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Articles

Roadmap for Integrating Total Quality Management in the Philosophy and Management Framework of Adult Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the least discussed topics in Adult Education (AE) or Adult Learning and Education (ALE) is Total Quality Management (TQM) and its integration into its philosophy and management. The paucity of such discussions in ALE prompted the writing of this paper, which began with the discussion of the origin, definition, and basic characteristics of the Total Management System, as well as an overview of adult learning and education. The basic characteristics and principles of TQM and adult learning and education were presented. The paper argued that both TQM and ALE are compatible with each other. Arising from the comparison, the paper discussed the application of Deming's 14 Points TQM implementation framework in adult learning and education. Recommendations on the practical application of TQM in adult learning and education were made. The paper concluded that TQM brings practical tools to the philosophical framework of adult learning and education that empower the learners, facilitate change, aid problem-solving, and value continuous improvement and growth.

Keywords: *Total quality management, philosophy and management framework, adult education, continuous improvement and growth, lifelong learning values.*

Introduction

The underlying desire of any individual or organisation when embarking on a venture, project or programme is quality delivery of such venture, project or programme. Increasingly, quality makes the difference between success and failure. Sallis (2002) submitted that "quality is what makes the difference between things being excellent or run-of-the-mill". The emphasis on quality led to the emergence of total quality management, as a management philosophy, embraced by business organisations, and industries to be globally competitive producers of quality goods

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and services. Thus, total quality management is universally recognised as an effective management philosophy for continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and organisational excellence (Sohel-Uz-Zaman and Anjalin, 2016). Even though total quality management was developed in the manufacturing sector, it has been found to be compatible and applicable in education in general (Lunenburg, 2010) and adult education in particular (Bierema, 1996). Therefore, this paper focuses on how total quality management can be integrated in the philosophy and management of adult learning education programmes since TQM offers a useful framework in adult learning and education.

Origin, Definition and Basic Characteristics of Total Management System (TQM)

Total quality management was first espoused and advocated by W. Edwards Deming in the late 1950s in the USA, but his ideas were not accepted by USA industry (Walton, 1986). However, Japan was the first country to embrace TQM to recover her economy after World War II (Oakland, 1993). The success of TQM implementation in Japan made this concept popular in many countries across the world. Originally, the concept was developed for manufacturing organisations, which gained popularity, and later, in other service institutions including bank, insurance, non-profit organisations, and healthcare, among others (Sohel-Uz-Zaman and Anjalin, 2016). TQM has also been found relevant to corporations, service organisations, Universities, as well as elementary and secondary schools (Lunenburg, 2010). TQM is now globally recognised as a versatile management tool applicable to any organisational setting.

1. TQM is a planned and systematic approach to ensure quality and continuous improvement.
2. TQM is a holistic management approach that incorporates all organisational activities to satisfy customers' needs and achieve overall organisational objectives.
3. TQM is a method by which management and employees are involved in an ongoing process of enhancing the production of goods and services.
4. TQM is a pragmatic model focusing on service to others.
5. In TQM, the customer is an exclusive issue and customer satisfaction is considered a major source of business or organisational success.
6. TQM leads to continuous improvement in the capabilities of the employees.
7. TQM helps in creating a culture of trust, participation, teamwork, quality-mindedness, enthusiasm for continuous improvement, constant learning and as a result, a working culture that contributes towards a firm's success and existence (Yusuf and Aspinwall, 2000).

8. TQM comprises a management doctrine and organisational practices aim to optimise both human and material resources within an organisation in the most efficient way, to ultimately attain the goals of the organisation.
9. TQM views an organisation as a collection of interrelated processes.
10. In TQM, "the driver of the entire system is the customer" (Ross, 1993).

The various definitions of TQM, as discussed above, provides its basic characteristics which are:

1. Customer satisfaction,
2. Continuous improvement,
3. Integration of people,
4. Functions and resources,
5. Systematic and structured approach,
6. Quality control at every level of the organisation and at every step of the operating process,
7. Development of human and organisational capabilities,
8. Efficient utilisation of resources,
9. People participation, and
10. Creating a quality culture.

Overview of Adult Learning and Education

Adult Education or Adult Learning or Adult Learning and Education (ALE), as UNESCO has appropriately termed it in its various documents, has been myopically misconceived by many as simply providing education to illiterates on how to read, write, and calculate simple numeracy or arithmetic; or a second-chance learning opportunity for non-literate youth and adults to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills and be able to function in their daily life with the skills (Ojokheta, 2020). In this sense, many, including educational policy makers, equate adult education with literacy education. Even the official education policy document of Nigeria recognises it in chapter four of the 6th National Policy on Education (2013) revised edition.

However, these perceptions are not in tandem with the global overview and perception of this field of study.

Some of the most concise perceptions of Adult Education are reproduced below:

1. Adult Education is "a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities

for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills" (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

2. Adult Education is a field of "practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained learning activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, or values" (Merriam and Brockett, 2007).

3. Adult Education is "an important tool to tackle social and economic inequality, reduce poverty, prepare global society for new paradigms of sustainable production and consumption, train skilled labour for competitive economies, create the basis for a culture of peace and conviviality, establish more harmonious relationships between human and natural environments, and develop the potential of all people" (UNESCO, 2009).

4. Adult Education is a fundamental human right "for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable, and knowledge-based societies" (UNESCO, 2011).

5. Adult Education is "any form of learning that adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfilment as a lifelong learner" (Spencer, & Lange, 2014).

6. Adult Education has made a long evolutionary journey from being merely a second-chance opportunity for illiterate adults to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skill; to a comprehensive canvas for providing education for all, throughout life, as lifelong and life-wide learning (UNESCO, 2017).

7. The Fourth UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education held in Paris in 1985 perceived Adult Education "as a means to achieve social justice and educational equality while its contribution to economic and social development was considered crucial" (UNESCO, 1985).

8. The Fifth UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg, Germany in 1997 (popularly called the Hamburg Declaration) defined Adult Education as:

The key to the twenty-first century; it is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice... (Hamburg Declaration paragraph 2).

The conference also called for "a set amount of time to be devoted to adult education, everywhere and by everyone – one hour a day – one week a year" (UNESCO/UIL, 1997).

9. The last UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education held in Belem, Brazil in 2009 stressed the broadness of the concept of Adult Education as a "significant component of the lifelong learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning" and an "imperative for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies" (UNESCO, 2010, 2011; UIL, 2010b). The conference conceptually recognised adult education as very rich and multi-referenced. It conceptualised the field of study as "a significant component of the humanistic perspective of lifelong learning" (UNESCO, 2011; UIL, 2014).

10. UNESCO (2015) provided a comprehensive perception of Adult Education as "a core component of lifelong learning comprising all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes: formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies" (UNESCO/ UIL, 2016).

11. Adult Education constitutes a major building block of a learning society and for the creation of learning communities, cities and regions as they foster a culture of learning throughout life and revitalize learning in families, communities and other learning spaces, and in the workplace (2015 UNESCO Declaration).

12. Adult Education includes education and learning opportunities for active citizenship (variously known as community, popular or liberal education). It empowers people to actively engage with social issues such as poverty, gender, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection, and climate change. It also helps people to lead a decent life, in terms of health and well-being, culture, spirituality and in all other ways that contribute to personal development and dignity (2015 UNESCO Declaration).

From the various perceptions of adult education presented above, it can clearly be seen that adult education means much more than the misleading and myopic perception usually associated with it by the generality of people. It is a field of study and practice relevant to promoting peace, social development, social justice, individual self-development, advancement and transformation, educational equality, lifelong learning, life-wide learning, and environmental protection and climate change education, among others.

Besides, adult education is considerably recognised and accorded top priority in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development approved by the United Nations in 2015 (United Nations, 2015; 2016) and the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (World Education Forum, 2015). Goal 4 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education as well as promoting lifelong learning for all. Out of the 10 targets of Goal 4, five targets were set aside for achieving adult education as shown below:

Goal 4: Target 3 called on all countries to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university by 2030.

Goal 4: Target 4 called on all countries to ensure substantial increase in the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship by 2030.

Goal 4: Target 5 called on all countries to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations by 2030.

Goal 4: Target 6 called on all countries to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030.

Goal 4: Target 7 called on all countries to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development by 2030.

These targets were overwhelmingly stressed in the vision of the Education 2030 Agenda which is designed "to transform lives through education by leaving no one behind and by recognising the important role of education as the main driver of development and for achieving the other proposed 16 SDGs" (World Education Forum, 2015).

Adult education is multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional in nature whose scope is so expansive. UNESCO (2015) captured the aim of adult education as (1) "to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their rights and take control of their destinies; (2) to promote personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement by adults with their societies, communities, and environments; and (3) to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth and decent work prospects of individuals".

The objectives of adult education, as specified in UNESCO's 2015 document, are to:

i. Develop the capacity of individuals for critical thinking and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility;
ii. Reinforce the capacity to deal with and influence economic and workplace advancements;
iii. Contribute to the creation of a learning society ensuring equal learning opportunities for all to participate in sustainable development processes and community solidarity;
iv. Promote peaceful coexistence and human rights; (e) foster resilience in both young and older adults; and
v. Enhance awareness for the protection of the environment.

