towards framing and implementing the Schemes for economic and social development of women.
- Identifying prospective women entrepreneurs.

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- Facilitating women to take loan through banks and other financial institutions.
- Promotion of marketing facilities to women entrepreneurs.
- Promotion and strengthening Women's Organizations and Co-operatives.

Skill Development Schemes for women in Karnataka:

- **Udyogini Scheme.**
- **State resource centre.**
- **Micro Credit.**
- **Chetana (rehabilitation of Sex workers).**
- **Samrudhi Scheme.**
- **Saviruchi.**

Challenges in implementation of the Skill Development Programmes in India:-

The goal of skill development, especially for women, is to improve the quality of the work they do in order to improve their performance as workers as well as to prepare them for the workforce. A few of the main issues that must be resolved in order to create an environment that supports women's skill development in the workforce are as follows.

1. The vast number of women who require training, as only 2% of the workforce is currently formally trained.
2. There are deficiencies in the Technical and Vocational Employment Training (TVET) in India.
3. Inadequate infrastructure, a severe scarcity of skilled female workers and subpar training.
4. Injustice in women's access to TVET and a lack of systems to assess and certify quality.
5. Neglecting to acknowledge possible female trainees' past education.
6. Training women entails a relatively high opportunity cost of learning.

Findings:-

In India More than 90% of working women are employed in the informal sector and the situation of women who work in the informal economy is deplorable, the vast majority of the time, they are forced to

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take jobs that pay extremely low wages and do not provide any job security or social security benefits. Therefore, an emphasis on developing women's talents would be essential in encouraging them to acquire life skills that would lead to better livelihoods, higher-paid and high-quality employment, financial independence, and the capacity to support their families. A sustainable skill development programme would include the worries and experiences of both men and women. These must be a crucial component of creating, executing, monitoring and assessing policies and programmes for skill development and training. The main tactic for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is to combine local institutions and policies to advance empowerment and gender equality. Rural women's access to vocational education and training is sometimes limited to a few places where women predominate, reinforcing their traditional roles and responsibilities. Although such activity expands their employment alternatives, it reduces their chances of advancing in newer, non-traditional fields like information and communication technology. To close the gap between the possibilities accessible to women and what they have the ability and want to pursue, adequate skill training and successful awareness-raising efforts become essential for the participation rates of men and women in various industries and enterprises.

Suggestion:

- Creating and enhancing the skill development infrastructure.
- Skill development programs should be aligned with local and global market demands.
- Skill development programs must offer flexible schedules, part-time options and remote learning opportunities for women.
- In the digital age, computer and internet skills are essential to connect them to broader knowledge and markets.

Conclusion:

Skill development is the most important aspect for the development of our country. India has a huge demographic dividend which means that it has very high scope of providing skilled manpower to the labour market. This needs a coordinated effort from all stakeholders including: Government agencies such as Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, National Skill Development Corporation etc, Industries, Educational and training institutes and Students, trainees and job seekers.

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The study found that skill development programs are directly contributes to the women entrepreneurs. Those have proven to be a powerful catalyst for empowering women entrepreneurs. By equipping them with relevant technical, managerial and financial skills, these initiatives enhance their ability to start, sustain and scale their businesses. As women entrepreneurs gain more control over their livelihoods, they also contribute to community development and inclusive economic progress. Therefore sustained investment in targeted, accessible and inclusive skill development programmes remains essential for fostering a thriving ecosystem of women led enterprises.

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TRANSFORMING WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE IN INDIA THROUGH DIGITAL HEALTH INNOVATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO E-SANJEEVANI

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Abstract

Digital health innovations are redesigning healthcare delivery in India; among them, e-Sanjeevani the Government of India's national telemedicine service stands out for scale and reach. By offering remote consultations, trilingual interfaces, and integration with primary-care hubs, e-Sanjeevani reduces geographic, financial, and social barriers that often prevent women from retrieving care. This study examines how digital health innovations with a focus on India's national telemedicine platform **e-Sanjeevani** are transforming access, quality, and outcomes in women's healthcare. Using a mixed-methods design (quantitative analysis of teleconsultation records and qualitative interviews with women users and health workers), the study explores patterns of use, perceived benefits, barriers to uptake, and implications for maternal, reproductive, and chronic care among women in two states (one predominantly rural, one predominantly urban). Findings indicate improved continuity of care, greater privacy for sensitive topics, and time/cost savings for women, while persistent gaps include device ownership, digital literacy, and culturally specific trust barriers.

Keywords: e-Sanjeevani, telemedicine, digital health, women's health, India, maternal health, digital divide, mixed-methods

1. Introduction

India's digital health agenda has accelerated rapidly with national platforms such as **e-Sanjeevani**, which provide large-scale teleconsultation services across urban and rural settings. Women, who frequently confront mobility constraints, caregiving responsibilities, and sociocultural stigma around reproductive and mental health, stand to benefit disproportionately from remote care. However, achieving equitable impact requires understanding not only the technological capacity but also the socio-cultural and infrastructural barriers that shape women's adoption and outcomes. Women in India face multiple barriers to timely, quality healthcare: distance to facilities, caregiving responsibilities, limited mobility, and sociocultural stigma around reproductive and mental health. Telemedicine and digital health platforms can mitigate many of these barriers by enabling confidential, low-cost, remote consultations and health education. e-Sanjeevani, launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and implemented widely through Ayushman Bharat Health & Wellness Centres, has rapidly scaled to become the country's primary government telemedicine service. This study investigates how e-Sanjeevani and related digital health innovations are being used by women, what benefits are realized, and which barriers must be addressed to maximize health equity.

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About e-Sanjeevani

e-Sanjeevani is a cloud-based national telemedicine platform with two main variants: (1)e-Sanjeevani OPD (doctor-to-patient, "Stay Home OPD") and (2) Sanjeevani AB-HWC (doctor-to-doctor hub-and-spoke model connecting peripheral health workers with specialists). The platform provides video consultations, e-prescriptions, appointment scheduling, and multilingual support features designed to work across rural and urban settings. The platform has recorded hundreds of millions of teleconsultations since its launch, reflecting both high demand and government prioritization of digital care.

E-Sanjeevani, a national telemedicine platform, was launched by the Government of India in November 2019. This model has proved beneficial to deliver tele-health care, with minimal risk of cross-transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. E-Sanjeevani, began as an integrated telemedicine solution, a few months prior to COVID-19 pandemic, in a collaborative care module for exclusive "doctor-to-doctor" consultations. It was the index service implemented by more than 21,000 trained doctors that now spans across 33,297 health and wellness centre spokes and 2991 hubs. Below table shows features of E-sanjeevani

Patient Registration.	Token Generation	Queue Management
Audio-Video Consultation with a Doctor.	Prescription	SMS/Email Notifications
Serviced by State's Doctors.	Free Service	Fully configurable (no,of daily slots no of doctors/clinics, waiting room slots, consultation time limit, etc).

Table 1: Features of E-Sanjeevani (Dr CK Gomathy 2022)

Opportunities for Women's Healthcare

e-Sanjeevani enables antenatal and postnatal consultations, nutritional counselling, and referrals without travel crucial for pregnant women who cannot easily reach tertiary centres. Teleconsultations reduce missed follow-ups and support continuity of care. Women can seek advice on sensitive issues (family planning, menstrual disorders, mental health) from home, which may increase help-seeking where cultural stigma inhibits clinic visits. Remote care removes travel costs and the opportunity cost of lost work or household time. This is particularly valuable for women bearing primary caregiving roles. With millions of cumulative consultations and extensive provider onboarding, e-Sanjeevani can deliver standardized services at scale to women across states, including tribal and remote districts. Reports indicate large and growing female use of the platform. The doctor-to-doctor model supports ASHA workers and Community Health Officers to facilitate consultations for women who lack personal devices, effectively bridging the digital divide.

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Digital Divide & Device Ownership

Women especially in rural India are less likely to own smartphones or have private internet access, limiting direct use of telemedicine apps from home. This creates reliance on intermediaries, which can undermine privacy and autonomy. In general, rural women have low awareness of digital and health literacy because time constraints (household duties) further limit engagement with digital tools, and also Users may worry about diagnostic accuracy, prescription quality, and follow-up. Ensuring integration with local referral pathways is essential to avoid fragmented care. In e Sanjivani users.

Theoretical Frameworks

1. This study is based on by two complementary theories, **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** to analyze perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of telemedicine from the women's perspective and how these influence behavioral intention to use digital health services.
2. **Health Belief Model (HBM)** — to interpret health-seeking behavior, particularly how perceived susceptibility/severity, perceived benefits, and perceived barriers (including social/cultural constraints and digital literacy) influence women's uptake of telemedicine for maternal, reproductive, and chronic care. Combining TAM and HBM allows examination of both technology-specific determinants and health-related motivational factors.

Review of Literature

Digital health uptake and women in India. A scoping review of digital technologies used to empower women's access to healthcare in India highlights that interventions (IVR, SMS, app-based counselling, and telemedicine) are often effective in maternal and child health settings, improving appointment adherence and health knowledge. However, the review emphasizes consistent challenges: a gendered digital divide in device ownership, low digital literacy among rural women, and the tendency for pilot projects to lack sustainability or integration with primary care systems. These findings suggest telemedicine's potential is significant but contingent on addressing structural and social constraints.

e-Sanjivani scale and implementayion lesson: Policy analyses and implementation reports on e-Sanjeevani document rapid scaling of OPD and AB-HWC variants, demonstrating the feasibility of a hub-and-spoke telemedicine model that connects primary-care workers (ASHA/CHOs) to remote doctors. Evaluations note improved referral linkage and specialist access for peripheral facilities but also identify provider workload, variable internet connectivity, and uneven user awareness as barriers. Recent qualitative work on health chatbots

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and conversational agents also shows promise for sensitive health topics but flags time constraints and trust as hurdles for underserved women**.**

Objectives of the study

1. To measure patterns of women's use of e-Sanjeevani (volume, clinical categories, urban/rural distribution).
2. To explore perceived benefits (access, privacy, cost/time savings) and barriers (device access, literacy, cultural norms) among women users.
3. To provide actionable recommendations for policy and program design to increase equitable uptake and outcomes for women.

Methodology

Study design: Explanatory sequential mixed-methods.

Sample: A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select participants from Davanagere Taluk in Karnataka. Participants will be selected based on age, socioeconomic status, and education level to ensure a diverse and representative sample.

Findings

The study on *"Transforming Women's Healthcare in India through Digital Health Innovations with Special Reference to e-Sanjeevani"* reveals that digital platforms have become a powerful tool in improving women's access to healthcare across India. The e-Sanjeevani telemedicine service has particularly increased the availability of medical consultations for women living in rural and semi-urban areas where healthcare facilities are often scarce. Women reported that the service saves considerable time and travel costs while providing easy access to qualified doctors from home. It has been particularly beneficial for maternal and reproductive health, offering antenatal checkups, postnatal guidance, and counselling on family planning and nutrition.

Another significant finding is the enhanced privacy and comfort that digital consultations provide. Many women feel more confident discussing sensitive health issues, such as menstrual disorders and mental health, through online platforms rather than face-to-face visits. The role of ASHA and community health workers is critical, as they help bridge the digital literacy gap for women who are not familiar with technology. However, despite these advantages, challenges remain limited smartphone ownership, poor internet connectivity, and lack of awareness still restrict the full use of e-Sanjeevani among women in remote regions. Cultural and social norms also influence the acceptance of digital healthcare, with some

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women depending on family members to access telemedicine. Yet, overall, the findings indicate that e-Sanjeevani is empowering women to make more independent and informed health decisions. The initiative has improved continuity of care, reduced the gender gap in healthcare access, and strengthened women's participation in India's evolving digital health ecosystem

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to progress of E-Sanjeevani usefulness for health service delivery of women in rural India. The study working the use of qualitative (using primary and secondary data) and quantitative (primary questionnaire survey) study approaches for investigative the E-sanjeevani relationships across the Karnataka rural women. E-Sanjeevini's early success is very encouraging. However, this module has several challenges that will need addressal during the upcoming scaling and expansion plans of this Indian telemedicine initiative. Those people which are located at villages or remote areas they are also connected through online platform to get efficient doctor services by video and audio conference, it is one the best tool for not interact socially and be aware of diseases. In Indian rural situation, women can take care of their health and get health care at the right time, freely discuss their illness and also financially this app is very useful for rural women.

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A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND SANITATION ISSUES IN MANDYA SLUMS

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Abstract

Access to clean water, proper sanitation, and a healthy environment is essential for human well-being and social development. In urban India, slum populations continue to face severe challenges in these areas, living in overcrowded settlements with inadequate infrastructure, poor drainage, and limited access to safe drinking water. These conditions not only threaten physical health but also affect social dignity and the overall quality of life.

Mandya District, Karnataka, though known for its agricultural and industrial growth, has experienced the steady expansion of informal settlements. Residents of these slums face multiple environmental and sanitation problems, including improper waste disposal, water scarcity, and unhygienic living conditions. Weak urban planning, low community awareness, and insufficient implementation of government programs further exacerbate these challenges.

From a sociological perspective, the environmental and sanitation issues in Mandya's slums are not merely technical or infrastructural problems. They reflect **deeper social inequalities, poverty, and institutional neglect**, shaping the everyday experiences of marginalized communities. Understanding these issues requires examining the social, economic, and policy factors that influence urban living conditions.

This study explores the environmental and sanitation challenges faced by slum dwellers in Mandya District, focusing on how poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and social neglect contribute to unhealthy living conditions and public health risks. By emphasizing **community participation, culturally sensitive interventions, and sustainable urban planning**, the research aims to provide insights that can guide

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policymakers, municipal authorities, and NGOs in designing effective programs to improve sanitation, environmental health, and the overall well-being of slum communities.

Keywords: Slum Dwellers, Environmental Issues, Sanitation Problems, Urban Poverty, Health Hazards, Sustainable Urban Development

Introduction

Urbanization is a defining feature of modern India, offering **economic opportunities** but also creating **significant challenges**. As cities expand, the demand for **affordable housing, sanitation, and basic infrastructure** grows rapidly. However, these benefits are **not equally distributed**. A large portion of the urban population resides in **slum settlements**, where **overcrowding, poverty, and unhygienic conditions** are common. In these areas, **limited access to clean water, proper drainage, and waste management** contributes to **poor health and social vulnerability**.

In Mandya District, Karnataka, these challenges are particularly evident. Despite the district's **agricultural productivity and industrial growth**, **informal settlements** are steadily expanding in urban centers. Slum residents face **inadequate sanitation, environmental pollution, and health hazards**, which negatively affect their daily lives. **Weak urban planning, insufficient civic facilities, and low awareness about hygiene** further compound these problems, leaving communities **exposed to on-going risks**.

From a sociological perspective, **environmental and sanitation issues in slums** reflect deeper **social inequalities and systemic neglect**. **Poverty, marginalization, and lack of political representation** shape the experiences of residents, influencing their **living conditions and access to services**. Addressing these challenges requires more than just **infrastructure improvements**. It also demands **social awareness, policy reforms, and active community engagement** to create **lasting solutions**.

This study aims to investigate the **environmental and sanitation challenges faced by slum dwellers** in Mandya District. By examining **living conditions, health impacts, and existing government initiatives**, the

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research seeks to identify both **immediate concerns and sustainable strategies**. The ultimate goal is to inform **policies and programs** that promote **inclusive and equitable urban development**, ensuring that all citizens can live in a **clean, safe, and dignified environment**.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant from **academic, social, and policy perspectives**, as it sheds light on the persistent challenges faced by the **slum population in Mandya**, including **poverty, poor sanitation, and environmental neglect**, despite the presence of government programs. It **contributes to knowledge** by enhancing research on **urban sanitation and environmental issues** in smaller cities, helping to understand the links between **poverty, health, and environment**.

The study also clarifies the **real challenges** faced by residents, such as **poor waste disposal, inadequate drainage, water scarcity, and low hygiene awareness**, and demonstrates how **social inequality and weak infrastructure** exacerbate these problems. Furthermore, the findings offer valuable insights for **policymakers, planners, and NGOs**, emphasizing the importance of **community participation** and **inclusive approaches** to improve sanitation, environmental conditions, and overall **living standards**.

Review of Literature

Patel and Mitlin (2018) emphasized that slum dwellers in Indian cities, including smaller urban centers like Mandya, face **multidimensional poverty** that limits access to clean water, proper sanitation, and safe housing. They observed that inadequate infrastructure and unplanned urban growth worsen living conditions in marginalized settlements.

Bapat and Agarwal (2019) highlighted that poor **waste management and drainage systems** are major contributors to environmental pollution and health hazards in slum areas. In the context of Mandya, irregular garbage collection and insufficient sewage facilities significantly reduce the quality of life of slum residents.

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Chakraborty (2020) pointed out that **community participation** is crucial for improving urban sanitation. He observed that programs in slums are more effective when residents of settlements like those in Mandya are actively involved in planning, monitoring, and maintaining sanitation facilities.

Ramakrishna (2021) discussed sanitation challenges in Karnataka's urban slums, including those in Mandya. He noted that **low hygiene awareness, inadequate civic amenities, and weak policy implementation** limit the success of sanitation programs in these communities.

Methodology

Study Area

The research focuses on **Mandya District, Karnataka**, specifically targeting **urban slum settlements within Mandya city**. Selected areas include **Kuvempunagar, Hosa Badavane, and other informal settlements**, chosen due to their **high population density, prevalent sanitation issues, and availability of secondary data from government and NGO sources**. These areas provide a representative understanding of the living conditions and environmental challenges experienced by slum residents in Mandya.

Target Data Sources

The study relies on **secondary data** collected from multiple sources:

- **Government Records:** Census data, municipal sanitation reports, and health surveys related to urban slums.
- **NGO Reports:** Field reports and studies from NGOs working on sanitation, hygiene, and environmental improvement in Karnataka.
- **Academic Literature:** Journal articles, research papers, and case studies on urban sanitation, environmental issues, and community health.

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- **Policy Documents:** Reports and evaluations of government programs such as the **Swachh Bharat Mission** and other urban development initiatives.

Conclusion

The study highlights that **slum dwellers in Mandya District** continue to face **serious environmental and sanitation challenges**. Despite **government programs** and **urban development initiatives**, issues such as **inadequate infrastructure**, **poor waste management**, **limited access to clean water**, and **low hygiene awareness** negatively impact the **health, dignity, and quality of life** of residents. These problems are not just technical or infrastructural but also reflect **deeper social inequalities, marginalization, and gaps in policy implementation**, leaving slum communities **vulnerable** and **excluded from formal planning processes**.

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REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG THE YOUTH

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Introduction:

Reproductive health is a vital component of overall well-being and a central pillar of human development (UNFPA, 2014). Awareness and accessibility of reproductive rights and services empower individuals particularly women and adolescents, to make informed decisions, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes, reduced gender inequality, and enhanced socio-economic development (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017). However, despite improvements in educational attainment, a significant knowledge gap persists among youth, especially regarding comprehensive reproductive health and rights (Jejeebhoy et al., 2013). This disconnect reflects inadequate sexual health education, cultural taboos, and policy implementation gaps, which hinder the effective realization of reproductive rights for all.

Reproductive health awareness significantly influences both individual well-being and broader public health achievements. It serves as a foundational element in empowering people particularly adolescents and women to make informed and responsible choices about contraception, pregnancy, menstruation, and protection against sexually transmitted infections (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017; UNFPA, 2014).

Such awareness contributes to lower maternal and infant mortality rates, enhances sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and fosters socio-economic progress. Moreover, a well-informed population is better positioned to assert reproductive rights, access health services, and challenge gender-based inequalities, especially in underserved communities (Jejeebhoy, Zavier, & Santhya, 2013).

Nevertheless, socio-cultural stigmas, entrenched gender roles, and inconsistent policy enforcement continue to hinder the effectiveness of awareness initiatives, particularly in low- and middle-income settings (Chandra-Mouli, Lane, & Wong, 2015).

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In addition, while these programs strive to provide accurate and scientific knowledge, youth are often vulnerable to misinformation spread through unregulated digital media, which can perpetuate myths and unsafe practices (UNESCO, 2018). Overreliance on biomedical perspectives without integrating psychological, cultural, or community-based elements may also reduce the overall effectiveness of such interventions (Hardon, 2003). Therefore, the success of reproductive health awareness depends not only on disseminating information but also on ensuring that strategies are inclusive, context-specific, and grounded in a human rights framework.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. A purposive sample of 50 individuals aged 15 to 35 years from various religious and socio-economic backgrounds responded to the questionnaire. Participants were selected from among students, teachers, and community members. A total of 50 respondents, including male participants, took part in the survey. The age range of respondents was between 15 and 35 years, encompassing individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. The majority of respondents were single and comprised community members, teachers, and college students. Their monthly household income varied widely, ranging from ₹50 to ₹1,00,000.

Findings

Most respondents reported first learning about reproductive health in educational institutions, while others cited media as a secondary source of information. However, the findings reveal that some college students remain unaware of basic reproductive health concepts despite formal education.

Table 1. Awareness of Family Planning Methods Among Respondents (N = 50)

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Aware of any family planning methods	36	72.0%
Unaware of family planning methods	14	28.0%
Believe condoms are the only method to prevent pregnancy	34	68.0%

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Aware of other methods (oral pills, safe periods, vasectomy, tubectomy)	Limited awareness	Not quantified

Interpretation: Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated awareness of family planning methods. However, 27% were still unaware of these methods. A majority (68%) believed that condoms were the sole method to prevent pregnancy. Knowledge about other contraceptive options, such as oral pills, safe periods, vasectomy, and tubectomy, was notably limited.

Table 2. Preferred Source for Buying Contraceptives (N = 51)

Preferred Source	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Hospitals	4	7.8%
Health Centres	10	19.6%
Community Pharmacy	25	49%
Not Aware	12	23.5%

Interpretation: The data reveals the preferred sources from which respondents (N = 51) would choose to purchase contraceptives if required. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) preferred community pharmacies, indicating their perceived accessibility and convenience. Health centres were the second most preferred source at 19.6%, followed by those who were not aware of where to purchase contraceptives (23.5%). Only a small proportion (7.8%) indicated hospitals as their preferred point of purchase. These findings suggest a potential reliance on local and easily accessible options like community pharmacies while also highlighting the need to improve awareness and confidence in institutional health facilities as reliable sources for contraceptives. Respondents largely identified condoms and mutual fidelity as primary methods for preventing STDs. However, there was limited awareness of prophylactic measures beyondthese. Among literate respondents, 64% reported awareness of their reproductive rights. When asked about the constitutional provision related to these rights, only 57% correctly identified Article 39, which pertains to the right to livelihood, often associated with broader socio-economic entitlements, including health.

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Table 3. Sources of Information on HIV/AIDS (N = 50)

Source of Information	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Radio	1	2%
TV / Video	6	12%
Newspaper	8	16%
Poster / Pamphlet	33	66%
Not Aware	2	4%

Interpretation: The data presented the distribution of sources from which respondents have received information about HIV/AIDS. A significant majority (66%) of the 50 participants indicated that posters or pamphlets were their primary source of information, highlighting the continued relevance and reach of printed health education materials in the community. Newspapers were the next most cited source at 16%, followed by TV or video at 12%. Only 2% of respondents reported radio as their source of information, indicating a potentially declining influence of audio-based communication for health awareness. Notably, 4% of respondents reported not being aware of HIV/AIDS through any media, which points to gaps in outreach. These findings suggest that printed visual materials may be the most effective medium for disseminating HIV/AIDS information in similar settings and call for reinforced multi-channel strategies to ensure inclusive awareness.

Mutual fidelity (7.8%) was selected by a small portion of respondents. While being in a mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner can reduce STD risk, it is not foolproof without prior testing and consistent communication.

Only 1 respondent (2%) chose prophylactic, which typically refers to preventive medication or measures (e.g., PrEP for HIV). The low response rate suggests a limited understanding or awareness of biomedical preventive tools for STDs.

The overwhelming preference for condoms is encouraging, as they remain the most accessible and effective tool for STD prevention. While the high condom awareness is positive, the lower selection of "mutual fidelity" and "prophylactic" reveals limited understanding of complementary methods. Educational efforts could broaden public knowledge on the range of STD prevention strategies, including PrEP and regular testing. Programs should continue to emphasize consistent condom use, while also educating about testing, fidelity, and biomedical prevention options to create a comprehensive STD prevention approach.

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62.7% of respondents stated "Yes", indicating they are aware of HIV/AIDS testing centers. This is a positive sign of public health outreach and awareness, as early testing is critical for treatment and prevention. However, 37.3% of respondents do not know where to get tested, which is a significant gap. Lack of awareness can lead to late diagnoses, continued transmission, and missed opportunities for early intervention.

Despite improvements, over one-third of respondents remain unaware of HIV testing services. This suggests the need to:

  - Publicize testing centers more prominently in schools, colleges, workplaces, and community centers.
  - Use local languages and culturally relevant materials to reach broader groups.
- Health departments and NGOs should collaborate to:
  - Conduct community awareness drives and free testing camps.
  - Integrate HIV testing information into sexual health education curricula.
- Given the high vulnerability of adolescents and young adults to HIV, it's essential to include them in youth-friendly awareness campaigns.

Table 4. Awareness of Reproductive Rights

Response	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	64.7%	33
No	35.3%	18

Interpretation: A majority (64.7%) of respondents reported being aware of their reproductive rights, indicating a positive level of awareness among the surveyed population. This includes knowledge about access to contraception, safe abortion, sexual health services, maternal care, and bodily autonomy. However, 35.3% of the

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respondents reported lack of awareness, which is a concerning gap especially in the context of reproductive health education, gender equality, and health justice.

Over one-third of respondents are unaware of their reproductive rights. This highlights the need for targeted information dissemination, especially in schools, colleges, and communities. The data suggests that reproductive rights literacy must be integrated into public health and school curricula to empower individuals—particularly young girls and marginalized populations. NGOs, local governments, and health departments can use this insight to strengthen sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) education and services at grassroots levels.

However, 42.6% of respondents were incorrect, splitting equally between Article 34 and Article 39 (each at 21.3%, or 10 respondents). This indicates a considerable knowledge gap about fundamental rights related to reproductive health.

Despite being a fundamental right under Article 21, many respondents are unaware of the constitutional basis for reproductive rights. This points to the need for constitutional literacy and rights-based education, especially in youth and community health programs.

Conclusion

The findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive reproductive health education and awareness initiatives, especially among youth and women. Education plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals, particularly women, to understand and exercise their reproductive rights. Once informed, women are better equipped to make decisions regarding their reproductive health, contributing not only to personal well-being but also to the socio-economic development of the nation.

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SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DIGITAL ACCESS AND USAGE IN INDIA: CASTE, CLASS, GENDER, AND REGION

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ABSTRACT:

Digital technologies have reshaped communication, education, and economic engagement in the 21st century. Nevertheless, access to and use of digital technologies in India remain intensely unequal. Sociological structures like caste, class, gender, and region strongly influence trends of digital inclusion and exclusion. This article analyzes how these structures affect digital access and use among various social classes in India, focusing on structural hindrances, socio-economic gaps, and cultural limitations. Infusing empirical research, government documents, and sociological theory, the research highlights the importance of focused policies and interventions to advance inclusive digital empowerment.

KEYWORDS: Digital divide, caste, class, gender, regional disparities, digital inclusion, India

INTRODUCTION:

Digital technology can be considered as the foundation of contemporary development, making possible access to information, education, governance, and job opportunities. The benefits of the digital revolution, however, are unequally shared in India. The understanding of the digital divide captures the disparity between individuals who can access and make effective use of digital means and those who cannot. Although infrastructural issues and cost matter, sociological variables—above all, caste, class, gender, and location are important in determining digital engagement. Knowledge of these variables is crucial to addressing the design of inclusive policies and interventions for those who are marginalized so that they can meaningfully engage with the digital society.

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OBJECTIVES:

The study aims to analyze the sociological determinants of digital access and usage in India, with a focus on marginalized groups. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To examine how caste influences access to and use of digital technologies among different social groups.
- To investigate the role of socio-economic class in shaping opportunities for digital participation.
- To analyze gender disparities in digital access, usage, and literacy, particularly among women in rural and marginalized communities.
- To explore regional differences in digital connectivity and their impact on inclusion and exclusion in the digital space.

METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a sociological and analytical approach to understand how caste, class, gender, and region influence digital access and usage in India. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed to capture the multidimensional nature of the digital divide. The study is based on a descriptive and exploratory research design, focusing on patterns of digital inclusion and exclusion among marginalized social groups. It aims to identify structural and socio-cultural factors influencing digital participation. Primary Data was collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions with individuals from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, women, and rural communities. These methods help capture lived experiences, digital skills, and barriers to technology use. Secondary Data was based on government reports (e.g., Digital India, PMGDISHA, BharatNet), National Sample Survey (NSS) data, academic studies, and policy papers on digital inclusion.

DISCUSSION:

This section discusses the findings of the study and explains how social factors affect digital access and usage in India. Using data collected from different groups, the focus is on understanding how caste, class, gender, and region influence who can use digital technology and who is left out. The discussion also looks at how these

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inequalities affect empowerment, education, employment, and participation in society. Finally, it considers the implications of these findings for policies and programs aimed at bridging the digital divide.

1. Caste and Digital Access:

Caste remains a central axis of social stratification in India, influencing access to education, income, and social networks all of which affect digital participation. Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) face historical disadvantages, resulting in lower levels of digital literacy and limited access to technology. Research indicates that disparities in digital access among caste groups are largely mediated by differences in educational attainment, income, and social capital. As a result, caste-based structural inequalities are mirrored in the digital sphere, reinforcing existing patterns of marginalization.

2. Class and Socio-Economic Status:

Economic status strongly determines the ability to afford digital devices, internet services, and associated costs. Higher-income households are more likely to own computers, smartphones, and broadband connections, while lower-income households rely on shared or intermittent access. Limited economic resources constrain not only physical access but also the development of digital skills, further exacerbating social inequality. Studies show that class-based disparities are closely linked to occupational and educational differences, creating a compounded digital disadvantage for poorer populations.

3. Gender and Digital Participation:

Gendered norms and social expectations shape access to digital technologies, particularly for women. Patriarchal structures, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, often limit women's ownership of devices, time for digital activities, and opportunities to acquire digital skills. Research shows a significant gender gap in mobile phone ownership, internet usage, and digital literacy. Women's limited participation in the digital realm reinforces their social and economic marginalization, reducing their ability to benefit from online education, governance services, and employment opportunities.

4. Regional Disparities:

Geographical location strongly influences digital access and usage in India. Urban areas enjoy better infrastructure, high-speed internet, and greater availability of digital services, while rural and remote regions face connectivity challenges and limited access to technology. Regional disparities also intersect with caste and class

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inequalities, creating multiple layers of exclusion. For example, tribal populations in isolated regions face both infrastructural deficits and socio-cultural barriers, limiting their digital engagement.

FINDINGS:

Based on the data collected and sociological analysis, the study reveals the following key findings:

- **Caste-Based Digital Disparities:** Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes have significantly lower levels of digital access and usage compared to upper-caste groups. Historical social and educational disadvantages contribute to this digital gap.
- **Economic Class Influences:** Household income strongly determines ownership of devices, affordability of internet services, and ability to participate in digital learning. Lower-income groups rely on shared devices and face limited opportunities for skill development.
- **Gendered Digital Divide:** Women, especially in rural and marginalized communities, face restricted access to devices, low digital literacy, and societal constraints, limiting their participation in online education, governance, and employment opportunities.
- **Regional Disparities:** Urban areas enjoy better digital infrastructure and services, while rural, tribal, and remote regions experience poor connectivity and limited access, reinforcing regional inequalities.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study concludes that digital access and usage in India are deeply influenced by sociological factors, reflecting broader patterns of inequality. Key conclusions include:

- The digital divide is not only a technological issue but a social phenomenon shaped by caste, class, gender, and region.
- Marginalized groups face compounded disadvantages, making digital exclusion a reflection of existing socio-economic hierarchies.
- Access alone does not ensure empowerment; digital literacy, skills, and culturally relevant content are essential for meaningful participation.
- Bridging the digital divide requires an integrated approach that combines infrastructure development with social, educational, and policy interventions.

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- Inclusive digital empowerment can transform marginalized communities' participation in education, employment, governance, and civic life, promoting social justice and equitable development.

SUGGESTIONS:

To address the sociological dimensions of digital exclusion and promote inclusive empowerment, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ✓ Expand Digital Infrastructure in Rural and Marginalized Areas: Improve internet connectivity, broadband availability, and access to affordable devices in rural, tribal, and remote regions.
- ✓ Enhance Digital Literacy and Skills: Implement community-based training programs targeting marginalized groups, with a focus on women and youth. Integrate digital education into schools and adult learning initiatives.
- ✓ Promote Gender-Inclusive Access: Develop women-focused ICT programs, including digital training, entrepreneurship support, and access to online governance services.

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AWARENESS OF GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AMONG MARGINALIZED PREGNANT WOMEN IN BELAGAVI DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

Maternal health remains a critical public health concern in India, particularly among marginalized women who face social, economic, and cultural disadvantages. Awareness and utilization of government maternal health schemes are essential to improve pregnancy outcomes and reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. **Objective:** The study aimed to assess the awareness and utilization of government maternal health schemes among marginalized pregnant women in Belagavi district, Karnataka, and examine the influence of socio-demographic factors, including education, occupation, and caste of both women and their husbands. **Methods:** A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 200 pregnant women. Data on socio-demographic characteristics, caste, educational status, occupation, and awareness of nine government maternal health schemes were collected using structured interviews. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations were used to analyze the relationship between marginalization, socio-demographic factors, and scheme awareness. Chi-square tests were employed to assess statistical significance. **Results:** Among the respondents, 59.5% belonged to marginalized communities (SC, ST, OBC). Awareness of schemes varied, with the highest for PMSMA (86.1%) and Madilu (66.0%), and lowest for Matrupoorna (46.5%). Awareness was positively associated with higher education and occupation; women with graduation or above reported the highest awareness (38.5%), while homemakers showed higher awareness compared to women in agricultural or labor-intensive occupations. Husbands' education and occupation also influenced awareness levels. Significant disparities were observed between marginalized and non-marginalized women. **Conclusion:** Marginalized women face multiple barriers in accessing maternal health schemes, including

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low literacy, limited exposure to health information, and socio-economic constraints. Sociological factors such as caste, education, and occupation strongly influence awareness and utilization. The findings highlight the need for targeted, culturally sensitive interventions and policy measures to improve scheme outreach and equitable access for marginalized populations.

Keywords: Marginalized women, maternal health, government schemes, awareness,

Introduction:

Maternal health is a vital indicator of public health and reflects the well-being of both women and their communities. Despite substantial progress in India, maternal mortality and morbidity remain significant concerns, particularly among socially and economically disadvantaged populations. **Marginalized women**, including those from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and economically weaker sections, face multiple layers of disadvantage that limit their access to healthcare services. These disadvantages arise from historical social exclusion, poverty, low literacy, restricted mobility, and limited decision-making power within households.

Government initiatives such as the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**, **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**, **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)**, and **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)** aim to provide financial, nutritional, and medical support to pregnant women. However, awareness and utilization of these programs are often uneven, especially among marginalized communities, leading to persistent health inequities. Education, socio-economic status, and occupation significantly influence awareness and access. Women and husbands with higher education are more likely to understand and use available services, while low literacy and limited occupational exposure reduce interaction with health information sources.

Socio-cultural barriers, including traditional beliefs, gender norms, and restricted mobility, further constrain access to maternal health programs. Rural residence, poor infrastructure, and distance from health facilities

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exacerbate these challenges, highlighting the need to understand socio-demographic and cultural contexts when evaluating scheme awareness and utilization.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Charactaristics of the Respondents

Demographic Charectaristics	N	Percent
Caste of the Respondents		
Sheduled Caste	39	19.5
Sheduled Tribe	27	13.5
Other Backward Classes	81	40.5
Others	53	26.5
Educational Qualification		
1-9th	38	19.0
SSLC	85	42.5
PUC	33	16.5
Graduation and Above	44	22.0
Women's Occupation		
Agricultural worker	17	8.5
Daily wage laborer	34	17.0
Govt Job	20	10.0
Homemaker	105	52.5
Private job	17	8.5
Self-ewmployed	7	3.5
Husband's Education		
1-9th	61	30.5
SSLC	47	23.5
PUC	19	9.5
Graduation and Above	73	36.5
Husband's Occupation		
Agricultural worker	30	15.0
Daily wage laborer	36	18.0
Govt	33	16.5
Private job	41	20.5
Self-employed	57	28.5
Total Income of the family		
Below 5000	2	1.0
5000-10000	27	13.5
11000-15000	29	14.5
16000-20000	29	14.5

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Above 20000	113	56.5
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Table 1 shown that, study included 200 marginalized women in gestation from Belagavi district, representing socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 40 years, with the largest proportion (31.5%) in the 20–25 age group, followed by 24.5% aged 26–30, and 22% each in the 31–35 and 36–40 age groups. Caste distribution highlighted the inclusion of marginalized communities, with 19.5% belonging to Scheduled Castes, 13.5% to Scheduled Tribes, and 40.5% to Other Backward Classes, while the remaining 26.5% were from other socially less vulnerable groups. Education levels among these women were relatively low, reflecting social marginalization: 42.5% had completed SSLC, 22% had graduation or higher, 19% had education from 1st–9th standard, and 16.5% had PUC level education. Most respondents (52.5%) were homemakers, while the remainder engaged in daily wage labor (17%), government jobs (10%), agriculture (8.5%), private employment (8.5%), or self-employment (3.5%). These occupational patterns underscore the limited economic empowerment among marginalized women. Husbands' education and occupation also varied, with 36.5% having graduation or higher and 30.5% educated up to 1st–9th standard. Occupations ranged from self-employed (28.5%) and private jobs (20.5%) to daily wage laborers (18%), government jobs (16.5%), and agricultural workers (15%), indicating that household resources and stability were often constrained by socio-economic factors.

Household income data revealed that while a majority (56.5%) earned above ₹20,000, a substantial proportion (43.5%) fell below this threshold, highlighting economic vulnerability common among marginalized communities. Additionally, 25% of respondents lacked access to toilet facilities, reflecting infrastructural and environmental marginalization. Overall, the socio-demographic profile illustrates that these marginalized women face multiple layers of disadvantage including limited education, low-income households, restricted economic opportunities, and social exclusion which can significantly affect their awareness and utilization of government maternal health schemes.

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Table 2: Health Worker Explanation of Available Services and Benefits by Marginalised Communities (N-200)

Marginalised Communities	N.	Percent
Sheduled Caste	21	10.5
Sheduled Tribe	22	11.0
Other Backward Classes	36	18.0
Others	40	20.0

Table 2 shows that, among the 200 respondents, a total of 119 women (59.5%) belonged to marginalized communities. Specifically, 21 women (10.5%) were from Scheduled Castes, 22 women (11.0%) from Scheduled Tribes, and 36 women (18.0%) from Other Backward Classes. The remaining 40 women (20.0%) were categorized as "Others," representing non-marginalized groups. This distribution highlights that a significant proportion of the study population consists of socially disadvantaged women, who may face structural barriers in accessing healthcare and government welfare schemes, thereby making them a critical focus for interventions aimed at improving maternal health awareness and service utilization.

Table 3: Awareness of Government Schemes Among Marginalised Communities (N-200)

Marginalised Communities	Sheduled Caste	Sheduled Tribe	Other Backward Classes	Others	Total
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**	12.5	17.0	16.0	26.7	72.2
Pradhan Mantri Surakshita Matrutva Abhiyan (PMSMA)	14.0	17.1	22.0	33.0	86.1
Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)***	13.2	12.0	18.0	29.0	72.2
Janani Shishu Surakha Karyakram (JSSK)***	8.5	6.0	13.0	23.0	50.5
Mathoshree***	11.4	14.0	17.0	21.0	63.4
Matrupoorna	8.5	7.0	12.0	19.0	46.5
Tayi Bhagya	8.5	7.0	13.3	22.0	50.8
Prasooti Araike**	9.0	10.0	17.0	26.0	62.0
Madilu	10.5	8.5	20.0	27.0	66.0

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Table 3 presents the awareness of key government maternal health schemes among 200 pregnant women, disaggregated by marginalized community. Overall, awareness was highest for **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)** at 86.1%, followed by **Madilu** (66.0%) and **Prasooti Araike** (62.0%). Awareness of other schemes such as **PMMVY** and **JSY** was 72.2%, while **Mathoshree** and **Tayi Bhagya** had moderate awareness levels of 63.4% and 50.8%, respectively. The lowest awareness was observed for **Matrupoorna** (46.5%) and **JSSK** (50.5%). The chi-square test results ($p < 0.05$) suggest that the differences in awareness across communities are statistically significant for several schemes, highlighting the impact of social marginalization on access to health information. Overall, these findings emphasize the need for targeted outreach and health education strategies to improve awareness and utilization of maternal health schemes among marginalized women.

Table 4: Awareness of Government Schemes According to Education Level of Women and Husbands (N-200)

Education level	Women's Education	Husband's Education
Primary Education	3.5	11.0
Secondary Education	14.5	17.0
SSLC	16.5	9.5
PUC	20.0	11.5
Graduation and Above	38.5	44.0

Table 4 illustrates the relationship between educational attainment of women and their husbands and awareness of government maternal health schemes. Among women, awareness increased with higher education: only 3.5% of women with primary education were aware of the schemes, compared to 14.5% with secondary education, 16.5% with SSLC, 20.0% with PUC, and 38.5% among those with graduation or higher. A similar trend was observed for husbands' education, where awareness was highest (44.0%) among those with graduation and above and lowest (9.5%) among those with SSLC education. These findings suggest a positive association between the level of formal education and awareness of government maternal health schemes, highlighting that higher literacy

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and education levels among both women and their spouses enhance exposure to information regarding available services. This underscores the importance of educational interventions and community awareness programs to improve knowledge and access to maternal health benefits, particularly among less-educated and marginalized households.

Fig 1: Awareness of Government Schemes According to Occupation of Women and Husbands (N-200)

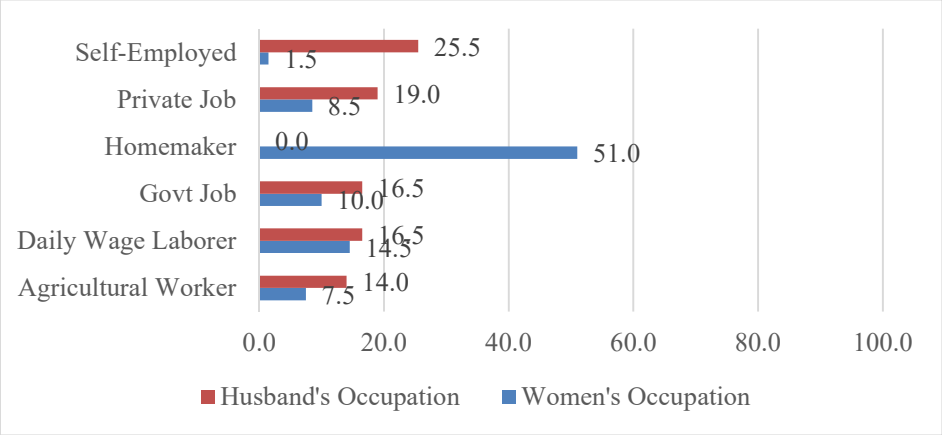


Fig 1 presents the awareness of government maternal health schemes according to the occupation of women and their husbands. Among women, homemakers showed the highest awareness (49.0%), whereas agricultural workers had the lowest (7.5%). Other women's occupations, including daily wage laborers (14.5%), government employees (11.5%), private job holders (12.5%), and self-employed women (10.5%), exhibited moderate awareness levels. For husbands, awareness was highest among self-employed individuals (25.5%) and those in private jobs (20.5%), followed by government employees (18.0%), daily wage laborers (16.5%), and agricultural workers (14.0%). Notably, homemakers as husbands were absent in the dataset (0%).

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Conclusion:

This study underscores the complex interplay between marginalization, social structures, and maternal health. Marginalized communities—comprising Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and economically disadvantaged groups—experience structural disadvantages rooted in historical social exclusion, caste hierarchies, gender norms, and economic inequities. From a sociological perspective, these factors influence access to information, health-seeking behavior, and utilization of government welfare schemes, reflecting the broader social determinants of health. The findings reveal that awareness and utilization of maternal health schemes are significantly shaped by **socio-demographic factors** such as education, occupation, and household dynamics. Women from marginalized communities with lower literacy and limited exposure to health information remain at a disadvantage, highlighting persistent social inequalities in access to health resources. Husbands' education and occupational status further mediate these outcomes, illustrating the role of household power dynamics in shaping maternal health practices. By situating these findings within the framework of sociology, the study provides critical insights into **how social stratification, economic vulnerability, and cultural norms intersect to create health inequities**. These insights have direct **policy implications**: targeted outreach programs, community-based health education, and context-sensitive interventions can be designed to address the specific needs of marginalized women.

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INVISIBLE LABOUR, VISIBLE STRUGGLES: WOMEN, WORK AND INEQUALITY IN INDIA'S GIG ECONOMY

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Abstract

The gig economy in India has opened new income-generating opportunities, especially for women who often face barriers to formal employment. Flexible work models offered by digital platforms and informal networks seem ideal for women balancing paid work with domestic responsibilities. However, these opportunities are often low-paid, unregulated and reinforce traditional gender roles. This paper explores how women's labour in the gig economy remains undervalued, insecure and largely invisible, especially in sectors such as home-based beauty services, caregiving, domestic work and digital microtasks.

Based entirely on secondary sources academic research, government reports, policy documents and media accounts this study analyses the gendered nature of India's gig economy. It highlights how caste, class and regional disparities further complicate women's access to fair and safe gig work. It also considers recent developments such as the Karnataka Gig Workers Bill (2024) and women-led protests against platform companies like Urban Company. Drawing on feminist political economy and intersectional theory, the paper shows how the promise of flexibility is often accompanied by precarity, surveillance and exploitation.

Keywords: gig economy, women workers, precarity, India, home-based labour, platform work, feminist political economy, Karnataka policy, informal work, intersectionality

Introduction

India's gig economy has grown rapidly in recent years, transforming how labour is organised, accessed and paid. Powered by mobile apps, digital marketplaces and informal networks, gig work now includes a range of jobs from food delivery and transportation to online tutoring, beauty services and care work. These platforms promote

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flexibility and autonomy, appealing especially to women seeking work that fits around domestic duties. However, beneath this flexibility lies a fragile foundation, where work is often precarious, informal and unregulated.

This paper examines the lived experiences of women gig workers in India, focusing on the invisible struggles that persist despite the visibility offered by digital platforms. It explores how gender intersects with other social factors such as caste, class and digital access to shape women's entry into and experience within, the gig economy. Using a sociological lens, the paper draws on feminist political economy, precarity theory and intersectionality to understand how informal labour, domestic work and caregiving are reproduced within this modern form of employment.

Women, Flexibility and the Illusion of Choice

The gig economy's appeal to women lies primarily in its promise of flexible work. In a context where women's mobility is often restricted due to domestic expectations, social norms or safety concerns, gig work especially home-based services offer a practical solution. Many women engage in work like home salons, tuitions, tailoring or caregiving, which allows them to earn without leaving the domestic space.

