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Societal Integration in India and Gandhian Philosophy: Issues and Relevance for an Inclusive Social order

RAHUL CHAUDHARY

Abstract

Social Integration is a technique through which the minorities or the marginalized sections of the society are unified into the main social structure. The process of social integration not only involves social equality, justice and acceptability but it also includes the amalgamation of all societal members in the economic process and protecting their identity, so that a homogenous society is established. Social integration is a continuous process and it cannot be forced upon the members. It includes the efforts to minimize the tendencies of social fragmentation, social exclusion and social divisiveness and Gandhi through his ideas and practice always tried to create an inclusive, coherent and tolerant society. The present paper seeks to examine the efforts made in the independent India towards social integration of the marginalized sections of the society, through Constitutional provisions and Parliamentary legislations. Also, it seeks the investigate the effects of these efforts on the condition of the marginalized sections, which invariably influences their integration into the social order.

The Gandhian philosophy through its insistence on Ram Rajya or Non-Violent Society, Doctrine of Limits and Non-possession, Trusteeship, abolition of untouchability, Varnashram Dharma etc. emphasised creating a social order in which political, social and economic justice is ensured to every individual. This will ensure incorporation of all the groups into the ordinary developmental track of the society. It is important to point out that, though the term social integration is a broader term but the paper will confine its focus on the incorporation of marginalized sections in the mainstream of Indian society. The article, further analysis the relevance of

Gandhian ideas in addressing the issues or challenges before the societal integration in India.

Keywords: Social Integration, Marginalized sections, Social justice, Social exclusion, Gandhian philosophy.

Introduction: Theoretical Perspective

Social Integration: As per the Cambridge Dictionary the term 'social' means engagement of individual with other people and integrating himself or herself with the ways and different activities of the society. The term 'integration', in a general sense indicates the process of uniting two or more objects or coming together of different set of individuals in a manner to form a functional social unit. Thus, taking together these two terms- 'social integration' highlights the continuous action or process of mixing the various groups, in a manner that they share common ideas, beliefs and institutions and thereby creates a cohesive and inclusive social unit. In this process the individual becomes a part of collective social unit as he/she gets certain benefit from it and also collectively they believe that they can move ahead better as a social unit.

The term social integration was first used by French sociologist and philosopher Emile Durkheim in his work, where he highlighted that there exists an interdependence among individuals in the society and in this inter-relationship, it is essential that every individual is incorporated into the value, material and cultural-norm system of the society. He pointed out that it is essential that each member should have a share in the benefits and responsibilities of the society, according to his/her capacity (Durkheim, 1893). Further, Peter Blau, an American Sociologist, regards social integration as the process based on 'attraction' (Blau, 1960). There exists a mutual attraction between the individual and the group, whose membership he/she wishes to attain. The social group integrates individual on the basis of its attractiveness, that is, utility. Similarly, the individual integrates with the social group, if he/she realizes variety of benefits, as enjoyed by the other members of that group.

Along with the understanding of the notion of social integration, it is also indispensable to comprehend its process or how and through what means the integration is brought about in the society. According to Auguste Comte, the social structures can be maintained or an integrated society can be established through three means- (a) developing mutual interdependence among various parts of the structure as well as groups of the society, (b) creating a central authority for controlling, regulating and coordinating the actions of various constituent parts or groups, and (c) building a common set of values, morals and spirit among the members of the community. On this basis, Comte argues that so long as these demands of social integration are fulfilled the society remains in a state of equilibrium. As the differentiation in society increases, the equilibrium gets disturbed and the social order faces the problem of disintegration. (Comte, 1830).

Further, he argues that the social system has passed through three different phases, which has their own structural and cultural features. As he states, in the first, the Theological phase, the source of integration was the religious spirit and sentiments towards own small groups. In this phase, coercive, physical and spiritual, force was used to maintain the social bond. The second phase, that is, during the Metaphysical stage societal unity was maintained through state, its laws and its coercive machinery. The Positivistic stage, which is the third phase, here, the basis of the integration is the mutual interdependence and benefits of the individuals. There is a general spirit among the people towards unification and the state only acts as a regulator, encouraging coordination among different stakeholders and institutions (Comte, 1830). Here, it is important to point out that the society may be in different phases of the social systems (as given above) at different times or the different basis of integration may be applied in the same society depending upon the nature and condition of the individuals.

According to UN Division for Social Policy and Development, social integration is a process as well as a goal. As a ‘goal’ it seeks to achieve a

just, stable and safe society for all the members. In an integrated and all-inclusive social system every individual enjoys same set of rights, obligations and plays an active role in the socio-economic and political processes of the society.

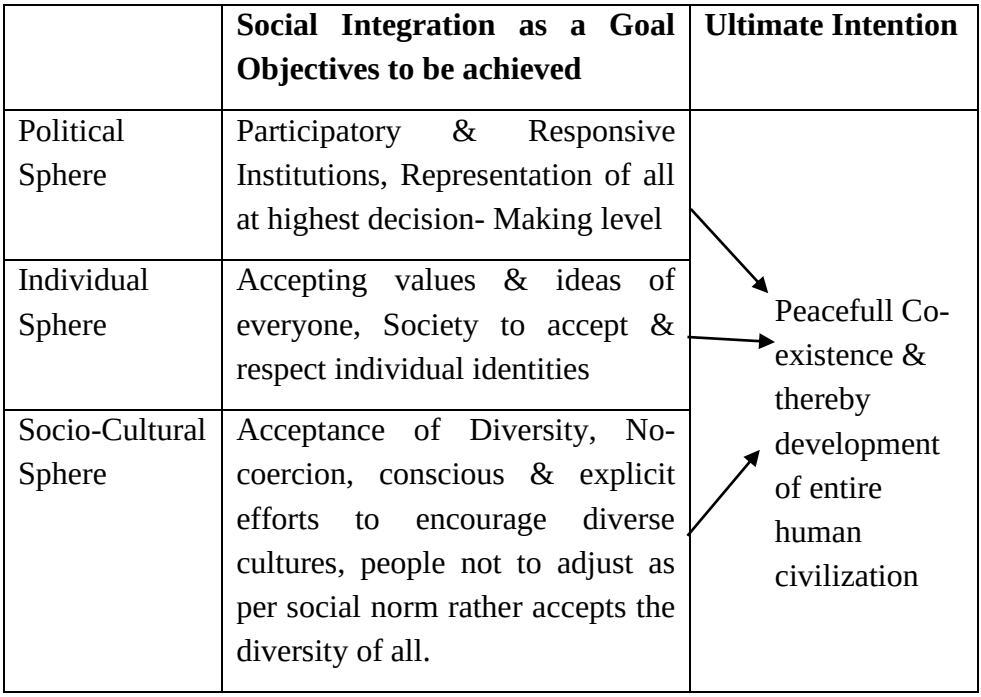


Figure1: Goals of Social Integration & its real aim

The figure 1, highlights the demands of social integration in different spheres, and also mentions that meeting these goals will benefit the entire human race. Now, as a 'process', social integration is a dynamic notion and requires continuous decentralization and democratization of all the social, economic and political institutions of the society. It involves constant efforts to ensure justice (Socio-economic, Procedural and Substantive) to all the members and groups in the society. This process can be further facilitated through continuous interventions in different spheres of the society, from ensuring psychological unity, accepting diversity in socio-cultural values and norms, to confirming fair representation to all the sections/individuals in the economic and political

domains. In this course, all the important stakeholders like civil society, influential individuals, media, independent organs of the government etc. have to ensure that the policies and practices of social integration are suitably and effectively implemented.

'Solidarity'	**'Collaboration'**	**'Co-existence'**	**'Social-Inclusion'**	**'Social-Integration'**
Psychological unity & sense of belongingness among members	Equal access & participation in Socio-economic & Political domain	Acceptance & respect for diverse values, norms & practices	Conscious efforts by Society & State for involving all	Inclusive & cohesive social unit
				
'Fragmentation'	**'Expulsion'**	**'Co-existence'**	**'Social-Exclusion'**	**'Social-Disintegration'**
Inner disbelief & aversion among members	Shunning particular group or section from all spheres	Segregation on the basis of differences	Conscious effort to deprive, from being part of social system	Fragmented and strained social unit

Figure 2: Ingredients and cyclic inter-relationship of Social Integration & Social Disintegration

Figure 2 explains the ingredients and process of social integration as well as that of social disintegration. It is important to point out that if conscious efforts are not made to facilitate the course of social integration, then it is apparent that the symptoms of social disintegration would arise in the

social system, thereby hampering the progress of the society.

Gandhian Philosophy and Social Integration: Mahatma Gandhi was a spiritual leader, who emphasised on the establishment of Ram Rajya or a Non-violent social order based on the principles of liberty, equality and brotherhood among all the members of the society. He believed that along with the political independence, a healthy social order-based on mutual cooperation, respect for cultural-religious diversity and complete justice to all its members, has to be ensured in India. Though, Gandhi has not dealt with the matter of social integration in an explicit manner yet careful examination of his social, political and economic notions highlights the fact that he gave supreme status to creating a sensitive, unified and comprehensive social order.

In the political sphere, the ideal laid down by Gandhi is the concept of Ram Rajya, in which every individual would be capable enough to govern himself/herself and there will be no need of any political institution. Such a society will be based on the notion of 'truth' and 'non-violence'. There will be no coercion of any kind on the individual and all will act according to their superior moral conscience, which will teach them to respect the co-existence other individuals, values, customs and traditions. However, Gandhi knew that people, in the present condition, are not capable of ruling themselves and hence such an ideal of Ram Rajya cannot be realized immediately. So, in such a condition, the practical form of government which he supported was the "non-violent democracy'.

In such a democratic system, the individual will be assured complete freedom and the state will perform minimum functions. The inner enlightened self-conscience of the individual will be regarded as supreme than the laws of the state. The state will derive its power from the people, as there will be complete decentralization of the authority and the people will have right to rise against the state, if the state misuses its power. The state will not discriminate among the people on the basis of artificial grounds and will promote social harmony and goodwill. The state will

respect the diversity among the people and will be completely secular in nature. Thus, Gandhi through his notion of non-violent democracy emphasised on the need of converting the state into an instrument which, while ensuring freedom to every individual, will help to establish a decentralized, accountable interconnected and participatory social order.

Gandhi, in the economic domain was against exploitation of man by man. He emphasized on transformation of the materialistic nature of man through the principles of truth and non-violence. He believed that a sense of duty should be developed among the rich, so that they voluntarily work for the welfare of the poor people. Through his theories of non-possession, trusteeship, doctrine of limits, eco-decentralization and revival of village economy, he put forward a reformative picture in the economic sphere, which will contribute towards establishment of a society where each member will work for its own betterment as well as for the progress of the whole society. Such a social order will respect and accept the utility of every individual, irrespective of its class, caste, sex, religion or region. Economic democracy is an essential aspect of healthy social order.

In the social sphere, Gandhi not only developed his principles for a strong, stable and fair Indian society but he also practically implemented them, in order to eradicate several evils existing in the society. Gandhi, through his morning prayers, preached to the people of different religions that God is one, all the religion are equal and are medium to realize that supreme being. He tried to develop the feeling of peaceful co-existence among the members of different religions by advocating that all the religions should be respected and no discrimination should be made among the people of different religions. By propagating the concept of dignity of labour, he tried to remove the social stigma attached with doing manual work. He strongly worked for abolition of untouchability and denounced the caste system, thereby propagating equality among different members of the community and bringing them closer to each other. These evils were responsible for a fragmented social order in India and Gandhi throughout his life tirelessly worked for their elimination. Another important aspect of

Gandhian philosophy as well as his applied strategy was connecting the womenfolk with the socio-economic and political mainstream of the nation. Thus, Gandhi tried to integrate the marginalized sections with the popular/common aspects of the society by ensuring them socio-economic as well as political justice, equality and participation.

Marginalized Sections: Meaning and Identification: There is no universally acceptable definition of the notion of marginalization. However, in a general sense, it can be demarcated as a multi-faceted, multi-causal historical process in which a group/section of people as a part of the larger society are viewed as less desirable, due to their distinct identity, function or cultural factors, receives smaller portion of the societal benefit and are excluded from the mainstream activities of the society. Such group of people are at the bottom of the societal hierarchy and they exist at the margins of the economic and political domain. They have limited access to the resources, material as well as spiritual, and are deprived of the fruits of liberty, equality and justice.

The Oxford Learner's dictionary defines marginalization as the "process or result of making somebody feel as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; the fact of putting somebody in a position in which they have no power." Also "Marginality is a complex condition of disadvantage that individuals and communities may experience because of vulnerabilities which may arise from unequal or inequitable environment, ethnic, cultural, social, political and economic factors" (Mehretu, Pigozzi and Sommers, 2000). Thus, these definition highlights the fact that marginalization is a state of deprivation in which a section of people are forced to live in a less favourable and discriminatory environment, in comparison to the privileged sections of the society.

In context of India, there have been certain sections of the society who have been discriminated and accorded inferior social status, thereby negatively impacting their economic as well as political positioning and participation. The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes,

Women, Disabled people, Minorities, Migrants, Children, Elderly people etc. generally constitutes the group of marginalized people. However, the present article, while discovering its objectives mentioned in the abstract above, will take into consideration the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Backward Classes (BCs) and Women, as the marginalized sections of the society.

Constitutional Provisions and Parliamentary Legislations: The constitution makers of the nation sought to create a healthy and integrated society and as a result they made several provisions for the welfare of the SCs, STs, BCs and Womenfolk, so that these sections do not feel excluded from the societal benefits. Such a feeling could encourage polarization between the haves and have-nots, thereby leading to a fragmented society. So, to establish an inclusive, cohesive and participatory social order, the constitution makers not only included articles for the advantage of these sections but also empowered the Parliament to implement these benefits and accordingly act in the future for bringing about social transformation and integration.

Articles of the Constitution	**Provisions and Directions**
Preamble	Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity for & among all citizens.
Article 14 & 15	Equality before law & Prohibition of discrimination on artificial grounds. State can make special provisions for SCs, STs, BCs, Women & Children.
Article 16	Equality of opportunity with regard to public employment. Enabling clause of providing reservation in public employment.
Article 17 & 18	Abolition of untouchability & abolition of titles in

	order to end special status to few.
Article 23, 29 & 30	Prohibition of traffic in human beings & forced labour. Protection of the interest of the minorities & their right to establish & administer educational institutes.
Article 32	Provides constitutional remedies for the enforcement of the rights of the people.
Article 38	The state will function in a manner so as to secure a healthy social order for the welfare of the people.
Article 39	In the economic & nutritional sphere, the State will function in a manner to improve the conditions of the deprived section.
Article 40 & 42	Directions on village panchayats & just & humane conditions of work & maternity relief for women.
Article 46	The state will function in a manner so as to promote the educational & economic interests of SCs, STs & other weaker sections of the society, including women.
Part XVI Article 330 to Article 342	Made special provisions for the political representation of SCs & STs. Establishment of National Commissions to monitor the condition & progress made by SCs, STs & BCs.

Figure 3: Constitutional Provisions (Source: Bakshi, 2022)

Inspired by the spirit of these Constitutional provisions, the Parliament has also passed several legislations in order to improve the condition of these sections of the society thereby working in the direction of bringing them

into societal mainstream. Apart from ensuring proper political representation and reservation in the public employment for improving the social status and economic conditions of these sections, the Parliament has constituted the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, as per the provisions of constitution. These commission have been given enough legal authorities, so that they can work efficiently and effectively in integrating these sections with the social mainstream. Also, the National Commission for Other Backward Classes has been established to function on the lines of above two commissions. Each ministry or department has to appoint a Liaison officers, who will ensure the proper implementation of the provisions related to SCs, STs and BCs in their respective departments. This provision for Liaison officers has been extended to almost all the public offices, which highlights governments dedication towards safeguarding the interest of these sections.

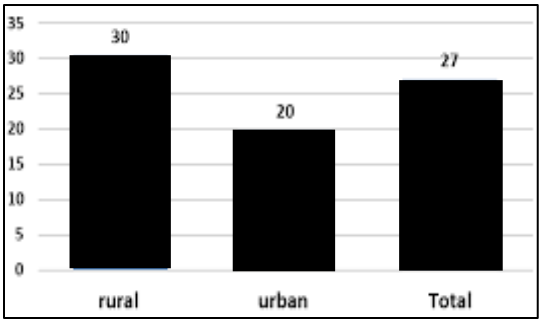
The Indian Parliament has also adopted several legislations in order to prevent discrimination and atrocities against women and also to safeguard their interest, so that they get adequate representation and due benefits in the social, economic and political spheres of the society. Several women specific legislation like “the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (amended in 1986), the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986” etc. have been passed, to provide womenfolk safe and just environment for their holistic development. Apart from this, the amendment to Hindu Succession Act, 1956 has been made to ensure equal property rights to daughters, so as to put them on equal footing with the males in the social rights and claims. In the Panchayati Raj Institutions, women have been ensured reservation ranging from 33 percent to even 50 percent. Recently, the Indian government has approved the Women’s

Reservation Bill providing for 33 percent reservation in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. This will empower women as they will be in a position to take decision for themselves.

Contemporary Realities and Issues: The SCs, STs, BCs and Women constitutes majority of population in India but still from the ancient times they have faced severe exploitation, discrimination and subjugation. Due to this condition, these sections of the society have been pushed to the margins of the social order. The Constitutional provisions and the legislation adopted by the Parliament have gone a long way in improving the socio-economic and political status of these section, but still they are facing deprivation, suppression and mistreatment in the society, which, even after 75 years of independence, is seen as the greatest hinderance in establishment of a cohesive and inclusive social order in India. In the social, economic and political domains these sections still face exclusion, injustice and violation of their rights.

Socio-Economic Sphere- Ingredients of Analysis: In the scrutiny of the issues and realities, an important aspect in the social sphere is the problem of 'untouchability' and 'atrocities' faced by the SCs, STs and BCs. With respect to the economic domain, it the presence of 'poverty' and 'gap in the employment ratios', which highlights the marginalization of these people. Similarly, while taking up the gender issue in the social sphere, it is noteworthy to understand the 'oppression' faced by them in the society. The position of women in the economic sphere is seen from their ability to 'participate', by having equal access in the educational, health and empowerment fields.

Analysis through Data: It is important to point out that even after so many years of independence the practice of untouchability has not been completely abolished. The Figure 4, according to India Human Development Survey, Household Survey, shows that still at the ground level, people of these sections have to face the problem of untouchability.



	Cases registered	Charge-sheeted	Pending probe
SCs			
2018	42,793	34,838	16,323
2019	45,961	34,754	17,903
2020	50,291	39,138	19,825
STs			
2018	6,528	5,619	2,603
2019	7,570	5,918	2,920
2020	8,272	6,484	3,351

*Investigation pending at end of given year
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, LS reply

Figure 4: Percentage of Households Practicing Untouchability.Figure 5: Crimes against SCs & STs

Further, the crimes/atrocities against SCs and STs are also not declining. This highlights the discriminatory treatment faced by the people of these sections. The Figure 5, shows the status of cases against SCs and STs.

The dignity and rights of women are also being continuously violated. The following table (Figure 6) shows the various types of complaint registered with the National Commission for Women (NCW) during the year 2023. These are only the cases registered with NCW, and not the complete picture, yet these highlights the various forms of social suppression and exploitation which women have to face in the society.

Nature of Complaint	Number of Cases (% of Total, approx.)
Right to live with dignity	8579 (29.8)
Protection of women against Domestic Violence	6305 (21.9)
Harassment of married women/Dowry Harassment	4820 (16.7)
Outraging modesty of women/ Molestation	2356 (8.2)
Rape/ Attempt to Rape	1539 (5.3)
Others including Cyber-crimes, Right to exercise choice in marriage, Stalking, Sexual harassment, Police apathy against women etc.	5212 (18)

Figure: 6

In the economic sphere, according to the NSSO, Indian Labour Employment Report, 2014, as per the consumption expenditure data, nearly 50 percent of the SC, ST & OBC population falls in the poorest two quintiles. In the presence of economic inequalities for these sections, the social equality and political empowerment is still a distant reality. Also, in terms of nature of employment, as per the Indian Human Development Survey, 2011-12, the people of marginalized sections are more engaged in casual type of work, than the regular skilled jobs as compared to the individuals belonging to the upper castes.

A comparison of the various indexes and subindexes of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report of 2006 & 2021 points out the declining position of women in India, in various economic and related sectors. The Figure 7 highlights that in the areas which effect the economic participation of women an urgent intervention is required so that complete gender parity can be attained, which is essential for the establishment of a sensitive, responsive and gender inclusive social order in India.

Index & Sub-indexes	**Ranking of India**	
	2016	**2021**
Global Gender Gap Index	98	140
Economic participation & opportunity	110	151
Educational attainment	102	114
Health & Survival	103	155
Political Empowerment	20	51

Figure 7: Source- World economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report

Political Sphere- Ingredients of Analysis: Political domain has the ability to influence the social & economic domains and hence it is imperative that these marginalized sections should be incorporated at the 'highest decision-making' positions, so that they work for their own empowerment without any dependence on other sections. Therefore, it is important to

analyse their representation at the highest political stratum.

Analysis through Data: Though seats have been reserved for SCs and STs in the Union Parliament but the matter of concern is that apart from these reserved seats, the representation of these sections from other seats is minuscule. Also, an investigation into the social background of the members of India's cabinet reveals that these sections have never been adequately represented in cabinet in accordance to their population since Independence like in the central cabinet, the number of members of SCs and STs as percentage of the total members of the cabinet were only 6 percent and 3 percent (approx.) respectively. Likewise, in the cabinet of 2014, this percentage was 4.6 and 3 percent (approx.) respectively. Similarly, around 20 percent of the elected members of Parliament in the lower house belongs to OBC, which has a population share of more than 40 percent in the total Indian population.

As far as the representation of women in the Union Parliament is concerned, the figure 8 shows that it is on slight rise, but it is critically unsatisfactory as compared to the total number of seats vis-à-vis the entire women population of the nation. This lack of representation at the decision-making level adversely effects the progress of women in all the spheres of life.

Lok Sabha	**Number of Women representatives**	**% of total seats**
14th Lok Sabha (2004)	45	8.1
15th Lok Sabha (2009)	59	10.9
16th Lok Sabha (2014)	61	11.2
17th Lok Sabha (2019)	78	14

Figure: 8 Number & Percentage of Women Representatives (Source: pib.gov.in)

Conclusion and Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy: On the basis of the above theoretical discussion and factual analysis, certain implications can be made which highlights the need for reinventing, reinterpretation and reimplementation of the Gandhian doctrines in present Indian context. It is important to remember that Gandhi was a 'practical idealist' (Karmayogi), who not only preached his ideas but also brought them into practice in his own life as well as during India's freedom struggle. His thoughts are native to Indian situations and conditions and hence, can greatly contribute towards creation of an inclusive, non-discriminatory and fair society in India.

1. If India aspires to become a developed nation by the centenary of its independence, it is essential that an integrated social order is established because then only all citizens can contribute with the best of their capacities. In a society, where majority of the citizens are segregated from social belongingness and capital, are confined to residual economic activities and are deprived of active participation at political decision-making, then it is improbable for it to achieve the highest advancement.

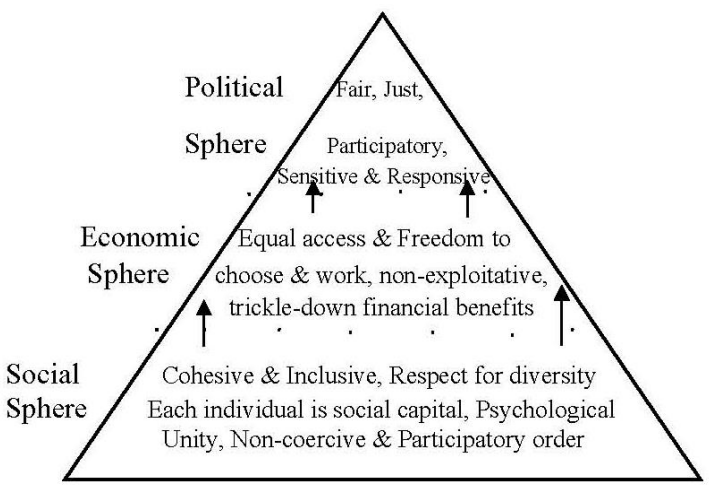


Figure 9: Pyramid of Integrated Social order for developed nation

2. The social order of a nation includes within itself the socio-economic as well as political spheres. The figure 9, highlights that the structure of a developed nation should be based on an inclusive and integrated social sphere. An important aspect of this sphere is that it has certain shared values, spirit and commitments but at the same time it also respects the existence of diversity. It includes every individual, of whatever status, as important resources and encourages him/her to participate in all its activities without any coercion. The cohesiveness and comprehensive aspect of this sphere will influence the nature of economic domain as well. Such a social sphere will establish a non-exploitative, equally accessible and financially inclusive economic order, which has the capacity to achieve rapid growth as it will be based on a robust social system. Finally, the socio-economic solidarity of the structure will create a political organization which will be participatory and responsive to the demands of each citizen. In such a system the power will flow from bottom to top and not vice-versa as the case exist in present structure. For attainment of such a social order it is indispensable to adopt and implement certain doctrines of Gandhian philosophy.

3. The Indian constitution has included all the aspects, which on the one hand directs the state to work for building an integrated, inclusive and participatory socio-economic as well as political system and on the other hand enables the citizen, as an individual, and society, as a collective unit, to develop such an environment which is conducive for the progress of all, without any discrimination, exclusion or fragmentation. The Parliament has also tried to replicate this spirit of the constitution but has not gained complete success in this regard. Though, as a nation, the Indian society is moving ahead which is reflected in its recent cultural accolades, economic growth, scientific inventions and global exposures but at the same time the social fragmentation, economic gap between the rich and the power, the deprivation in decision making, with regard to the marginalized

section including women, can be noticed through the cracks of the Indian growth story. These cracks are to be filled with the mortar of cohesiveness, inclusiveness and progress for all, which are ingrained in the principles, so fondly, propagated by Mahatma Gandhi.

4. The present social sphere which suffers from evils of untouchability, atrocities, crimes and exploitation of women, can be reformed through the Gandhian philosophy. The Gandhian view that all the religions are equal and there should be no discrimination among people on artificial grounds should be made compulsory part of the elementary curriculum. The future generations of this nation will therefore inculcate the feeling of psychological unity with each member of the society. Also, his idea of dignity of labour should be propagated so that every kind of work, whether manual or intellectual, is seen with equal respect and dignity. The Gandhian philosophy of religion, truth and non-violence should be taught to every individual which will go a long way in the abolition of untouchability and crimes against the marginalized sections, especially the women. Gandhi laid great emphasis on the emancipation of women in the social sphere and so he views in this regard are crucial to attain gender equality in India.

5. In the economic sphere, Gandhi belief that nature can satisfy the needs of all and not the greed of few, if practiced, can help in retarding the environmental harms caused due to excessive capitalist tendencies. Gandhi's emphasis on development of the individual skill and focus on revival of village economy can help India to become hub of manufacturing, thereby making Indian self-sufficient in several economic aspects. This will help in reducing poverty and will also open all sectors for the marginalized class. Through this prominence on small scale sector, Gandhi believed that women can also contribute greatly to the progress of the nation. His theory of 'trusteeship', can add to the efforts of creating a trickle-down economic order as it emphasised that the capitalists should also contribute to the upliftment of the down-trodden class.

6. In the political domain, Gandhi believed in a non-violent democratic system in which the people are supreme. He believed that power should flow from people to parliament and this if attained can greatly contribute to curbing of political corruption. Gandhi laid emphasis on the participation of women in politics as he alleged that this will lead to purification of politics. Gandhi regard politics as a means to serve the humanity and so advised that the political parties should act as groups to reform the society instead of cluster of people hunting for power. Also, Gandhi's belief that only those people should be allowed to participate in politics who are enlightened, secular and have experience of social service would give an ideal character to the political system of the nation.

Thus, on the basis of above arguments it can be concluded that India's aspiration of becoming a developed nation firstly depends on its ability to create an integrated social order. In the creation of such a social structure, the Gandhian doctrines can become the torch bearer for the nation. A gradual inclination, adoption and implementation of Gandhian principles is essential for keeping alive the Indian spirit, while moving ahead on the path of progress.

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Socio-Demographic Differences in the Prevalence of Institutionalized and Non-Institutionalized Single mothers in Karnataka State

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Abstract

Single mother is a woman responsible for caring for her children without the support of her husband in the upbringing of the children. In India, as the joint family system gradually disintegrates and the rate of divorce and separation among couples rises, single mothers find themselves left alone to manage on their own. Single mothers, encompassing widowed, legally divorced, and separated individuals, are often the most vulnerable segment of society, particularly when originating from low-income groups.