The document concluded that adult education is a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributing to sustainable learning societies. The detailed and comprehensive knowledge of adult education reveals that adult education, in its true and correct perception, is very wide in nature. It covers the entire activities of mankind in every phase of human existence. It aims at increasing the range of human experiences which individuals can respond to. It helps individuals to recognise the basic commonalities of human experiences, and aims at holistic development of the human person: persons who are open to change, continued learning, and self-actualisation (Ojokheta, 2020).

Compatibility of TQM with Adult Learning and Education

From the overview of adult learning and education (ALE) discussed above, it is evident that the richness of the field of study requires TQM as a management philosophy and model in the planning, organisation, administration, and implementation of the various programmes associated with its diverse forms and components. Similarly, a closer scrutiny of the basic characteristics emphasised in adult learning and education reveals compatibility with those emphasised in total quality management (TQM). TQM emphasises customer satisfaction, while ALE emphasises learners' satisfaction. Continuous improvement of the organisation is the hallmark of TQM, and continuous improvement of the learning process is the hallmark of ALE. TQM focuses on the integration of people and their participation in the success of the organisation, while ALE focuses on learners' participation for their success in their learning. The pragmatic model of TQM focuses on providing services to others, while that of ALE focuses on providing services to the learners. TQM is premised

on systematic and structured approach in organisational and learning management, respective. Creating a culture of quality is key to TQM, and creating a quality learning culture is equally vital in ALE, among others. Table one shows the comparison of TQM and ALE basic characteristics.

Table1: Comparison of TQM and ALE Basic Characteristics

Basic Characteristics of TQM	Basic Characteristics of ALE
Customer satisfaction	Learners' satisfaction
Continuous improvement of organisation	Continuous improvement of learning process
People's participation for organisation success	Learners' participation for their success in their learning
Quality culture for organisational management	Quality culture for learning management
Service to others	Service to the learners
Systematic and structured approach in organisation management	Systematic and structured approach in learning management
Development of human and organisational capabilities	Development of learners' capabilities to learn and apply such learning to their lives
Efficient utilisation of resources	Efficient utilisation of all resources to improve learning
Teamwork	Group work/collaborative learning
Enhancing organisational growth	Enhancing learner's growth

In a similar manner, Bierema (1996) concluded a comparison between total quality management and adult learning and education principles and concluded that they share some similarities. Bierema's comparison was based on multiple definitions of adult education (Courtney, 1989). Beder (1989) had offered four categorisation of the basic purposes of adult education which were: "(1) to facilitate change in dynamic society, (2) to support and maintain the good social order, (3) to promote productivity, and (4) to enhance personal growth". Adult education has also been defined as the process of development and growth "[The] progressive movement towards the solution of problems and development of abilities to counter similar future problems with greater competencies" (Boyd, Apps & Associates, 1980). It is in this context that Merriam and Caffarella (1991) observed that "most definitions of adult education involve behavioural change and experience". Based on this submission, Bierema, (1996), argued that "the similarities between TQM and adult education lie in the orientation of both toward creating change that results in an improved system".

Bierema (1996) summarised the compatibility of TQM with adult education or adult learning and education as shown in Table 2 on next page:

**Table 2: A Comparison of TQM and Adult Learning and Education
Principles**

TQM Principles	Adult Learning and Education Principles
Continuous improvement in every facet of life and work	Lifelong learning
Customer satisfaction	Student/learners satisfaction
Participative management	Empowerment of the learner
Change	Transformation
Prevention rather than inspection	Inspection through testing ineffective. Prevent mistakes of learner
Breakdown barriers between manager and employee	Breakdown barriers between teacher and learner
Enabling management	Enabling learning
Information is key enabler	Knowledge is power
Know thy customer	Know thy student/learner
Systemic	Systemic
Teamwork	Team learning and team teaching
Coach versus manager	Teacher versus facilitator of learning
PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) Cycle	Learning contract

Source: Bierema, Laura, L. (1996). Total Quality and Adult Education: A Natural Partnership in the Classroom. *Innovative Higher Education*, 20, 3, 145- 159.

Applying Deming's 14 Points TQM Implementation Framework in Adult Learning and Education

The 14 points of W. Edwards Deming, adapted from Winn and Green's (1998) framework, is globally recognised as the framework of implementation of total quality management (Walton, 1986) and all the 14 points are applicable in adult learning and education. They are:

1. Create constancy of purpose- The starting point of implementation of TQM is for every organisation to develop a mission statement defining the organisational purpose or aim which is called *the constancy of purpose. In adult learning and education programmes, constancy of purpose can be defined as follows "to develop skills, attitudes, and motivation in adult learners so they become responsible citizens capable of making positive contributions to society".* It must be stressed that developing a mission statement is not a trivial task; it requires a deep understanding of why adult learning and education programmes exist. Everyone involved in programme implementation must be carried engaged and empowered to contribute and add value at each level of the implementation process.

2. Adopt a new philosophy- Every organisation implementing TQM must insist on a new philosophy based on quality, which should be built on an atmosphere of cooperation among all staff rather than competition. Implementing an adult learning and education programme must emphasise the quality of cooperation among everybody involved. The question everyone involved must always ask is *"What can we, as adult learner's facilitators, do to ensure every learner has the best opportunity to learn most productively?"*. This what the philosophy of quality preaches.

3. Cease dependence on mass inspection- To build quality, organisations operating TQM must focus more on the processes of producing products or services rather than solely relying on inspections. Emphasising processes allows the organisation to discover defects at various stages of production rather than waiting until the end for mass inspection. The analogy of this in adult learning and education programme is that we need to develop processes of learning among the adult learners, wherein there is less emphasis on testing but more focus on the progress of learning. For example, adult learner facilitators must prioritise formative assessment tests over summative tests. These formative tests must be conducted to ascertain the progress of learning of the adult learners rather than merely for the evaluation of learners' performance.

4. End the practice of conducting business on cost alone- Organisations operating TQM to end the practice of conducting business on cost alone. This implies that organisations must consider the long-time benefits and values of producing a product or service rather than the cost of producing it alone. The analogy of this in adult learning and education programme is that if a new programme is being planned for implementation, such programme is bound to fail if the long-time benefits and values are not determined or ascertained. The long-time benefits and values of a programme are more important than the cost of planning or mounting it.

5. Constantly improve processes- Organisations operating under TQM must constantly improve their processes. The integration of this principle in adult learning and education programmes means that the processes of educating the adult learners must also undergo constant improvement. One must find whether the learners are more satisfied in their learning experience than before; and similarly, whether the facilitators are more satisfied in their role more than before. If the answer to these questions is no, we must promptly find out why and address the situation immediately. On the other hand, if the answer is yes, we must determine the processes that soled to this outcome. In other words, we must constantly analyse the processes to identify areas for improvement. This approach involves introducing innovations and incremental changes to the process.

6. Institute training- A TQM organisation must ensure that everyone in the organisation knows their job and responsibilities. Capacity development programmes should always be implemented to enhance the technical competence of all staff

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members. The analogy of this in adult learning and education programmes is that we should consistently organise development programme for facilitators and other related personnel to enhance their capacity and competence in facilitating learning for adult learners, taking into consideration their unique characteristics during the facilitation process. We must provide training in TQM principles because the more the facilitators are aware of TQM, the more likely they are to apply it consistently during the facilitation process.

7. **Institute leadership**- Organisations operating under TQM must prioritize leadership over management. Everyone involved in an adult learning and education programme has some form of a leadership role to play. It is essential to strive to be a coach rather than a judge or overseer. A leader in adult learning and education must act as a designer or a creator of a conducive learning environment. They should identify and eliminate barriers to communication and effective learning. Their primary focus should be on ensuring the learners' satisfaction in their learning experience.

8. **Drive out fear**- In adult learning and education, fear constitutes a significant-impediment to the success and learning performance of adult learners. Therefore, a good and efficient facilitator must do everything possible to instil confidence in the adult learners. He or she must work with the learners to make them believe in their ability to learn and achieve success. Facilitators prioritize learners' progress of learning over constant evaluation of the learners. Fear often arises in adult learners when facilitators excessively focus on evaluation mechanisms like tests, quizzes, and exams.

9. **Break down barriers**- Organisations operating under TQM must strive to break down barriers by promoting cooperation rather than competing among staff. Such organisations must encourage cross-functionality to address problems and process improvements. This principle is also applicable in adult learning and education programmes. A good facilitator must always encourage team-learning, and cooperative learning among adult learners, rather than promoting competitive learning. The best method to achieve this is through group work among the learners. The adult educator must involve all the learners in the decision-making process regarding what they want to learn, how they want to learn it, and how they want the learning to be evaluated.

10. **Avoid obsession with goals and slogans**-Organisations operating TQM must devise means through which workers can achieve a goal rather than simply telling them to achieve it without providing the necessary resources. In adult learning and education, learners must be provided with all learning materials and resources to make them achieve their learning goal. The provision of learning materials and other resources will positively impact their learning, while the absence of such support will negatively affect their performance.