However, this flexibility is rarely empowering. Women still carry the bulk of household responsibilities and childcare, meaning that gig work simply adds to their existing unpaid workload. According to the National Statistical Office (2019), Indian women spend nearly 300 minutes daily on unpaid domestic labour, while men spend less than 30 minutes. This "double burden" affects women's ability to work regular hours, take multiple gigs or advance economically.

Caste, Class and the Digital Divide

Women's experiences in gig work are shaped not just by gender, but also by caste and class. Upper-caste and middle-class women often access digital gigs like online coaching, content creation or reselling due to better internet access, education and language skills. Meanwhile, Dalit, Adivasi and working-class women are concentrated in physical labour sectors like domestic cleaning, caregiving or cooking jobs that are both low-paid and physically demanding.

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Home-Based Work and Visibility Struggles

A significant portion of women's gig work in India is home-based and informal. Beauticians, eldercare providers and home cooks often operate without contracts or legal protection. Even when associated with platforms like Urban Company, they work under conditions of high uncertainty variable commissions, unsafe client visits and long hours. In 2021 and again in 2023 and 2025 , Urban Company beauticians protested in Delhi and Bengaluru. They demanded safer work conditions, fair pay and an end to exploitative commission cuts. Many said that despite years of loyal service, they had no say in company policies or rating systems that directly affected their income and job access. These protests made it clear that women gig workers, often overlooked in labour movements are organizing and demanding recognition.

Karnataka's Gig Worker Policy: Progress and Gaps

In response to growing activism and media pressure, several Indian states have begun drafting regulations for gig workers. Karnataka's Draft Gig Workers Bill (2024) proposes the formation of a welfare board, basic social security and grievance redressal for gig workers. While this is a welcome step, critics argue the bill lacks gender-specific provisions such as maternity benefits, anti-harassment protections and support for home-based services. Without explicitly addressing the different experiences of women gig workers, especially in care and beauty sectors, such policies risk offering generic solutions that leave the most vulnerable workers behind. Moreover, implementation remains uncertain, with many platform companies opposing state intervention. The bill does, however, open a door for broader advocacy around labour recognition, digital justice and gender inclusion.

Resistance and Collective Organising

Despite barriers, women gig workers are not passive. Through formal unions like SEWA, The Gig and Platform Service Workers Union (GIPSWU) and informal WhatsApp groups, they are sharing safety tips, coordinating protest actions and pushing for platform accountability. These networks provide emotional support and build solidarity in a space designed to promote individualism and competition. The Urban Company protests marked a turning point. For the first time, a large group of women gig workers publicly challenged a tech platform's policies. Their actions not only won temporary policy changes but also forced media and policy circles to

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recognise the gendered dimensions of gig work. As De Neve, Medappa, and Prentice (2023) note, these new forms of "distributed organising" represent a radical shift in how women in precarious work claim voice and power, often outside traditional union frameworks.

Conclusion

India's gig economy has expanded rapidly, but its foundation is built on invisible labour and visible struggles especially for women. While it offers short-term income and flexible hours, it also replicates gender hierarchies, deepens digital divides and ignores unpaid care responsibilities.

This paper has shown that women gig workers face unique vulnerabilities shaped by gender, caste, class and algorithmic systems. The promise of empowerment through gig work remains unrealised unless structural reforms are introduced. Recognising women gig workers as legitimate workers, ensuring their safety, providing childcare support and making platform practices transparent are essential steps forward.

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DIGITAL HISTORY IN KARNATAKA: CASE STUDY OF DIGITAL HAMPI PROJECT

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Abstract

Through the lens of the Digital Hampi Project, located in the Indian state of Karnataka, this case study examines the convergence of digital technology and cultural heritage preservation. Known for its great mythical, historical, and cultural significance, Hampi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was the capital of the Vijayanagara dynasty. The Digital Hampi Project was launched as part of the larger Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) project in response to the necessity of conserving Hampi's cultural legacy. This multidisciplinary project sought to record, reconstruct, and interpret Hampi's architectural wonders, social life, and cultural traditions by using cutting-edge digital technologies. Using technologies like 3D scanning, modelling and visual reconstruction, the case study outlines the goals, technological processes, and results of the Digital Hampi Project. The initiative has successfully conserved Hampi's rich historical legacy and enhanced global awareness and appreciation of Karnataka's cultural heritage through its unique methodology and interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: Digital Hampi, Digital History, Cultural Heritage, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 3D Scanning, 3D Modeling, Visual Reconstruction

Introduction:

The World Heritage Site recognized by UNESCO Situated on the banks of the Tungabhadra River in the Indian state of Karnataka, Hampi served as the capital of the Vijayanagara kingdom. The remnants of the palaces' grandeur and beauty are breathtaking. In addition to its mythological and historical significance, Hampi's surroundings are rich in social, cultural, and natural traditions. Particular attention should be paid to the physical and digital preservation of Hampi's temples and civil architectural structures. Emerging technological instruments allow India's rich cultural heritage to be preserved, used, and enjoyed. Therefore, new digital methods and procedures for documenting Hampi's tangible and intangible cultural legacies are needed for an accurate portrayal of karnataka's cultural legacy.

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Digital Initiatives for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage:

"Cultural Heritage once lost is lost forever". Preserving the cultural heritage of India through digital initiatives is important due to the "ephemerality" of cultural heritage and the challenges posed by time and socio-political circumstances. As noted by scholars such Smith and Andreson (2017) traditional artifacts are susceptible to degradation over time, whether through natural processes through decay or human induced factors such as vandalism and urbanization. India's cultural heritage is also susceptible to "colonial biases" and "politicization of history". Digital preservation not only solves the problem of "ephemerality" and "politicization of history" but also breaks down barriers to accessibility and wider distribution of cultural heritage across geographical and temporal boundaries. Digital history encompasses a wide range of activities, including digitizing primary sources (documents, photographs, manuscripts), creating digital archives, developing interactive exhibits and educational resources, and employing computational techniques for historical analysis. It goes beyond mere digitization to engage with new possibilities offered by technology, such as data visualization, 3D modelling and virtual reality, and artificial intelligence. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and shifting cultural landscapes, the preservation and sustainability of cultural heritage have become crucial endeavours. Digital history, a relatively new field, has emerged as a powerful tool in this pursuit. It harnesses technology to digitize, archive, and disseminate historical and cultural information, ensuring that our rich heritage is not only preserved but also made accessible to a wider audience.

Digital Hampi Project: Digital Preservation of Cultural Heritage

The Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) project is directly related to the Digital Hampi Project. IDH project provides the framework and support for initiatives like the Digital Hampi Project, which contribute to the digital preservation and dissemination of India's rich cultural heritage. The IDH project was launched by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India. The primary objective of the IDH project was to create technological tools that would enable the preservation, utilization, and enjoyment of India's rich digital legacy. This was accomplished by bringing together advanced ICT and geospatial technologies in a harmonious manner. The accomplishment of this task would require cooperation between various communities and agencies. The

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technology community, comprising scientists and engineers from 12 prestigious research and academic institutes in India, would create, innovate, and develop appropriate technologies. The culture community, on the other hand, would involve 11 teams of experts from the humanities and social sciences, including architects, anthropologists, art historians, and other professionals. Government agencies, acting as guardians of India's vast heritage, would provide the necessary executive power to facilitate collaboration. Finally, private agencies, companies, and other organizations with a stake in this for a variety of reasons, including tourism, would need to work together. This massive multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, multi-crore project, funded by the Department, was possibly the first of its kind in India.

Key Objectives of the Digital Hampi Project

The major goals of the Digital Hampi Project are as follows:

- To meticulously and graphically reconstruct the missing portions of the temple complex in an effort to digitally bring it back to its former splendor.
- To provide a digital interpretation of Vijayanagar and Hampi architecture so that the general public can engage with and comprehend it.
- To establish an open-axis digital cultural knowledge bank featuring digital archives pertaining to the development of Hampi temple architecture, wherein information can be updated in real-time by other researchers, practitioners, and members of the public who share an interest.

Evaluation of Digital Technologies Applied in the Digital Hampi Project

The convergence of technology and tradition has gained prominence in the field of cultural heritage protection. The preservation and continuation of cultural artefacts for future generations greatly depend on technological methods. This case study investigates the wide range of technical approaches used in cultural artefact digital preservation. These approaches—which range from cutting-edge photography methods to fully immersive digital experiences not only preserve and improve accessibility to cultural artifacts but also help to capture their essence. A large portion of intangible legacy is actually an embodied practice, and presenting it digitally entails preserving the discipline's knowledge base to enable future enactments of the practice. For a site's cultural legacy to be fully preserved, it is also critical to connect digital preservation efforts for both tangible and intangible assets. An intellectual context may be lost if a tangible cultural artifact is preserved without also protecting its associated

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intangible legacy because tangible cultural artifacts can be linked to intangible knowledge and activities. Through walkthroughs in visual, physical, and intellectual areas, digital presentation offers a unique chance to exhibit the history in a contextualized manner while also preserving a digital representation of intangible heritage.

Analyzing the 3D Reconstruction Efforts in the Digital Hampi Project

The Digital Hampi project aimed to go beyond simply storing and sharing the heritage data and knowledge and use emerging technologies in computer vision, graphics, audio-video technologies and user interface design to create vivid experiences of the heritage for common users. It also aimed to provide analytic tools for the art historian, the architect or any scientist who may be interested in conducting scholarly studies of Indian heritage. Technologies employed in the Digital Hampi have ranged from laser scanning, modelling and gesture-based interactive displays, haptic explorations, experiential multimedia renditions and ontological explorations. The well-known artistic and architectural splendours provided a fertile ground for this exercise ranging from the Narasimha colossus, the luminescent murals of Lepakshi and the Virupaksha temple, the Vitthala temple complex and some of its enigmatic colonnades which emit musical tones, whether intentionally or not, and the remains of the bazaar, which was once the topic of much admiration by travelers from the Mediterranean. Some other heritage artifacts documented and interpreted from digital approaches in this project include the portable Vijayanagara bronzes with study of their iconometry and modeling; the vibrant living crafts such as painting and carpentry for making chariots; living traditions such as the Dussehra tradition (harking back to the Mahanavami festival of Hampi), related crafts, and the legacy of the Girija Kalyanam ritual concerning the marriage of Siva and Parvati.

Important technological processes in the Digital Hampi Project:

Measurement of the existing objects automatically using 3D capture technologies such as laser scanning or photogrammetry. Reconstructive modeling of damaged or no-longer-extant objects by manual (using software like AutoCAD, GD Studio Max, Maya) or algorithmic interventions. Combination of captured and reconstructed models to create hybrids which are hypothesized representations of damaged artifacts.These representations serve multiple purposes, including cultural heritage preservation and documenting artifacts, facilitating public outreach and education, conducting historical studies, and exploring experimental architectural and urban history. The researchers involved in the Digital Hampi Project have used many scales and approaches to conduct thorough

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readings of the Vittala temple complex. This project was conceptualized through careful documentation of the temple, a survey of the literature, and a comparative analysis. The temple complex and its components were documented using measured drawings, sketches, and systematic visual recording. 3D models were produced using these 2D representations as a basis, and two-dimensional AutoCAD drawings were produced and cross-checked with measurements taken on the job site.

Architectural and Social Life Reconstruction

An emerging area of study in digital heritage is the reconstruction of social life and architecture. A Key Example of this is the Roman Reborn project , which constructed the digital models to portray the urban growth of Rome from 1000 B.C. to 550 AD, is one of the well-known examples in this field. In the Digital Hampi Project, there are social and architectural reconstructions made to the Bazaar streets of the Vijayanagara-era metropolis of Hampi. The goal of architectural and social life reconstruction in the Digital Hampi Project has been to envision how bazaars and social life might seem architecturally in a variety of dimensions. The techniques have focused on fieldwork, use of 3D Models, Data and Advanced Algorithms and an examination of the literature from the Vijayanagara period in order to create coherent digital reconstructions.

Future Prospects of Digital History Projects in Karnataka:

One significant contribution of the digital archive of Indian cultural heritage would be the democratization of knowledge about heritage monuments. The "Hoysala temples at Belur, Halebid, and Somanathapur" and the Pattadakal temples, which date their origins to the Chalukya era with monuments dating from the 7th to the 9th centuries CE, are just two examples of the world heritage sites in Karnataka that can be included in a digital database created by replicating and scaling up works like the Digital Hampi Project.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, the Digital Hampi Project is evidence of the revolutionary potential of digital technologies for safeguarding and advancing cultural heritage. The project's strength is its interdisciplinary nature. This massive multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, multi-crore project, funded by the Department of Science and Technology, was possibly the first of its kind in India. The creative tactics and teamwork of subject matter experts from multiple disciplines have allowed it to digitize Hampi's rich historical legacy and make it available to a worldwide

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audience. We highlight the project's contribution to promoting a greater understanding of Karnataka's rich cultural heritage.

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DIGITAL LITERACY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

In the contemporary world, digital technologies significantly influence our lives and economies. It is essential to ensure that everyone, particularly women and girls in marginalized communities, can learn to utilize these new tools for accessing and generating information. Technology has become a fundamental aspect of society, impacting various spheres, one of which is the growing importance of digital literacy as a means of empowering individuals. This research paper addresses the intersection of gender and technology, employing a sociological perspective to examine how limited digital literacy disproportionately affects women. It explores how digital skills can help bridge existing gaps that hinder women's access to information, education, and employment, thereby reducing the disparities between males and females. The study emphasizes case studies and interview methods to gain insights into the challenges of women's integration into the digital landscape.

Keywords: Digital literacy, women's empowerment, digital divide

Introduction:

Information communication technology has been acknowledged as a significant catalyst for social and economic change in modern society. To actively engage in today's globalized world, it is crucial to have access to and the ability to utilize these 'technology tools.' In many developed nations, and even more so in developing regions, the access of women and girls to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation is at a pivotal moment, where digital literacy can bridge gender disparities that have existed for many years. However, the relationship between gender and technology is complex: while technology offers women new avenues to achieve their aspirations, it also presents challenges. These challenges arise from cultural, economic, and structural factors that contribute to the digital gender divide. Essentially, this study seeks to explore the literacy required for women's

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empowerment through the integration of technology to transform traditional gender roles and improve women's socio-economic status. Although technology has the potential to increase information accessibility for everyone and promote gender equality, the online environment remains predominantly patriarchal. Additionally, inadequate education and Internet infrastructure in the digital realm hinder women's ability to take advantage of this technological shift. Moreover, cultural obstacles restrict women's engagement with devices and technology overall, perpetuating the gender gap. In this context, the study employs sociological analysis to examine how digital literacy can serve as a source of empowerment, enabling women to surmount various obstacles, gain agency, and contribute to societal advancement. By investigating case studies and analyzing the experiences of women from various socio-economic backgrounds, this research will tackle the question: How does digital literacy contribute to the empowerment of women?

Literature review

The growth of digital literacy has prompted numerous researchers to explore its impact on women, girls, gender equity, and marginalized communities. Since 2020, various authors have made efforts to examine the dynamics of digital literacy, highlighting its positive effects on women while also addressing the negative influences of socio-economic and cultural factors. As noted by Rahman et al. (2020), digital literacy can improve women's opportunities in areas such as learning, online shopping, and business, particularly in rural regions like Birmingham. This study revealed that women gained from digital skills training, which led to an increase in income-generating activities through home-based businesses and online markets. Similarly, Afshar et al. (2021) underscored the empowering role of digital literacy in enhancing women's involvement in decision-making both at home and within their communities, especially in cultures dominated by patriarchy. Nevertheless, a significant gender divide persists regarding the use of information and communication technologies and literacy in general, particularly in developing countries. The Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO in 2021 highlighted a digital gender gap, indicating that women in low-income areas have 23% less access to mobile internet compared to men. The findings indicated that in regions where these programs were effectively implemented and promoted by the government, women received training that enabled them to perform online banking, engage in governance, and participate in social media activism. The existing literature on information and digital literacy concurs that improvements in these areas can promote socio-economic development and reduce gender inequalities. However,

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challenges related to resource access, cultural factors, and socio-economic disparities persist. Future research should aim to identify strategies to overcome these obstacles by developing gender-sensitive political measures, effective online training, and community interventions that acknowledge the complexities of women's experiences. Thus, bridging the technology gap for women is fundamentally about empowering them to contribute to solutions for humanity and our planet.

Objectives of the study

- To comprehend whether and in what ways digital literacy enhances women's standing in education, employment, and social environments relative to their socio-demographic status.
- To uncover the socio-cultural and economic elements that contribute to the limited access of females to digital tools and technology, especially in developing countries, and to propose methods for overcoming these obstacles.
- To evaluate the impact of digital literacy on advancing women's socio-economic status, with a particular focus on how digital literacy has fostered entrepreneurship and economic self-sufficiency among women, as well as their participation in the digital landscape.

Research Methodology

The study model employed in this work utilizes mixed methods. Women from various socio-economic backgrounds in both urban and rural areas of Chitradurga. Were interviwed regarding their experiences with digital technology. The questions posed in the study addressed topics such as digital skills, technology availability, socio-economic issues, and the impact of digital literacy on their empowerment. Additionally, interviews were conducted with key participant groups, including women entrepreneurs, to deepen the understanding of the barriers and opportunities for effective technology use by women.

Findings

The findings indicate that women with higher levels of digital literacy enjoy greater job and educational opportunities compared to those with lower levels. Consequently, this research suggests that efforts to improve women's digital literacy could lead to significant socio-economic benefits. By equipping women with the

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necessary digital skills, those seeking employment can be better positioned, and educational support can be provided to women in need, thereby contributing to societal advancement. Financial authorities and other relevant stakeholders should prioritize digital literacy as a crucial intervention to promote gender equality and enhance the quality of life for women across various communities. The findings indicate that women with higher levels of digital literacy enjoy greater job and educational opportunities compared to those with lower levels of digital literacy.

Conclusion

Digital literacy improves women's job prospects, encourages entrepreneurship, provides access to remote work, aids in closing the gender pay gap, and enhances financial independence. It facilitates the formation of networks, promotes lifelong learning, challenges stereotypes, encourages civic engagement, and fosters global connectivity, thereby empowering women economically. This includes addressing cultural barriers, limited access to tools and resources, and educational disparities. Consequently, the findings of the study emphasize the necessity of supporting women in achieving economic and social empowerment through enhanced digital literacy, as this can transform power dynamics within households and other areas of life. Therefore, this paper highlights the significance of policy development, infrastructure construction, and tailored digital literacy courses to ensure that women can leverage information technology as a means to enhance their liberation and social welfare.

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A CASE STUDY OF KARNATAKA STATE

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Abstract

This study examines Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending in India with a focused analysis of Karnataka from 2014–15 to 2020–21. The **purpose** is to assess CSR's role in fostering sustainable socio-economic development. The **objectives** include evaluating year-wise and sectoral trends, highlighting regional disparities, and examining CSR's developmental impact. The **methodology** adopts a quantitative approach using secondary data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. **Statistical tools** such as mean, standard deviation, standard error, range, minimum, and maximum were applied. Findings reveal CSR's upward growth nationally, with Karnataka emphasizing education and health while underfunding gender equality, sanitation, and cultural initiatives.

Key words : Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainable Development, CSR in India, Karnataka CSR Spending, Financial Performance

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) represents a strategic integration of business ethics, accountability, and sustainable development within corporate functioning. It extends beyond profit maximization to include the obligation of companies to contribute meaningfully to societal welfare and environmental sustainability. In India, CSR gained formal recognition under

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the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates qualifying firms to allocate a portion of profits toward developmental activities. These include initiatives in education, healthcare, rural development, environmental protection, gender equality, and cultural preservation. Academically, CSR is conceptualized as both a compliance-driven obligation and a voluntary corporate strategy that enhances legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and long-term competitiveness. Thus, CSR is not merely philanthropic but a transformative approach, aligning corporate growth with inclusive socio-economic development and sustainable progress. This paper further elaborates on the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainable development, and the role of businesses in advancing social and environmental well-being, particularly within the Indian context (Kujur, 2023). Corporate Social Responsibility is often considered a voluntary effort by corporations to integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations, playing a crucial role in promoting societal development and welfare (Singh et al., 2018). In India, the increasing emphasis on CSR has led many companies to adopt these practices not only for compliance but also for enhancing their brand image and fostering long-term business sustainability (-, 2024).

2. CSR in Karnataka

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Karnataka has evolved into a structured mechanism that integrates corporate accountability with developmental imperatives. The state has witnessed significant CSR contributions, particularly in education, healthcare, rural development, and animal welfare, reflecting corporate focus on long-term socio-economic capacity building. Education consistently dominates allocations, underscoring its role in skill enhancement and human capital development. Healthcare spending, particularly during the COVID-19 period, highlights CSR's adaptive response to urgent social demands. However, sectors such as gender equality, sanitation, and cultural preservation remain underfunded, indicating selective prioritization. Thus, CSR in Karnataka operates both as a compliance-driven obligation under the Companies Act, 2013, and as a strategic instrument fostering inclusive development, though greater diversification and equitable sectoral attention are necessary.

3. Literature Review

Recent literature on CSR in India and Karnataka highlights sectoral concentration, uneven regional distribution, governance integration, and its complex relationship with financial performance, urging sustainable, inclusive, and context-specific corporate interventions.

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Alves et al. (2022) conducted a bibliometric review of CSR scholarship, highlighting governance, financial performance, and sustainability as core themes while calling for more region-specific analyses in emerging economies such as India. **Wang et al. (2023)** performed a systematic review of CSR studies (2019–2023), identifying methodological diversity and urging the use of longitudinal designs to measure CSR's impact on developmental outcomes in low-income regions. **Dhaliwal et al. (2021)** empirically examined Indian firms and found CSR engagement significantly reduces the cost of capital by enhancing transparency and reducing information asymmetry, linking CSR to financial performance. **Fernando and Lawrence (2020)**, through large-scale bibliometric analysis, showed that CSR–financial performance relationships remain mixed, with variations depending on industry, firm size, and regulatory environments, stressing the need for state-level research like Karnataka. **Haque and Jones (2022)** emphasized CSR integration into ESG and governance frameworks, arguing that corporate boards in Asia, including India, must strategically embed CSR to achieve sustainable transitions. **Liu et al. (2021)** reviewed CSR's role in advancing SDGs, cautioning that short-term, project-based funding undermines long-term impact and recommending collaborative, multi-year interventions in regions such as Karnataka. **Carroll and Shabana (2020)** provided a critical historical review, noting Western conceptual dominance in CSR literature and urging more empirical work capturing subnational variations and socio-political dynamics in India. **Patel and Ranganathan (2023)** analyzed CSR practices in Karnataka, observing uneven distribution of funds across sectors, with education and health dominating allocations, and recommended alignment with policy frameworks for balanced development.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach to examine Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending in Karnataka from 2014–15 to 2020–21. The analysis is based on secondary data sourced from official CSR disclosures. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, standard error, range, minimum, and maximum have been applied to measure central tendencies and variations in CSR spending. Year-wise analysis highlights trends in overall allocations, while sectoral analysis evaluates priority areas such as education, health, animal welfare, and rural development.

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Table No. 1 CSR Spend in Karnataka classified on basis of CSR Activities (₹ Crores)

Type of CSR Activity / Fund	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Any Fund	0.00	9.24	7.27	6.80	6.94	17.93	11.51	59.69
Clean Ganga	0.00	0.08	0.19	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.39
Education etc.	63.33	126.04	435.03	371.28	553.54	585.84	382.58	2517.64
Sports	2.53	11.49	4.66	5.70	12.60	6.15	13.63	56.76
Animal Welfare etc.	45.50	90.38	116.62	264.60	154.24	169.15	123.56	964.05
Gender Equality etc.	6.11	6.67	27.45	14.56	27.41	35.50	20.06	137.76
Health etc.	40.73	74.29	180.56	82.36	197.38	293.09	302.50	1170.91
Heritage, Art & Culture	8.90	2.13	5.66	10.70	20.65	10.28	22.23	80.55
Other Sectors	0.31	0.26	2.75	0.74	10.95	4.78	5.17	24.96
Others	83.28	12.75	4.80	0.00	0.00	1.23	0.00	102.06
PM National Relief Fund	0.00	2.79	3.87	1.52	12.05	13.75	8.30	42.28
Rural Development	15.71	16.18	48.05	49.62	67.73	25.33	18.51	241.13
Slum Area Development	0.07	0.11	1.48	0.06	15.71	3.85	0.78	22.06
Swachh Bharat	0.00	0.61	0.33	0.70	2.15	4.39	22.70	30.88
Total	**266.47**	**353.02**	**838.72**	**808.95**	**1083.50**	**1171.27**	**931.63**	**5453.56**

Source: MCA Website

The year-wise analysis of CSR spending in Karnataka from 2014–15 to 2020–21 highlights distinct sectoral priorities and evolving corporate commitments. In the initial years, education emerged as the dominant sector, accounting for ₹63.33 crores in 2014–15 and rising sharply to ₹435.03 crores in 2016–17. This consistent focus reflects the centrality of education in CSR mandates and its long-term developmental impact. Health-related initiatives also gained momentum, particularly

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after 2018–19, peaking at ₹302.50 crores in 2020–21, likely driven by heightened healthcare needs and pandemic-related interventions. Animal welfare and rural development remained significant, demonstrating CSR's role in supporting social welfare and livelihood security. Notably, sectors like heritage, art and culture, and gender equality received intermittent but growing attention, signaling diversification of CSR portfolios. However, activities such as Clean Ganga, Slum Development, and Swachh Bharat registered relatively modest allocations, suggesting limited prioritization in Karnataka. The overall CSR spending rose from ₹266.47 crores in 2014–15 to a peak of ₹1171.27 crores in 2019–20, before a decline in 2020–21. This trajectory underscores the influence of corporate profitability cycles, compliance trends, and contextual factors such as COVID-19 on CSR outlays.

TABLE: 3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLE CSR Spend in Karnataka classified on basis of CSR Activities (₹ Crores)

Year	CSR Spend	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Range	Minimum	Maximum
2014-15	266.47	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27
2015-16	353.02	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27
2016-17	838.72	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27
2017-18	808.95	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27
2018-19	1083.5	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27
2019-20	1171.27	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27
2020-21	931.63	779.08	130.7943967	346.0494467	904.8	266.47	1171.27

Source : Author Calculation

The descriptive statistics of Karnataka's CSR spending (2014–15 to 2020–21) reveal notable year-wise variations within an overall upward trend. The mean expenditure of ₹779.08 crores highlights a consistent corporate commitment, while the high standard deviation (₹346.05 crores) and range (₹904.8 crores) reflect substantial inter-year fluctuations. The minimum spend in 2014–15 (₹266.47 crores) corresponds to the early phase of CSR compliance, whereas the maximum in 2019–20 (₹1171.27 crores) aligns with strengthened regulatory enforcement and rising corporate profits. The standard error indicates moderate reliability, justifying the conclusion that CSR allocations in Karnataka demonstrate both growth and variability across sectors.

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5. Major Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Education Investments:** While education dominates CSR spending, allocations should be diversified towards skill development and digital literacy to enhance employability and future readiness.
2. **Expanding Healthcare Support:** With rising health expenditure, particularly during the pandemic, companies should invest in sustainable healthcare infrastructure, preventive care, and rural health outreach beyond crisis-driven initiatives.
3. **Balanced Sectoral Allocation**: CSR should reduce over-concentration in a few sectors by enhancing contributions to underfunded areas like gender equality, sanitation, and slum development to ensure inclusive growth.
4. **Focus on Rural Development:** Strengthening rural development initiatives, including livelihood creation and infrastructure, can address urban-rural disparities and promote balanced regional development.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of CSR spending in Karnataka from 2014–15 to 2020–21 demonstrates a dynamic trajectory marked by both growth and sectoral concentration. Education consistently emerged as the dominant focus, reflecting corporate recognition of its long-term developmental value. Health-related expenditure gained prominence in later years, especially during the pandemic, highlighting CSR's responsiveness to emergent social needs. Other sectors such as animal welfare and rural development attracted significant but comparatively lower allocations, while initiatives like Clean Ganga, slum development, and Swachh Bharat remained underfunded, indicating selective prioritization. Statistical measures revealed considerable fluctuations, with a high standard deviation and range underscoring year-to-year variability influenced by corporate profitability cycles and external shocks. While CSR in Karnataka has expanded in volume and scope, the imbalance across sectors and limited diversification remain critical challenges. A more holistic, inclusive, and strategically aligned CSR approach is essential to enhance sustainable socio-economic development.

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DIGITAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG WEAKER SECTIONS IN INDIA – A SOCIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT:

The digital revolution has transformed modern life, reshaping the ways in which individuals access information, education, and employment. However, this transformation has not been uniform across all sections of Indian society. The digital divide refers to the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not, Indian society showcases profound socio-economic disparities based on caste, class, gender, and regional differences. While digital technology holds promise to empower the marginalized groups by facilitating greater access to information, education, and employment, unequal access to these opportunities has served to intensify existing disparities. Digital inclusion has emerged as a critical component of social development in contemporary India. The expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has the potential to transform social structures, democratize access to knowledge, and enhance participation in governance and the economy. This paper examines how the digital divide influences the empowerment of weaker sections in India. It is an analysis of the extent of digital divide in India and its effects on weaker sections of society including the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women, specially abled, LGBTQs and rural population. It also takes a look at initiatives by the government to ensure digital inclusion and the importance of an equitable digital environment to provide empowerment and inclusive growth.

KEY WORDS: Digital divide, digital inclusion, social empowerment, weaker sections, inequality, ICT

INTRODUCTION:

With the 21st century, digital technology has become a strong driver of socio-economic change. Access to digital capabilities and resources now defines individuals' and communities' ability to engage with education, work, government, and social life. Yet in India, the extent of digital technology coverage and use is highly

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unequal. The digital divide the gap between those who can access digital technologies and those who cannot mirrors and enforces current social and economic disparities.

This dichotomy is most visible among the weaker sections of society, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, rural communities, and economically backward sections. Digital connectivity in this sense has emerged as a new social capital allowing those who are equipped with it to access avenues of learning, communication, and growth, leaving behind those who are not endowed with it, keeping them out of the realm of development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The key objectives of this study are;

- To analyze the nature and extent of the digital divide among marginalized groups in India.
- To examine how digital inclusion contributes to social, educational, and economic empowerment.
- To assess the role of government policies and initiatives in promoting digital inclusion among weaker sections.
- To suggest strategies for strengthening digital literacy and inclusive digital participation for equitable social development.

METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a sociological and analytical approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the patterns, barriers, and impacts of digital inclusion on marginalized communities in India. The research is descriptive and exploratory in nature, focusing on understanding the link between digital access and empowerment. Primary Data has been collected through structured interviews and focus group discussions. Secondary Data was drawn from government reports, census data, National Sample Survey (NSS) reports, research papers, policy documents (e.g., Digital India, PMGDISHA), and relevant sociological literature.

DISCUSSION:

The digital divide in India is not simply an issue of technology access but one that reflects underlying structural disparities based on caste, class, gender, and geography. It sociologically replicates the hierarchical structure of Indian society, wherein resource access—be it land, education, or information—has always been

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uneven. Digital technology, though epoch-making in nature, works within this social system and hence is affected by existing hierarchies.

Digital inclusion is capable of being a force for change by improving communication, exchange of knowledge, and citizen participation in governance. It can help the excluded sections access welfare programs, enhance employability, and interact with wider networks of society. For instance, e-governance services and online learning websites can make information and services available to all on a democratic basis. However, these advantages are not evenly spread. The disadvantaged classes Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and those living in rural areas tend to be at the margins of the digital revolution because of low digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural limitations.

FINDINGS:

The study reveals that digital inclusion in India continues to be uneven and reflects broader patterns of social inequality. While digital technology has created new opportunities for communication, education, and governance, its benefits are not equally shared across social groups. The key findings are summarized as follows:

Persistence of the Digital Divide: The gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not remains significant, particularly along lines of caste, class, gender, and region. Rural areas and marginalized communities still face inadequate digital infrastructure and poor connectivity.

Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers: Economic constraints, low literacy levels, and socio-cultural norms especially those restricting women's participation—continue to limit the digital engagement of weaker sections.

Digital Literacy as a Determinant of Empowerment: Access alone does not guarantee empowerment. The ability to use technology effectively—through digital skills and education plays a crucial role in enabling marginalized individuals to benefit from digital inclusion.

Role of the State and Policy Interventions: Government initiatives such as Digital India, PMGDISHA, and BharatNet have expanded outreach but have not yet achieved uniform inclusion. Implementation challenges, lack of awareness, and infrastructural gaps restrict their full impact on weaker sections.

Gendered Nature of Digital Exclusion: Women, especially from rural and economically weaker backgrounds, face compounded disadvantages. Social restrictions and lack of digital literacy widen the gender-based digital divide, limiting their empowerment potential.

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CONCLUSIONS:

The study concludes that digital inclusion is not merely a technological or economic issue but a sociological process deeply embedded in existing social structures. The digital divide in India reflects the persistent inequalities of caste, class, gender, and geography that continue to shape access to resources and opportunities. True empowerment through digital inclusion can only be achieved when access is accompanied by digital capability, literacy, and cultural inclusion. Digital connectivity must serve as a means of social transformation enabling marginalized communities to participate actively in education, employment, governance, and civic life. Bridging the digital divide therefore requires a multi-dimensional approach strengthening infrastructure, promoting digital education, ensuring affordability, and addressing social barriers. Policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations must collaborate to create an inclusive digital ecosystem where technology acts as an equalizer rather than a divider. In essence, digital inclusion should be seen as a pathway to social justice and inclusive development, where technology empowers the weakest sections to claim their rightful place in the digital age.

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BRIDGING DIGITAL INEQUALITIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE TELECOMMUNICATION STRATEGIES -EMPOWER UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This paper focus on the bridging the digital inequalities through innovative telecommunication strategies to empower underserved communities. A brief introduction to Digital inequalities is highlighted with a focus on factors contributing to digital inequalities. It also highlights the significance of emerging technologies like 5G Expansion, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation, 6G Development, Satellite internet, cloud computing, Internet of Things, Digital Twins and Network Virtualization, TV White Space, Mesh Networks, community networks etc. in providing high speed internet. The key statistics regarding digital inequalities are presented for clear understanding and it highlights the current situation. Subsidies and financial assistance programs are effective strategies to make internet access more affordable. Governments can subsidize low-income households to help cover the cost of internet subscriptions and digital devices. It also highlights the role of BharatNet and PM-WANI. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are identified as pivotal in pooling resources, expertise, and infrastructure to drive digital inclusion efforts.

Keywords: Digital Inequality, Digital Equality, Telecommunication Strategies, 5G Technology, PPPs, Artificial Intelligence.

1. Introduction to Digital Inequality

Digital inequality can be understood as the unequal or differentiated use of the available technology, infrastructure, services, facilities, and information. It prominently exists socially, economically, educationally, culturally, and in geographically diverse societies.

The digital divide manifests in various ways like limited or no internet access, insufficient digital literacy, and lack of affordable digital devices. The consequences of digital inequities are profound, affecting education, employment, healthcare, and social inclusion.

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Digital equality, instead, is a deliberate and dedicated effort to provide digital technology, infrastructure, services, facilities, and information at a minimum cost to all citizens so that they can be informed and participate in the growth and development of their society. In such a society, the distribution and availability of digital technology, infrastructure, and services are insured without any military, geographical, or economic agenda.

1.1 Current state of Digital Inequalities:

The current state of digital inequalities is a complex issue that affects various aspects of society, including education, employment, healthcare and social mobility. India faces a major challenge in its digitalization journey – the unequal distribution of digital access. NSSO (National Sample Survey Office) data reveals a staggering disparity: only 24% of rural households have internet access, compared to 66% in cities as of early 2024. This lack of infrastructure and awareness in rural areas creates a ripple effect, limiting access to quality education, employment opportunities, and economic growth. According to a May 2025 government survey in India, about 48.4% of rural women aged 15 and above own a mobile phone. However, mobile phone usage is much higher, with 76.3% of rural women using a mobile phone, indicating a significant gap where many women use devices that are not their own.

1.2 Factors Contributing to Digital Inequalities

- Income: Affordability of digital technologies and internet access is a significant barrier for low-income households.
- Geography: Rural areas often lack infrastructure, making it difficult to access reliable internet.
- Education: Limited digital literacy and skills hinder effective use of digital technologies.
- Language: Availability of content in local languages is crucial for accessibility.
- Disability: Individuals with disabilities face unique challenges in accessing digital technologies.

1.3 Objectives of the Paper:

- Examining current digital inequalities and their impacts
- Identifying emerging telecommunications technologies

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- Provide practical recommendations for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and community leaders

1.4 Methodology

The data is purely secondary in nature collected from various websites and research articles.

2. Importance of Innovative Telecommunication Strategies

Innovative telecommunication strategies are required to address the digital inequities that extend beyond traditional infrastructure solutions. These strategies encompass a range of technologies and approaches designed to make internet access more affordable, reliable, and widespread. Innovative telecommunication strategies are crucial for driving growth, enhancing connectivity, and fostering economic development.

2.1 Innovative Telecommunication Strategies

New and emerging telecommunication strategies are transforming the industry, driven by technological advancements and changing customer demands. Some key strategies include: 5G Expansion, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things (IoT) Integration, Edge Computing, Open RAN and Vendor Diversification, Satellite Communication, Cyber security Innovations, Digital Twins and Network Virtualization, 6G Development, Satellite internet, TV White Space (TVWS) and Mesh networks.

3. Strategies for Affordable and accessible internet connectivity:

Subsidies and financial assistance programs are effective strategies to make internet access more affordable. Governments can subsidize low-income households to help cover the cost of internet subscriptions and digital devices. These programs can be funded through universal service funds, which collect fees from telecommunications providers to support the expansion of connectivity in underserved areas. Additionally, targeted subsidies for educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and small businesses can enhance digital inclusion by ensuring these critical services have reliable internet access

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4. Framework for Empowering Underserved Communities

Empowering underserved communities through digital inclusion requires a holistic and strategic framework integrating innovative telecommunications technologies. This framework should encompass the deployment of advanced infrastructure, the promotion of affordable and accessible internet services, and the creation of supportive environments for digital literacy and engagement.

- Deployment of advanced telecommunications infrastructure. This includes leveraging 5G networks to provide high-speed internet access in urban and rural areas alike.
- Strategies to ensure that internet access is affordable and inclusive. Governments and private sector stakeholders must collaborate to offer subsidies and financial assistance to low-income households. Innovative pricing models, such as pay-as-you-go and zero-rating for essential services, can also make internet access more financially accessible. Community networks, operated and maintained by residents, can provide cost-effective and locally tailored connectivity solutions.

4.1 Policy Recommendations and Regulatory Considerations

Effective policy and regulatory frameworks are essential to support the deployment and sustainability of innovative telecommunications strategies. Recognizing it as a critical component of socio-economic development, Governments should prioritize digital inclusion in their national agenda through Supportive policies, Regulatory frameworks and Spectrum allocation.

4.2. Community Engagement and Capacity-Building Initiatives

Community engagement is a cornerstone of any successful digital inclusion strategy. Empowering underserved communities requires providing access to technology and ensuring that individuals have the skills and knowledge to use it effectively. Capacity-building initiatives should focus on digital literacy, technical training, and ongoing support.

5. Conclusion

By empowering underserved communities through improved digital access, we can unlock opportunities for education, employment, healthcare, and social participation, contributing to overall societal development and

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economic growth. The findings and recommendations presented in this paper are intended to inform and inspire initiatives to reduce digital inequities and promote inclusive connectivity. As the world becomes increasingly digital, ensuring that all communities have equal access to the benefits of the internet is not just a technological imperative but a moral and economic one. Through innovative telecommunications strategies, we can create a more equitable digital landscape, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

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TECHNOLOGY - BRIDGING GAP IN EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly changing environment around the world, technology plays an important role in shaping the way to connect, learn and manage education, health and finances. Beside these advantages there are challenges also in accessing quality education, healthcare and financial services. Issues of equity and efficiency often leave undeserved communities behind. Fortunately technology is stepping in as a bridge to address these gaps. By understanding and leveraging these tools, we can work towards sustainable development ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Education is meant to be an equalizer but for many barriers like geography, poverty or lack of resources create gaps- technology is becoming a bridge connecting students to knowledge and communities to opportunities.

Importance of Technology in Education

Technology plays a pivotal role in education by increasing accessibility, enabling personalized learning, promoting collaboration and equipping students with crucial 21st century skills for the digital world. It provides access to vast, updated information, creates dynamic learning environment and offers flexibility for diverse learners. While challenges like the digital divide persist, technology's integration is essential for creating more inclusive engaging and effective educational experiences for all.

Benefits of Technology in Education

1. **Enhanced Accessibility**: technology makes education available to a wider audience, including those in remote areas or with physical challenges, breaking down traditional barriers of time and place.

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2. **Personalized Learning**: online platforms and tools for customized learning paths, accommodating individual student needs and paces, which leads to better engagement and understanding
3. **Improved Engagement and Collaboration**: interactive digital tools make learning more dynamic and fun, while platforms like Google Classroom and Zoom facilitate real time communication and teamwork among students and teachers.
4. **Development of Future Ready Skills:** integrating technology ensures students develop essential digital literacy, critical thinking and problem solving skills are vital for success in future careers.
5. **Access to Resources**: students gain access to a wealth of information, e-books and up-to-date digital materials, enriching their knowledge base beyond traditional textbooks.
6. **Support for Educators**: technology provides teachers with date driven insights into student performance, tools to create diverse educational materials, and platforms to manage workloads efficiently.

Gaps in Technology

a. **Geographic Barrier**: rural students lack access to schools or qualified teachers.
b. **Economic**: students from lowincome families lacking text books, tutoring or stable internet.
c. **Disability**: learners need assistive tech to access the same materials as peer.
d. **Crisis Situation**: conflict zones or pandemic related school closures.

Technology bridges gaps in education through the following mode

Digital Learning Platforms

E-learning platforms like Coursera, Khan Academy and Udemy have transformed how we perceive education. They offer a number of courses that make quality education accessible to anyone with an internet connection. This is especially beneficial for those in underserved and rural areas where educational resources are scarce. For instance, mobile apps like Duolingo have made language learning interactive and engaging, breaking down the barriers for those without traditional classroom access.

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Virtual Classrooms and Remote Learning

The pandemic has shown us the effectiveness of tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom. These platforms have allowed students of all abilities to continue their education from home. For students with disabilities or those in remote locations, virtual classrooms offer an inclusive environment where they can learn at their own pace without the constraints of physical attendance.

AI and Adaptive Learning Technologies

Artificial intelligence is personalizing education like never before. Chatbots and tutoring apps ae helping students grasp complex subjects while machine learning identifies knowledge gaps and tailor solutions. Imagine a student struggling in math receiving immediate, customized assistance to help them catch up-this is the future of personalized learning.

Bridging Language and Cultural Barriers

Translating tools and language apps made education more accessible across diverse backgrounds. Virtual reality is also a game changer, providing immersive experiences that bring history or science to life. With such tools, students from different geographies can experience and learn about other's cultures, fostering understanding and collaboration.

Helps Students with Disabilities

Assistive technologies like screen readers, speech-to-text and magnifiers support learners with visual, hearing and physical impairments. Customizable tools make education more inclusive.

Empowers Teachers and Improves Learning

Teachers use digital tools to plan lessons, track progress and share materials. Online communities allow teachers to collaborate and learn from each other globally.

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Reduces Economic and Social Inequality

Free or low cost educational apps help students who can't afford private tutoring. Government and NGO programs provide devices and internet access to underprivileged students

Supporting Self-directed Learning

Emerging tools like AI chatbots or tutors provide 24/7 support for students needing help outside of school hours. Free high quality content is available in almost every subject imaginable through YouTube.

Connecting Students and Educators Globally

Students can engage with peer globally, gaining cultural exposure and diverse perspectives. Tools like Padlet, Google Docs and Edmodo encourage collaboration across borders.

Conclusion: Technology is an undeniable and powerful bridge in education, connecting learners and educators across geographical, socioeconomic and learning style barriers. While it offers unprecedented opportunities for personalized, collaborative and accessible learning. Its effectiveness relies on mindful implementation to overcome significant challenges, such as the digital divide. Ultimately, the successful integration of technology enhances educational outcomes and better prepares students for a highly driven world.

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RELEVANCE OF NATIONAL URBAN HEALTH MISSION IN IMPROVING WOMEN'S HEALTH

*** Anitha and ** Dr. M. Purvachar**

Abstract

For any person in society to live happily and peacefully, he must have good health. Without good health, a person cannot move towards the path of development. Health is a wealth. No matter how much money, property and jewelry he has, if he does not have health,all of it is vain. Health is not limited to men only, but is a necessary facility that should be available to women equally. It is not enough for only men to be healthy in a family, it is essential for women to be healthy as well. If a women is healthy in a family, the entire family members are healthy. In a modern society that is growing at a rapid pace, both men and women are working equally without any sense of discrimination. women are working both inside and outside the family. Due to this, she subjected to various types of pressures and falls ill. Educated women in the city go to the hospital for treatment if they fall ill. But when rag pickers, unsheltered communities, people living in huts, homeless, poor women living in slums, and other migrant women fall ill, they have to spend all their hard earned money to get treatment. Moreover, many people are dying without being able to get proper treatment for their diseases. Knowing this, the Central and State Governments implemented the "National Urban Health Mission" as a subsidiary of the "National Health Mission" with the aim of reducing the expenditure incurred by people on their health and providing good health facilities to all sections of the people. The present article analyzes the Relavance of National Urban Health Mission in improving women's health.

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Introduction:

Health is one of the basic amenities that every person should have. The progress of a country depends on the health of its people. Here, health should be available to everyone equally without any discrimination of men or women. A healthy person becomes the property of the country. Similarly, getting health is the right of every citizen. But in the current society, maintaining one's health is a challenge for an individual. Especially the poor living cities, the destitute, the homeless, the health deprived people, those living in huts, those living in slums, rag pickers, street children, rickshaw pullers, other migrant people, and women are suffering from various types of diseases. Those who fall ill with such diseases have to spend all their hard earned money on treating their diseases. Due to this, they do not take the initiative to seek treatment when they fall ill. The death rate increases due to not being able to get proper treatment. Knowing this, The Central and State Governments have

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implemented "National Urban Health Mission" as an extension of "National Health Mission" in all the cities of the country with the aim of reducing the expenditure of people on their health and providing good health facilities to all sections of people. Bangalore city also one of them. This Mission has been launched as a National Mission program by the Union Health and Family Welfare Minister in Bangalore city. This article explains the Relevance of National Urban Health Mission in improving women's health.

Background of the National Urban Health Mission:

Due to rapid urbanization, the migration of people from rural to urban areas for education, employment and other reasons is increasing day by day. Due to this, population in urban areas is increasing. Most of the people who have migrated build temporary housing, huts and stay in slums, increasing the population density there. Due to lack of basic facilities, health problems are getting worse among the people who settle like this. Recognizing these health issues, the Central and State Governments launched the National Urban Health Mission to strengthen the primary health care system in cities and towns to provide essential primary health care services to the urban population.