The most prevalent form of single-parent families in India is the single mother's family, encompassing widowed, separated, and legally divorced women. Single mothers, constituting 4.5% of Indian households (13 million), highlight the substantial presence of lone-parent families. The study adopts a descriptive research design to assess socio-economic differences in the prevalence of institutionalized and non-Institutionalized single mothers in Karnataka State and the age group of single mothers aged 15 to 39. The findings indicate that financial difficulties are apparent, with a considerable number reporting no income, and the majority falling within the lower income bracket. Educational disparities underscore the necessity for focused interventions. The diverse employment status and housing conditions underscore the multifaceted challenges confronting single mothers.

Key Words: Single mother, socio-economic differences, institutionalized, non-institutionalized

Introduction

When a woman has a substantial income, it doesn't pose a problem. However, for a woman with limited income and no social security, numerous challenges arise (Harish, 2021). Numerous studies (Cheeseman, Ferguson, & Cohen, 2011), (Youngblut, Faan, Brady, & Brooten, 2000) single parents, predominantly mothers, encounter challenges in managing their families, stemming from a lack of secure employment or sufficient income, leading to both economic and psychological hardships. The study highlighted that adverse economic conditions, unemployment, reliance on welfare, limited educational attainment, a high number of children, and early parenthood exert a detrimental impact on the health outcomes of lone parents and their children (Neises & Gruneberg, 2005).

Single Mother Family

Single mothers head 4.5% of Indian households (13 million), emphasizing the prevalence of lone-parent families. In India, 46.7% of couples live with children, with 31% in extended families and 12.5% in single-person families. Globally, 8 out of 10 lone-parent households, totaling 101.3 million, are led by women. Notably, the poverty rate for single mothers is 38%, significantly higher than dual-parent households at 22.6% (UN Women's Flagship Report, 'Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020'). To comprehend challenges in single-mother families, considering a woman's societal status is crucial (Bharat, 1986). Due to employment in low-paying jobs, economic conditions for these mothers are often unfavorable.

In recent years in India, the life conditions of single mothers have gained attention. The study conducted on October 5, 2006, titled 'Widowed, Divorced, Unmarried Single Mothers in India Face an Uphill Task,' explored emotional and economic challenges through in-depth case studies. Karnataka has the highest percentage of widows, divorcees, and separated women at 16.4%, with 17.6% residing in rural areas and 14.2% in urban areas. The 2001 census of India reports 34.8 million widows and divorcees/single mothers, comprising 10.35% of families managed by women.

Socio- Demographic Status of Single Mother's

Research indicates that single mothers confront heightened economic and occupational challenges, exacerbated by conflicts with family members, the strain of independent living, and feelings of loneliness, adversely impacting their social standing and contributing to economic difficulties (Sperlich, Arnhold-Kerri, & Geyer, 201). Due to a lack of societal help and support, the economic condition remains poor (Nicole, 2013). Many single mothers struggle to secure suitable employment, leading to economic burdens and eventual emotional challenges (Harish, 2021). The majority of single mothers attribute emotional problems to poor economic conditions, concerns about children, and the stress of shouldering the family burden. Loneliness, helplessness, and a lack of self-confidence are common emotional stressors, primarily driven by poverty and worries about children's future (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009).

The study on 'Problems Faced by Single Mothers' (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009) economic challenges emerged as the primary cause, hindering basic needs for children and creating instability in income, knowledge, and social support. This economic, emotional, and social struggle contributes to the difficulties faced by single mothers. A significant portion of global literature indicates a correlation between single motherhood and heightened chronic stress, primarily attributed to economic hardship and diminished social support. This association has the potential to result in both physical and psychological health issues over time (Elena, Christiana, & Middleton,2016).Single mothers face the challenging role of being both the breadwinner and caregiver, navigating tasks such as finding employment and dealing with economic and psychological difficulties, which can impact their financial well-being and mental health. Single mothers exhibit a higher likelihood of experiencing poverty, affective disorders, and utilization of mental health services compared to mothers in two-parent families. The risk of encountering mental health issues is particularly significant among single mothers facing economic challenges (Lipman, MD, David R. Offord, & Boyle, 1997).

Data and Methods

The research design serves as the foundational framework for the study, adopting a descriptive design. The primary objective of the study is to comprehend the socio-economic variations in the occurrence of institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers in the state of Karnataka. The study focuses on single mothers (Widow, Separated, and Divorced) aged 15 to 39, raising children below 18. The geographical scope is limited to Karnataka, and the universe comprises single mothers in the state. Data, specific to Karnataka, underwent filtration based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, identifying the population of non-institutionalized single mothers—those independently raising children without institutional support. Institutionalized single mothers from swadhargreah, One-stop centers, and santhwana centers were selected for the study. This approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of socio-economic differences in both groups

Sample size determination in this social work research follows the (Krejcie & Morgan) table, resulting in 104 institutionalized and 100 non-institutionalized samples. These were distributed proportionately across eight districts within the four administrative divisions of Karnataka through cross multiplication. A probability sampling method was employed, ensuring that all respondents selected for the study were chosen as random samples. This approach enhances the reliability and representativeness of the research findings.

Efficient data collection techniques are crucial for research, and this study employs a self-prepared tool to investigate the socio-economic conditions of single mothers. Independent variables encompass key socio-demographic characteristics, including age, education, income, occupation, family size, house ownership, total years of single motherhood, age at marriage, age at pregnancy, and total number of children. This tailored tool ensures comprehensive and relevant data collection for a thorough analysis of the socio-economic factors affecting single mothers. To determine the socio-economic category of institutionalized/non-institutional single mothers recoded based on the self developed questionnaire was used.

Results

Table 1

Socio- demographic profile of institutional and non-institutional single mothers.

	Age	Group				Total		Test
		Institutionalized		Non-Institutionalized				
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Age wise distribution of Single mothers	15-19	20	19.2%	3	3.0%	23	11.3%	**X^2 =16.36 P= 0.000 HS**
	20-29	48	46.2%	43	43.0%	91	44.6%	
	30-39	36	34.6%	54	54.0%	90	44.1%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Income wise distribution of Single mothers	No Income	17	16.3%	0	0.0%	17	8.3%	X^2 =46.04 P= 0.000 HS
	3000 to 5000	53	51.0%	36	36.0%	89	43.6%	
	5000 to 10000	13	12.5%	52	52.0%	65	31.9%	
	10000 to 15000	21	20.2%	12	12.0%	33	16.2%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Education distribution of Single mothers	Illiterate	17	16.3%	35	35.0%	52	25.5%	X^2 =9.48 P= 0.024 HS
	Primary	29	27.9%	23	23.0%	52	25.5%	
	Secondary	32	30.8%	22	22.0%	54	26.5%	
	Graduation/Post Graduation	26	25.0%	20	20.0%	46	22.5%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Occupation distribution of Single mothers	Unemployed	29	27.9%	8	8.0%	37	18.1%	X^2 =32.35 P= 0.024 HS
	House wife	26	25.0%	38	38.0%	64	31.4%	
	Private factory employees/Daily wage workers	29	27.9%	10	10.0%	39	19.1%	
	Other working	20	19.2%	44	44.0%	64	31.4%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	

	After Marriage	18	36.7%	20	37.0%	38	36.9%	
	After become Single	13	26.5%	19	35.2%	32	31.1%	
	Total	49	100.0%	54	100.0%	103	100.0%	
Status of having own house	Yes	52	50.0%	1	1.0%	53	26.0%	X^2 = 63.65 P= 0.000 HS
	No	52	50.0%	99	99.0%	151	74.0%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Ownership of House	Husband	27	26.0%	2	2.0%	29	14.2%	Fishers exact test P =0.000 HS
	Fiancé	7	6.7%	2	2.0%	9	4.4%	
	Father	61	58.7%	77	77.0%	138	67.6%	
	Mother-in-Law/Father-in-Law	8	7.7%	17	17.0%	25	12.3%	
	Relatives	1	1.0%	2	2.0%	3	1.5%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Type of House	Tile House/ Cement Sheet	30	28.8%	43	43.0%	73	35.8%	X^2 =43.34 P= 0.000 HS
	Concrete/RCC	66	63.5%	21	21.0%	87	42.6%	
	Thatched roof/Hut house	8	7.7%	36	36.0%	44	21.6%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	

The socio-economic and demographic characteristics data presents a comprehensive overview of single mothers across various dimensions, shedding light on their Age, Income, Education, Occupation, Housing Status, Type of House, Years of Single Motherhood, Employment status, Marriage structure, Age at Pregnancy, and children. The age-wise distribution reveals a

notable concentration of institutionalized single mothers within the 20-29 ages (46.2%), while non-institutionalized single mothers are more prevalent in the 30-39 age groups (54.0%). This suggests that a considerable proportion of institutionalized single mothers are young adults, particularly those in their twenties. The observed significant difference between institutionalized and non-institutionalized respondents in terms of age (X^2 =16.36, P=0.000 < 0.05) indicates that the younger age group is significantly more represented among institutionalized respondents compared to their non-institutionalized counterparts. The income distribution highlights diverse financial situations among single mothers. Notably, a considerable portion (8.3%) of single mother's reports having no income. The predominant income range for institutionalized single mothers is between 3000 and 5000 (51.0%), indicating the prevalent economic difficulties experienced by a substantial portion of this demographic. Similarly, for non-institutionalized single mothers, the majority falls within the income of 5000 to 10000 (52.0%), highlighting economic challenges faced by a significant proportion within this group. The observed significant difference between institutionalized and non-institutionalized respondents in terms of income (X^2 =46.04, P=0.000 < 0.05). This suggests that there is a noteworthy distinction in the income distribution between the two groups. The findings imply that economic factors play a crucial role in differentiating the financial situations of institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers, as indicated by their respective income. Additionally, the analysis of educational attainment among institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers indicates a notable diversity in their educational backgrounds. Within the institutionalized group, a significant proportion, comprising 32 **(**30.8%**)**, possesses a secondary education. On the other hand, non-institutionalized single mothers, the majority 35 (35.0%) are found to be illiterate. The observed significant difference between institutionalized and non-institutionalized respondents in terms of education (X^2 =9.483, P=0.000 < 0.05) indicates that the educational profile significantly

more represented among institutionalized respondents compared to the non-institutionalized counterparts. These findings underscore the varied educational profiles within the single mothers' population, emphasizing the importance of addressing educational disparities. The observed diversity suggests that interventions and support programs should consider the educational needs of single mothers, recognizing the different levels of educational attainment present within this demographic. By doing so, efforts can be tailored to cater to the specific educational requirements of both those with secondary education and those facing literacy challenges among single mothers.

Further, the occupation distribution highlights the diverse employment status of institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers. A notable portion is housewives (31.4%), emphasizing the importance of recognizing and supporting the work involved in homemaking. Additionally, a considerable number engage in other forms of employment (31.4%), showcasing the versatility of roles undertaken by institutionalized single mothers. On the contrary, within the group of non-institutionalized single mothers, a significant segment, accounting for 44 **(**44.0%**)**, is involved in alternative forms of employment. This includes both hourly work and house chores undertaken for an hourly wage. This highlights a noteworthy aspect of the economic activities undertaken by non-institutionalized single mothers, indicating their engagement in diverse and flexible work arrangements. The prevalence of such dual roles suggests a pragmatic and adaptable approach to income generation among this demographic. The observed significant difference between institutionalized and non-institutionalized respondents in terms of occupation (X^2 =32.35, P=0.000 < 0.05) indicates that the occupational deprivation is significantly more represented among institutionalized respondents compared to the non-institutionalized counterparts.

Further examination of house ownership reveals that fathers are the primary

owners (67.6%), underscoring the role of extended family support in providing housing for institutionalized single mothers. The research findings highlight a noteworthy trend wherein fathers serve as the primary home owners for non-institutionalized single mothers, constituting a significant majority at 77(77%). The observed significant difference between institutionalized and non-institutionalized respondents in terms of house ownership (X^2 =16.36, P=0.000<0.05). The reliance on fathers as primary homeowners suggests that familial ties and support networks play a substantial role in addressing housing needs within this demographic. This underscores the importance of understanding and acknowledging the supportive role of extended family structures in contributing to the housing stability of institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers.

Upon examining the type of houses in which institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers reside, the study finds that a majority of institutionalized single mothers, specifically 66 (63.5%), live in concrete or RCC houses. In contrast, the majority of non-institutionalized single mothers 43 (43.0%) reside in tile or cement sheet houses. The observed significant difference between institutionalized and non-institutionalized respondents in terms of type of houses (X^2 =16.36, P=0.000<0.05) indicates that the housing condition is significantly more represented among institutionalized respondents compared to the non-institutionalized counterparts. This diversity in housing types underscores the importance of tailored interventions that take into account the varied living conditions of both institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers. Addressing the housing needs of these groups requires a nuanced approach that considers the different structural and material aspects of their living arrangements. Such targeted interventions can help create more effective and relevant support systems, recognizing the unique challenges faced by each subgroup in terms of housing.

Table 2

Percentage distribution of respondent's years of single motherhood, type and age at marriage, age at pregnancy and number of children.

		Institut-ionalized		Non-Insti-tutionalized		N	%	Test
Years of Single motherhood	1-2	67	64.4%	66	66.0%	133	65.2%	X^2 =1.21 P= 0.545 NS
	3-5	32	30.8%	32	32.0%	64	31.4%	
	More than 5 years	5	4.8%	2	2.0%	7	3.4%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Type marriage	Love marriage/Self Arranged	38	36.5%	37	37.0%	75	36.8%	X^2 =0.005 P= 0.946 NS
	Traditional / Family arranged	66	63.5%	63	63.0%	129	63.2%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Age at marriage	Below 18 years	46	44.2%	45	45.0%	91	44.6%	X^2 =0.038 P= 0.981 NS
	19 to 20 years	35	33.7%	34	34.0%	69	33.8%	
	21 to 26 years	23	22.1%	21	21.0%	44	21.6%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Age at Pregnancy	Below 18 years	12	11.5%	11	11.0%	23	11.3%	X^2 =0.072 P= 0.995 NS
	19 to 20 Years	45	43.3%	45	45.0%	90	44.1%	
	21 to 22 Years	22	21.2%	21	21.0%	43	21.1%	
	32 to 44 years	25	24.0%	23	23.0%	48	23.5%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	
Number of Children	1	37	35.6%	36	36.0%	73	35.8%	X^2 =0.041 P= 0.980 NS
	2	44	42.3%	41	41.0%	85	41.7%	
	3 - 4	23	22.1%	23	23.0%	46	22.5%	
	Total	104	100.0%	100	100.0%	204	100.0%	

The data presented in the above table 2, explores the percentage distribution and the association of respondents' years of single motherhood, type and age at marriage, age at pregnancy, and the number of children, with a particular focus on comparing institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers. The data on years of Single Motherhood revealed, the chi-square test value ($X2 = 1.21$, $p = 0.545$) indicating no significant association between the duration of single motherhood and institution/non-institution status. Both institutionalized and non-institutionalized groups show comparable percentages in each category (1-2 years, 3-5 years, and more than 5 years). The non-significant result (NS) suggests that the years of single motherhood do not differ significantly between the two groups.

Further, the type of Marriage reveals the chi-square test value ($X2 = 0.005$, $p = 0.946$) revealing no significant association between the type of marriage and institution/non-institution status. The percentages for love marriage/self-arranged and traditional/family arranged marriages are similar in both groups. The non-significant result (NS) implies that the type of marriage is not a differentiating factor in the institutionalization status of single mothers. Additionally, the age at Marriage, the chi-square test reveals ($X2 = 0.038$, $p = 0.981$) indicating no significant association between age at marriage and institution/non-institution status. The percentages for different age groups at marriage (below 18 years, 19 to 20 years, and 21 to 26 years) are comparable between institutionalized and non-institutionalized groups, leading to a non-significant result (NS).

The study revealed that young women, specifically those between the ages of 15 and 20, harbored the most pessimistic expectations regarding the impending childbirth. Throughout pregnancy, they exhibited heightened levels of concern, with a more prevalent presence of depressive moods compared to the reference group. Further, when asked about the age at first pregnancy; the data revealed. The chi-square test ($X2 = 0.072$, $p = 0.995$) indicating no significant association between age at pregnancy and institutionalization

status. The distribution across age groups (below 18 years, 19 to 20 years, 21 to 22 years, and 32 to 44 years) is similar for both groups, resulting in a non-significant result (NS). The data on number of Children, the chi-square test ($X2 = 0.041$, $p = 0.980$) revealed no significant association between the number of children and institution/non-institution status. The percentages of single mothers with 1 child, 2 children, and 3-4 children are comparable in both institutionalized and non-institutionalized groups, leading to a non-significant result (NS). Overall, the analysis suggests that there are no statistically significant differences in the distribution of years of single motherhood, type and age at marriage, age at pregnancy, and the number of children between institutionalized and non-institutionalized single mothers.

Major Findings of the Study

The socio-demographic profile of institutional and non-institutional single mothers is characterized by several significant findings. In terms of age distribution, institutionalized single mothers exhibit a higher percentage in the 20-29 age group (46.2%), while non-institutionalized ones have a higher percentage in the 30-39 age group (54.0%). The association between age distribution and institutionalization status is statistically significant ($X2 = 16.36$, $P = 0.000$), indicating a relationship between age and the likelihood of institutionalization. Regarding income distribution, a significant association is observed ($X2 = 46.04$, $P = 0.000$), with non-institutionalized single mothers having a higher percentage in the 5000 to 10000 income range (52.0%), while institutionalized ones are more prevalent in the 3000 to 5000 range (51.0%). Educational distribution also shows a significant association ($X2 = 9.48$, $P = 0.024$), with a higher percentage of illiterate non-institutionalized single mothers (35.0%) compared to institutionalized ones (16.3%).Occupation distribution highlights that unemployed institutionalized single mothers constitute 27.9%, whereas non-institutionalized ones have a higher percentage of housewives (38.0%). The association is statistically significant ($X2 = 32.35$, $P = 0.024$), suggesting a connection between occupational status and

institutionalization. Additionally, the ownership of a house is significantly associated with institutionalization status (X2 = 63.65, P = 0.000), with a higher percentage of institutionalized single mothers owning a house (50.0%) compared to non-institutionalized ones (1.0%).The ownership of the house further reveals interesting patterns, with husbands being the primary owners for institutionalized single mothers (26.0%) and fathers for non-institutionalized ones (77.0%). The type of house also exhibits a significant association (X2 = 43.34, P = 0.000), with institutionalized single mothers having a higher percentage in Tile House/Cement Sheet (28.8%), while non-institutionalized ones are more prevalent in Concrete/RCC houses (63.5%).

Further, in table 2, the years of single motherhood do not show a significant association with institutionalization status. Similarly, factors such as type of marriage, age at marriage, age at pregnancy, and the number of children does not exhibit significant associations. These findings provide valuable insights into the socio-demographic characteristics of institutional and non-institutional single mothers, emphasizing the importance of age, income, education, occupation, and housing in understanding their circumstances.

Discussions:

The detailed analysis of the socio-demographic profile of institutional and non-institutional single mothers' sheds light on the complex interplay of factors influencing their circumstances. Age distribution emerges as a crucial factor, with institutionalized single mothers being more prevalent in the 20-29 age group, while non-institutionalized ones are more common in the 30-39 age range. This suggests that younger single mothers may face a higher likelihood of institutionalization, possibly due to a lack of familial or community support. Further, Income distribution also plays a pivotal role, showing a significant association with institutionalization status. Non-institutionalized single mothers tend to have a higher income, particularly in the 5000 to 10000 range, implying financial stability as a potential protective factor against institutionalization. Rapidly increasing worldwide, single-parent families led

by mothers face elevated chronic stress, primarily attributed to economic hardship and diminished social support, potentially resulting in both physical and psychological health issues (Elena, Christiana, & Middleton, 2016). The presence of economic freedom and opportunities reduces women's inclination towards marrying for financial gain, especially when women have a stable and dependable income (Owolabi, 2023). Educational disparities are also noteworthy, as a higher percentage of illiterate non-institutionalized single mothers implies potential vulnerabilities in terms of accessing support services and opportunities. And the data pattern in Occupational distribution highlights the challenges faced by both groups, with a considerable percentage of unemployed institutionalized single mothers and a higher prevalence of housewives among the non-institutionalized. Occupational deprivation occurs within the context of cultural norms, social status, and a dearth of social opportunities. Given that this process unfolds gradually over an extended period, subsequent changes become increasingly intricate (Kamilla, Hanne Kaae, & Dorthe S, 2018). The results of the study (AuroraP, Jeanne Brroks, Chien, & Marc, 2003) propose initial recommendations for policies aiming to maximize the positive impacts of maternal employment in single-parent families with young children. This underscores the need for targeted interventions to address the employment and economic empowerment of single mothers, especially those facing institutionalization.

Further, the ownership of a house is a striking finding, with a significantly higher percentage of institutionalized single mothers owning a house compared to their non-institutionalized counterparts. The study (Rense & Zagel, 2023) reveals about likelihood of single mothers facing housing deprivation. This unexpected result prompts further exploration into the dynamics of housing and its potential role in the decision-making process related to institutionalization. The ownership of the house by husbands for institutionalized single mothers and fathers for non-institutionalized ones reflects traditional family structures. Additionally, the type of house shows a significant association, indicating potential socio-economic disparities

between the groups.

In contrast, Table 2, which explores factors such as years of single motherhood, type of marriage, age at marriage, age at pregnancy, and number of children, does not reveal significant associations with institutionalization status. This suggests that these factors may be less influential in determining whether a single mother becomes institutionalized. The socio-demographic profile of institutional and non-institutional single mothers is multifaceted, emphasizing the importance of age, income, education, occupation, and housing. Additionally, they experienced social challenges such as unemployment and a lack of support (Eva, Erica, & Ulla, 2007). These findings underscore the need for support programs addressing the unique challenges faced by single mothers, with a focus on socio-economic empowerment and community resources to prevent institutionalization.

Ethical Consideration:

In conducting research sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), ethical considerations are followed ensuring the integrity, credibility, and respect for the rights of all participants involved. Adherence to ethical principles to safeguarding the dignity and well-being of research subjects. A researcher has prioritized obtaining informed consent from participants, providing them with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks. Additionally, confidentiality measures are rigorously implemented to protect the privacy of participants, and any identifiable information is handled with utmost care. The research design and methodologies which are culturally sensitive and respectful of local norms and values are followed. Transparent communication and continuous engagement with participants, as well as obtaining approval from relevant ethics review boards, are followed.

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Conclusion

The socio-economic and demographic characteristics data provide a holistic understanding of single mothers, encompassing crucial dimensions such as age, income, education, occupation, housing, and family structure. The age-wise distribution reveals a statistically significant association, indicating that age groups play a pivotal role in the likelihood of institutionalization. Economic challenges are evident, with a significant proportion reporting no income and the majority falling within the lower income range. Educational diversity highlights the need for targeted interventions to address disparities. The versatile employment status and housing conditions further emphasize the multifaceted challenges faced by single mothers. The data additionally sheds light on the importance of family support in housing and the varied duration of single motherhood, with implications for tailored support services. Marital and reproductive histories reveal diverse experiences, from early marriages to different forms of family arrangements, underscoring the need for nuanced policies. Understanding the age at which single mothers become pregnant and the distribution of children within families provides valuable insights for maternal and child health interventions. This study highlights the complex dynamic nature of socio-demographic factors influencing the institutionalization/non-institutionalized single mothers. In essence, this comprehensive analysis informs policymakers and support organizations in developing targeted and holistic strategies to address the unique needs of single mothers across various life dimensions.

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Sovereignty, Suzerainty and Autonomy: A Case Study of State Formation in the Late Eighteenth Century Punjab

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Abstract

Placed in the context of late medieval India, this case study delineates the political processes entailing sovereignty, suzerainty and autonomy in the Punjab region during the late eighteenth century. In the 1750s, Ahmad Shah Abdali wrested Kashmir, Multan, Lahore and the sarkar of Sarhind from the Mughal empire. As the sovereign of these territories, he issued coins and exercised suzerainty over the Rajput rulers in the hills, 'Muslim' chiefs in the plains, and the Sikh chiefs in the Sutlej-Jamuna divide. Though politically subordinate to Abdali, they had administrative autonomy within their territories. However, the Sikhs in the province of Lahore, who had been inspired by Sikh ideology, first rebelled against Mughal authority, and then successfully resisted the Abdali. The Sikhs ousted the Afghan nominees, conquered territory, and struck coins, deriving sovereignty from God through the Gurus. Majority of them came from the peasant and artisan background and exercised power in their small or large states virtually as monarchs, continuing with the essentials of the Mughal system, albeit ruling with moderation. The leading Sardars acted as suzerains over the autonomous chiefs in the hills and plains. As a whole, the political scene remained fluid in the eighteenth century, but upward social mobility was discernible in the overlapping situations entailing sovereignty, suzerainty, and autonomy. This paper is based on literary, archival and documentary evidence.

Keywords: Sovereignty, Suzerainty, Vassalage, Autonomous chieftains, State formation, Sikh ideology, Punjab

Introductory

Sovereignty was the prerequisite of suzerainty and was formally declared through the striking of coin and some other ways in medieval India. Suzerain-vassal polity played an important role in state formation in the Punjab region during the late eighteenth century. It implied limitations of resources on the part of the suzerain, difficulties of the terrain, and the tradition of autonomy in the area. This arrangement was not peculiar to the north-western region and could be traced to pre-Turkish times. It facilitated expansion of political control over new areas without actual conquest as it allowed administrative and fiscal autonomy to the vassal. Payment of tribute to the suzerain was the hallmark of vassalage which was often accompanied by service of contingents.

The Mughal Emperor Akbar evolved an elaborate arrangement of political control over autonomous chieftains which was later expanded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh Broadly, the Mughal empire had two categories of territories: (a) the territory under the direct administration of the emperor in which he was the sole sovereign, and (b) the territory under the subordinate chiefs or vassals who were autonomous in their administration. Thus, the Mughal political organisation had an interrelated framework of sovereignty, suzerainty, and autonomy. In this context and with reference to some new sources, the present paper examines the nature of political change in the late eighteenth century Punjab, covering the five *doab*s (interfluves) and the Sutlej-Jamuna divide. In the upper *doabs* of the Punjab region, however, Sikh ideology had an important role to play in the political process.

Ahmad Shah Abdali as the Immediate Successor of the Mughal Emperor

In Indian history, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali have generally been seen as mere invaders who plundered the wealth of the Mughals and weakened their hold over the north-west. The fact that the invaders were intent upon ruling over large territories of the Mughal empire is ignored. In

1739, Nadir Shah obliged Emperor Muhammad Shah to cede his trans-Indus territories. In addition, the Iranian conqueror acquired four *pargana*s, or the *chahār mahāl* (Sialkot, Aurangabad, Gujrat, and Pasrur) in the province of Lahore. His Afghan lieutenant, Ahmad Shah Abdali, succeeded Nadir Shah in 1747 in his eastern dominions. Through successive invasions, Abdali obliged the then Mughal emperor to cede the provinces of Lahore, Multan and Kashmir in 1752. In 1757, Abdali added the *sarkār* of Sarhind in the province of Delhi to his dominions, with Kabul as his capital. He thus replaced the Mughal emperor as the sovereign of these territories and struck his own coin in his Indian acquisitions. Ahmad Shah Abdali used as many as 20 mints most of which had been Mughal mints at one time or the other. In the north-west, the most important mints were at Lahore, Multan, and Sarhind (Ganda Singh, 1959: 365-67). Evidently, he was serious about his designs over the Punjab region (Banga, 1968: 85-90) His *farmān*s to the hill chiefs of Chamba, Kangra and Jammu, preserved in the Bhuri Singh Museum at Chamba, clearly show that he treated them as his vassals (Catalogue, 1909: 61-65). Thus, for nearly a decade and a half he ruled over nearly the entire Punjab from the Indus to the Jamuna, exercising political and administrative control.

It may be added that till his death in 1772, Ahmad Shah Abdali never relinquished his claim to his conquests in north-western India. In this, he was followed by his son, Taimur Shah (1772-93) and grandson, Zaman Shah (1793-1800), who reasserted their suzerain claims over the rulers of Patiala, Chamba and Jammu (Catalogue, 1909: 61-5). Taimur Shah recovered Multan from its Sikh conquerors in 1780 and gave it to Muzaffar Khan Saddozai as a vassal (*Gazetteer of Multan,1883-84*: 27). According to contemporary British reports, Zaman Shah invaded the Punjab four times from 1793 to 1799 to regain control over Lahore and to reassert his suzerainty over the new rulers of the region (NAI, Foreign Secret Consultation, File no.6 (31 Dec. 1796, 6 Jan. 1797, 25 Jan. 1797), pp. 1-5; Fort William India House Correspondence, vol. XVIII, 1796-1800, pp. 5, 42; Foreign Secret Department, December 1800, pp. 64-5).