11. Eliminate numerical quotas- Organisations operating TQM must eliminate numerical quotas because they become crutches of poor supervision. This principle is evident in the assembly line during the production process. If numerical quotas are established for workers, the quality will decrease. This principle also applies to adult learning and education. When implementing an adult learning and education programme, the primary focus must be on maintaining quality throughout the process. Only after ensuring the quality of the programme's implementation should the issue of quantity (i.e., how many people will participate in the programme) be addressed.

12. Remove barriers to pride of workmanship- Organisations operating under TQM must eliminate barriers to pride of workmanship. By involving workers in some of the decision-making processes, they can develop a strong sense of ownership that significantly impacts their attitudes. This also applies to adult learning and education programmes. This principle is also applicable to adult learning and education programmes. Empowering learners through cooperative, collaborative, or group work where they can share ideas and experiences fosters a strong sense of ownership over their learning. Barriers to learning among the learners should be dismantled; they can learn a lot from each other when engaged in group work and cooperative learning.

13. Organisation-wide involvement- For TQM to succeed in an organisation everyone must be involved in the organisational process and be aware of and concerned about their immediate customer. Similarly, in adult learning and education programme, everyone must be included in the process and implementation of the programme. For instance, facilitators who undergo capacity development trainings on new techniques and technologies to use during the facilitation process, are much more likely to suggest improvements based on the processes they have been exposed to.

14. Define management's responsibilities to make it happen- Deming emphasized that management at every level, especially the top level, should fully embrace and adopt TQM philosophy. It is crucial for Management to have a clear understanding of the significance of each of the 14 points in relation to the mission of the organisation. The analogy of this principle to adult educators is that everyone involved in the planning and implementation of an adult learning and education programme must wholeheartedly accept and adopt the TQM philosophy, and principles discussed above.

Practical Application of TQM in Adult Learning and Education: Some Recommendations

Integrating TQM in adult learning and education must be considered a worthy adventure by all scholars and practitioners. The values of quality, innovation, and

continuous improvements of programmes must be the embedded professional philosophy of all scholars and practitioners in adult learning and education. Two key areas in adult learning and education where the values of TQM can be integrated are the curriculum design and facilitation strategies. Therefore, a facilitator using a TQM-compliant facilitation strategy must have a framework discussed below:

1. **Write the facilitation philosophy and values**- A good facilitator must create a facilitation "vision and value statement" similar to the mission statements written in quality initiatives. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the vision and value statement should be regularly reviewed and enhanced, and it should be shared with the learners/beneficiaries of a programme during the meeting. At the end of the programme, a summative evaluation should be conducted among the learners/ beneficiaries to assess their reaction and response to the facilitation philosophy and values.

2. **Design the facilitation process and format**- Facilitators should design facilitation process and format to foster personal growth and enhance the vision of the learners/beneficiaries. They should allow the learners/beneficiaries to participate both individually and collaboratively (in team work) and create a shared vision for what will be learned during the course. By doing so, learners are given control and flexibility in determining their learning objectives and plans. This aligns with the TQM principle of consensus decision-making.

3. **Promote learners' satisfaction**- As continuous improvement and growth hold significance in both TQM and adult learning and education, learners must be given the opportunity to provide feedback periodically. Facilitators must respond promptly to these feedbacks. This feedback process could be facilitated through a folder system, Wherein which learners receive a folder from the facilitator to share feedback at the end of every class, and subsequently return the folder to the facilitator for a response. Learners must be actively encouraged to express their expectations for satisfaction in the learning process.

4. **Engage in participative and empowered facilitation**- The learning should be designed to be interactive, experiential, and participative with very little reliance on traditional lectures. Learners should be given full authority to make decisions affecting every aspect of their learning. Each learning session must adhere to a *P. O. P* (Purpose, Outcomes, and Plan) agenda. Within this framework, each learning outcome should be accompanied by a clear goal and specified activities.

5. **Encourage critical reflection from the learners**- An atmosphere of trust is fostered when learners feel comfortable sharing their world views and engaging in constructive challenges with one another. This process aids them in mastering the art of dialogue. Learners can also be encouraged to write brief reflective opinions on topics of their choice as discussed in the class. The goal is to guide learners in

uncovering and appreciating their individual voices while nurturing the development of critical thinking skills.

6. **Make use of Teamwork**- In adult learning and education, learners bring a wealth of experiences and ideas to learning situations, contributing to a collective pool of knowledge from which everyone can learn. Therefore, a facilitator should encourage small teams to collaborate on exercises and reflect on topics covered and discussed in class. Teamwork offers learners the benefits of mutual learning from one another and lessens the dynamic in which learners expect to rely solely on the facilitator for all teaching. It should be noted that teamwork serves as the cornerstone of TQM.

7. **Set the ground rules**- Establishing ground rules or guidelines for treating team members with respect and dignity is also a core value of TQM value. Ground rules facilitate the involvement of all participants in the learning process. The facilitator must determine the ground rules explain them and share them with the learners during the initial meeting of the learning exercise. Subsequently, the class should collaboratively establish its own set of rules through consensus. Generally, ground rules include respecting individuals and ideas, fostering mutual support, and creating an environment where learners can take risks, learn, and grow.

8. **Promote continuous improvement/lifelong learning-** Given the significance of continuous improvement and growth in both TQM and adult learning and education, facilitators must develop diverse methods of facilitation that allow learners to express their views and opinions on any aspect of the learning process. Additionally facilitators must cultivate the practice of providing feedback in the subsequent class concerning all materials submitted by the learners.

Conclusion

The various segments of discussion in this paper demonstrate that TQM is a powerful tool suitable for adoption in adult learning and education, despite its initial development with manufacturing processes in mind. In other words, merging TQM with principles of adult learning and education can create a powerful partnership in any learning endeavour. TQM introduces practical tools into the philosophical framework of adult learning and education, empowering learners, facilitating change, aiding in problem-solving, and valuing continuous improvement and growth. The key elements of TQM that adult educators and practitioners must prioritize for the successful implementation of adult learning and education programmes include (1) garnering support of everyone involved in the planning and implementation of the programme, thereby promoting a teamwork attitude; (2) identifying the beneficiaries, (3) maintaining a steadfast focus on refining the process; and (4) employing Deming's 14 Points, as discussed earlier, as a guiding framework and checklist throughout the implementation of any adult learning and education programme.

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Situating the Social: Habermas and the Emancipatory Possibilities of Adult Education

• **Akshiptika Rattan**[1]

Abstract

The paper attempts to establish crucial linkages between adult learning and the emancipatory possibilities of adult education. It relies upon the fundamental ideas offered by critical sociological theory, building upon the works of Habermas and the theory of communicative action. Throughout the discussion of critical and transformative learning concepts, the paper asserts the significance of acknowledging the social and cultural contexts of the adult learners within the learning process. Adult educators must suspend their preconceived assumptions and actively engage towards sustaining a more meaningful, dialogical, and transparent environment, considering the situated realities and requirements of the learners. Inculcating sociological sensibilities is indispensable to foster empowering and collaborative practices, build communities of practice, promote social change, and explore alternative pathways for learning and harmonious co-existence.

Keywords_: Adult learning, social context, emancipation, critical theory, social change, transformative learning, situated realities, sociological imagination, critical consciousness, life-world, discourse._

Introduction

Adult education and lifelong learning intrinsically convey a simple but striking message: learning is essentially a lifelong endeavor. It is not just a continuous process but also requires structures and policies that support and encourage its realization, particularly among individuals and groups who have been systematically disadvantaged and marginalized. Two important works, 'The Three Dimensions of Learning' and 'Adult Education and Adult Learning' (Illeris 2002, 2004), delve into notion that learning primarily includes two intertwined yet distinct processes: the external and

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objective interaction between learner and the social, macro and material environment, and the internal and subjective-psychological process involving elaboration and acquisition. In the words of Jarvis, lifelong learning is defined as:

> "The combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical, and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, and senses) – experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively, or practically (through any combination) and integrated into the person's biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person" (2007: 1).

The point of crucial distinction of adult learning is that it is predominantly selective and self-directed, where adults make concrete and voluntary choices about what they want to learn and define the meaningfulness of the learning process in terms of their life-situations, social contexts, and the resources they already possess in their learning (Cranton, 2011). Although education of children and adults, both constitute educational enterprises, there are pivotal differences between the two in terms of educational genres, distinction of priorities, modes of provision, learning styles and institutional forms. The concept of 'andragogy,' a set of assumptions, principles and practices differentiates between adult learning and children's learning and pedagogy (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Its focal point is more on the characteristics of adult learners rather than the process of learning itself. Far from being reduced to a technique, it is largely a philosophy that serves as a guidebook for the teacher. According to Knowles who first introduced the term, adult learners possess the following main characteristics:

1. As maturity levels increase, an individual's self-concept shifts from a dependent personality structure to becoming a more self-directing individual.
2. Adult individuals possess a rich reservoir of life-experiences that serve as a fecund resource of learning.
3. An adult learner's willingness and motivation to learn are linked to the developmental tasks associated with their social role.
4. For adult learners, the concept and perspective of time different. They prioritize problem-solving and the immediate utility and application of knowledge.
5. The primary and overwhelming motivation is internal, rather than being externally driven.
6. Adult learners need transparency and clarity upon why they need to learn something (1980: 44-45).