Aims of the National Urban Health Mission:

To provide equitable access to quality health care through a reformed public health system, partnership and active participation of urban local bodies. Also, the Mission aims to improve the health status of the urban poor, especially slum dwellers and the underprivileged, and provide quality health care without bias to other underprivileged communities.

Human resources provided by the National Urban Health Mission:

- Providing one Junior Female Health Assistant per 10-12 thousand population. They work in Urban Primary Health Centers. Also conducts special field health camps in communities and Anganwadi centers.
- For 1000-2500 slum population (200-500 Families) one ASHA worker will be trained and appointed to perform the task.
- The Mission will form a Mahila Arogya Samiti (MAS) with 10-15 women members, one for 50-100 families in each slum area, provide one day training. Maternal Child Health Services and Neighborhood Sanitation Program will be lined up and they will be given an open fund of Rs.5000/- per annum for permanent activities.

Women's Health:

Women's health is an important factor. But health is like an unattainable star for women. Their physical and mental conditions, social, economic, cultural and many other factors are responsible for women's ill health. Also, reproductive health and the responsibility of reproduction is completely assigned to women. Generally, some diseases of women are related to their reproductive organs, while some diseases are related to their mental

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condition. Due to the indifferent attitude of family members in the matter of women's health, they do not get proper treatment. Women's health is given secondary importance. Due to gender inequality, the expenditure on women's health is very less compared to men. Due to this, the mortality rate of women, girls, pregnant women, lactating mothers and infants is increasing. Knowing this, the Government implemented the National Urban Health Mission with the aim of providing health services to all. It aims to provide free quality health services to all sections of people. The National Urban Health Mission plays an important role in improving women's health. This Mission helps in detecting and preventing health problems faced by women in the slums of the city at an early stage. This can reduce the mortality rate of women, girls and pregnant women.

Causes of illness in women:

The following factors are responsible for women falling ill.

- Women do all the work in their home. Also working both inside and outside the home puts an excessive workload on her. This puts her under mental stress.
- Women fall ill because they eat after their family members have eaten, do not eat at the right time, and do not eat nutritious food.
- Women fall ill due to many factors, including repeated pregnancies and abortions without knowledge of family planning, taking birth control pills, undergoing surgeries, and having Copper-Ts inserted.

Major Programs implemented by the National Urban Health Mission to improve women's health :

The National Urban Health Mission has implemented several programs to improve the health of women in cities and slums. These are:

- **Providing services for pregnant women and children during childbirth:** Regular health check-ups of pregnant women, pregnancy management and provision of post-natal care services. Providing health services to children and newborns. Providing necessary vaccinations to children and pregnant women. This will help reduce maternal and infant mortality.
- **Providing comprehensive childhood and adolescent health services:** This includes adolescent sexual health, mental health, substance abuse prevention, and management of non-communicable diseases.
- **Raises awareness by providing health education to women:** It helps women maintain their health by educating them on how to maintain personal cleanliness, their lifestyle, and the benefits of keeping their home environment clean. It works to create awareness among women about hygiene and cleanliness.
- **Provides suggestion for preventing communicable and non-communicable diseases:** It helps in getting appropriate treatment for communicable and non communicable diseases. Provides screening services for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, arthritis and rheumatism, breast and uterine cancers.
- **Gruha Arogya:** Through the Gruha Arogya scheme, health services are being provided at the doorstep. Through this, women can easily access health facilities. Health workers visit homes and conduct primary

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health check-ups. Under this scheme, free screening for 14 non-communicable diseases will be done and medicines will be distributed free of cost.

Objectives of the Study :

The present article covers the following objectives. They are :

1. To know the background of National Urban Health Mission.
2. To understand the current functioning of National Urban Health Mission in improving women's health.

Research Methodology :

The present research article is based on Primary and Secondary data.

- **Primary data:** For the present study, women from slum areas in Rajajinagar area in the Western part of Bangalore city were selected for the study. Data were collected by interviewing 50 women from slum areas through an interview schedule.
- **Secondary data:** The present article has been prepared by obtaining information from supplementary books, manuals, research articles, journals or news paper articles etc.

Research Scope and Framework :

To study the topic "Relevance of National Urban Health Mission in improving women's health," women from slum areas in Rajajinagar area which is located in western part of Bangalore city have been selected for the study.

Findings from data collection :

The information collected for the present article was collected through both primary and secondary methods. The findings are as follows;

1. National Urban Health Mission in Bangalore city is providing free healthcare facilities to all sections of the people.
2. BBMP is providing healthcare services in the central area through Referral hospitals in Bangalore city
3. Transit clinics have been started in the most densely populated areas of Bangalore city center area.
4. Mobile Health Units have been launched in Bangalore city to provide health facilities to people in slum areas.

Conclusion:

The present article analyzes the relevance of National Urban Health Mission in improving women's health. That is, this mission is aimed at the vulnerable groups in the city, people living in slums, people living in huts,

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low income neighbourhoods,such as homeless people, rag pickers, street children, rickshaw pullers and other temporary migrants, at railway stations and bus stands, those deprived of health facilities, daily wage workers, refugees, migrants, women and children. This article is helpful in understanding what kind of health facilities are currently being provided and how they are functioning. It also helps to know to what extent women are availing the facilities. Overall, the National Urban Health Mission plays a significant role in improving women's health.

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CREDIT CARDS AND DIGITAL LITERACY: TOOLS FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:

The convergence of financial tools, particularly **credit cards**, and the essential skill set of **digital literacy** is emerging as a powerful dual force driving inclusive growth and economic empowerment. In an increasingly digital economy, access to formal credit and the ability to navigate digital financial services (DFS) are no longer luxuries but prerequisites for full economic participation. This article explores how targeted interventions in digital financial literacy can unlock the potential of credit cards to serve as a gateway to financial inclusion, build creditworthiness, stimulate consumption, and ultimately contribute to a more equitable and robust national economy.

The Digital Transformation of Finance

The global financial landscape is undergoing a radical shift, moving rapidly from cash-based transactions to digital platforms. This transformation, catalyzed by advancements in financial technology (FinTech) and supportive national policies (e.g., Digital India), presents an unprecedented opportunity to address the persistent challenge of financial exclusion.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Finance, Credit Cards, Infrastructure, E-Commerce,

Introduction:

Credit Cards: A Gateway to Financial Inclusion

For millions of unbanked and under-banked individuals, the credit card can be a transformative tool for inclusion and empowerment:

1. **Access to Formal Credit:** A credit card offers immediate access to short-term, revolving credit, which is often easier to secure than traditional bank loans. For new-to-credit consumers, consistent and responsible

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credit card usage is the fastest way to **establish a formal credit history and credit score**, crucial prerequisites for accessing larger loans (e.g., for housing, education, or small business).

2. **Economic Resilience:** Credit cards provide a financial safety net, enabling consumers to manage unexpected expenses or smooth out irregular income flows, thereby enhancing **household financial resilience**.
3. **Stimulating Consumption and Growth:** By empowering consumers with flexible spending options, credit cards drive both consumer confidence and spending, which, in turn, boosts economic activity and supports the growth of sectors like e-commerce and retail.

The Indispensable Role of Digital Literacy

The promise of credit cards, however, can only be realized when coupled with adequate **digital literacy**. The shift to digital finance introduces new complexities and risks that an uninitiated user is ill-equipped to handle. Digital literacy, in this context, encompasses:

- **Understanding the Digital Interface:** The ability to securely use mobile applications, online banking portals, and payment gateways for credit card management.
- **Credit Management Knowledge:** Comprehending the fundamentals of **interest rates, billing cycles, minimum payments, and debt accumulation**. This knowledge is essential to avoid the spiral of high-interest debt that can negate the benefits of credit access.
- **Security and Fraud Awareness:** Recognizing and avoiding digital scams, phishing attacks, and identity theft—risks that are amplified in the digital realm.

Without robust digital financial literacy, increased access to credit cards can paradoxically lead to **financial distress** and greater vulnerability for marginalized populations.

Strategies for Inclusive Empowerment

To leverage credit cards and digital literacy for true inclusive growth, a multi-pronged strategy is required, involving all key stakeholders:

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1. Government and Regulatory Interventions

- **National Digital Financial Literacy Campaigns:** Implement coordinated, national-level programs that are context-sensitive, using local languages and community-based training to reach rural and underserved populations.
- **Consumer Protection:** Strengthen regulations around credit card disclosures, fees, and unsolicited credit offers. Introduce a "vulnerability lens" in consumer protection rules to safeguard those with lower literacy levels.
- **Mandatory Digital Training:** Integrate basic digital financial literacy modules into public education curricula and vocational training programs.

2. Financial Institution Responsibility

- **Simplified, Transparent Products:** Design entry-level credit products with simplified fee structures, lower limits, and built-in educational features to manage risk for first-time users.
- **Intuitive User Experience (UX):** Prioritize user-friendly, multilingual interfaces for digital credit card management, making security features and debt-tracking tools easily accessible.
- **Support Teams:** Maintain a human element in the process—loan officers and dedicated support teams can offer one-on-one coaching to bridge the literacy gap where purely digital solutions fall short.

3. Collaboration for Ecosystem Development

- **FinTech Partnerships:** Encourage collaboration between traditional banks and FinTech firms to utilize innovative educational tools, such as gamified learning apps and personalized, 'just-in-time' financial advice.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Utilize sex-disaggregated and socio-economic data to identify and address specific barriers to credit card adoption and digital literacy faced by women, rural households, and other disadvantaged groups.

Conclusion:

The integration of credit cards into the formal financial system, powered by expanding digital infrastructure, presents a powerful engine for achieving **inclusive growth**. Credit cards are not just transactional tools; when

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used responsibly, they are instruments of empowerment that enable individuals to build capital, manage resources effectively, and fully participate in the modern economy.

However, access without comprehension is a recipe for risk. The core challenge for policymakers and financial institutions lies in ensuring that digital literacy keeps pace with financial innovation. By prioritizing **digital financial literacy** alongside **credit access**, nations can ensure that the credit card is truly a tool for building a more financially secure, inclusive, and empowered society.

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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN INDIA

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of India's digital divide on industrial development and its associated environmental consequences. Drawing from current national data and academic research, it highlights how disparities in digital access—across urban and rural areas, gender lines, and regions—hinder inclusive industrial progress. At the same time, these inequalities influence shifts in consumption habits, energy usage, and resource demands. The paper advocates for policies that not only bridge digital access gaps but also guide technological growth toward environmentally sustainable and low-carbon trajectories to promote fair and resilient industrialisation

Keywords: Digital Divide, Digital Economy, Industry Development, Data Centres, Environment

1. Introduction :

Technologies like broadband, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things are transforming industrial production, distribution, and value chain organization. India's digital economy has grown swiftly, contributing approximately 11.7% to the national income in 2022–23, with expectations of continued expansion. This growth presents significant prospects for employment generation but also introduces new environmental challenges. Therefore, narrowing the digital divide is crucial for fostering inclusive industrial progress and ensuring effective environmental stewardship across the country.

2. Conceptual framework:

We treat the digital divide as multidimensional: (a) access (availability of broadband and devices), (b) affordability (cost barriers), and (c) skills/usage (digital literacy and effective use). These dimensions interact with industrial development channels (labour market access, entrepreneurship, productivity, market reach) and environmental channels (energy consumption of ICT infrastructure, material footprint of devices, and digital-enabled shifts in production/consumption). The framework helps to identify where inequality in access translates into uneven industrial benefits and asymmetric environmental burdens.

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3. Literature review (selective):

Research indicates that access to digital technologies enhances productivity and enables greater market engagement for both businesses and workers. However, these advantages tend to be concentrated in areas with robust infrastructure and digital literacy. In India, a persistent divide exists between urban and rural connectivity—recent data shows urban households enjoy significantly higher levels of home internet access, while many rural homes remain disconnected, restricting rural enterprises from fully engaging in digital commerce.

4. India snapshot: digital economy, access gaps and industrial policy:

- **Digital economy size and trajectory:** Official estimates place India's digital economy at roughly 11.7% of GDP in 2022–23, with forecasts of continued growth as more sectors digitalise.
- **Urban–rural access gap:** Recent mappings suggest internet access exceeds 90% in many urban contexts while rural household access remains lower (estimates vary by source), leaving meaningful regional divides. These disparities translate to uneven industrial participation across regions.
- **Policy context:** Government initiatives (Digital India and related state programmes) have focused on connectivity, digital public infrastructure and e-governance to expand coverage and promote digital entrepreneurship — contributing to jobs and new industry clusters in tier-II/III cities.

5. How the digital divide affects industry development:

5.1 Market access and firm productivity

Firms with reliable digital access can participate in e-commerce, adopt cloud ERP, connect to global supply chains and exploit platform markets. In contrast, firms in poorly connected regions face higher transaction costs and missed market opportunities, perpetuating regional industrial disparities.

5.2 Skills, employment and inclusive job creation

Digital skills determine who benefits from automation and platform work. Where skills and devices are lacking (notably in certain rural areas and among women), workers are excluded from new job opportunities in IT, services and digitally enabled manufacturing.

5.3 Spatial reorganisation of industry

Improved connectivity can decentralise industry (growth of tech hubs beyond major metros), but only where infrastructure, policy incentives and talent exist. Recent state initiatives demonstrate that targeted investments can create jobs in tier-II cities, but these successes are unevenly distributed.

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6. Environmental dimensions of digital expansion:

6.1 Energy demand and data centres

Digitalisation raises electricity demand through data centres, telecom networks and increased device charging. Analyses highlight that the data centre sector is becoming an important electricity consumer and that unmanaged growth could substantially raise national energy demand. India's data centre growth will require planning for grid capacity and cleaner energy supply.

6.2 Material flows and e-waste

Device proliferation increases demand for minerals and creates e-waste challenges. Regions that lag in access may avoid some direct material impacts but also miss circular-economy opportunities (e.g., device refurbishing, repair markets).

6.3 Unequal environmental burdens

When digital infrastructure is concentrated in certain regions, environmental costs (water use for cooling, local emissions) can cluster there. Poorer or rural areas lacking regulatory oversight may face unmanaged impacts when infrastructure expands rapidly without environmental safeguards.

7. Policy implications and recommendations:

To ensure India's digital growth supports equitable industrial development while minimising environmental harm, we recommend:

1. **Targeted connectivity with inclusion goals:** Prioritise last-mile broadband in underserved regions and programmes to close the gender and affordability gaps (subsidies, public access points, women-focused digital literacy).
2. **Skills and enterprise support:** Combine connectivity with vocational digital skills, MSME digitalisation grants and platform integration support so small firms can compete in digital markets.
3. **Green digital infrastructure:** Mandate energy-efficiency standards for data centres, incentivise co-location with renewable energy, and integrate cooling-water management to limit environmental footprints. Policymakers should include data-centre demand forecasts in power planning.
4. **Circular economy for devices:** Promote device repair/refurbish ecosystems, extended producer responsibility (EPR) enforcement for e-waste and incentives for longer device lifetimes.

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5. **Decentralised, resilient planning:** Support tier-II/III city digital hubs with coordinated land-use, grid and workforce planning to spread industrial benefits and avoid overconcentration of environmental costs.

8. Methodological note and research gaps:

This paper synthesises recent secondary sources (policy reports, sector reviews and peer-reviewed literature). Primary, micro-level studies are needed to quantify causal links between household/firm connectivity and measurable changes in productivity, employment composition and local environmental metrics. Further empirical work should combine household surveys, firm panels and spatial energy-use data to identify distributional and environmental outcomes precisely.

9. Conclusion:

India's digital expansion has the potential to accelerate inclusive industrial development, create jobs and modernise value chains — but the digital divide can prevent large segments of the population and regions from participating. At the same time, digital growth creates non-trivial environmental pressures, particularly via data centres and device lifecycles. Policy must therefore combine equity-focused connectivity and skills programmes with proactive environmental governance (energy efficiency, renewables integration and e-waste management) so digitalisation becomes both inclusive and sustainable.

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EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT IN BACKWARD CLASSES: THE FOUNDATION ERA (PRE-1970)

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Abstract:
The period from India's independence up to 1970 represents the foundational era for the educational empowerment of **Backward Classes** (a category primarily encompassing **Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, and the yet-to-be-fully-codified **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**). Guided by Constitutional mandates, this time was characterized by pioneering, though often incomplete, efforts to dismantle caste-based educational exclusion. This article examines the key legislative, administrative, and social initiatives of this period, arguing that while the political will was established, the structural impediments and limited resources often hindered the translation of policy into widespread, tangible educational equality.

Keywords: Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, educational empowerment

I. Introduction:

The Constitutional Mandate: A New Dawn

The framers of the Indian Constitution recognized the centuries of systemic educational deprivation faced by the socially disadvantaged. This recognition translated into two pivotal articles that formed the bedrock of all subsequent educational empowerment initiatives:

- **Article 46 (Directive Principle):** This explicitly directs the State to "promote with special care the **educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people**, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."
- **Articles 15(4) and 16(4) (Fundamental Rights):** These clauses empowered the State to make **special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens** or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This provided the legal basis for **reservations** in educational institutions and public employment.

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The Constitution thus transformed the status of education for Backward Classes from a mere charitable act into a **fundamental state responsibility** aimed at achieving socio-economic parity.

II. Initial Policy and Administrative Measures (1950s)

Following the Constitution's adoption, the Government of India launched specific measures, mainly focusing on the most disadvantaged groups, the SCs and STs, who were clearly defined in the First Schedule:

A. Scholarship Schemes: The Primary Tool

The most significant and immediate step was the implementation of **scholarship schemes**. These were critical in mitigating the economic burden of education, which was a major deterrent for poor, backward-class families:

- **Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS) Scheme:** This was arguably the most impactful central government initiative of the era. Launched to support SC/ST students in pursuing higher education (after the 10th grade), it aimed to open the doors of colleges and universities previously inaccessible to them. By covering maintenance allowances and non-refundable fees, it provided a necessary financial lifeline.
- **Pre-Matric Scholarships:** Schemes for school-level students were also introduced, though coverage and quantum varied, often focused on encouraging the very first generation of learners.

B. Reservation in Education and Services

While the concept of reservation in education was a matter of ongoing legal debate, the Central and State Governments began reserving a certain percentage of seats in government-run educational institutions for SCs and STs. Simultaneously, the **Ministry of Education** in **1954** suggested reserving **20%** of places for SCs/STs in educational institutions, often with a provision for relaxing the minimum qualifying marks.

C. The First Backward Classes Commission (1953)

The government appointed the **First Backward Classes Commission** (also known as the **Kaka Kalelkar Commission**) in 1953. Its mandate was to identify the 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs) other than SCs/STs, whose educational and social conditions warranted similar special provisions.

- **Impact:** The Commission submitted its report in 1955, identifying over **2,399 castes** as backward. However, its recommendations were not fully accepted by the Central Government, primarily due to the lack of clear, objective criteria for defining backwardness, marking a significant *delay* in the formal

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educational empowerment of the OBC category at the national level. The issue of OBC reservations remained largely confined to state-level policies until the post-1970s era.

III. Challenges and Limitations up to 1970

Despite the good intentions and foundational policies, the period up to 1970 struggled to achieve true educational parity due to systemic issues:

- **The Problem of Access:** Even with scholarships, the lack of schools in remote or disadvantaged hamlets, coupled with the absence of necessary infrastructure (e.g., hostels, especially for girls), meant that physical access remained a major barrier.
- **High Dropout Rates:** Early dropout rates for Backward Class students, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, remained alarmingly high. This was often driven by the need for children to contribute to family income, a lack of supportive home environments for study, and experiences of social discrimination within schools.
- **Caste Discrimination in the Classroom:** Despite legal prohibitions, social stigma and discrimination against students from Backward Classes by teachers and upper-caste peers persisted, creating a hostile educational environment that deterred enrolment and retention.
- **The OBC Policy Vacuum:** The rejection of the Kalelkar Commission's report meant that the vast population categorized as OBCs was largely left out of a coherent national policy framework for educational assistance and reservations, creating a crucial policy gap that would only be addressed decades later by the Mandal Commission (appointed in 1979).
- **Limited Fund Allocation:** Educational policies often suffered from under-allocation of resources. The sheer magnitude of the social problem required investment that often outstripped the financial capacity or political priority assigned to the schemes.

Conclusion

The period up to 1970 laid the essential **legal and administrative foundation** for the educational empowerment of Backward Classes in India. The establishment of the **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme** and the constitutional guarantee of **affirmative action (reservation)** for SCs/STs were historical milestones that initiated the

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dismantling of entrenched exclusion. However, it was a period of **unfulfilled potential** for a majority of the disadvantaged population. While policy successfully targeted the most extreme deprivation (SCs/STs), the hesitation on the OBC question and the failure to fully overcome the deep-seated structural barriers—such as poverty, physical non-access, and social discrimination—meant that the *pace* and *depth* of educational empowerment remained slow, setting the stage for more assertive demands and policies in the decades to follow.

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"SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ALCOHOLISM"

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Abstract

Alcoholism, or Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), is a complex public health challenge with profound ramifications extending far beyond individual health. This article explores the **socio-economic and cultural aspects** of alcoholism, particularly within diverse national contexts like India. It examines how factors like **socio-economic status (SES), unemployment, cultural norms, and social inequalities** serve both as determinants of alcohol abuse and as channels through which its harmful consequences are exacerbated. A holistic understanding of these interlinked dimensions is essential for formulating effective, culturally sensitive policy and intervention strategies.

Keywords: Cultural Aspects, Socio-Economic Status, Unemployment, Social Inequalities

1. Introduction:

Socio-Economic Dimensions of Alcoholism

The relationship between alcoholism and socio-economic status (SES) is often paradoxical and highly contextual, but its burden is clearly felt across the economic spectrum.

Determinants of Alcohol Abuse

- **Poverty and Economic Strain:** In many low-income communities, particularly among daily wage earners and marginalized groups, alcohol is often used as a **coping mechanism** for **stress, financial uncertainty, and occupational strain**. This can lead to a vicious cycle where scarce resources are diverted to alcohol, further deepening poverty for the individual and their family.
- **Income and Education:** Research often indicates a complex pattern. While **higher SES groups** may report more frequent drinking or higher overall consumption, **lower SES groups** (e.g., those with lower education and income) frequently engage in **more hazardous drinking patterns** (e.g., heavy episodic

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drinking, consuming cheaper, illicit, and high-concentration alcohol) and consequently bear a **disproportionate burden of negative health and social consequences** (the 'alcohol harm paradox').

- **Workplace and Productivity:** Alcoholism is a major contributor to **reduced workplace productivity** due to absenteeism, lower efficiency, and increased accidents. At a macro level, this translates to significant economic losses for the nation, often estimated to be a substantial percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Economic Consequences

- **Household Financial Ruin:** Excessive spending on alcohol directly depletes family finances. This often leads to the **deprivation of basic amenities** for dependents, such as education, nutrition, and healthcare, perpetuating inter-generational cycles of poverty.
- **Healthcare Costs:** The chronic health disorders, injuries, and mental health issues associated with alcohol abuse place a heavy **strain on public and private healthcare systems**. These direct and indirect medical costs far outweigh the revenue generated from alcohol taxation in many regions.
- **Criminal Justice and Social Costs:** Alcohol abuse is strongly correlated with increased rates of **violent and non-violent crime**, including drunk driving, public-order offenses, and domestic violence. The costs associated with criminal justice, law enforcement, and correctional facilities add to the overall economic burden.

2. Cultural Aspects and Social Dynamics

Cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping drinking patterns, norms of consumption, and the societal response to alcohol-related problems.

Cultural Influences on Consumption

- **Normalization and Ritualistic Use:** In many communities, alcohol consumption is deeply **ingrained in social customs, festivals, or traditional rituals**. In some indigenous and tribal groups, traditional brewing and drinking may have been a part of life for centuries. However, the shift from traditional, low-alcohol, and controlled ritualistic use to **habitual, high-volume, and recreational drinking** has escalated the problem.

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- **Gender and Social Hierarchy:** Drinking patterns are often highly **gendered** and linked to social status. In many societies, especially in South Asia, alcohol consumption is largely a **male-dominated activity**, often perceived as a symbol of masculinity or social bonding. Female drinking, though increasing, often faces much greater **social stigma**. Paradoxically, while the consumption is male-centric, women and children often bear the brunt of the abuse through domestic violence and financial instability.
- **Media and Advertising:** In the modern era, **media exposure, advertising, and the cultural promotion** of alcohol as a symbol of 'modernity' or 'celebration' have influenced social norms, particularly among youth, accelerating the adoption of riskier drinking behaviors.

Societal Consequences and Stigma

- **Family Disintegration:** Alcoholism is a major cause of **domestic conflict, marital discord, and gender-based violence**. The resulting family instability leads to emotional trauma and psychological stress for all members, with long-term consequences for children's development and future well-being.
- **Social Stigma and Isolation:** While alcohol use may be culturally accepted or even encouraged in certain settings, **alcohol dependency (alcoholism)** is often heavily **stigmatized**. This stigma acts as a significant **barrier to seeking help**, leading to social isolation and preventing timely intervention and treatment.
- **Policy Ambivalence:** Governments often face an **ambivalent policy environment**. They are torn between the significant public health and social costs of alcoholism and the substantial **excise revenue** generated from alcohol sales (often a critical component of state budgets). This economic dependence can undermine public health initiatives and lead to ineffective policy implementation.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Alcoholism is an issue that simultaneously affects individual biology, household economics, and deep-seated cultural norms. Addressing this requires a shift from a purely clinical or law-and-order approach to a **comprehensive public health strategy** that integrates socio-economic and cultural understanding.

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Recommendations for Action:

1. **Culturally Sensitive Interventions:** Develop prevention and treatment programs that are **attuned to local customs, language, and social structures**. Leveraging community leaders and existing social capital can enhance effectiveness.
2. **Targeted Economic Policies:** Implement measures that **mitigate economic distress**, such as job creation, skills training, and micro-financing, particularly in vulnerable communities, to reduce the need for alcohol as a coping mechanism.
3. **Fiscal Measures:** Utilize **taxation and pricing strategies** to reduce alcohol affordability, especially for illicit and cheap, high-concentration alcohol, which disproportionately affects lower SES groups.
4. **Strengthening Social Safety Nets:** Increase access to **mental health services** and social support for families affected by AUD, alongside robust legal frameworks to address **domestic violence**.
5. **Media and Norm Change:** Regulate alcohol marketing and engage in sustained, impactful public awareness campaigns to **challenge harmful cultural norms** that glorify or normalize excessive drinking.

By recognizing and tackling the **entwined socio-economic and cultural roots** of alcoholism, nations can move towards more effective, equitable, and sustainable solutions to this pervasive public health crisis.

Socio-Economic Findings

- **Poverty-Alcohol Vicious Cycle: Poverty and economic strain** drive marginalized groups to use alcohol as a **coping mechanism** for stress and uncertainty, which in turn leads to the diversion of limited resources, **deepening family poverty**.
- **The Alcohol Harm Paradox: Lower Socio-Economic Status (SES)** groups, despite potentially lower overall consumption than high-SES groups, bear a **disproportionate burden of harm** because they engage in more **hazardous drinking patterns** (e.g., heavy episodic drinking, consuming cheaper, high-concentration alcohol).
- **Economic Burden:** Alcoholism severely impacts national economies by causing **reduced workplace productivity** (absenteeism, inefficiency) and creating immense **strains on healthcare and criminal**

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justice systems. The associated direct and indirect costs are often found to **far outweigh alcohol tax revenue**.

- **Family Ruin:** Excessive spending on alcohol results in **household financial ruin**, depriving dependents (children, spouses) of basic necessities like education and healthcare, thus **perpetuating inter-generational poverty**.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The article concludes that addressing alcoholism requires a move away from purely clinical or punitive approaches toward a **comprehensive public health strategy** that explicitly integrates socio-economic and cultural understanding.

The key recommendations are:

1. **Culturally Sensitive Interventions:** Develop programs **attuned to local customs** to maximize effectiveness and uptake.
2. **Targeted Economic Policies:** Implement measures like **job creation and micro-financing** to mitigate economic distress and reduce alcohol use as a coping mechanism.

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IMPACT OF INDUSTRIALIZATION ON INDIAN COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT:

The significant growth of Industrialization in India has brought about many transformations in the social, economic and cultural structure. The growth of factories, especially after the colonial era and after independence has led to many opportunities and challenges in Indian communities. In addition, the positive growth of industrialization has facilitated urbanization, creating more jobs and improved infrastructure, including education, healthcare and modern amenities. This has encouraged social movements among various groups, primarily by increasing occupations and reducing dependence on traditional agricultural and craft products. But the growth of industrialization has disrupted traditional community structures and the livelihoods of the people there. Rural artisans and small-scale producers in India are increasingly marginalized by the station of today's mechanized production. As people increasingly migrate from village to cities, joint family systems have broken down and kingship ties have weakened. Moreover, today's growing urban communities have caused problems of over population, housing shortages, environmental pollution and increasing social and economic inequalities.

Keywords: Industrialization, Indian communities, Urbanization, Social change, Migration.

INTRODUCTION:

The significant growth of industrialization that began in India has brought about modern social economic and cultural transformation. Industrialization has took place in independent India through liberalization policies, with planned economic development, following the Introduction of textile, Mills Railways and plantations during the colonial period. Modern agricultural-based systems resulting from industrialization have impacted the lives of

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Indian communities and led to economic change. Moreover, the unprecedented growth of Industrialization has created many employment opportunities and allowed for technological advancement along with improving infrastructure. The growths of modern industrialization has allowed for rapid urbanization, modernization and rise of the middle class, creating a global economic system that has improved productivity and the standard of living of the country's people. It has expanded education, health-care and consumer goods, largely due to the growth of industrial systems and economic diversification.[1]Therefore, the growth of industrialization is threatening traditional systems and community life, posing challenges. Moreover, the migration of many people from rural areas to urban areas for employment has led to overpopulation, housing shortages, crime-juvenile delinquency and the growth of slums in cities. Today's handcrafts, weaving and small-scale agriculture and traditional occupations are disappearing due and competition in manufacturing. Further more, environmental degradation, pollution and resource depletion have created several problems in rural and urban communities.[2] Thus, industrialization in Indian communities has led to modernization, brought about economic progress and provided many opportunities.

AIMS:

1. To see how industrialization has changed the social, cultural, and economic life of Indian communities.
2. To note both the benefits and drawbacks of industrial growth on families, jobs, and traditions.
3. To understand how industries shaped urban growth, migration, and modernization.
4. To look at the long-term effects on inequality, jobs and community life.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study how work, income, and urban living have shifted with industrialization.
2. To observe changes in families, kinship ties, and traditions.
3. To study how caste, class, and mobility have been affected.
4. To identify issues like pollution, migration, and worker exploitation.
5. To review government efforts to deal with these problems.
6. To suggest ways to grow industry without harming communities or fairness.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Many sociologists have undertaken studies on industrialization in India and they have emphasized its profound impact on community life, family structures and social relations. In particular, M. N Srinivas (1956) argued that industrialization accelerated that process of 'Westernization and Sanskritisation', which led to changes in caste roles and professions. A. R Desai, in his work 'Social Background of Indian Nationalism',(1948) has pointed out that industrialization uprooted the traditional rural economy, weakened joint family and created struggles for the working class. Yogendra Singh in his book 'Modernization of Indian tradition'(1973) explains that industrialization was also a major force of modernization, reshaping blood relations, marriage and caste hierarchies. He said that the recent growth of industrial industrial centers has created new forms of social mobility and class structure in society. Andre Beteille (1965) noted that industrialization introduced new inequalities, as factory jobs led to rapid rural and urban migration, which had traditionally divided caste and community structure. Dr. Irawati Karve (1965) also noted that the industrial life that began in cities weakened traditional blood ties from the past and led to the emergence of nuclear families.

METHODOLOGY:

Data Collection:

- **Primary Data:** In research work, interview and structured questionnaire methods will be used to obtain information about the people and workers of the community in Industrial and rural areas, through primary data and to discuss with local leaders.
- **Secondary Data**: Secondary is collected through the interview of government reports, Census data, research articles and historical records of Industrial development.

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Sampling Technique:

A Sampling method will be used to select communities affected by industrialization and to ensure representation from urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

Data Analysis:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Through this statistical method, it is possible to find changes in the employment, income, education and migration patterns of people in a community.
- **Qualitative Analysis**: Through this qualitative approach, it becomes easier to find themes of social changes, cultural transformations and community responses in society.

CONTENT ANALYSIS:

ECONOMIC IMPACT:

1) Growth of Capitalism: Due to the growth of industrialization, wealth in modern society is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few people. Thus, in a society transformed by industrialization, an individual has the opportunity to acquire immense wealth through business.

2) Vast Production: As a result of the significant growth in industrialization, India is producing large quantities of steel, cement, sugar, jute, fertilizers, electrical and railway equipment's etc., So there is no shortage of goods.

3) Growth of Trade: Today, high levels of production have Led to a significant growth in trade and commerce and foreign trade has also increased tremendously.

4) Economic Crisis and Unemployment: Despite the abundance of goods and services today, an economic crisis has occurred in many sectors. The over supply of goods resulting from industrialization has led to a serious economic crisis today.

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III] COMMUNITY AND RURAL TRANSFORMATION:

1) Decline of Traditional Crafts: The growth of industrialization has led to the decline of the mass production of hand-loom weavers, artisans and small scale rural producers in rural areas.

2) Agricultural-Industrial Linkages: Due to the effects of industrialization economic growth is declining due to the lack of proper demand for raw materials such as cotton, jute, sugarcane, etc., grown in rural areas.

3) Displacement and Marginalization: Tribal and rural communities are being displaced, mainly due to industrial projects, dams and mining activities, and are not being rehabilitated.[8]

IV] ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH IMPACT:

1) Pollution and Resource Exploitation: Excessive industrial growth in modern society has resulted in air and water pollution and has led environmental destruction. This has led to health problems in industrial sectors.

2) Occupational Hazards: Today's workers working in factories are exposed to unsafe working conditions. In addition, accidents that occur there have led to long-term illness.[9]

V] POLITICAL AND LABOR IMPACT:

1) Rise of Trade Unions: Organized labour moments have grown up demanding better wages, working hours and equal rights for workers working in factories that emerged as a result of industrialization.

2) State Intervention: Policy decisions were implemented (1956) to improve industrialization in modern society. But the Liberation system gave way to privatization and globalization in 1991.[10]

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SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMDENDATIONS:

1) **Balanced Regional Development:** Industrialization has increasingly prioritize cities and neglected rural areas. Therefore, equitable distribution policies in industries should be implemented to eliminate regional disparities.

2) Protection of Traditional Occupations: Promoting cottage industries, handicrafts and aggro-based industries, especially in rural areas, will improve the lives of the people there.

CONCLUSION/FINDINGS:

The significant growth of industrialization in India has brought about many transformations in villages and has fundamentally affected the economic, social and cultural fabric. This has in a way increased economic growth and provided jobs in many forms. It has also led to modernization through urbanization and strengthened education, health and Technology. But on the other hand, it has disrupted traditional professions in rural areas. Increasing social and economical disparities between different groups, and Led to cultural fragmentation and weakening of relationships within communities. Therefore industrialization is a nation-building force and if it is to lead better development, it must lead to maximum economic progress in society. Along with this, it is necessary to implement well organized social welfare and good environmental protection and awareness programs and comprehensive sustainable policies.

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Women Dairy Cooperative Societies: A Sociological Study (With Special Reference to Kolar-Chikkaballapur District)

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Abstract

India's dairy sector is the largest in the world, contributing 25% of global milk production. Women form the backbone of this sector, accounting for nearly 80–90% of dairy-related activities. Despite their central role, women's contributions are often under-recognized and undervalued. This study examines the functioning, contributions, and challenges of Women Dairy Cooperative Societies (WDCS) in Karnataka, focusing on the Kolar-Chikkaballapur Milk Union (KOMUL). The paper draws upon both primary and secondary data to evaluate the socio-economic status of women members, their empowerment outcomes, and the structural role of cooperatives in shaping rural livelihoods. Findings highlight that WDCS significantly improve women's income levels, educational opportunities for children, social mobility, and decision-making power within households and communities. However, challenges such as limited access to credit, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers persist. Policy recommendations include targeted training, stronger financial inclusion measures, and promotion of women's leadership in cooperative governance.

Keywords: Women Dairy Cooperative Societies, Milk, Empowerment.

1. Introduction

India's dairy industry has witnessed transformative changes through cooperative structures like AMUL and Operation Flood. The White Revolution, led by Dr. Verghese Kurien, enabled the country to become self-sufficient in milk production and today India produces over 239 million tonnes of milk annually (NDDB, 2024). Dairy farming has emerged not only as a major source of food security but also as a livelihood generator for millions of rural household s.

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Women, particularly in rural areas, are the principal caretakers of dairy animals and manage day-to-day operations including feeding, fodder collection, milking, calf rearing, and marketing of dairy products. Women Dairy Cooperative Societies (WDCS) have been established across India as platforms to channel women's efforts into organized, remunerative, and socially empowering structures. Karnataka, through the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) and its affiliated district unions such as KOMUL, has played a pioneering role in promoting dairy cooperatives at the grassroots level. This research focuses on understanding how WDCS empower women socially, economically, and politically.

2. Research Problem

Despite the dominance of women in dairying, their participation in leadership and decision-making within cooperatives is often marginalized. Previous research has overlooked the micro-level impact of WDCS, particularly in southern Karnataka where cooperative dairying is both extensive and economically significant. This study bridges that gap by examining the socio-economic and empowerment outcomes of women members under KOMUL.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To trace the growth and development of dairy cooperatives in India and Karnataka.
2. To analyze the socio-economic profile of women members in WDCS.
3. To evaluate the impact of WDCS on women's empowerment and household decision-making.
4. To identify challenges faced by women in dairy cooperatives.
5. To suggest policy interventions for strengthening WDCS and enhancing inclusivity.

4.Methodology

The study adopted a **multistage sampling technique**. At the first stage, the Kolar-Chikkaballapura Milk Union (KOMUL) was selected due to its high milk production and significant number of WDCS. At the second stage, 10 WDCS (5 each from Kolar and Chikkaballapura) were randomly selected. Finally, 10 women members from each WDCS were chosen, making a sample size of 200 respondents.

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Data Sources:

- **Primary data:** Collected through structured questionnaires, personal interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations. Variables included family demographics, dairy herd size, milk output, income, expenditure, empowerment indicators, and cooperative participation.
- **Secondary data:** Drawn from NDDB, KMF, KOMUL records, government reports, livestock census, and academic literature.

Analytical Tools: Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and correlation analysis were conducted using SPSS software. Hypotheses on empowerment, decision-making, and income autonomy were statistically tested.

5. Growth and development of dairy cooperatives in India and Karnataka.

Dairy cooperatives are organizations owned and controlled by their members, typically milk producers. The first farmers' integrated dairy cooperative in India was established in Anand, Gujarat in 1946 and is known as Anand Milk Union Limited (AMUL). It is recognized as the world's largest farmer-owned dairy cooperative, with 3.6 million milk producer members.

The movement began in 1946 in Anand, Gujarat, when local farmers, facing exploitation by private milk traders, organized themselves into cooperatives with support from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. This led to the formation of the Kheda District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited in 1946. The most renowned of these businesses was Kaira District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Limited of Anand, Gujarat, also known as Amul. The dairy cooperatives' success in the Gujarat state motivated the government of India to replicate the AMUL/Anand pattern in all over the country.

Table 5.1: Growth of dairy cooperatives in India

Year	DCS	Milk Producer Members (in Thousands)
1980-81	13,284	1,747
1990-91	63,415	7,482
2000-01	96,206	10,738
2010-11	1,43,126	14,464
2020-21	2,23,610	18,185

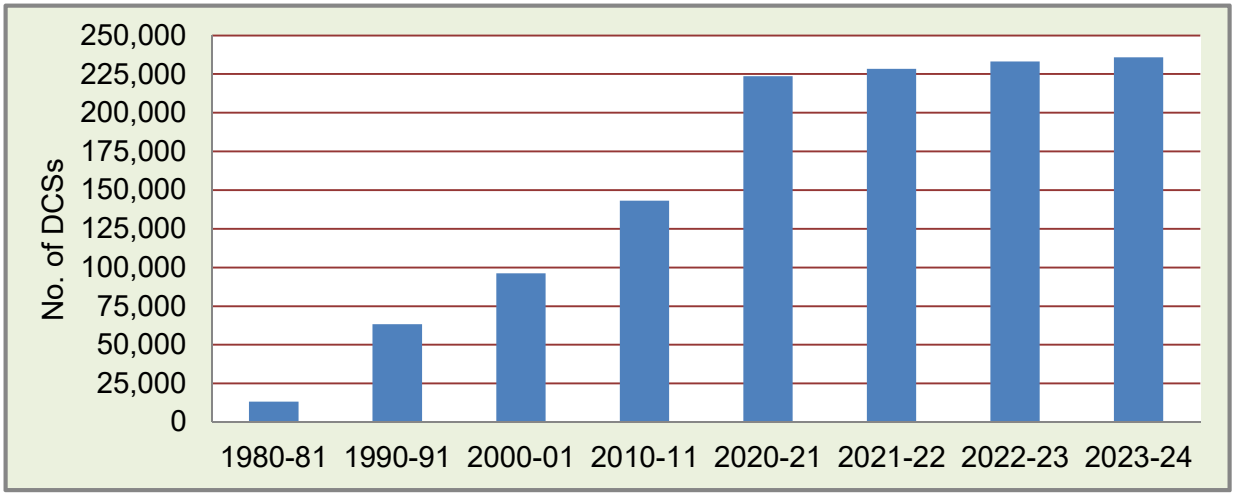
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2021-22	2,28,374	17,552
2022-23	2,33,086	17,215
2023-24	2,35,877	17,200

Source: NDDB (2024). Annual Report 2023-24.

Figure 5.1: Growth of **dairy cooperatives in India** (1980-81 to 2023-24)



Source: NDDB (2024). Annual Report 2023-24.

It can be seen from Figure 5.1 that the number of DCS has grown from 13,284 in 1980-81 to 2,35,877 in 2023-24, a remarkable expansion. From 1980-81 to 1990-91, nearly a 5-fold increase in DCS, indicating strong establishment during this period, likely due to government and policy support (e.g., Operation Flood). Both the number of DCSs and the number of milk producer members have experienced substantial growth over the period, indicating a flourishing dairy cooperative movement in India.

5.2 Dairy Development in Karnataka through Dairy Cooperatives

Dairy development in Karnataka is primarily driven by the cooperative sector, with the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) playing a central role. KMF, the largest cooperative dairy federation in South India, has significantly increased milk production and availability across the state. Dairy development in Karnataka operates on a three-tier cooperative structure: Milk Producers Cooperative Societies at the village level, Milk Unions at District level, and the KMF at the state level. Dairy development in Karnataka has evolved into one of the most successful cooperative movements in India, transforming the state from milk scarcity to surplus and

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positioning it as the country's one of the largest milk producer.

Table 5.2.1: Achievements of KMF in dairy development (2018-19 to 2023-24)

SL.No	Particulars	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1	DCS Functioning	14512	14682	14864	15005	15515	15779
2	Women DCS Functioning	3872	4051	4140	4143	4417	4608
3	Total Members Enrolled (Lakhs)	24.74	25.33	25.71	25.90	26.57	26.89
4	SC Members	2.57	2.65	2.69	2.71	2.78	2.82
5	ST Members	1.45	1.50	1.51	1.58	1.64	1.67
6	Women Members	8.89	9.11	9.31	9.55	10 .00	10.18
7	Small Farmer Members	9.16	9.39	9.51	9.56	9.78	9.92
8	Marginal Farmer Members	7.23	7.38	7.50	7.67	7.91	8.00
9	Landless Labourers Members	4.38	4.49	4.56	4.54	4.65	4.69
10	Others	3.97	4.07	4.14	4.13	4.24	4.28
11	Average Procurement (Lakh Kgs/Day)	74.79	74.44	78.73	81.66	80.32	82.92
12	Amount Paid to Producers (Rs. In Crores/day)	18.11	20.13	21.30	22.52	28.27	28.82
13	Average retail sales (lakh liters/day)	34.87	37.42	35.59	37.17	43.04	46.27

Source: KMF Annual Reports

Karnataka is also one of the top milk producing states in India. As per Department of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services of Karnataka (2023-24), Karnataka has produced 13.46 million tonnes of milk, which is 5.62% of the nation's share. *In 2018-19, Karnataka produced 7.9 million tonnes of milk, followed by 9.03*

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million tonnes in 2019-20. The State crossed the 10-million-tonne mark in 2020-21, producing 10.94 million tonnes. Further gains were recorded in 2021-22 with 11.79 million tonnes, culminating in 12.83 million tonnes in 2022-23. The State's per capita milk availability has also improved significantly, increasing from 332 grams per day in 2018-19 to 543 grams per day in 2023-24 (GoK, 2024 and NDDB, 2024). This figure is higher than the national average of 459 grams per day.

5.3 Growth of Women Dairy Cooperatives in Karnataka

Women's dairy cooperatives are growing worldwide, playing a significant role in both economic empowerment and social development for women, particularly in rural areas. These cooperatives offer women opportunities to participate in the dairy business, gain financial independence, and improve their social standing. *Women dairy cooperatives (WDCs) have become a crucial force in India's dairy sector, playing a vital role in empowering rural women and promoting socio-economic development. A notable aspect of India's dairy industry is the substantial involvement of women. According to Press Information Bureau of India (2025), there are 48,000 women-based dairy cooperative societies operational at the village level across India, with 35 percent of women participating in dairy cooperatives (Government of India, 2025).* These cooperatives are directly *fostering inclusive growth and empowering women in rural areas.*

The Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) scheme plays a crucial role in empowering women in the dairy sector by providing comprehensive support through skill development, financial assistance, and the promotion of women-led cooperatives. The STEP was initiated in 1986 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Under this scheme, WDCs are formed to facilitate women's participation in dairying and improve their socio-economic conditions.

Table 5.3.1: Growth in Establishment of WDCS under STEP Programme in Karnataka during 1997-98 to 2016-17

Phase/Period	Establishment of WDCS
Phase-I	400
Phase-II	200
Phase-III	200

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Phase-IV	250
Phase-V	224
Phase-VI	200
Phase-VII	200
Phase-VIII	250
Total	1924

Sources: KEA (2017) and KMF (2020)

Women dairy cooperatives in Karnataka have seen remarkable growth over recent decades, largely shaped by the **STEP programme** and sustained through cooperative support and government initiatives. It can be seen from the Table-3.9 that the **total number of DCS** has **increased steadily** from **13,287 in 2015-16** to **15,779 in 2023-24,** showing consistent support and expansion of the dairy sector. *Furthermore, the number of women DCSs has risen from 3,550 to 4,608, marking an increase of nearly 30%. The steady growth in both the total number of DCSs and women DCSs signifies a healthy expansion within the cooperative dairy sector, indicating improvements in rural infrastructure and the rising significance of dairy cooperatives in the agricultural economy.*

The share of women DCS also raised incrementally from 26.72% to 29.20%. *The percentage share experienced the most pronounced and sustained growth from 2020-21 onwards, achieving its peak at 29.2% in 2023-24. Although this increase may seem modest, the persistent upward trajectory implies a gradual empowerment and greater involvement of women in dairy cooperatives.* The share showed stability with a slight upward trend every year, except a small dip in 2016-17. From **2019-20 onwards**, the **share of women DCSs consistently increased,** indicating stronger emphasis on **women's participation**. This trend reflects the ongoing integration of women-led initiatives, progressively reducing gender disparities in cooperative leadership.