Apparently, there had been an overlapping process of state formation in the territories of Ahmad Shah Abdali in the Punjab. A new pattern began to emerge by the early 1760s, with the emergence of new rulers from within the region who included the Rajput chiefs in the hills, 'Muslim' chiefs in the Punjab plains, and the Sikh rulers in the former Mughal province of Lahore. However, informed by their religious ideology, the last were different in their political attitudes from all other rulers, including the Sikh chiefs in the former province of Delhi, or the Sutlej-Jamuna divide. Yet, all of them were part of the framework of sovereignty, suzerainty and autonomy in one way or the other. We may begin with the Rajput chiefs in the hills who had the oldest history.

Rajput Chiefs in the Hills

Out of over 25 hill states, Kangra, Chamba and Jammu had been founded in pre-Turkish times, and only a few of the hill states were less than 500 years old. Nearly all of them acknowledged Akbar's suzerainty in the sixteenth century and formed an integral part of the Mughal province of Lahore till its cession to Ahmad Shah Abdali (Hutchison and Vogel, I, 41-90). The hill chiefs remained autonomous under him. Raja Ghamand Chand Katoch (1751-74) of Kangra and Raja Ranjit Dev (1750-81) of Jammu actively cooperated with Abdali. However, they stopped paying tribute to his successors and established their own overlordship in the neighbouring areas (Hutchison and Vogel, I, 176; II, 541-42). Ranjit Dev even struck a coin to declare his sovereign status. In the inscription on his coin he claimed to derive his authority from Lakshmi Narayan (Ganesh Das, 1849: ff 221b, 235b, 236a).

'Muslim' Chiefs between the Indus and the Sutlej

The label 'Muslim' has been used for the chiefs subscribing to Islam and belonging to different ethnic groups: Sayyids, Afghans, Baloches, Rajputs and Jatts. A recognized position in the Mughal framework gave them the initial advantage of existing resources and local influence. For example, the chiefships of Pakpatan and Hujra Shah Muqim were established by the

madad-i-ma'ash (charitable) grantees. The Pathans of Qasur had served as the *faujdars* of the *sarkars* of Jammu and Jalandhar. The ancestors of the Saddozai Afghan ruler of Multan had served as the governor of Multan under Emperor Muhammad Shah. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions the Manj and Bhatti Rajputs, the Chatha Jatts, the Gakhars and the Kharals, among others, as holding *zamindari* rights in several *parganas* and maintaining horsemen and infantry (Abul Fazl, 1997: 320-28, 331-35). This arrangement was not peculiar to the north-western region. They were intermediary *zamindars* collecting revenues and exercising certain superior rights over land. For assertion of autonomy in most cases they only had to withhold the revenues or the tribute payable to the imperial government. But they did not go beyond autonomy in the Punjab. They appear to have been restrained as much by the prestige of the Mughal empire as by the limitation of their own resources. In fact, the resources of most of these petty chiefs ranged from less than 50,000 rupees a year to a lakh and fifty thousand rupees. Only the chiefs of Multan, Mankera, and Jhang commanded larger resources worth over 8 lakhs of rupees each (Sachdeva, 1993: 159-93).

The majority of the 'Muslim' territories were in the Bari and the Sindh Sagar Doabs. In the Bist Jalandhar Doab, the Bhatti Rajputs of Sultanpur yielded place to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia early in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Manj Rajputs at Nakodar and Talwan lost their territories before 1770. In the Bari Doab, closest to Lahore was the Afghan Nawab of Qasur, and the farthest from Lahore was the Afghan Nawab of Multan. The other autonomous territories were Dipalpur, Pakpatan, Malka Hans, Hujra Shah Muqim and the area controlled by the Wattu tribe. All these petty chiefships, except Malka Hans, survived as autonomous territories into the early nineteenth century. In the Rachna Doab, Ramnagar (Rasulnagar) was the headquarters of the chiefdom of the Chatha Jatts. The Sials had their headquarters at Jhang and Chiniot along the river Chenab. The chiefs of the Kharal tribe, with their headquarters initially at Kamalia, ruled over the area along the river Ravi. In the Chaj Doab, Bhera was taken over by a Sikh ruler and the former chief of Bhera established his headquarters at Sahiwal lower down the river Jhelum. In the Sindh Sagar Doab, the territories of the

Gakhars were in the north along the hills, and the southern part of the tract had the chiefship of Mankera. In between were the Ghebas of Kot and the Jodhras of Pindi Gheb. The chiefs of the Awan, the Janjua and the Khokhar tribes had their territories around Pind Dadan Khan, Ahmedabad, Kusk and Malot. All these chiefs remained autonomous in the late eighteenth century, to be subjugated later by Ranjit Singh.

Sovereign Sikh Rulers of the Province of Lahore

By now it is known that the ideal of sovereign rule had become current among the Khalsa Sikhs (who had taken initiation of the double-edged sword) in the time of Guru Gobind Singh himself. The *Nasihatnama* (also called *Tankhahnama*), a manual of the Sikh way of life placed in the tenth Guru's lifetime, 'ends with a sure prophecy of sovereignty and rulership' for the Khalsa (Malhotra, 2005,70,76). Ideologically, the institution of the Khalsa had reinforced social equality and justice, and enjoined wielding of weapons and righteous warfare, among other things. Within a couple of years of the passing away of the tenth Guru, the Khalsa conquered Sarhind and other territories under the leadership of Banda Singh and declared their sovereignty by striking a coin in 1710. In fact, in the coins struck in 1710, 1711 and 1712, with regnal years 1,2,3, sovereignty is received by Guru Gobind Singh from God through the grace of Guru Nanak (for *facsimilies*, Surinder Singh, 2004: 40-41). The Sikh struggle for political power continued after Banda Singh who courted martyrdom along with hundreds of his companions in 1716. There are eyewitness accounts in Persian and English of the martyrdom of Banda Singh and his companions (Mirza Muhammad, 1710-16: 127; Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan, 1710-16: 139-41; Khafi Khan, 153-54; Muhammad Shafi "Warid": 157-59).

The next half a century saw the resurgence of the Sikhs who were overwhelmingly from the peasant proprietor and artisanal background. They refused to be suppressed by the determined onslaught of the three most powerful Mughal governors of the Punjab: Abdus Samad Khan (1713-26), Zakariya Khan (1726-45), and Muin-ul Mulk (1748-52/3). Ratan Singh Bhangu, the first historian of the Khalsa and a near contemporary, mentions

that in 1748 the Sikhs constructed their first mud fort which was at Amritsar (Bhangu, 2004: 305-9). By this time, they were able to organise themselves into a number of bands (*jathā*s) commanded by over three scores of leaders. In the 1750s, the individual leaders began piecemeal occupation of territories in the Punjab plains and administering them in their own name. Significantly, the earliest available order of a Sikh Sardar in Persian is dated 1752, and the seal of another was inscribed in 1750 (Pindori Collection,2010: documents XVIII-XIX, XXIV). Tahmas Khan, an eye-witness, gives an account of the Sikhs fighting against Ahmad Shah Abdali's nominees at several places (Tahmas Khan, 1782: 169-80).

What enabled the Sikhs to organise themselves in this unequal struggle? They devised some cohesive arrangements on the basis of the doctrines of Guru Granth (Granth Sahib as the Guru) and Guru Panth (collectivity as the Guru) enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh. The decisions taken in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib as well as by the collectivity, or the Panth as a whole, were accepted by its individual members. The unity of action was ensured through the *gurmata,* that is the resolution of the Sikhs in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Their rallying place was generally Amritsar but sometimes *gurmatas* were adopted elsewhere. These resolutions were the bases of joint action by a large number of fighting units (initially *jathas,* then *misals*) under individual leaders. The combination of a number of units under a single leader chosen for a particular offensive or defensive action was called the *dal Khalsa* or the army of the Sikhs. On the basis of a *gurmata,* the territories conquered were divided among the leaders of units in proportion to the number of warriors brought into action (Bhangu, 2004: 337-49, 377-79).

The crucial phase in the struggle for power in the Punjab began in 1758 when the Marathas on behalf of the Mughal emperor ousted Ahmad Shah Abdali's son Taimur Shah from Lahore and the Punjab. This was the immediate background to the battle fought between Abdali and the Marathas at Panipat in 1761. After defeating the Marathas, the Afghan king tried to eliminate the Sikhs but they had conquered more territories and become too powerful by that time. They survived the great retaliatory

massacre (*vadda ghallughara*) by him in 1762, defeated him in a pitched battle in 1763-64, occupied the *sarkar* of Sarhind, and obliged him to retreat in haste in 1764 as mentioned in News Reports in Persian (News Reports, 1759-65: 195-97). In the year following, three Sardars ousted Abdali's governor of Lahore, parcelled out the city, and struck their own coin (Bhangu, 2004, 337-49, 377-79; *Tahmas Nama*,1782:181-83). At that time, Qazi Nur Muhammad, another eyewitness, who was with the invading army, regretfully observed in his *Jangnama* that the Sikhs fearlessly held territories from Sarhind to the Derajat, including Lahore and Multan (Qazi Nur Muhammad, 1765: 210).

Significantly, the coin of 1765 had the same inscription as on Banda's seal. In this coin, the Sikhs of the province of Lahore derived their authority from Guru Nanak through Guru Gobind Singh. Another coin using the inscription on Banda's coin of 1710, was issued from Amritsar in 1775. The two have broadly similar import, but in the later coin the victory of Guru Gobind Singh is attributed to the grace of God through Guru Nanak. Both the coins became current in the territories of the Sikh rulers of the former Mughal province of Lahore whereas in the Sikh territories in the Delhi province Ahmad Shah Abdali's coin remained current (Rogers, 1881: 79-82; 1885: 75, respectively). Thus, a Sikh ruler in the former Mughal province acknowledged no earthly superior. An individual ruler could invoke the authority of the inscription to support his own sovereign status. Depending upon the size of his territory and resources, he made further conquests and entered into alliances. In the administration of his territories, the new ruler's tendency was to continue broadly with the existing revenue and judicial arrangements, revenue assignments (*jagirs*), and charitable revenue-grants (*dharmarth*). He also acted essentially as a suzerain over his less powerful neighbours, allowing them autonomy subject to military help and payment of tribute (Malhotra, 2016: 26, 44-46, 80-87; Banga, 2019: 81-97, 138-40).

Even when 'the number of petty sovereigns among the Sikhs in the late eighteenth century was large, only a few were predominant among the first generation rulers: Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh Bhangi, Jhanda Singh

Bhangi, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Charhat Singh Sukarchakia, Jai Singh Kanhiya, and Gujjar Singh. As noted before, they all came from amongst the peasant proprietors and artisans by background. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was a carpenter (*tarkhan*). The case of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was more significant. He was born in a family of distillers of liquor(*kalāl*s), and became the foremost among the Sikh leaders from about the mid-1750s to the mid-1770s, to be called the "Patshah of the Panth" (Grewal, 2007: 174-82).

After establishing their rule over the plains, some of the Sikh Sardars exercised suzerainty also over the hill states as Abdali did. The names that figure in this connection are: Jhanda Singh Bhangi, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Gujjar Singh and his son Sahib Singh, Maha Singh Sukarchakia and Jai Singh Kanhiya (Rao, 1981: 64; Banga, 2019: 41-42). A painting of 1775 (given below) shows Jai Singh Kanhiya as the suzerain of the hill chiefs.

Jai Singh Kanhiya with the hill chiefs identified as Raja Raj Singh of Chamba, Raja Pragas Chand of Guler, Raja Jagrup Singh of Jaswan, and Raja Narain Singh of Siba. In the middle is seated the young prince, Sansar Chand of Kangra. On Jai Singh's left are seated two Akalis in blue dress (1775).
Source: Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, Accession no. 250.

Subordinate Sikh Chiefs of the Province of Delhi

Significantly, there was a marked contrast between the Sikh rulers in the former Mughal province of Lahore and those in the Delhi province. A News

Report in Persian, dated 8 March 1765, reflects the essential difference between Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Ala Singh, the founder of the Patiala state, and the most important Sikh ruler in the province of Delhi. Referring to the presence of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the report says:

> Jassa Singh and other Sikh chiefs sent a message to Ala Singh Jat asking him not to make a settlement with the Shah [saying] 'If it comes to siege, we are ready to give assistance'. He replied saying: 'I am a *zamindar.* I first make a settlement; thereafter, I am helpless.' You [on the other hand] can confront the Shah on equal terms (News Reports, 8 March 1765: 202).

Here, the difference between Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Ala Singh is actually a difference between antecedents of the Sikh rulers of the two provinces. Ala Singh was the grandson of Chaudhari Phul who collected revenues from several villages of the directly administered territory of the Mughal empire. He was the ancestor also of the founders of the states of Nabha and Jind and some chiefships in the *sarkar*s of Sarhind and Hissar. All of them had been the intermediary *zamindar*s in the Delhi province, whereas coming from plebian background, the Sikh leaders of the province of Lahore had not been a part of the existing framework of power. They were motivated by the Khalsa ideology to wage a righteous struggle to establish sovereign rule.

It may nonetheless be interesting to note that Ala Singh's career was representative of the process of state formation by an intermediary *zamindar* who collected revenues on behalf of the Mughal state. The orders (*hukamnamas*) of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi (widows of Guru Gobind Singh), addressed to Ala Singh and his collaterals in 1728 indicate that they were held in high esteem (*Hukamname,*1967: documents 74,76). Ala Singh continued to make piecemeal addition of territory, steadily acquiring towns and building forts. In 1761, his authority was confirmed over more than 700 villages by Abdali. Ala Singh founded the town of

Patiala as his headquarters. Finally, in 1765, he agreed to pay tribute to Abdali in acknowledgement of his suzerainty. His coins were struck at Sarhind for circulation in Ala Singh's territories (Ganda Singh, 1959: 303). Abdali conferred the title of 'Raja' on Ala Singh, with a robe of honour and a kettle drum and a banner as the insignia of royalty. In 1767, his successor and grandson, Raja Amar Singh, was given the title of 'Raja-i-Rajgan' by Ahmad Shah Abdali (Ganda Singh, 1959: 317).

In Retrospect

The immediate successor of the Mughals in the north-western parts of their empire was Ahmad Shah Abdali. He ruled over the acquired territories directly or indirectly, exercising sovereign power in some areas and suzerainty over some others. In the latter case, the subordinate chief remained autonomous within his territories. Thus, as under the Mughals so under Ahmad Shah Abdali, we come across exercise of sovereignty, suzerainty and autonomy.

The new rulers from within the Punjab region responded to the political situation in broadly similar ways. The Rajput rulers of Kangra and Jammu asserted their sovereignty for a short while, and even acted as suzerains over others, but they had to revert to autonomous status under their Afghan and Sikh overlords. In the lower *doab*s, the erstwhile revenue grantees, assignees and collectors of revenues and other state functionaries by and large remained content with autonomy. Like the other revenue collectors, the Sikh chiefs of the Sutlej-Jamuna divide too remained autonomous but notionally subject to the suzerainty of Kabul. However, a conscious and prolonged assertion of sovereignty was made by the Sikh rulers of the former Mughal province of Lahore. The prominent Sardars among them also acted as suzerains over autonomous territories in the hills and the plains in emulation of their Mughal and Afghan predecessors. Interestingly, the big chieftains everywhere exercised control over the petty chiefs in the vicinity.

There was an important difference between the sovereign Sikh rulers and the autonomous chiefs *per se*. The common factor among the latter,

irrespective of their faith, was their former position in the Mughal, and later Afghan, framework of power which accounted for their initial advantages as well as constraints. By contrast, the new Sikh rulers in the Lahore province rose from amongst the lower classes and castes and so did their ruling class. In the process of state formation, they had to evolve new modes of organisation for united action for coming into power. Their faith, combined with the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh, provided the necessary motivation and the means of cohesion. After ousting the Afghan nominees, the Sikh rulers declared their sovereignty, subscribing to the coins of 1765 and 1775 in which political power was derived from God and Guru Nanak through Guru Gobind Singh. The government of the new rulers was monarchical in nature, because in a given territory political power was in the hands of a single individual who issued orders in his own name and contracted alliances. It may be added that invoking the idea of just rule, they extended patronage in the form of revenue-grants to persons and institutions of all faiths. As a whole, certain degree of socio-economic change and upward social mobility were built into the political processes involving sovereignty, suzerainty and autonomy in the late eighteenth century Punjab.

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The Transgender Law in India: Promoting Identity and Restoring Dignity

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Abstract

The transgender community in India has long suffered discrimination, marginalisation, and violence due to their gender uniqueness. Of late, in 2014, the Supreme Court of India recognized transgender people as a "third gender", and since then, there have been several developments in laws and policies aimed at restoring their dignity. However, the law has faced criticism for its failure to adequately consult with the members of transgender community during its drafting process; besides medical certification for legal recognition of their identity, insufficient provisions for addressing discrimination and its execution in true spirit. This research paper explores the legal framework related to transgender rights, prominently the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019; with a focus on the restoration of their self-respect and self-esteem. Focusing on Indian scenario, this research work reviews the concerned laws, policies, and judgments, using the doctrinal methodology. The study draws upon various sources, including legal documents, government reports, academic articles besides news-reports. The research suggests that while the statutory enactment represents a significant step forward in recognizing and protecting the rights of transgender individuals, there are significant challenges to its effective implementation like the persistence of discrimination, limited resources for enforcement, lack of responsiveness among government officials and continuance of social stigma for the want of sensitisation among the public. The paper concludes to promote identity by calling for further efforts to address these challenges and ensure that the rights and dignity of the transgender community in India are fully protected.

Keywords: *Dignity, Discrimination, National Legal Services Authority, Rights and Transgender.*

1. Introduction

Being non-conforming to the binary gender norms of male and female, the transgender population in India is one of the disadvantaged groups. Consequently, individuals encounter issues like prejudice and social exclusion, unemployment and a lack of access to healthcare, to the perpetual list. Though the Preamble of the Constitution of India (*hereinafter* referred to as the Constitution) endorses Social, Economic and Political Justice; Article 14 guarantees to all person's equality before law; Article 15(1) and (2); Article 16(2), *inter alia*, prohibits in express terms, discrimination on the ground of sex; and Article 19(1)(a) ensures freedom of speech and expression to all citizens, yet the discrimination and atrocities against the transgender persons continue to take place.

Swati Bidhan Baruah, Assam's first Transgender Judge, observed that:

> "In every religious community and for all times, the transgender community has been a part of the society. The problem is that present society is more interested in labelling us, and that is because they are not sensitive to our issues and do not want to discuss and open their minds."

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1976 (ICCPR); the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (UDHR); the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1948 (UNCAT); the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1953 (better known as the European Convention on Human Rights); and the Yogyakarta Principles, published in 2006, are just a few of the international initiatives that have significantly established the rights of all beings. Despite this, transgender people have not yet been granted the identity and dignity they deserve.

In furtherance of the above and to restore dignity of transgender, the Supreme Court of India (*hereinafter* referred to as the Supreme Court), *vide* its order dated April 15, 2014, passed in the case of *National Legal Services Authority* v. *Union of India*, *inter alia*, directed the Central

Government and State Governments to take various steps for the welfare of transgender community and to treat them as a "third gender" for the purpose of safeguarding their rights under Part III of the Constitution and other laws made by the Parliament and the State Legislature.

2. Transgender: Gender Expression, Identity and Orientation

The World Health Organisation (WHO) classified transgender as a gender identity disorder in the International Classification of Diseases-10 on mental and behavioural disorders. But in a progressive view, the International Classification of Diseases-11 defines gender incongruence as a noticeable and ongoing discrepancy between a person's experienced gender and ascribed sex.

A person who seems to exhibit traits of both the genders *i.e.,* masculine and feminine is referred to as a *hijra* in Hindi. They are also known as the "other-gender" and they identify themselves neither as male nor as female and they often live in communities together. They have their own cultural practices and rituals, such as the hijra initiation ceremony, which involves a symbolic castration ritual and adoption of hijra identity.

One of India's most ignored socio-economic groups is the 'others' who are frequently viewed as an object of curiosity, contempt, exploitation, and abuse despite the fact that they are nearly revered in some parts in India besides many other nations under different names. The American Psychiatric Association defines 'transgender' as:

> "The term "transgender" refers to a person whose sex assigned at birth (*i.e.,* the sex assigned at birth, usually based on external genitalia) does not align their gender identity (*i.e.*, one's psychological sense of their gender)."

Gender expression and gender identity are two distinct concepts. Gender expression is the way a person confirms himself to the outside world in a gendered fashion; as opposed to gender identity, which relates to his internal understanding of gender. For instance, wearing a dress is regarded as a 'feminine' expression whereas donning a tuxedo is regarded as a

'masculine' one. These standards have a cultural definition and they change over time and across cultures. Also, gender identity is different from sexual orientation, as sexual orientation refers to the kind of people towards whom one is sexually attracted. As with people who are cisgender (*people whose sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity*), people who are transgender have a diverse range of sexual orientations.

In *National Legal Services Authority* v. *Union of India*, the Supreme Court defined transgender as:

> "Transgender persons include Hijras, Eunuchs, Kothis, Aravanis, Jogappas, Shiv-Shakthis, etc. They are persons whose gender identity does not match with the gender assigned to them at birth."

Hence, transgender persons identify as neither a man nor a woman, or as a combination of male and female, and may use terms like non-binary or genderqueer to describe their gender identity.

2.1 Transgender and the Census of India

The Census of India, 2011 did not include a separate category for transgender individuals, which made it difficult to estimate the size of the transgender population in India. However, the census did collect data on individuals who reported their gender as "Other" which could include transgender people as well as individuals who do not identify as male or female. As per the 2011 census data, there were 4,87,803 individuals who identified themselves as 'other'. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this figure is likely to include a diverse range of gender identities and expressions beyond the transgender individuals; and may not accurately reflect the exact transgender population in India.

3. Historical Overview

The transgender community is believed to have existed for thousands of years and depending upon the region in India, they are known by other names also, *like* kinnars and aravanis. Since long, in India, they are auspiciously coupled with cultural traditions and religious ceremonies such as performing at weddings, child-birth, inaugural functions etc.

Historically, they were recognized as a distinct group, and they are often mentioned in ancient Hindu texts and epics, such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

3.1 Transgender Persons in Hindu Mythology

Transgender individuals have been a part of Indian society for centuries, and ancient Indian scriptures contain references to their existence and identities. These scriptures not only acknowledge their presence but also outline their rights and duties within society, indicating a level of acceptance and dignity.

3.1.1 Transgender and the epic of Ramayana

Ramayana narrates the life of Lord Rama – a legendary prince of Ayodhya city; wherein he was asked to spend fourteen years in the wilderness after being exiled from the kingdom. He was followed by his supporters in the forest, but he pleaded with them to go back to the city of Ayodhya. All men and women went back but the transgender people continued to be with Lord Rama. Impressed by their devotion and commitment, Lord Rama granted them the authority to bestow blessings on significant occasions, which continues till date.

3.1.2 Transgender and the epic of Mahabharata

Mahabharata narrates the struggle between two groups of cousins in the Kurukshetra war containing philosophical and devotional material, such as a discussion of the four 'goals of life'. In the Mahabharata, there are several references to characters who exhibit traits that could be considered 'transgender' or 'gender non-conforming'. Some of these instances are:

3.1.2.1 Arjuna as Brihannala (Transgender for one year)

When Arjuna refused damsel Urvashi's advances by saying that she was like his mother; she cursed him to lose his masculinity forever. However, Indra changed the Urvashi's curse to last for a year of Arjuna's choosing. This worked out well for Arjuna because he chose staying as transgender during the final year of the *Pandavas* exile, disguised as

Brihannala – a dance instructor. Thereby, disguised Arjuna taught dance and music to Uttara – the daughter of King Virat.

3.1.2.2 Shikhandini to Shikhandi (A Transgender)

Transgender Shikhandi played a significant role in the victory of the *Pandavas* in the war of Kurukshetra. After being abducted by Bhishma Pitamaha for his step brother and rejected by him in marriage, Princess Amba took her life and swore to take her revenge from Bhishma. Amba was reborn to King Drupada and named Shikhandini. Later, she performed austerities and changed her sex to become Shikhandi. In the battle of Kurukshetra, Bhishma recognized him as Shikandini – the Amba reborn, and he had vowed never to fight with a 'woman'. On the tenth day of the war, Bhishma was forced to lower his weapons as Shikhandi rode in Arjuna's chariot. Arjuna hid behind Shikhandi and attacked Bhishma with his arrows leading to the latter's death.

3.1.2.3 Lord Ayyappa's birth through Mohini (A Transwoman)

In the Tamil version of Mahabharata, Lord Ayyappa was the child of Shiva and Vishnu who was born after Vishnu, took the guise of Mohini and impregnated by Shiva. Nonetheless, many specialists maintain that only males and females can bear offspring, even though in this particular instance Vishnu was not in his true form. The interesting thing about this tale is that Mohini was a manifestation of Vishnu; and since Vishnu is a male, Mohini is technically a transwoman who gave birth to Ayyappa through her marriage with Lord Shiva. *Puranas* made reference to it without demeaning Shiva or Mohini, indicating that the transformation of a man into a woman or a woman into a man was not immoral and was even thought to be a choice.

3.1.3 Transgender in Astrological Texts

There exists a frequent mention of transgender in Indian astrological legends like *Phaldeepika* treatise written by Mantreswara. One such well-known narrative is that of *Budh-Graha i.e.,* the mercury planet, who was brought up by Tara and *Brihaspati Guru i.e.,* the Jupiter. *Brihaspati*

learned that the infant was the illegitimate son of Tara and Chandra *i.e.*, the Moon. Brihaspati cursed the child, saying that he or she would not be either male or female.

These tales evince a definite existence and acceptance of transgender in pre-historic myths and folklore.

3.2 Transgender in Mughal Epoch

During the Mughal Empire in medieval India, transgender assumed a renowned position. They even progressed to significant positions as political advisers, overseers, officers, and watchmen over the concubine groups. Globally, as they were close to the rulers and sovereigns, the transgender also played a significant role in the strict foundations, particularly in protecting the heavenly cities of Mecca and Medina. They also had the power to influence state decisions and earned significant financial rewards. Thus, transgender lived a dignified life during the Mughal epoch.

3.3 Transgender in British Period

Despite their cultural significance, transgender faced a long history of discrimination and marginalization in British India. They were subject to social stigmatization and exclusion, and were often denied access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities. The British colonial government further criminalized transgender and other gender non-conforming individuals in the 19th century, enacting laws that made cross-dressing and same-sex relationships illegal *like* the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which subjected them to surveillance, arrest and detention.

3.4 Transgender in Post-Independence Era

In post-independence India, transgender continued to face legal and social marginalization. They were also excluded from legal protections against discrimination based on sex and were not recognized as a distinct gender under Indian law, despite of equality provisions in the Constitution. However, slowly, transgender individuals in India began organizing and advocating for their rights. They formed advocacy groups, staged protests,

and lobbied the government to recognize their identities and provide them with legal protections. These efforts culminated in a landmark Supreme Court judgment of 2014, in which the court recognized transgender individuals as a third gender and affirmed their right to equality and non-discrimination under the Constitution.

4. Evolution of Legal Framework

The legal framework governing the transgender rights in India has evolved significantly in the recent years only, with a series of judicial pronouncements and legislative initiatives aimed at curbing discrimination and promoting dignity.

4.1 Judicial recognition of 'Third Gender'

One among the many Supreme Court rulings that has altered Indian society's landscape is *National Legal Services Authority* v. *Union of India*. In order to protect, preserve and promote the rights of people who are part of the transgender community, two writ petitions were filed. The National Legal Services Authority, established by the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987, filed a writ petition (No. 400 of 2012). Subsequently, Poojya Mata Nasib Kaur Ji Women Welfare Society, a registered association dedicated to safeguarding the rights of the Kinnar (transgender) community, filed a second writ petition (No. 604 of 2013).

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, a transgender person, also went to court to protest the denial of rights protected by Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. She supplicated for judicial intervention to end discrimination against her and other people in her community. Tripathi was consequently also adjoined in the current instance.

The core of the case revolved around the gender identity and the necessary protection to safeguard the rights and interests of transgender. Besides, the other substance was, whether a person who is born as a male but has a female orientation, has the right to be identified as a female; the same dilemma arises when an individual changes sex by surgery. Further, the petitioners raised the concern that whether a person who do not identify

either as a male or a female has the right to be categorized as "third gender".