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The guidance, motivation, or compulsion, in the case of adult learning shall always be contextualized in relation to their own situated realities, embedded within their life-experiences and perspectives. Thus, adult education is perceived as an engagement with the community, which must consider both the social nature of learning and the complex and multi-dimensional social processes that are involved in it (Tuckett, 2015). Adult learning cannot be reduced to a simple acquisition of knowledge and skills, nor it can rely on strait-jacketed, pre-established and traditional pedagogical practices. The relevance of an education programme for adults, must bear upon their social and pragmatic realities and purposes and must be rationalized in a way that persuades and assures them of its meaning and utility. A simple and descriptive typology identifies four major traditions in adult learning – training and efficiency in learning, self-directed learning and the andragogy school, learner-centered education and humanistic education, and the critical pedagogy and social action (Romiszowski, 2011: 60). It is useful to design educational programmes for adult learners with a synthesis of philosophical and epistemological orientations of both 'liberal adult education' and 'vocational adult education' where these are not seen as mutually exclusive but complement one another (Forrest & Peterson, 2006: 116). The larger and final objective, therefore, is empowerment, to develop humans who are capable of adaptation, critical and independent thinking and decision-making, self-sufficiency, and free inquiry (Eylon & Herman, 1999).

In prevalent terms, adult education can be defined as "the continuing and resumption of formal, non-formal, and/or informal learning with general or vocational content after completion of initial training" (Kleinert & Matthes, 2010). The underlying value in adult learning and education is granting the individual his/her complete personhood along with both independence and freedom to make choices and decisive responsibility. Adults, it must be remembered, seek meaning – both every-day and transcendent, assess reasons, and engage in reflective discourse. Adult education, therefore, must be an empowering process and ensure that the individual is not stripped of his/her identity as an adult (Stanistreet, 2019:856). This, however, presupposes that the education programmes designed for adults must be flexible in nature. With a clear and broad framework in hand, these should not be fully pre-determined, definite, structured, or regimented; they must have an emergent property, and the adult educator must be conscious and sensitized towards providing space and autonomy to the adult learners. However, it is vital to note here that there are ongoing contestations regarding the assumptions that the adult learner is autonomous and in control of his or her learning.

Thus, for enhancing positive engagement of the participants, the fundamental challenge for adult education remains ensuring that the learning process and outcomes

are subjectively meaningful and fulfilling for the adults, while also meeting the objective criteria and standards. Learner identity is socially constituted and learning discourses themselves can reproduce power relations and perpetuate inequality. Adult educators, therefore, must ensure that the participants receive complete information and experience freedom from coercion or any sort of distortion. At the same time, the adult learners must be encouraged to weigh evidence, assess arguments and instill the ability to critically reflect upon assumptions. Adult education envisages the facilitator-learner relationship as being transparent and empathetic, with the instructor aiding in fostering the learner's ability to be autonomous and self-directed, and ultimately, self-learned (Belanger, 2011: 38). Thus, Adult educators, have an extremely responsible role to play at a societal level. It is through them that adult learning communities engaging in collaborative discourse can be created and sustained, where systemic distortions and alienation can be minimized.

Adult Learning and Emancipation: Building on Critical Theory and Ideas of Habermas

Critical theory and the ideas of Habermas in particular, offer rich opportunities and conceptual frameworks to discuss some of the fundamental issues in adult education. Building itself as a systematic alternative to the positivistic tradition in social sciences, critical theory emerged out of the work of the Frankfurt School. Habermas has exerted a wide-ranging and phenomenal influence in fields of sociology, political science, philosophy, law, and other areas. Habermas (1972) categorizes three generic cognitive areas in which human interest generates knowledge, referred to as 'knowledge constitutive' - empirical, historical-hermeneutic, and emancipatory.

In his quest of exploring the emancipatory possibilities of a reasonable and well-grounded critical theory, Habermas extends, synthesizes, and reconstructs the ideas of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber, as well as Parsons and Mead, alongside Horkheimer and Adorno. This endeavor aids him in his attempt to understand change and conflict and build his overarching sociological theory of communication action. Not limiting himself to conflicts based on social class, Habermas (1984) analyses new forms of conflicts that have emerged, particularly in the twentieth century. With the concern of rescuing reason and the unfinished project of modernity from the clutches of postmodern theory and formulating a new critical approach for analyzing society, Habermas develops an important distinction between instrumental and communicative rationality. Instrumental rationality, a product of capitalism and modern nation-state, pertains to adjusting the means to the end.

Communicative rationality, on the other hand, emerges from consensual human interaction, mutual understanding, social coordination, and free exchange of ideas. Habermas visualizes 'strategic action' as 'primarily oriented to achieving an end' and communicative action as, 'oriented to reaching an understanding' and 'a process of reaching agreement among speaking and acting subjects' (Fuchs, 2020:355). Here, action and pursuit of goals is based on a shared understanding that the goals are inherently meaningful and reasonable. His work recognized the irreconcilable tension between the micro-theory of rationality founded on communicative action and macro-theory of the structural integration of modern societies based on the mechanisms of the market. Habermas adopts a two-level concept of society, rejecting reductionist and unidimensional interpretations and allowing for both action-theoretic and a systems-theoretic analysis of the process of rationalization. Habermas attempts to overcome the dominance of one-sided narrative of rationalization that has been ushered by capitalism via the state and market transgressing their own functional boundaries and 'colonizing' the life-world. (Habermas, 1984: 140). Habermas sees societies as both systems and life-worlds and uses the term 'lifeworld' to denote the inter-subjective world, background consensus of everyday life, the huge stock of taken-for-granted assumptions and definitions that provide coherence, consistency, and stability in everyday lives. The decoupling of the lifeworld and the system threatens to pathologize the system (Gouthro, 2006:11).

The ideas of Habermas offer an epistemological foundation that grounds the optimal conditions for adult learning and education. It is important to underline that in communicative learning, validation is arrived at not just in terms of the accuracy of what is being communicated but also in the intent, qualifications, truthfulness, and authenticity of the one communicating (Habermas, 1984). Thus, the effort is to inculcate an empathetic understanding of the frame of reference of others and construct a common ground of consensus, while acknowledging and understanding the assumptions underlying disagreements. The conclusions drawn from this discourse of understanding are essentially tentative, with new arguments and paradigms continuously emerging and being incorporated. This perspective calls on educators to nurture a diversity of ideas, foster the sphere of free and non-coercive communication and debates, and provide learners with equal opportunities for critical reflection (Gouthro, 2006). Adult learning and education, hence, shifts from being ahistorical, universal, and decontextualized towards a more critical-dialectical discourse of building sociological sensibilities and addressing context related questions that include structural factors like gender, class, race, age, ideology (Tuckett, 2015; Alhadeff-Jones, 2020).

Essentially, adult learning and education requires the practice of 'sociological imagination' that analyzes the interplay between individual and society; agency and structure; history and biography; micro and macro, and the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between each of them. It needs sociological sensibilities that consider the complex intersections between – social structure, power, social and personal identity, subjectivity, situated experiences, meaning and practices (Mills, 2000). Adulthood is increasingly characterized by the de-standardization of the life-course, heterogenous patterns that break the routinized constructions of everyday life, and the uncertainty and frequency of organizational and technological changes that destabilize the pre-fixed notions of daily life (Alhadeff-Jones, 2020: 117).

Habermas' ideas on the potential of civil society to transform itself into an instrument for de-colonizing the life world have offered a spectrum for critiquing the dominance of instrumental learning in adult education. They deconstruct the ways in which strategic action rooted in instrumental and technical rationality is antagonistic to the emancipatory interests of the common people. According to Habermas, civil society is:

> Composed of more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations and movements that are attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private public sphere, they distill and transmit such reactions in an amplified form to the public (1984: 367).

In the context of adult education and the emphasis by Habermas on civil society, voluntary organizations play a pre-eminent role in furthering the interests of the people who have been largely neglected and pushed to the periphery. The reclamation of the public sphere and the sustenance of a culture of dialogue, debate and accountability thus become tasks of critical and humanistic adult education. The assertion of Denis Hayes (2003) becomes relevant here as he writes that Habermas's theory of communicative action is responsible for a 'therapeutic turn' in pedagogy. Grounded in the emancipatory philosophy, adult education carries within itself the capacity to foster free spaces where citizens can debate and engage in an environment of non-coercion, escaping systemic pressures and compulsions. It is significant to assert here that the condition of free and rational discourse is also supportive for effective adult learning.

Critical and Transformative Learning: Towards Sociological Sensibilities

Critical pedagogy takes within its ambit the issues relating to power, oppression, and emancipation. It deals with interrogating the power relations that are embedded

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in the social structures. It unravels the underlying and latent motivations and agendas geared towards the maintenance of the status-quo and established hierarchies. According to Burbules and Burk (1999: 55), 'From the perspective of critical thinking, critical pedagogy crosses the threshold between teaching critically and indoctrinating.' Edmund O'Sullivan (2002) proposes what is termed 'integral transformative learning' which encompasses environmental, spiritual, and self-related concerns, in addition to the social and political concerns of critical pedagogy. The essence of the concept, according to O'Sullivan, is encapsulated in the following words:

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feeling, and action. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our being in the world. Such a shift involves understanding of self and our self-locations; our relationship with other humans and the natural world; our understanding of the power relations in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of the possibilities for social justice, peace, and personal joy (2002: 11).