Conclusion

Women Dairy Cooperative Societies in Karnataka have proven to be effective vehicles for rural transformation. They not only provide stable incomes but also foster women's empowerment and social inclusion. However,

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persistent challenges highlight the need for targeted interventions. Strengthening institutional support, enhancing training, and encouraging leadership participation of women can make WDCS more resilient and equitable.

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THE INVISIBLE NATURE OF WOMEN'S LABOUR IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Introduction:

Agriculture production is greatly impacted by the essential agricultural workforce of women. Women are actively involved and make a contribution to agricultural production in India. The contribution of women in agriculture to our economy is significant, but it often goes unnoticed. Through agriculture, women all over the world make a significant contribution to food security. Rural agriculture ensures food stability globally by employing both male and female labour forces. Women make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in developing countries. Although their activities are not considered 'economically active employment' in national accounts, they are vital for rural households and household income.

Differences in access to both tangible and intangible resources, unequal wages for work, unequal pay, and unequal opportunities are the causes of gender disparities in agricultural labour. Many forms of inequality can be found in society as it is rooted in social norms, the social construction of patriarchy, and power structures. This process is shaped by the marginalization of women's roles in agricultural activities, poor access to resources such as land, knowledge, technology, and gadgets, limited decision-making power, and gender norms. Reconstructing an equitable society is necessary. Women's domestic work and farmwork are often not recognized as work. Unpaid work is often overlooked and hard to quantify in terms of value.

According to the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report 2021-22, India had 62.9 percent of agricultural workers who were women. The report shows that agriculture has the highest estimated female worker percentage, followed by manufacturing. It is commonly believed that 43 to 57 percent of agricultural workers in Asia are women, and South Asia has a higher percentage than other areas of Asia. The salaries of women in South

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Asian countries are significantly lower than those of their male counterparts. Feminization in agriculture is the highest in India and Nepal.

Food and Agricultural Organization of united nations "Empowering women and achieving gender equality can bring huge gains and secure higher agricultural productivity. Eliminating discrimination brings tangible benefits it's time to make a change" FAO of United Nations highlights "the crucial role of women in agriculture and advocates for gender equality". The World Bank promotes gender equality and women's empowerment, addressing gender disparities in earnings, and recognizing the importance of social norms and legal frameworks in sustainable development and gender growth.

Research Methodology

The analysis focuses on the extent and nature of female agricultural labour in rural villages of Ramanagara. The study was carried out in various villages of Ramanagara district, which is well-known for being known as Silk City. Different villages in the Ramanagara district were used to collect data using the interview schedule method. The data indicates a connection between women who work as labourers in the agricultural sector and low literacy levels. Individual well-being and socioeconomic development are hindered by gender inequality. Land ownership and domestic work are examined in the study. Due to ingrained biases, women's contributions are frequently overlooked or undervalued. Cultural norms and patriarchy are crucial at the household level. Social stratification can be categorised into two forms: caste and class. Upper caste families employed women agricultural workers to work in their own fields and then use exchange labour to work in other fields. As per the 2011 census, Ramanagara District had an average literacy rate of 69.22 percent. Males had a literacy rate of 76.76 percent, while females had a literacy rate of 61.50.

Result and Discussion

The findings suggest that women are important contributors to agriculture-related work, but there are gender differences in work, such as pay, education, opportunities, and low representation of women in decision-making processes.

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The socio-economic profile of female respondents from selected villages in Ramanagara district. The respondents ranged in age from 31 to 65. The respondents who were below the age group were not into agricultural work, as they were either employed or were students, some were into childbearing and rearing and they were not allowed to work outside home but helped in household work and care taking work at household level in the study area. The age group of 41-50 had the most respondents, with 38% of them being over 51 years old. Only 15% of the total respondents were educated at secondary or high school, and 5.7 percent were educated at pre-university level. The percentage of people who were not literate was over 65 percent. According to the respondents, they will educate their children to provide them with good employment opportunities. In the study area, gender gaps in literacy in secondary and tertiary educational attainment have been observed.

The type of work they do and the amount of money they earn for food, education, and health is influenced by economic factors. The economically weaker sections of society were given access to essential food commodities at subsidized rates by the majority of them who were holders of BPL ration cards. For economic benefits to their family, those who owned family land had to work on their own land, and some also performed exchange labour. In industry, service, agriculture, and business, the respondent's family members worked as labourers. As agriculture is seasonal, women who didn't own any land had to work on other agricultural farms for their livelihood. Their livelihood relied on animal husbandry during non-agricultural seasons. The raising of animals for meat, fiber, milk, or other products is what animal husbandry, a branch of agriculture, is all about. Dairy farming was a major part of the lives of most of the respondents. Small farmers usually have one or two cows. Milking is a cultural tradition for them, as it is connected to nutrition, prosperity, and their history and culture. It also serves as a financial support system for families. Farmers are the main source of income, but due to seasonality and financial crunch, dairy fills the liquid income gap for households. Women are actively involved in certain agricultural tasks such as planting, weeding, harvesting, post-harvesting process, threshing, manuring, household work, etc.

Land holdings and caste: Sixty-four percent of respondents owned small land holdings, while 36 percent did not own any land. Their work on agricultural land involved dairy farming, raising livestock, and silk rearing, which is important for food security and leads to milk producers becoming members of dairy cooperative

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societies. Mulberries, ragi, togari, mango, and groundnut are the primary crops grown in the Ramanagara district, with silk production, cocoon production, ragi, togari, mango, and groundnut being the main crops grown on agricultural lands. The growth of horticulture crops such as mango, areca, coconut, and banana is a result of changes in cropping patterns caused by the availability of water and market demands. The use of traditional methods like plowing and animal agriculture is more prevalent among small land holdings. The agricultural industry has become highly feminized, leading to a diverse range of income opportunities for women. Women work in both the household and farm settings. Women have less involvement in going to the market and dairy work, while men are more involved in taking goods to the market, taking milk products to dairy cooperatives, taking vegetables and finished products to the market. Women face a major financial crunch due to their lack of involvement in market-related activities because they spend more time on domestic and unpaid work. Agriculture is seasonal and women perform multiple roles as cultivators, labourers, dairy farming, sowing. harvesting etc. The household's preferences for engaging in agricultural activities, such as subsistence production, cash crops, and day-to-day farm management and supervision. Their involvement in income earned decision making was minimal or nonexistent. The development of cities and towns, such as Greater Bengaluru integrated township, has resulted in changes in land use patterns.

Credit and finance for women agricultural labourers:. Women owned bank accounts and used loans to buy cows, construct houses, and other items. Poor rural women are uplifted by the Stree Sakthi program through the emphasis on savings, and they are provided with an internal loan to fund their economic activity and gains. Shri Kshethra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project had many women members who saved money and also took out loans for their activities. Government programs such as Gruha Jyothi and Shakthi Yojana have enabled agricultural women to receive 2000 per month and free mobility services.

Women's agricultural work is impacted by globalization and technology. Globalization and technology were thought to have no impact on their work by some respondents as their work cannot be done by machines. According to some people, small farmers are marginalized due to the expensive technologies that cannot be afforded by small land holding owners. The value of agricultural labourers has not decreased despite technological

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advancements. Seed preparation, sowing, irrigation, and harvesting are typically handled by agricultural labourers. These workers may experience unemployment, underemployment, wage discrimination, and debt.

Conclusion: Gender disparity is evident in educational levels, nature of work, wage differentials. The paper emphasizes the importance of gender-inclusive policies for institutional arrangements that can challenge and alter gender and social norms. Sustainability requires adequate housing and food security, and if they are not available, it could pose significant challenges for their health and life. We must strive for a society that is more equitable. A society that works equally for both men and women is necessary. Empowering and mainstreaming rural agribusiness women who work in agriculture in the economic and social development process is necessary. Valuing their work is important for both visibility and invisibility. Measurement of both unpaid and paid work, as well as adding value to assigned work by society and the economy. Institutional support from cooperative societies, banks, insurance, gender equality in wages, and incentives are necessary to enhance their quality of life. Changes in gendered work differences and wage patterns can be crucially influenced and brought about by economic and societal reforms.

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Digital Inequalities and Social Change: Rethinking Family and Kinship Structures among Youth and Marginalized Groups in the Age of Modernization

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Abstract:

The digital divide unequal access to devices, connectivity, skills and meaningful use — remains a defining inequality of the twenty-first century, with direct consequences for youth and marginalized groups and indirect consequences for family, marriage and kinship structures. This paper synthesizes theoretical and secondary empirical sources to examine how modernisation and globalisation-mediated digitalization reshapes intergenerational ties, marriage processes, kin networks and household power relations. Drawing on international connectivity and policy data (ITU, World Bank, UNESCO) and national programmes (India's Digital India), the study highlights two linked dynamics: (1) where access + digital literacy exist, youth leverage digital platforms to expand social networks, access education/employment and re-negotiate autonomy within family systems; (2) where access is limited or unequal, exclusion amplifies existing marginalization (gender, caste, class, geography), perpetuating informational poverty and constraining social mobility.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Youth Empowerment, Kinship, Modernisation

Introduction

The twenty-first century has been defined by an accelerating digital transformation that reshapes economic systems, governance, education, and interpersonal relations. Yet, this technological revolution has not been uniformly experienced. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2023), approximately 67% of the world's population (5.4 billion people) are connected to the Internet, leaving about 2.6 billion individuals offline—the majority in low- and middle-income countries. The World Bank (2024) estimates that

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people in high-income nations are five times more likely to have broadband access than those in low-income regions, illustrating a persistent and widening digital divide.

Important Events

1. Launch of Digital India (1 July 2015) — Government Flagship Programme

The Digital India initiative, launched by the Government of India on 1 July 2015, marked a major policy shift towards integrating digital technology into governance, infrastructure, and citizen services. Its three core pillars—digital infrastructure as a utility, governance and services on demand, and digital empowerment of citizens—aimed to bridge the urban–rural digital divide. Under this initiative, over 125 crore Aadhaar enrollments, 90 crore Jan Dhan accounts, and 90 crore mobile connections were integrated, laying the foundation for what is now referred to as the "JAM Trinity" (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile). The programme also encouraged the growth of e-governance, digital literacy campaigns such as Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), and digital payment adoption. Despite notable achievements, government evaluations (MeitY, 2024) highlight persistent gaps in rural connectivity and affordability—particularly affecting youth, women, and marginalized communities.

2. BharatNet and Rural Broadband Rollouts (Ongoing since mid-2010s)

BharatNet, launched in 2011 (earlier as the National Optical Fibre Network - NOFN), is the world's largest rural broadband project. Managed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), its objective is to connect 250,000 Gram Panchayats through high-speed optical fibre. As of 2024, over 210,000 village councils have been connected, though only about 65% of these connections are fully functional (MeitY Progress Report, 2024). While BharatNet has expanded digital access geographically, the challenge remains to ensure last-mile connectivity, affordable devices, and localized digital literacy. Studies show that improved broadband access has begun to influence rural education participation, telehealth, and small-scale digital entrepreneurship, yet gendered and caste-based disparities continue to limit participation from marginalized groups.

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3. COVID-19 Pandemic (2020 Onward)

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as both an accelerator and a magnifier of digital inequality. Lockdowns and social distancing measures forced a rapid shift to remote education, telehealth, e-commerce, and online governance. However, according to the World Bank (2022), nearly 40% of students globally lacked reliable Internet access during school closures. In India, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2021) found that only 24% of rural households had access to online learning tools. The pandemic highlighted how the digital divide disproportionately affects the poor, rural, and female populations, reinforcing social exclusion. It also catalyzed new patterns of digital kinship, where families relied on smartphones and video calls to maintain intergenerational ties.

4. ITU Facts & Figures (2023)

According to the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Facts and Figures 2023, global Internet usage reached 67%, with around 5.4 billion users. However, 2.6 billion people remain offline, most of them in developing economies. The report emphasizes persistent inequalities: Internet use among men (69%) continues to exceed that among women (63%), and only 27% of individuals in low-income countries are online compared to 90% in high-income countries. These disparities directly influence youth empowerment, access to knowledge, and participation in digital economies. The ITU's findings underscore that digital inclusion is a social as well as technological issue, requiring attention to affordability, skills, and socio-cultural barriers.

Literature Review

- **Jan A. G. M. van Dijk (2020) – The Digital Divide Van Dijk** conceptualizes the digital divide as a layered process involving access, motivation, skills, and actual usage. He demonstrates that unequal digital participation mirrors broader social stratification rather than mere technological gaps. His framework helps explain why marginalized groups remain disadvantaged even when infrastructure improves. The book emphasizes digital literacy and social support as the missing links in inclusion. It provides a theoretical base for analyzing empowerment through connectivity.

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- **Mark Warschauer (2003) – Technology and Social Inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide** Warschauer challenges simplistic notions of "haves and have-nots," arguing that access must include material, skills, and community resources. Through case studies in India, Brazil, and the U.S., he shows that digital tools enhance opportunity only within enabling social contexts. His emphasis on literacy and language resonates with marginalized communities' struggles. The book frames technology as a social practice, not a neutral instrument. It remains foundational for evaluating digital inclusion policies.
- **Manuel Castells (1996/2010) – The Rise of the Network Society** Castells introduces the idea of a "network society" in which information flows reshape economies, politics, and identities. He posits that power in modern societies depends on network connectivity, marginalizing those outside global information circuits. This macro-sociological lens helps explain how globalization intertwines with digital modernization. Youth emerge as primary agents of cultural transformation through technology. Castells' thesis links structural modernization to everyday social relations.
- **M. N. Srinivas (1969/1973) – Social Change in Modern India** Srinivas conceptualizes processes such as Westernization, Sanskritization, and secularization in shaping Indian social transformation. His framework explains how modernization reconfigures caste and family structures. Though written before the digital era, his theory of adaptive change applies to contemporary technological modernization. It illuminates how digital tools become new symbols of status mobility. Srinivas' insights bridge classical sociology with **digital transitions.**

Research Objectives

1. To synthesize secondary evidence on how digital inequalities affect youth agency within family and kin networks.
2. To identify mechanisms through which digital access (or lack thereof) reshapes marriage and courtship practices.
3. To highlight policy and research priorities that can reduce the risk that digitalization amplifies existing marginalization.

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Findings (from synthesized secondary sources)

1. Access + Skills = Agency

Studies consistently show that access to digital infrastructure combined with functional digital literacy translates directly into enhanced personal and social agency. Youth equipped with both connectivity and skills employ online platforms for education, employment searches, creative self-expression, and social networking (boyd, 2014; Castells, 2010). This digital competence enables young people—especially women and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds—to navigate beyond the constraints imposed by traditional kinship hierarchies. For instance, online learning platforms such as SWAYAM and Coursera have enabled rural youth to access quality education previously unavailable locally. Similarly, social media allows young people to cultivate peer networks and participate in public discourse, reconfiguring their social identity and autonomy.

2. **Family and Kinship Renegotiation**

Digital communication technologies have profoundly altered the texture of family life and kinship structures. The increased use of smartphones, video calls, and messaging applications has strengthened transnational family connections, particularly among migrant communities, by facilitating regular contact across distances. Yet, these same technologies introduce new social tensions. Turkle (2011) warns that the illusion of constant connectivity can mask emotional detachment, while boyd (2014) highlights generational conflicts around privacy and control in digital spaces. Among youth, online dating and matrimonial apps (e.g., Shaadi.com, Tinder) are redefining partner selection norms, challenging arranged marriage traditions (Uberoi, 1993). Digital remittance channels and online financial transfers have also reshaped kin-based obligations, increasing transparency but reducing the ritual aspects of giving. Warschauer (2003) argues that these shifts illustrate the dual role of technology: bridging physical distances while simultaneously transforming traditional emotional economies. Families are therefore negotiating between autonomy and cohesion in the digital era—a process of reconfiguring kinship under the pressures of modernization.

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Conclusion

The present study underscores that digital transformation in India—and globally—operates as both a driver and mirror of social change. While modernization and globalization have expanded digital access and reshaped everyday communication, the benefits of this transformation remain unevenly distributed. Youth with digital literacy and reliable connectivity are gaining new forms of agency, reimagining education, employment, and relationships beyond the boundaries of traditional kinship and caste hierarchies. However, the same technologies that empower some also deepen exclusion for others—especially marginalized groups constrained by geography, poverty, gender, or disability.

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THE INEXTRICABLE LINK: ENVIRONMENT AS THE FOUNDATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Abstract:

Good morning, esteemed colleagues, researchers, and policymakers. We are gathered at a pivotal moment, one where the boundaries between environmental science and public health have dissolved entirely. The central thesis of this presentation is simple yet profound: **human health is fundamentally dependent on the health of our environment.** This is not a theoretical concept; it is a measurable reality, with environmental risks contributing to nearly a quarter of the global disease burden. Our ability to secure public health in the 21st century hinges on our commitment to environmental stewardship.

The Modifiable Environmental Risk Factors

A healthy environment is a prerequisite for a healthy population. When environmental conditions degrade, the immediate and long-term health consequences are severe and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. The following are the most critical modifiable environmental risk factors:

1. Air Quality

Both **ambient (outdoor)** and **household (indoor)** air pollution are major threats.

- **Outdoor Air Pollution:** Primarily from industrial emissions, vehicular traffic, and thermal power plants, outdoor air pollution, particularly **Particulate Matter (PM2.5 and PM10)**, penetrates deep into the lungs and bloodstream. It is directly linked to millions of premature deaths annually, driving up the incidence of **chronic respiratory diseases (COPD, asthma)**, **lung cancer**, and **cardiovascular diseases (heart attacks and strokes)**.
- **Indoor Air Pollution:** In many developing regions, the combustion of solid fuels (wood, dung, crop residue) for cooking and heating leads to high levels of indoor smoke exposure, particularly impacting women and children, causing respiratory infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

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2. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene practices remain primary pathways for infectious disease transmission.

- **Contamination:** Contaminated water sources, often due to untreated sewage and industrial discharge, transmit **diarrheal diseases, cholera, typhoid**, and parasitic infections.
- **Chemical Exposure:** Groundwater contamination by heavy metals like **Arsenic and Fluoride**, prevalent in parts of India, leads to chronic, debilitating conditions (arsenicosis, fluorosis) and increased cancer risk.

3. Chemical and Waste Management

The uncontrolled release of toxic chemicals, industrial effluents, and unmanaged solid waste contaminates soil, water, and the food chain. Exposure to heavy metals, pesticides, and other persistent organic pollutants is associated with **neurological disorders, endocrine disruption, and various cancers.**

The Climate Crisis: A Health Multiplier

Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is an active public health emergency. It acts as a **threat multiplier**, exacerbating existing health challenges and creating new ones.

Environmental Change	Direct Health Impact	Indirect Health Impact
Rising Temperatures	Heat stress, heatstroke, and increased mortality during extreme heatwaves.	Altered crop yields leading to food insecurity and malnutrition.
Extreme Weather Events	Injuries, deaths, and psychological trauma from floods, cyclones, and droughts.	Displacement, breakdown of health services, and increased risk of water-borne diseases.
Ecosystem Disruption	Shifting geographical distribution of **disease vectors** (mosquitoes, ticks) leading to the spread of diseases like **dengue, malaria, and Zika** to new areas.	Stress on water resources, mass migration, and social unrest.

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Policy Implications and the Way Forward

Addressing the environmental determinants of health requires a paradigm shift from a purely curative approach to a **preventive, cross-sectoral** one.

1. Integrating Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Environmental protection must be viewed as a health policy. This requires robust collaboration across government sectors, including **Health, Energy, Transport, Agriculture, and Urban Development.**

- **Sustainable Urban Planning:** Prioritizing green spaces, public transport, and non-motorized transport (walking, cycling) simultaneously reduces air pollution and promotes physical activity.
- **Clean Energy Transition:** Phasing out fossil fuels in favor of renewables offers the dual benefit of mitigating climate change and dramatically improving air quality, leading to immediate public health savings.

2. Strengthening Environmental Health Surveillance

We must invest in advanced monitoring and data systems that track both environmental quality (air, water, soil) and associated health outcomes. **Early warning systems** for heatwaves, air pollution spikes, and infectious disease outbreaks are crucial for timely and effective public health response.

Conclusion:

The relationship between health and environment is the defining challenge of our generation. By prioritizing clean air, safe water, sound chemical management, and climate action, we are not only protecting our planet, but we are also making the single most cost-effective investment in public health. Let this national conference be the catalyst for unified action—where every environmental policy is seen as a health policy, and every health initiative is grounded in environmental sustainability. Thank you.

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN DIGITAL SPACES: A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract:

The rapid adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has inadvertently created poorly regulated spaces for the perpetration and amplification of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), termed Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TF-GBV). This paper asserts that TF-GBV is not a novel form of abuse but rather a digital extension of pre-existing patriarchal structures and misogynistic norms, posing a fundamental threat to equality and democratic participation. The analysis details the multifaceted manifestations of TF-GBV, including Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images (NCII), cyberstalking, doxing, and targeted disinformation campaigns. Furthermore, the paper examines the severe psychological (PTSD, anxiety), social (forced self-censorship, digital gender divide), and legal impacts, noting the crisis often spills into offline physical violence. The paper concludes by urging a comprehensive national response based on strengthening legal frameworks, mandating platform accountability, promoting digital literacy, and establishing trauma-informed victim support systems to ensure a safe, equitable, and inclusive digital future.

Keywords: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TF-GBV), Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV), Non-Consensual Intimate Images (NCII), Cyberstalking, Deepfakes

Introduction:

The rapid advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has created unprecedented opportunities for connection, expression, and democratic participation. However, these same digital spaces have become fertile, yet poorly regulated, grounds for the perpetration and amplification of **Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**. This phenomenon, often termed **Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TF-GBV)** or **Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV)**, is not a separate or lesser form of abuse; it is a **digital extension of deeply rooted, offline patriarchal structures and misogynistic cultural norms**.

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This paper explores the pervasive nature of TF-GBV, its multifaceted forms, and its devastating impacts, arguing that this digital crisis presents a fundamental threat to the principles of equality, freedom of expression, and overall national development.

1. The Manifestations of Digital Gender-Based Violence

TF-GBV is a broad spectrum of behaviors that leverages digital tools to inflict harm based on gender. Its **ubiquity, anonymity, and permanence** amplify its intensity and consequences. Key manifestations include:

- **Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images (NCII) / Image-Based Abuse:** This includes the distribution of explicit photos or videos, often referred to as "revenge porn," or the creation of **deepfakes** (manipulated synthetic media) to defame and sexually exploit women without their consent.
- **Cyberstalking and Harassment:** Persistent, unwanted surveillance, monitoring (often through spyware or tracking apps), and the coordinated transmission of abusive comments, threats, and insults.
- **Doxing and Hacking:** Publishing a victim's private, identifying information (home address, phone number, workplace) online, which often serves as an explicit bridge to **offline physical threats and violence**.
- **Cyber-Sexual Exploitation and Sextortion:** Coercing victims, particularly minors, into sending sexual images or performing sexual acts under threat of digital exposure.
- **Targeted Disinformation and Smear Campaigns:** Coordinated attacks, particularly against **women in public life (politicians, journalists, activists)**, using hateful speech, misogynistic tropes, and disinformation to undermine their credibility and silence their voices (often referred to as the "**chilling effect**").

2. Profound and Multi-Dimensional Impact

The impact of TF-GBV transcends the digital screen, inflicting severe psychological, social, and economic damage on individuals and restricting their fundamental human rights.

A. Psychological and Physical Trauma

- **Severe Mental Health Outcomes:** Victims frequently report symptoms mirroring those of physical assault, including **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), severe anxiety, depression, paranoia, and**

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suicidal ideation. The constant fear that the content could resurface or the online threat could materialize in the physical world prolongs the trauma.

- **Online-to-Offline Violence:** Digital threats are often preludes to real-world harm. Doxing, for example, has resulted in **physical attacks, "honour"-related violence, and, in tragic cases, suicide** due to overwhelming shame and isolation.

B. Impact on Social Participation and Democracy

- **Forced Self-Censorship:** Fear of abuse compels a significant percentage of women to **self-censor**, reduce their online presence, use private settings, or withdraw from public discourse entirely. This leads to the **loss of authentic female voices** in critical debates on politics, social justice, and policy.
- **Widening the Digital Gender Divide:** When the digital space becomes hostile, it restricts women's **equal access and freedom to operate**, reinforcing the patriarchal notion that public spaces—digital or physical—are fundamentally male domains. This undermines the democratic ideal of inclusive participation.

C. Socio-Economic and Legal Challenges

- **Economic Disadvantage:** TF-GBV can lead to **job loss, hindered career progression, and financial strain** due to the costs of legal battles or psychological counseling.
- **Victim Blaming and Stigma:** Societal attitudes often **blame the victim** for using the internet or for the content shared, leading to social ostracisation and a reluctance to report the abuse, thereby fueling a culture of **impunity** for perpetrators.
- **Legal Gaps and Enforcement Barriers (Specific to India):** While Indian laws (such as Sections of the IT Act, 2000, and the IPC regarding voyeurism and stalking) address some forms of cybercrime, challenges persist. These include **lack of awareness** among victims, **underreporting** due to stigma, **delayed legal processes** due to a shortage of cyber forensic expertise, and **jurisdictional complexities** of borderless internet crimes.

3. Recommendations for a Comprehensive National Response

A multi-stakeholder approach involving government, technology platforms, civil society, and the community is urgently needed to make digital spaces safe and equitable.

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1. **Strengthening the Legal and Judicial Framework:**
    - Enact **gender-sensitive, specialized legislation** that clearly defines and prosecutes all forms of TF-GBV, including deepfake creation and NCII, with fast-track redressal mechanisms.
    - **Invest heavily in capacity building** for law enforcement and the judiciary, focusing on digital forensics, investigation of online abuse, and trauma-informed handling of survivors.
2. **Platform Accountability and Design:**
    - Mandate **strict policies** for technology companies to develop and implement **proactive abuse detection and reporting tools** that are transparent, accessible, and responsive to gendered forms of violence.
    - Hold platforms accountable for the **rapid removal** of illegal content, especially intimate images shared without consent.
3. **Digital and Media Literacy:**
    - Integrate **critical digital literacy and online etiquette** into educational curricula, focusing on consent, privacy rights, and the severe, real-world consequences of cyber-misogyny. This education must target **boys and young men** as future users and potential allies.

Conclusion:

TF-GBV is a critical human rights crisis that cannot be ignored as an unfortunate side effect of technology. It is a systemic issue that restricts the participation of women and girls, undermining the very foundations of an inclusive and progressive society. By recognizing TF-GBV as a **continuation of physical violence** and a **violation of fundamental rights**, the nation must commit to decisive legislative action, technological accountability, and a profound shift in social norms to ensure that the digital future is safe, equitable, and empowering for all.

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Driving Inclusion: An Economic Analysis of E- Vehicles in Karnataka and Their Role in Empowering Youth and Marginalized Communities

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Abstract: *Karnataka stands at the forefront of India's green mobility revolution, registering approximately 1.5 lakh electric vehicles annually, reflecting its commitment to environmental sustainability and economic development. The transformation of Bengaluru's urban landscape through electric vehicle (EV) adoption is generating multidimensional economic and social benefits, especially for youth and marginalized communities. This study undertakes a socio-economic analysis of the EV sector's impact in Bengaluru urban taluks, drawing on a survey of 250 respondents representing youth, women, SC/ST, OBC groups, and persons with disabilities engaged in EV-related occupations. The research demonstrates how robust policy frameworks—like Karnataka's dedicated EV policy and urban investment incentives—have contributed to rapid e-mobility growth, with more than 169,000 EVs registered by 2023 and a projected stock of over 2.3 million by 2030. Key findings indicate substantial increases in green job opportunities, skill development, income enhancement, and social mobility for disadvantaged groups.*

Key Words: *marginalized, persistent, incentive, enhancement, embedding, transforming.*

INTRODUCTION: Karnataka is emerging as a national leader in EV adoption through robust policies, infrastructure development, and skill training programs, this study explores how such growth drives inclusion,

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job creation, and sustainable development. Unlike conventional vehicles, EVs promise reduced carbon emissions and less urban congestion, positioning Karnataka as a potential hub for electric vehicle innovation and manufacturing. Beyond environmental benefits, the EV ecosystem contributes to economic inclusivity by generating new job opportunities, especially for the youth and marginalized sections of society through targeted skill development and entrepreneurship programs. Bengaluru's emergence as the e-mobility capital of India marks a profound urban shift. With more than 85% of Karnataka's EV charging infrastructure concentrated in the city, and annual vehicle registration growth exceeding 150%, the metropolis anchors Karnataka's ambitious vision for clean, inclusive transportation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Dr. Richa Tiwari et.al. (2023) has conducted "a study on perception of consumers on E-Vehicles in Bengaluru." The objective of this study is to give consumers a rational idea of the advent of electric vehicles. The data used in this study is collected by Snowball sampling of 123 respondents in an online questionnaire. A pilot study conducted before the main study also provided better insight into the market. Key factors such as reliability, smooth driving, fast charging and environmental friendliness are some of the criteria that consumers consider when choosing a vehicle.

Sharath Kumar Y (2024) has conducted a study on "*Electric* Vehicles in Karnataka: Consumer Insights and Trends". The objective of the research is to explore consumer perceptions and preferences towards electric vehicles (EVs) in the contemporary automobile market in Karnataka. The study unveils a high level of consumer awareness and a strong inclination toward EVs, emphasizing environmental considerations as key influencers in buying behaviour. Factors such as cost savings, vehicle performance, and brand recognition play pivotal roles in shaping EV preferences. This research provides nuanced insights crucial for manufacturers, policymakers, and researchers navigating the dynamic landscape of the evolving EV market.

Y. Gulzar et.al. (2024) has conducted a study on "A comprehensive review of electric vehicles charging infrastructure in India. The study reviews EV charging infrastructure development across states in India, linking infrastructure gaps to adoption barriers affecting equitable access and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- Analyze economic effects of EV growth in Bengaluru's urban taluks.
- Assess empowerment of youth and marginalized communities through EV ecosystem participation.
- Identify challenges to inclusion and propose targeted solutions.
- Evaluate policy and infrastructure strategies for sustainable empowerment.

METHODOLOGY:

Secondary Data: Totally two types of data was collected for the present study. Secondary data was collected from books, research papers, Government Reports, journal articles, web sites, etc. The secondary is mainly used to derive theoretical background and research gap for the present study.

Primary Data: The present research work is mainly based on primary data collected from youth, women, people with physical disabilities, EV sector workers in Bengaluru Urban Taluks.

Study Area and Sample Size:

A stratified survey of 250 respondents was conducted across major Bengaluru urban taluks/RTO zones: Central, West, East, North, E-City, Jnanabharathi, KR Puram, Yelahanka, South. Participants were selected from youth (18–30), women, SC/ST, OBC, and PwD categories working in EV manufacturing, logistics, charging, and maintenance. Data were collected via structured questionnaire and analysed for representation and impact indicators.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents:

Segment	Count	% of sample	EV sector Role
Youth (18-30 Years)	120	48%	Assembly, charging, Fleet Ops
Women	60	24%	Quality Testing, Logistics
SC/ST & OBC	40	16%	Last -mile Service, Technical
PwDs	30	12%	Battery Testing, workshop support

The Table 1 reflects a workforce that is near half composed of youth, with sizable representation of women and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. The roles consist primarily of technical assembly and operational duties (youth), quality and logistics (women), last-mile and technical support (SC/ST & OBC), and specialized technical support (PwDs).

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Table 2: Socio-Economic Impact of EV Involvement

Indicator	"Yes" (%)	"No" (%)	Notable Trends
Increased Employment	74	26	Most participants saw new job opportunities.
Skill Development	71	29	Govt/NGO skilling programs cited
Income Growth	62	38	Higher in technical/fleet roles
Social Mobility	70	30	Urban migration/job access up
Job Satisfaction	58	42	Barriers: hours, growth prospects

From the Table 2 it is noted that EV sector jobs yield significant economic gains for urban youth and marginalized groups, most notably through employment and skill development. 71% experienced improved skills, 74% found new employment. However, satisfaction and income gains remain mixed, especially for contract/entry-level workers. However, satisfaction lags for those in lower-paying or temporary positions, spotlighting persistent challenges in workplace equity.

Table 3: Main Barriers to Inclusion

Barrier	Frequency (%)
Infrastructure Gaps	29
Skills/Training Access	26
Financial Barriers	22
Social/Workplace Bias	16
Grid/Tech Challenges	7

Table 3 above explains that the most commonly cited obstacles were limited access to advanced charging infrastructure (especially in peripheral taluks), sporadic/skewed skill training programs, and insufficient financial support for entry-level job seekers from marginalized backgrounds.

Secondary Data: Bengaluru's EV Ecosystem

As of October 2023, ~169,000 EVs were registered in Bengaluru, with a growth rate over 150% per year and projections of more than 2.3 million by 2030.310 charging stations installed by BESCOM, 800 by private sector, with extensive expansion planned. Incentives include capital subsidies (15%), GST exemptions, entrepreneurial grants for women/SC/ST. Rapid growth in public transport electrification; BMTC running >1,500 e-buses.

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Partnership with Tata Technologies and major ITIs to skill youth for EV assembly, testing, and management roles. Inclusion targets: 35% new jobs to women, 15% to SC/ST/OBC, 4% to PwDs by 2025.

CHALLENGES:

Infrastructural: Limited public charger density in peripheral taluks; outdated power grid in some zones may bottleneck growth. EV chargers less dense in peripheral urban taluks; some locations lack robust electricity grid and maintenance.

Financial: EV purchase costs; lack of startup capital for marginalized entrepreneurs; insufficient wage growth for entry-level sector workers. Acquisition costs, limited loans for marginalized sectors, wage ceilings, and capital barriers for EV entrepreneurs.

Social: Workplace discrimination; hiring barriers for SC/ST, OBC, and disabled applicants; job retention issues. Persistent biases in hiring/promotion; lower retention for SC/ST, women, PwDs.

Technological: Charger compatibility, battery replacement logistics, consumer awareness. battery management, and end-user awareness must be broadened.

FINDINGS:

- Bengaluru leads India in EV adoption, charging infrastructure, and urban policy support; annual urban EV growth rate is highest nationally. Bengaluru's EV adoption, job creation, and training are India's fastest-growing, but wage floors and workplace advancement for marginalized groups remain uneven.
- Youth and marginalized communities cite gains in employment, mobility, income, and skills, but barriers persist in training, finance, and workplace equity.

CONCLUSION:

Bengaluru's EV transition exemplifies the potential for technology-driven inclusion in rapidly growing urban contexts. Karnataka's unique blend of progressive EV policy, private sector innovation, and targeted social schemes has produced tangible benefits in employment and empowerment for historically marginalized groups—


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though real barriers persist in job quality, infrastructure, and equitable access. Continued coordinated scaling—through advanced skilling, policy expansion, and investment—can realize the promise of a truly inclusive urban green economy. Bengaluru's experience thus offers both a reality check and a replicable blueprint for other cities seeking real impact and sustainable empowerment in India's green mobility revolution.

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THE AHIR COMMUNITY IN KARNATAKA: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF FAMILY STATUS AND INTEGRATION

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Abstract

The Ahir community, primarily known in North and West India as a traditional pastoral and cattle-keeping caste, is present in Karnataka, albeit often integrated under the broader regional umbrella of related communities like **Golla** or **Gaoli**. This paper examines the family status, socio-economic trajectory, and patterns of cultural integration of the Ahir community within Karnataka, where they are typically categorized under the **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**. Traditionally associated with **animal husbandry and agriculture**, their family structure historically favored **joint families** to support labor-intensive occupations. However, migration, urbanization, and economic diversification in Karnataka have led to a gradual shift towards **nuclear family units** and a greater push for formal **education** and **occupational mobility**. The community's identity in Karnataka reflects a complex process of cultural synthesis, balancing their pan-Indian Yadava heritage with the regional customs and social classifications of the Southern states.

Keywords: Education, Occupational Mobility, Backward Classes, Golla

1. Introduction:

The Ahir community, whose origins are traced to the ancient **Abhira tribe**, is nationally recognized as one of the major constituents of the larger **Yadava** social grouping, claiming descent from the legendary King Yadu and Lord Krishna. Their traditional function across India is that of **herdsmen, cowherders, and milk sellers**.

In Karnataka, the presence of the Ahir community is often localized and its members are frequently classified alongside or under cognate groups such as the **Golla** or **Gaoli** castes, which share similar traditional occupations related to cattle-keeping and dairying. These groups are generally included in the state's list of **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**, indicating a shared history of social and economic disadvantage. Understanding their family

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status in Karnataka requires acknowledging this regional assimilation while recognizing their distinct Ahir/Yadava cultural markers.

2. Traditional Family Structure and Livelihood

Historically, the family structure of the Ahir community, consistent with other agrarian and pastoral groups across India, leaned towards **large, patriarchal joint families**.

- **Joint Family System:** The joint family served as a vital economic unit. The pooling of labor and resources was essential for managing cattle herds, grazing, milking, and associated agricultural activities. This structure also provided a mechanism for generational knowledge transfer regarding animal husbandry and traditional lore.
- **Occupational Focus:** The family's economic life revolved around their traditional occupation of **cattle-rearing and dairy trade**. Work was often segmented by age and gender, with men typically involved in grazing and long-distance trade, and women managing the household, processing dairy products, and participating in local markets.
- **Kinship and Marriage:** Marriage practices were generally **endogamous** at the community level but adhered to **exogamy** at the clan/surname level to maintain kinship integrity. Traditional rites and ceremonies, often centered around the worship of Krishna and Shiva, reinforced family and community ties.

3. Transformation and Family Status in Contemporary Karnataka

The socio-economic landscape of modern Karnataka, characterized by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and high levels of internal migration, has catalyzed significant changes in the Ahir family structure and status.

3.1. Shift to Nuclear Families

The most pronounced change is the gradual transition from joint families to **nuclear family units**. This is driven by several factors:

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- **Migration:** Younger generations often migrate from rural, traditional settlements (where their original community concentration might be low) to urban centers like Bengaluru, Mysuru, or Hubballi-Dharwad in pursuit of non-traditional employment.
- **Economic Diversification:** Dependence on traditional cattle-keeping has declined as education and government job opportunities open up. Families now rely on diversified income streams from white-collar jobs, small businesses, and government service, reducing the functional need for a large, co-resident joint family.
- **Individual Aspirations:** Modern influences and a focus on formal **education** lead to greater individual autonomy, often making the strict hierarchy and shared finances of the joint family less appealing to younger members.

3.2. Education and Social Mobility

A key aspiration across the community is **upward social and economic mobility** through education.

- **Educational Attainment:** As an OBC group, access to reservation benefits has helped increase the proportion of Ahir/Yadava youth pursuing higher and technical education. This is directly linked to an increased family status and prestige.
- **Changing Gender Roles:** While patriarchal norms persist, increased female literacy and employment in non-traditional sectors are gradually shifting the dynamics within the family, leading to greater decision-making participation by women.

3.3. Cultural and Linguistic Integration

In Karnataka, the Ahir identity is deeply interwoven with regional linguistic and cultural frameworks.

- **Linguistic Adoption:** While maintaining elements of their ancestral languages (e.g., Hindi, Marathi, or Gujarati, depending on their migration history), Ahir families in Karnataka are fluent in **Kannada**, essential for socio-economic integration.
- **Caste Association:** The community frequently interacts and intermarries with other local groups categorized as OBC with similar traditional backgrounds, particularly the **Golla** and **Gavli/Gaoli** communities, leading to an amalgamation of customs.

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Findings of the Study

The study identifies the following key sociological findings regarding the Ahir community in Karnataka:

1. Identity Integration and Regional Classification

- **Regional Assimilation:** The Ahir identity in Karnataka is often not distinct but is **integrated or classified under the regional umbrella** of cognate cattle-keeping communities like the **Golla** and **Gaoli/Gavli** castes.
- **OBC Status:** The community and its related groups are generally categorized as **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** in Karnataka, indicating a shared history of socio-economic disadvantage.
- **Cultural Synthesis:** The community's identity is defined by a complex **cultural synthesis**, balancing their pan-Indian **Yadava heritage** (claiming descent from King Yadu and Lord Krishna) with the regional customs, classifications, and linguistic frameworks of Southern India.

2. Transition in Family Structure

- **Shift from Joint to Nuclear Families:** The study finds a **gradual, pronounced shift** from the traditional large, patriarchal **joint family system** to **nuclear family units**.
- **Drivers of Change:** This transition is primarily driven by:
    - **Migration** to urban centers (like Bengaluru, Mysuru, etc.) for non-traditional employment.
    - **Economic Diversification** away from traditional cattle-keeping and agriculture.
    - Increased **individual aspirations** and autonomy influenced by modern society.

3. Socio-Economic Mobility and Education

- **Upward Mobility:** A key current aspiration is **upward social and economic mobility** primarily achieved through **formal education**.
- **Role of OBC Status:** Access to **reservation benefits** as an OBC group has helped increase the proportion of Ahir/Yadava youth pursuing higher and technical education, directly contributing to increased family prestige.

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- **Occupational Diversification:** The community's livelihood is shifting from solely reliance on **cattle-rearing and dairy trade** (their traditional occupation) to diversified income streams from **white-collar jobs, small businesses, and government service**.

4. Cultural and Linguistic Adaptation

- **Linguistic Adoption:** Ahir families are adopting **Kannada** fluently, which is essential for socio-economic integration in the state, even while retaining elements of their ancestral languages (Hindi, Marathi, or Gujarati).
- **Changing Gender Dynamics:** Increased **female literacy** and employment in non-traditional sectors are leading to a gradual shift in gender roles and greater participation of women in **family decision-making**.

Conclusion

The family status of the Ahir community in Karnataka is in a state of dynamic flux. While they proudly maintain their pan-Indian **Yadava heritage** and the core cultural values of hard work and reverence for cattle, their socio-economic reality is defined by **integration into the regional matrix**. The community is navigating a transition from the traditional, agrarian joint family model to a more **nuclear, educationally-driven structure**. The continued success of the community in Karnataka will depend on balancing this cultural continuity with active engagement in the state's modern economy and political processes, utilizing their OBC status to further enhance social mobility and regional influence.

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THE ROLE OF LABOUR LAW WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MARGINALIZED GROUPS

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Abstract:

[3]Labour law plays an important role in regulating employment relationships, ensuring fair treatment, and protecting workers from exploitation. Its significance is especially clear for marginalized groups, including women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, migrant workers, and people with disabilities, who face ongoing disadvantages in the job market. This article looks at how labour law acts as a way to promote equality, social justice, and empowerment for these vulnerable communities. Key legislative frameworks, like the Equal Remuneration Act, the Employees' State Insurance Act, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, and the Code on Social Security, are examined for their role in protecting rights and providing social security. The study also points out challenges in implementation, such as weak enforcement in informal sectors, lack of awareness, job segregation, and exploitative practices like bonded labour. The article highlights the need for stronger enforcement, inclusive workplace policies, and increased legal awareness to close the gap between laws and practice. By exploring the connection between labour law and marginalized groups, this study shows that legal frameworks can be not just regulatory tools but also ways to support socio-economic empowerment and fair development.

Keywords: Labour Law, Marginalized Groups, Social Justice, Equality, Workers' Rights

Introduction:

Labour law is an important part of modern social and economic governance. It provides a framework to regulate the relationship between employers and employees, protect workers' rights, and ensure fair working conditions. Its main goal is to prevent exploitation, promote social justice, and create a fair and inclusive workplace. In India,

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where deep-rooted inequalities based on caste, gender, economic status, and regional differences exist, labour law plays a crucial role in protecting marginalised groups who are often the most vulnerable in the job market.

Marginalised groups—including women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, migrant workers, and people with disabilities—face several hurdles in accessing job opportunities, fair wages, social security, and safe working conditions. Their participation in the formal sector is limited, and many are employed in the unorganised or informal sector, where legal protections are weak or poorly enforced. Common issues include wage discrimination, occupational segregation, unsafe working environments, and lack of basic benefits.

In this context, labour law is more than just a set of rules; it serves as a tool for social empowerment and inclusion. Legislation such as the Equal Remuneration Act, Employees' State Insurance Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, and various social security codes aim to protect the rights of marginalized workers, promote equality, and reduce socio-economic gaps. However, the effectiveness of these laws relies on awareness, enforcement, and accessibility, pointing to the need for ongoing reforms and focused interventions.

This article will explore the role of labour law in protecting the rights and interests of marginalised groups. It will examine both its successes and weaknesses, while addressing the challenges that remain in achieving true equity and social justice in the Indian labour market.

Review of Literature:

1. **Role of Labour Law in Social Justice:** Studies by Upendra Baxi (2002) and Arup Banerjee (2010) highlight labour law as a vital tool for ensuring social justice and protecting vulnerable workers from exploitation. They emphasize its potential to transform lives in marginalized communities.
2. **Protection of Marginalized Groups:** Research by N. K. Sinha (2015) and [4]R. N. Sharma (2018) shows that marginalized groups, including women, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes, often face discrimination in

[4] *R. N. Sharma, Marginalized Communities and Labour Rights in India (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2018), 78.*

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workplaces. Labour laws like the Equal Remuneration Act and the Maternity Benefit Act play a crucial role in addressing these issues.

3. **Challenges in Implementation:** Several studies, including one by the ILO (2016)[5] And reports from the Government of India (2019) point out that weak enforcement, a lack of awareness, and a high number of informal workers limit the effectiveness of labour laws. This leaves many marginalized workers without protection.
4. **Social Security and Informal Sector:** Research by R. K. Mishra (2017) highlights the importance of social security schemes and laws, such as the Employees' State Insurance Act and the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, in offering financial protection to marginalized and informal sector workers.
5. **Empowerment through Legal Frameworks:** Scholars like A. K. Choudhury (2019) argue that labour law serves not only as a regulatory tool but also as a means of socio-economic empowerment. It enables marginalized groups to access equal opportunities, dignity at work, and economic independence.

Methodology:

1. **Research Design:** The study uses a qualitative research design to explore how labour law protects and empowers marginalized groups, focusing on descriptive and analytical methods.
2. **Data Collection:** Secondary data was gathered from legal statutes, government reports, research papers, academic journals, and publications by organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the National Labour Commission.
3. **Content Analysis:** Relevant labour laws, including the Equal Remuneration Act, Employees' State Insurance Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, and social security codes, were reviewed to assess their relevance and impact on marginalized groups.
4. **Review of Literature:** The study examined existing studies, articles, and reports on labour law and marginalized workers to identify challenges, gaps in implementation, and best practices for ensuring workplace equity and social justice.