The petitioners strongly maintained that the Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21), the Freedom of Expression (Article 19), and the Right to Equality (Article 14) strikes the cord with the idea of binary genders. Those who do not identify as either gender have been further victimised and alienated by the normalisation of binary genders. Further, they contended that these people's basic human dignity is violated because they do not identify as members of the third gender, which marginalises them and forces them to live on the fringes of society without their fault. The respondents, however, countered that the Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment had established an 'Expert Committee on issues relating to Transgender' to hear their views and provide assistance in leading a productive and respectable life. They said that in order to formulate a more comprehensive policy in this regard, the Committee will also take the petitioners' opinions into consideration. It was also asserted that a few of states and union territories have made notable progress in improving the lives of transgender people.

On April 15, 2014, a two-judge panel made up of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and A.K. Sikri gave the verdict. The court relied on various judgments from foreign courts like New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and England. The court distinguished between 'biological sex' and 'psychological sex'; and, rejected the gender identification based on the former and gave full weight gender to the identification based on the latter. The Court held that all provisions of the international agreements, including the Yogyakarta Principles, must be acknowledged and adhered to the extent that they are consistent with the fundamental rights protected by Part III of the Constitution. The Court concluded that transgender people are therefore, fully entitled to their constitutional rights. The prominent rights of transgender include:

a) Right to Self-Identification

The right of self-identification means that transgender individuals have

the right to choose their own gender identity, and are not required to undergo any medical procedures or obtain any legal approvals in order to do so. Further, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment issued the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020; which explicitly recognize their right of self-identification.

b) Right to Healthcare

Transgender are entitled to access healthcare services on an equal basis with other citizens. This includes the right to receive medical treatment for gender dysphoria, as well as other health issues that may affect transgender persons disproportionately. In line with this, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 mandates that the government provide access to healthcare services for transgender individuals. This law also prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in healthcare settings.

c) Right to Education

Under the inclusive approach, transgender are entitled to equal access to education at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. Article 21-A of the Constitution providing for the right to free and compulsory education to all children between 6 to 14 years, includes transgender also. Additionally, the Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender includes gender identity and expression.

d) Right to Employment

Transgender are entitled to equal opportunities for employment, and are protected against discrimination at the workplace. Even the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 provide that all establishments shall ensure a safe environment and equal opportunities by incorporating infrastructure adjustments, recruitment, employment benefits and promotion. Besides, it is mandatory for all establishments to publish their Equal Opportunity Policy.

Through the above rights, the Court recognized them as “third gender” and directed the government to grant them full recognition in the eyes of law without any discrimination. Also, the court gave directions to the

government to operate separate HIV Zero-Surveillance Centers, make provision for separate public toilets, and provide appropriate medical care in hospitals for transgenders.

After this judgment, a Private Member Bill was introduced in Rajya Sabha by Mr. Tiruchi Siva in 2014 to guarantee rights and provide welfare measures for transgender persons and was passed in Rajya Sabha in 2015. In August 2016, the government introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 in Lok Sabha. This Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment. However, this Bill was criticized by transgender activists and organizations for its narrow definition of transgender identity and for its failure to provide adequate protection against discrimination and violence.

To meet the concerns expressed by the transgender activists, in 2018, the Bill was re-introduced in the Lok Sabha as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2018. This Bill provided for a wider definition of transgender identity and acknowledgment of the rights to self-perceived gender identity as the two major changes. However, this Bill was still criticised for failing to offer consequential protection, feeding negative pre-notions/pre-conceptions, and stigmatizing the transgender people.

In response to these criticisms, the Bill was revised and reintroduced in 2019 and was ultimately passed by the Parliament as the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and came into force on January 10, 2020. It recognized the right to self-perceived gender identity and prohibited discrimination against transgender individuals in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. However, it faced criticism from transgender activists for inadequate provisions for social welfare and affirmative action, and for lack of clarity on issues such as gender-affirming healthcare.

4.2 The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 is a legislation enacted by the Government of India to provide legal recognition and protection to transgender individuals. The law was passed on November

26, 2019, and came into effect on January 10, 2020. This law is a significant step towards improving the lives of transgender individuals in India.

4.2.1 Salient Features

Some of the main aspects covered by the law to promote the identity and restore the dignity of transgenders are:

a. **Legal recognition of transgender identity:** Section 4 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 provides legal recognition to transgender individuals, which is a crucial step towards restoring their dignity. The law defines a transgender person as someone whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It also mandates the issuance of a certificate of identity to transgender individuals, which enables them to access government schemes and services.

b. **Prohibition against discrimination:** Section 3 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 prohibits discrimination against transgender individuals in education, employment, healthcare, and other areas. This provision is significant as transgender individuals face systemic discrimination in various spheres of life. The law also provides for the establishment of a National Council for Transgender Persons under Section 16 to advise the government on issues related to transgender rights.

c. **Criminalization of offenses against transgender individuals:** Section 18 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 criminalizes offenses against transgender individuals, including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse. This provision is essential as transgender individuals are often subjected to violence and abuse. The law mandates imprisonment of up to two years and a fine for offenses committed against transgender individuals.

d. **Establishment of Welfare Boards:** The National Council for Transgender Persons was established in accordance with Section 16 of

the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 to carry out the following obligations:

- reviewing and coordinating the actions of all government departments and other governmental and non-governmental organisations that are handling issues pertaining to transgender people;
- providing advice to the Central Government on the creation of policies, programmes, legislation, and projects regarding transgender people;
- monitoring and assessing the effects of policies and programmes intended to achieve equality and full participation of transgender people;
- resolving the complaints of transgender people; and
- to perform such other functions as may be prescribed by the Central Government. at the state level to address the social, economic, and educational needs of transgender individuals.

These provisions are significant as transgender individuals face significant barriers in accessing education and employment opportunities, and are often excluded from social and economic activities.

4.3 Criticisms of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

Despite its noble intentions, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 has faced significant criticism from activists and members of the transgender community. One of the primary criticisms is that the law violates the right to self-determination of gender identity. The law mandates that transgender individuals obtain certification from a district magistrate before they can be recognized as transgender, which many view as a violation of their autonomy and privacy.

Another criticism is that the law fails to recognize the diverse identities of transgender individuals. The law defines transgender as an umbrella term, which includes transmen, transwomen, and intersex individuals. However,

it does not provide separate recognition or protection for each identity. This has led to concerns that the law does not adequately address the unique issues faced by each identity within the transgender community.

The law is also criticized for its failure to provide for reservations and affirmative action for transgender individuals in education and employment. Many activists argue that such provisions are essential to address the systemic discrimination faced by transgender individuals.

5. Judicial Pronouncements Post 2014: Imperatives and Implications

The Indian judiciary has played a crucial role in promoting the identity and restoring the dignity of transgender individuals in the country. The following are some notable instances when the court has stepped in to defend the rights of the transgender community following its ruling in *National Legal Services Authority* v. *Union of India*:

5.1 S. Swapna v. State of Tamil Nadu

The petitioner transitioned after being born a man by undergoing sex reassignment surgery in 2011. She filed a court application to ask that her name and gender be changed on her school records after the state denied her request, claiming that the rules in effect did not allow it. According to the court's order, "When a transgender undergoes sex reassignment surgery and submits an application for a change of name and sex on the basis of various documents, including the certificate issued by the Medical Officer, the concerned authorities are expected to verify the records and submit consequential changes in the concerned records." This order enabled transgender persons to register their gender identity in important documents, such as educational records. The court further stated that the authorities in a case of this nature must help transgender persons rather than denying these reliefs citing technical issues.

5.2 Arun Kumar v. Inspector General of Registration

The Madras High Court, in this judgment, expanded the definition of brides to include transwomen. Only men and women are included in the definition of marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. This ruling

broadens the definition of women to encompass transgender individuals who wish to marry and identify as women.

5.3 Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India

This case led to the legalisation of homosexuality in India. Several Public Interest Litigations brought by various LGBTQIA+ community organisations resulted in the Supreme Court's decision in this case.

The Bench invalidated Section 377 inasmuch as it made sexual activity between two consenting adults illegal. The Court affirmed the clause that makes non-consensual actions with children or animals illegal. Also, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 377 breaches Articles 14, 15, 16, and 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. It acknowledged that everyone has the right to live with dignity, autonomy, and privacy without interference from the government, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

5.4 Anjali Guru Sanjana Jaan v. State of Maharashtra & Ors.

In this case, the Bombay High Court noted that the petitioner for the Village Panchayat elections identified herself as a female while she was a transgender person and her application was denied. The petitioner's claim was approved by the court after it was decided that she had the right to self-identify her gender.

5.5 Nangai v. Superintendent of Police

In this case, the Madras High Court acknowledged that it is against Article 21 to force someone to undergo a gender-specific medical examination. It upheld the individual's right to self-identify as a particular gender.

5.6 Mx. Alia SK v. The State of West Bengal and Ors.

The court determined that transgender people had the right to apply for admission to institutions. The decision is significant because it clarified the role of courts in ensuring that, in the absence of any existing regulations, additional accommodations and changes are made to include transgender people in the application and admissions process of public universities.

5.7 Chinmayjee Jena v. State of Odisha

In this case, the Odisha High Court pronounced the country's first court ruling clearly recognising a trans-person's right to live with the partner of their choice, regardless of that partner's 'gender'.

In these cases, the courts have taken a strong stance on protecting the rights of transgender persons in India. Notably, many of these cases have resulted in court directives for the government to take specific actions to protect transgender rights, including providing access to employment, education, and medical treatment. The judgments in these cases reflect a growing recognition of the rights of transgender persons in India and a commitment to restoring their dignity.

6. Government Efforts To Promote Transgender Rights

Over the past few years, the Indian government has taken a number of initiatives to promote the rights of transgender persons and address the challenges they face. Some of the key policies and initiatives are:

6.1 The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020

In order to ensure the welfare and protection of transgender people in India, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 were introduced under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. These Rules provide for a range of welfare measures for transgender individuals, including the establishment of a National Council for Transgender Persons, which is tasked with monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the law (Act and Rules). These Rules also mandate the creation of separate HIV surveillance centers for transgender individuals, and require the inclusion of transgender individuals in all welfare schemes and programs offered by the government.

Overall, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 are an important step towards ensuring the welfare and protection of transgender individuals in India. However, there is still a need for greater awareness, sensitivity, and investment in ensuring that these Rules are effectively implemented, and that the rights and dignity of transgender individuals are

fully realized.

6.2 Scholarship Schemes

The Indian government has also introduced scholarship schemes for transgender students, aimed at promoting their education and career prospects. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated an umbrella scheme "SMILE - Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise", which includes two sub-schemes - 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons' and 'Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the act of Begging'.

6.3 Healthcare Initiatives

In order to meet transgender people's healthcare needs, the Indian government has also taken several measures. The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's National Health Authority (NHA) inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to offer transgender people an inclusive and comprehensive health package under Ayushman Bharat.-PMJAY.

6.4 Garima Greh Scheme for Transgender Persons

One of the components of the plan being developed for the welfare of transgender people by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the establishment of shelter homes for those who are homeless and in need.

These shelter homes would offer services like food, medical attention, and recreational facilities in addition to capacity-building and skill-development programmes. No pension programme is being implemented by this ministry. Nonetheless, the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), which is run by the Ministry of Rural Development, provides monthly pensions to 3,384 transgender people. The major goal is to give transgender people who are in need of it a safe and secure place to live.

6.5 Allowance for Transgender Person

The nodal ministry for transgender welfare, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, has agreed to immediately support each transgender person by giving them a subsistence payment of Rs. 1500 to cover their basic needs. The transgender community will be better able to meet their basic needs due to this financial support. It is recommended that the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community-based Organisations (CBOs) supporting transgender individuals raise awareness of this deed.

7. International Scenario

The legal frameworks for transgender persons vary significantly across different countries. While some countries have recognized the rights of transgender persons and implemented laws and policies to protect them, others have failed to do so, leading to significant discrimination and marginalization.

7.1 United States of America

The legal framework for transgender persons in the United States has evolved significantly over the past few decades. While there is no federal law protecting the rights of transgender persons, several states and cities have implemented laws and policies to protect them. For example, legislation prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity in public facilities, housing, and employment has been put into effect in California, New York, and Washington, D.C. The Affordable Care Act also prohibits discrimination based on gender identity in healthcare. Additionally, the Supreme Court of the United States has recognized the right of transgender persons to marry and has held that discrimination based on gender identity is a form of sex discrimination.

7.2 Canada

Canada has implemented several laws and policies to safeguard the rights of transgender persons. The Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and expression, and the Criminal Code of Canada includes hate crimes based on gender identity or

expression as an aggravating factor that can increase the severity of a sentence. This means that if a crime is motivated by hatred or prejudice against a person's gender identity or expression, the offender may face a harsher punishment.

7.3 Pakistan

Several laws and policies are implemented by Pakistan to protect the rights of transgender persons, including the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, which recognizes the right to self-identification and prohibits discrimination based on gender identity. Additionally, the Pakistani government has implemented policies to promote transgender rights, including the provision of education and employment opportunities.

In comparison to these countries, the legal framework for transgender persons in India has been relatively limited. While the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 recognizes the rights of transgender persons and prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, it has been criticized for being inadequate and for failing to fully recognize the rights of transgender persons. Additionally, transgender persons in India continue to face significant discrimination and marginalization, particularly in healthcare, education, and employment.

8. Conclusion

The Supreme Court’s pronouncement in the case of *National Legal Services Authority* v. *Union of India* offered new hope to transgender people who had long endured discrimination and social injustice on a huge scale while suffering in silence. While it is unrealistic to expect that this ruling will completely transform society’s attitude towards transgender people, it is a positive first step towards redressing centuries of injustices against this community. There is still a long way to go before transgender people are granted equal rights in socio-religious and socio-political spheres; in the meantime, they are still either crutching in the mainstream society or outcasts that live on the outer edge.

In terms of legal frameworks, India's transgender rights laws have come a long way in recent years, with the enactment of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. However, some critics have argued that the law falls short of international standards and does not adequately protect the rights of transgender persons. Comparing the legal framework for transgender rights in India with those of other countries shows that while some countries have more comprehensive legal protections, many still lag behind in recognizing transgender rights. The global movement for transgender rights is still evolving, and there is a need for continuous advocacy and legal reforms to ensure that transgender persons get the respect and dignity they deserve.

Overall, the challenges faced by transgender persons in India are significant and require sustained efforts from the government, civil society, and individuals to address. It is essential to recognize the inter-sectional struggles and take a holistic approach that includes legal protections, access to services, and social acceptance. The fight for transgender rights in India is ongoing, and it is essential to continue the inclusive momentum towards greater equality to promote identity and restore dignity for all.

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Perception of Teachers About Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Schools

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Abstract

Children with special needs have long been excluded from mainstream education, but in recent decades, there has been a push towards inclusion. Inclusion involves each and everyone irrespective of their race, gender, religion, disability etc. Inclusive Education means educating children with and without disabilities together in the same classroom, with students receiving individualised support as needed. Inclusive Education is the fundamental right of every child and should not be seen as a privilege. For executing Inclusive Education programs, teachers play a critical role in ensuring that students with special needs receive appropriate educational opportunities alongside their typically developing peers. To do so, teachers must be empathetic towards children with special needs and a believer in inclusion. But sometimes, there are significant discrepancies in what teachers feel they know about Inclusive Education, what they really know, and how they act in the classroom. Teachers' perceptions about inclusion can influence the implementation of Inclusive Educational practices. Their perceptions can be influenced by various factors such as prior experiences, training, support, and attitudes towards disability. In the present study, the researcher tried to analyse the preceptions of teachers about the inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms. In addition to that, recommendations were made for better implementation of Inclusive Education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Children with Special Needs, Perceptions, Teachers, Mainstream

Introduction

For many years, the integration of children with special needs into the education system has been a topic of discussion as there has been a shift towards a new model of education that entails the education of children with disabilities and learning difficulties alongside those without such challenges. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2005) defines Inclusive Education "as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education". As per the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." It is estimated that there are approximately 240 million children worldwide who are living with disabilities (UNICEF 2021). Based on the 2011 census, it has been estimated that around 2.04 million children in India, accounting for approximately 7.62% of the total population, are living with disabilities. Such data highlights the significant number of children who require specialised care and support to navigate their daily lives and reach their full potential. It is important to recognise that these children face unique challenges and to work towards creating a more inclusive society that values and accommodates their diverse abilities.

Inclusion means accepting and celebrating individual differences and promoting harmony. In education, being inclusive means integrating all students, regardless of their unique characteristics, in a single classroom (Dey and Bika 2023). This enhances the learning experience for everyone by fostering diverse perspectives and ways of thinking. Internationally, Inclusive Education has gained widespread recognition. Inclusive Education has its roots in the efforts of parents of disabled children residing in the Global North. These parents, who were dissatisfied with the unfair and substandard educational opportunities provided to their children via separate special education services, took up the challenge to demand a

more inclusive and equitable approach to education (Thomas and Vaughn 2004). Their tireless advocacy and activism have resulted in significant progress towards providing education that caters to the needs of all students, regardless of their abilities.

Drawing inspiration from social justice concepts, the Convention on the Rights of the Children (UN 1989), and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994), numerous nations have established policies and put into effect practices that aim to advance Inclusive Education. India committed itself to the development of an inclusive approach to education as a signatory to the Salamanca statement. The philosophy of Inclusive Education was introduced to district primary education in 1997. This approach aimed to tackle issues surrounding the curriculum, such as identifying factors that limit certain children's access to it and implementing modifications to improve accessibility. Inclusive Education is an attempt to provide special services (i.e., special curriculum, aids and infrastructure) for CWSN in the least confined manner. In 2000, India's National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) underwent a significant shift in ideology. The concept of integration was replaced with a more inclusive approach of inclusion. The NCFSE, which was developed by the NCERT, called for Inclusive schools that cater to all learners, offering them quality education (Julka, 2006). The goal of this Inclusive Education (IE) approach was to create a more equitable and accessible education system that would benefit all students, regardless of their background or abilities.

In recent years, Inclusive Education has expanded, encompassing all disadvantaged students, not just those with disabilities. This understanding has led to the development of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005), which emphasises the importance of including and retaining all children in school. The program reaffirms the value of each child, instilling dignity and confidence in all students so that they have the opportunity to learn.

The concept of Inclusive Education (IE) is a comprehensive approach to cater varied requirements of all learners. This approach entails the

elimination of obstacles both within the learning environment and outside it. Essentially, it involves enrolling a child in a local school that is age-appropriate and providing them with bespoke assistance tailored to their individual needs. To ensure inclusivity in schools, all teachers need to be prepared to teach all students. It is absolutely crucial that educators become fully aware of this perplexing issue if we are to ensure the success of all students. Without a doubt, if teachers were more receptive to inclusion, we would see a significant increase in student achievement, socialisation, skill acquisition, and access to education for students with disabilities (Newton et al., 2014).

Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

World Bank Group (2020) India's educational system has made progress, but there are still challenges to providing equal education. One of the biggest obstacles to Inclusive Education in India is the negative perceptions towards students with special needs, learning difficulties, and disabilities. By shifting to Inclusive Education, there is a change in the attitudes of teachers. Many believe that inclusive classrooms benefit both students with and without disabilities. Some teachers may hold certain perceptions towards their inclusion which stem from practical considerations on how it can be effectively implemented rather than ideological arguments (Warnock et al., 2010). Teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education vary across countries (Sharma et al., 2022). The perceptions of teachers in India towards Inclusive Education progress can be influenced by various factors. According to research, teachers in non-western countries tend to have a more negative attitude towards Inclusive Education. However, there are several variables that can determine whether a teacher has a positive, negative or neutral attitude towards Inclusive Education (Shaikh et al., 2023). Several factors can affect a teacher's performance, including their age, gender, qualification, experience, and exposure to people with disabilities. Kumar and Midha (2017) have investigated the impact of age on teaching effectiveness, while Dash et al., (2019) and Parsuram (2006) looked into the role of gender. Qualification has also been shown to be an important factor, as

suggested by Bansal (2016) and Parsuram (2006). Finally, years of experience have been found to influence a teacher's performance (Kumar, 2016).

Perceptions among teachers towards the inclusion of children with special needs (CWSN) can be broadly categorised into positive, negative, or mixed perspectives. Approximately two-third of the teachers expressed a generally favourable attitude towards mainstreaming CWSN (Scruggs and Mastropieri 1996). However, a lower percentage of teachers were willing actually to implement Inclusive Education practices within their own classrooms. Wiggins (2012) found that there is a noteworthy correlation between the perceptions of high school teachers regarding inclusion and the classroom environment. The findings showed that teachers who possess prior experience of teaching in inclusive classrooms hold more favourable perceptions towards Inclusive Education as compared to those who lack such experience. Moreover, teachers have a favourable view regarding the interaction of students with their classmates who have disabilities. Teachers admitted that students, in general, have limited knowledge about the capabilities and restrictions of their peers with disabilities (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2021).

During COVID-19, both elementary and secondary school teachers had favourable viewpoints regarding mainstreaming CWSN in regular classrooms (Khan et al., 2023). Teachers found online learning helpful during the pandemic period. But challenges like poor communication, interaction, motivation, parent support, technology, and the internet limit its effectiveness (Rahayu and Wirza 2020). Kumar (2016), aimed to delve into the attitudes of both university and school teachers regarding Inclusive Education. After thorough analysis, it was revealed that the university instructors exhibited a more favourable outlook towards Inclusive Education in comparison to their counterparts in the school setting. Ali et al., (2006), teachers have exhibited a positive outlook towards the implementation of Inclusive Education programmes. Nevertheless, certain facets require enhancement, such as the cooperation between mainstream and special education teachers, along with the need

for better training programmes for regular teachers to cater to students with special needs effectively. Also, female educators exhibited a higher degree of positive disposition towards the concept of inclusion as compared to their male counterparts (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2021). Additionally, it is highly important to both maintain and broaden the scope of teacher training programs, as the enhancement of Inclusive Education is still in its early stages of development (Sowiyah and Perdana 2022).

Incorporating students with disabilities into mainstream education can present challenges when negative attitudes towards inclusion persist among teachers. Inclusive Education is challenging and many countries struggle to provide it, negatively affecting students who need extra support (Mngo and Mngo 2018). These perceptions may create obstacles that impede the success of Inclusive Education initiatives (Cawley et al., 2002), which can stem from a variety of factors, many of which are rooted in misconceptions, lack of training, and insufficient support (Lyra et al., 2023). Research studies have demonstrated that the mindset of teachers is the most significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive classroom practices. There have been instances where educators have encountered challenges when it comes to providing tailored education to their students. Mainstream schools with preferential schooling exhibit a lower level of preceptions among teachers that takes into account the unique characteristics of each student (Rosado-Castellano, 2022). Despite the best intentions of educational institutions to provide equal opportunities to all students, negative attitudes towards diversity and inclusivity from teachers can hinder progress and ultimately hinder the attainment of intended results (Carrington et al., 2018). Earlier studies have revealed that there exists a noteworthy and adverse connection between the attitudes and apprehensions of teachers. To elaborate, a study conducted in Thailand encompassing 702 in-service educators highlighted that those who displayed a favourable outlook towards Inclusive Education had a lower level of concern regarding the same, and those with a negative attitude exhibited a higher degree of concern (Forlin 2011). Teachers with unfavourable attitudes held the belief that pupils with

disabilities would be more suitably placed in specialised institutions (Parey 2021). The detrimental attitudes of teachers towards inclusion severely impact both their teaching effectiveness and the learning process of students, thus hindering Inclusive Education's success (Bih 2022). Nel et al., (2014) revealed that a significant obstacle to the successful implementation of inclusive pedagogies in classrooms is the insufficient training and expertise of teachers in this area. As a consequence, policies aimed at promoting inclusivity often fail to achieve their intended objectives.

Objectives

The objectives of the present paper are as follows:

- To find out the perceptions of teachers about the inclusion of children with special needs in the school education system.
- To develop pertinent suggestions for the better implementation of Inclusive Education in schools.

Research Methodology

The present research is quantitative in nature. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 40 Government teachers in Chandigarh based on their designation, i.e. Nursery Teacher Training (NTT), Junior Basic Training (JBT), Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT), Postgraduate Trained Teachers (PGT). Ten teachers were selected from each designation, i.e., 10-NTT, 10-JBT, 10-TGT, and 10-PGT. The targeted population was selected based on two primary criteria, i.e. a minimum of three years of experience in teaching and a minimum of two or more teacher training programmes attended on Inclusive Education. The interview schedule was used to collect the data.

Profile of the Respondents

For the present research, it is necessary to understand the demographic profile of the respondents, and it has been analysed in terms of teachers' age, gender, designation, year of service and training programmes attended.

Table 1
Profile of the respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Age (in years)		
25-30	6	15
30-35	9	22.5
35-40	9	22.5
40-45	10	25
45 & above	6	15
Gender		
Female	30	75
Male	10	25
Designation		
NTT	10	25
JBT	10	25
TGT	10	25
PGT	10	25
Year of service		
Up to 10 years	16	40
11-20 years	18	45
21 years & more	6	15
Training Programmes attended		
2	26	65
3-5	8	20
6 & more	6	15

The total number of respondents was 40 for each category/characteristic, i.e. age, gender, designation, year of service and training programmes attended.

For the present study, it is important to obtain information about the age of teachers as this will indicate their degree of maturity in managing CWSN in an Inclusive Education system. The variable age was divided into five categories, i.e., 25-30, 30-35, 35-40, 40-45 and 45 above. Most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 40 – 45, i.e. 25 percent. There was a relatively equal distribution of respondents within the 30-35 and 35-40 age groups, i.e., 22.5 percent in each category. The remaining two age categories, i.e., 25-30 and 45 above, have 15 percent of respondents each. It shows that most of the teachers had a high level of maturity, which is most needed in handling children. The gender of the teachers revealed that there was 75 percent of females and only 25 percent of males who took part in this research. This shows that teaching is still considered a female role in a patriarchal society, with the predominance of female teachers.

Designation of the respondents depicts that an equal number of respondents were taken according to their designation, i.e. 25 percent of NTT, JBT, TGT and PGT, for the purpose of this research study as it reveals the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with CWSN at different levels of schooling while mainstreaming them. It is evident that 45 percent of teachers had experience ranging from 11- 20 years, followed by 40 percent of the teachers who had up to 10 years of experience, and only 15 percent of teachers had experienced more than 21 years. It reveals that teachers had good teaching experience in Inclusive Education.

The majority of the teachers, i.e. 65 percent, had attended a minimum of two training programmes conducted by the government on Inclusive Education. Whereas 20 percent of the respondents had participated in 3-5 training programmes, and only 15 percent of respondents had attended more than six training programmes. It clearly depicts that teachers were well aware of the concept of Inclusive Education and knew about the educational and special needs of the children while mainstreaming them in regular classrooms.

Results

To achieve the first objective of the study, i.e. the perceptions of teachers about the inclusion of children with special needs in the school education system, the outcomes of the analysis were assessed by considering three specific questions, which are detailed below.

1. What is Inclusive Education?
    - **It is dedicated to enhancing the learning outcomes of every student, regardless of ability.**
    - tailored instruction and established high expectations for achievement for children with exceptional needs.
    - committed to particular to enhancing the educational results of children with exceptional needs.
    - determine a student's educational needs based on their disability.

    (the sentence written in bold is the correct option for the above-asked question.)
2. Is the integration of students with special needs into the regular classroom required? (yes/no)
3. Does the academic performance of students in mainstream classrooms suffer when children with special needs are enrolled in regular classes? (yes/no)

Below given, Table 2 provides a detailed explanation of the responses of teachers regarding Question 1 i.e. what is Inclusive Education?

Table 2

Number of teachers with their response to the meaning of Inclusive Education.

	Teachers with Designation									
Question	**NTT**		**JBT**		**TGT**		**PGT**		**TOTAL**	
	R(%)	W(%)	R(%)	W(%)	R(%)	W(%)	R(%)	W(%)	R(%)	W(%)
what is an Inclusive Education?	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	8 (20%)	2 (5%)	8 (20%)	2 (5%)	26 (65%)	14 (35%)
Total	10		10		10		10		40	

* Percentage (%) = Right (R) or wrong (W)/total number of respondents (40)*100

Despite having at least three years of teaching experience and at least two Inclusive Education training programmes, only 26 respondents, i.e. 65 percent attempted right answer for what Inclusive Education is. Whereas, 14 respondents i.e., 35 percent gave the wrong answer to the question asked. It clearly shows that these respondents do not have a conceptual understanding of Inclusive Education. Based on the table provided, it appears that a greater number of Trained Graduate Teachers (TGT) and Post-Graduate Teachers (PGT) have a better understanding of Inclusive Education compared to the respondents having Nursery Teacher Training (NTT) and Junior Basic Training (JBT) teachers. Perhaps some of the possible explanations for misunderstanding the concept of Inclusive Education could be insufficient teacher training i.e., all these teachers (JBT, NTT, PGT, TGT) practicing inclusion policy in classroom don't have bachelors in special education. Also, there is a lack of complete coverage of inclusive education topic in the seminars and training sessions, leaving them with inadequate information on the concept. It was found that only a small group of educators, namely resource teachers or CWSN in-charge, were getting benefit from the training on Inclusive Education as it was only compulsory for them. This disparity in Inclusive

Education training opportunities may be contributing to a lack of awareness and understanding of implementing Inclusive Education practices effectively.