Transformative learning nurtures and shapes people; 'they are different afterwards, in ways both they and others can recognize' (Clark, 1993:47). It delineates the way individuals interpret, construct, validate and reappraise their experiences. It acknowledges the socio-cultural context and explores the multiple ways in which it influences our own values, experiences, and meanings. Adult education thus has the potential, not just to identify but also to disrupt old boundaries and imagine new configurations with the possibilities of critical engagement and learning. It is within these very spaces that the potential exists to convert themselves into sites of critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and emancipation. According to Mezirow:

> Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discerning, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective, enabling them to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or justified to guide action (2000: 7-8).

Transformative learning is more oriented towards the cognitive process of meaning-generation. It is seen as an important tool to address issues of oppression, social change, and personal empowerment. It holds the possibilities of renewed and revised understanding towards interpreting life-experiences, re-examining and changing established and normative frameworks and constructing critical outlooks –

what Mezirow (2000) terms a 'disorienting dilemma'. The social emancipatory approach defines transformation as the development of critical consciousness, 'the process through which men not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of both the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality' (Freire, 1976:27).

Thus, the idea of transformative learning strongly leans on the idea of communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984), critical consciousness and praxis, constituting a process that continually involves action, critical reflection, and dialogue (Brookfield, 1991). Mezirow (2000), borrowing from Habermas, identifies the process of transformative learning as incorporating reaching consensus through collaborative discourse, where validity claims and the validity of speech actions can be interrogated, and disagreements over truth claims are resolved through argumentation and debate. In the context of adult education, it needs to be pointed out that the work of Habermas is a powerful resource in the area of adult learning as it concerned with the 'learning processes involved in the highest forms of learning, that is, the self-reflective discourses of collective learning. His multidimensional notion of 'communicative competence' serves to identify the competencies of the social subjects required to further the processes of social rationalization, especially in relation to democratization' (Morrow and Torres, 2002: 120).

Conclusion

Theorists and researchers of adult education concur that in order to pursue the above goals, adult learning must indispensably involve two dimensions – social reproduction (the process of enculturation) and social-revolutionary learning (deconstruction and critique of the system and structures). Along with this, the constant threat of hegemonic ideologies and the groups whose interests lie in the maintenance of the status-quo, reverse and neo-colonization, must neither be ignored nor underestimated. In the words of Mezirow (1995: 57), 'The social goal toward which adult education strives is one in which all members of society may engage freely and fully in rational discourse and action without this process being subverted by the system.'

A critical point, underlined by Habermas (1989) himself, is that civil society is frequently the location of sexism, casteism, elitism, racism, etc., and therefore must not be idealized as a utopia. Hence, it is always important to acknowledge its possibility of turning into a regressive space of prejudices and non-inclusion (Gouthro, 2006). The field of adult education, particularly the and adult educators, therefore, need to

constantly engage themselves in its renewal for the sustenance and realization of the values and philosophy of empowerment and emancipation. Stephen Brookfield in his classical work asserts:

> For something to count as an example of critical learning, critical analysis or critical reflection, I believe that the persons concerned must engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context in which learning is happening. They must also try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others; that is, hegemonic assumptions (1991: 126).

Like any other field of study, adult learning and education, for its continuous evolution must necessarily reflect upon itself, engaging in rigorous self-critique at multiple levels - revisiting its disciplinary orientations, processes of knowledge production and dissemination, and institutionalization and policies. Adult-education and transformative learning must take into account the ways in which sociological factors and social contexts direct and determine the process of learning. Adult learners do not exist in a vacuum, nor are they frozen in space and time. They exist and interact within socio-cultural spaces and life worlds. Hence, it is pertinent to identify and analyze their situated realities, biographical and historical contexts and examine the continuous interplay between the micro and macro factors. Critical social science, particularly sociology, illuminates and locates learning within the social context of learners, and comprehending the ways in which it is intrinsically embedded in the processes and outcomes of learning. Adult education, as a field of inquiry, must be alert to the balance between its institutional and non-institutional logic, not allowing itself to disengage from the life worlds of adult learners (Milana, Rasmussen & Holford, 2016:535). There needs to be a constructive engagement between critical theory and the field of adult education for community-wide engagement and fostering the emancipatory of and collaborative practices.

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Happiness

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Abstract

Human beings are inherently social by birth, and the ever changing dynamics of the society have both positive and negative impacts on them. In this dynamically changing society, alongside the basic necessities of food, cloth and shelter, happiness has emerged as a fundamental human need. Some argue that happiness is influenced by external factors like society, relationships with family and friends, circumstances etc., while others argue that one must cultivate their own happiness, as it is primarily shaped by internal factors like inner peace and a sense of purpose in life. Happiness is now regarded as a multi-dimensional aspect and realizing its importance, many countries have established 'Ministry of Happiness'. In India, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh have taken the lead in planning for the promotion of happiness among citizens. In the light of all this, the aim of the present study is to produce a summary of studies on happiness through a systematic review of relevant literature. The researchers made an attempt to explore the concept of happiness, its importance, predictors, and various dimensions. The study also offers an overview of the "purpose of happiness studies" and the "research methodologies adopted in happiness studies". The study recommends that there is a strong need of studies for exploring the multi-dimensional aspects of happiness and the development of benchmarks and tools for measuring it. As happiness is a multi-dimensional concept, its integration into the curriculum should also be approached thoughtfully.

Keywords: *Happiness, factors of happiness, predictors of happiness, dimensions of happiness.*

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Introduction

Happiness serves as the "secret motive" underlying all the activities that people do and are willing to endure and it is the central concept in the definition of good life (Kammann et al., 1984). Happiness is now being explored by many disciplines like Economics, Psychology, Philosophy, etc., and has different philosophical, psychological, political, economic, cultural, religious, and health-related definitions/views which are undergoing revival continuously (Bremner, 2011). The psychological notion of happiness is undergoing a revival, shifting from a behavioristic approach towards a focus on positive human functioning. The shift has led to a growing trend towards studying wellbeing, happiness and other aspects of positive psychology. The importance of happiness is also being realized by many countries like Bhutan, Venezuela, and UAE who have already established Ministries of happiness. In India, the state of Madhya Pradesh has become the first to have a Happiness Department, with the objective of setting up "Anand Basti" in every district of the state. The Delhi Government has brought the concept of "Happiness" into school curricula through the introduction of the "Happiness Curriculum" in schools (SCERT, 2019). Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has made people realize the need for and importance of happiness. People have started exploring ways to improve their levels of contentment through various aspects of their lives.

Purpose of the study

The growing need for and importance of happiness has motivated the researchers to study more in-depth about it. Hence, the aim of the present study is to produce a summary on the concept of "happiness" as presented in various literatures. By analyzing the literature, the present study attempts to (i) explore the concept of happiness, (ii) study the importance, dimensions, and predictors of happiness, (iii) examine the purpose of happiness studies, (iv) review the research methodology adopted in happiness studies, and (v) explore the recommendation for further studies in happiness.

Methodology of the study

The researchers systematically reviewed the literature on happiness collected from various online sources like Shodhganga, Research Gate, Academic edu, Jstor, Google scholar, Sage, Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, and other e-journals. Keywords like happiness, factors of happiness, dimension of happiness, predictors of happiness, etc., were used to collect the literature on happiness. Only literature which would facilitate in meeting the purpose of the present study were considered for inclusion.

Concept of Happiness

Happiness is a strong indicator of quality life. It is not just a psychological trait and a temporary feeling; rather, it is the overall well-being of a person's life. It means something more specific, internal, and subjective (Bremner, 2011). Thus, rather than just being a state of mind, happiness indicates having a positive orientation towards a fortunate life situation (Griffin, 1979; Bremner, 2011). Although the word 'happy' may be used with many meanings in common language, its most important meaning philosophically is a complete and lasting sense of satisfaction with life as a whole (Tatarkiewicz, 1976, as cited in Kammann et al., 1984). Thus, philosophers consider happiness as a value or an approach to look at life (Eudiamonic).

Agarwal (2013) claimed that "Happiness is a state when an individual feels satisfied by how their life is going, has a positive emotional state, is able to maintain warm healthy interpersonal relationships, and has a positive orientation towards life". Yacobi (2015) pointed out that Happiness is linked to a quality life, which is often associated with well-being or satisfaction with life. James (2012) and Bhatpahari (2020) claim that "Happiness lies deep within us, in the very core of our being. Happiness does not exist in any external object, but only in us". Kansal & Paliwal (2012) assert that "Inner Happiness is a product of inner peace and to achieve inner happiness one is required to take care of their inner self and soul".

Psychologists on the other hand consider happiness as a state of mind which depends on aspects like life satisfaction, pleasure, positive emotional conditions, etc. The main accounts of happiness in this sense are hedonism, the life satisfaction theory, and the emotional state theory (Haybron, 2011). Hedonists identify happiness with the individual's balance of pleasurable experiences over unpleasant ones. Theories of life satisfaction define happiness as possessing a favorable attitude toward one's life, while emotional state theorists identify happiness with an agent's emotional condition as a whole. Thus, when attempting to study happiness, it should be understood as something beneficial, good for a person, enhancing one's well-being, and in relation to an individual's sentiments about life based on their own standards (Hedonic approach).