[5] *International Labour Organization (ILO), World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women and Marginalized Workers (Geneva: ILO, 2016), 22–25.*

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5. **Analytical Approach:** The study looks at the connection between labour law and marginalized communities, evaluating the effectiveness of legislative measures and the practical challenges faced by vulnerable groups. It includes suggestions for policy improvements and better enforcement.

The Role of Labour Law in Protecting Marginalized Groups:

1. Ensuring Equality and Non-Discrimination

Labour law prohibits discrimination in hiring, wages, and promotions on the basis of caste, religion, gender, disability, or social origin. Statutes like the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, and provisions under the Constitution (Articles 14, 15, 16, 39) provide safeguards to vulnerable communities.

2. Promoting Social Security

Schemes under the Employees' State Insurance Act, Employees' Provident Fund Act, and the Code on Social Security aim to provide financial protection to workers, particularly those in the informal sector, where a large proportion of marginalized communities are employed.

3. Protecting Women and Child Labour

Labour law addresses specific vulnerabilities of women through maternity benefits, workplace safety, and the prohibition of sexual harassment (POSH Act, 2013). Similarly, child labour laws protect children from exploitative and hazardous employment, which disproportionately affects economically weaker and socially backward families.

4. Empowering Migrant and Informal Sector Workers

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, and recent labour codes attempt to extend legal protections to migrant laborers, many of whom belong to marginalized communities. Since most marginalized workers are in

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the unorganized sector, the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, and the Code on Wages, 2019, seek to address their insecurities.

Challenges Faced by Marginalized Groups in Labour Law Enforcement:

Despite strong legal frameworks, marginalized groups face several challenges:

- Lack of awareness about legal rights and entitlements.
- Weak enforcement of labour laws in rural and informal sectors.
- Prevalence of caste- and gender-based occupational segregation.
- Exploitative practices like bonded labour and contract labour.
- Limited access to grievance redressal mechanisms.

The Need for Reforms and Effective Implementation:

For labour law to be truly transformative for marginalized groups, the following steps are necessary:

- Strengthening enforcement mechanisms at both the state and central levels.
- Ensuring accessibility of labour courts and grievance forums to vulnerable workers.
- Enhancing awareness through legal literacy campaigns.
- Expanding social security coverage to include informal and gig workers.
- Promoting inclusive workplace policies that respect diversity and human dignity.

Conclusion:

Labour law is a key tool for promoting social justice, fairness, and empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups who have traditionally faced discrimination and exclusion in the job market. The legislative framework in India, which includes the Equal Remuneration Act, Employees' State Insurance Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, and various social security codes, has made significant progress in tackling issues like wage discrimination, unsafe working conditions, lack of social security, and unequal

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opportunities. These laws legally recognize the rights of women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, migrant workers, and persons with disabilities. This recognition helps build a foundation for inclusive growth and socio-economic empowerment.

Essential to unlock the full potential of labour law as a way to promote social justice and inclusive development in India.

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SHAMANISM AND HEALING PROCEDURES BY THE SAVARAS

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INTRODUCTION

Survival of mankind has been subjected to nature made and as well as man made factors. With the rise of health science, often we lament for the reason of difference in availability of health care of services in various parts of the globe. Even in this century, in many parts of developing nations pervasive lack of resources and presence of diseases constitute an exceedingly heavy burden which is particularly prevalent among the tribal communities inhabiting the hills and forests. During my stay in puttansingi while I was investigating upon the cultural traits and structurisation of the livelihoods of the savara people, I noticed that rarely there is any incident of these tribal people to visit the hospitals or health centres. Even the village hamlets did not have any hospital in its vicinity. There were some health centres which was very poorly equipped and many a times its was mostly empty with no one to attend the patients. But it seemed as if the tribal people are quite unaffected by the deplorable conditions of these health care centres. Majority of these tribal people are not only fit and healthy but also managed to recover from sickness without the help of the health care centres mostly. This pushed me to investigate on their health-seeking behaviour. After a bit of inquiry, it was found that where they have their own stable traditional medicinal system using both 'magico religious' ways and by using plant medicine by "magico religious'' healers, which is not replaced by modern allopathic medicine.To combat the helpless situation it is often observed that in developing nations like ours, the magico-religious based ethno-medicinal practices lead over other practices and traditional healers emerge as the only ray of hope. It has also been observed that the shamans and the ethnomedicinal healers of the communities are considered to be the sole custodian of the community wellbeing.

Methodology

Ethnomedicine is a subject of study of the traditional medicinal practices adopted by various ethnic groups, and especially by indigenous people. The most important aspect in the traditional healing systems is that there is

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continuity in the sense that the knowledge, substances, procedures, and folklore about what constitutes illness – how it is manifested, how it is treated and above all how it is managed – is handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, and as such is the essential syllabi for socialization and enculturation.

This paper explores the patterns of the diagnostic procedure of these magico religious healers that they employ to understand the patient's illness and their procedures of treatment using elements of nature and shamanistic rituals. To understand this complex set of the cultural practices, myths and rituals this research needs to carry out an intensive ethnographic study. There daily practises were observed which was followed by interaction and interpretation. This study required to have an in-depth picture to understand a completely different culture. The present research is concentrated in a locality named puttasingi which is situated in the rayagada district of odhisha. With a long and glorious historical records evident by copper plates, rock inscriptions as well as different coins the district is basically a tribal district and is inhabited by approximately 57.52% tribes, the Kandhas and Saoras being the main tribal group.

Medical anthropology as an emerging branch of anthropology focuses on the sentient body, the native experiences and perception and sound explanation of health and ailment. Native healing practices centre on balancing mind, body, and spirit within the community context. The tribal people are custodian of this unique traditional knowledge systems and their ambient flora and fauna. Many a times we tend to use the word illness and disease as synonyms but while conversing with these people I found out they conceptualize illness as a short term phenomenon for which the solution is rest and food supplement greater than the usual intake and disease as a short and long term phenomenon which either impairs a part of the human body as the whole body to perform its usual chores and requires the administration of medicines and fortification of mind or soul with the unseen forces the spirits, god and goddess etc. Based on Indian experience, Mandelbaum (1981) introduced the idea of transnatural curing, specifically the transcendental and pragmatic complex. Problems that are urgent and personal, like finding lost property or curing illness, are resolved by the pragmatic complex. It is not the same with the transcendental complex. The tribal group under study in this work prioritises long-term lifestyle maintenance that preserves their health equilibrium. They undoubtedly have practical medical solutions that address instantaneous healing, but their primary health philosophy is based on transcendental healing. Their everyday routines and

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cultural norms are ingrained with their aetiology and health care methods. Besides all these the savara people also has a magico religious way of diagnosing and treatment of diseases. Most of the time the healers can understand the disease by their methods of observation and intuition but still there are times when the healer gets confused between two or three diseases and cannot understand which one particular disease is the patient suffering from. In those times they resort to their magico-religious way of diagnosis. In that process they fill a pot with water in which the hands of the patient are dipped. Then the water is poured in a bowl which is placed properly over some husk powder. The names of the suspected diseases are written in the four sides of the bowl. Then the pot is placed in the upside-down manner in the bowl which is filled with water. Then two long strings of thread are hung over that pot in such a way that there appear four threads hanging from the head of the pot. Then the fire is set in each end of the thread then it is observed from which side the bubbles of the water is coming out. The side which will have the bubbles first will indicate that the disease which is written in that side is the actual culprit. They feel that by this way their ancestral spirits help them in identifying the diseases.

The savaras believe that various spirits which are referred to as "sonums" are responsible for disease and illness. They believed many a times illness occurred due to sorcery effects and the shamans were the last resorts in those cases. During my stay I often encountered that the family members reminded the other members of the family to wear the amulet before going to certain places because they feel that certain spirits stay in those places which they believe is responsible for causation of disease. They believe that the spirits are located in sites across the landscape that contained people who had died previously from similar symptoms and who now reside there. Using these sites as an attack base the residents might transmit their symptoms to a living person and draw that person to join them. People who died through accident, murder or suicide resided in the sun. The sites are scattered throughout the village and when a person suffers from these events or dies from such events, they believe that sun sonum has attracted them. Those with skin lesions or convulsions went to sites of leprosy-sonum or epilepsy-sonum respectively and those with cough, rashes or epidemic disease to small-pox sonum. The earth sonum caused swelling and pain in the body and the persons suffering from them is believed to pass the sites where those sonums reside.

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Now the question is many people pass those sites and many a times many of them are not getting attacked by those spirits, that is why they are not falling ill. Their explanation to this is the spirits attack those individuals only from whom they demand something. The spirits release their grasp from the individuals only when their demand is fulfilled. They firmly believed that there is a connection between the ancestral spirits and the patient and the spirits make them ill because his ancestors had a claim on the patient. The living experienced it as sickness and the dead explained it as motive, often in form of reminder or claim. The spirits usually attack their own lineage so while a ritual what we might call healing did aim to cure a patient but it was equally a ritual of acknowledgement.

During my stay in Puttasingi, I was often invited to the huts of the savara people and during those regular visits, I often noticed that several clay pots with big leaves tied across their mouths were hanging from the ceiling and there were splashes of rice-flour water and blood across the underside. These unusual visuals made me very curious and from the conversations with them, I got to know from them that these were residues of the ritual that are specifically done for women and babies that are afflicted by the sun spirit. The soara people believe that there are several spirits which are referred to as sonum or spirits which are responsible for various illness. They believe that sun is the residence for the victims of accidents, murder or suicide, which involves a violation of the boundary of the body so that their victim's soul would rise up to the sun like smoke. Suicides also involved suspension on a rope from a height, symbolizing their journey across open space to the sky. They believe that the sun-sonum had various subpersonalities in particular sun-woman (uyung-boj) who molded babies from molten metal in the womb and her blacksmith slave hammered them into shape. Sun-woman also had a python called moon-eclipse-sonum who caused eclipses by swallowing the moon and then vomiting it out again. This was a very dangerous moment, since by a parallel process the expulsion of the moon might cause the miscarriage of a fetus. Pregnant women donot look at the moon and took special care during an eclipse. To appease them she must perform this cure. But not in her husband's lineage where she now lives. She must go back and do it among the lineage of her birth, even if this is in a different village. Besides the hanging pots, there was another interesting thing that I noticed in some of their houses. It was a structure which is made up of wooden logs. They keep earthen pots in it which they keep rice grain and cover it with banana leaf and paint idital on it. this structure is named janaglosumpur which is kept in the corner of the house to prevent miscarriages and infant mortality. I got to know

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from them that this not just a mere structure. It is built after observing certain ritualistic practises and sacrificing a hen or goat. They also keep a stone which they collect from the side of the waterfall, inside the rice grain.

After one month of the child birth they had a custom of shaving the baby's head for sun-sonum for which two chickens are sacrificed, one each for Gadi-uyung (the sun who molds) and mommo-yung (dumb-sum the one who hammers). Even before shaving, the person who came for shaving waved a leaf over the baby's head, wet her hair and shaved her. He then plastered the hair cuttings with cowdung into a corner high up on the interior wall. There exists a belief among them that the remains of the hair cuttings can be used to harm the baby with sorcery and that is why they took particular care in disposing it, to prevent anyone from reaching that.

After the child is born and he attains the age of 6 months or 1 year, one of the most significant rituals that takes place is the naming ritual. In this ritual they name the infant. The savara community usually give the name of their ancestors to their children because they believe that the spirits of that ancestor would then protect the children from other harmful spirits. They have a very interesting way of naming their infants. They start with the long list of names that their ancestors had and the name hearing which the baby stops crying is finalised as the name for the baby. This naming ritual is celebrated with grandeur among the savara people. It is like a ceremony to them where a large number of men and women sit around the materials that were kept for child's naming ritual. The materials included a heap of unhusked rice, five laia leaves with splashes of alin, a clump of riadi grass, an iron plough tip and branches of kumbali thorn. Some of the women also engages themselves in stitching the leaves into cups with bamboo splinters with a murmur of conversation and laughter. The naming ritual is of huge significance for them as this is often done to calm down the ancestors.

They strongly believe that if this ritual is not done properly then the spirits may cause physical harm to the children which results in suffering of various kinds of diseases. This ritual is like a disease prevention mechanism for the people of this community.

In that event, there was a shaman who was waiting in a dark corner of a room. She was a frail old lady but her power was revealed when she stretched out her legs and began her invocation in a faint quaver voice. The offerings to the ancestors were made and the mother and father of the baby talked with each ancestor through the shaman's

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mouth. Then the old ancestor (ranjnai) finally arrived she stayed for half an hour while a magnificent brass axe was put in the shaman's hand, fine homespun skirts were piled on her outstretched legs and the child was given to her to inspect. The child's mother urged the old Ranjani so that she looks after the baby girl and then the ancestor replied through the mouth of the shaman that she will protect her from all the odds and then there was a series of exchange of dialogues between them.

Conclusion

When the babies fell ill, they administer various kinds of herbal medicines and besides that they also adopt certain magico-religious ways for getting their babies healed. Many a times mothers come to the hut of the shaman with her baby who was not feeding well. They believe that the python' spirits (which stays with the sun spirit) is causing a disruption by suckling the mother's nipple and putting its tail into the baby's mouth as a dummy. The shaman helps out the woman by doing some ritualistic practises. The mother used to hold the baby throughout the ritual and in their role as a patient they seemed like one undifferentiated unit. The shaman stucks rice grains on the forehead of each of them and began to chant. He sprinkled rice-flour water all round and especially on the round underside of an upturned clay pot. This white fluid represented milk. Infants suckled for around three years and since sora did not use wet nurses or the milk of other species, a mother's milk-flow was a matter of life and death. Other than that various other things like baskets of leaves were added, husked rice, unhusked rice, millet and brass figure rings are also used in the ritual procedure.

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SECURITY ACTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MARGINALISED GROUPS IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

Social security is a key part of the welfare state. It ensures economic stability, social fairness, and dignity for citizens, especially those from marginalized and disadvantaged groups. In India, the constitutional framework under the Directive Principles of State Policy requires the state to provide welfare measures that reduce inequalities and protect vulnerable populations. Karnataka, recognized as a socially progressive state, has actively implemented central social security laws, including the Employees' State Insurance Act, the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, and the National Food Security Act. Additionally, the state has developed its own welfare programs, like Anna Bhagya Yojana, Sandhya Suraksha Yojana, and targeted development initiatives for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and backward classes. This paper looks at the role of social security laws in meeting the needs of marginalized communities in Karnataka. It highlights their impact in the areas of economic protection, healthcare access, women's empowerment, and educational improvement. The paper also includes judicial interpretations where the Supreme Court of India has broadened the definition of social security through significant cases like Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation, Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India, and People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India. These cases affirm that the right to life under Article 21 includes the right to livelihood, dignity, and health.

Keywords: Social Security, Marginalised Groups, Karnataka, Welfare State, Labour Law

Introduction:

Social security is a key part of a welfare state. It protects individuals and communities from economic and social risks. It includes various measures aimed at ensuring financial stability, healthcare, education, and support for those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. In India, the Constitution requires the state to promote social welfare and ensure the right to work, education, health, and a decent standard of living through its Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 38, 39, 41, 42, and 43). These provisions serve as the foundation for social

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security laws and welfare programs that protect the interests of vulnerable groups. Karnataka, as a diverse and forward-thinking state, has a large population of marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), women, rural laborers, unorganized sector workers, and differently-abled persons. These groups often struggle to access employment, healthcare, education, and basic services. The social security framework in Karnataka aims to tackle these inequalities. This is achieved through a mix of central laws, such as the Employees' State Insurance Act, Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, and National Food Security Act, along with state-specific programs like Anna Bhagya Yojane (food security), Sandhya Suraksha Yojana (pension for senior citizens), Vidyashree and Vidyasiri scholarships (education for marginalized students), and Vatsalya Scheme (maternal and child health). Social security acts do more than provide financial help; they also promote social inclusion, dignity, and human rights. Judicial actions by the Supreme Court of India, such as in Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation and Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India, have reinforced the idea that the right to livelihood, health, and social protection is part of the right to life under Article 21. These rulings have strengthened the legal framework for implementing social security measures for marginalized populations.

Review of Literature:

1. Social Security and Constitutional Mandate

Scholars like Dr. B. Shiva Rao (2010)[6] And Prof. K.C. Vohra (2015) emphasizes that social security in India is based on the Directive Principles of State Policy and the commitment to social justice in the Constitution. Their research shows how legislation turns constitutional ideals into real welfare measures for marginalized groups.

2. Impact on Marginalised Communities

Research by Dr. S. Ramesh (2018) and Prof. N. Rajasekhar (2020) indicates that social security schemes such as MGNREGA, food security programs, and pension schemes greatly improve the economic and social conditions of SC/ST, OBCs, and rural women. They note that targeted schemes help reduce gaps in access to basic services and improve livelihood security.

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3. Role of Judicial Interventions

Legal scholars like Dr. Upendra Baxi[7] And Prof. P.K. Tripathi (2016) points out how Supreme Court decisions, including Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation and Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India, have broadened the understanding of Article 21 to include the right to livelihood, health, and dignity. This literature highlights the judiciary's role in supporting social security responsibilities for marginalized groups.

4. Challenges in Implementation

Studies by the Institute for Human Development (IHD, 2019) and Centre for Policy Research (CPR, 2021) recognize ongoing challenges like low awareness among beneficiaries, administrative delays, corruption, and social discrimination. These works argue that while the legislation is strong, its effectiveness relies on clear governance and active community involvement.

Methodology:

1. Research Design

The study uses a descriptive and analytical approach, focusing on the role and impact of the social security acts in Karnataka. It looks at both legal frameworks and socio-economic outcomes for marginalized groups.

2. Data Collection

Secondary data has been collected from government reports, legal texts, academic journals, books, and official websites. Key sources include publications from the [8]Ministry of Labour and Employment, Karnataka State Government portals, and studies by respected research institutes.

3. Case Law Analysis

Relevant Supreme Court and Karnataka High Court judgments have been reviewed to understand judicial interpretations of social security rights, especially for marginalized populations. Landmark cases like Olga Tellis

[8] *Government of India, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Annual Report on Social Security Schemes for Unorganized Workers, 2021, New Delhi.*

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v. Bombay Municipal Corporation and Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India are examined for their legal and practical significance.

4. Scheme Evaluation

Central and state social security schemes such as MGNREGA, Anna Bhagya Yojane, Sandhya Suraksha Yojana, and Vidyashree scholarships have been assessed in terms of coverage, implementation effectiveness, and impact on beneficiaries, particularly SC/ST, OBCs, women, and unorganized workers.

Social Security Acts and Their Relevance:

Some of the major central and state legislations applicable to Karnataka are:

1. **The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 (ESI Act)** – Provides medical and cash benefits to workers and their dependents.
2. **The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952** – Ensures savings and retirement security for employees.
3. **The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008** – Extends welfare benefits like insurance, health, and maternity to workers outside the organised sector.
4. **The MGNREGA, 2005** – Guarantees 100 days of wage employment to rural households.
5. **The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996** – Protects construction workers through welfare boards.
6. **The National Food Security Act, 2013** – Ensures subsidised food grains to poor households.

In Karnataka, these central laws are supplemented by **state-specific schemes** such as:

- **Anna Bhagya Yojane** – Free rice distribution to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.
- **Vidyashree and Vidyasiri Scholarships** – Support for SC/ST and backward class students.
- **Vatsalya Scheme** – Health insurance for pregnant women and infants.
- **Sandhya Suraksha Yojana** – Pension for senior citizens from poor families.
- **Ambedkar Development Corporation and Devaraj Urs Backward Classes Development Corporation** – Economic empowerment of marginalised groups.

Challenges in Implementation:

Despite strong legislative and policy frameworks, certain challenges persist:

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- **Lack of awareness** among beneficiaries about their entitlements.
- **Bureaucratic delays** and corruption in delivery mechanisms.
- **Fragmentation of schemes** leading to overlaps and inefficiency.
- **Inadequate funds** and poor monitoring of welfare boards.
- **Social discrimination** prevents marginalised groups from fully utilising benefits.

Case Laws:

A. Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985) 3 SCC 545:

The Supreme Court held that the Right to Livelihood is part of the Right to Life under Article 21. This case is important because it recognized livelihood protection as a constitutional right. It formed the foundation for social security measures for the urban poor and homeless.

B. People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India (1982) 3 SCC 235 (Asiad Workers' Case):

The Court ruled that non-payment of minimum wages is a form of forced labour under Article 23. This judgment protected construction workers, many of whom come from marginalized groups, and emphasized the need for strong labor and social security protections.

C. Francis Coralie Mullin v. Administrator, Union Territory of Delhi (1981) 1 SCC 608:

It expanded the scope of Article 21 to include the Right to Live with Human Dignity, which includes the right to health, food, and social security.

D. Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India (1984) 3 SCC 161:

The Supreme Court recognized the situation of bonded laborers, many of whom belonged to SC/ST communities. It directed the government to provide rehabilitation and social security measures.

E. **Consumer Education & Research Centre v. Union of India (1995) 3 SCC 42:** The Court held that the right to health and medical care is a fundamental right under Article 21. The case highlighted the responsibility of employers and the state to ensure the health and safety of workers, especially those in dangerous industries.

Conclusion:

Social security acts play an important role in promoting social justice, protecting vulnerable populations, and supporting inclusive development in Karnataka. The combination of central laws, such as the Employees' State Insurance Act, Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, and National Food Security Act, along with state-

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specific programs like Anna Bhagya Yojana, Sandhya Suraksha Yojana, and Vidyashree scholarships, has created a strong framework to address the needs of marginalized groups. These measures provide economic stability, healthcare, educational opportunities, and social protection to communities that have faced disadvantages due to caste, gender, economic status, or location. Judicial actions have further reinforced the importance of social security, establishing that the right to livelihood, health, and dignity is a key part of the fundamental right to life under Article 21. Landmark cases like Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation, Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India, and People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India emphasize the state's legal duty to protect marginalized communities and ensure their social and economic welfare. In conclusion, social security acts in Karnataka are not just welfare tools but also ways to empower people and promote social equity. They greatly contribute to reducing poverty, improving human dignity, and allowing marginalized groups to take part fully in socio-economic life.

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TIPU SULTAN'S ADMINISTRATION IN THE DEVANAHALLI REGION: A STUDY OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

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Abstract

The Devanahalli area holds a unique and crucial position in the history of the Kingdom of Mysore under **Tipu Sultan (1782–1799)**, primarily as his **birthplace** (born in 1751) and a strategic fortress. This paper analyzes the administrative and economic significance of Devanahalli within Tipu's broader framework of centralized governance and reform. The study highlights the regional application of his revolutionary **land reforms (Amani system)**, his focus on **horticulture and commercial agriculture**, and the military role of the Devanahalli Fort. Despite its personal significance, Tipu's administration viewed Devanahalli as a vital component in the northern defense and economic diversification of the Mysore State, reflecting his modern, anti-feudal approach to governance.

1. Introduction:

Devanahalli, located approximately 35 km north of Bengaluru, transitioned into a key administrative and military outpost following its capture by Tipu's father, **Hyder Ali**, in the mid-18th century.

- **Birthplace and Renaming:** Tipu Sultan was born near the Devanahalli Fort in 1751. Following his ascent to the throne, he is known to have renamed the town **Yousafabad** (the abode of Yousuf, a reference to his father, Hyder Ali), though the new moniker did not gain widespread usage.
- **Military Fortification:** The **Devanahalli Fort**, originally built by Malla Byre Gowda in the 16th century, was rebuilt in stone by Hyder Ali and was crucial to the defense of the northern frontiers of Mysore against the Marathas and the British. The fort fell to the British under Lord Cornwallis during the Third Anglo-Mysore War in 1791, underscoring its strategic importance in the regional conflicts.

2. Administrative and Economic Reforms in the Region

Tipu Sultan's administration was marked by an emphasis on centralization, anti-feudal policies, and state-led economic modernization. The Devanahalli region, being a part of the core territory near the capital, was a direct beneficiary of these reforms.

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2.1. Land and Revenue System

The region was integrated into the new, standardized land revenue system:

- **Abolition of Feudalism (Anti-Poligar Measures):** Tipu undertook a sustained campaign against local feudal chiefs, the **Poligars (Palegars)**, who traditionally held autonomous power and collected revenue. Land confiscated from these chiefs was directly administered by the state and redistributed to farmers and tenants, effectively making Tipu one of the earliest champions of land reform.
- **The Amani System:** Tipu replaced the old system with the *Amani* or direct revenue management system, where the state dealt directly with the cultivators, eliminating the intermediary layer of hereditary landlords and tax farmers. This was aimed at maximizing state revenue while securing tenure for the actual tillers of the soil.

2.2. Promotion of Horticulture and Commercial Crops

The fertile lands surrounding Devanahalli were specifically targeted for cultivating high-value commercial crops:

- **Specialized Cultivation:** Tipu actively promoted the cultivation of horticultural produce and cash crops. He famously encouraged the migration of the **Thigalars** community, known for their expertise in vegetable cultivation, to areas including Bangalore, Hoskote, Kolar, and Devanahalli.
- **The Devanahalli Pomelo:** Tipu is credited with introducing the **pomelo** fruit variety to the Devanahalli region, which became locally famous, showcasing his interest in agricultural innovation through foreign contacts.
- **State-Owned Commerce:** The economic administration involved state monopolies on certain commercial products, and the Devanahalli area, through its production of valuable crops, would have contributed to the larger state-managed trade network.

3. Military and Civil Administration

The fort served not only as a military garrison but also as a hub for civil administration under Tipu's regional governance structure.

- **Qil'ahdars and Amildars:** The fort would have been under the command of a **Qil'ahdar** (Fort Commander), while the civil and revenue administration of the surrounding area (a *taluq*) was managed

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by an **Amildar**. Tipu enforced strict rules on his officials, holding them directly accountable for the welfare of the cultivators and for efficient revenue collection.

- **Welfare Measures:** His administrative orders show an emphasis on local infrastructure; for instance, he mandated the repair and construction of **canals and embankments** and ordered that village *Patels* (headmen) plant **avenue trees** (particularly useful fruit trees like mango and tamarind) along roads, directly impacting the local environment and livelihood in areas like Devanahalli.

4. Conclusion

The Devanahalli area under Tipu Sultan was more than just a historical landmark marking his birthplace; it functioned as a practical embodiment of his reformist state. The administration implemented his centralized revenue policies, promoted pioneering horticultural practices, and reinforced the region's military significance as a key defensive bastion. The administrative footprint in Devanahalli clearly demonstrates Tipu's ambition to create a modern, economically robust, and centrally controlled state, leveraging local resources for both defense and commercial prosperity.

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A STUDY ON AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN FARMERS WELFARE IN MALNAD REGION

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Abstract

Agriculture is the key contributor to the Indian economy. More than 80% of the GDP depends on the agriculture. Still agriculture is neglecting in India by the youths while selecting as employment and they selecting various other fields even though they earn less than agriculture. The only reason behind it is their believed that agriculture is very difficult, unstable pricing for agricultural products and lack of support to them. There is need to analyse the problems of the farmers and agriculture cooperatives which are meant for the farmers development. However, the present study is undertaken to analyse the role of agriculture cooperative societies in farmers development in Malnad region i.e. Shivamogga district.

Keywords: Agriculture, Cooperatives, Farmer, Malnad

Introduction:

Agriculture is the major economic activity in India. Agriculture not only provides the food and raw materials but also creates the major portion of the employment opportunity. Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy from long back. Introduction and growth of the industrialization and growth in other sectors, agriculture continues to play a very important role in the country's economic development and livelihood. It is not only an economic activity but a cultural matter of the nation. Farmers themselves form the Cooperative societies in their region to get support and to share information among them thereby to get the support. However, the present study is undertaken to analyse the role of agriculture cooperative societies in farmer development in Malnad Region.

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Literatures Review:

Kumar, (2018) in his study on the **"**Future of Co-operative Movement in India and Abroad" describes the Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) are called as Mini Banks or Rural Credit Banks. Primary agriculture cooperative societies provide the loan in less interest to its members. With the credit facility it also provides the seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, agricultural machineries etc to its members.

Agrawal, (2012) in their study **"**Co-Operatives in India History, Problems and Reforms" discussed about the role of the cooperative societies in the economic and social life of the poor in rural areas. The study also shows that the, Five year plan provides the base for the development of the rural agriculture.The study also reveals that the nature of the cooperative society activities and member attitude like non exploiting, self initiated, one vote for one member, de-centralised decision etc.

Getnet et al., (2012) in their research on "Agricultural cooperatives and rural livelihoods: Evidence from Ethiopia. The study also found that the lifestyle and economic condition of the farmers comes under the cooperative society are improved. The study also provides some suggestions to improve the cooperative societies in initiating, developing and supporting the farmers or the members of the society.

Statement of the Problem:

Farmers are the backbone to the society still they are facing many problems. To resolve the problems of the farmers they only found the solution that to establish the cooperative societies. However, there is need to study about such cooperative societies to find the loopholes and uncontrollable barriers in the cooperative societies. Therefore the present study is undertaken to analyse the role of cooperative societies in the development of the farmers in Malnad region is undertaken.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are

- To understand about the cooperative societies and their work in the Malnad region.

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- To find the problems faced by the farmers and cooperative societies in the study area.
- To analyse the prospects of cooperative societies in the development of farmers.
- To examine the economic & social benefits from cooperative societies to the farmers.

Research Methodology:

The present study is descriptive and theoretical in nature. It will be examines the economic and social issues of the farmers and the cooperative societies in Malnad region. The present study includes only secondary data which is collected with the help of website, journals, articles, books and Government records, cooperative society's documents etc.

Scope of the Study:

The present study is on the role of cooperative societies in development of the farmers in Malnad region. The present study is covers the Shivamogga district only.There are many organisations and government departments working on behalf of farmers the study restricted only on the cooperative societies in the study area by keeping all other things constant.

Discussion:

In ancient days before independence the people and farmers are suffering from the dominance of the rich people and the kings. To overcome from these problems the committee was established by the British Government with the head of Sir Fredrick Nikalson. In 1954 as per the report on the Rural Credit, there are three stages of the cooperative banks are established in Karnataka they are,

- Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS)
- District Credit Cooperative Banks (DCCB)
- State Credit Banks (SCB)

Cooperative movement is considering as one of weapon to the rural development. At present statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and farmer welfare more than 99.5% of villages are comes under the cooperative sector.The Malnad region of Karnataka cooperative sectors features a diverse range of societies, with a strong

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base on **agricultural credit, arecanut and cocoa marketing, dairy production, and various producer-based co-operatives** some of them are Areca Marketing Co-Operative Society and the Karnataka Milk Federation. The cooperative sector serve as important economic drivers, providing services, processing agricultural products, and improving the livelihoods of the members which means farmers.

Major Cooperative sectors in the Malnad Region are

- Agriculture and Credit
- Dairy
- Marketing and Consumer Cooperatives
- Credit Cooperatives

The present study is focuses on the Agriculture and Credit Cooperatives in the Malnad region. Primary Agriculture and Credit Societies are undertaken these types of the Cooperative societies. The agricultural cooperatives are backbone to the farmers in the Malnad region. They serve the farmers in both the economic and social benefits. They are

Economic Benefits:

1. **Increased Bargaining Power:**Usually at the time of purchase farmers facing the problem of high price from the seller of the agriculture inputs like fertilisers, pesticides etc. With the intervention of the cooperative societies farmers may get the products with reasonable price.
2. **Access to Credit and Inputs:**Farmers may get the loans with the less interest and easy procedures than the banks and other financial institutions
3. Now days, cooperativesalso provides the storage facilities to its members at free of cost or minimum charges based on the norms of the society.
4. **Financial and Marketing Support:**most of the Societies like MAMCOS offer financial support to the farmers like harvest loans and advance payments, enabling farmers to carry out processing activities and develop their entrepreneurial ventures nearby.

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Social Benefits:

1. **Empowerment of Farmers:**Cooperatives provide the trainings and information to the farmers to make them empower. Cooperatives also includes the farmers in the decision making activities, gives voting, securing land-use rights, and improving their social and economic standing.
2. **Promoting Sustainable Employment:**Cooperatives encourage the rural farmers to become self employed along with the farming. They provide training to them to establish their own business by using their agricultural produce as raw materials.
3. **Community Development:** cooperatives in the study area are focus on collective welfare, working to help all members and improve the overall economic condition of the community.
4. **Contribution of Cooperatives to Malnad's Economy:**
5. **Focus on Local Needs:Malnad** Cooperatives are addresses local needs, utilizing local talent and leadership to drive development in areas like agriculture.
6. **Supporting Key Crops:**In a Malnad region, vital crops are areca nuts; cooperatives play a key role in supporting the entrepreneurs and farmers involved in these specific agricultural sectors. Along with the primary agricultural product cooperatives also support many subsidiary products with the main product.
7. **Resilience to Shocks:**Cooperatives creates resilience by creating robust business models that can sustain economic and environmental shocks, ensuring the stability of farmers' livelihoods.

Suggestions:

- Cooperative societies should be fully farmers oriented and be governing properly.
- The study also suggests that the training facilities given by the cooperatives should be improved in the Malnad region.
- Cooperative societies should need to improve or minimise the credit issue and collecting rules to the small farmers.
- Cooperative societies in study area should integrate the rural and urban communities.
- Cooperatives should ensure the high accountability and transparency.
- To improve the efficiency of the cooperative sector, it should develop and maintain the digital infrastructure.

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- Cooperative focused courses should be established in the higher education to create awareness about it.

Conclusion:

Agriculture cooperative societies are the key supporters for the farmers in the Malnad region. There is a continuous research is essential in the field of agriculture cooperative sector to make strong the agriculture in this competitive era. In this context, the present study is an effort to analyse role of agriculture cooperatives in development of farmers in Malnad region.

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SOCIAL REALISM IN THE SELECTIVE PLAYS OF GIRISH KARNAD AND MAHESH DATTANI: A STUDY

Dr. Nanjappa

Associate Professor of English, GFGC Chikkaballapura Karnataka

1. Introduction:

A. Contextual Background:

- Briefly introduce modern Indian English-language theatre and its significant playwrights.
- Introduce **Girish Karnad** and **Mahesh Dattani** as two towering figures, noting their distinct yet influential approaches.

- **B. Defining Social Realism:**
  - Provide a clear, academic definition of **"Social Realism"** in the context of theatre/literature (focus on depicting contemporary life, social issues, class, gender, and power structures, often with a reformist agenda).
- **C. Thesis Statement (The Core Argument):**
  - State the paper's main argument clearly. *Example:* "While Girish Karnad primarily uses myth and history as a *vehicle* to comment on contemporary social issues (indirect realism), Mahesh Dattani employs an overtly naturalistic style to directly and often controversially confront specific, marginalized realities in modern India (direct realism). This paper will analyze how selected plays by both playwrights utilize these distinct modes to achieve a common goal of **social critique and consciousness-raising**."
- **D. Scope and Selection:**
  - Explicitly name the **selective plays** you will analyze for each playwright (e.g., Karnad's *Tughlaq* or *Hayavadana* and Dattani's *Tara* or *Bravely Fought the Queen*). *This is crucial for the paper's focus.*

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2. Girish Karnad and the Mythopoetic Route to Social Realism (Approx. 30-35% of the paper)

- **A. Karnad's Dramatic Technique:** Discuss his characteristic use of **myth, history, and folklore** (the Puranic and historical canvas).
- **B. Analysis of Selected Play(s) - The Indirect Critique:**
  - **Focus on the social *relevance* of the ancient/historical narrative.** Show how the characters, conflicts, and themes in the play (e.g., the failure of idealism, the crisis of identity, the clash between tradition and modernity) are a mirror to post-Independence Indian society.
  - ***Example (if using Tughlaq):*** The erratic governance and alienation of the protagonist reflect the political disillusionment and fragmentation of post-Nehruvian India, a deeply *social* commentary masked by historical drama.
  - **Conclusion for this section:** Establish that Karnad's realism is **"allegorical"** or **"subtextual."**

3. Mahesh Dattani and the Direct Confrontation with Social Issues (Approx. 30-35% of the paper)

- **A. Dattani's Dramatic Technique:** Discuss his use of **Naturalism, domestic settings, and explicit social taboos.** Note his focus on the urban middle class and their hidden conflicts.
- **B. Analysis of Selected Play(s) - The Direct Critique:**
  - **Focus on the immediate, observable social issues.** Analyze how Dattani tackles specific topics head-on.
  - ***Example (if using Tara):*** Analyze the themes of **gender discrimination** (specifically against female twins), patriarchal structures in the family, and the hypocrisy of urban morality, demonstrating an overt commitment to social realism.
  - ***Example (if using Bravely Fought the Queen):*** Analyze the themes of **homosexuality, marital abuse, and gender roles** within a dysfunctional family structure.
  - **Conclusion for this section:** Establish that Dattani's realism is **"explicit," "psychological,"** and rooted in the **"domestic sphere."**

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4. Comparative Analysis and Synthesis (Approx. 10-15% of the paper)

- **A. Contrasting Approaches to Social Realism:**
    - **Karnad:** Uses macro-narratives (history/myth) for a broad social commentary. Focuses on the state, power, and existential dilemmas.
    - **Dattani:** Uses micro-narratives (family/domestic) for a specific social critique. Focuses on identity, gender, and sexual politics.
- **B. Shared Goal:**
    - Despite differences in form, both writers aim to unsettle the audience and challenge accepted social norms, thus fulfilling the ultimate function of social realism: to initiate **critical reflection and social change.**

5. Conclusion:

A. Restatement of Thesis: Briefly reiterate the main argument—how Karnad's indirect approach and Dattani's direct approach both serve the cause of social realism in Indian theatre.

- **B. Summary of Findings:** Summarize the key observations from the analyses of the selected plays.
- **C. Concluding Thought:** Offer a final statement on the enduring legacy of Karnad and Dattani in shaping a socially conscious, critically engaged dramatic tradition in India.

Key Terminology and Concepts to Use:

Social Realism, Mythopoetic Drama, Naturalism/Psychological Realism, Subversion of Norms, Patriarchy and Gender Politics, Marginalized Identities, Allegory and Historical Parallel, Didacticism vs. Subtext

Next Steps for Your Research:

To effectively write this paper, you must first:

1. **Select the specific plays** for analysis (e.g., one or two from each playwright).
2. **Read and re-read** the selected texts.

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3. **Search for critical articles** that discuss social realism, postmodernism, and feminist/gender studies in relation to the chosen plays.
4. **Write the first draft** following the structure provided above.

I will use the Google search tool to provide you with initial critical resources that can aid your research. The title you have provided, "Social Realism in the Selective Plays of Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani: A Study," is an excellent topic for a national conference paper.

Based on scholarly consensus, the defining contrast is that **Karnad utilizes myth and history as a metaphoric vehicle for social commentary (Indirect Realism), while Dattani employs a naturalistic/domestic setting to confront contemporary social taboos directly (Direct Realism).** Both approaches achieve the goal of *Social Realism* by exposing the hypocrisy and dysfunction of Indian society. Here is a comprehensive framework and critical analysis to guide your paper's composition, incorporating the essential scholarly points.

Social Realism in the Selective Plays of Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani: A Study

1. Introduction: Two Streams of Social Critique

Indian English drama gained prominence by reflecting the socio-political complexities of the post-colonial nation. Among its most towering figures, **Girish Karnad** and **Mahesh Dattani** offer distinct, yet equally potent, approaches to **social realism**. Social realism is defined here as the literary endeavor to depict life and society "as it is usually experienced," focusing on class, gender, and power structures with an implicit critique of social and moral institutions.

This study argues that while Karnad embeds social realism through **mythological and historical allegory**, Dattani engages it via **domestic naturalism and explicit confrontation of taboo subjects**. By analyzing selected plays, this paper will comparatively evaluate their methods of socio-cultural exposure and reform.

2. Girish Karnad: The Mythopoetic Vehicle of Indirect Realism

Karnad's genius lies in his ability to probe the contemporary Indian psyche using indigenous forms and ancient narratives. His realism is **indirect, symbolic, and subtextual**.

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A. Allegorical Critique of Power and Politics

In plays like ***Tughlaq*** (1964), Karnad uses 14th-century history to craft a powerful allegory of post-Independence political disillusionment.

- The political failures of the Sultan, Tughlaq, mirror the **decay of Nehruvian idealism** and the rise of political hypocrisy and unchecked bureaucratic power in modern India.
- The chaos and violence unleashed by Tughlaq are a social critique of the danger posed by a disconnect between **idealism and practical governance**. The play suggests that the flaws in the political structure are perennial, transcending historical periods.

B. Subversion of Patriarchy and Identity through Myth

In plays like ***Hayavadana*** (1971) and ***Nāga-Maṇḍala*** (1988), Karnad uses folk tales and myths to expose the unchanging nature of **gender inequality** and the psychological complexity of **identity crisis**.

- The head-body conundrum in *Hayavadana* is not merely fantastical; it is a profound social statement on the modern Indian woman (Padmini) trapped between a desire for **intellectual completeness (Devadatta's mind)** and **physical fulfillment (Kapila's body)**. The play implicitly critiques a patriarchal system that fragments a woman's desire.
- In *Nāga-Maṇḍala*, the oppression and neglect of the newly married Rani, who is visited by a 'Nāga' (serpent) in the guise of her husband, functions as a critique of the **patriarchal marriage institution**, revealing the loneliness, exploitation, and psychological complexities faced by women under traditional male dominance.

3. Mahesh Dattani: The Domestic Frame of Direct Realism

Dattani is a pioneer of modern Indian English theatre whose work is marked by a **naturalistic and psychological realism**. His plays operate within contemporary, often urban, middle-class settings, allowing him to launch an **unflinching, direct assault on social taboos**.

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A. Exposing Gender Bias and Dysfunctional Families

Dattani's plays frequently turn the lens onto the urban family, revealing its hypocrisies and deeply ingrained biases.

- ***Tara*** (1990) is a quintessential text of direct social realism. It explicitly tackles the issue of **gender-based discrimination** and the insidious preference for the male child, demonstrated by the surgical separation of the conjoined twins. The play is an immediate, devastating critique of how patriarchy operates even in educated, metropolitan families.

B. Addressing Marginalized and Taboo Identities

Dattani is celebrated for bringing subjects considered "forbidden" or "alien" to the center stage of Indian theatre.

- In ***Seven Steps Around the Fire*** (1998), he directly addresses the **marginalization and violation of the *hijra* (transgender) community**. The play functions as an appeal for **human rights** and social inclusion, using the murder mystery format to highlight the institutional neglect and prejudiced mindset of society towards this community.
- This direct focus makes Dattani a voice for the **queer and marginalized**, using the stage as a direct platform for socio-cultural revolution.

4. Comparative Synthesis: Divergent Forms, Common Purpose

The comparative study reveals the playwrights' distinct dramaturgical choices for enacting social realism:

Feature	Girish Karnad (Indirect Realism)	Mahesh Dattani (Direct Realism)
Technique	Myth, History, Folklore, *Yakshagana* elements.	Naturalism, Time-jumps, Domestic Setting.
Focus/Scope	Macro-level: State, Political Power, Universal Existential Dilemmas.	Micro-level: Family, Gender Politics, Marginalized Identities (LGBTQ+).

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Feature	Girish Karnad (Indirect Realism)	Mahesh Dattani (Direct Realism)
Social Critique	Allegorical; the past *reflects* the present (e.g., Tughlaq is a timeless failure).	Explicit; the present is *confronted* directly (e.g., *Tara* is a modern tragedy).
Key Theme	Identity and Perfection (Karnad).	Hypocrisy and Taboo (Dattani).

5. Conclusion:

Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani stand as twin pillars of Indian social theatre. Karnad demonstrates that true social realism can be achieved even when dressed in the robes of history and mythology, proving that the human dilemma and social evils are **archetypal and enduring**. Dattani, conversely, shows the necessity of **uncompromising naturalism** to drag contemporary societal ills—from gender bias to homophobia—out of the shadows and into the stark light of the stage. Together, their works constitute a powerful, multifaceted, and deeply resonant body of social realist drama that continues to challenge, provoke, and shape India's cultural and ethical landscape.

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UGC and the NAAC function as the Twin Pillars of Regulation and Quality Assurance in Indian Higher Education

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Abstract

This article analyzes the **dual institutional framework** of the **University Grants Commission (UGC)** and the **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)**, which are the foundational pillars for quality assurance and regulation in Indian higher education. The **UGC**, established in 1956, acts as the **apex statutory body**, responsible for **coordination, standard setting, funding, and recognition** of universities and colleges, thus providing the administrative and financial mandate. Complementary to this, **NAAC**, established by the UGC in 1994, is an **autonomous body** that executes the quality review through a robust, **criteria-based assessment and accreditation** process, promoting a culture of **continuous quality enhancement** and self-improvement in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). Furthermore, their roles are increasingly aligned with the transformative goals of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, making their coordinated efforts indispensable for improving the **global competitiveness and social relevance** of Indian higher education.

Keywords: University Grants Commission (UGC)**,** National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)**,** Higher Education (HE)**,** Quality Assurance**,** Accreditation**,** Regulation**,** Funding**,** Academic Standards

Introduction:

The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** is a statutory body established in 1956 by an Act of Parliament. It is the apex body responsible for the coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards of university education in India. Its role is multi-faceted, encompassing both an administrative and a developmental dimension.

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Key Pillars of UGC's Mandate

Pillar	Function	Impact on HEIs
Regulation and Standard Setting	Prescribes minimum standards for courses, faculty qualifications, academic infrastructure, and curriculum.	Ensures a baseline level of **quality and uniformity** across the vast and diverse Indian HE system.
Funding and Development	Allocates and disburses grants to recognized universities and colleges for development, infrastructure, research, and faculty salaries.	Provides the **financial backbone** necessary for HEIs to expand, upgrade, and sustain operations.
Coordination and Linkage	Acts as the vital link between the Union and State Governments and the HEIs.	Facilitates the execution of national educational policies and promotes a **unified educational structure**.
Recognition	Grants recognition to universities and colleges, which is a prerequisite for receiving UGC grants and affiliating colleges.	Confers **legitimacy** to an institution's degree-granting power.

The Role of NAAC:

The **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)** was established by the UGC in 1994 as an autonomous body with the primary mandate to assess and accredit HEIs in India. Its vision is to make **quality the defining element** of higher education. NAAC shifts the focus from mere compliance to a culture of continuous quality enhancement.

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NAAC's Seven Criteria (The Pillars of Quality)

NAAC's assessment framework is based on seven core criteria, which serve as the internal pillars of quality for any HEI:

1. **Curricular Aspects:** Relates to the academic flexibility, design, and enrichment of the curriculum.
2. **Teaching-Learning and Evaluation:** Focuses on student enrollment, catering to diversity, and effective teaching methodologies and assessment reforms.
3. **Research, Innovations, and Extension:** Measures the quality of research output, research facilities, consultancies, and extension activities for societal benefit.
4. **Infrastructure and Learning Resources:** Evaluates the physical infrastructure, library, and modern ICT-enabled learning resources.
5. **Student Support and Progression:** Assesses student support mechanisms, career guidance, and the success rate of students in higher studies or employment.
6. **Governance, Leadership, and Management:** Examines the effective functioning, strategic planning, and financial management of the institution, including the role of the **Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)**.
7. **Institutional Values and Best Practices:** Assesses the institution's efforts in promoting value-based education, social responsibility, and distinctive practices for quality sustenance.