To know about the perceptions of teachers, two research questions were used related to Children with Special Needs. The first question emphasised teachers' perceptions of integration of Children with Special Needs into the regular classroom as it is of paramount importance. When teachers view it positively, they are more likely to embrace an inclusive environment which will benefit not only Children with special needs but also their typically developing peers. Conversely, negative perceptions can be barrier to effective education for Children with Special Needs.

Below given, Table 3 provides detailed explanation of the responses of teachers regarding Question 2 i.e. Is the integration of students with special needs into the regular classrooms required?

Table 3

Number of teachers with their responses on the requirement of integration of students with special needs into the regular classroom.

	Teachers with Designation									
Question	**NTT**		**JBT**		**TGT**		**PGT**		**TOTAL**	
	Y(%)	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**
Is the integration of students with special needs into the regular classrooms required?	2 (5%)	8 (20%)	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	16 (40%)	24 (60%)
Total	**10**		**10**		**10**		**10**		**40**	

*Percentage (%) = (number of yes (Y) or no (N) /total number of respondents) *100

Question 2 Is the integration of Children with Special Needs into the regular classroom required?

Teachers were surveyed regarding their perspective on the requirement of the integration of Children with special needs into regular classrooms. Of the total 40, 16, i.e. 40 percent, teachers were affirmative about including children with special needs in regular classrooms. A consensus was reached among certain teachers that implementing Inclusive Education practices can lead to increased social interaction and inclusion among students. This, in turn, can help to reduce negative stereotypes and stigma surrounding those with special needs. But, the majority of the teachers, i.e. 24(60 percent), depicted a negative preceptions about integrating children with special needs in the regular classroom. There is a prevailing belief among some individuals that the inclusion of children with special needs into standard classrooms may present a greater workload for educators and potentially have adverse effects on the learning experience of other students.

Here are some of the narratives of respondents who opted for 'yes' to the mentioned question.

To make sure of the anonymity of the participants, letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I have been used by the researcher.

Teacher A - "Students with disabilities benefit greatly from Inclusive Education as they get more indulged in peer contact and activities."

Teacher B- "My student with an orthopaedic disability in class 12th scored 75% in non-medical. I have seen a drastic change in that girl. Earlier, she was really shy and didn't talk to anybody around, and after some time, she became really confident and didn't hesitate to take help from her class fellows."

Teacher C- " I believe that it is necessary to integrate CWSN (children with special needs) in regular classrooms for their personal growth. Also, providing enough facilities for children with unique educational needs would be really beneficial."

Teacher D- “It is the essential thing to do for children with special needs as I myself have gone through this situation.”

The success story of a Visually Impaired Teacher (Teacher D) is a regularly employed teacher who is having double master’s degree and works as a social science teacher with full dedication and gets support from colleagues wherever required. She told the researcher that when she was in a blind school, she did learn many things but was conscious of her disability. She was full of fear before entering a normal college, but later she entered, she learned so many things and really learned to get along with people and her complexes about her condition were resolved. She felt that inclusive schools would help CWSN in different ways as they get accustomed to a life with other people and learn many things. It motivates them to do better. She suggested that braille training should also be there for visually impaired students in Govt. schools. Her story serves as a motivation for other parents to provide a conducive environment to grow and be in the mainstream system.

Below are some of the responses from individuals who answered 'no' to the question mentioned.

Teacher E - “Due to the enormous class size, traditional teaching methods sometimes fail to fulfil the special needs of children.”

Teacher F - “These children cannot cope with normal children. Inclusion of such students depends on the severity of the disability.”

Teacher G - “Students with intellectual disability should be enrolled in special schools because they hinder class decorum by disturbing other students.”

Teacher H- “Mai CWSN bacho ko parhane mai trained nhi hu aur na hi mujhme itni patience hai”

(Translation): I’m not trained in educating CWSN, nor do I have that much patience.

Teacher I- “Inclusive Education ke karn work load aur bhi zada hogya hai, it would be better CWSN ke liye separate schools and special educators ho”

(Translation): Inclusive Education has increased our workload; it would be better that CWSN should be enrolled to separate schools and have special educators.

Below given, Table 4 provides detailed explanation of the responses of teachers regarding Question 3 i.e. the academic performance of students in mainstream classrooms suffer when students with special needs are enrolled in regular classes.

Table 4

Number of teachers with their responses on the Impact on performance of students in mainstream classrooms by inclusion of students with special needs

	Teachers with Designation									
Question	**NTT**		**JBT**		**TGT**		**PGT**		**TOTAL**	
	Y(%)	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**	**Y(%)**	**N(%)**
Does the academic performance of students in mainstream classrooms suffer when students with special needs are enrolled in regular classes?	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	22 (55%)	18 (45%)
Total	**10**		**10**		**10**		**10**		**40**	

*Percentage (%) = (number of yes or no /total number of respondents) *100

Question 2 Does the academic performance of students in mainstream classrooms suffer when children with special needs are enrolled in regular classes?

To get insight into the preceptions of teachers, the second question emphasised teachers' viewpoint on the inclusion of Children with special needs in regular classrooms and the effect on the academic performance of their peers. Some teachers may believe that inclusive education has the potential to benefit all students. Conversely, some teachers may express concerns about potential disruptions of other students. It is important to note that such perceptions are not uniform, and personal experiences, training, and the specific context of the classroom can influence them.

In the analysis of the question, it came to light that most teachers, 22 i.e. 55 percent were of the conviction that the enrollment of children with special needs has a negative effect on the academic performance of other students. Students with special educational needs may require additional support and attention from teachers, which can impact the overall classroom dynamic. In some cases, this may lead to a lower standard of education for all students and potential distractions for those without special needs. In comparison, 18 i.e.45 percent of teachers believed that the academic performance of normal students does not get affected by the mainstreaming of children with special needs. These respondents believed that Inclusive Education is a more adaptable approach which could have positive effects on all children.

Narratives of respondents who opted for ‘Yes’ to the mentioned question.

To make sure of the anonymity of the participants, the letters J, K, L, M, and N have been used by the researcher.

Teacher J- “A student of 1st standard having Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder(ADHD) scratches her fellow classmates sitting near her, and if I make her sit alone, then she scratches the desk and starts making sounds which bother other kids.”

Teacher K- “Intellectually disabled bacho ko alag school mai admission dena chahiye ”

(Translation): Intellectually disabled students should be admitted to separate schools

Teacher L-“CWSN class ke aur bacho ko bhi disturb krte hai, government jitne funds CWSN pe spend krti hai agr vahi normal bacho pe kre toh zada faida hoga”

(Translation): CWSN disturbs other children in class; the amount of funds the government spends on CWSN should have been spent on normal students; it would have been more beneficial.

Narratives of respondents who opted for ‘No’ to the mentioned question.

Teacher M- “I think Inclusive Education is a great initiative for kids to learn from their peers and for teachers to share their knowledge.”

Teacher N - “I believe that Inclusive Education should be for less severe disabilities (mild hearing impairment, low vision, limited mobility) so that it can be more effective."

Based on the responses, it was found that most teachers had negative perceptions of integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms. Many teachers believe that mainstreaming children with special needs is not necessary. Furthermore, a prevalent belief among teachers is that the inclusion of students with special needs may negatively impact the academic performance of mainstream students.

Discussion

The present research is of great importance as it contributes significantly to our overall understanding of how teachers perceive students with special needs. The study delved into the fundamental concepts related to Inclusive Education, examining the teachers' attitudes towards this approach. The study revealed negative perceptions of teachers towards the inclusion of children with special needs. The inclusion of special needs

children in schools and classrooms heavily relies on the attitudes and perceptions of teachers. They play a key role in practicing inclusiveness in schools. However, there are numerous factors that can affect inclusive education, such as poor implementation of policies, negative societal perceptions, infrastructure barriers, and limited job opportunities in the future.

According to the feedback obtained on the subject of inclusive education, it was discovered that in-service government school teachers are not adequately equipped to cater to the needs of children with special needs. This is attributed to the fact that only those specifically in-charge of such children are the ones who attend training sessions. There is a shortage of special educators in government schools, as they only visit on a weekly basis. It's not just a matter of teacher preceptions but also the government's failure to appoint special educators in every school. The respondents think that their sole effort as a teacher is not enough to bring a change in the scenario. To improve this, there should be a greater focus on practical learning instead of just theoretical training. Additionally, only students with less severe disabilities should be enrolled in regular schools, as teachers may not be able to provide appropriate attention to all students.

Suggestions by the Researcher

1. It is strongly recommended that all educators possessing a professional degree in education should also do a degree course on Inclusive Education. This would not only enhance their skills and knowledge but also ensure that they are equipped to provide an inclusive learning environment for all students.
2. For inclusive schools to better serve children with disabilities, it is crucial for regular teachers and other specialists to work together collaboratively in order to improve instruction and service provision.
3. It is necessary to arrange training programmes for teachers to assist them in managing the behavioural challenges that children with

special needs frequently encounter.

4. Having a special educator in every school is absolutely essential. Furthermore, it is equally crucial to arrange monthly training and meetings for both teachers and parents. This will ensure that everyone is well-informed about the unique needs of children and can actively contribute to their successful integration into society.
5. It would be beneficial for the government to implement skill development programs for children with special needs (CWSN). Many students may struggle with traditional academic studies but possess talents and abilities in other areas. By providing opportunities for them to develop these skills, they can potentially earn a livelihood and improve their overall quality of life.

Conclusion

The findings uncovered a concerning trend, with a significant number of teachers displaying a lack of knowledge regarding Inclusive Education. Furthermore, a considerable portion of the teachers held a negative attitude towards Inclusive Education, believing that the academic progress of regular students might get affected due to the inclusion of students with special needs. However, it is imperative to address this issue as the role of teachers in the successful implementation of Inclusive Education cannot be overstated. To ensure academic success and cater to the diverse needs of all students, creating a suitable learning environment and fostering positive perceptions among the teachers towards Inclusive Education is crucial.

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Unemployed Women and their State of Dependency: A Sociological Scenario

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Abstract

In the border belt regions, the dependency of educated unemployed females on their families is deeply rooted in a complex interplay of socio-economic factors and cultural norms. These areas often face challenges such as underdevelopment and instability due to their proximity to border zones, resulting in limited job opportunities for women despite their academic qualifications. The absence of industries or businesses exacerbates this issue, making it difficult for women to secure suitable employment. Additionally, entrenched cultural norms and traditional gender roles discourage women from pursuing careers outside the home, particularly in conservative communities where familial duties take precedence over individual aspirations. Consequently, educated unemployed women often rely on their families for financial support and sustenance, perpetuating a cycle of economic vulnerability. This dependency not only strains family resources but also limits women's autonomy and decision-making power within their households, reinforcing existing gender dynamics. Moreover, the lack of targeted support structures or initiatives further compounds the problem, leaving women without avenues for empowerment or economic inclusion. The unfolding job crisis in India unfolds against the backdrop of a nuanced historical context, prompting a critical examination of unemployment as both a personal plight and a national issue. Beyond merely determining one's income, an individual's job plays a profound role in shaping their social status. It becomes a linchpin influencing familial, societal, and interpersonal relationships. In the case of women, especially those who have pursued higher education, the dearth of employment opportunities poses a particularly acute challenge. Faced with the absence

of job prospects, societal pressures, emanating from parents and relatives, often coerce these educated women into premature marriages. Financial dependencies fuel this coercive trend, as these women find themselves relying on their families for economic support in the absence of gainful employment. This paper is based on primary data and it endeavors to delve into the specific circumstances surrounding unemployed women in the border area of Punjab, aiming to illuminate the intricate web of challenges they face and the extent of their reliance on familial support structures. By unraveling the complex interplay between education, unemployment, and societal expectations, a comprehensive understanding of the plight of these women and the broader implications for the socio-economic landscape can be gained.

Keywords: Unemployment, Youth, Socio-economic Condition, Demographic Dividend and Border Area.

"There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing".

Swami Vivekananda

Introduction

Employment stands as the foundation of economic activity, enabling individuals to actively contribute to and benefit from societal productivity across various sectors like manufacturing, healthcare, finance, and technology. Employment contracts outline the terms under which individuals provide their skills and time, covering aspects like working hours, compensation, benefits, and performance expectations. Whether employed in corporations, small businesses, government, or as entrepreneurs, people depend on employment for financial stability, professional growth, and social integration. Beyond financial support, employment fosters a sense of purpose and belonging, driving both personal and community well-being. Moreover, it's pivotal for economic development, innovation, and societal advancement by leveraging the

diverse talents of the workforce. In our society, engaging in paid employment serves as a significant means of integrating individuals into various societal dimensions. Unlike other activities, it symbolically represents a person's complete involvement and belonging to society, regardless of the level of personal satisfaction derived from the work itself. From an economic perspective, the ability to earn income and possess personal financial resources distinguishes an individual from those who rely on the efforts of others or state support for their sustenance. Regardless of whether the nature of the work is deemed socially beneficial, the mere act of being employed signifies an individual's status as an independent and capable member of society (Allan, 1985). Securing employment plays a vital role in reducing poverty and elevating the status of women. Nevertheless, the empowerment and liberation that employment can offer are contingent upon it presenting women with the chance to enhance their well-being and develop their capabilities (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010).

Unemployment and Dependency

The lack of job opportunities leads to unemployment, which occurs when someone actively looks for work but can't find any due to different reasons. Unemployment has substantial effects on both individuals and society. Harris & Levenly (1975) in their view that unemployment "is a condition of one who is able to work but unable to find it". Unemployment poses a significant challenge for educated young people, as the pool of recent graduates seeking employment expands, leading to increased competition for limited job openings and longer wait times to secure employment. Drèze and Sen (2005) contend that economic poverty, marked by insufficient income, imposes substantial constraints on individuals' lives, curtailing their freedom to engage in vital activities that hold personal significance. They stress that poverty extends beyond mere material deprivation, impeding individuals' capacity to pursue a meaningful and satisfying existence. In India during the first half of the decade, there was significant debate surrounding the sharp decline in overall employment growth. Between 2000-2005 and 2005-2012, the rate dropped dramatically from

around 12 million annually to approximately 2 million annually. This substantial decrease was primarily attributed to a reduction in agricultural employment and a notable rise in secondary and tertiary education enrollment for both genders (Mehrotra and Parida, 2019).

Dependency in society refers to the intricate connections and reliance between individuals, groups, and institutions. It acknowledges that no one exists in isolation, with everyone's well-being tied to others within the larger social framework. For instance, economic dependency highlights how people depend on jobs, financial aid, and public services for support and progress. Social dependency emphasizes the role of relationships and community bonds in offering emotional backing and a sense of belonging. Societal structures also influence dependency patterns, affecting access to essential services like education and healthcare.

The complex interplay between dependency and unemployment among educated women is deeply rooted in a multitude of societal, economic, and individual factors. At the outset, despite possessing the requisite qualifications and skills, educated women often encounter formidable barriers in securing suitable employment opportunities. This predicament arises due to pervasive gender discrimination in hiring practices, disparities in educational attainment and training access, and a stark misalignment between their qualifications and the available job market. Consequently, many educated women find themselves unable to attain gainful employment, leading to a precarious reliance on their families for financial sustenance. This reliance is exacerbated by societal expectations and cultural norms that continue to uphold traditional gender roles, which prioritize women's roles as caregivers and homemakers over their pursuit of professional careers. Consequently, even women with higher education may feel compelled to prioritize familial duties over career aspirations, thereby perpetuating their financial dependency on family members. Moreover, structural obstacles further compound the challenges faced by educated women in entering and remaining in the workforce. The dearth of accessible and affordable childcare facilities, coupled with inflexible work

arrangements, often leaves women grappling with the daunting task of balancing professional commitments with familial responsibilities. In the absence of adequate support systems to facilitate this delicate equilibrium, many educated women are forced to make the difficult choice between foregoing employment opportunities altogether or settling for part-time or low-paying jobs that fail to provide financial independence. This cycle of dependency and unemployment not only takes a toll on individual women but also perpetuates broader economic inequalities within families and communities. Financial dependence undermines women's agency and decision-making power, relegating them to subordinate roles within the family structure. Moreover, the strain imposed on families to support unemployed women diminishes overall household resources, stifling opportunities for economic mobility and perpetuating a cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Female participation in the labour force (Labour Force Participation Rate is defined as the percentage of persons in labour force i.e. working or seeking or available for work in the population) and their access to fair employment opportunities are crucial for fostering inclusive and sustainable development within a nation. At a broader level, increased female participation in the workforce positively impacts the economy. In India, there has been a noticeable growth in the rate of women joining the labor force over the years, although it still lags behind the global average. However, it's important to acknowledge the numerous socio-economic factors that hinder women's participation in the labor force. Despite progress, women face various barriers such as limited access to employment, unequal opportunities, poor working conditions, job insecurity, wage disparities, discrimination, and the challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities.

As per Census 2011, the final population of India is 1210.57 million (excluding the estimated population of 3 sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur) comprising 587.45 million (48.5%) females and 623.12 million (51.5%) males. The sex ratio (number of females per 1000 males) at the

national level is 943. The rural sex ratio is 949 and the urban is 929. Among the States, Kerala at 1084 has the highest sex ratio followed by Puducherry at 1037. Daman and Diu have the lowest sex ratio of 618 in the country. In the age-group 0-6 years, the share of the female child population is 47.9 per cent of the total child population in that age-group. There are 78.75 million girl children in the age group 0-6 years, 95.55 million in the age-group 11-18 years, and 234.58 million in the age-group 0-19 years. Women constitute 48.5 per cent of the total population in our country, and their role in the development of the Indian economy cannot be overlooked. Women make up a significant portion of the labor force in India, and their participation in the workforce is steadily on the rise. Approximately one-third of the total workers in India are women, totaling 123 million out of 397 million workers. These women are often found in lower-income roles, engaged in various activities as casual wage workers or home-based workers, contributing 31 per cent to the overall workforce. Among poor workers, women make up 36 per cent. While women's participation in various sectors like education, sports, politics, media, arts and culture, service industries, science, and technology has increased since independence, they still face challenges such as unequal wages, lack of dignified treatment, and violence. Despite progress, there is a disparity in recognizing and valuing the contributions of women in these fields. In the agricultural sector, 19 per cent of women workers are engaged in various activities. Over the years, there has been a notable increase in women's work participation in rural areas, rising from 38.50 to 47.8 per cent. The significant contribution of women in agricultural activities has been particularly noteworthy. However, despite these positive trends, women's progress continues to be hindered by issues such as unequal treatment and violence.

Profile of Punjab

Punjab, located in the northern region of India, is predominantly inhabited by farmers. With a population of 27.7 million and covering an area of 50,362 square kilometers, the state's sex ratio, at 891 compared to the national average of 904 (2017-19), is lower, with urban areas showing

improvements due to factors such as increased literacy, better healthcare, and awareness campaigns. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) in Punjab is below the national average, with rates of 19.4 per cent in rural and 17.1 per cent in urban areas, compared to the national figures of 27.7 per cent. Punjab boasts a commendable literacy rate of 75.8 per cent, surpassing the national average of 72.9 per cent according to the 2011 Census. However, there remains a gender disparity in literacy, with 80.5 per cent for men and 70.7 per cent for women, aligning closely with the national figures of 80.9 per cent for men and 64.7 per cent for women. In urban areas, the usual situation remains that most women have access to regular employment, while in rural areas, women predominantly engage in self-employment, aligning with national patterns. The percentage of women in regular employment has dropped from 64.1 per cent to 54.2 per cent in urban regions and from 30.9 per cent to 20.8 per cent in rural areas between 2017-18 and 2020-21 (Gupta et al., 2022).

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) according to Current Weekly Status for Persons of Age Group 15 Years and Above (July 2022-June 2023), (Data in %)

	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	**Female**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**	**Person**	**Male**	**Female**	**Person**
Punjab	77.9	27.1	52.8	76.5	25.2	51.8	77.4	26.4	52.4
India	78.8	34.6	56.7	73.9	24.0	49.4	77.4	31.6	54.6

Source: PLFS 2022-2023

The persistence of women being primarily responsible for household chores can be attributed to different perspectives. Some scholars suggest that economic dependence drives wives to contribute unpaid labor in exchange for a portion of their husband's income. Alternatively, others argue that the division of housework reflects a symbolic enactment of femininity or masculinity, with wives taking on these tasks while husbands avoid them (Bhullar & Singh, 2023).

During the early Vedic period, historical accounts suggest that women held a position of equality akin to men in society. Various texts from that time emphasize gender parity, highlighting women's access to education and cultural refinement. Women were able to move independently with their husbands or partners, indicating a level of autonomy and integration. Moreover, they engaged in diverse professions, challenging conventional gender norms. This depiction of Vedic society indicates that women were not only equal participants in social and familial settings but also active contributors to intellectual and professional domains (Narayanan, 2002).

In the context of women's existence, characterized by freedom and autonomy similar to all female beings, Simone de Beauvoir (1956) observes that women are, nonetheless, placed in a world where men enforce upon them the role of being the "other". According to the Beauvoir, a significant form of pressure experienced by women is economic in nature. The historical reality of women relying on men for their material support and maintenance is widely recognized.

According to *'Manu-Smriti',* (Book of the Hindu code, Dharma-shastra in India) women lack autonomy and independence throughout their lives. He argues that during childhood, a woman relies on her parents for protection, in youth she depends on her husband, and in old age, she is supported by her sons. The assertion is that women, according to this perspective, do not experience true independence at any stage of their lives.

Contrarily, the woman's employment status seems to matter little unless she maintains a steady job. Having a formal job and children (as opposed to being without children) reduces the chances of the woman enduring extended physical violence (Agarwal, 2016). Women globally confront persistent violations of their human dignity, often linked to unequal treatment based on gender. In various spheres like employment, safety, health care, education, and political engagement, women encounter disparities solely due to their gender, perpetuated by both laws and institutions. Despite these challenges, women worldwide are actively

challenging inequality and asserting their right to be treated with dignity and respect (Nussbaum, 2002). Estimating unemployment in India poses challenges, with most statistics likely falling short of reflecting the actual extent of unemployment, especially among women. A significant contributing factor is that numerous individuals, discouraged by the perceived scarcity of job opportunities, choose not to actively seek employment. Consequently, these individuals, who refrain from job hunting, are often excluded from official unemployment figures. Additionally, the reluctance to register at employment offices persists due to the perceived limited advantages associated with such registration (Srinivasa & Kumar, 2011). The issue of female unemployment in India has been largely overlooked, despite increasing evidence indicating its significant prevalence, especially in rural areas.

Dependency theory is the basis for two fundamental assumptions in stratification theory: firstly, that the family functions as the central unit of social hierarchy, and secondly, that the benefits resulting from the family's position in this hierarchy are fairly shared among all its members (cited in Sorensen & McLanahan, 1987). Education is widely acknowledged as the key to economic stability and opportunities, with a particular emphasis on its significance for girls and women (Mishra, 2011). The absolute size of the active workforce is not inherently linked to increased unemployment rates. In other words, having a larger working population does not necessarily mean that a country will experience a higher percentage of unemployment (Sen, 2002).

Causes of Women's Unemployment

Thakur (2001) has given the following causes of Women's Unemployment: (a) Lack of Awareness, (b) Lack of Mobility, and (c) Lower level of achievement motivation.

Srinivasa and Kumar (2011) rightly said that the relationship between women's education and employment in India is complex and not easily defined. Sen (2000) underscores the notion that comprehending social

exclusion is most effectively achieved by considering capabilities rather than material possessions. The excluded individuals often lack the necessary skills and opportunities to maintain employment and actively engage in community life. This understanding is articulated through a comprehensive conceptual framework that focuses on capability deprivation and the underlying circumstances leading to the loss of these capabilities, with poverty serving as a prime illustration, primarily linked to class distinctions. Authors also make a distinction between the intrinsic and utilitarian facets of social exclusion. A notable example is provided to illustrate these dimensions: the failure to establish connections with others as a root cause of impoverishment represents an intrinsic aspect, while the self-denial of credit facilities and the subsequent loss of unique opportunities exemplify the utilitarian dimension. The exclusion approach places a central focus on the quality of labor-market integration, with unemployment and unsustainable job situations serving as crucial elements that illustrate how individuals or groups may be partially or entirely excluded from complete social participation. The robustness of the connections between one's employment status and other facets of economic and social life, such as family, living conditions, and social interactions, highlights the substantial risk faced by individuals in precarious occupational situations whether due to unsafe employment or unemployment in terms of potential societal exclusion. Full-time employment, especially when the household head is employed, is regarded as the most secure means of avoiding poverty and social exclusion (Bhalla & Lapeyre 2004). Social exclusion takes various forms, and one prominent manifestation is through unemployment. Poverty, as the ultimate consequence, signifies a deprivation of essential survival needs. Unemployment, however, represents a specific mechanism wherein an adult member of society is denied the means necessary for survival, leading to a lack of access to fundamental goods and services. Even if a welfare system were in place to support the unemployed in acquiring basic necessities, they would remain a significant segment of socially excluded individuals. This

is because employment is a crucial element contributing to an individual's dignity and self-respect within society (Judge 2014).

Narayanan (2002) has given the following factors which affect the women's labour force. a) Level of Economic Development, (b) Style of Development and Infrastructure Available, (c) Government Policy concerning the Employment of Women, (d) Types of Available Work, (e) The Structure of the Family and Cultural Traditions concerning Men's Control over Women, (f) Cultural Expectations as to the need for and Nature of Housework, (g) Women's Property Rights, (h) Women's Educational Levels and Access to Technology.

Constitutional Provisions

Several provisions in the Constitution explicitly reaffirm the dedication to fostering the socio-economic development of women and ensuring the preservation of their political rights and active involvement in decision-making processes. Building on these constitutional commitments, the Government of India has consistently strived to effectively translate the rights, assurances, and safeguards outlined in the Indian Constitution for women, progressing from a mere legal acknowledgment to the actual implementation of these provisions. Article 14 - Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic, and social spheres. Article 15(1) - Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc. Article 15(3) - Special provision enabling the State to make affirmative discriminations in favour of women. Article 16 - Equality of opportunities in matters of public appointments for all citizens. Article 39(a) - The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood. Article 39 (d) – Equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 42 - The State to make provisions for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. Article 51 (A) (e) –To renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-07) advocated a comprehensive approach

focused on social empowerment, economic empowerment, and the establishment of gender justice. The objective was to establish a supportive framework through positive economic and social policies for women, aiming to eradicate all types of discrimination against them and thereby promote the achievement of gender equality objectives.

In our challenging world, the persistent lower status of women exacerbates their vulnerability, leading to various forms of exclusion and disadvantage. This disparity is especially evident in the aftermath of disasters, where women often face obstacles in mobility and accessing vital information. Sadly, these hurdles frequently result in women being among the last to receive relief resources, intensifying their suffering during crises. Additionally, women are disproportionately represented in informal and agricultural sectors, which are particularly vulnerable to disasters. This occupational bias further limits their ability to access relief and engage in recovery efforts. Consequently, women experience higher rates of unemployment, diminishing their influence within households and communities. Unlike men, who may have the option to migrate for work, women are often bound to their roles as primary caregivers, preventing them from pursuing alternative employment opportunities. The compounding effects of structural biases and pervasive gender discrimination are also evident in the distribution of compensation following disasters, with allocations often favoring men. This perpetuates existing gender disparities and highlights the urgent need for gender-sensitive disaster management policies. Addressing these biases is crucial not only for the well-being of women but also for the resilience and recovery of communities in the face of disasters.

Theoretical Framework

- **Structural Functionalism:** This theory focuses on how society is structured to maintain stability and order (Ritzer, 2011). In the case of unemployed women, structural functionalism might analyze how societal norms and institutions (such as the family, education

system, and labor market) contribute to women's dependency when they are not engaged in paid work. It would examine how these structures either support or hinder women's ability to find employment and achieve financial independence.