The hybrid theories on happiness examine happiness from various viewpoints. Argyle, Martin and Crossland, 1989 (as cited in Parmar and Vyas, 2018); Haybron, 2011; and Koydemir et al., 2013 look at happiness in an inclusive way as a sense of wellbeing and also as a state of mind. Thus, according to hybrid theories all the components of subjective wellbeing are included in "happiness". According to

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Banavathy and Choudry (2013), happiness can be categorised into three kinds, i.e., Sensual/Material happiness (Visyananda), which is similar to hedonistic happiness; Aesthetic happiness (Kavyanada) equated to eudaimonic happiness/psychological wellbeing; and Existential/transcendental happiness (Brahmananda) related with self-realization. Salavera et al. (2017); Shrivastava et al. (2020); and Tabbodi et al. (2015) also adopted a hybrid approach and defined happiness as composed of multiple dimensions of cognitive and non-cognitive (emotional) aspects.

The cognitive component is related to life satisfaction, and the emotional component is related to pleasant and unpleasant emotions as well as unconscious and motivational processes through which a person judges the quality of life. Badri et al. (2018) and Hashim and Zaharim (2020) defined happiness as a feeling which occurs when an individual experiences more positive emotions, fewer negative emotions, and greater life satisfaction. Marathe (2021) and Joshanloo (2013) took one step forward and defined happiness from both the Indian and Western perspectives. According to the Indian perspective happiness is obtained by doing good to others and finding peace. According to the Western perspective on happiness, there are two kinds of happiness: hedonic and eudemonia. Hedonic happiness is related to immediate pleasure, while eudemonia is related to living a virtuous life and a sense of fulfillment of the purpose of life.

Moyano-Diaz (2016), through a phenomenography study, concluded that happiness can be described as a 'state' (of being), which means a sensation or feeling, a mood or a sense of balance. It indicates having good physical and mental health, feeling good in both work and leisure time, having a healthy family in a harmonious relationship, or having a well-paid job. Further, happiness is also accepted as an achievement that is derived from achieving goals, and while happiness as 'wellbeing' denotes a variety of statuses that depend on economic, physical, psychological, and social conditions.

Pillania (2020) in "India Happiness Report" claimed that both material and non-material conditions contribute to happiness, and to achieve happiness, an individual needs wealth, knowledge, and power. Baltaci (2020) defined that happiness is a judgment of a person about their life which includes two components, i.e., cognitive and affective. The happiness curriculum launched by the Delhi Government also emphasizes the promotion of sustainable happiness rather than focusing on one shot or temporary happiness (SCERT, 2019). Thus, it can be said that the trend in studying/ exploring happiness is moving towards the hybrid theories. Happiness is being accepted as a multi-dimensional perspective and there is no fixed and permanent definition of it.

Importance of happiness

Happiness is the central concept in the definition of the good life (Kammann et al., 1984). It is also used synonymously with subjective well-being and has a positive effect on the mental health status of a person (Fowler & Christakis, 2008, as cited in Heizomi et al., 2015). It enhances the quality of life, academic achievement, decision-making style, and positive outcomes in life (Tabbodi et al. 2015; Yildiz & Eldelekloglu, 2021). A significant and positive relation exists between happiness and spiritual intelligence (SI) (Tankamani & Shahidi, 2016; Awasthi, 2018). There is also a significant focal correlation between SI, happiness, and the quality of life (Ansari, 2015). Happiness is one of the strong indicators of well-being and reflects the self-esteem, sense of control, and resilience capacity of an individual (Li et al., 2001). Llenares et al. (2020) claim that there exists a significant correlations between gratitude and happiness.

According to Baltaci (2020), there is a strong negative relationship between students' happiness level and their problematic internet usage and smartphone addiction. Bhatpahari (2020) explored that there is a significant positive correlation between happiness and intrapersonal skills such as independence, emotional self-awareness, self-actualization, and assertiveness. Happiness has a positive correlation with parental acceptance, parental concentration, positive stability, and self-efficacy (Gautam, 2019). Goksoy (2017), using phenomenological research, revealed that social relationships, participation in school activities, and high academic achievement made students happy, while scolding and indifference made them unhappy. Bahiraeri et al. (2012) found that there is a significant correlation between happiness and various dimensions of personality. Moltafet et al. (2010) stated that a significant relationship exists among happiness, extraversion, and intrinsic religious orientation.

Predictors of Happiness

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that happiness is a multi-dimensional concept, and many external and internal aspects act as predictors of happiness. Some of the predictors of happiness include aspects like intolerance to uncertainty, cognitive flexibility (Yildiz & Eldelekloglu, 2021); problematic internet usage and smartphone addiction (Baltaci, 2020); creativity and spiritual intelligence (Tamannaeifar & Panah, 2019); personal standard perfectionism, emotional intelligence (Abdollahi et al., 2019); hardiness and perceived stress (Abdollahi et al., 2014); personality traits like extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, feelings and affects, sensationalism, judgments (Bahiraeri et al., 2012); and extraversion and intrinsic religious orientation (Moltafet et al., 2010).

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Further, happiness is also a predictor of psychological well-being (Ghasempour et al. (2013) and the academic achievement of students (Salehi et al. (2014)**.** Llenares et al. (2020) claim that happiness and gratitude are significant predictors of resilience among college students.

Dimensions of Happiness

According to Haybron (2011), measuring happiness in principle may be impossible because it involves multiple dimensions that cannot be precisely quantified or summed together. However, it is still feasible to develop approximate measures of happiness or at least its various dimensions. The literature reviewed reflects that happiness is assessed using a broad range of indicators such as wellbeing, hedonic state, emotional state, personal growth, relatedness, autonomy, competence, life orientation, etc. Marathe (2021) studied happiness from four dimensions: feeling responsible, healthy relationships, supportive approach, and positivity. The most commonly used Oxford Happiness Scale (OHS) (Hills & Arygle, 2002) studies happiness measured across seven subscales, viz., "self-efficacy, hope, life satisfaction, psychological fitness, being on a good mood, self–fancy, and aesthetic feeling". Shrivastava et al. (2020) revealed that factors like education, sociability, health, entertainment, and sensation seeking were affecting the happiness of students. Agarwal (2013) studied happiness across four dimensions: Satisfaction, Positive Orientation, Healthy Interpersonal Relationships and Emotional State.

Thus, there is no definitive list of the main dimensions/factors of happiness. However, both materialistic and non-materialistic aspects like employment, good governance, trust, helping others, supportive relationships, etc., are considered chief correlates of happiness (Haybron, 2011). Arora (2020) studied that the happiness level of academicians in an organization depends on factors, namely, research activities, working environment, fringe benefits, personal growth, job security, salary, work–life balance, and involvement in social endeavors.

Studies on happiness were also carried out at the macro level. Happiness of individuals or the country as a whole was measured using various dimensions like work and related issues (earnings and growth); relationships (family and friends); health (physical and mental health); philanthropy including social concerns; and religious or/and spiritual orientation (Pillania, 2020). Helliwell et al. (2020) revealed the ranking of countries' happiness based on six factors of life evaluations: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, corruption, and measures of positive affect like experiencing enjoyment, laughing

and negative affect such as anger, sadness, and worry. Avsec et al. (2015) measured the happiness of people in Australia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Mexico, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA people through three scales: psychological wellbeing scale, depression scale, life satisfaction scale and a questionnaire on happiness. The happiness curriculum developed for Delhi schools is based on the happiness triad: pleasure through our senses (momentary happiness), feeling in relationships (deeper happiness), and learning and awareness (sustainable happiness) (SCERT, 2019).

The above literature shows that, happiness is not a uni-dimensional quality rather, it is influenced by various philosophical, psychological, sociological, technological, and economical aspects and the variables with which it relates are significantly infinite.

Purpose of Happiness studies

By now it is evident that happiness is a multi-dimensional trait, and that there is no single definition which can be used to measure it. Thus, happiness is being explored from various objectives in mind. Moyano-Diaz (2016), Pillania (2020), Kansal and Paliwal (2012) and Agarwal (2013) conducted studies to understand the concept of happiness. These studies made an in-depth attempt to answer many questions related to concept of happiness by exploring it in through quantitative or qualitative researches. Researchers also carried out studies to explore the factors of happiness (Shrivastava et al., 2020; Mertoglu, 2020). Goksoy (2017) conducted a study to know what makes school students happy and unhappy. Marathe (2021) revealed four dimensions of happiness i.e., feeling responsible, healthy relationship, supportive approach, and positivity.

To study the influence of sociological, demographic, cyber, and psychological factors was the objective of many studies carried out in the area of happiness. The influence of various factors like gender, ethnicity, religion, household income of parents, education level of parents, academic performance, age, residential area, home, school, every day events, problematic internet usage, smartphone addiction, family relationship, spiritual intelligence, creativity, attributional style on happiness with regard to various target groups like adolescents, students, etc., were carried out by Baltaci (2020); Hashim & Zaharihm (2020); Gautam (2019); Badri et al. (2018); Parmar & Vyas (2018); and Kirmani (2016). Kurniati and Atikasari (2019) measured the happiness level of students in higher education.