UGC and NAAC: The Complementary Pillars

The UGC and NAAC are not isolated entities but operate in a **synergistic relationship**, ensuring a comprehensive approach to quality management in Indian HE:

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- **UGC Sets the Mandate, NAAC Executes the Review:** UGC's regulations often necessitate an HEI to undergo NAAC accreditation to be eligible for certain grants, autonomy status, or other privileges. For example, a high NAAC grade is a criterion for an institution to be considered for **Category I or II status** as per UGC's graded autonomy regulations.
- **From Input to Outcome:** UGC traditionally focuses on **Input** standards (like faculty-student ratio, infrastructure norms), whereas NAAC primarily focuses on the **Process and Outcome** (teaching-learning effectiveness, research quality, student progression).
- **Sustaining Quality:** NAAC advocates for the establishment of the **Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)** in every accredited institution. This mechanism is crucial for continuous self-evaluation and quality sustenance, which aligns with UGC's broader mission of maintaining academic standards.

Alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has further strengthened the need for this dual-pillar structure, aiming for a "light but tight" regulatory framework. Both UGC and NAAC are pivotal in realizing NEP 2020's goals:

- **NAAC Reforms:** The proposed future shift in NAAC to a **Binary Accreditation System** (Yes/No for baseline quality) and **Maturity-Based Grading** (for excellence) directly supports NEP's call for transparent and progressive accreditation.
- **UGC's New Focus:** UGC's guidelines on **Internationalisation of Higher Education** and promotion of multidisciplinary studies reflect its role in implementing the transformative vision of the NEP.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the UGC and NAAC form a powerful institutional architecture. The **UGC** provides the necessary **regulatory framework and financial resources**, while **NAAC** drives a culture of **self-improvement and quality assurance**. Their coordinated efforts are indispensable for enhancing the global competitiveness and social relevance of Indian higher education.

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Role of Gen Z in Nation Building

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Abstract

The significance of youth in nation-building and development is paramount, as the progress of any nation is rooted in its future generations. The prospects for democracy, the economy, technological advancements, and healthcare innovations are contingent upon the contributions of young individuals. Today's youth, referred to as Generation Z, transcend the label of merely being the 'digital generation'—they are catalysts for change, advocates, and leaders who are actively shaping the future of both society and politics. Their dedication to social justice, transparency, and mental health underscores a collective aspiration for a more inclusive and equitable world.

Swami Vivekananda once remarked, 'My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, and from them will emerge my workers.' This statement encapsulates the profound influence that youth can exert on society. This paper explores discussions regarding the ways in which the younger generation contributes to nation-building and national development, drawing upon secondary data.

Key words: Gen Z, Nation-building , HDI

Introduction

India stands as the largest democracy globally and is the second most populous nation in the world. With 65% of its population being Youth, this statistic underscores the significance of the younger generation and their immense value as an asset to the country. The current youth are referred to as Generation Z. This term encompasses individuals born approximately between 1997 and 2012. This timeframe indicates that Generation Z follows Generation Y (millennials) and precedes Generation Alpha. By 2025, members of Gen Z will be aged between 13 and 28 years. They represent more than just the "digital generation"; they are catalysts for change, advocates, and leaders who are actively shaping the future of society and politics. Their dedication to social justice, transparency, and mental health illustrates a yearning for a more inclusive and equitable world. This generation is unique as it is the first to have been born and raised in an environment saturated with readily available technology, which distinctly influences their perspectives compared to previous generations. The contribution of Gen Z to nation-building is crucial. The initiatives they undertake and the ideas they introduce will guide the country towards success. Despite being the largest democracy in the world, India continues to struggle in achieving the economic prosperity necessary to establish a significant presence on the global stage. It

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has been 78 years since India gained independence, and during this time, the nation has grappled with several persistent issues, including corruption, unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, inadequate healthcare services, and violence against both men and women. Currently, India ranks 126th on the World Happiness Index, 108th on the Gender Development Index, and 132nd on the Human Development Index. The country's standings in various development indices have shown little improvement over recent years.

Theoretical frame work

Karl Mannheim's Theory of Generations, presented in his 1928 essay "The Problem of Generations," is a significant concept within the sociology of knowledge. It elucidates how individuals of similar ages are collectively influenced by the specific socio-historical contexts they encounter during their formative years, resulting in a unique worldview. Mannheim posits that while all members of a generation share a common experience (such as a significant revolution), their reactions to it can vary greatly, even to the point of opposition. Mannheim contends that a generation is a crucial category for social analysis, acting as a conduit through which social and cultural transformations occur. This process is primarily facilitated by the continuous emergence of new cohorts (generations) that replace the older ones, thereby introducing "fresh contact" and offering new interpretations of the inherited culture.

Review of Literature

Numerous publications address Generation Z, ranging from sociological studies to fictional narratives that reflect their experiences. These works frequently delve into the traits, values, and influence of Gen Z.

iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood by Jean M. Twenge: This significant study utilizes extensive datasets to analyze the impact of smartphones and social media on adolescents and young adults.

Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America's Future" by Jean M. Twenge: This book provides a comprehensive overview of all existing generations, offering context for the distinctive characteristics of Gen Z

Gen Z, Explained: The Art of Living in a Digital Age" by Roberta Katz, et al.: This work examines how this generation manages life, identity, and relationships in a digitally dominated environment.

Generation Z in the Workplace: Helping the Newest Generation in the Workforce Build Successful Working Relationships and Career Paths" by Candace Steele Flippin: This book emphasizes Gen Z's transition into the professional realm.

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Objective of the study

1. Understanding Gen Z in a positive light

2. Explore the contribution of Gen Z to national development

Role of Gen Z in Nation Building

Based on secondary data, this article discusses the contributions of Generation Z to national development. It addresses aspects such as the Human Development Index (HDI), youth participation in politics, technology, economic growth, and the social responsibilities of young people in nation-building.

Human Development Index (HDI) and gen Z

The significance of the Human Development Index (HDI) is evident in its ability to reflect a nation's genuine advancement by integrating health, education, and income, rather than focusing solely on economic factors. Grasping the concept of HDI is essential for academic assessments, competitive examination preparation, and for individuals keen on understanding the actual development of nations. This notion is a fundamental aspect of Commerce and Economics education, enabling one to look beyond mere economic statistics. The sole method through which India can enhance its standings in these indices is by empowering the Z generation of the nation. It is imperative for them to take initiative and step forward to advocate for a brighter future, which can only be achieved if adequate opportunities are made available to the youth across various sectors.

Gen Z and Technology

The swift advancement of technology, especially in the domains of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and digital education, has influenced industries across the globe. In India, the digital transformation is spearheaded by younger generation. Equipped with access to contemporary education and technology, they are paving the path for a more progressive nation. Youth of India serve as the catalyst for numerous start-ups and technology-driven enterprises. Programs like Digital India offer avenues for young individuals to cultivate technology and enhance productivity in diverse sectors. The innovation of the youth is fostering a technologically sophisticated India.

Gen Z and Economic Development

One of the key components in nation-building is the promotion of economic growth and development. The youth (Z) serve as the main catalysts for the economic engine of the country. They are responsible for job creation, establishing businesses, and contributing to various sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture, information

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technology, and renewable energy. initiatives like Start-Up India and Skill India have empowered the youth to position India as a center for innovation and entrepreneurship. Beyond entrepreneurship, young people are also making significant contributions in traditional sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure, and services.

Gen Z and the Social Responsibility

n addition to technology, young people are significantly contributing to the resolution of social issues and addressing societal challenges. Initiatives led by youth in areas like environmental conservation, rural development, and community welfare are making a difference in achieving sustainable solutions. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in bridging educational gaps and enhancing digital literacy in rural areas. This ensures that all citizens can reap the benefits of a smart India.

Conclusion

The distinctive combination of digital proficiency, entrepreneurial mindset, and ethical/social awareness positions them not merely as a consumer group, but as an active force that is fundamentally transforming the national landscape in areas such as technology, economy, and governance. Generation Z is becoming increasingly pivotal in influencing societal and political environments. This group utilizes digital platforms for advocacy, championing social justice, climate initiatives, and political participation.

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CHALLENGES FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY — A STUDY

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Abstract

The digital economy has created new forms of work, finance, learning, and entrepreneurship. However, working women face a distinct set of barriers that reduce their ability to fully participate and benefit. This paper examines those challenges using recent evidence from India and comparative findings from global studies. It synthesizes data on the gender gaps in mobile and internet access, labour-force participation in gig/platform work, cybercrime and online harassment, and barriers to digital entrepreneurship. The analysis shows that while access gaps are narrowing, persistent inequalities in ownership, skills, safety, and social norms continue to limit women's economic opportunities in the digital age. The paper concludes with targeted policy recommendations to close these gaps and to enable safer, more productive digital participation for working women.

Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technologies and platforms has reshaped labour markets and economic interactions. Digital work — including platform and gig work, remote employment, and e-commerce entrepreneurship — offers potential flexibility and income opportunities particularly relevant for women balancing work and care responsibilities. Yet, evidence shows that women face specific structural, social and technological barriers that restrict their digital participation and economic returns. This study focuses on identifying and analysing these challenges, using recent data and reports, primarily from India, with global comparisons where useful.

Objectives

1. To document the principal challenges working women face in the digital economy.
2. To present recent empirical data on gender gaps in access, participation, and safety in digital work.
3. To analyse how structural factors (affordability, skills, safety, norms) reduce women's gains from digitalisation.
4. To recommend targeted policy interventions to improve women's digital economic inclusion.

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3. Data sources and methodology

This is a mixed-methods desk study combining secondary quantitative data and policy reports. Key data sources used include the GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report, India-focused data and reporting (India Spend, ICRIER), NITI Aayog policy brief material on the gig economy, and official crime statistics on cybercrimes (NCRB/MoSPI summaries). Where possible, I use the latest available figures reported in these sources to highlight trends and magnitudes. (See references.)

Literature review — what previous studies show

- Gendered access: Numerous studies report that women are less likely than men to own mobile phones and to use mobile internet: an access problem that cascades into online economic opportunities. gsma.com+1
- Gig economy and precarity: Research shows that although platform work can provide flexibility, it often exposes women to precarious pay, lack of social protection, and safety risks. SSRN+1
- Safety and harassment: Rising cybercrime and online harassment disproportionately affect women and constrain their online participation and entrepreneurship. ncrb.gov.in+1

Key empirical findings (data summary)

The mobile & internet access gap (ownership & usage)

- The GSMA Mobile Gender Gap report (2024) shows that women are still less likely to use mobile internet than men; global mobile internet gender gap narrowed but remains significant — estimated at around **15%** in recent reporting. This means hundreds of millions fewer women use mobile internet compared to men.
- India-specific reporting shows persistent disparities in phone ownership and usage: surveys and journalistic analysis indicate large gaps in mobile ownership (figures such as ~84% men vs ~56% women for phone ownership have been reported in recent India-focused analyses). Lower device ownership and control over devices constrains women's ability to work online. Indiaspend

Women in the gig / platform economy

- The platform/gig economy in India is growing rapidly (estimates project large growth to tens of millions of workers over the next decade). However, women's overall labour force participation remains low and there are unique barriers for women entering platform work — safety concerns, unpaid care responsibilities, limited digital skills, and access to devices. NITI Aayog and related analyses highlight

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the nascent but rapidly expanding nature of the platform economy and call for more gender-disaggregated data. NITI Aayog+1

Cybercrime, online harassment and safety risks

- Official crime-record compilations and analyses by scholars and policy centres document a rising trend in cybercrimes against women (including stalking, harassment, and abuse), which deter many women from active online participation in professional and entrepreneurial activities. NCRB and related reporting show increases in reported cyber incidents against women in recent years. ncrb.gov.in+1

Access to finance and digital public infrastructure

- Digital financial services and public digital infrastructure (DPI) can empower women entrepreneurs, but lack of ID, lower digital financial capability, and limited access to bank accounts or mobile wallets restrict benefits for many working women. Policy briefs stress the need for gender-sensitive DPI design. Women's

Major categories of challenges

Affordability & device ownership

- **Problem:** High upfront cost of smartphones and recurring data costs remain a barrier for lower-income women, especially in households where device ownership is controlled by male members. Data show substantially lower ownership rates among women in many Indian contexts. Indiaspend
- **Effects:** Inability to access job platforms, domain-specific apps (e.g., seller dashboards), training resources, or digital finance tools. Women who lack personal devices are less able to work flexible hours on platforms, attend online interviews, or manage online micro-enterprises.

Digital skills & usage quality (not just access)

- **Problem:** Even when women have access, many lack the digital skills needed for productive use — from basic digital literacy to platform-specific skills (e.g., digital marketing, coding, skills). The "usage divide" separates passive consumption (social media, calls) productive engagement (earning, learning).
- **Effects:** Women earn less on platforms, take lower-skilled tasks, and miss higher-value opportunities requiring specialized digital skills.

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Safety, harassment and hostile online environments

- **Problem:** Online harassment, doxxing, cyberstalking, and threats are major constraints. Rising reported cases and broader awareness of online violence make many women cautious about full online engagement for work. This also includes safety concerns for women working in physical roles coordinated via digital platforms (e.g., delivery, ride-hailing). ncrb.gov.in+1
- **Effects:** Women limit visibility, avoid certain categories of work (night shifts, on-field roles), and reduce use of social platforms essential for entrepreneurship and networking.

Social norms, unpaid care work and time poverty

Problem: Traditional gender roles and care responsibilities reduce the time available for paid digital work and for upskilling. Even flexible digital work often does not compensate for constrained hours and the productivity hit from multitasking.

- **Effects:** Lower participation rates, patchy engagement, and inability to scale digital enterprises.

Platform design, algorithmic bias and lack of protections

- **Problem:** Many platforms are not designed with women's needs in mind — e.g., limited female-friendly features, lack of localized UI, or inability to address harassment quickly. Additionally, algorithmic biases can disadvantage women (e.g., recommendation systems that limit visibility).
- **Effects:** Lower earnings, reduced presence, and lack of trust in platforms.

Financial inclusion barriers and digital financial capability

- **Problem:** Women may not have bank accounts, formal ID or the confidence to transact digitally, or they may face gatekeeping within the household. While digital finance (UPI, wallets) can lower barriers to business, uptake among women lags due to capability and trust issues. Women's World Banking

Improve affordable access & device ownership

- Subsidy schemes or financing models for women's smartphones and internet (targeted vouchers or zero-interest instalment schemes).
- Public device-loan programmes (community digital kiosks with private booths for women entrepreneurs to manage e-commerce).

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Strengthen online safety & legal protections

- Fast-track mechanisms for reporting and taking down abusive content; mandatory gender-sensitivity training for platform moderators.
- Awareness campaigns and helplines for victims of online harassment. Strengthen data on cybercrimes against women to inform policy. ncrb.gov.in

Design DPI & digital finance with women in mind

- Ensure digital public infrastructure (IDs, eKYC, payment rails) works for women with low literacy (voice-based interfaces, vernacular UIs). Women's World Banking
- Financial literacy and trusted digital banking channels to increase women's confidence in transacting online.

Platform regulation & incentives for gender-inclusive design

- Encourage platforms to adopt gender-responsive features (safety filters, female-only delivery/shift options where needed, verified female vendor badges).
- Incentivize platforms to collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on workers and earnings.

Time-use and care support policies

- Complement digital interventions with social policies that reduce unpaid care burden (childcare services, flexible public services), enabling women to participate in income-generating digital work.

Limitations of this study

- This study synthesizes existing secondary data; primary survey work would be needed for micro-level causal analysis.
- Data availability varies by state/region and many platform operators do not publish gender-disaggregated metrics, constraining precise measurement. The study therefore leans on policy briefs and aggregative reports.

Conclusion

The digital economy offers transformative potential for working women — flexible work, entrepreneurship, access to markets and finance. Yet, persistent gaps in device ownership, digital skills, safety, social norms, and

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platform design substantially reduce women's ability to capture these gains. Closing these gaps requires integrated interventions across infrastructure, training, safety, finance, and social policy — implemented with a gender lens and supported by better gender-disaggregated data. If policymakers, platforms and civil society act decisively, digitalisation can become an engine for inclusive economic empowerment of women rather than a driver of greater inequality.

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Digital Divide and Its Impact on Education: A Sociological Study with Special Reference to India

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Abstract

The digital revolution has reshaped education across the globe, creating unprecedented opportunities for learning, teaching, and access to information. Yet, the unequal distribution of technological resources has led to a persistent *digital divide*—the gap between individuals who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. This paper investigates the sociological dimensions of the digital divide and its significant impact on education, with a particular focus on India. It explores how socio-economic, geographic, and cultural disparities shape patterns of digital inequality and restrict educational opportunities. Drawing upon secondary data from national surveys, government publications, and scholarly research, the study analyzes how limited access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) affects educational attainment, equity, and social inclusion. The paper concludes by proposing policy interventions and community-based strategies to reduce digital disparities and promote inclusive digital education in India's quest for equitable and sustainable social development.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Education, ICT, Inequality, Digital Literacy, India, Sociology.

1. Introduction

The 21st century is characterized by the rapid advancement of digital technologies that have reshaped nearly every aspect of human life. From classrooms to corporate environments, the internet has become a central platform for communication, information exchange, and knowledge dissemination. Educational institutions worldwide have embraced digital to enhance learning experiences , and strengthen global connectivity.

However, the benefits of this digital transformation have not been distributed equally. Significant disparities persist between those who have access to and can effectively utilize digital technologies and those who remain excluded—a phenomenon commonly known as the *digital divide*.

The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exposed and amplified this divide. As schools and universities transitioned to online learning, millions of students adapted to virtual classrooms. While students from urban and economically stable backgrounds managed this shift relatively smoothly, those from rural, low-income, and marginalized communities faced severe disruptions, often being excluded from education altogether. Consequently, the digital divide has emerged as a pressing social issue, deepening existing inequalities within the educational landscape.

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2. Review of Literature

A substantial body of research has examined the relationship between access to technology and educational inequality, revealing that the digital divide operates as both a cause and a consequence of broader socio-economic disparities. The following section reviews key global and Indian studies, as well as sociological perspectives that provide theoretical grounding for understanding this phenomenon.

2.1 Global Studies

Globally, several studies have highlighted how unequal access to digital resources influences educational outcomes. According to the **UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2021)**, more than 1.6 billion students were affected by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and at least one-third of them were unable to participate in remote learning due to a lack of internet connectivity or digital devices. These findings underscore the structural nature of the digital divide and its capacity to exacerbate educational disparities across social and economic lines.

2.2 Indian Studies

In the Indian context, the digital divide has deepened pre-existing inequalities based on class, caste, gender, and geography. Data from the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO, 2018)** indicates that only 24% of Indian households have internet access, with a pronounced urban–rural divide (42% in urban areas compared to 15% in rural regions. Scholars such as **Sharma (2020)** and **Kumar (2022)** argue that these disparities are not merely technological but social in nature, as they perpetuate the marginalization of disadvantaged groups and reinforce patterns of social stratification within the education system.

2.3 Sociological Perspectives

From a theoretical standpoint, sociologists have provided critical insights into the nature of digital inequality. **Pierre Bourdieu's** concept of *cultural capital* offers a valuable framework for understanding how access to digital tools and skills functions as a form of symbolic power that shapes educational achievement. Individuals and groups possessing greater digital literacy and resources are able to convert this capital into academic and professional advantages, embodying deeper social and cultural dimensions that influence educational equity and opportunity.

3. Objectives of the Study

The present research seeks to explore the multifaceted relationship between the digital divide and education, with a particular focus on the Indian context. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the concept, dimensions, and sociological implications of the digital divide in education.

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2. To analyze the socio-economic, cultural, and regional factors influencing access to digital technologies in India.
3. To assess the impact of the digital divide on educational equity, learning outcomes, and social inclusion.
4. To explore government policies, institutional frameworks, and community-led initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide.
5. To propose evidence-based strategies for promoting inclusive and equitable digital education across diverse social groups.

4. Methodology

This research adopts a **descriptive and analytical** design, grounded in a **sociological framework**. The study primarily relies on **secondary data sources**, including government reports, statistical data from the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** and **Census of India**, as well as publications from international organizations such as **UNESCO** and **UNICEF**. Additionally, relevant academic journals, books, and policy documents have been reviewed to support theoretical and empirical analysis. The study employs a **qualitative interpretive approach** to understand how structural inequalities—particularly those related to **class, caste, gender, and region**—intersect with digital access and educational opportunities. Through this lens, the research aims to uncover the broader social implications of technological exclusion and to identify pathways toward digital inclusion within the educational landscape.

5. Understanding the Digital Divide

The concept of the *digital divide* encompasses more than just differences in access to technology; it reflects broader patterns of social and economic inequality that shape who benefits from digital advancements. Scholars typically identify three interrelated dimensions of the digital divide:

1. **Access Divide** – This refers to the physical and economic ability to own and utilize digital devices such as smartphones, computers, and internet connections. It highlights disparities arising from income levels, infrastructure availability, and regional development.
2. **Skills Divide** – Beyond access, this level concerns the knowledge, confidence, and digital literacy necessary to effectively navigate and use technology. It underscores how educational background and exposure to digital environments influence one's ability to engage productively with digital tools.
3. **Usage Divide** – This dimension focuses on the qualitative differences in how individuals use digital technologies. It relates to the capacity to apply these tools for meaningful purposes such as learning, professional development, communication, and civic participation.

Within the field of education, these three levels of the digital divide manifest as unequal access to online resources, digital classrooms, and skill-based learning opportunities. Consequently, students from disadvantaged backgrounds often face compounded barriers that limit their participation and success in an increasingly digital learning environment.

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6. Factors Contributing to the Digital Divide in India

The digital divide in India is shaped by a complex interplay of economic, social, and infrastructural factors. Despite the country's rapid technological progress, significant sections of the population remain excluded from digital participation. The key determinants of this divide are discussed below.

6.1 Economic Inequality

Economic disparity remains the most critical barrier to digital inclusion. For millions of Indian households, the cost of purchasing smartphones, laptops, or tablets is prohibitively high. In addition, recurring expenses such as internet data charges, maintenance costs, and unreliable electricity supply further hinder digital access. Consequently, low-income families are disproportionately excluded from online education and digital skill development opportunities.

6.2 Regional Disparities

India's digital infrastructure is unevenly distributed across regions. Urban centers benefit from better connectivity, higher internet penetration, and improved access to digital resources, whereas rural and tribal areas continue to lag far behind. This regional imbalance reinforces educational and developmental inequalities across states and districts.

6.3 Educational and Digital Literacy

A lack of digital literacy among both students and educators is another major contributor to the divide. Traditional, lecture-based methods continue to dominate classroom practices, reducing the effectiveness of technology integration. The absence of systematic training programs for teachers further widens the digital skill gap in education.

7. Impact of the Digital Divide on Education in India

The digital divide has far-reaching implications for educational equity and quality in India. It not only determines access to learning resources but also influences students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and future opportunities. The key dimensions of this impact are discussed below.

7.1 Educational Inequality

The digital divide has intensified existing educational inequalities. Students with reliable internet access and digital devices are able to engage in online learning through platforms such as **SWAYAM**, **Byju's**, or **Google**

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Classroom, thereby maintaining continuity in their educationThis divergence reinforces class-based and regional disparities in educational outcomes.

7.2 Learning Loss and Dropouts

The shift to online education during the **COVID-19 pandemic** exposed the fragility of India's digital infrastructure. Students without access to digital tools suffered significant learning losses and disengagement from the educational process. For many families, financial hardship, lack of connectivity, and inadequate support structures forced children out of formal education altogether.

7.3 Emotional and Social Impact

Digital exclusion has also had profound psychological and social consequences. Students who are unable to participate in online learning often experience feelings of isolation, frustration, and inferiority compared to their peers. The loss of peer interaction and school-based socialization further compounds these emotional challenges.

8. Government Initiatives to Bridge the Digital Divide

The Indian government has implemented several programs to enhance digital inclusion:

- **Digital India (2015):** Aims to transform India into digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- **PM e-Vidya (2020):** Integrates all forms of digital and online learning under one umbrella.
- **SWAYAM & SWAYAM Prabha:** Provide free online courses and educational television channels.
- **BharatNet Project:** Expands broadband connectivity to rural villages.
- **DIKSHA Platform:** Offers e-learning resources for students and teachers in multiple languages.

9. Sociological Analysis

- From a **Marxian perspective**, the digital divide represents an extension of class inequality—technology becomes another means through which the ruling class maintains control over resources.
- From **Weber's perspective**, access to technology reflects one's *life chances* and social status, influencing educational and occupational mobility.

Hence, sociologically, the digital divide is both a cause and consequence of social inequality.

10. Case Studies

- **Case Study 1: Kerala – "First Bell" Initiative**

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Kerala introduced the *First Bell* program on television and YouTube during the pandemic, ensuring educational continuity even for students without internet access. The initiative became a model for inclusive e-learning.

- **Case Study 2: Delhi Government Schools**
  The Delhi government distributed tablets and provided digital training for teachers. Community-based WhatsApp classes were organized for students from low-income families.
- **Case Study 3: Rural Jharkhand and Maharashtra**
  NGOs distributed offline educational content via SD cards and USB drives, enabling students to learn without constant internet connectivity.

11. Recommendations

1. **Infrastructure Development:** Expand affordable broadband and electricity in rural areas.
2. **Digital Literacy Programs:** Include ICT training in school curricula for students and teachers.
3. **Affordable Access:** Subsidize devices and internet for low-income families.
4. **Public–Private Partnerships:** Encourage corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to enhance digital inclusion.
5. **Localized Content:** Develop educational material in regional languages to promote inclusivity.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly assess digital learning programs for equity and effectiveness.

Conclusion

The digital divide is not merely a technological issue—it is a reflection of deeper socio-economic inequalities. Education, which should empower individuals, becomes another arena of exclusion when access to technology is unequal. Ensuring universal digital literacy and access will not only improve educational outcomes but also strengthen democracy and social justice in the digital age.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE: EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTH – A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The digital revolution has transformed the way societies function, presenting new opportunities for youth empowerment in education, employment, and civic participation. Yet, the benefits of digitalization are not equally distributed, leading to a persistent digital divide. This paper analyzes the digital divide as a sociological phenomenon, exploring its implications for youth empowerment. By drawing upon sociological theories such as Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Castells' notion of the network society, the paper highlights how structural inequalities—class, caste, gender, and geography—shape access to digital technologies. The study concludes that bridging the digital divide requires not only physical infrastructure but also digital literacy, inclusive policies, and social transformation to ensure equal participation of youth in the digital age.

Introduction

The information age has transformed human society into a network-driven system, where access to digital technologies determines social participation, knowledge acquisition, and economic advancement. Youth, comprising nearly 65% of India's population, represent the backbone of the country's demographic dividend. The internet, social media, and online platforms have become tools of empowerment, offering access to education, entrepreneurship, global culture, and democratic participation.

However, this potential is threatened by the **digital divide**, which refers to disparities in access, skills, and usage of technology. Unlike earlier forms of inequality (such as land ownership or literacy), the digital divide creates a new hierarchy based on information access. The paper situates the digital divide within the broader framework of sociology, considering it as a **reflection of social inequality**. It emphasizes that empowerment cannot be achieved unless barriers to digital inclusion are addressed.

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Objectives of the Study

1. To define and explain the sociological dimensions of the digital divide.
2. To explore the role of digital access in empowering youth in India and globally.
3. To analyze structural inequalities—class, caste, gender, and geography—that shape digital exclusion.
4. To review key government and global initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide.
5. To suggest strategies for holistic youth empowerment in the digital age.

Conceptual Framework: Digital Divide in Sociology

The digital divide is not merely a technical or economic issue—it is sociological in nature. It influences how individuals participate in society and how power is distributed.

- **First-level digital divide**: Inequality in access to devices and internet connectivity.
- **Second-level digital divide**: Inequality in digital literacy, skills, and usage.
- **Third-level digital divide**: Inequality in the social, educational, and economic outcomes from digital access.

The divide is strongly linked to **Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital**, where youth from privileged groups inherit the ability and resources to benefit from technology. Those from marginalized groups are excluded not just from devices but also from the skills, cultural exposure, and opportunities needed to succeed in the digital space. Similarly, **Manuel Castells' theory of the Network Society** emphasizes that networks are sources of power in the modern world. Being excluded from digital networks means being excluded from social, economic, and political power.

Youth and Empowerment in the Digital Era

Empowerment implies gaining access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making. For youth, digital technologies are powerful tools of empowerment:

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1. **Educational Empowerment**
    - Online courses (SWAYAM, NPTEL, Coursera, Byju's).
    - Access to global knowledge beyond textbooks.
    - Equal opportunities for competitive exams through online resources.
2. **Economic Empowerment**
    - Gig economy jobs (Uber, Zomato, Upwork).
    - Startups and e-commerce platforms enabling entrepreneurship.
    - Digital banking and UPI facilitating financial inclusion.
3. **Political Empowerment**
    - Social media activism (#MeToo, climate justice movements).
    - E-governance platforms (MyGov, RTI online portals).
    - Increased youth participation in democratic processes.
4. **Social Empowerment**
    - Platforms for self-expression (YouTube, Instagram, podcasts).
    - Networking beyond geographical boundaries.
    - Inclusion of marginalized voices in mainstream discourse.

Literature Review

- **Manuel Castells (1996):** Introduced the concept of the network society, emphasizing that power lies in networks. Exclusion from networks means marginalization.
- **Pierre Bourdieu (1986):** His concept of cultural capital highlights how digital literacy and technological access function as forms of capital that reproduce social inequality.
- **UNESCO Report (2022):** Found that 40% of youth globally lack internet access; most of them are in rural and low-income countries.
- **World Bank (2021) "Digital Dividends" Report:** Warned that the digital economy can worsen inequality if access remains uneven.

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- **Economic Survey of India (2022–23):** Noted stark differences in access between rural and urban India, and between men and women.

Educational Divide

During COVID-19, students in private schools accessed online classes easily, while many government school students dropped out due to lack of devices.

Positive Impacts of Digital Empowerment

- Increased literacy and skill-building opportunities.
- Expansion of employment opportunities in IT, freelancing, and gig sectors.
- Greater participation in democracy and civic life.
- Inclusion of marginalized groups into global discussions.

Challenges in Bridging the Divide

- **Economic Barriers:** High cost of devices and internet.
- **Infrastructural Gaps:** Weak connectivity in remote areas.
- **Cultural Resistance:** Families restricting women from digital use.
- **Skill Gaps:** Lack of digital fluency, not just literacy.
- **Cyber Risks:** Misinformation, online harassment, digital addiction.

Government Policies in India

- **Digital India (2015):** Improving connectivity, e-governance.
- **Startup India, Skill India:** Promoting digital entrepreneurship.
- **National Education Policy (2020):** Emphasized digital platforms for learning.

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Conclusion

The digital divide is not just a technological gap—it is a sociological issue that reproduces inequalities in education, employment, and social participation. While India has made progress through initiatives like Digital India and PMGDISHA, much remains to be done. For true youth empowerment, policies must focus on **inclusive access, digital literacy, cultural change, and social equity**. Only then can the promise of the digital revolution be fully realized for all youth.

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KURUBA COMMUNITY COUNTRY SPORT - RAM FIGHT

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Abstract

Sheep, goat, ram are Kurubas' favourite animals. There is enough evidence that sheep-rearing has been there since ages. Even today sheep-rearing is the chief occupation of Kuruba Community. The shepherds live their lives by moving from one place to another in search of fodder for their flock of sheep. They live a nomadic life. During these circumstances, this sport of fight is organized between Rams for the sake of entertainment. Ram fight has been in practice since ancient times. There has been enough reference regarding this fight in the ancient books and inscriptions of kannada. References can be found in epic poetry with regard to the Ram fight that has been prevailing since ancient times. There are references in Modi Rudra's 'Hundred and One Viraktara Poetry', that this fight in the earlier stages was held in the presence of kings.

Keywords: Kuruba, Community, Ram, Entertainment, Fight, Country Sport

Introduction

A community that spreads the history and culture of the 'Kurubas' in the form of stories and songs to every household member is in existence even to the present day. The name of this community is called 'Ram Jogis'. Their Miraculous Ram story is very significant where in the Ram's fight is mentioned.

One more story that spreads the history and culture of the Kuruba Community is that of Undaadu Padmanna. The Kuruba Community's Undaadu Padmanna had reared a very sturdy Ram. His elder sister Nagamma had also reared a Ram calf. A fight is organized between these two Rams. Unfortunately Nagamma's Ram faces defeat in

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this fight. As a result Nagamma becomes angry and henceforth decides to rear her calf by feeding it every day with horsegram. In the future, once more a fight between these two Rams is organized. This time Nagamma's Ram becomes victorious. In memory of this victory, Nagamma organises Ram fight every year. Since then, the popularity of this sport is verbally known through this story.

Objectives of study

- To describe Ram fight as country sport of the Kuruba Community.
- Analyse country Ram fight of the Kuruba Community.
  - Debate regarding the violence in competition of the Country Ram fight of the Kuruba community.

Methodology

This paper derives data from the secondary resources which focuses on the Ram fight as a Kuruba community country game. The studies already have done reflect how this Ram fight has been evolved as a country game which is a great entertainment in the rural folk.

How Rams are prepare for the fight

The Rams taking part in the sport are given proper training. Rams bearing up to two, four, six and eight teeth are trained every year. On the day of the fight, the Rams taking part in the competition are classified based on their age (number of teeth). Later the Rams fighting their opponents and the bout to be fought is finalised based upon the owner of a particular Ram or on the name of the Ram by casting lots. These Rams competing in the sport usually bear Godly names such as Mylari, Beeralinga, Maalingaraya etc. In order to maintain transparency, the lots are made to be picked by small children. Before the commencement of the fight, the owner of each Ram ensures that his/her Ram is not intoxicated by any drug.

A sturdy and healthy Ram fights for its lifetime of seven to eight years in various competitions. After each competition each Ram is given rest for a period of four times five weeks. During the fight, in case of injury; a Ram is given Ayurveda treatment until it is completely healed. When the Rams become old and unfit for the sport, they are not sold to the butchers but instead live life long with their owner.

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As noted in "Kurubar Sanskruthi Darshna-5 Kale Mattu Kreede" written by "Chandrakantha Bijjaragi & Dr. Chikkanna Yannekatte, Shekappa Ronada from Gadag has been participating in the Ram Sport for the past 16 years. Basically Shekappa works as a porter in a broker's shop. As a hobby, he rears Rams, trains them and takes them to make them take part in competitions held at various places. All the details provided by him regarding the Rams can be consolidated and said as follows. The Rams taking part in the fight is specially trained every Morning for a period of six months. They are also made to run for four kilometers every day. They are fed with nutritious and vitamin based healthy food at the right time. Food like milk, egg, channa dal, horse gram, wet grass- husk etc must be compulsorily given. Some owners feed their Rams with dry fruits such as cashew nuts, grapes and Almonds which is rich in protein and fibre.

How the Rams Fight Happen

At the commencement of the fight, both the Rams fighting each other begin the fight by forcefully clashing their heads into each other's. The competing Rams fight as long as they can depend their energy. The sturdy and muscular Ram clashes its head into its opponent's head around hundred and fifty times in a single bout. During this brutal fight, some of the Rams suffer a severe head injury and there are some instances that lead to fatality. In this sport, both the opponents should clash their heads into each other. If one of them runs away without clashing its head into the opponents head; it is regarded as a certain defeat of such Ram. The victorious Ram is awarded with Cash and Gold prize. The winner in the ultimate round is selected for the first prize.

Importance of Ram Fight as a country Spot

Ram Sport fight has a historical and cultural significance which speaks about the history and culture of the Kuruba Community' which patronized this sport. Ram sport fight is an ancient and indigenous Country sport which speaks about the Kuruba Culture.

Conclusion

Though this sport has been patronized and has been in practice since ages, it also has some disadvantages. Nowadays there has been severe opposition from animal lover because it is exhibits of violent by one ram on the

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other. There is bloodshed, brutality and at times fatality which is against the Prevention of cruelty to animals Act. The other thing is that this sport paves way for indulgence in betting and gambling which is anti-social. Though this sport has historical and cultural significance, it has to be banned as to uphold the Prevention of cruelty to animals and to abstain people from indulging in gambling as it is immoral to indulge in such violent practices.

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INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND AI

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ABSTRACT:

The **Indian Knowledge System (IKS)** represents centuries of accumulated wisdom encompassing philosophy, sciences, arts, medicine, and sustainable practices. It preserves knowledge in areas such as Ayurveda, Yoga, mathematics, linguistics, and environmental management, providing a foundation for cultural identity and societal development. In the contemporary context, IKS can be leveraged to empower communities, especially when combined with modern technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. AI enables digitization, analysis, and dissemination of traditional knowledge, making it accessible to a wider audience, including youth and marginalized groups. AI-driven tools and platforms facilitate personalized learning, multilingual translation, and digital literacy, bridging gaps in education and skill development.. On a societal level, the integration of IKS and AI strengthens cultural identity, preserves heritage, and ensures equitable access to knowledge and opportunities. It also supports sustainable development by combining traditional ecological practices with modern data-driven solutions. Globally, India can share its knowledge systems through digital platforms, contributing to cultural diplomacy, global wellness, and knowledge-based globalization.

In essence, the synergy of IKS and AI not only bridges the digital divide but also empowers youth and marginalized groups, fostering an inclusive, innovative, and culturally grounded society. By combining the richness of tradition with cutting-edge technology, India sets a model for inclusive development and global engagement.

KEYWORDS: IKS, AI, Indian Society, Globalization, Marginalised groups.

INTRODUCTION:

India's economic liberalization in 1991 marked a turning point in the country's development trajectory, transforming it from a relatively closed, slow-growing economy, often referred to as the era of the "Hindu rate of

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growth" into one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. This economic transformation has not only accelerated urbanization and strengthened the service sector but has also driven the widespread adoption of digital technologies across education, commerce, governance, and communication.

However, these sweeping changes have produced significant social and cultural challenges. The traditional joint family structure, which provided social support and intergenerational knowledge transfer, is increasingly under strain due to urban migration and changing lifestyles divide and amplified inequalities in access to technology, education, and economic opportunities.

In parallel with these globalizing currents, India's policy-makers, researchers, and academic communities have increasingly focused on revitalizing indigenous knowledge systems to address contemporary challenges. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS), encompassing centuries-old wisdom in areas such as Ayurveda, Yoga, mathematics, astronomy, sustainable agriculture, and linguistics, provides culturally grounded solutions that remain relevant in modern contexts. AI-driven applications in education can personalize learning, make regional languages accessible, and preserve traditional knowledge, while in healthcare, AI combined with Ayurveda and other indigenous practices can improve diagnostics, treatment planning, and preventive care.

This dual focus embracing global economic integration while revitalizing local knowledge presents both opportunities and challenges. This paper mainly focuses and analyses on the influence of IKS and AI on Indian society and also the role of IKS and AI in facilitating India's participation in the global knowledge and cultural economy. Thus, helps to shape India's socio-economic and cultural trajectory for the coming decades.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To study the influence of the Indian Knowledge System on Indian society.
2. To analyse the role of the Indian Knowledge System in achieving globalization
3. To impact of Artificial Intelligence on Indian society.
4. To analyse the effect of Artificial Intelligence on globalization.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary Data:

Secondary data was collected from the existing sources such as books, research papers, journal articles, government reports, census data, web sites, etc. The secondary data is mainly used to derive theoretical background and research gap for the present study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The transmission of knowledge in IKS is through four vedas; Rig veda, Yajur veda, Sama veda, and Atharva veda. Sustainability in IKS is through mindful consumption, sacredness of nature, interconnectedness of life, guidance from ancient texts and take away. The process of cognition in IKS takes place through three stages, they are; प्रमाता (the knower), प्रमेयम् (the known) and प्रमाणम् (the process of knowing). According to IKS the four **purusharthas** for every person are Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. These four purusharthas helps human being in finding way to remove suffering and achieve liberation. Geeta also teaches about renunciation giving peace of mind, the psychology of greed, the nature of soul and the nature of the supreme i.e., **Paramathma**. **Upanishad,** the one more foundation of IKS, teaches that **Bramhan** as the ultimate cause of this world, evolution of this world and its character, nature of living beings as individual souls, their relationship with Brahman, final goal of life, disciplines that help in reaching that goal, and the nature of attainment of that final goal. According to modern science substances are classified as either, pure substances (elements) or compounds (mixtures). It was found that India's rich traditional knowledge covers diverse systems; medicine and architecture to art, literature and rituals. Thus, IKS helps us to live meaning fully and contribute positively to the society. The contribution of pioneering sages; Surya, Pitamaha, Vasistha, Medhatithi, Garga, Lomasa, Cyavana and astronomers/ mathematicians; Varahamihira, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya I &II, Brahmagupta, Mahaviracharya, Kalakacharya, in the field of **astronomy and mathematics** is remarkable. They have invented the number system and the concept of zero, developed basic operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, gave insights into solar system and planetary motion, developed advance algebra, calculus, geometry,

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astronomy etc. **Aryabhata's** heliocentric theory was preceded Copernicus by 1000 Years. The value of **Pi (π)**, which is essential in geometry, trigonometry, Texts with detailed recipes for alloys, compounds, and therapeutic substances are also available. **Ancient Indian chemists** studied metals, minerals, and plants to develop eco-friendly medical treatments. The traditional water management techniques through interconnected waterway, water channel networks, reservoir systems, creating check dams, stepwells, have played an integrated roll in the agricultural and economic produce. **Traditional agricultural techniques** (agroforestry, intercropping, crop rotation, cover cropping, composting, integrated livestock farming, shifting cultivation) are even now practiced in many rural regions, preserving indigenous knowledge systems that promote sustainability, biodiversity, and harmony with the environment.

The key theme of IKS is "**Vasudhaiva kutumbakam**" that means "**world is one family**". These strategies are very useful in achieving globalization. There is one more subject in IKS, that is **Nitisastra**, known as the "**science of ethics**" or "**code of conduct**". This provides guidelines for ethical leadership, and personal behaviour and relationships. It also addresses key areas of life and governance, such as diplomacy, international relations, financial management and economics, moral principles, social behaviour, emphasizing the importance of justice and integrity, truth, fairness and responsibility.

FINDINGS

Globalization in India:

Literature highlights the impact of globalization on India's economic and social fabric. However, urban areas have benefited disproportionately, and rural poverty and informal employment remain challenges.

Social Change:

Sociological and demographic studies document a marked decline in joint families (from 78% prevalence, 1991, to 32% in 2024), a corresponding rise in nuclear families, smaller average family sizes, and increased labour participation by women (from 22.3% to 37.1%).

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Migration and Urbanization:

The period since 1991 has witnessed large-scale rural-urban migration (12–15 million annually), accelerating urbanization rates (from 25.7% in 1991 to 34% in 2024) and generating new social stresses in both urban and rural areas. Census data indicates urban populations grew from 216M (1991) to 485+M by 2024.

Digital Infrastructure and Divide:

India's digital leap is evidenced by over 700 million internet users, universal Aadhaar coverage, and a robust Unified Payments Interface (UPI) ecosystem handling over 18 billion monthly transactions. These shifts, however, mask disparities: only 24% of rural households have internet access compared to 66% of urban, and gendered exclusion remains significant.

IKS and Education:

Recent literature underscores efforts to integrate IKS into curricula at over 150 universities and 500 colleges nationwide, with increasing government support and research output since NEP 2020.

AI and Healthcare:

India has emerged as a laboratory for AI healthcare innovation, particularly in rural contexts where 70% of the population is served by <30% of trained staff. Over 45 clinical trials and 150+ publications focus on AI in Ayurveda, with the WHO recognizing India's AI-enabled integration of traditional medicine.

Influence of the Indian Knowledge System on Indian society:

- **On the social aspects of Indian society**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) profoundly influences the social fabric of Indian society by shaping values, traditions, and community practices. Systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and traditional education promote holistic well-being, discipline, and ethical living. It also guides social practices around festivals, rituals, and governance, fostering moral and ethical behavior. Overall, IKS nurtures a culturally grounded, cohesive society while adapting to contemporary social challenges.

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- **On the cultural aspects of Indian society.**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has deeply shaped the cultural identity and heritage of Indian society, influencing art, literature, language, philosophy, and religious practices. Practices such as Yoga, Ayurveda, and meditation emphasize holistic living, linking culture with health and well-being. Linguistic traditions, including Sanskrit and regional languages, have maintained continuity of knowledge and cultural narratives across generations. Festivals, rituals, and community practices derived from IKS reinforce social cohesion and collective identity. Overall, IKS sustains India's diverse cultural tapestry, nurturing creativity, ethical values, and spiritual depth, while enabling the society to adapt and reinterpret traditional wisdom in a contemporary context.

- **On the educational aspects of Indian society**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has significantly shaped the educational landscape of Indian society by emphasizing holistic learning, moral development, and the pursuit of knowledge for personal and societal well-beingBy combining intellectual rigor with ethical and spiritual grounding, IKS continues to enrich India's educational practices, promoting well-rounded individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

Role of the Indian Knowledge System in achieving globalization:

- **The economic aspects of globalization**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) contributes to the economic dimensions of globalization by transforming traditional knowledge into globally valued products and services. Ayurveda, Yoga, and indigenous crafts have become international commodities, boosting wellness tourism, healthcare, and handicraft exports. Sustainable agricultural methods and eco-friendly production practices derived from IKS attract global markets and encourage responsible consumption. This approach strengthens India's economic presence in the globalized marketplace while promoting heritage-based industries.

Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Indian society:

- **On the social aspects of Indian society**

AI is transforming the social fabric of Indian society by improving access to education, healthcare, and public services. AI-powered platforms enable personalized learning, digital literacy programs, and telemedicine,

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benefiting youth and marginalized communities. Contributing to equitable development and the overall improvement of social well-being across diverse communities.

- **On the economic aspects of Indian society**

AI significantly influences the economic landscape of India by driving productivity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. In sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, and finance, AI enables data-driven decision-making, process optimization, and predictive analytics, increasing efficiency and profitability. By integrating AI into traditional industries and emerging sectors, India strengthens its competitiveness in the global economy, attracts foreign investment, and accelerates economic growth, positioning the country as a key player in the global knowledge-driven market.

- **On the cultural aspects of Indian society**

AI impacts Indian culture by preserving, promoting, and globalizing traditional knowledge, languages, and arts. Digital platforms powered by AI enable the cataloging and translation of texts, classical music, dance, and literature, ensuring accessibility to wider audiences. By integrating modern technology with India's rich cultural heritage, AI not only safeguards traditions but also enables innovation in artistic expression, creating new opportunities for cultural entrepreneurship, global recognition, and the promotion of India's identity in a rapidly globalizing world.

Effect of Artificial Intelligence on globalization:

- **On the economic aspects of globalization**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role in shaping the economic aspects of globalization by enhancing productivity, efficiency, and connectivity across industries worldwide. AI-driven automation, predictive analytics, and data management improve supply chains, reduce costs, and create smarter markets. Nevertheless, it strengthens economic integration by enabling innovation, international trade, and cross-border collaboration in a globalized marketplace.