- **Conflict Theory:** Conflict theory emphasizes the role of power dynamics and inequalities in society. Applied to unemployed women, this perspective would highlight how gender, class, and other social factors intersect to create and perpetuate dependency. It would analyze how economic systems and policies benefit certain groups while marginalizing others, contributing to women's dependence on others for financial support.
- **Feminist Theory:** Feminist theory examines the ways in which gender shapes individuals' experiences and opportunities in society. When applied to unemployed women, feminist theory would highlight how patriarchal norms and expectations limit women's access to employment and economic resources. It would also explore how gendered divisions of labor within households contribute to women's dependency on male partners or other sources of support.
- **Symbolic Interactionism:** This theory focuses on how individuals construct meaning through their interactions with others. When studying unemployed women, symbolic interactionism would emphasize the importance of understanding how societal attitudes and stereotypes about gender and work influence women's sense of self-worth and their perceived opportunities for employment. It would also examine how women negotiate their identities and roles within the context of unemployment and dependency.

These theories offer distinct frameworks for understanding the complex social dynamics at play in the lives of unemployed women and their experiences of dependency. By applying these theoretical perspectives, one can gain insights into the structural, interpersonal, and cultural factors that

shape women's opportunities and constraints in the realm of employment.

Review of Literature

Coyle (1984) in her research emphasized that the perception is that female unemployment, unlike male unemployment, is not believed to result in similar economic or emotional challenges. The assumption is that women are supported by their families and are engaged in household activities. This perspective is so deeply ingrained in our common understanding that the idea of married women being unemployed seems almost paradoxical; society tends to categorize them as either employed or as homemakers.

Thakur (2001) in his study argues that Kiran Bedi, the pioneering Indian I.P.S. officer, expressed the view that women should acknowledge their capabilities, comprehend their strengths, and actively participate in the nation's development. She emphasized the importance of women striving for personal improvement in aspects such as education and skills at any point in their developmental journey. She also encouraged women to aspire to be mothers to the extent they can effectively nurture and educate their children, fostering the growth of responsible and valuable citizens for India. Thakur is of the view that the substantial contributions of women to the economy are reflected in their employment, serving as a key indicator of their economic status in society, particularly about equality.

Badgett and Folbre (2002) in their research examined that in numerous societies, the role of women is commonly associated with caregiving and familial responsibilities, holding them to higher standards in these aspects compared to men. Failing to fulfill obligations towards parents, spouses, or children is often more severely judged in women than in men. Societal expectations regarding appropriate behavior for each gender are intertwined with socially constructed notions of family altruism and individual self-interest. Women perceived as overly independent or ambitious, and men seen as highly dependent or family-focused, often face social judgments, with implications for their perceived attractiveness.

Narayanan (2002) pointed out that it is widely recognized that a significant factor contributing to the subordinate status of women in comparison to men is their excessive reliance on men for sustenance and financial assistance. This dependence diminishes when women begin earning independently, allowing them to engage in savings and financial planning for their future. This form of indirect economic influence persists even after women are liberated from societal expectations. However, true freedom for women remains elusive until they can eliminate this economic pressure.

Francis (2011) in his study argued that due to the expanding globalization and liberalization of the Indian economy, coupled with the increasing privatization of services, women have been disproportionately excluded from benefiting from development. It is crucial to integrate women into the evolving areas of growth, necessitating their training in emerging trades and promoting their active involvement in vocational training and employment within thriving sectors. The promotion of women's participation in the workforce, particularly in rural areas, is viewed as a policy measure to alleviate rural poverty and counter the feminization of poverty.

Ghosal (2011) pointed out that ensuring the well-being of women is an essential aspect of our country's planning process. The progress in women's development indicates that similar to men, women can function as economic entities, engage in business, or pursue various services, thereby opening up more opportunities for their development. The government has launched numerous development and welfare programs for women, with a focus on offering financial and technical support to underprivileged women for establishing self-employment ventures. Various agencies have created ample opportunities for training women in need, and state-level Women Development Corporations can contribute significantly. A lack of awareness poses a barrier to women achieving economic freedom. Factors such as illiteracy, ignorance, inadequate dissemination of information by relevant agencies, and corruption among government officials contribute to this challenge. The limited education or illiteracy levels act as obstacles to women's progress. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other

associations can take proactive steps and play a crucial role in addressing these issues. Proper training in respective fields is essential for women to stay abreast of the latest advancements, as their progress may stagnate without such knowledge.

Agarwal (2016) in her study discussed that unequal educational opportunities for women contribute to diminished earning prospects and hinder their economic independence. Despite being well-educated, a significant number of women opt not to pursue employment. In 1971, 36 per cent of female degree holders, compared to only 5 per cent of male degree holders, were not actively seeking employment. This trend has persisted over the years. Those women who do seek employment often find themselves in lower-tier professional positions with lower salary scales. One factor influencing this situation is the initial qualifications of women. Those with arts/humanities degrees face higher unemployment rates and secure less lucrative jobs compared to graduates in other fields. Gender-specific factors also play a role, such as the burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities, which limits women's mobility and their ability to sustain full-time careers throughout their lives. Social norms dictate that highly qualified professional women often have to relocate based on their husbands' careers, resulting in these women accepting lower-paying jobs despite being equally qualified. Gender discrimination is evident in the labor market, affecting both hiring practices and pay scales. Employers frequently hold biases, assuming that women may be less committed to or capable of fulfilling work responsibilities due to their domestic roles. There's a prevailing belief that women might leave employment upon marriage or possess lesser innate abilities than men, irrespective of the actual commitments and abilities of individual women. This bias often leads to the preference for men over equally qualified women or the payment of higher salaries to men with similar qualifications.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The experience of dependency among unemployed women extends far

beyond mere economic hardship, delving deep into the intricate fabric of societal narratives and cultural norms. In many cultures, traditional gender roles have long confined women to domestic spheres while positioning men as primary providers. These deeply ingrained norms perpetuate the expectation that men should be the breadwinners, while women are relegated to caregiving and household responsibilities. Consequently, when women find themselves unable to secure employment, they not only face practical challenges but also confront societal resistance and prejudice. The inability of women to conform to traditional gender norms by securing employment challenges societal expectations, often resulting in discrimination and judgment. This societal pressure further exacerbates the already difficult circumstances of unemployment, compounding the psychological toll on affected individuals. Moreover, the cycle of dependency experienced by unemployed women has far-reaching consequences, potentially perpetuating disadvantages across generations. Children raised in households where women are economically dependent may internalize these dynamics, replicating them in their own lives and perpetuating the cycle of inequality. Breaking this cycle requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the immediate economic needs of unemployed women and the systemic barriers that impede their access to education and employment opportunities. Governmental and institutional policies play a crucial role in shaping the landscape for unemployed women. Implementing and enforcing anti-discrimination laws, promoting equal pay, and offering targeted support for women in the workforce are vital steps toward dismantling systemic barriers. Furthermore, initiatives aimed at providing training, mentorship, and networking opportunities can empower women to enter and thrive in traditionally male-dominated fields, thereby expanding their economic opportunities and breaking free from the cycle of dependency. In parallel, efforts to challenge societal attitudes through awareness campaigns and education programs are essential. These initiatives can help dismantle stereotypes and foster a more inclusive understanding of gender roles, highlighting the economic and social

benefits of gender equality. Ultimately, empowering women in the workforce is not only a matter of justice but also a catalyst for overall societal progress.

Objectives

- ❖ To understand the socio-economic status of educated women who are currently unemployed.
- ❖ To investigate the challenges encountered by these women and to analyze the strategies they employ to address these challenges.
- ❖ To assess their personal experiences of relying on their families for support.

Methodology

The current research is primarily exploratory, aiming to investigate the impact of unemployment among educated women on themselves, their families, and society. The study focused on gathering in-depth data concerning unemployed educated women, particularly emphasizing their dependency on their families. The study's target group included educated women aged 18 to 34 actively seeking employment, these women have educational backgrounds spanning from completing secondary school to obtaining postgraduate degrees and even further qualifications.

Universe of Sampling

The research was carried out in the Punjab region, with a specific focus on Pathankot district, which is purposively selected due to its location at the crossroads of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir. Pathankot holds significance as it shares borders with neighboring Indian states and Pakistan. Data was collected from three distinct villages situated directly on the India-Pakistan international border. Interviews were conducted with chosen respondents using a mixed sampling approach to acquire research insights. The selection of this topic and area stems from Pathankot district's standing as one of Punjab's top districts in literacy rates. However, the lack

of industrial and infrastructural development, particularly in the border belt area, is resulting in unemployment among youth, leading to increasing burdens on their families over time.

Techniques of Data Collection

In the course of the research, the investigator took a thorough approach, utilizing a mix of primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive examination of the subject. Secondary sources included various data repositories, reports, and scholarly works such as census data, government reports, as well as books and research articles. Additionally, the researcher employed diverse methods for primary data collection, such as detailed interviews, focus group discussions, and selecting specific cases for in-depth case studies (4 case studies were conducted). These primary sources allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the experiences, perspectives, dependencies, and challenges faced by educated unemployed women aged 18-34 in the region. To aid in primary data collection, the researcher made a semi-structured interview schedule, serving as a framework for interactions with respondents.

Results of the Study

Table 1
Distribution of the Respondents according to their Age

Age (in years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18-20	12	20
20-25	24	40
25-30	14	23.3
30-34	10	16.7
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table (1) delineates the demographic distribution of respondents based on

their age, shedding light on noteworthy trends within different age groups. According to the data, a substantial 40 per cent of respondents fall within the 20-25 years age bracket, while 23.3 per cent belong to the 25-30 years category. Remarkably, individuals in these two age groups, appear to have experienced higher levels of hardship or challenges. Further data reveals that 20 per cent of the respondents are situated in the 18-20 years age group, and 16.7 per cent fall within the 30-34 years range. Interestingly, members of the latter age group, particularly females, express concerns regarding their eligibility for government job applications, contending that their age might be a hindrance. Despite this concern, a discrepancy arises as these individuals assert that securing government jobs remains elusive, implying potential barriers or challenges that extend beyond age considerations.

Table 2
Distribution of the Respondents according to their Caste

Caste	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Scheduled Castes	30	50
Backward Classes	17	28.3
General	13	21.7
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

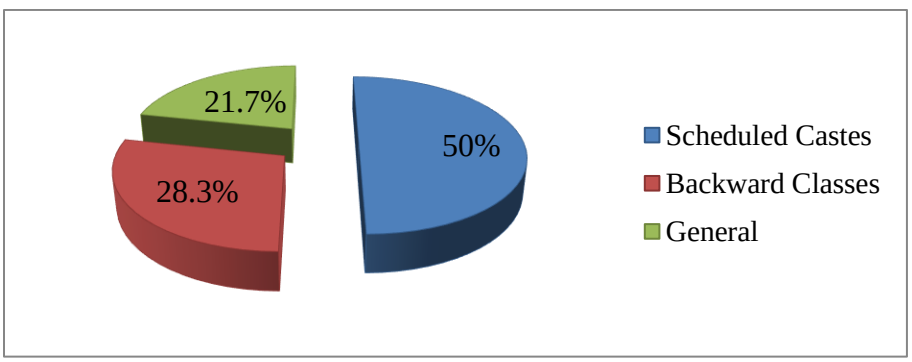

Figure 1: Distribution of the Respondents according to their Caste

The above table (2) and figure (1) describe the caste of the respondents. Data reveals that 50 per cent belong to Scheduled Castes (SCs), 28.3 per cent from Backward Classes, and 21.7 per cent from the General caste. The data suggests a significant representation of Scheduled Castes among the respondents. The study draws attention to a noteworthy finding: individuals from Scheduled Castes face fewer opportunities in the job market compared to respondents from other castes. This observation implies that there may be disparities or challenges within the employment sector that disproportionately affect individuals from Scheduled Castes. Possible factors contributing to this disparity could include historical social discrimination, lack of access to quality education and skill development opportunities, systemic biases in recruitment processes, and limited resources for career advancement.

Table 3
Distribution of the Respondents according to Marital Status

Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Unmarried	46	76.7
Married	14	23.3
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

Data (table 3) highlights the marital status distribution among respondents in the studied villages, with 76.7 per cent being unmarried respondents and 23.3 per cent being married. The married respondents express concerns about their dependence on their husbands for financial support, attributing this reliance to a lack of job opportunities after completing their studies. Some respondents regret getting married in a border area that they perceive as underdeveloped, with limited employment prospects. Several themes emerge from the responses of the married respondents. Firstly, there is a sentiment of regret among some married respondents who feel they made a mistake by marrying in a border area. This regret is linked to the perceived

lack of development and employment opportunities in these regions. The married respondents also highlight a common narrative where they completed their education but were unable to secure jobs, resulting in financial dependence on their husbands. This situation reflects a broader issue of economic challenges and limited job opportunities in the border areas. The respondents express frustration over the lack of employment-oriented opportunities and the cessation of work, such as in the case of those who worked as tailors and beauticians in their paternal homes. The data further emphasizes the struggles faced by unmarried respondents who are actively searching for employment. Despite their efforts, they express frustration with the prevailing issues of corruption and favoritism in the job market. According to their accounts, deserving candidates face challenges in securing jobs due to these factors, contributing to the overall difficulty in finding employment.

Table 4

Distribution of the Respondents according to the Size of Land Owned

Land (in acres)	Number of Respondents	Percentage
No Land	28	46.7
Less than 1	12	20
1-2	7	11.6
3-4	5	8.4
5 and Above	8	13.3
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents' distribution based on the size of land they own, shedding light on the socioeconomic disparities prevalent in the surveyed population. Strikingly, a significant proportion, accounting for 46.7 per cent of the respondents, did not possess any agricultural land. This group, predominantly comprising individuals from the scheduled caste, faced additional challenges as their parents were

primarily engaged in daily wage and labor work, contributing to the overall struggle for economic stability. Further analysis reveals that 20 per cent of the respondents owned less than 1 acre of land, while 13.3 per cent were fortunate enough to possess 5 acres or more. Notably, these larger landholders were primarily associated with the general caste. In contrast, 11.6 per cent of respondents owned land ranging between 1-2 acres, and 8.4 per cent had holdings between 3-4 acres. However, a significant portion of these respondents lacked agricultural land altogether, with a predominant representation from the scheduled caste and a few from the backward class. The challenging circumstances extend beyond land ownership to the living conditions of the respondents. Particularly, those without land found themselves in precarious living situations, often residing in homes with merely 1-2 rooms. Additionally, the absence of a separate kitchen and, in some cases, the lack of a toilet underscored the harsh living conditions experienced by this segment of the population. The plight of the scheduled caste respondents is further emphasized as their parents, grappling with precarious employment, struggled to provide for their education. Despite facing economic hardships, these individuals managed to complete their studies, only to find themselves educated unemployed. Consequently, many are left without gainful employment, wandering in search of opportunities while remaining financially dependent on their families.

Table 5

Distribution of the Respondents according to their Total Annual Income

Income in Rupees	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 100000	18	30
100000-200000	25	41.7
200001-300000	11	18.3
Above 300000	6	10
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

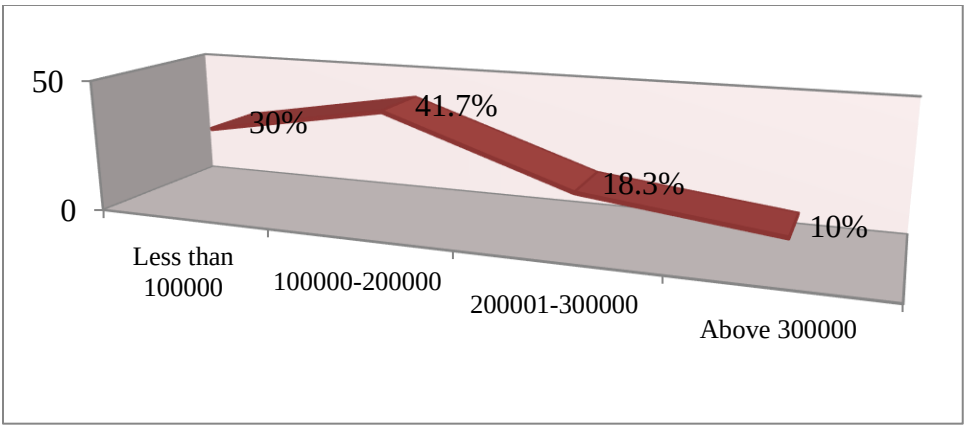

Figure 2: Distribution of the Respondents according to their Total Annual Income

The distribution of respondents' total annual income of the family, as depicted in table (5) and figure (2), reveals several notable patterns. Among the respondents, 41.7 per cent reported an annual income falling within the range of 100,000 to 200,000. This group predominantly consisted of individuals from scheduled caste communities, with many family members engaged in labor work, indicating a reliance on manual labor for income generation. Additionally, 30 per cent of respondents reported an income of less than 100,000 annually, further underscoring the prevalence of lower-income brackets within the surveyed population. In contrast, 18.3 per cent of respondents reported an annual income ranging between 200,001 to 300,000. This segment represents a slightly higher income bracket, suggesting a level of financial stability beyond the lower-income groups. Notably, the remaining 10 per cent of respondents reported an income exceeding 300,000 annually. This higher-income group was characterized by factors such as land ownership within their families and employment in government sectors, including Defence Services, Punjab Police, and Teaching professions. The distribution of respondents across these income categories provides valuable insights into the socioeconomic landscape of the respondents. It highlights disparities in income levels, with a significant portion falling within lower-income brackets and relying on manual labor,

while a smaller yet notable segment enjoys higher income levels and benefits associated with government employment and land ownership.

Table 6
Distribution of the Respondents according to their Educational Qualification

Qualification	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Secondary/Matriculation	8	13.3
Senior Secondary	15	25
ITI/Diploma	9	15
Graduation	17	28.4
Post Graduation and Above	11	18.3
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

The data presented in table 6 provides insight into the educational qualifications of respondents, categorized into various levels of attainment. Among the respondents, 28.4 per cent have completed their graduation degrees, encompassing diverse fields such as B.A. and B.Sc. A significant portion, constituting 25 per cent, has attained education up to the Senior Secondary level. Furthermore, 18.3 per cent of the respondents have pursued post-graduation in various subjects including Punjabi, Sociology, and History. Another 15 per cent have undergone vocational training, such as ITI in COPA (Computer Operator and Programming Assistant) and tailoring, or have obtained diplomas in computer applications like PGDCA (Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Application) and DCA (Diploma in Computer Applications). Lastly, 13.3 per cent of the respondents have completed their education up to the matriculation level. This breakdown illustrates a diverse range of educational backgrounds among the

respondents, reflecting a mix of academic and vocational pursuits. The distribution across different educational levels underscores the varied paths individuals take in their pursuit of knowledge and skill development, contributing to a rich and heterogeneous dataset.

Table 7
Distribution of the Respondents according to the Years of Unemployment

Years of Unemployment	Number Of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 year	17	28.4
1-2	28	46.6
3 and Above	15	25
Total	60	100

Source: Primary Data

The data presented in table 7 categorizes respondents based on the duration of their unemployment. It highlights a significant proportion of respondents, with 46.6 per cent experiencing unemployment for 1-2 years, followed by 28.4 per cent unemployed for less than a year, and 25 per cent enduring unemployment for three years or more. This situation is particularly challenging for educated females, who perceive unemployment as both a personal and familial setback. They express frustration at completing their studies yet struggling to secure employment, leading to financial dependence on their families. Furthermore, they lament the dwindling window of opportunity for applying to government jobs as they age. In response to these challenges, they advocate for the government to create employment opportunities in border areas, emphasizing the need for policies that prioritize job creation and economic empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups such as educated women facing systemic barriers to employment.

Table 8
Distribution of the Respondents according to their Views on Reasons for Unemployment

Reasons for Unemployment	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Government has failed to create enough Jobs in Public Sector	43	25.7
Private Industries have not Provided enough/sufficient Jobs	32	19.2
Reservation Policy of the Government	11	6.6
Too Much Competition in the Job Market	53	31.7
Location Constraint	28	16.8
Total*	167	100

Source: Primary Data, *Multiple Responses

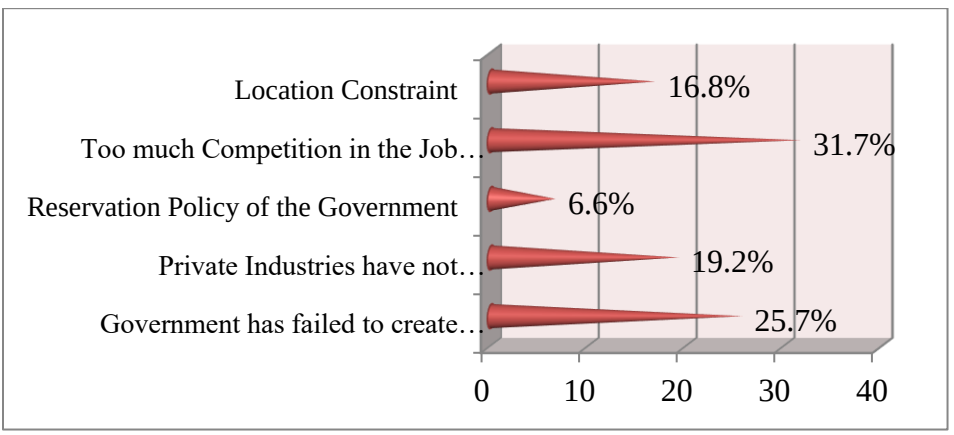

Figure 3: Distribution of the Respondents according to their Views on Reasons for Unemployment

The findings from table 8 and figure 3 provide insight into the diverse perspectives of respondents regarding the reasons for unemployment. While there are numerous factors contributing to unemployment, the study focused on those reasons highlighted by the respondents. It was revealed that the

pervasive issue of unemployment affects individuals across the board, irrespective of their specific circumstances. A significant portion, comprising 31.7 per cent of the respondents, identified excessive competition in the job market as a primary obstacle to securing employment. This sentiment underscores the fierce competition individuals face when vying for limited job opportunities. Additionally, 25.7 per cent of them attributed the lack of job creation in the public sector to government policies, expressing dissatisfaction with the government's role in addressing unemployment through public sector employment opportunities. Moreover, 19.2 per cent of respondents expressed concern over the private sector's failure to provide an adequate number of jobs for young people, coupled with concerns about low salaries offered by private industries. Furthermore, 16.8 per cent of respondents emphasized the significance of job location, particularly highlighting the reluctance of some families to allow their daughters to pursue employment opportunities that require them to relocate. This concern is rooted in contemporary issues such as bullying and harassment in the workplace, which exacerbate parental reluctance to send their daughters to work in distant locations. Moreover, 6.6 per cent of respondents belonging to the general caste category identified government reservation policies as a hindrance to employment opportunities. These respondents perceive such policies as creating barriers rather than opportunities for securing jobs.

Case Studies

- *Rashmi (Pseudonym),* a 29-year-old woman from the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, is grappling with significant challenges in her life. Born into a family of five, where her father works in dairy farming and her mother is a homemaker, her educational journey, marked by dedication and success, has not translated into the stable and meaningful employment she aspired to achieve. Despite holding B.A., B.Ed., and M.A. (Punjabi) degrees and qualifying for the UGC-NET, she struggles to secure a permanent job matching her qualifications. This predicament is common among educated individuals in India, particularly from

marginalized communities, where societal expectations for gainful employment after higher education are high. Her situation is further complicated by societal pressures, especially regarding marriage. In her community remaining unmarried at her age is challenging, given the prevalent norms of early marriage. The prevailing sentiment is that higher education should lead to improved job opportunities. However, her struggle has raised doubts among her peers and neighbors, potentially discouraging others, especially young girls, from pursuing higher education. Currently employed as a teacher in a local private school, she faces the issue of underemployment. Despite her advanced degrees, her meager salary reflects the broader challenge of individuals being compelled to accept low-paying jobs that don't utilize their skills and education properly. She also sheds light on the scarcity of government job vacancies and the corruption within the recruitment process in India. Government jobs are desirable due to their stability, but limited positions and corruption leave qualified candidates like her without opportunities. Urgent attention is needed to ensure merit-based employment opportunities, address systemic problems, and eliminate corruption. In summary, her story exemplifies the struggles faced by highly educated individuals in India seeking permanent employment. Despite commendable qualifications, the lack of job opportunities, underemployment, and corruption in the recruitment process has left her disillusioned about her future. Addressing these systemic issues and changing societal attitudes toward education and gender roles are crucial for a more equitable and prosperous future.

- *Pooja (Pseudonym),* a 24-year-old woman from a Backward Classes (BC) caste, comes from a family of five, where her father, a laborer, supports the household alongside her two brothers who work as daily wage laborers. Despite facing financial constraints, she completed her 12th-grade education and demonstrated her commitment to education by teaching at Akaal Academy Sangthan School for five years. Despite her family's limited resources, she conducted classes from her home to

ensure access to education for children. Her aspirations extend beyond teaching, as she harbors a deep desire to join the defense forces. However, her brothers oppose her career goals, emphasizing societal expectations that women are their family's responsibility until marriage. Despite their opposition, she secretly applied for a job in the defense forces, showing her determination to pursue her passion. Additionally, she enrolled in a B.A. program but had to drop out after the COVID-19 pandemic strained her family's finances, preventing them from paying her college fees. A pivotal moment occurred when the school offered her a one-week teacher training program in Ferozepur district, Punjab. Unfortunately, her brothers opposed her participation, leading to her removal from the list due to their concerns about her marriage, prioritizing traditional roles over her education and career. Her story highlights the significant challenges faced by many women in Indian society, particularly those from marginalized communities. Despite her strong desire to continue her education and pursue a career, familial expectations and financial constraints have proven formidable barriers. Her determination and ambition drive her towards her dreams, even if it means secretly pursuing her goals, underscoring the need for greater empowerment and opportunities for women in traditionally conservative societies.

- *Seema (Pseudonym),* a 23-year-old woman belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, has faced numerous challenges impacting her education and career opportunities. Raised in a family of four, her life took a difficult turn when her father passed away five years ago, leaving her family emotionally and financially strained. To support the household, her resilient mother took up a job in a factory due to limited opportunities in their village. Financial constraints compelled her to discontinue her education after the 10th grade, despite her potential for further studies. She joined her mother at Chenab Textiles Mills (CTM) in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir, but the factory's working conditions and low wages were unsatisfactory. The job required a demanding 4

a.m. wake-up time for a 20-kilometer commute, leaving her dissatisfied. Eventually, she left the factory to focus on household responsibilities and support her younger siblings in their education. Apart from the grueling work hours and low pay, she expressed concerns about societal perceptions of women working in factories, facing stereotypes about their character. She also highlighted workplace harassment, urging the government to create job opportunities closer to remote areas like her village. She advocated for initiatives supporting home-based work to enhance safety, reduce harassment risks, and contribute to women's economic empowerment. In summary, her case underscores the struggles and aspirations of a young woman from a marginalized community, emphasizing the need for government intervention to address issues such as unemployment, low wages, and workplace harassment. By establishing opportunities in remote areas and promoting home-based work initiatives, the government can empower women economically and address the challenges faced by individuals like her.

- *Pallavi (pseudonym),* a 28-year-old woman belonging to the General Caste, her story paints a poignant picture of the struggles faced by many women in marginalized communities, where economic constraints and limited opportunities hinder their personal and professional growth. Despite her aspirations and initial education up to the 12th grade, her dreams of pursuing further studies were dashed due to the financial limitations of her family. This unfortunate circumstance, compounded by her father's untimely demise, placed her in a precarious position where she had to rely on the support of her mother and maternal uncle for her marriage. Settling into her role as a daughter-in-law in a village with sparse employment opportunities, her hopes for financial stability were further dashed by her husband's laborer job in a border area. The meager salary he earned was significantly diminished by his alcohol consumption, leaving the family in a perpetual cycle of financial strain. Her struggle to meet basic needs, such as her son's school fees,

underscores the extent of their financial instability and her dependence on her husband's earnings. The absence of viable employment opportunities in her husband's village compounded her challenges. Despite her skills in stitching work acquired from her maternal home, she found herself unable to leverage them due to the lack of demand in her new environment. This disheartening reality not only limited her economic prospects but also forced her to endure the tumultuous environment of her husband's excessive drinking and resulting conflicts. In the face of these adversities, her plea to the government for programs and policies aimed at providing home-oriented work for women reflects her desire for self-reliance and empowerment. By advocating for initiatives that enable women like her to earn a livelihood from home, she hopes to break free from the shackles of dependence and contribute meaningfully to her family's well-being. Her story serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for targeted interventions to uplift marginalized women, providing them with the tools and opportunities to build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

Discussion and Findings

The data offers a thorough examination of the demographic, socio-economic, and educational characteristics of respondents in the studied villages, revealing insights into the employment challenges they encounter. Particularly noteworthy is the predominance of respondents aged 20-25 years, alongside the elevated levels of adversity reported within this demographic, underscoring the precarious position of young individuals in securing employment. Furthermore, the gender-specific challenges faced by females in the 30-34 years age group, particularly regarding government job applications, underscore potential systemic barriers that extend beyond age considerations. The caste-based analysis reveals a significant representation of Scheduled Castes among the respondents, with indications of disparities in job opportunities compared to other castes. Historical social discrimination, limited access to quality education, systemic biases in recruitment, and insufficient resources for career advancement emerge as

potential factors contributing to this observed disparity. Marital status distribution exposes the economic struggles of married respondents, particularly in border areas with perceived underdevelopment. Regret over marriage choices, financial dependence on husbands and the cessation of work activities reflect broader issues of economic challenges and limited job opportunities in these regions. Socio-economic disparities are evident in the distribution of respondents based on land ownership and annual family income. Individuals without agricultural land, predominantly from the Scheduled Caste, face additional challenges, including precarious living conditions. The income distribution highlights reliance on manual labor for lower-income groups, while higher-income segments benefit from factors such as government employment and land ownership. Educational qualifications showcase a diverse range of backgrounds among respondents, emphasizing the need for a varied approach to skill development and knowledge acquisition. The duration of unemployment indicates a significant proportion enduring prolonged unemployment, especially affecting educated females facing systemic barriers. Respondents attribute unemployment to factors such as excessive competition, government policies impacting job creation, private sector limitations, job location concerns, and reservations hindering employment opportunities. These findings collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of unemployment challenges and call for targeted interventions to address systemic issues, create job opportunities, and empower marginalized groups in border areas.