Studies were also carried out to explore the correlation of happiness with many other variables. Relationship of happiness with humor styles (Yaprak et al., 2018)

and with stress (Abdollahi et al., 2014) were also explored. Salavera et al. (2017) explored the relation between the level of subjective happiness and coping strategies of secondary education students. Tabbodi et al. (2015); and Salehi et al. (2014) studied the relationship between happiness and academic achievement. Heizomi et al. (2015) conducted a study on "Happiness and its relation to psychological well-being of adolescents". Salehi et al. (2014); Koydemir et al. (2013); Bahiraeri et al. (2012); and Francis et al. (2010) studied relationship and impact of personality on happiness. Relationship of happiness with various aspects of personality like religious orientation (Moltafet et al., 2010), decision making styles, intolerance to uncertainty, cognitive flexibility (Yildiz & Eldelekloglu, 2021), gratitude (Llenares et al., 2020), intrapersonal skills (Bhatpahari, 2020), and perfectionism (Abdollahi et al., 2019) were also explored.

Studies to explore the role/influence or correlation of spiritual intelligence with happiness and vice versa were carried out by (Vafaeeyan et al., 2015; Ansari, 2015; Tankamani & Shahidi, 2016; Awasthi, 2018; Choudhari & Singh, 2019; and Aliabadi et al., 2019).

It is evident from the above literature that studies on happiness are growing, and many factors act as predictors of happiness while also influencing it. It is also clear from the studies that happiness is related to many sociological, demographic, cyber, and psychological factors, serving as a predictor for many other variables.

Research Methodology adopted in happiness studies

Anyone working on "Happiness" is well aware of the linguistic difficulties surrounding the use of 'happiness', and it is for this reason, that the researchers tend to use technical/operationalized terminology in their work (Haybron, 2000). Majority of the studies reviewed used survey method to explore happiness, and OHS (Hills & Argyle, 2002) was the most used tool (Yildiz & Eldelekloglu, 2021; Baltaci, 2020; Tabbodi et al., 2015; Abdollahi et al., 2019; Parmar & Vyas, 2018; and Bahiraei et al., 2012). Hashim and Zaharim (2020) used Malay version of OHS to study the role of socio demographic factors in happiness while, Heizomi et al. (2015) used its Persian version to study the relationship between happiness and psychological wellbeing. Llenares et al. (2020) used the Happiness scale developed by Fordyce (1988).

Salavera et al. (2017) used pre-developed Subjective Happiness Scale of Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999) to measure the level of subjective happiness.

Bhatpahari (2020) used the Happiness scale developed by Sethi & Ajwani (2000) to measure the level of happiness. Koydemir et al. (2013) used "Ontological Well-Being" questionnaire developed by Simsek & Kocayoruk (2013) to study happiness. Mertoglu (2020) used Happiness Inventory developed by Telef (2014) to explore the factors of happiness. Francis et al. (2010), on the other hand, used a single item tool (It is important to me to make other people happy) to explore relation between personality and happiness. Shrivasatava et al. (2020), and Hamka et al. (2015) used an open-ended questionnaire to explore the factors/sources of happiness. Pearson correlation coefficient was the most used statistical analysis technique to study correlation between happiness and other psychological variables. Statistical analysis techniques like Regression analysis, CFA and EFA were the most used statistical analysis to study about the predictors of happiness. Statistical analysis techniques like ANOVA and t-test were used to study the influence of various socio-demographic variables on happiness.

Thus, most studies reviewed used the survey design to study happiness. The Majority of studies used pre-developed standardized tools to study about happiness, while a few of them used self-made and open-ended questions for the data collection. The OHS was the most used tool in happiness studies. This suggests that there is a strong need for developing new tools to measure happiness. The data obtained using OHS, was analyzed using either Chi-square or parametric techniques. Only a few studies collected data through online mode and most of them collected data in physical/offline mode. Number of studies exploring the dimensions of happiness were also very less. Hence, there is a strong need to carry out more studies to explore the dimensions of happiness. The majority of studies used random sampling techniques for sample selections, and few of them used convenience or purposive sampling for the sample selection.

Recommendations for further studies on happiness

The studies carried out in the area of happiness recommended a need to conduct studies to explore the relationship between positive psychological traits and happiness (Abdollahi et al., 2019). There is also a need for more studies to explore the factors influencing happiness (Baltaci, 2020). A relationship and effect of psychological skills such as interpersonal relationship, stress tolerance, and mental health on happiness can also be carried out (Bhatpahari et al., 2020). Happiness studies can also explore the relationship between strategies to cope with stress and different subjective well-being components like subjective happiness, satisfaction with life, and affections (Salaver et al., 2017).

Conclusion

India stands at the 139th position among the 149 countries in the World Happiness Report, 2021 (Helliwell et al., 2021). Its rank is deteriorating year by year in both positive and negative effects of happiness and this cautions that there is a strong and immediate need to focus on inclusion of happiness in policies and programmes. The famous quote by Karl Pearson, "that which is measured improves" indicates that there is a strong need to increase research studies aimed at developing benchmarks and tools for measuring happiness. Happiness is a multi-dimensional concept, and its inclusion in the curriculum should be approached accordingly. It can thus be concluded that happiness is not merely a momentary surge of positive feelings, but rather the positive and lasting orientation of a person towards self and life as a whole, which serves to improve the overall quality of life.

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Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development Goals: Case Studies of Three Steel Industries

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Abstract

It has been almost a decade since mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was implemented under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, in India. The corporate sectors or industries are supposed to allocate a mandatory 2% of their net profit from the last three years towards specified areas of CSR activities, as outlined in Schedule VII of the Act. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Both CSR and SDGs were framed at the same time with a common focus on promoting quality education. Tracing the history of CSR in India, among all the industries, the steel sector in India emerged as one of the pioneers in giving importance to CSR activities for the promotion of education. The steel companies like, Tata Steel believe that the "community is the reason for the corporations' very existence." The present study aims to map the CSR activities in education undertaken by three steel industries: Tata Steel Limited (TSL), Jindal Stainless Steel Limited (JSSL), and Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL), all located in Kalinga Nagar Industrial Complex in the Jajpur district in Odisha.

Keywords: *CSR, SDG, Steel, education, sustainable, activities.*

Introduction

CSR is a widely accepted concept around the world. The concept of CSR first gained importance when Peter Drucker discussed the social responsibility of business in his 1954 book, "The Practice of Management". CSR's central concepts are encapsulated in the phrases "do well and do good" and "triple bottom line or integrated

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responsibility" (Falck & Heblich, 2007). These ideas do have something in common today: an emphasis on "integrating traditional business problems, such as profit-generating for stakeholders, with sustainable development problems, societal and environmental difficulties" (Schonherr et al., 2017).

CSR, in our opinion, is an approach that continually strives to meet environmental, economic, and social criteria. "CSR is a business's obligation to act in alignment with society's overarching goals, thus directly linking with the concept of sustainable development" (Martinuzzi & Krumay, 2013); "CSR reaches beyond the borders of the corporation to include systematic linkages and interdependencies with stakeholders along the value chain" (Seuring & Gold, 2013); "CSR may also be implemented in different ways or phases, gradually leading to improved performance" (Martinuzzi & Krumay, 2013).

This assumption provides us with understanding that CSR acts on issues linked with sustainability. The broader picture of issues considered in CSR research includes system-wide sustainable challenges, such as, poverty, social justice, ecosystem degradation, peace, and human rights (Schonherr et al., 2017). CSR also works for the SDGs, as the goals are closely associated with the environmental and social issues that are directly linked to sustainability.

CSR aligned with the SDGs could provide an integrated framework for future-oriented CSR participation. The current set of 17 SDGs and their targets represent a comprehensive approach to the 2030 development agenda. The goals recognise the interwoven nature of issues, including "poverty, inequality, decent employment, gender equality, and environmental protection" emphasise and the necessity for all actors in society to collaborate to address them (Le Blanc, 2015).

The SDGs also broke the traditional boundary between the public and private sectors for the first time. "The private sector got the opportunity to be represented at the negotiation table and design a global sustainable development agenda with political and civil society leaders" (Scheyvens et al., 2016).

CSR in India

CSR is a very old concept in India (Tatjana et. al., 2007). Cultural and religious beliefs primarily influenced CSR in the pre-industrial age before the 1850s. The primary focus was on ethics, charitable actions, and other discretionary efforts for which no social obligations or standards existed. Historically, these behaviours were

seen as a social obligation owed by all entities, including corporations, to fulfil scripture-based commitments. The Indian merchant elite has deep roots in generosity, according to researchers.

The worldwide conversation on CSR has rapidly shifted away from charity to strategic CSR and shared values (Whitehouse, 2006). With the passage of the Companies Act in 2013, CSR became mandatory (Singh & Verma, 2014). India was one of the first countries to enact CSR legislation. The 2013 amendment to the Companies Act introduced a specific framework of procedures and methods to mandate CSR expenditure across India. While some Indian corporations had previously engaged in voluntary CSR activities, the new provisions established a formal requirement for organisations to participate in the societal and economic development process.

Any company with a net worth of 500 crores, a turnover of more than 1000 crores, or a profit of 5 crores or more in the previous financial year must comply with the mandated CSR requirements, according to Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013. According to Schedule VII of the Act, the corporation must spend at least 2% of its profit on CSR efforts.