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- **On the cultural aspects of globalization**

AI has a profound effect on the cultural dimensions of globalization by transforming how traditions, languages, and arts are shared and preserved. At the same time, AI-driven content creation influences popular culture, blending local and global identities. While there is a risk of cultural homogenization, AI also provides opportunities to safeguard traditions and promote cultural diversity in the age of globalization.

- **On technological aspects of globalization**

AI accelerates the technological aspects of globalization by driving innovation, research, and global collaboration. It supports advancements in healthcare, agriculture, education, and manufacturing, creating shared technological solutions across countries. While challenges of inequality and digital dependency exist, AI remains central to shaping an inclusive and collaborative technological globalization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Policy Integration:** The government should frame policies that integrate IKS with digital and AI initiatives to ensure cultural continuity while embracing modernization.
2. **Educational Reforms:** Curriculum design must blend IKS-based knowledge such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and indigenous sciences with AI literacy to prepare youth for global opportunities.
3. **Digital Inclusion:** Expanding affordable internet access, especially in rural areas, is critical to bridge the digital divide and empower marginalized groups.
4. **Research and Innovation:** Academic and industrial collaborations should focus on AI-driven applications that digitize, preserve, and globalize traditional knowledge systems.

CONCLUSIONS

The study highlights the profound role of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping Indian society and globalization. IKS preserves cultural identity, promotes holistic education, and offers sustainable solutions, while AI drives innovation, efficiency, and inclusivity. Together, they empower youth and marginalized groups by bridging digital and social divides. Technologically, AI combined with IKS facilitates

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knowledge dissemination and sustainable practices for global benefit. Thus, their synergy offers a model for inclusive, innovative, and culturally grounded globalization.

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ROLE OF GUARANTEE SCHEMES IN EMPOWERING THE RURAL WOMEN IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract

Women constitute almost 48.8% of the population in India. But they are facing many economic and social issues. The situation of the women in the rural area is more critical than the urban. Among those schemes Gruhalakshmi scheme is one of the techniques to improve the women economic condition in rural areas. However, the present study is undertaken to analyse the role of Gruhalakshmi scheme in empowering the rural women in Chikkamagalur district.

Keywords: Gruhalakshmi, Empowerment, Rural, Women, Government

Introduction:

Indian constitution provides the principle of gender equality in its preamble. It is became a basic right of the women to get equal access in all fields like men. Therefore both the government central and state established many policies to bring that right into practice. To solve the problems of women newly Government of Karnataka introduces the five schemes. Gruha Jyothi for supply free electric power. Anna Bhagya scheme to provide sufficient foods to the citizens. However, irrespective of rural and urban women, government of Karnataka launched the Gruhalakshmi scheme for all head of the family women who have comes under the Below Poverty

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Line. The main aim of the Government of the Karnataka is to bring empowerment among the women in rural areas. The present study is undertaken to analyse the Gruhalakshmi Scheme in empowering the rural women.

Literature Review:

Dr. Anil Kumar and Dr. Hegadal (2025) in their study discuss the gruhalakshmi Scheme and its impact on the women of rural areas. The research also discloses the problems and prospects of the Gruhalakshmi scheme. The present study is provide clues on the problems in implantation of the scheme, drawbacks of the scheme and it gives some suggestions from the rural women to improve the scheme to reach all the real beneficiaries.

Ahashanul Karim, Koyel Palit and Debjani Guha (2021) the study provides light that empowering women through education is most essential, but the COVID-19 pandemic has inverse impact to access to schooling nationwide. Even though with these problems, girls in the KSP program have demonstrated resilience in getting education and empowerment.

Dr. Mrinal Mukherjee (2017)the research disclose that, the literate women is very importantso they are the backbone of society that drives positive variations in the society. The Right to Education Act of 2009 has to address this by ensuring equal access to education for girls up to primary school atleast.

S. J. Sandhya (2015) the research proves that the education empowers women to bring challenge traditional roles, reduce inequality and improve their family status and many more obstacles of women in the rural areas. In our country, women's education is very need for the development of the country. The present study shows that the development of rural women's education remains very slow, leaving a important number of illiterate and vulnerable.

Statement of the Problem:

Women are facing many problems from long back decades. Women empowerment is a universal slogan from earlier days. Even though many policies and programmes initiated by the government to women empowerment, still they are backward. Hence, the present study is undertaken.

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Objectives of the Study:

1. To analyse the economic and social conditions of the women in rural areas.
2. To measure the performance of Gruhalakshmi scheme in rural areas.
3. To give suggestions to improve the scheme effectiveness.

Research Methodology:

The present study is descriptive in nature. It discloses the economic and social issues of the women in rural areas. The study also relates to the Gruhalakshmi effectiveness in the rural women empowerment. The data is collected with the help of website, journals, articles, books and Government records etc.

Scope of the Study:

The study covers the Chikkamagaluru district. The present study includes the Gruhalakshmi beneficiaries in the Chikkamagaluru district. The study analyse the role of Gruhalakshmi Scheme in the rural areas in women empowerment of the study area.

Discussion:

Women constitute more than half of the population in India and only 29% of the women are working independently in various sectors. That is why women are seems to be far from the economic contribution even though they contribute a lot to the economy. In this context, Government extend many opportunities to the rural women by establishing the new policies and schemes to empower the women in the rural areas.

Women are engaged in the bulk of unpaid care work such as looking after the child, educating children, looking after older family members, caring for the sick, household chores and are the invisible life line of the rural community women in India. Recognizing women's unpaid work and undertaking suitable strategies and support services to integrate unpaid work with the programmes and measures to free woman's time for paid work through time-saving technologies, infrastructure, child/parental care services and child care/parental leave needs to be undertaken.

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Gruhalakshmi scheme is the new scheme launched by the Government of Karnataka to empower the women. Empowerment means socially and economically good. Empowering women in the rural areas to involve fully in economic life across various sectors is essential to shape up potential economies as it betters the sustainability, and raises the quality of life. Hence, empowerment is multi faced, multi-dimensional and multi-layered activity, which needs women to undertake highest share of control over resources which could be material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas etc. Such a activity will subsequently improvise women's control over economic resources and strengthening women's economic security.

Empowerment of women in rural area is a more essential as this would help women to get rid of the social violence and atrocities against her. The suggestions given in this research paper which would open up the doors of awareness in the surroundings and the women living in the society and make them actively participating member and also thus fight for their rights.

Chikkamagaluru District Taluk wise Families details

Taluk	Families		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Ajjampura	21419	2626	24045
Chikkamagaluru	45631	28545	74176
Kadur	56125	13450	69575
Kalasa	7386	0	7386
Koppa	19965	1331	21296
Mudigere	21378	3170	24548
NR Pura	14827	1739	16566
Shringere	8148	1165	9313
Tarikere	23368	5812	29180
Total	218247	57838	276085

Gruhalakshmi Scheme beneficiaries and amount sanctioned to the beneficiaries.

Taluk	No. of Beneficiaries Registered	Amount Sanctioned among Registered	Total Amount
Chikkamagaluru	72,528	69,762	13,95,24,000
Kadur	72,549	70,264	14,05,28,000
Koppa	18,572	17,993	3,59,86,000
Mudigere	28,995	27,905	5,58,10,000

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NR Pura	16,140	15,611	3,12,22,000
Shringere	8253	7,973	1,59,46,000
Tarikere	54,992	53,436	10,68,72,000
Total	2,72,029	2,62,944	52,58,88,000

The present secondary data showed that, almost all the registered families are getting the Gruhalakshmi amount. The result of the study shows that the scheme aimed mainly to empower the rural women than the urban. Doubtlessly, the women in the rural areas will get benefitted from it and thereby get the economic and social independence at least little bit compare to previous days.

Suggestions:

The following are the some of the major suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the Gruhalakshmi scheme.

- BPL families should be clearly defined and identified to reduce the misuse of the scheme.
- With this effective plan government should need to plan for the income generation activities among the women in the rural areas.
- Government should tackle the corruption in the implementation of the scheme.
- GST verification process should be faster to reduce the delay in the payment of the scheme amount.

Conclusion:

Government of Karnataka introduce many guarantee schemes to the upliftment of the society. Gruhalakshmi scheme is one of the weapons to women empowerment. It creates the confidence and motivates the women towards the economic activities. The present study will be giving a light on the reality of the scheme. The intention of the scheme is very good but there is need to adopt the suggestions then the aim will be successful.

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WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY, AND PEACE: CLOSING THE DIGITAL GAP IN CONFLICT ZONES

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Abstract

Women in conflict zones are among the most marginalized populations globally, facing multidimensional exclusion across socio-economic, political, and digital domains. The proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has created unprecedented opportunities for empowerment, peacebuilding, and civic participation. Yet, the digital divide—rooted in unequal access, literacy, and infrastructure continues to hinder women's full participation in peace processes. Drawing from recent studies by Seedat-Khan and Khan (2025), Oyekanmi and Ojo (2024), and Harbinger (2020), this paper examines the intersection between gender, technology, and conflict, highlighting both the empowering and disempowering roles of digital media. Using case studies from Ethiopia, Colombia, and Nigeria, it explores how women navigate online spaces to document violence, advocate for justice, and build peace networks. The study also investigates challenges such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence, misinformation, and state surveillance that disproportionately target women activists. It proposes integrated digital literacy programs, gender-responsive ICT policies, and partnerships between international organizations and local women's groups to ensure inclusive participation. The paper concludes that digital inclusion is not merely a technological issue but a critical dimension of social justice and sustainable peace in the 21st century.

Keywords: Women, Conflict Zones, Digital Divide, Empowerment, Peacebuilding, Gender Equality, ICT, Marginalization

Women in conflict zones occupy a paradoxical position: they are simultaneously victims of systemic violence and agents of peace, resilience, and transformation. Across the world's war-torn regions—from Syria and Yemen to Ethiopia and Colombia—women continue to bear the brunt of displacement, sexual violence, and loss of livelihood. Yet, their exclusion from post-conflict peacebuilding, governance, and technological participation remains deeply entrenched. According to Oyekanmi and Ojo (2024), the Fourth Industrial Revolution has magnified the digital divide between men and women in fragile states, creating a new layer of marginalization—digital exclusion. In these regions, digital technologies such as mobile communication, social media, and online learning platforms have the potential to connect women to global networks of advocacy, education, and empowerment. However, when access to these tools is limited by infrastructural, cultural, or policy barriers, women remain digitally invisible and politically marginalized.

The concept of the digital divide extends beyond mere access to technology; it encompasses disparities in literacy, affordability, safety, and meaningful participation. Wilson and Wilson (2009) describe this divide as a form of

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structural inequality that reinforces existing gender hierarchies. For women in conflict zones, digital exclusion translates into silenced voices, limited access to humanitarian aid, and exclusion from decision-making processes that directly affect their futures. Seedat-Khan and Khan (2025) argue that while digital technologies hold promise for gender equity and peacebuilding, they can also reinforce oppression when not accompanied by inclusive policies and local engagement.

Conflict exacerbates this divide. In war-affected societies, communication infrastructures are often destroyed, and patriarchal norms restrict women's mobility and access to public resources. Moreover, technology-facilitated gender-based violence such as online harassment, cyberstalking, and digital surveillance creates an additional layer of insecurity that discourages women's digital participation (Santos & Pourmalek, 2022). This violence silences activists, journalists, and peacebuilders who depend on digital spaces for advocacy.

Yet, amidst these challenges, women have creatively harnessed technology for resilience and resistance. In Ethiopia, women used encrypted messaging platforms to coordinate humanitarian responses and document human rights abuses during the Tigray conflict (Yimam 2025). In Colombia, grassroots women's collectives employed digital storytelling to reclaim narratives of reconciliation and post-conflict healing (Hustead, 2024). These examples underscore the transformative potential of digital inclusion when combined with local knowledge and gender-sensitive frameworks.

1. The Digital Divide and Gendered Exclusion:

The digital divide in India's conflict zones is not merely a technological gap; it is a reflection of deep-rooted gender inequalities, structural marginalization, and socio-political disempowerment. In areas such as Jammu & Kashmir, the Northeast, and the Maoist-affected tribal belts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, women's access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) is limited by a combination of infrastructural collapse, economic deprivation, and patriarchal norms. According to Debbarma and Chinnadurai (2023), only 28% of women in rural and conflict-affected districts have access to mobile internet compared to 56% of men, revealing a stark digital gender gap.

This divide manifests in three interrelated forms access, literacy, and agency. Access refers to infrastructural barriers such as unreliable electricity and poor connectivity, particularly acute in border and insurgency-affected areas. Literacy encompasses not just the ability to operate a device but also the capacity to critically engage with digital information. Bermúdez (2022) notes that digital literacy remains the weakest link in women's empowerment chains in fragile settings. Agency, meanwhile, involves the freedom to use technology without surveillance, stigma, or coercion. In many communities, mobile phone ownership by women is viewed as a sign of moral deviance, curtailing their independence.

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This exclusion has direct consequences for women's economic and social participation. Verma, Gupta & Singh (2020) argue that without digital connectivity, women are cut off from online education, telemedicine, and welfare services that increasingly rely on digital verification and e-governance. The exclusion is not passive; it actively reinforces the existing patriarchal order by silencing women's voices and limiting their access to justice, information, and employment.

In this connection, the digital divide in India's conflict zones perpetuates a cycle of gendered invisibility—women remain unseen in digital policymaking, unheard in online debates, and unrepresented in technological innovations. Bridging this divide requires viewing digital inclusion not as a privilege but as a fundamental human right essential for peace, equality, and sustainable development.

2. Women as Digital Peacebuilders:

Despite the multiple layers of exclusion, women in India's conflict-affected regions have demonstrated resilience and ingenuity in leveraging technology as a tool for peacebuilding, advocacy, and social transformation. Digital technologies have become new frontiers of feminist resistance—platforms where women negotiate power, build solidarity, and reclaim agency.

Beyond individual activism, women's organizations have adopted technology for collective empowerment. 'The Digital Empowerment Foundation' (DEF), operating in Assam and Tripura, trains tribal women in mobile journalism and e-commerce, linking peacebuilding to livelihood security. SEWA's ICT4Change initiative helps women artisans in conflict-prone Gujarat and Jharkhand access online markets, fostering economic independence and inter-community trust. Technology also fosters trans-regional solidarity. Online forums such as "Peace Women Across Northeast India" use Facebook and Instagram to share local stories of resistance, creating virtual peace networks that transcend ethnic divisions. Aryal (2024) highlights that digital spaces allow marginalized women to construct alternative narratives of reconciliation that challenge militarized masculinities dominating traditional peace dialogues.

Thus, women in India's conflict zones are redefining peacebuilding—not as elite negotiation but as everyday digital activism rooted in lived experience. They transform ICTs from mere tools of communication into 'platforms of justice and visibility', where peace is both practiced and narrated by women themselves.

3. Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence:

The rapid digitization of social and political life in India's conflict regions has also generated new forms of vulnerability. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)—including cyberstalking, doxxing, online harassment, and digital surveillance—has emerged as a pervasive threat to women's safety and participation

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online. Santos and O'Donovan (2025) argue that digital platforms in conflict contexts often replicate the violence of physical spaces, where women's visibility is punished through intimidation and defamation.

The intersection of militarization and digitalization thus transforms the internet into a contested battlefield, where women's empowerment and exposure coexist. As Luna & Whetstone (2024) note, feminist solidarity networks in the Global South are responding through "cyber-feminist" initiatives that combine digital literacy with online safety training Protecting women online is inseparable from protecting democracy and peace itself.

4. Policy and Structural Barriers:

While India has made significant strides in expanding digital access through initiatives like 'Digital India' and 'Bharat Net', these policies often overlook the intersectional realities of women in conflict zones. 'Policy gaps', bureaucratic inertia, and lack of gender-sensitive implementation continue to exclude women from the benefits of digital empowerment.

First, government-led digital schemes seldom reach areas under military control or insurgent activity. NITI Aayog (2023) found that over 60% of villages in conflict-prone districts such as Kupwara, Bastar, and Mon remain outside reliable internet coverage. This infrastructural neglect effectively denies women access to digital welfare programs, online education, and telehealth services.

Second, digital policies in India rarely adopt a gender and conflict lens. Most ICT initiatives treat technology as a neutral tool, ignoring how caste, ethnicity, and patriarchy intersect to shape women's access. Bermúdez (2022) cautions that without targeted policies, digital inclusion may reinforce existing inequalities by empowering already-privileged groups.

Third, the absence of digital safety frameworks and privacy protections exacerbates women's vulnerability. India lacks comprehensive data protection laws tailored to conflict-affected populations. In Kashmir, recurring shutdowns have cut women off from e-commerce platforms and emergency communication during crises.

Addressing these barriers demands an integrated approach—combining infrastructure development with digital literacy, gender mainstreaming, and peace-sensitive governance. Public-private collaborations can accelerate inclusive connectivity, while NGOs and academia must document and disseminate local best practices. Only through policy coherence and structural reform can digital empowerment translate into real empowerment for women in India's most vulnerable regions.

Recommendations:

1. Gender-Responsive Digital Policies: Integrate women's participation in ICT policymaking to ensure equitable access.

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2. Digital Literacy and Safety Training: Provide grassroots training in digital security and literacy to empower local women activists (Oyekanmi & Ojo, 2024).

3. Partnerships with Local NGOs: Strengthen collaborations between international agencies and community-led women's organizations to contextualize digital tools.

4. Inclusive Design: Prioritize multilingual platforms and low-bandwidth solutions for remote and conflict-affected areas.

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Globalisation and Its Impact on Employment Pattern in India

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Abstract

Since the 1991 economic reforms, India has witnessed rapid integration into the global economy, leading to profound changes in the labour market. Globalisation has opened opportunities in emerging fields like information technology, outsourcing, and services, while at the same time reducing reliance on agriculture and traditional manufacturing. This paper examines how employment patterns have shifted in India, focusing on sectoral changes, the growing prevalence of contract and informal jobs, and issues such as inequality, insecurity, and skill mismatches. Based on secondary sources, the study argues that although globalisation has created significant prospects, its benefits remain unevenly distributed, highlighting the need for skill-oriented training, social protection, and inclusive labour policies.

Key words: Globalisation, employment pattern

Introduction

Globalisation refers to the growing linkages between countries through trade, technology, capital flows, and cultural exchange. For India, the decisive moment came in 1991 when liberalisation policies dismantled trade barriers and invited foreign investment. These changes reshaped production structures and labour market dynamics.

Before liberalisation, agriculture was the backbone of India's workforce. However, in the post-reform period, agriculture's share has consistently declined while services—particularly IT, finance, and business outsourcing—have expanded rapidly. Manufacturing has also struggled to generate enough jobs to absorb the surplus labour leaving agriculture.
Although globalisation has fostered economic growth and created new career opportunities, the gains have been concentrated among skilled, urban workers, while unskilled and rural labourers often remain confined to insecure jobs. This paper critically investigates how globalisation has altered employment structures in India, the opportunities it has generated, and the challenges it poses.

Review of Literature

- Bhagwati & Srinivasan (2002) argued that while globalisation fuelled India's growth, it deepened structural imbalances across sectors.

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• Nayyar (2006) observed that globalisation strengthened India's IT sector but weakened the agricultural workforce due to declining policy focus.

• ILO Reports (2010–2020) highlighted that informal employment still dominates the labour market despite three decades of global integration.

• Kapila (2018) noted that globalisation intensified inequality by disproportionately favouring skilled workers over unskilled ones.

Objectives of the Study

1. To trace changes in sectoral employment trends in post-globalisation India.
2. To examine the growth of informal and contractual work after economic liberalisation.
3. To analyse the implications of globalisation for skilled and unskilled labour.
4. To explore gender and regional dimensions of employment shifts.
5. To suggest strategies for promoting equitable and sustainable employment.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on secondary research. Information was collected from National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), reports of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Ministry of Labour and Employment publications, and World Bank and WTO databases. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, identifying broad employment trends and assessing their implications.

Sectoral Employment Shifts

Agriculture: In 1991, around two-thirds of India's workers were engaged in agriculture. Today, the figure has fallen below 45%. Globalisation, coupled with mechanisation and stagnant farm productivity, has pushed surplus labour away from agriculture.

Manufacturing: Though industrial policies like Make in India aim to boost manufacturing, employment absorption has been weak. Labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and leather face competition from lower-cost producers in countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Services: The service sector has benefited the most from globalisation. IT, BPO, finance, tourism, and retail have flourished, contributing over half of India's GDP and employing millions of educated youth.

Growth of Informal and Contractual Work

In an effort to cut costs, firms increasingly depend on outsourcing and contract labour. More than 80% of India's workforce is in the informal sector without access to job security or social protection. The rise of the gig

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economy—such as app-based work with Ola, Uber, Zomato, and Swiggy—illustrates how globalisation generates flexible but precarious jobs.

Skilled versus Unskilled Labour

Educated, English-speaking youth in urban areas, especially in IT and financial services, are beneficiaries. Unskilled labourers displaced from farming and traditional manufacturing, many of whom take up insecure low-wage jobs in construction or informal services, have been left behind. This divergence has contributed to a widening income inequality gap.

Gender and Regional Dimensions

Women in urban centres have gained opportunities in call centres, IT, and services. Rural women, however, face declining job prospects in agriculture and limited access to training. Regional variations are evident: Southern and Western states (Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh) have reaped major benefits, while northern BIMARU states (Bihar, UP, MP, Rajasthan) lag behind in creating new jobs.

Challenges Associated with Globalisation

The major challenges linked to globalisation include jobless growth in manufacturing, informalisation of work and lack of employment security, skills not aligned with global market requirements, and increased migration to urban centres, creating congestion and pressure on infrastructure.

Tables and Data

Table 1: Sectoral Share of Employment (Usual Status), 2021-22

Sector	Share of Total Workers (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Agriculture	45.5	38.1	62.9
Manufacturing	11.6	11.8	11.2
Mining & Quarrying	0.3	0.4	0.1
Electricity, Water etc.	0.6	0.7	0.2
Construction	12.4	15.6	5.0
Trade, Hotels & Restaurants	12.1	14.7	5.9
Transport, Storage & Communication	5.6	7.5	1.2
Other Services	11.9	11.2	13.6

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Table 2: Recent Trends in Sectoral Shares (2017-18 to 2023-24)

Sector	Share in 2017-18 (%)	Share in 2023-24 (%)	Change
Agriculture	44.1	46.1	+2.0 pp
Manufacturing / Industry	12.1	11.4	-0.7 pp
Services	31.1	29.7	-1.4 pp

Conclusion

Globalisation has clearly reshaped employment dynamics in India. The workforce has shifted from agriculture to services, with new opportunities in IT, BPO, and gig platforms. However, the benefits are unevenly distributed, with skilled urban workers gaining more than unskilled rural labourers. The persistence of informal employment, job insecurity, and regional as well as gender-based disparities highlight the need for inclusive policies. India must focus on skill development, extend social security to informal workers, strengthen labour-intensive sectors, and address inequality. Globalisation should be seen as an opportunity that requires strong domestic policies to ensure fair and sustainable distribution of its gains.

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AYUSHMAN BHARAT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO TUMKUR DISTRICT

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Abstract

The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (**AB-PMJAY**) is a monumental step towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India, aiming to provide financial protection to the poorest and most vulnerable households against catastrophic health expenditures. However, the sociological impact of such a scheme hinges on its capacity to foster **social inclusion**, ensuring equitable access across different social and geographical strata. This paper presents a sociological study, focusing on the implementation and its inclusive outcomes in **Tumkur District, Karnataka**. Drawing on primary and secondary data, the study examines key indicators of social inclusion: **awareness and knowledge, utilization patterns, and the reduction of Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)** among marginalized groups. Preliminary findings, consistent with localized studies in the region, suggest that while the scheme has reduced financial barriers for those who utilize it, significant gaps remain in **awareness and geographical accessibility**, particularly in rural pockets of Tumkur. The article concludes by recommending targeted, community-centric interventions to translate the scheme's universal intent into tangible social inclusion for the district's most socioeconomically vulnerable populations.

1. Introduction: Health Insurance and the Mandate of Inclusion

Social inclusion, in the context of healthcare, means that all individuals and social groups—regardless of their economic status, caste, or location—have equal opportunity and effective access to quality health services. India's history of high Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) pushing millions into poverty underscores the crucial need for an inclusive safety net.

The **Ayushman Bharat (AB) mission**, launched in 2018, is designed to address this challenge through two major components: Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) and the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**, which offers a health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care. In Karnataka, the scheme is implemented in convergence with the state's existing framework as **Ayushman Bharat Arogya**

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Karnataka (AB-ArK). This study seeks to sociologically evaluate how effectively AB-ArK/PM-JAY is achieving the goal of social inclusion in the specific geo-cultural milieu of **Tumkur District**.

2. Theoretical Framework: Dimensions of Social Inclusion in Healthcare

A sociological lens views social inclusion in health not merely as the presence of a policy, but as the *effective translation* of that policy into a reduction of systematic health disparities. This study adopts a framework focusing on three critical sociological dimensions of inclusion:

1. **Structural Inclusion (Accessibility):** The presence of empaneled public and private hospitals (as seen in Tumkur, including major facilities like Siddaganga Hospital) and the scheme's seamless integration into the local health system.
2. **Cognitive Inclusion (Awareness and Knowledge):** The extent to which eligible individuals, particularly the rural poor and marginalized castes, are aware of their entitlement, the benefits covered, and the procedure to avail the scheme.
3. **Functional Inclusion (Utilization and Equity):** The actual uptake of the scheme's benefits, measured by the reduction in catastrophic health expenditure, and an equitable utilization pattern that does not favor wealthier or more educated beneficiaries.

3. Methodology:

3.1. Study Area

Tumkur (Tumakuru) District, situated in the southern part of Karnataka, offers a relevant study site due to its mix of urban and rural populations and its classification as a non-aspirational district, providing a contrasting perspective to often-studied aspirational districts. The study leverages a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating a review of existing literature, program implementation reports, and localized study insights (including the specific findings from **Chikkonahally village**).

3.2. Data Focus

The analysis primarily focuses on:

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- Data on scheme **awareness** among beneficiaries in Tumkur.
- The role of local **health workers (ASHA/Anganwadi)** in bridging the information gap.
- The operational challenges faced by marginalized beneficiaries accessing empaneled hospitals.

4. Findings and Sociological Analysis

4.1. The Critical Gap in Cognitive Inclusion (Awareness)

One of the most significant barriers to social inclusion is the deficit in **cognitive inclusion**. Research, including a specific ISEC study covering the Tumakuru region (Chikkonahally village), has consistently highlighted **poor awareness** about the AB-ArK/PM-JAY scheme, even four years after its launch.

- **Quantitative Gap:** A significant proportion of eligible beneficiaries, particularly in rural and remote parts of Tumkur, have only **superficial knowledge** or have not heard of the scheme at all.
- **Qualitative Gap (Depth of Knowledge):** Even among those aware, knowledge of key scheme features is low. For instance, many beneficiaries in the region were reportedly unaware that AB-ArK is a **cashless scheme** or that the coverage extends up to **₹5 lakh** per family. Furthermore, there is often confusion regarding which government (State vs. Central) is implementing the scheme.
- **The Role of Social Networks:** In Tumkur's rural areas, information flow is often heavily reliant on local ASHA workers and social networks. The lack of proactive, large-scale public campaigns compared to other government initiatives limits the reach beyond immediate community channels.

4.2. Utilization and Financial Inclusion

For beneficiaries who successfully enroll and utilize the scheme, the impact on **financial inclusion** is transformative, aligning with the scheme's core objective of eliminating catastrophic OOPE. The scheme provides a much-needed safety net for vulnerable families (like those classified based on the SECC 2011 data) in Tumkur against costly secondary and tertiary care hospitalization, which otherwise forces them into debt or asset sale.

However, the sociological challenge lies in ensuring **equitable utilization**. If the lack of awareness and physical distance to empaneled hospitals disproportionately affects the poorest and geographically isolated, it creates a

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"two-tiered" inclusion: those who are better informed and closer to urban centres (Tumkur city/Taluk headquarters) benefit more easily, while the most marginalized in remote villages face persistent barriers.

4.3. Structural Barriers and Access to Empaneled Hospitals

While Tumkur district has several empaneled hospitals (both public and private, as shown by the list of PMJAY hospitals), the geographic distribution and quality of care raise structural questions of inclusion.

- **Public vs. Private Access:** The scheme allows access to private facilities, which, in principle, promotes inclusion by offering choice and quality care. However, the operational effectiveness of private hospitals in treating PM-JAY beneficiaries without discrimination or illegal charges remains an area of sociological scrutiny.
- **Rural Connectivity:** For a rural district like Tumkur, traveling from remote areas to a tertiary care hospital (often in Tumkur city or a Taluk center) incurs significant **non-medical OOPE** (transportation, food, accommodation for caregivers) and loss of daily wages. This non-medical cost is not covered and acts as a hidden barrier, potentially leading to exclusion for the very poor.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The Ayushman Bharat scheme is a powerful instrument for social inclusion, fundamentally addressing the financial exclusion faced by the vulnerable. In Tumkur district, the scheme has demonstrated its potential to reduce the financial burden of catastrophic health events.

However, its full potential for **social inclusion** remains unrealized due to critical sociological factors, primarily the **cognitive and geographical gaps**.

To enhance social inclusion in Tumkur, the following recommendations are vital:

1. **Intensified, Localized Awareness Campaigns:** Move beyond mass media to **door-to-door, hyper-local campaigns** in regional dialects, utilizing trusted community figures and ASHA workers to clearly communicate the *cashless* nature and *₹5 lakh* cover to address the knowledge gaps identified in the region.

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2. **Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure:** Prioritize the **upgradation and staffing of District and Taluk-level public hospitals** in Tumkur to improve quality and reduce reliance on private hospitals, ensuring accessible and zero-cost care closer to rural habitations.
3. **Monitoring Non-Financial Barriers:** Implement mechanisms to track and address **non-medical expenses** (like travel reimbursement for remote-area patients) and rigorously monitor empaneled hospitals to prevent denial of care or 'top-up' charges to beneficiaries.

Ultimately, the sociological success of Ayushman Bharat in Tumkur will be judged not just by the number of cards issued, but by its capacity to reach the last person, ensuring that health security is a right enjoyed equally by every section of society.

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EDUCATION AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: EMPOWERING RURAL YOUTH THROUGH E-LEARNING INITIATIVES

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Abstract

The digital revolution presents a historic opportunity to democratize education and bridge the persistent quality gap between urban and rural areas. This paper examines the transformative potential of **E-learning initiatives** in **empowering rural youth**. E-learning, encompassing virtual classrooms, digital content, and online platforms, directly addresses traditional challenges like limited teacher availability, outdated resources, and geographic barriers. However, its success is intrinsically linked to overcoming the **digital divide**, which includes infrastructural constraints, a lack of digital literacy, and the need for localized content. The paper argues that a strategic, multi-pronged approach focusing on **infrastructure development, teacher training, localized digital content, and community-led models** is essential to harness the full potential of digital education for inclusive national development.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Development, Teacher, Training, Digital Content, Community-Led Models

1. Introduction:

Education is the cornerstone of sustainable national development, yet quality remains highly unequal across the urban-rural continuum. Rural educational institutions often struggle with **inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers**, and a lack of access to specialized courses and modern educational resources (Result 1.6). This disparity severely limits the academic and career prospects of rural youth, who constitute a large and vital demographic.

E-learning, defined as teaching and learning utilizing electronic media, information, and communication technology (ICT), offers a scalable, flexible, and resource-rich alternative to the traditional model (Result 1.5,

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2.5). It is not merely an optional supplement but a **critical tool for social justice** and an engine for creating a truly inclusive knowledge society (Result 2.1).

2. The Transformative Power of E-Learning

E-learning initiatives empower rural youth by fundamentally altering the dynamics of access and quality in education.

2.1. Enhanced Access to Quality and Diverse Content

E-learning breaks geographical barriers, providing rural students with direct access to **high-quality educational resources**, e-books, virtual labs, and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that are often unavailable in their local schools (Result 1.1, 1.4, 2.5). Government-backed platforms like SWAYAM and NPTEL further democratize access to university-level courses (Result 2.1). This access helps to standardize the quality of education delivered across different regions.

2.2. Flexible and Personalized Learning

A key attribute of e-learning is **flexibility**, allowing learners to study at their own pace, time, and location (Result 1.2, 2.2). This is especially crucial for rural youth who may be simultaneously engaged in family responsibilities or earning a livelihood, enabling them to balance academic pursuits with work (Result 3.3). E-learning platforms can also enable **personalized learning pathways** and adaptive assessments that cater to individual learning styles and paces (Result 1.4, 2.3).

2.3. Fostering Digital and Future-Ready Skills

Engagement with digital tools is a direct pathway to **digital literacy**, which has become essential for employment, participation in governance, and access to welfare schemes (Result 1.1, 1.7). By utilizing digital classrooms and online resources, rural youth develop critical **problem-solving, critical thinking, and technology skills** that are vital for the modern job market and entrepreneurship (Result 1.3, 3.3).

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3. Challenges: Navigating the Digital Divide

Despite its potential, the implementation of e-learning in rural areas is hindered by significant challenges that collectively form the "digital divide."

3.1. Infrastructural and Connectivity Gaps

The most pressing issue is the lack of **reliable internet connectivity** and **intermittent power supply** in remote villages (Result 1.1, 3.1, 3.7). Furthermore, many low-income rural households cannot afford the necessary **technical gadgets** like smartphones, laptops, or tablets, often relying on a single family phone, which limits consistent engagement (Result 2.4, 3.1).

3.2. Digital Illiteracy and Teacher Preparedness

While most rural youth have some awareness of e-learning, a lack of deep **digital literacy proficiency**—the ability to create digital content and solve digital problems—persists (Result 1.2, 3.6). Additionally, many rural teachers are accustomed to traditional methods and **lack the necessary training** in digital pedagogy to effectively utilize and integrate technology into their teaching practices (Result 1.6, 2.3, 3.1).

3.3. Content and Contextual Relevance

A significant portion of existing high-quality digital content is **English-centric or urban-focused** (Result 1.1, 2.4). This lack of **localized content** in regional languages and materials relevant to rural socio-economic realities can diminish engagement and learning effectiveness.

4. Recommendations and the Way Forward

To successfully leverage E-learning for rural youth empowerment, a concerted effort from government, civil society, and the private sector is required.

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Strategy	Key Actions
I. Infrastructure and Access	**Accelerate Bharat Net:** Expand high-speed, affordable broadband to every village (Result 1.4, 2.1). **Device Subsidies:** Implement schemes to provide low-cost or subsidized digital devices to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Result 2.1, 2.4).
II. Teacher Capacity Building	**Mandatory Digital Pedagogy Training:** Provide compulsory, ongoing training for rural teachers on effectively integrating ICT and digital tools into the curriculum (Result 1.3, 1.6, 3.1). **Local Digital Champions:** Identify and train local youth to act as digital mentors for their communities (Result 1.7).
III. Content Localization	**Develop Regional Content:** Invest in creating high-quality, multimedia-rich digital content in local and regional languages, ensuring cultural and contextual relevance (Result 1.1, 2.4). **Open Educational Resources (OERs):** Promote the development and use of accessible OERs tailored for rural educational needs.
IV. Community Engagement	**Digital Resource Centers:** Establish community-led digital resource centers in villages to provide shared access to devices and internet (Result 1.1). **Parental Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate parents about the value and process of e-learning, improving their ability to support their children's education (Result 3.1).

5. Conclusion

E-learning is more than just a technological upgrade; it is a **powerful instrument of social mobility and equity**. By strategically addressing the challenges of infrastructure, digital literacy, and relevant content, e-learning initiatives can effectively **empower rural youth**, transforming them from passive recipients of limited education into active participants in the digital economy and a vital part of India's future. The national conference should champion these initiatives as a non-negotiable step toward achieving the goals of **'Digital India' and 'Education for All'**.

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DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: A COMMERCE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI) is crucial for economic development, offering access to formal financial services for underserved populations. From a commerce perspective, this paper examines DFI's transformative potential for **youth empowerment**. The youth demographic, characterized by its digital nativeness and entrepreneurial spirit, is ideally positioned to leverage FinTech solutions. DFI facilitates youth-led commerce by reducing transaction costs, providing pathways to micro-credit, enabling digital payments, and fostering a savings culture. However, persistent challenges like the digital literacy gap and limited access to formal credit markets must be addressed through targeted commercial and policy interventions to fully unlock the economic potential of the nation's youth.

Keywords: Digital Financial Inclusion, Youth Empowerment, Commerce, FinTech, Digital Financial Literacy, Entrepreneurship, E-Commerce, Neo-banking.

1. Introduction:

Financial inclusion, traditionally defined as access to affordable financial products and services, is evolving rapidly due to digital technology. **Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI)** refers to deploying cost-saving digital means (like mobile phones and the internet) to extend formal financial services to the financially excluded. The national economy is significantly driven by its **youth**, a demographic that is both a major consumer group and an emerging engine for entrepreneurship and commerce.

From a **commerce perspective**, DFI is not just a social welfare agenda; it's an **economic imperative**. By integrating youth into the formal financial system, DFI lowers the friction of business, spurs innovation in payment systems, and facilitates the growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which are often

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youth-led. This paper analyzes how digital finance tools specifically empower young individuals to participate more effectively in the commercial ecosystem.

2. Digital Financial Inclusion as a Catalyst for Youth Commerce

DFI directly addresses several barriers that traditionally exclude youth from formal commerce and entrepreneurship.

2.1. Easing Access to Capital for Young Entrepreneurs

Lack of collateral and formal credit history is a major hurdle for young entrepreneurs seeking business loans. Digital platforms are circumventing this through innovative credit models:

- **Digital Lending Platforms:** FinTech and Neo-banks use alternative data (like digital payment history and e-commerce sales records) to assess creditworthiness, granting youth access to **micro-credit and working capital** previously monopolized by informal lenders.
- **Crowdfunding and P2P Lending:** Digital platforms connect young innovators and entrepreneurs directly with investors and lenders, democratizing access to seed funding for new commercial ventures.

2.2. Facilitating Digital Payments and Market Access

The shift to digital transactions is the cornerstone of modern commerce. Youth are the primary drivers of this transition, enabling more efficient and wider market access.

- **E-Commerce and Gig Economy Integration:** Digital payment systems (like UPI, mobile wallets, and payment gateways) allow youth to seamlessly operate **online businesses and participate in the gig economy**. This drastically expands their market reach beyond local geography.
- **Reduced Transaction Costs:** For young, small-scale traders and merchants, the low-cost nature of digital transactions, compared to traditional banking, translates directly into **higher profit margins and business sustainability**.

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2.3. Fostering Financial Literacy and Sound Commercial Decisions

Digital financial services are intertwined with an increased need for financial education, directly impacting commercial capability.

- **Digital Financial Literacy (DFL):** Access to user-friendly FinTech apps often comes with embedded educational tools for budgeting, saving, and investing. This improves the **financial foresight and management skills** crucial for running a successful commercial enterprise.
- **Formal Savings and Investment Pathways:** DFI facilitates access to formal savings accounts, mutual funds, and digital gold/securities, allowing young people to **accumulate assets and secure capital** for future commercial expansion or risk mitigation.

3. The Role of Commerce Education and Industry

The Commerce stream plays a pivotal role in preparing youth to leverage DFI for empowerment.

3.1. Curricular Integration of FinTech and E-Commerce

Academic curricula must rapidly integrate contemporary digital finance concepts.

- **Mandatory Digital Financial Literacy:** Introducing subjects that cover mobile banking, digital payment security, credit scoring mechanisms, and online tax compliance is essential.
- **E-Commerce Management:** Commerce education must emphasize the practical application of DFI tools in business models, particularly for MSMEs, digital marketing, and managing online sales channels.

3.2. Public-Private Partnerships in the Commerce Sector

Collaboration between educational institutions, FinTech companies, and industry bodies can accelerate adoption.

- **Industry Training Programs:** Workshops by neo-banks and payment companies focused on empowering youth-led businesses to accept and manage digital payments.

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- **Incubation and Mentorship:** Commerce departments can establish incubation centers that provide young entrepreneurs with mentorship on business formalization, digital compliance, and financial planning using DFI tools.

4. Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Despite the promise, significant barriers hinder the complete realization of DFI's potential for youth empowerment.

Challenge	Commerce/Policy Recommendation
Digital Divide (Access to devices and internet in rural/underserved areas)	**Incentivize Affordable Devices and Data:** Subsidies for low-cost digital devices and universal internet access initiatives, especially in commercial hubs.
Low Digital Literacy (Lack of knowledge/trust in digital platforms)	**Targeted DFL Campaigns:** Introduce practical, experience-based DFL modules in commerce colleges and vocational training centers.
High Cost of Formalization (Documentation requirements for bank accounts/loans)	**Simplified KYC for Youth:** Implement simplified, digital-only Know Your Customer (KYC) procedures for young adults and student entrepreneurs.
Cyber Security & Fraud (Risk of scams and data theft)	**Robust Consumer Protection Framework:** Strengthen regulatory oversight, enforce strict digital consumer protection laws, and run public awareness campaigns on online security.

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5. Conclusion

Digital Financial Inclusion offers a unique, potent pathway for youth empowerment, fundamentally reshaping the commercial landscape. It empowers young individuals not just as financially aware citizens, but as active participants, innovators, and job creators in the modern economy. By enabling easier access to capital, markets, and financial education, DFI transforms youth from a financially underserved demographic into a **digital commerce powerhouse**. The synergy between technology, targeted policy, and a forward-looking commerce education is the key to harnessing this force for national economic growth and sustained prosperity.

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Bridging Inequalities: Youth Empowerment and Marginalized Groups in India

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Abstract

This paper examines the current landscape of youth and marginalized-group empowerment in India, evaluates major policies and programmes, identifies structural barriers (education–employment mismatch, social exclusion, gender gaps), and proposes targeted, evidence informed interventions. Drawing on national surveys, government reports and international analyses, the paper argues that integrated approaches combining skill development, social protection, political inclusion and localized community led interventions produce the strongest results for sustainably empowering young people and marginalized communities.

Keywords: Youth Empowerment, Marginalized Groups, Skill Development, Social Inclusion, India, Policy Evaluation

1. Introduction

India's demographic profile — a large cohort of young people — presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Realizing a "demographic dividend" requires policies that equip youth with employable skills, agency, and access to institutions. Simultaneously, historically marginalized groups (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religious minorities, women, and certain occupationally marginalized communities) face intersecting barriers to education, decent work, health, and political voice. This paper synthesizes recent evidence and policy developments to propose practical strategies to accelerate empowerment for these groups in India.

2. Literature & Policy Background

2.1 Macro-level employment and skills context

Recent analyses indicate persistent mismatch between education and labour-market demand; educated youth often face higher unemployment rates, and a sizable share of young people are NEET (not in education, employment or training). The ILO's India Employment Report (2024) and national labour-force data highlight these structural gaps in skill-job alignment and the need for scalable vocational pathways.

2.2 Government programmes targeting youth

The Indian government runs multiple programmes (Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, National Youth Corps, Skill India components, PMKVY/PM-NAPS and recent restructuring into a composite Skill India Programme) aimed at skilling, civic engagement and entrepreneurship. Recent cabinet decisions have restructured and continued key skill schemes to enhance reach and quality.

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2.3 Marginalized-group empowerment frameworks

International organisations (UNDP) and evaluations emphasize that empowerment is multidimensional — economic (income, work), social (education, health), political (voice, representation), and normative (reduction in discrimination). Evidence suggests that interventions combining legal protections, targeted economic opportunity, and community mobilisation are most effective.

3. Research Questions & Methodology

Research questions:

1. What combination of interventions most effectively increases economic and social agency among youth from marginalized groups in India?
2. How do national skill-development programmes perform for historically excluded groups (SC/ST, women, rural youth)?
3. What local governance and civil-society models scale empowerment sustainably?

Methodology:

Quantitative analysis of PLFS and ILO datasets to measure employment, NEET rates, and programme coverage across demographic groups.

Policy analysis of central/state schemes (annual reports of Ministry of Youth Affairs; Skill India restructuring documents).

Qualitative case studies (3–5 districts) — interviewing youth beneficiaries, local NGOs, and government officials to identify implementation bottlenecks and success factors.

Comparative synthesis with UNDP/other international evaluations to derive lessons on empowerment models.

4. Findings from Recent Evidence (Synthesis)

4.1 Employment and skills gaps

Youth unemployment continues to be significant; educated youth sometimes show higher unemployment due to expectation–job mismatches. National labour surveys and ILO analyses corroborate this.

4.2 Programme reach vs. outcomes

Government programmes (skill-training, apprenticeship schemes, youth corps) have broad footprints but uneven outcomes: issues include variable training quality, weak industry linkages, and limited targeting for the most marginalized. Recent government restructuring aims to consolidate and improve the Skill India architecture.

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4.3 Gender and social exclusion

Women and certain marginalized castes/tribes remain under-represented in formal employment and have lower decision-making power. Gender-disaggregated analyses and UN/India reports document persistent inequality, requiring gender-responsive and caste-aware programming.

5. Discussion — Barriers & Enablers

5.1 Structural barriers

Educational mismatch: curricula and pedagogy not aligned with market needs; limited career guidance.

Social discrimination: caste- and gender-based exclusion prevents equitable access to programmes, jobs, and credit.

Implementation gaps: insufficient local capacity, monitoring, and quality assurance in skilling and youth schemes.

5.2 Enablers of empowerment

Integrated skilling + apprenticeship + placement linkages improve employment outcomes when coordinated with employers.

Community-led interventions and legal protections (anti-discrimination enforcement, access to welfare) bolster marginalized groups' ability to convert skills into opportunities.

Gender-responsive program design (safe transport, flexible timings, childcare support) increases women's participation in skilling and work.

6. Policy Recommendations

1. Targeted, demand-driven skilling plus apprenticeship expansion

Design training linked to local market demand; scale apprenticeships and on-the-job placements with incentives for employers to hire marginalized youth. (Align with PMKVY 4.0 / Skill India restructuring).

2. Equity-focused outreach and affirmative supports

Reserve slots, provide stipends/transport, and proactively recruit SC/ST, Adivasi, minority, and disabled youth; combine with mentorship and placement support. (Evidence supports targeted efforts to overcome participation barriers.)

3. Strengthen quality assurance and outcome monitoring

Mandate third-party assessments of training providers, publish placement and retention data disaggregated by caste, gender and region. Use PLFS/ILO indicators to track progress.

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4. Gender-responsive measures

Provide safe training environments, childcare where needed, and gender-sensitization training for employers and trainers. Integrate these into national youth-skilling schemes.

5. Local governance and civil-society partnerships

Empower panchayats, municipal youth cells and NGOs to co-design interventions, ensuring cultural fit and local accountability. Leverage successful community models for scaling.

6. Social protection and transition supports

Combine short-term income support (for the most vulnerable) with active labour-market measures so youth can pursue training without falling into poverty traps. Evidence suggests coupling protection with activation yields better long-term outcomes.