In the early years of the 21st century, women find themselves under increasing scrutiny despite constituting half of the world's population. Despite significant progress in various fields, a majority of women still face challenges in accessing fundamental resources and opportunities. This inequity extends to crucial aspects of life such as land ownership, credit availability, technological access, education, employment opportunities, and political representation. While women's roles in society are pivotal, their contributions are often undervalued, particularly in terms of monetary

recognition. Women are integral to the fabric of family and community life, exerting profound and pervasive effects on the health and happiness of these units, as well as on the local ecosystem. Their development is intricately linked to the overall development of nations. Despite being engaged in earning livelihoods alongside men throughout history, the monetary value of their contributions remains largely unaccounted for, or when considered, it is often assigned a disproportionately low value. This discrepancy does not reflect the capabilities of women, who, even in rural and illiterate communities, exhibit proficiency in various management skills. In essence, women, including those in rural areas with limited access to education, have been practicing and utilizing various tools and techniques of efficient management. This includes financial management, where they navigate the complexities of budgeting and resource allocation. Additionally, women demonstrate adeptness in human resource management, playing crucial roles in nurturing relationships and fostering community cohesion. Their skills extend to time and space management, as they balance multiple responsibilities within the constraints of their environments. Maintenance management is another area where women excel, ensuring the well-being of their families and communities. Recognizing and valuing the multifaceted skills and contributions of women is imperative for fostering inclusive development. By addressing the existing disparities and empowering women in various spheres, societies can unlock their full potential, leading to more equitable and sustainable progress. Women's development is not only a matter of justice but also a strategic imperative for the holistic advancement of nations in the 21st century.

- Some respondents expressed that their male family members, particularly their brothers, hindered their ability to pursue employment. One respondent shared her experience of being offered a job in the textile industry in Chandigarh, but her brothers prohibited her from taking the opportunity, resulting in her missing out on it.
- Due to the lack of industrial development in the area, respondents are experiencing unemployment and are struggling to find opportunities

even after completing their education.

- The findings of the study shed light on a notable phenomenon observed among a subset of respondents, specifically daughters-in-law residing in the studied villages. These respondents shared accounts wherein prior to entering into matrimony, they were given assurances by their prospective husbands and in-laws. These assurances pertained to the freedom and encouragement to pursue further education and employment opportunities commensurate with their qualifications and aspirations. However, upon formalizing their marital ties, a stark contrast emerged between the promises made and the ensuing reality. Post-marriage, these daughters-in-law found themselves constrained by familial expectations and societal norms, which curtailed their autonomy and professional pursuits. Instead of being afforded the promised latitude to explore career options and educational advancements, they were swiftly relegated to roles primarily focused on domestic responsibilities. The burden of household chores and caregiving duties was thrust upon them, leaving scant room for personal or professional development. This dissonance between pre-marital assurances and post-marital realities engendered profound disillusionment and frustration among the affected respondents. It not only thwarted their aspirations but also eroded their sense of agency and self-worth. Consequently, the impediments posed by these discrepancies acted as formidable barriers to their endeavors to pursue meaningful employment or further educational opportunities.

- The data highlights a significant presence of Scheduled Castes among the respondents. The study sheds light on a notable discovery: individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes encounter fewer job prospects compared to those from other castes. This observation suggests the presence of disparities or obstacles within the employment landscape that disproportionately affect Scheduled Caste individuals. Respondents from other castes, particularly the general caste, often possess agricultural land, providing them with some degree of financial

stability unlike those from Scheduled Castes.

- SDG 8 refers to Sustainable Development Goal 8, which is one of the 17 global goals established by the United Nations as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 8 specifically focuses on "Decent Work and Economic Growth". It aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. In the context of women, SDG 8 recognizes the importance of gender equality in the workplace and aims to address various challenges that women may face in the labor market. This includes issues such as gender-based discrimination, unequal pay for equal work, limited access to economic opportunities, and barriers to career advancement. The goal is to ensure that women have equal access to employment, enjoy fair and just working conditions, and have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from economic growth. Achieving SDG 8 in the milieu of women involves implementing policies and practices that promote gender equality in the workplace, closing gender pay gaps, addressing stereotypes and biases, and creating an inclusive work environment. It also involves recognizing and valuing the unpaid care work that women often perform, both within and outside the home, and finding ways to reduce the disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities on women. Ultimately, the aim is to create an environment where women can fully participate in and benefit from the economic opportunities available, contributing to the overall goal of sustainable development.
- Agarwal (2016) is of the view that, unlike the restricted opportunities for women to achieve economic autonomy through an unfair education system and biased job markets, gaining access to property offers a more direct and immediate path to financial independence, both within and beyond the family, without the need for postponement.
- Social exclusion primarily arises from two main factors: being excluded from the productive system and experiencing social deprivation. On the other hand, the essential elements of social integration encompass having access to decent employment and being part of a robust social

network. An increasing number of individuals in contemporary society are facing economic and social hardships, finding them either entirely or partially excluded from the community in which they reside. These individuals are confined to a kind of “social no-man's land”, at risk of becoming a marginalized group of socially valuable individuals who lack positive acknowledgment from society (Bhalla & Lapeyre 2004).

- The emergence of novel forms of poverty, widespread vulnerability, and prolonged unemployment has generated fresh concerns regarding mechanisms of social polarization. This is marked by a growing gap in income between the more affluent and less privileged segments of society.
- The resurgence of widespread social unrest, exemplified by a growing population stuck in unstable job arrangements or rendered entirely redundant, inconsequential, or obstructive to the global economic system, constitutes a focal point of the emerging social dilemma. The restructuring of society and spaces, coupled with the prevalence of precarious employment and joblessness, are intrinsic to the mechanisms of economic accumulation.
- The evolving global economy is characterized by a notable trend towards the breakdown of social bonds and changes in employment patterns. The crucial concern revolves around preserving societal unity in a fragmented environment, where a substantial portion of the population is marginalized due to the emphasis on economic efficiency and flexibility.
- It's important to note that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) play a crucial role in empowering both women and communities, serving as an effective approach to reducing poverty. SHGs contribute significantly to poverty alleviation, the development of women, and social empowerment. Through their involvement, women in SHGs have improved their standing as active decision-makers and recipients in various aspects of democratic, economic, social, and cultural life. Furthermore, these groups have raised awareness among women members, encouraging their active participation in the socio-economic advancement of rural

India (Das & Patra, 2015).

Conclusion

The empowerment and liberation of women are fundamental to the progress and development of society. Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy for women's autonomy and self-reliance resonates strongly, emphasizing the importance of cultivating independence and agency within familial and societal structures. However, despite significant strides in education and awareness, numerous challenges persist, hindering women's full participation in the workforce and their attainment of economic independence. The intersection of systemic barriers, cultural norms, and socio-economic factors presents formidable obstacles for women, particularly in border belt regions where limited job opportunities intersect with entrenched gender roles and familial expectations. These challenges perpetuate a cycle of dependency on families for financial support, constraining women's economic agency and decision-making power. In border belt regions, educated unemployed women face multifaceted challenges stemming from socio-economic factors and cultural norms. Limited job opportunities due to underdevelopment and instability near border zones, alongside traditional gender roles, deter women from seeking employment outside the home. This dependence on the family for financial support perpetuates economic vulnerability and reinforces gender dynamics. The absence of targeted support exacerbates the issue, leaving women without avenues for empowerment or economic inclusion. Efforts to address these issues must be multifaceted and comprehensive. They should include targeted interventions to dismantle systemic barriers such as gender discrimination in the job market, promote inclusive workplace cultures, and align educational curricula with industry needs. Additionally, initiatives to challenge traditional gender roles and empower women to pursue careers outside the home are essential. Furthermore, creating support structures and economic opportunities tailored to the specific needs of women in border belt regions is crucial for breaking the cycle of dependency and fostering economic inclusion.

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Wartime Role of Media: A Case Study of Kargil War

MAMTA

Abstract

War presents the most demanding setting for journalists, with the capability to either advance or devastate their careers. Undoubtedly, journalists face a multitude of challenges when reporting from war zones. The research paper examines the pivotal wartime role of media, highlighting the challenges faced by journalists reporting from the frontlines. A descriptive, exploratory, theoretical, and analytical research methodology has been applied in the present paper. The paper discusses the historical evolution of media's involvement in wartime reporting and explores the shift from society-centric to media-centric society in the post-Cold War era, marked by advancements in media technologies. Additionally, it delves into the role of Indian media post-independence. Emphasizing the significant impact of media coverage during the Kargil war, the paper underscores how it contributed to fostering nationalism and uplifting morale among civilians and the military. This analysis underscores the vital function of media in shaping public perception and national sentiment during times of conflict.

Keywords: Wartime, Media, Kargil War, Journalist, Military, India, Pakistan

Introduction

War poses the ultimate test for journalists, with the potential to either propel or shatter their careers. Undoubtedly, the challenges confronting journalists in war zones are multifaceted. Beyond the immediate peril to their lives, journalists grapple with a profound moral quandary with each assignment (Nusbaumer, 1999). On one hand, they are tasked with upholding the principles of objectivity and impartiality, as prescribed by professional

ethics. Yet, on the other hand, they bear a patriotic duty to their nation, akin to any other citizen in times of conflict. This dilemma has been evident since the era of William Howard Russell, the first war correspondent who, while covering the Crimean War, balanced his allegiance to country with his journalistic integrity (Parthasarathy, 1995). Throughout history, journalists navigating war zones have been forced to negotiate this delicate balance, torn between fidelity to their profession and allegiance to their homeland. Despite the myriad obstacles they face, the indispensable role of journalists in providing frontline insights during wartime cannot be overstated. It is through their sacrifices and tribulations that the world has gleaned insights into the devastating aftermath of global conflicts, such as the World Wars, the missteps of American intervention in Vietnam, the deceit of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War, and the efforts to combat terrorism in conflicts and skirmishes in Afghanistan.

Consequently, the wartime media shoulders an immense burden of responsibility. As society's watchdog, the media is entrusted with the vital task of disseminating accurate information, a responsibility that becomes even more pronounced during times of war. The media's duty to inform the populace about the evolving dynamics of conflict is paramount, reflecting its heightened obligations to society amidst the chaos of war.

Objectives of the Study

The research paper has been written with the following objectives:

- To examine the challenges faced by journalists reporting from the frontlines.
- To analyse the historical evolution of media's involvement in wartime reporting.
- To understand the role of media and its impact in fostering nationalism and boosting morale among civilians and the military.

Historical Developments and Wartime Global Role of Media

The evolution of communication technology has profoundly influenced both the conduct of warfare and the dissemination of information about conflicts. This trend, pioneered by Western nations, notably the United States, gradually expanded to encompass a global scale. Numerous international studies have delved into the intersection of media coverage and conflict, tracing its origins back to the First World War when mass media was harnessed as a powerful tool to galvanize public sentiment, foster patriotism, bolster wartime dedication, and stoke animosity toward the enemy. Propaganda permeated various mediums such as news reports, films, photographs, lectures, literature, sermons, posters, rumours, advertisements, and pamphlets, reaching the entirety of society (Lasswell, 1927).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, scholarly attention shifted towards researching the dynamics of knowledge dissemination, attitudes, persuasion, propaganda, and counter-propaganda. The war underscored concerns regarding the media's persuasive capabilities and its potential to shape public attitudes and behaviours. The US government, intrigued by German propaganda tactics and the British communication infrastructure during the war, conducted extensive studies, including wartime research, to analyse these phenomena and enhance civilian morale (Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1944). Industrialization, the proliferation of mass communication channels, and the spread of democratic ideals catalysed significant shifts in warfare tactics. Consequently, the media emerged as a potent force in shaping and manipulating public opinion, aligning itself with the agendas of governments and military establishments.

The Vietnam War marked a watershed moment as the first conflict to be extensively televised, expanding the reach of media coverage, and amplifying the dissemination of diverse perspectives. The proliferation of sophisticated communication networks posed new challenges for governments, as they grappled with countering alternative viewpoints and

managing public perceptions globally. The ubiquitous coverage of media also diminished the efficacy of traditional propaganda efforts, complicating efforts to rectify strategic missteps after the fact (Page, 1996). Throughout the conflict, media narratives closely mirrored official viewpoints, initially presenting an idealized portrayal of the war before gradually adopting a more critical stance in response to growing public discontent (Hallin, 1986). While some attributed the perceived failure in Vietnam to televised coverage, the media's role was more nuanced, reflecting the prevailing diplomatic positions of respective nations (Sunday Herald, 2000).

Post-Vietnam, governments sought to exert greater control over media narratives in subsequent conflicts, imposing restrictions on media access and leveraging it for psychological operations and propaganda purposes. This orchestrated manipulation of media served to align journalistic narratives with political and military agendas, underscoring the complex interplay between media, propaganda, and warfare in the modern era (Gorman & McLean, 2003).

Post Cold War Media Landscape

In the era following the Cold War, characterized by a surge in media technologies, society experienced a transition from society-centric media to media-centric society. This "mediatized"[1] period was propelled by globalization, technological advancements, and digitalization, granting media a pivotal role in global politics. Media outlets have increasingly become more significant sources of information on contemporary events and global issues.

The proliferation of traditional media channels and the advent of alternative platforms like the internet, mobile devices, blogs, social media, community-based media, and citizen journalism define the post-Cold War media landscape. Concurrently, the rise of powerful media conglomerates, the concentration of media control within a select few, media's engagement with civil society and non-state entities, its transformation into a purveyor of infotainment, and its entanglement with government, society, and

religion are notable characteristics of this landscape. Within democratic systems, the media serves as both a watchdog and an influencer, fostering political participation and stimulating public discourse. A significant shift in the political economy of media has occurred, with outlets increasingly resorting to sensationalism, dramatization, and trivialization in their coverage to capture audience attention. News dissemination has transitioned into a commodified process, where content is packaged and marketed for consumer consumption.

The 2003 Iraq War marked a turning point in the relationship between media and military operations, as the US government introduced the practice of embedding[2] journalists within military units. This initiative blurred the lines between journalism and combat, with journalists effectively becoming participants in the conflict. As a result, journalistic objectivity often gave way to overt support for military objectives, with reporters assuming the role of cheerleaders rather than impartial observers. Moreover, recent terrorist activities have underscored the sophisticated utilization of media technologies by both state and non-state actors to disseminate their messages and influence public opinion (Basu, 2003). Instances such as the cooperation between the US government and media outlets following the World Trade Center attacks exemplify how media can align with governmental narratives, foregoing criticism in favour of supporting nationalistic and security-oriented agendas. This convergence of interests between media and government raises questions about the independence and integrity of journalistic practices in contemporary contexts (McChesney, 2002).

Media Coverage of Post-Independence Indian Wars before Kargil

The Kargil conflict in India served as a pivotal moment that underscored the significance of media in armed conflicts, prompting media professionals and researchers to delve into its crucial role. Prior to Kargil, India had been embroiled in four major wars: the Indo-Pak war of 1947, the Indo-China war of 1962, and the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. However, in the first

Indo-Pak war of 1947, media access to frontline areas was restricted, limiting the flow of reliable information. Print media attempted to cover the war through articles, albeit with limited accuracy. Similarly, during the 1962 Indo-China war, journalists were unable to access the North East Frontier Area (NEFA), hindering their ability to convey the true gravity of the situation. With journalists confined to Tezpur, official government handouts became the primary source of information, leading to a blending of facts and rumours in press coverage. Lessons from this experience were applied during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, granting media access to advanced regions, and facilitating better communication, effectively countering enemy misinformation (Natarajan & Chakraborty, 1998).

The 1971 Indo-Pak war marked a milestone with televised media playing a significant role for the first time in India's conflicts. Despite television's nascent stage, Doordarshan Kendra in Delhi served as a vital source of war coverage. Additionally, All India Radio acted as a conduit for communication between soldiers and their families, airing recorded messages to provide solace and encouragement. Journalists were granted access to the frontlines, enabling extensive coverage across western and eastern sectors, capturing the experiences of soldiers firsthand. In addition to onsite briefings by military commanders, daily briefings in Delhi kept the public informed about the developments (Bahl, 2000). Overall, the evolution of media coverage in India's conflicts, culminating in the comprehensive reporting during the Kargil war, highlights the growing recognition of media's role in shaping public understanding and perception of the armed conflicts.

Development of India's Private Satellite Television Channels in 20th Century

In the 1990s, the Indian media landscape experienced a significant transformation, particularly within the realm of electronic media. This shift was catalysed by the Indian government's adoption of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (LPG) policies at the onset of the decade.

Consequently, private satellite channels and international broadcasting corporations were welcomed to compete and integrate into the Indian television industry, challenging the longstanding monopoly held by India's state-owned television network, Doordarshan (Sashikumar, 2003). Traditionally, Doordarshan and All India Radio served as public service broadcasters, predominantly disseminating the Indian government's perspectives on national issues while maintaining a cautious approach to content, mindful of the nation's religious and ethnic diversity to preserve peace and unity.

In contrast, private television channels diverged from Doordarshan's and All India Radio's conventions, adopting a more sensationalized approach to news coverage. These channels excelled in news creation and frequently sensationalized events to capture audience attention, gradually shaping public opinion through swift reporting and captivating presentation styles. The Kargil war marked the first instance of private television outlets actively participating in war coverage, with the emergence of channels like Star, Zee, and Sun TV offering Indian audiences a broader array of content and viewpoints. This influx of private channels fundamentally altered the landscape of Indian combat reporting during the Kargil war, introducing new perspectives and approaches to news dissemination.

Role of Media in Kargil War

During the Kargil war, a dynamic print media and a sophisticated electronic media vied with each other to cover the war comprehensively and bring the war's developments into every Indian household. "Kargil" prominently featured on newspaper front pages, in periodicals, editorials, cartoons, and news analyses, becoming a ubiquitous household reference. Unlike previous Indo-Pak wars identified by specific years, the 1999 war became known as the "Kargil war," with "Kargil" symbolizing the war itself, marking a shift in war nomenclature. This war witnessed a significant milestone as it was the first war extensively covered by a substantial number of Indian war correspondents reporting directly from the frontlines,

heralding India's first televised war (Kargil Review Committee Report: From Surprise to Reckoning, 1999).

The Kargil war represented the Indian military's maiden encounter with a new breed of agile, mobile journalists equipped with satellite phones and television cameras, boldly capturing events from the heart of the battlefield (Rai, 2000). This experience served as a learning curve for the government, armed forces, and media alike. Journalists, from both print and electronic media, traversed the rugged terrain of Drass and Kargil, seeking to document every facet of the war zone, from helipads and gun positions to troop accommodations and Brigade Headquarters, fulfilling the nation's voracious appetite for news through newspapers and television broadcasts (Sawant, 2000). The Kargil war illuminated the pivotal role of media, particularly electronic media, in wartime reporting, a departure from India's previous wars that lacked such extensive electronic media coverage. The war's live telecasts captivated the nation, underscoring the electronic media's newfound influence in shaping public perceptions and fostering national unity during the times of crisis.

During previous wars, media administrators meticulously scrutinized dispatches from war journalists before their release, a protocol absent during the Kargil war. Throughout the Kargil war, the media heavily relied on the Indian Army for information dissemination, a practice consistent with previous wartime scenarios. However, due to security concerns, reporters were not stationed alongside soldiers, prompting most journalists to report from sanitized areas within Pakistan's firing range. Despite the proximity to danger, this vantage point provided a sense of involvement and excitement, with journalists often positioned near 155 Howitzer Bofors guns, frequently featured on television broadcasts (Bahl, 2000). Television channels provided unprecedented live coverage of the war, marking a milestone in India's military history, and signalling a shift towards greater transparency. This on-screen portrayal of the armed forces exuded confidence and conveyed a sense of development. The continuous airing of footage depicting firing weapons and soldiers in combat further heightened

the nation's sense of pride and nationalism (Malik, 2006).

The media's extensive coverage of the war played a pivotal role in fostering nationalism and boosting morale among both civilians and the military. Uniformed troops, previously confined to their cantonments, became household names, with individuals like Captain Saurabh Kalia, Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey, and Captain Vikram Batra emerging as celebrated heroes. A soldier, expressing gratitude to war journalist Baweja, articulated how media reports transformed faceless soldiers into recognized figures, providing a morale boost amidst the challenges of war. This sentiment underscores the profound impact of media coverage in shaping public perceptions and bolstering national unity during times of war (Baweja, 2018).

The televised coverage of the Kargil war instilled a profound sense of pride in India, offering a unique perspective on the warriors involved. Reporters venturing into Kargil bunkers to report marked a groundbreaking shift towards dramatizing combat on Indian television. Most channels aimed to garner support for the war, employing tactics such as showcasing military funerals and the poignant return of fallen soldiers' remains to their families. This broadcast strategy effectively rallied widespread public support for the war, evinced by a surge in officer requests to be stationed in Kargil as a patriotic duty.

The extensive coverage of Kargil in the print media further fuelled nationalist fervour, featuring images of grieving widows and shedding light on the typically isolated institution of the army. Investiture ceremonies[3] were televised and prominently featured in newspapers, immortalizing the valorous deeds of soldiers for the public. *India Today*, a renowned weekly publication, released a Kargil-exclusive edition, featuring soldiers adorned in snow gear trudging uphill against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains on its cover. This exclusive coverage underscored the significance of the war and the valour of the soldiers involved, amplifying national pride and solidarity. The cover page featured the caption "On the Spot Report." A year post-war, the magazine dispatched two journalists to Kargil in search of

journalistic excitement, believing in the allure of experiencing the moment firsthand (Vinayak, 2000). However, upon realizing the lack of anticipated adventure, they promptly returned. War, they discovered, could also be mundane and solitary, with both body and mind grappling with anguish amidst remote peaks and hostile surroundings. A Major stationed at a forward post aptly noted, it resembled "solitary confinement with a few perks thrown in" (Vinayak, 2000).

Wartime Role of Media in Shaping Domestic and International Opinion

The review of Indian military literature has emphasized the country's recognition of the importance of crafting a media strategy as a vital element of conflict management. India's extensive involvement in counter-insurgency and peacekeeping endeavours underscored the imperative for such a strategic approach (Ray, 1997). Throughout the Kargil war, New Delhi demonstrated adaptability in utilizing various media channels, encompassing television, print, radio, and the internet, to disseminate and manage the Indian narrative, thereby shaping both domestic and international perceptions of the situation. This approach was corroborated by findings outlined in the Kargil Review Committee Report. It reported:

> The media is or can be a valuable force multiplier. Even in circumstances of proxy war, the battle for hearts and minds is of paramount importance. It is little use winning the battle of bullets only to lose the war because of popular alienation (Kargil Review Committee Report: From Surprise to Reckoning, p. 215).

During the Kargil war, major Indian newspapers used headlines to shape both domestic and international perceptions of the event. Numerous reports in the Indian press highlighted Pakistan's alleged support for infiltrators, characterizing the infiltration as "qualitatively different" (The Hindustan Times, 1999). Indian media portrayed India as at the forefront of the fight against Islamic terrorism and explicitly linked Pakistan to terrorism (Raman, 1999). India aimed to project an image of transparency and

accountability from the outset of the war (Rajain, 2001). Despite severe provocation from Pakistan, India gained global respect by openly disavowing any crossing of the Line of Control (LoC). These narratives reinforced the perception of India as a responsible nuclear power victimized by an aggressive neighbour.

Headlines such as "Pakistan's Intrusion Exposed" and "India's Stand Against Aggression" drew attention to a wave of stories revealing Pakistan's direct involvement in the Kargil intrusion. These headlines demonstrated the media's role in shaping the war's narrative, highlighting India's stance while portraying Pakistan as the aggressor (The Hindustan Times, 1999). Here are a few examples of noteworthy headlines:

> "Pakistan Army Officers Among Kargil Infiltrators," – *The Statesman*, 25 May, 1999.
>
> "Intrusion Obviously Had Full Backing of Pak Government: India," – *The Hindustan Times*, 27 May, 1999.
>
> "Evidence of Pak Intruders on Indian Side," – *The Hindu*, 29 May, 1999.

The media's broadcast coverage of India's war had positive effects, including bolstering domestic support for stronger actions against Pakistan (Indian Express, 1999). Indian media outlets garnered internal support by continuously covering frontline events and utilizing the internet for instant communication. Websites like www.indiainfo.com, www.kargilonline.com, and www.vijayinkargil.org reported numerous instances of bravery, supported Indian strategic decisions, provided real-time updates, and shared accounts of soldiers' families who experienced loss.

Submissions

The Kargil war stands as a testament to the transformative power of media in shaping public perception and national sentiment during times of conflict. Throughout this paper, the researcher has examined the pivotal role played by media during the Kargil war, shedding light on the challenges faced by

journalists reporting from the frontlines.

The analysis began by tracing the historical evolution of media's involvement in wartime reporting, from the controlled dissemination of information during the World Wars to the media-centric society that emerged in the post-Cold War era. The advancements in media technologies during this period have significantly altered the landscape of conflict reporting, amplifying the media's role in shaping public opinion.

Furthermore, the role of Indian media post-independence has been explored, emphasizing its increasing influence in both domestic and international affairs. The Kargil war served as a pivotal moment in Indian media history, showcasing its ability to mobilize public support and galvanize national sentiment. The extensive media coverage during the Kargil war played a crucial role in fostering nationalism and uplifting morale among both civilians and the military. Through television, print, radio, and the internet, the Indian media provided real-time updates, shared stories of bravery, and highlighted the sacrifices made by soldiers and their families. The coverage not only provided a comprehensive view of the war but also helped to humanize the experiences of those involved. By showcasing the bravery and sacrifices of Indian soldiers, the media played a significant role in rallying public support for the war effort.

In conclusion, the Kargil war demonstrated the immense power of media in shaping public perception and national sentiment during times of conflict. The extensive coverage provided by the Indian media not only informed the public but also served to galvanize support for the war effort. Moving forward, it is essential to recognize the vital role of media in conflict reporting and to ensure that it continues to serve as a watchdog, providing accurate and unbiased information to the public. Through responsible reporting, the media can help to foster understanding and promote peace in times of conflict.

Notes:

[1] The phrase "mediatized" refers to the more obvious way that political life is played out through the mass media. Media play a significant part in the theatre of "politics," providing audiences with news about politics, political events, and political actors. Political actors appear as performers on the media stage and deliver their messages to the public which consumes such kind of mediated content.

[2] The word "embedding" refers to a tactic used by US government in the Iraq War (2003) as a component of the PR-ized combat concept. Journalists from a variety of media outlets were integrated into the military units so they could observe the conflict firsthand. Journalists who were embedded started to rely significantly on the military for their safety. The lives of the journalists who chose to remain outside of the embedded groups were in danger. This was the most effective form of propaganda doctoring to encourage support for the war among the general population.

[3] The Indian Army holds an Investiture Ceremony every year at a predetermined place under the auspices of Regional Army Commands to uphold a long-standing tradition of commemorating its braves and heroes. Selected officers, JCOs, and other ranks in the Indian Army are honoured by awarding gallantry medals as well as outstanding service awards.

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'E-waste Management' A Critical Concern in the Post COVID-19 Era: A Field Study

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Abstract

The matter of E-waste management is perhaps the greatest issue crippling modern human society, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic which increased the demand for the latest electronic devices around the world. The objectives of this paper are to assess the level of understanding about E-waste amongst school-going students in U.T. Chandigarh, hence raising awareness; to analyze the amount of E-waste processed in the Shivalik Solid Waste Management Ltd Unit - 2, Nalagarh, Himachal Pradesh, India and to portray a relation between COVID-19 pandemic and E-waste generation. This study was conducted in 3 distinct phases. In the first phase, a survey was conducted in August 2022, with 200 students covering 20 government schools randomly in UT Chandigarh with a pre-tested questionnaire. Secondly, to understand E-waste processing, a field visit was undertaken to the E-waste Management Plant, where E-waste is collected from neighboring states of Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh. Thirdly, E-waste collected from schools was handed to an authorized E-waste recycler.

The comprehensive survey illustrated that close to 47% of the respondents donated/passed on older E-devices to other family members/friends etc., indirectly promoting the reuse of old gadgets, thus reducing the generation of E-waste. The relationship between COVID-19 and E-waste has been analyzed by carefully examining the official records of the E-waste Management plant, which showed that there was an 85.87% rise in the quantity of E-waste received by the plant from the years 2019-20 and 2020-21. Towards the end, the role of young people, in mitigating inappropriate

and unethical management of E-waste has been emphasized. There is a focus on practical approaches to boost individual efforts for a healthy environment through promoting research and innovation.

Keywords: Authorized Recyclers, COVID-19, E-waste, Reuse (Word Count: 287)

INTRODUCTION

E-waste and its Environmental Impact

IT and communication growth has increased electronic equipment usage tremendously. E-waste is increasing as people discard obsolete electronics quicker due to faster product upgrades. E-waste recycling and management must improve due to the growing problem. E-waste is formed when electronic and electrical equipment becomes unusable or expired. Electronic waste, or e-waste, is generated when electronic and electrical devices reach the end of their usability or expire. This category encompasses a wide range of items such as computers, monitors, CDs, printers, scanners, calculators, fax machines, battery cells, cell phones, TVs, iPods, washing machines, air coolers, refrigerators, and air conditioners that are no longer functional. The surge in technological advancements and the constant introduction of newer electronic products contribute to the rapid replacement of devices, leading to a significant increase in e-waste production. The decreasing lifespan of products and the preference for newer models among consumers further exacerbate the issue.

E-waste disposal at landfills or other non-dumping places threatens public health and pollutes ecosystems for centuries. Electronics in landfills generate hazardous substances that harm the environment and human health. Demolishing, crushing, or melting e-waste releases dust and pollutants like dioxins into the air, polluting it and harming respiratory health. Burning low-value e-waste yields copper and other metals. Burning e-waste releases small particles that can travel thousands of kilometres and cause chronic diseases and malignancies in humans and animals.

In unregulated recycling regions, acids, de-soldering, and other chemicals destroy gold and silver from highly integrated devices, releasing odours. Informal e-waste recycling pollutes air thousands of kilometres distant from recycling plants, but it is particularly risky for workers.

Harmful elements like mercury, lead, cadmium, polybrominated flame retardants, barium, and lithium are present in electronic waste, posing dangers to vital organs such as the brain, heart, liver, kidneys, and skeleton. These pollutants can also adversely affect the reproductive systems, leading to illnesses and birth abnormalities. The improper disposal of e-waste poses a severe threat to the environment, underscoring the importance of raising awareness about this escalating problem and its detrimental effects. Engaging in e-cycling, which involves the recycling, refurbishing, reselling, and reusing of electronic waste, is a crucial step in preventing these hazardous impacts. Without proper education on disposal methods, the challenges of e-waste management are likely to persist and worsen.

COVID-19 and E-waste

The COVID-19 pandemic skyrocketed the demand for newer electronic devices both nationally and internationally. What this implied was, that not only did people buy newer equipment, but also discarded their pre-existing devices in favour of more advanced and sophisticated gadgets. This is the origination of the research problem. With people switching E-devices, the burden of dismantling and processing fell unequally upon the limited and often not-so-advanced E-waste processing units. Not only were these processing facilities scarce, even lower remained the peoples' sense of action and enquiry as to what happened to their discarded processions. The COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, is associated with increased purchasing, usage and "switching" of E-devices, which although tried bridging the technological gaps, also challenged our E-waste disposal capabilities and ignorance towards the environment.

Seen as the most extraordinary event of our times, the COVID-19 pandemic deeply altered the traditional lifestyle and brought three major evolutionary

demands. The first was the change in economic systems of countries, organisations, departments and even households. When people were struck in the proximity of their homes, the COVID-19 pandemic was equally lethal to everyone. This led to a domino effect of collapsing economic structures around the world, from international systems to domestic budgets. The "new normal" demanded newer economic avenues to be created and replacing them with those of the past. The second demand was redevelopment of social ties and networks. Isolation and distance played a major role in influencing peoples' lives in the troubled times. Technology acted as the connecting force. The third demand of evolution was reassessing human psyche and its behaviour in response to the surrounding environment. People made serious choices, and moved by the severity of conditions, adjusted to the new normal, mourning the loss of loved ones, livelihood, familial bonds, and memories of a time which was "better".

When we consider the three above mentioned entities, namely economy (Livelihood), social relations, and human psychology, it is interesting how they become congruent to technology. All these aspects depend heavily on technology and electronic devices more than ever before. It is worth mentioning that functionality of such devices has grown in a multiplicity of ways catering to the needs of the modern times. In such scenario, where new functions keep on adding every day and older features become redundant, people tend to discard and upgrade their devices in order to harness the benefits of technology to the fullest. This constant need to upgrade and replace leads to generation of enormous amounts of E-waste, slowly turning into a public health crisis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gautam et al. (2012) explored the strategic management of end-of-life solar photovoltaic (PV) e-waste in developing countries like India. They focused on establishing a recycling infrastructure, analyzing metal usage in PV systems, and proposing a circular supply chain. The study recommended policies like extended producer responsibility to attract SME investors.

In their study, **Borthakur et al. (2017)** examined e-waste disposal in Bangalore, assessing compliance with the E-waste (Management) Rules, 2016 in the IT, banking, and education sectors. They suggested take-back systems, auctions, and producer responsibility organizations for responsible e-waste management and emphasized the need for a transparent system and proper infrastructure to address India's e-waste challenges.

Rabani et al. (2020) used a consumption model to estimate household e-waste generation in Jammu city. Field surveys revealed a daily e-waste generation of 7.745 tonnes, leading to recommendations for source separation programs and municipality-led surveys to facilitate infrastructure development for e-waste separation, collection, and recycling.

Dhull et al. (2021) assessed consumer awareness of e-waste in Haryana, measuring awareness dimensions among rural and urban consumers. They found that overall awareness was low, although urban respondents showed slightly higher awareness. The paper suggested strategies for policymakers to enhance awareness among electronic product users in Haryana.

Conducted in New Delhi, the study by **Borthakur et al. (2022)** focused on mobile phones as examples of e-waste. It explored purchase and disposal patterns, emphasizing functional need as the primary consideration for phone purchases. The study suggested that conspicuous consumption and a throwaway society were not prevalent in the sample, providing insights for policy formulation in emerging economies.

OBJECTIVES AND BROAD FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

1) To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the generation and management of E-waste by analyzing the increase in electronic device usage and disposal patterns during and after the pandemic.
2) To evaluate the effectiveness of E-waste recycling and disposal practices in UT Chandigarh, particularly the role of authorized recyclers and existing infrastructure.

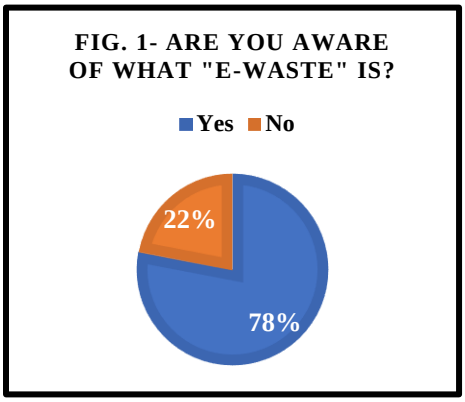
3) To explore the potential of youth engagement and education in promoting ethical E-waste management practices by examining the behaviours and attitudes of students towards reusing and recycling E-devices, and proposing strategies to enhance awareness and participation among young individuals for a sustainable environment.

METHODOLOGY

Commencing the study, primary data was systematically gathered through an extensive field survey and direct engagement with 200 students across 20 government schools, selected randomly within UT Chandigarh. Employing a rigorously structured questionnaire, students from various classes underwent randomized assessments to quantify their comprehension of e-waste management. Subsequently, for a comprehensive insight into e-waste processing, a field visit was conducted at Shivalik Solid Waste Management Ltd Unit - 2, Nalagarh, H.P. This facility acts as a collection hub for e-waste originating from neighbouring states, including Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh. Relevant data on E-WASTE [UOM-KG] spanning from April 2019 to April 2022 was systematically compiled from this site. Finally, a revisit to all schools was executed to scrutinize the volume of e-waste collected and subsequently transferred to the authorized recycler, Karo Sambhav Association, coupled with an in-depth analysis of associated activities within this domain.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Using a pre-tested questionnaire, the fundamentals of E-waste, its disposal and management were tested as a part of this study. The respondent group were explained the spirit of questions whenever deemed necessary so as to ensure meaningful data collection. The collected data was organised into charts to derive interpretations.



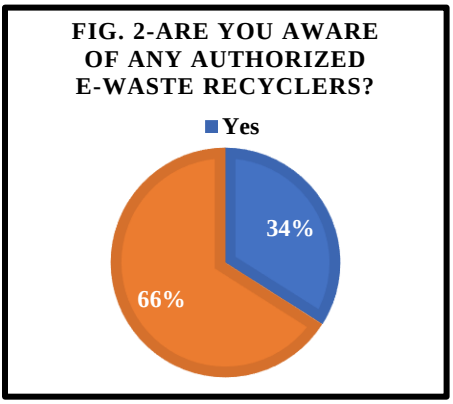


Fig. 1- Percentage of respondents aware of the term "E-waste"
Fig. 2- Percentage of respondents aware of the authorised E-waste recyclers

Figure 1 represents the most basic question to test respondents' knowledge on E-waste. The greater number of people who are aware of the term "E-waste", the more chances that they actually work to resolve its concerned issues. The diagram shows that more the three-fourth of the total sample population did not know what the term "E-waste" implies, pointing to severe under-awareness of the masses. Figure 2 elucidates the number of people who know or are in contact of any authorized e-waste recycler. It is a matter of concern that 66% didn't know anything about who these people were and what they do.

Electronic Gadgets	Zero	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
Television	6	138	40	13	3	0	0
Mobile	0	5	41	66	34	29	25
Washing Machine	108	73	21	0	0	0	0
Refrigerator	37	138	25	0	0	0	0
Laptop/ Computer	95	74	31	0	0	0	0
Air Conditioner	103	56	28	19	4	0	0
Cooler	45	109	32	13	1	0	0
Printer	157	43	0	0	0	0	0

Table No. 1- Number of each electronic device owned by each household.

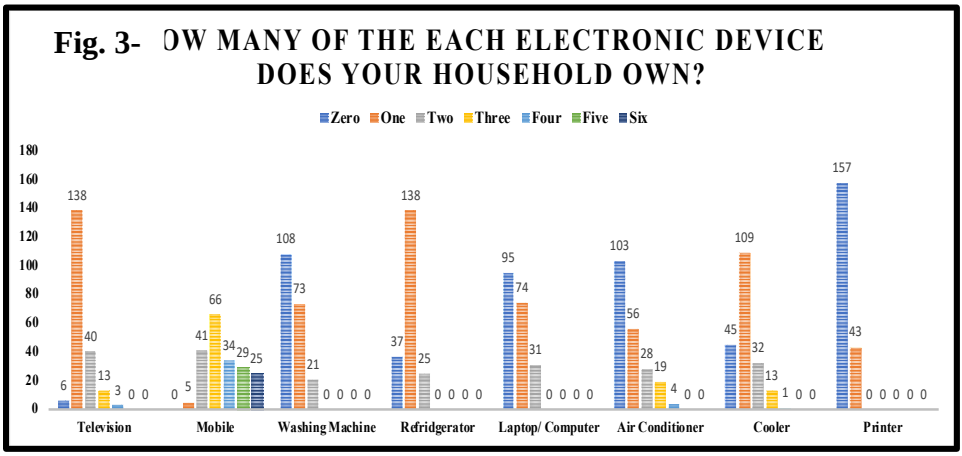


Fig. 3- Number of selected electronic devices owned by each household.

Table 1 and Fig. 3 provide with a comprehensive look at the number of selected electronic devices processed by each household of which the respondent belonged to. The E-devices chosen for the purpose of this study were Television, Mobile phone, Washing Machine, Laptop/computer, Air Conditioner, Cooler and printer. Mobile phones seem to be the most commonly processed item as the majority (66) household had atleast 3 of them. Atleast one Television and one refrigerator were owned by the 138 households. Around 109 households processed atleast one cooler. In the case of washing machine, laptop/computer, air conditioner and printer, the people who didn't possess any remained higher than those who did.

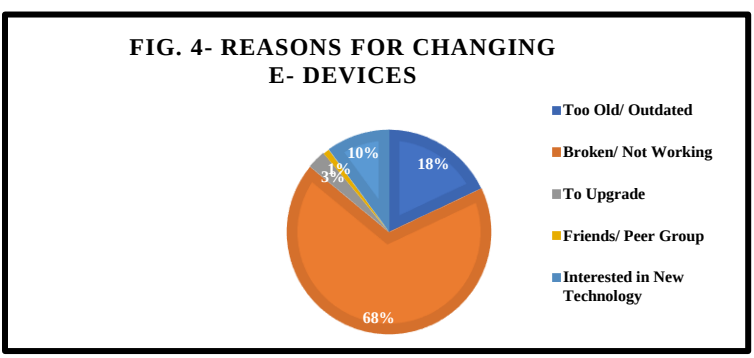
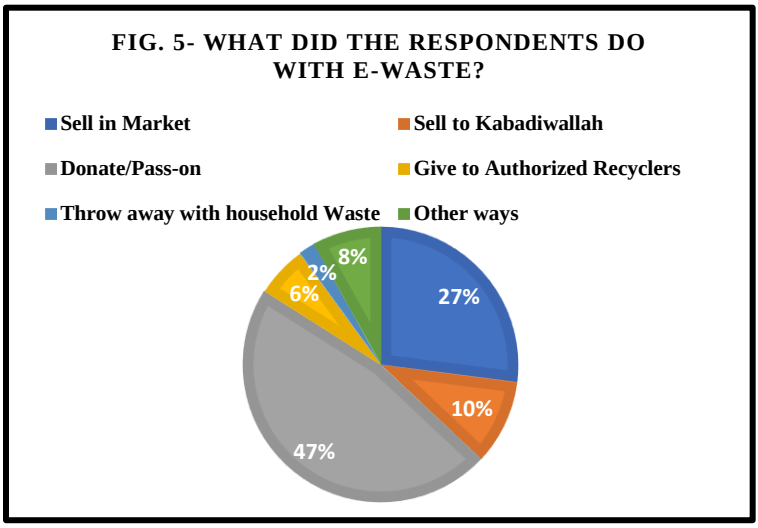


Fig. 4- reasons for changing E-devices as listed by the respondents.

Fig. 4 shows the reasons why people changed or switched their E-devices. It is notable that the majority of respondents (68%) would change their gadgets since they became obsolete and/or stopped working efficiently. Around 18% told that they would do so if their devices become too old or updated. Upgradation of devices was cited as the reason by 3% of respondents, followed by interest in latest technology (10%) and peer group pressure (1%).



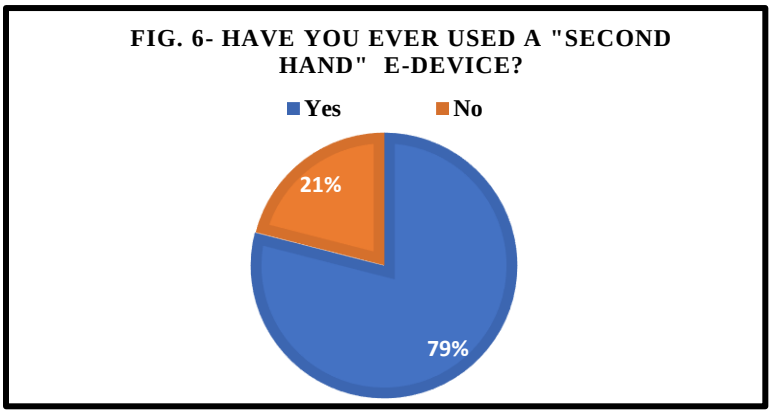
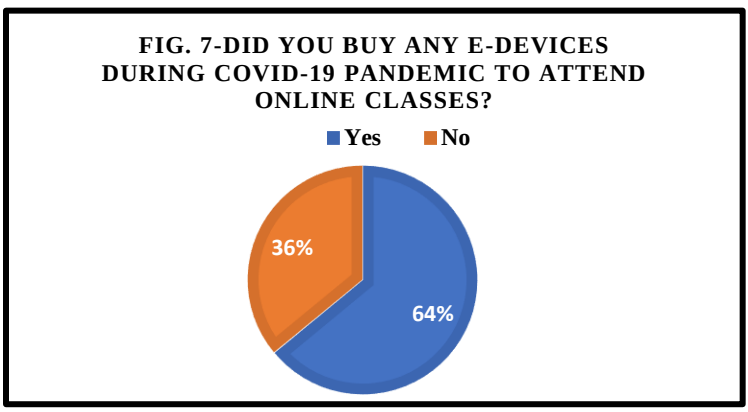


Fig. 5- E-waste disposal methods engaged by the respondents.

Fig.6 Percentage of respondents who have ever used a second-hand E-device.

Fig. 5 represents what the respondents of the study are mostly likely to do with their older devices. While 27% of the respondents said that they simply sell the old gadgets in the markets for money in return, only 6% responsibly hand them over to government authorised recyclers. Worse, 2% of the respondents admitted throwing their E-devices with the household waste itself, increasing the risk of environmental contamination manifold. Around 47% of respondents would preferably "pass-on" or "donate" their gadgets to others. Fig. 6 further shows that 79% of the respondents have actually used 'second-hand devices' at some point. This is practice of reuse helps in eliminating excess of e-waste generated.



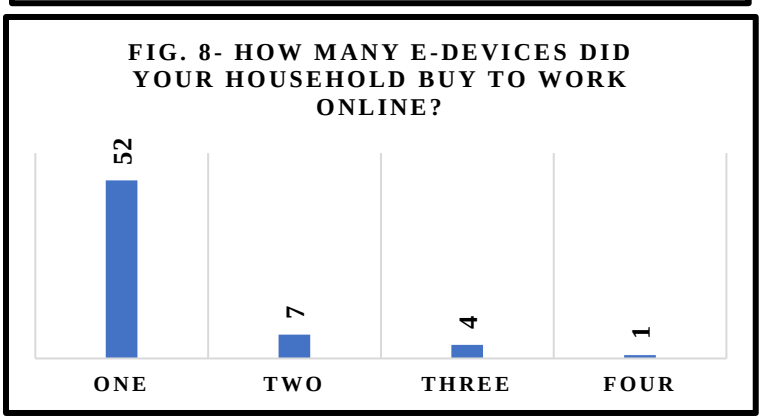


Fig. 7- Percentage of respondents who brought any E-devices during COVID-19 pandemic to attend online classes.

Fig. 8- Number of E-devices brought by each household to work online?

Fig. 7 shows that 64% of the respondents bought some kind of electronic device during the pandemic to attend online classes. This points towards increasing demand of technology during the pandemic. Fig. 8 enumerates the respondents who choose to answer the question "How many electronic gadgets did your household buy during the pandemic?" Out of the 64 answers received, it was noted that 52 households bought atleast one electronic device, followed by 7 devices (two households), 4 devices (three households) and 1 device (four households).

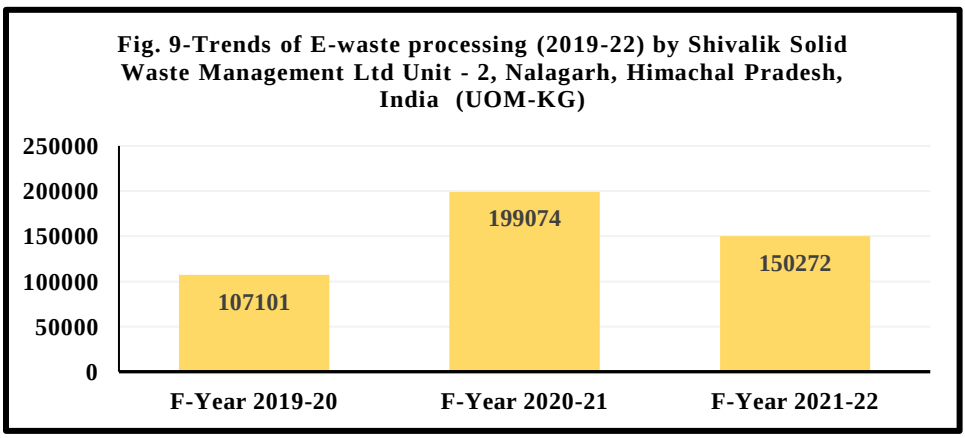


Fig. 9- Trends of E-waste Processing (2019-22) by Shivalik Solid Waste Management Ltd Unit-2, Nalagarh, Himachal Pradesh INDIA (UOM-KG)

Fig. 9 gives us some core observations from the Shivalik Solid Waste Management Ltd Unit - 2, Nalagarh, Himachal Pradesh, India, depicting the trends of E-waste processing from 2019-2022. It is evident that there has been a registered increase of 85% (from 107101 kg to 199074 kg) in the quantum of E-waste received and processed from the financial year 2019-20 to the year 2020-21. The time also coincides with the time when the COVID 19 pandemic peaked. This correlation forms the most important basis of the research issues, bringing into focus the direct relation between the two key aspects of this study, namely, E-waste generation and COVID-19. Further, there is a 24.5% decline in the E-waste received and processed

(from 199074 kg to 150272 kg) between the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Discussion

It is noticeable that the awareness of e-waste and its management remains scarce, more concerning being the fact that this data analysis takes the young people into account. Selling old/obsolete devices to the market or Kabadiwallah might seem economically wise, but one must take into consideration the impact of such "unofficial" disposal techniques. Not only thousands of workers work in dingy conditions extracting valuable metals out of such gadgets, the unwanted or rather, the harmful chemicals find their way to the landfills, this contaminating their immediate environment. The respondents said that they directly sell their e-waste in the market not knowing anything on who the authorized e-waste recyclers are. The culture of donating/passing on older electronic devices not only seems cheaper, but also helps reduce its ecological impact.

By a careful analysis of the e-waste disposal scenario, a few observations can be made. The first being on the nature of the job. The workers who are engaged in the tedious job were found to be unskilled labour without any significant academic history. Being financially compromised, such people are often found to be willing to take up jobs that are dangerous, lack of safety standards and can prove to be fatal. More rampant is the prevalence of children in such jobs, disguised as "helpers" or mere "assistants". The children are often vested with another responsibility- to scavenge from e-waste from enormous piles of trash, not to mention that they have no gloves/safety mechanism in place. These children dig into garbage to find remnants of charges, wires, phones, or another electronic device. No matter how trivial their contribution to the process may seem, these informal recyclers play a pivotal role in the ecosystem of e-waste disposal and reuse. It is because, while the big e-waste recycling unit are scarce and far, it the informal workers who act on the dismantling and extracting of at least of a part of the e-waste generated and discarded. Although the inspiration comes

from sole purpose of economic prospects of waste, it does reduce the burden on Municipal waste processing units which usually lack any machinery to tackle e-waste. Forming the bulk of the inorganized e-waste collectors, these are the people for whom specific measures have to be put into action in order to improve their standard of living, preventing fatal accidents/health hazards and subsequent assimilation into the organised sector.

The second major observation is people perception and understanding on the issues of e-waste. Thanks to ground-breaking publicity of Separating "wet" and "dry" wastes in India, people are more aware and even practice it on daily basis. But such an initiate to filter out e-waste at the point-of-generation is still missing from the roadmap of government initiation. People segregate waste based on wet or dry, but no such motivation comes for e-waste. The reason behind this is rooted in the gradual evolution of technology. The technological revolution that India has been going through has not been gradual as in the western part of the world, but rather quick and widespread, especially in India's urban centres. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a stronger push when people began to upgrade their digital/technological equipment in order to utilize the time they had when under lockdown. It can be felt that when people discard such e-waste, they usually do not give a thought on how it will be processed/disposed. It is necessary to inculcate a sense of "thinking for environment" in the citizens if the goal of sustainable development is to be achieved.

The third major observation that was reflected in the study was the importance of awareness and role of educational institutions in spreading it. Schools, colleges, and other institutions of national importance have a huge stake at ringing around social change, fuelling transformation and providing stage for development and growth. If people are taught about the importance of being socially productive and responsible citizens from a very early on, it speculated they might carry-on that attitude into adulthood and thereby internalising those values. The problem of E-waste is not important only

from the point of view of working conditions of the inorganized sector, but also because of damage it can perpetuate onto the environment, killing organisms and disrupting life processes. These lessons have to be a made a part of academic syllabus and talked about extensively in communities.

Conclusion

It may be inferred that it is crucial for individuals, especially the younger generation, to recognize the serious human and environmental health risks associated with improper and unethical e-waste management. The proper collection, processing, and disposal of e-waste, as well as its utilization as an alternative to traditional landfill and open burning methods, are essential practices. Combining efforts from both informal and official sectors is vital, and policymakers in developing nations like India need to establish secure and sustainable processes for handling e-waste. The field of e-waste management offers practical strategies to enhance individual contributions to environmental health through the promotion of research and innovation. With the noticeable technological revolution, spurred by changes in educational and professional practices during the COVID-19 era, there is a simultaneous need to address the risks associated with the disposal and processing of existing e-waste. The success of these endeavours ultimately hinges on the effective implementation of policies and collective efforts to preserve the environment.

Future Plan and Recommendations

- **Trainings and Workshops**

It is essential to make people aware about the management of E-waste and that can be achieved with regular trainings and workshops especially focusing on school students.

- **Addition in the Course Curriculum**

As we know that the problem of e-waste is rising day by day so it is very important and crucial to teach students about its management and correct disposal if it is made a compulsory section of the course curriculum.

- **Easy and Efficient Collection**

As we have noticed and analyzed, many people do not give their e-waste to authorised recyclers because their availability is quite limited, thus they sell their e-waste to local Kabadiwallah or mobile vendors. As a result, smart apps, as well as effective transportation and communication, are required to appropriately manage e-waste.

- **Research and Innovation**

Today we are living in a technological world and hence it is very important to manage the technology without harming the environment. Therefore, promotion of research and innovation is very important in the field of e-waste management. Students should be encouraged to participate in such activities.

- **Field Visits**

When a student theoretically studies concepts, it is critical for him or her to get practical knowledge via gaining exposure to the outside world. As a result, students should be taken to places where they can witness the practical process of e- waste processing.

- **Certification and Upskilling of Workers in Informal Sector**

The majority of unorganized e-waste recycling labour necessitates specialized expertise, particularly in the adept handling and disassembly of hazardous products. It is imperative to ensure the protection of both environmental and occupational health and safety during these operations while also establishing connections between production and formal sector processors.

- **Imports of E-waste**

E-waste cannot be imported for ultimate disposal under current rules; however, it may be imported for reuse and recycling. We must strongly consider banning all types of imports due to the lack of suitable recycling facilities in the nation. Import data must be combined with an e-waste

inventory in order to create reliable estimates of e-waste.

- **Encouragement of purchasing fewer electronic devices should be promoted**

A significant portion of electronic waste stems from avoidable purchases. It is advisable for individuals to refrain from acquiring brand-new electrical gadgets that lack proper recycling or disposal mechanisms provided by the manufacturer. Opting for electronic products with extended lifespans or recyclability features represents an environmentally conscientious choice, contributing to the mitigation of e-waste.

- **Donating or giving away e-waste should be encouraged**

Donate items you no longer use to those who will put them to good use. Giving to charity is a great way to save money on taxes because the amount you give is usually very close to the asset's market value.

- **Upgradation in Policies and Reforms**

The policy should be changed to encourage healthy collaboration between the informal and formal sectors, where the best-of-both-worlds can be judiciously leveraged for long-term E-waste governance in India.

- **Developing a Green Supply Chain for E-waste Management**

A green supply chain is a network of suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and consumers who collaborate to reduce the environmental impact of their activities. A green supply chain for e-waste management can involve strategies such as eco-design, green procurement, reverse logistics, remanufacturing, and recycling. By adopting a green supply chain approach, e-waste management can reduce the consumption of natural resources, energy, and emissions, as well as improve the economic and social benefits for the stakeholders.

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