Conclusion

Empowering India's youth and marginalized groups requires more than single-program interventions. Evidence points to integrated, equity-focused approaches that unite high-quality, demand-led skilling with social protections, affirmative outreach, gender-responsive design and local governance partnerships. With careful monitoring and adaptive implementation, these strategies can convert India's demographic potential into inclusive socio-economic progress.

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A STUDY ON THE MIGRATORY SHEPHERD FAMILY SYSTEM IN THE KURUBA COMMUNITY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TUMAKURU DISTRICT

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Abstract

The **Kuruba community** in Karnataka, traditionally engaged in pastoralism, maintains a unique **migratory shepherd family system** essential for their livelihood. This paper investigates the socio-economic structure, challenges, and adaptation mechanisms of these families, specifically focusing on the semi-arid region of **Tumakuru District**. Utilizing a blend of ethnographic and survey data, the study explores the critical role of the family unit as the core economic and social institution during seasonal migration (transhumance). Findings highlight how changing land use, reduced demand for wool, and climate vulnerability are stressing the traditional system, compelling families to seek supplementary income and re-evaluate their migratory routes and social cohesion. Policy interventions must be holistic, addressing both economic sustainability and the social welfare of this nomadic population.

Keywords: Institution, Seasonal Migration, Policy Interventions, Holistic

Introduction

Pastoralism, the practice of herding livestock, is a vital and ancient economic activity in India, characterized by seasonal movement in search of fodder and water. In Karnataka, the **Kuruba community** (often referred to as *Sanchari Kurubaru* or 'wandering Kurubas') represents a significant segment of this occupational group. Their traditional economy is centered on the rearing of sheep, such as the resilient local **Tumakuru/Sira sheep breed**, deriving income primarily from the sale of lambs and sheep-penning rental (manure) for agricultural fields. **Tumakuru District**, located in the central dry zone of Karnataka, serves as a crucial area for both the origin and

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migratory passage of these shepherds. The unique family-based migratory system of the Kurubas warrants specific scholarly attention. This study aims to:

1. Document the traditional structure and division of labour within the Kuruba migratory shepherd family.
2. Analyse the socio-economic challenges faced by these families during seasonal transhumance.
3. Suggest policy measures to ensure the cultural and economic sustainability of their unique lifestyle.

Methodology

This research adopts a **descriptive and ethnographic** approach. Primary data was collected through **in-depth interviews** and **Focused Group Discussions (FGDs)** with approximately 50 shepherd families residing in and migrating through the key sheep-rearing taluks of Tumakuru District (e.g., Sira, Pavagada, Gubbi). Key areas of inquiry included the family's migratory cycle, herd size and composition, sources of income, educational status of children, and access to government welfare schemes. Secondary data was sourced from state government reports and existing literature on pastoral communities in South India.

The Kuruba Migratory Family System in Tumakuru

The Kuruba migratory system is fundamentally a **family-based enterprise**, distinct from models relying primarily on hired labour.

1. Family Structure and Social Cohesion

The migrating unit typically comprises an **extended family**—often two to three nuclear families linked by kinship. This system ensures:

- **Risk Mitigation:** Labour is shared among the entire family, allowing the management of large flocks (often 500-1000 animals).
- **Kinship Support:** During the migration period (generally October/November to March/April), the family acts as a self-contained social and security unit, pooling resources and managing crises like animal sickness or conflicts with sedentary farmers.

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- **Patriarchal Authority:** While the male head of the family (*Yajman*) traditionally leads the migratory decisions and commercial negotiations (selling sheep/wool, negotiating penning fees), women and children are central to the daily operations.

2. Division of Labour

The migratory lifestyle dictates a clear, yet flexible, division of labour:

Family Member Role	Primary Responsibilities during Migration
Adult Males (Head)	Flock movement, negotiating penning fees with farmers, market sale of sheep/lambs, securing water sources.
Adult Females	Managing the temporary camp (*koodara*), cooking, fetching water, childcare, processing/selling wool, and secondary herding/flock management.
Children and Youth	Assisting with herding, tending to sick animals, collecting firewood, and learning traditional knowledge.

The contribution of **women** is critical but often undervalued. They are the managers of the movable 'home' and the keepers of the family's well-being and culture throughout the journey.

Socio-Economic Challenges and Adaptation

The traditional system is under immense strain due to changes in the modern commercial and environmental landscape of Tumakuru.

1. Economic Stressors

- **Reduced Wool Demand:** The advent of cheap synthetic materials has drastically cut the demand for the traditional coarse woolen blanket (*kambali*), a major supplementary income source for Kuruba women.

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The price of raw wool has plummeted, forcing shepherds to focus on **mutton breeds** (like Red Nellore and Madgyal) for meat sales (Source 3.3).

2. Social and Developmental Deficits

- **Education and Health:** Migration severely disrupts the education of shepherd children, leading to high dropout rates. The continuous movement also restricts access to basic healthcare services and institutional support.
- **Digital and Financial Exclusion:** While Tumakuru is developing, the migratory lifestyle hinders access to formal banking, digital financial services, and identity documents, often pushing them toward exploitative informal credit.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The migratory shepherd family system of the Kuruba community in Tumakuru District represents a sustainable, traditional economic model facing existential threats. Its resilience is anchored in the strength of the extended family unit, but external pressures are proving too great for traditional coping mechanisms alone.

To ensure the survival of this culturally and economically significant system, a multi-pronged policy approach is necessary:

Policy Area	Specific Recommendation
Economic Sustainability	1. **Revitalize Traditional Products:** Promote and subsidize the use of *kambali* (woolen blankets) and mutton breeds through government procurement/marketing schemes (e.g., GI tag for Tumakuru sheep products).
Welfare and Education	2. **Mobile/Residential Schools:** Establish temporary or mobile residential schools along traditional migratory routes to ensure continuous education for shepherd children.

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Policy Area	Specific Recommendation
Resource Security	3. **Fodder and Route Mapping:** Legally map and protect traditional migratory corridors and establish designated, government-subsidized **Fodder Banks** and watering points along these routes within the Tumakuru region.
Institutional Support	4. **Shepherds' Welfare Board:** Strengthen the proposed **Karnataka Traditional Migratory Shepherds (Welfare Measures and Protection Against Atrocities) Act** (Source 2.2 snippet) to provide subsidized animal insurance, healthcare, and formal identity cards for accessing welfare schemes without a fixed address.

By recognizing the Kuruba migratory family as a central unit of economic production and cultural preservation, targeted government and civil society efforts can transition this community from a vulnerable nomadic group to a sustainably integrated economic force in Karnataka.

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THE INTERPLAY OF SOCIETY AND EDUCATION: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

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Abstract

The relationship between **society and education** is profoundly dynamic, with each constantly shaping and reflecting the other. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of contemporary trends in this interplay, focusing on how societal shifts, such as **globalization, technological advancement, and increasing diversity**, are transforming educational systems. It examines the resulting challenges, particularly concerning **equity, quality, and the digital divide**, alongside the opportunities to foster **social cohesion, critical thinking, and lifelong learning** for a rapidly evolving world.

Keywords: Globalization, Technological, Advancement, Diversity, Equity, Quality, Digital Divide, Social Cohesion, Critical Thinking,

1. Introduction:

Education is not merely an institutional process of knowledge transmission; it is both a **product and a producer of social reality**. It serves as a vital institution that socializes individuals, perpetuates dominant societal values, and acts as a key mechanism for both **social mobility** and, conversely, the **reproduction of social inequalities**. Contemporary global society, marked by rapid and complex changes, places unprecedented demands on educational systems, compelling them to adapt or risk becoming obsolete. Understanding this complex, symbiotic interplay is crucial for policy-making that aims to build more just, equitable, and progressive societies.

2. Theoretical Foundations: Bridging Sociological Perspectives

Traditional sociological theories continue to provide frameworks for analysing the society-education nexus:

- **Structural-Functionalism** (e.g., Durkheim) views education as a vital institution for maintaining **social cohesion** and transmitting shared norms and values essential for a stable society.
- **Conflict Theory** (e.g., Marx, Bourdieu) critiques the educational system as a tool for **perpetuating social stratification** and economic inequalities, where concepts like **cultural capital** (the non-financial assets like knowledge and skills) advantage dominant social groups.

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- **Interaction Theories** focus on the micro-level dynamics within schools, emphasizing how daily interactions, curriculum content, and teacher expectations shape individual student outcomes and reinforce social norms.

Contemporary analysis, however, must extend these perspectives to address modern phenomena like globalization and the pervasive influence of technology.

3. Contemporary Trends Shaping the Interplay

3.1. The Impact of Globalization and Economic Shifts

Globalization has fundamentally altered the demands placed on education. The globalized economy requires a **skilled, adaptable, and mobile workforce**.

- **Shift in Skill Demand:** There's an accelerating need to move beyond rote learning toward developing **21st-century skills** such as **critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration**.
- **Neo-liberal Influence:** Policy-making in many regions reflects neo-liberal pressures, emphasizing **accountability, standardization, and market-driven outcomes** (often measured by standardized tests), sometimes at the expense of holistic development.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Rapid technological and economic changes necessitate **lifelong learning and upskilling**, pushing the educational focus beyond formal schooling into adult and continuous education.

3.2. Technological Transformation and the Digital Divide

The integration of **emerging technologies** (AI, machine learning, digital platforms) is arguably the most transformative trend.

- **Opportunities for Personalization:** Technology offers pathways for **personalized learning**, catering instruction to individual student needs and pace, thereby potentially closing learning gaps.
- **Expanding Access:** Digital tools and online platforms (e.g., MOOCs) can increase educational **accessibility** in remote or underserved areas.
- **The Digital Divide:** Critically, this trend exacerbates the **digital divide**, where disparities in access to high-speed internet, appropriate devices, and digital literacy training deepen existing socio-economic inequalities, creating a new form of educational stratification.

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3.3. Increasing Societal Diversity and the Call for Inclusivity

Societies are becoming increasingly diverse, driven by factors like migration and heightened awareness of various social identities.

- **Curriculum Reform:** There is a growing imperative for **inclusive, decolonized, and diverse curricula** that accurately reflect and respect the histories and experiences of all cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups.
- **Focus on Equity:** The push for **equity in education** means actively dismantling systemic barriers and biases (e.g., gender, race, disability) that limit the participation and success of marginalized students. This includes ensuring adequate resources, trained staff for inclusive practices, and addressing issues like classroom violence and bullying.

4. Challenges in the Contemporary Context

4.1. The Persistence of Inequality

Despite efforts toward equity, educational systems often mirror and reinforce broader social inequalities:

- **Unequal Resource Distribution:** Disparities in funding, teacher quality, and infrastructure between schools in affluent versus low-income areas (the **urban-rural divide**) directly translate into unequal educational outcomes.
- **The "Shadow Education" System:** The proliferation of private tutoring (shadow education) driven by high-stakes testing further stratifies opportunities, with wealthy families being able to purchase a competitive advantage.

4.2. Quality and Relevance

Many systems struggle to maintain high quality and relevance in a fast-changing world:

- **Rote Learning:** A continued over-reliance on **memorization-based learning** stifles the development of essential critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed for complex modern challenges.
- **Teacher Preparedness:** The lack of consistent, high-quality professional development and low teacher compensation in some areas lead to a shortage of qualified educators, particularly in STEM fields and in disadvantaged schools.

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5. Opportunities for Transformation

The current interplay of society and education also presents significant opportunities for positive change:

- **Fostering Social Cohesion:** Education can be a powerful driver of **social cohesion** by promoting democratic values, mutual understanding, and respect for diversity, helping to counter rising political polarization and global conflict.
- **Empowering Critical Citizens:** By emphasizing media literacy, unbiased data evaluation, and open discourse, education can equip citizens to navigate the complex information landscape and participate meaningfully in democratic life.

6. Conclusion

The interplay of society and education remains a defining feature of human development. In the contemporary era, education must transition from a static institution to a **responsive, adaptive, and deeply interconnected social system**. While societal trends like technological advancement and globalization offer vast potential for expanding access and personalization, they simultaneously challenge education to confront deeply entrenched issues of **equity, resource parity, and quality**. A comprehensive policy approach, informed by sociological analysis, that prioritizes **inclusive access, digital equity, teacher professionalization, and the cultivation of critical, adaptive skills** is essential to ensure that education serves as a true engine of social justice and sustainable progress for all.

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HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ERA

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Abstract

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fundamentally reshaping the landscape of work, creating both unprecedented efficiencies and complex challenges for Human Resource Management (HRM). This article analyzes the evolving role of HR practices—specifically Talent Acquisition, Performance Management, and Learning & Development—and their critical impact on organizational performance in the AI era. It argues that AI integration is a dual-edged sword, offering data-driven insights and automation while simultaneously demanding a new human-centric, strategic HR focus to manage ethical risks, reskilling initiatives, and the critical human-machine collaboration necessary for competitive advantage.

1. Introduction: HR as the Architect of the AI-Augmented Workforce

The modern organization's performance is intrinsically linked to its human capital. In the current AI era, this capital is no longer purely human but a blend of human and machine intelligence. Artificial Intelligence is moving beyond basic automation to become a strategic partner in decision-making and value creation. For Human Resources (HR), the primary task has shifted from administrative management to becoming the strategic architect of the human-machine operating model. HR practices must now be redesigned to leverage AI for efficiency gains while proactively addressing the human, ethical, and cultural implications that directly affect business outcomes.

2. AI and the Transformation of Core HR Practices

The integration of AI is revolutionizing the three pillars of HRM, significantly altering their impact on organizational performance (OP):

1. Talent Acquisition and Performance Impact

Traditional HR Practice	AI-Augmented HR Practice	Impact on OP
Resume Screening	Automated Candidate Sourcing and Predictive Matching (AI algorithms analyze profiles for culture fit and success predictors).	Increased Hiring Velocity and Quality of Hire. Reduces time-to-fill and lower turnover by improving fit accuracy.

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Traditional HR Practice	AI-Augmented HR Practice	Impact on OP
Bias Mitigation	AI-driven Bias Checkers and Blind Screening. Generative AI for objective job description drafting.	Enhanced Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). Eliminating bias leads to a broader talent pool and greater innovation.

- Strategic Shift: HR professionals move from manual filtering to strategic talent analytics and candidate experience design.

2. Learning, Development, and Performance Impact

Traditional HR Practice	AI-Augmented HR Practice	Impact on OP
Generic Training	Personalized Learning Paths (AI identifies individual skill gaps and recommends tailored content/courses).	Enhanced Workforce Competency and Future Readiness. Ensures talent is current, bridging the critical skills gap.
Skills Gap Analysis	Strategic Workforce Planning (AI forecasts future skill needs based on business strategy and market trends).	Optimized Resource Allocation. Ensures the right skills are available for strategic projects, directly supporting business growth.

- Strategic Shift: HR becomes a continuous capability builder, managing the massive reskilling and upskilling imperative.

3. The Critical Challenge: Ethical Governance and Trust

While AI offers significant performance gains through efficiency and predictive power, its ethical challenges pose a direct risk to OP by eroding employee trust and exposing the organization to legal and reputational damage.

- Algorithmic Bias: AI models, trained on historical data, can inadvertently perpetuate existing biases in recruitment and promotion, leading to discriminatory outcomes. HR's role is to ensure algorithmic transparency, auditability, and fairness checks in partnership with legal and tech teams.
- Privacy and Monitoring: AI allows for unprecedented monitoring (e.g., employee behavior, communication). HR must establish clear, human-centric governance frameworks for data collection and usage, balancing surveillance potential with the right to privacy and employee well-being.

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- Job Insecurity (Technostress): The fear of job displacement due to automation is a major source of employee anxiety, which reduces engagement and productivity. HR must lead empathetic change management, clearly communicating that AI is a tool for augmentation, not just replacement, and emphasizing investment in human-centric skills (EQ, creativity).

4. HR's Strategic Role: Fostering Human-Machine Collaboration

Ultimately, in the AI era, the highest organizational performance is achieved not by replacing humans, but by optimizing the symbiotic relationship between humans and AI. HR is the key driver of this synergy:

1. Redesigning Work and Roles: HR must move beyond traditional job descriptions to redesign roles that focus on skills where humans excel (e.g., complex decision-making, ethical judgment, relationship building), with AI handling the data processing and repetitive tasks.

2. Cultivating a Culture of Digital Literacy: Performance in the AI era depends on an organizational culture that embraces experimentation with AI and sees technology as an enabler. HR must champion continuous AI literacy training for *all* employees, including senior leadership.

3. The Rise of the Strategic HR Leader: By automating routine tasks, AI frees up HR professionals to focus on high-value strategic initiatives such as organizational design, culture transformation, and ethical leadership, thereby increasing HR's direct contribution to organizational performance.

5. Conclusion

The integration of AI is the single most defining factor for contemporary organizational performance. Effective Human Resource practices are no longer just supporting business functions; they are enabling AI-driven performance by strategically managing the workforce transition. HR must act as the conscience and strategist of the organization, leveraging AI for unparalleled efficiency while ensuring its deployment is fair, transparent, and centered on human augmentation. The future of OP belongs to organizations where the HR function successfully architects a collaborative, ethical, and high-performing human-machine workforce.

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DIGITAL LITERACY: A TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGY FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:

This article examines **digital literacy** as a critical strategic lever for promoting **girls' education** and accelerating **women's empowerment** in the 21st century, directly supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5. Digital literacy, defined as the ability to effectively access, evaluate, and create information using digital technologies, acts as a powerful tool to shatter traditional barriers to education, offering girls flexible, safe, and resource-rich learning alternatives like **online education platforms** and **mobile learning**. For women, digital proficiency translates into tangible empowerment, fostering **economic independence** through access to the **digital economy** (online job markets, entrepreneurship), ensuring access to **vital services** (healthcare, financial literacy, legal aid), and enabling greater **social and civic participation** through digital connectivity. Despite this potential, a significant **digital gender divide** persists, driven by challenges in infrastructure, socio-cultural norms, affordability, and safety concerns. The article argues that a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder strategy—including policy investment in infrastructure, integrating gender-sensitive digital skills into curricula, and implementing holistic training packages (including cybersecurity)—is essential to bridge this gap and fully realize digital literacy as a core pillar of inclusive national development.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Women's Empowerment, Girls' Education, Digital Gender Divide, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

Introduction:

Digital literacy is rapidly evolving from a desirable skill to a fundamental necessity, acting as a powerful **strategic lever** to address historical gender disparities in education and accelerate **women's empowerment** in the 21st century. As societies increasingly rely on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), ensuring equitable access and proficiency for girls and women is paramount for inclusive national and global development, directly contributing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality).

Digital Literacy:

Digital literacy, defined as the ability to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information using digital technologies, empowers girls by shattering traditional barriers to education:

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- **Overcoming Geographical and Socio-Cultural Barriers:** In areas where distance, safety concerns, or restrictive social norms limit girls' attendance in traditional schools, **online education platforms** and **mobile learning (mLearning)** offer flexible, accessible, and self-paced learning alternatives. Girls can pursue education, vocational training, and skill development from the safety of their homes, allowing them to balance domestic responsibilities with learning.
- **Enhancing Educational Resources:** Digital platforms provide access to a vast, high-quality repository of educational resources, e-books, and multimedia content. This enrichment, especially in subjects like **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)**, helps bridge academic gaps and fosters a culture of continuous learning.
- **Fostering Critical Skills:** Beyond mere technical usage, digital literacy cultivates essential 21st-century skills such as **critical thinking**, **problem-solving**, and **information evaluation**. These competencies are crucial for navigating a complex information landscape and preparing girls for future work.

Digital Literacy:

For women, digital literacy translates directly into avenues for **social, economic, and political empowerment**:

- **Economic Empowerment:** Digital skills open doors to the **digital economy**, enabling women to access online job markets, remote freelance work, and entrepreneurial opportunities. E-commerce platforms and digital payment systems facilitate the creation and management of home-based businesses, increasing financial independence and resilience.
- **Access to Vital Services and Information:** Digital proficiency allows women to easily access critical information regarding **healthcare**, government schemes, **financial literacy**, and legal aid. This access enables informed decision-making concerning their well-being and rights, improving their quality of life and that of their families.
- **Social and Civic Participation:** Digital tools, especially social media, empower women to connect, form support networks, amplify their voices, and engage in **civic and political discourse**. This participation breaks isolation, fosters a sense of community, and enables collective advocacy for gender-responsive policies.

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Addressing the Digital Gender Divide: Challenges and Strategies

Despite its potential, the full realization of digital literacy's benefits is hampered by a significant **digital gender divide**. This gap is rooted in multi-layered challenges:

Challenge Category	Specific Barriers for Women and Girls
Access & Infrastructure	Limited access to devices (smartphones, computers), poor or non-existent internet connectivity, and high data costs, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.
Socio-Cultural Norms	Patriarchal restrictions on women's mobility, decision-making power, and use of technology; limited time due to disproportionate burden of unpaid care work.
Affordability	Economic constraints limiting the purchase of devices and internet subscriptions, as technology costs are often borne by male family members.
Skills & Confidence	Lower levels of formal ICT training, leading to low digital confidence, and a lack of locally relevant content and training tailored to women's needs.
Safety and Security	Increased risk of online harassment, cyberbullying, and privacy violations, leading to self-censorship and restricted online presence.

To effectively bridge this divide and utilize digital literacy as a key strategy, a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach is essential:

1. **Policy and Infrastructure Investment:** Governments must prioritize investment in **affordable and reliable internet infrastructure** in rural areas and implement policies that promote low-cost or subsidized digital devices for girls and women.
2. **Gender-Sensitive Curriculum: Digital skills training** should be integrated into formal school curricula from basic grades and complemented by community-based programs (like PMGDISHA and similar local initiatives) that are context-specific and accommodate women's schedules.
3. **Holistic Training Packages:** Programs should go beyond basic technical skills to include **media and information literacy**, **cybersecurity**, and **online safety** to build confidence and ensure safe engagement.

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4. **Community Engagement:** Mobilizing local female digital champions and trainers can build trust and relevance within communities, challenging socio-cultural resistance and creating supportive learning environments.

5. **Private and NGO Collaboration:** Partnerships between the public sector, NGOs, and tech companies are crucial for developing affordable, gender-responsive content and scaling up training initiatives.

Conclusion

Digital literacy is not merely a tool for education; it is a **transformative strategy** for achieving **gender equity and empowerment**. By equipping girls and women with the essential skills to navigate, utilize, and shape the digital world, we not only secure their educational and economic futures but also unlock immense potential for national development and societal progress. The time for viewing digital literacy as supplementary is over; it must be embraced as a **core pillar** of every strategy aimed at empowering the women who are the architects of our future.

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DIGITAL DIVIDE AMONG RURAL AND URBAN WOMEN IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA

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Abstract

The digital divide in India disproportionately affects women, exacerbating gender inequalities in access to technology between rural and urban populations. This comparative analysis examines smartphone ownership, internet usage, and digital skills among women, drawing on national data and a focused lens on Karnataka. Nationally, while internet penetration reaches 55% with 886 million users, rural women lag with 56% smartphone ownership (versus 85% urban) and only 25% regular internet access, compounded by gender norms and shared devices. Challenges include infrastructural deficits and cultural barriers, while programs like Digital India offer pathways. Closing this divide demands gender-sensitive policies for equitable empowerment by 2030.

Keywords:

Digital divide; Rural-urban disparity; Gender digital gap; Women empowerment; Karnataka; Digital infrastructure; Digital skills; Smartphone ownership; Internet access; Labour force participation

Introduction

The digital divide refers to the unequal access to, use of, and benefits from digital technologies, particularly the internet and mobile devices, across different socio-economic groups.. For women, this gap not only limits economic opportunities but also hinders education, health awareness, and social empowerment. This article provides a comparative analysis at the national level, with a special focus on Karnataka, drawing on recent surveys and studies to highlight disparities, challenges, and pathways forward.

Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of the digital divide affecting women in rural and urban India, with a special emphasis on Karnataka, to inform policy interventions for equitable digital inclusion. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To Assess Access Disparities: Evaluate differences in smartphone ownership, internet connectivity, and device usage between rural and urban women, highlighting gender-specific barriers at the national level and within Karnataka.

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2. To Examine Usage and Skills Gaps: Analyze patterns of internet utilization (e.g., for education, finance, and health) and digital literacy levels, comparing rural women's limited engagement with urban counterparts' higher proficiency.
3. To Identify Socio-Economic Impacts: Investigate how the divide perpetuates inequalities in economic opportunities, education, and empowerment, with case insights from Karnataka's rural districts like Tumkur and urban hubs like Bengaluru.
4. To Recommend Targeted Interventions: Propose gender-sensitive strategies based on ongoing initiatives, aiming to bridge the gap by 2030 in alignment with Digital India goals.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach centered on secondary data analysis and qualitative synthesis, suitable for a comparative examination without primary fieldwork. Data were sourced from authoritative reports and surveys published up to 2025, ensuring relevance to current trends.

National Landscape: Rural vs. Urban Women's Digital Access

At the national level, the digital divide manifests in smartphone ownership, internet usage, and digital skills, with rural women facing compounded barriers compared to their urban counterparts.

Smartphone Ownership and Access

In 2024, 54% of women had access to mobile phones, a rise from previous years, but only 33% of these women smartphone users actively used the internet. Ownership rates show a clear urban-rural split: urban women report 85% personal smartphone ownership, compared to just 56% in rural areas, where 35% rely on shared devices. Overall, 90% of women have some form of smartphone access, but shared usage in rural households—often male-dominated—restricts independent engagement. Gender gaps persist, with women 40% less likely to own a smartphone than men.

A 2025 telecom survey reveals that among those aged 15 and above, 79.2% of rural males and 75.6% of rural females own smartphones, but usage for internet dips sharply for women: only 25% of rural women have regular mobile internet access, versus 45% of rural men. Nationally, internet users number 886 million, with rural India surpassing urban at 488 million versus 397 million, yet women's penetration remains low at around 35% in rural areas.

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Internet Usage and Digital Skills

Usage patterns underscore the divide. Rural women primarily use smartphones for calls (100%) and messaging (100%), with 92% on social media and 77% for e-commerce, but only 65% for digital payments and 7% for government apps. Urban women, while also focused on communication, show higher e-commerce (38%) but lower government app usage (2%). Digital financial services (DFS) adoption is 60-66% among women, mainly UPI, but lags men's 85%, with rural women preferring cash due to trust issues and limited literacy.The ASER 2024 report on rural teens (aged 14-16) highlights a gender skew: while 90% of households have smartphones, personal ownership is 36.2% for boys versus 26.9% for girls. Only 57% use them for studies, with boys outperforming in skills like cybersecurity (81.5% vs. 72.4% for girls). This early gap foreshadows lifelong disparities, as educated mothers (64% with primary schooling in 2024, up from 43% in 2014) push for better access but face infrastructural hurdles.

Indicator	Rural Women	Urban Women	Gender Gap (Rural)
Smartphone Ownership	56%	85%	Women 40% less likely than men
Internet Usage	25% regular access	45%+ (inferred higher)	20% gap vs. rural men
DFS Adoption	60-66% (UPI focus)	Higher e-commerce	Men 85% overall
Digital Skills (Teens)	26.9% personal ownership	N/A (urban higher)	Boys 9.3% higher ownership

Special Reference to Karnataka: State-Level Insights

Karnataka, a southern state with a mix of urban hubs like Bengaluru and vast rural expanses, exemplifies the national divide but shows pockets of progress through targeted initiatives. As of 2021, the state had 32.15 million rural internet users, contributing to national growth, yet women's access remains uneven.

Rural Women's Digital Challenges in Karnataka

In Tumkur district, a survey of 56 rural women entrepreneurs (aged 26-45, mostly SSLC-educated) reveals moderate digital literacy: 3.70/5 for regular device access and 3.64/5 for basic operations, but lower for advanced tasks like email (2.98/5). Nationally aligned, only 24-25% of rural women have internet access versus 49-50% of men. Barriers include connectivity (mean 3.73/5 ease) and costs (3.30/5 affordability), impacting marketing (ANOVA $F=6.072$, $p=0.001$) and finance ($F=3.396$, $p=0.025$).Empowerment stories abound: NGOs like IT for Change's Namma Mahithi Kendra in H.D. A study on digital media empowerment surveyed 310 rural women, finding high usage for communication (87%) and social media (76%), but challenges like poor connectivity and

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cultural norms persist. Rural female unemployment rose to 17.3% for educated women (2017-18), underscoring the need for digital skills.

Urban Contrast in Karnataka

Urban Karnataka, driven by Bengaluru's tech ecosystem, sees higher adoption: 72.5% of urban males and 51.8% of urban females used the internet (2022 data, trends continuing). The MicroSave report, including Karnataka, notes urban women's 85% ownership enables better DFS and e-commerce, though English app barriers affect 75%+ vernacular users.

Comparative Analysis: Rural vs. Urban Women in India and Karnataka

Nationally and in Karnataka, urban women enjoy 1.5-2x higher ownership and usage rates, with urban access at 95% versus rural 91%. In Karnataka's Tumkur, rural entrepreneurs score lower on advanced digital tasks, widening business gaps, while urban Bengaluru benefits from infrastructure. Gender amplifies this: rural women are 40% less likely to access internet than urban women, per 2024 analyses, with supply-side issues (e.g., connectivity) and demand-side (e.g., norms) in rural areas.

Economic impacts: Rural women miss DFS for credit (15% app uptake), perpetuating poverty, while urban women leverage it for independence. Educationally, rural Karnataka girls lag in skills (ASER parallels), but initiatives like PMGDISHA bridge gaps. Health-wise, urban telemedicine thrives; rural relies on NGO IVR.

Aspect	Rural Women (India/Karnataka)	Urban Women (India/Karnataka)
Ownership	56%; shared 35%	85%; shared 10%
Usage Focus	Calls, social media, e-commerce (77%)	Communication, e-commerce (38%)
Challenges	Connectivity, costs, norms	Affordability (59%), skills
Empowerment	NGO-led (e.g., IVR +70% awareness)	Tech hubs, higher DFS

Challenges and Initiatives

Challenges include infrastructural deficits, low literacy (82% vernacular proficient but <25% English apps), and cultural barriers. Initiatives like Digital India, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (78% women beneficiaries), and Karnataka's NIIT Digital Bus show promise, with rural users growing faster post-demonetization.

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Summary of Findings

The analysis reveals entrenched digital disparities between rural and urban women in India, amplified by gender norms and infrastructure gaps, with Karnataka exemplifying mid-tier state challenges amid urban tech advantages. Key insights from 2025 data include:

- Nationally, only 35% of women own smartphones (versus 85% of men), with mobile internet adoption at 37% for women (26% regular use), creating a 30% gender gap—double the global low/middle-income average.
- Rural women experience lower exclusive access (22% overall, further reduced rurally due to shared devices), while urban areas show higher independence.
- Broadband penetration lags rurally at 36.72% versus 59.52% urban, with mobile usage at 66.94% rural versus 80.35% urban.
- In Karnataka, the Digital Infrastructure Index (DII) highlights a 35.28% rural-urban divide (rural 56.38% vs. urban 74.18%), surpassing equitable southern states like Kerala (9.60%) but below central laggards.
- Digital literacy is critically low: 15% of rural women (aged 15+) versus 34% urban, with rural scores on basic tasks like copy-paste at 44.06% (vs. 62.57% urban).
- In Karnataka, scheme dependencies (e.g., Gruha Lakshmi) heighten gender barriers, though rural initiatives show promise for awareness gains.
- Overall, closing gaps could unlock $500 billion in GDP by 2025, with southern states like Karnataka leading if targeted interventions scale.

Conclusion

The digital divide between rural and urban women in India, stark in Karnataka, risks deepening inequalities unless addressed through gender-sensitive policies like subsidies, vernacular training, and community centers. With rural internet users outpacing urban, targeted empowerment can transform women's roles, fostering inclusive growth. As India aims for digital equity by 2030, closing this gap is not just technological—it's a step toward gender justice.

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SOCIO- CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S DIGITAL PARTICIPATION IN KUDUBI COMMUNITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UDUPI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, empowering women means understanding the cultural norms that influence their access to technology. This study explores the socio-cultural factors influencing women's digital participation in the Kudubi community of Udupi district. Where cultural norms, social structures, and traditional practices shape women's access to and use of digital technologies. The research used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

This research investigates the complex relationships between socio-cultural factors, digital access, and women's empowerment. By understanding these factors, policymakers and practitioners can design more effective programs to promote digital inclusion and women's empowerment.

This study contributes to the existing literature on women's digital participation and highlights the importance of considering community-specific factors in promoting digital inclusion. The study's results can inform the development of targeted interventions to address the specific needs of women in the Kudubi community.

Keywords: Digital empowerment, Digital inclusion, Kudubi community, Socio-cultural factors etc.

INTRODUCTION:

The rapid proliferation of digital technologies has transformed the way people live, work, and interact with one another. However, the benefits of this digital revolution have not been evenly distributed, with women in rural and marginalized communities often facing significant barriers to digital access and participation According to recent statistics, a significant digital divide exists in India, with 76.3% of rural women using mobile phones but only 48.4% owning one, compared to 89.5% of rural men using phones with 80.7% ownership.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Rachman, Yeni (2024), this article explores the role of women in cultural heritage preservation, focusing on their use of digital technology applications and online platforms.. The authors recommend leveraging digital technologies to preserve intangible cultural heritage passed down through generations. Overall, the article provides valuable insights into the intersection of women, cultural heritage, and digital technology, highlighting the importance of empowering women in this field.

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Ramasamy, I., et al (2024), this study explores the potential of digital technologies to accelerate socio-economic change among rural women. Through a thorough scoping assessment and bibliometric analysis, the research highlights the benefits of digitalization, including improved access to markets, and educational resources. The findings have significant implications for policymakers and practitioners.

Suneel Kumar, et al (2024), this study investigates connection between digital literacy and women's empowerment in rural Himachal Pradesh, with focus education's role in enhancing digital skills promoting women's empowerment in rural areas.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the socio- cultural factors that influence kudubi women's use of digital technologies.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities of kudubi women in promoting digital inclusion .

METHODOLOGY:

The methodology is designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Primary Data:

For the present study primary data has been gathered by preparing a structured questionnaire in order to the study the socio-cultural factors influencing women's digital participation in the Kudubi community of Udupi district.

Secondary Data:

For this study secondary data has been collected from books, reports, journal articles, websites, and other relevant sources. This secondary data will primarily serve to establish the theoretical background and identify the research gap for present study.

Study Area:

Udupi district in Karnataka, India, particularly focusing on rural areas where the Kudubi community is predominantly located.

Sampling Technique:

A combination of random sampling and purposive sampling is used to select respondents. This would ensure that the sample is representative of the community and includes women with diverse backgrounds, ages, and occupations.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table No. 1.1 Age of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18	04	3.83%
18–30	80	76.92%
31–45	20	19.23%
Total	**104**	**100%**

The data reveals a predominantly youthful respondent pool, with 76.92% aged between 18-30 years. Middle-aged adults (31-45) represent 19.23%, while only 3.83% are below 18. As a result, the findings may largely reflect the views and behaviors of younger individuals.

Table No. 1.2 Educational Qualification of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	11	10.57%
High school	11	10.57%
Graduate	44	42.30%
Post Graduation and above	38	37%
Total	**104**	**100%**

The majority of respondents are well-educated, with 42.30% being graduates and 37% holding postgraduate or higher degrees. High school and primary-level respondents each constitute 10.57% of the sample.

Table No. 1.3 Marital Status of Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Single	66	63.46%
Married	37	35.57%
Widowed	01	0.96%
Total	**104**	**100%**

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The majority of respondents are single (63.46%), followed by married individuals (35.57%). Only a small fraction (0.96%) are widowed.

Table No. 1.4 Occupational Status of Respondents

Particulars	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Homemaker	30	28.84%
Farmer/Laborer	04	3.84%
Self-employed	22	23.15%
Government employee	6	5.76%
Private sector employee	42	40%
Total	**104**	**100%**

The data shows that the largest segment of respondents (40%) are employed in the private sector, followed by homemakers (28.84%) and self-employed individuals (23.15%). Government employees make up a smaller portion (5.76%), while farmers/laborers account for just 3.84%. This indicates a workforce largely engaged in private and informal employment, with limited representation from the agricultural and government sectors.

Table No. 1.5 Digital Device Awareness

Particulars	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Yes	100	96.15%
No	4	3.85%
Total	**104**	**100%**

Out of 104 respondents, 96.15% (100 individuals) are aware of how to use digital devices, while 3.85% (4 individuals) lack such awareness. high level of digital literacy suggests that majority of respondents are comfortable operating digital tools.

Table No. 1.6 Sources of Awareness about Digital Device Usage.

Particulars	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Friends/ Relatives	40	38.46%

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Social media	50	48.08%
Workshop	7	6.73%
News paper	7	6.73%
Total	**104**	**100%**

Among 104 respondents, 48.08% reported social media as their primary source of information for digital device usage, while 38.46% cited friends or relatives. Traditional sources like workshops and newspapers were cited by only 6.73% each. The findings suggest that social media and peer networks dominate digital literacy, while traditional sources have limited reach. This insight can inform digital literacy initiatives to focus on social media and peer-based learning models.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Develop and implement culturally tailored digital literacy programs for women in the Kudubi community.
2. Engage community leaders and influencers to champion women's digital participation and challenge societal barriers.
3. Harness the community's positive attitude toward digital literacy to empower women and foster equitable digital inclusion.

CONCLUSION:

The study on socio-cultural factors influencing women's digital participation in the Kudubi community of Udupi district reveals significant barriers rooted in traditional roles and gender expectations. By leveraging the community's positive attitude toward digital literacy, targeted interventions can drive meaningful change and contribute to broader socio-economic development. Empowering women digitally enhances individual agency and promotes community well-being.

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RECENT MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS IN THE INDIAN PUBLIC SECTOR BANKING SECTOR

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Abstract

The Indian public sector banking (PSB) sector has witnessed a historic and transformative phase of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in recent years, primarily driven by the Government of India's strategic vision for consolidation. This paper provides an overview of the major M&A activities in PSBs since 2019, explores the key policy rationale behind this consolidation wave, and discusses its initial impact on the financial health and operational landscape of the merged entities. The objective of these mergers is to create fewer, but stronger and globally competitive, banks with enhanced capacity to lend, better risk management, and improved operational efficiency, thereby supporting India's economic growth ambitions.

Keywords: Competitive, Bank, Management, Ambitions, Public Sector

1. Introduction

The Indian banking sector, dominated for decades by numerous Public Sector Banks, has periodically undergone restructuring. However, the scale and speed of consolidation witnessed in the last few years are unprecedented. The government-led policy of rationalizing the number of PSBs is a strategic response to challenges such as high Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), capital adequacy requirements under Basel norms, and the need to achieve economies of scale and global competitiveness. This paper focuses on the major mergers implemented from April 2019 onwards, marking the most significant phase of the PSB consolidation agenda.

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2. Major Mergers and Acquisitions (2019-2020)

The consolidation drive significantly reduced the number of PSBs from 27 in 2017 to **12** by April 2020. The two main phases of this recent M&A activity are:

2.1. The 2019 Merger

- **Effective Date:** April 1, 2019
- **Merger: Bank of Baroda** absorbed **Vijaya Bank** and **Dena Bank**.
- **Outcome:** Created India's third-largest PSB at the time, establishing a precedent for merging weaker banks (Dena Bank, with high NPAs) with stronger, anchor banks.

2.2. The 2020 Mega-Merger

- **Effective Date:** April 1, 2020
- The government consolidated ten PSBs into four anchor banks, creating four larger, stronger entities:
    - **Punjab National Bank (PNB)** absorbed Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India.
    - **Canara Bank** absorbed Syndicate Bank.
    - **Union Bank of India** absorbed Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.
    - **Indian Bank** absorbed Allahabad Bank.

3. Policy Rationale for Consolidation

The rationale for this large-scale consolidation is multi-faceted, aligning with both domestic stability and global ambitions:

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- **Financial Stability and NPA Resolution:** Merging weaker banks with stronger anchor banks helped in diluting the stress of high NPAs across a larger, more resilient balance sheet, improving overall asset quality management.
- **Economies of Scale and Operational Efficiency:** Consolidation allows merged entities to benefit from economies of scale through the rationalization of branch networks, administrative overheads, and the harmonization of technology platforms and processes. This is expected to lead to lower Cost-to-Income Ratios (CI) over the long term.
- **Enhanced Lending Capacity:** The combined balance sheets provide a significantly larger capital base, allowing the merged banks to undertake higher-ticket lending, particularly for large infrastructure and corporate projects, thereby better supporting economic growth.
- **Global Competitiveness:** The creation of 'mega-banks' is aimed at establishing Indian PSBs that can compete with large international banks in terms of size, capital, product offerings, and global reach, in line with the vision of creating Indian "champions" in the financial sector.
- **Improved Governance and Risk Management:** A reduced number of banks allows the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to focus regulatory and oversight efforts more effectively, promoting stronger governance and better-sophisticated risk management frameworks across fewer, larger entities.

4. Initial Impact and Performance

Studies evaluating the post-merger performance indicate mixed but generally positive long-term trends:

- **Improved Profitability and Resilience:** Some analyses suggest that the mergers have *significantly* enhanced key profitability metrics like Net Interest Margin (NIM), Return on Assets (ROA), and Return on Equity (ROE) for the merged PSBs, particularly as integration challenges subside.
- **Capital Adequacy:** The consolidation has generally strengthened the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of the anchor banks, enabling them to meet Basel III norms more comfortably.

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- **Operational and Cultural Challenges:** The immediate post-merger phase saw operational challenges, including the harmonization of diverse IT systems, rationalization of human resources, and the merging of distinct organizational cultures, which temporarily diverted management bandwidth.

5. Conclusion

The recent wave of M&A in the Indian public sector banking sector represents a definitive structural reform aimed at creating a robust, efficient, and globally competitive financial system. While the process involved significant short-term integration complexities, the strategic intent—to create fewer, financially stronger banks with greater lending capacity and improved operational parameters—is being realized. Continued policy support, focused NPA management, and sustained efforts towards full technological and cultural integration will be crucial for the merged entities to unlock the full potential of these mega-mergers and position the Indian PSB sector for sustained, long-term success.

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EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION: POLICY INTERVENTIONS FOR BRIDGING THE YOUTH DIGITAL DIVIDE

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Abstract

The digital age, while offering unprecedented opportunities, has simultaneously entrenched a critical barrier to inclusive development: the **Youth Digital Divide**. This gap, characterized by disparities in access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), digital literacy, and meaningful engagement, disproportionately affects young people from low-income, rural, and marginalized communities. Failing to bridge this divide risks exacerbating social and economic inequalities, limiting educational attainment, and hindering participation in the future workforce. This article advocates for a comprehensive national strategy rooted in targeted policy interventions across **Access, Skills, and Empowerment** to ensure every young person is equipped to be a digitally empowered citizen and contributor to national progress.

1. Introduction:

The youth are not just the future users of digital technology; they are the innovators and leaders who will shape the digital society. However, a significant portion of the youth population remains on the wrong side of the digital divide. This divide is multifaceted, extending beyond mere infrastructure access to include the affordability of devices, the relevance of content, and the proficiency in digital skills ("second-level" and "third-level" divides). In an increasingly digital-first economy, the consequences for digitally excluded youth are severe, including limited educational opportunities, higher unemployment rates, and social exclusion, thereby jeopardizing the vision of an equitable and 'Viksit' (Developed) nation. Targeted policy intervention is no longer a luxury but an essential investment for national development.

2. The Multi-Dimensional Impact on Youth

The impact of the digital divide on youth manifests in three critical areas:

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- **Education:** The shift towards online learning platforms, e-content, and digital homework, particularly accelerated by events like the COVID-19 pandemic, leaves students without reliable internet and devices at a distinct disadvantage. This leads to lower academic performance, reduced access to quality resources, and a higher dropout risk, perpetuating cycles of poverty.
- **Employment and Economic Opportunity:** Modern employment is overwhelmingly digitized. A lack of foundational and advanced digital skills (e.g., coding, data analytics, AI literacy) acts as a significant barrier to securing well-paying jobs and engaging in the burgeoning gig and digital economy. The divide limits entrepreneurial potential and global competitiveness.
- **Social and Civic Participation:** Digital platforms are now central to civic engagement, accessing government services (e-governance), health information (digital health), and building social capital. Exclusion means marginalized youth cannot fully participate in democratic processes, access vital social services, or advocate for their rights.

3. Policy Interventions: A Three-Pillar Framework

To effectively bridge the Youth Digital Divide, policy must be structured around three interconnected pillars: **Access, Skills, and Empowerment.**

3.1. Pillar I: Universal and Affordable Access (Connectivity & Devices)

Addressing the foundational "first-level" divide requires robust infrastructure and affordability measures:

- **Broadband for All:** Accelerate investment in last-mile connectivity, particularly in rural and remote regions, through fiber and affordable wireless technologies. Policies should mandate quality of service and competitive pricing.
- **Device Subsidies and Digital Public Access:** Implement national programs to provide low-cost or subsidized digital devices (tablets, laptops) to students from economically weaker sections. Establish and upgrade public access points, such as community technology centers, libraries, and schools, with high-speed internet and extended hours.

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- **Data Affordability:** Introduce targeted schemes for affordable, educational data packages for students and job seekers to reduce the prohibitive operational cost of internet usage.

3.2. Pillar II: Holistic Digital Skills and Literacy

The mere presence of technology is insufficient; the ability to use it productively and safely is paramount.

- **Integrated Digital Literacy in Curriculum:** Embed mandatory, comprehensive digital literacy and critical thinking skills training across all stages of education, from primary school to higher education. This must go beyond basic computer use to include online safety, data privacy, media literacy, and ethical AI understanding.
- **Targeted Skills Training:** Launch specialized, accessible skilling programs focused on future-ready technologies (AI, IoT, Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity) for youth in vocational and technical institutions, with a focus on industry-academia collaboration for curriculum alignment.
- **Teacher and Educator Capacity Building:** Prioritize the rigorous training of educators to confidently integrate technology into teaching and become mentors for digital skills, ensuring the sustainability of digital education reforms.

3.3. Pillar III: Youth Empowerment and Policy Co-creation

Bridging the divide requires recognizing youth not just as beneficiaries, but as co-creators of the digital future.

- **Youth in Governance:** Establish formal mechanisms (e.g., Youth Advisory Boards, Digital Youth Parliaments) to ensure young people's voices are actively included in the design and evaluation of digital inclusion policies and e-governance initiatives.
- **Content and Language Inclusivity:** Promote the creation of digital content and services in diverse regional languages to address language barriers, a key driver of the usage divide. Encourage culturally relevant and accessible digital public goods.

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- **Digital Welfare and Safety:** Formulate policies to safeguard youth from online harms, cyberbullying, and data exploitation. This includes sector-specific regulations, simplified digital rights terms, and robust mental health support channels that leverage digital platforms responsibly.

4. Conclusion and Call to Action

The digital divide is a human rights and economic development issue. Empowering the next generation through a concerted national policy effort—one that strategically tackles **Access, Skills, and Empowerment**—is the most effective way to unlock the demographic dividend and ensure inclusive growth. We urge policymakers, industry leaders, academic institutions, and civil society at this National Conference to commit to the resources and coordinated action necessary to realize a truly equitable and digitally empowered nation for all its youth.

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