The CSR laws expanded the scope of compliance and obligation requirements to encompass holding and subsidiary corporations, and overseas firms with branches or offices in India (Pattnaik & Shukla, 2018).

SDGs

The concept of "sustainability" dates from the 18th century. In a conference formed to look at the needs of present and future generations, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined *sustainability* as "serving the requirements of the present without jeopardising future generations' ability to meet their own needs" in 1987 (Ebner, 2007).

As the world changes, people are attempting to alter unsustainable organisational systems. "Business as usual" has become tough to claim. The United Nations responded by releasing the Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD). The resolute and inclusive universal international agreement promotes 17 SDGs, with 169 targets and over 500 indicators, to address society's current overwhelming needs. The SDGs aim to enhance people's living standards and well-being, eliminate poverty, promote peace and a more inclusive society, and reverse environmental damage (Nurunnabi et al., 2019).

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The SDGs aim to accomplish the indicators that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) failed to achieve (UN, 2015).

The 2030 sustainability agenda is distinguished from its predecessor, the MDGs, in several ways. Firstly, it is characterised by its universal applicability, encompassing all individuals across all nations. Secondly, it places significant emphasis on the role of education and the quality of learning in fostering a more prosperous world. Thirdly, it prioritises environmental conservation as a crucial objective. Fourthly, it explicitly incorporates peace as a goal. Lastly, it integrates business as a key component of the agenda (Caprani, 2016). The United Nations (UN) has stated that the SDGs encompass the tripartite dimensions of SD, namely the economic, social, and environmental aspects (UN, 2015).

Goal 4 of SDG

The declaration on SDGs envisages a society wherein individuals have equitable access to education of superior quality across all levels. The SDG has set forth Goal 4, which aims to be accomplished by 2030, and the SDG declaration has proposed a range of criteria in pursuit of this objective. "To ensure (I) that all girls and boys accomplish accessible, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education resulting in relevant and effective learning results; (II) that all girls and boys have access to high-quality childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they could be ready for primary education; (III) equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and higher education; (IV) an increase in the number of youth and adults equipped with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship; (V) elimination of gender disparities in education and equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations; (VI) that all youths and a substantial percentage of adults, both men, and women, attain literacy and numeracy; (VII) that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills required" (UN, 2015).

Steel Industries

India's steel industry is a mix of public and private enterprises that contribute about 2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Since the commencement of the Industrial Revolution, steel businesses have been among the first to demonstrate social responsibility. In 1892, Jamshetji Tata, the founder of the Tata group, used awards for scholarships for study abroad. The group, which began its industrial foothold in the steel sector, established India's first science and atomic research

centres. TSL has also stated that it will not do business with companies that do not follow its CSR guidelines (Srivastava et al., 2012). In 2020–21, the corporation made a CSR contribution of about Rs. 222 crores. CSR is also defined by JSSL as tackling significant societal concerns and encouraging all stakeholders to participate in focused, long-term programmes and projects. CSR has been a cornerstone of success for NINL since the company's foundation.

Review of Literature: CSR and SDGs

CSR is a self-executed contribution to sustainable development (Mishra, 2021), and it promotes the SDGs (Silva et al., 2021). The SDGs are internationally recognised, comprehensive, and realistic frameworks for CSR and sustainability (Van Zanten & Van Tulder, 2018). However, a comprehensive plan is required to allocate the CSR funds and prioritise the SDG targets according to necessity and urgency (Zagloet et al., 2021). According to Bowen et al., 2017, achieving SDGs necessitates a trade-off between priorities in terms of investment and conditions. In order to appropriately channel resources and give each of the SDGs its due attention and concern, a solid administrative framework is also essential.

According to researchers, corporate contributions could help accomplish the SDGs by 2030. Corporations must adapt to future needs and become more honest about them to fulfil their social duties (Silva, 2021).

Ethics, human rights, society, economy, ecology, and companies are covered in sustainable development. On the other hand, CSR focuses on the environment, society, economy, and corporations (Behringer & Szegedi, 2016). It also demonstrates that both notions have a lot in common. According to Moon (2007), environmental and social responsibility is becoming more critical as a result of various worldwide shifts that actively encourage sustainable development.

CSR is concerned with long-term sustainability challenges and advocates for voluntary sustainability standards to assess CSR's impact (Giovannucci et al., 2014). According to Hopkins, (2002), long-term economic performance is influenced by the duty to sustainability. Corporations that engage in comprehensive CSR initiatives can assure long-term development and improve their image. As a result, CSR, or sustainability, has become an essential aspect of business, addressing business ethics, global corporate citizenship, corporate social performance, and stakeholder management.

Schönherr et al., 2017 investigated the links between CSR and SDGs, emphasising the importance of adopting a framework for CSR and advocating for

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systematic management and measurement of commercial impact on SDGs. According to Korhonen (2003), "the concept of sustainability has notwithstanding become the base for CSR and corporate environmental management", although the meaning of the term "sustainable development" has been extensively researched, and many advocates differ in their opinions. Several of the SDGs in the business world are entirely dependent on the implementation of CSR efforts.

In their study on CSR and sustainable development practices, Rahman and Islam (2019) noted that commercial banks in Bangladesh use CSR ideas to accomplish the country's SDGs. The study found that increasing CSR actions aligned with the SDGs' overall development.

CSR is widely documented as an essential component of the business process. This comprehensive strategy for sustainability benefits society, industry, and the environment. As a result, CSR is becoming an essential aspect of long-term development (Rahman & Islam, 2019). The literature study above demonstrates ample evidence of CSR's connection to sustainability challenges and how CSR is critical for accomplishing SDGs.

Objectives of the Study

1. Mapping the CSR activities undertaken by the selected steel Industries under goal 4 of SDGs.
2. To explore the pattern of CSR spending of selected steel Industries with respect to goal 4 of SDGs.

Research Methodology

Secondary data such as CSR reports of the companies were used for the present study. A statistical tool such as the Percentage method has been employed to analyze and interpret data. The researchers used their compilation method to depict the different activities undertaken by the three industries in the field of Education.

CSR Initiatives Goal 4 of SDGs: Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL)

The concept of CSR at NINL has been a foundation of success right from the establishment of the company. To lead their CSR activities, NINL has created a set of fundamental principles for itself that are "Care, Compassion, Commitment, and Trust." NINL's aim is to "be a reputable worldwide leader in the iron and steel industry, with a focus on people's prosperity and environmental preservation." To

achieve its objective, NINL is committed to continually improve its social responsibility, environmental, and economic policies in order to have a beneficial influence on society (NINL, 2015; NINL, 2016).

The company provides financial assistance to educational institutions and teachers under its signature programmes such as *Financial Aid to Educational Institutions* and *financial Assistance to Teachers (NINL, 2015; NINL, 2016; NINL, 2017; NINL, 2017; NINL, 2018, NINL, 2019).*

The company under the *Donation of Inverters to School* has donated three Inverters so far to one school. The company has also donated *one water tank* to a school (NINL, 2016).

CSR Initiatives for Goal 4 of SDGs: Jindal Stainless Limited (JSSL)

JSSL defines CSR as addressing crucial social issues and encouraging all stakeholders to participate in targeted long-term programmes. The company intends to initiate initiatives to achieve JSSL's overall vision of being an admired and respected socially responsible corporation. The company also believes that CSR should be the primary objective of its employees so that they devote their full support to CSR operations and ensure the company's comprehensiveness (JSSL, 2015; JSSL, 2016).

JSSL's *Digital Equaliser Programme*, in collaboration with the American India Foundation, provided infrastructure to schools, such as laptops and overhead projectors. Presently, ten institutions have been adopted by the programme. Under the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, the schools adopted under the programme were all Computer Aided Learning (CAL) institutions. Under the programme, inverters were also provided to the institutions. More than 1222 pupils have benefited from subject-specific knowledge enhancement (JSSL 2018; JSSL, 2019).

JSSL administers the *Early Childhood Care and Education Centre (ECCEC)* programme on the premise that every child deserves a dignified existence with equal access to opportunities. One hundred ninety-five pupils in five locations have benefited from this programme (JSSL, 2018, JSSL, 2019).

JSSL has created the *Jindal Institute of Industrial Training (JIIT)* as part of its Skill Development Training programme. JIIT offers skill development courses in various fields, including business process outsourcing, computer application, computer hardware, information technology, cosmetics and wellness, advanced electrical application, ladies' tailoring and sewing, etc. Over a thousand students have benefited from the programme to date (JSSL, 2017; JSSL, 2018).

In order to provide children with quality education, JSSL introduced the ***Promotion of Education scheme***. JSSL has launched numerous programmes under the initiative, including the Scholar Programme, Navodaya Coaching Centre, Village Library, and Bridge Course Education Programme, among others. The programme also provided the students with school backpacks, play materials, and teaching and learning materials. The schools were supplied with additional instructors to enhance learning and instruction. Additionally, computer subjects were introduced in numerous institutions. The village libraries contained various farming books, patriotic books, epics, novels, Dharma Shastra, and children's literature. These initiatives have affected thousands of lives globally (JSSL, 2019)

CSR Initiatives Goal 4 of SDGs: Tata Steel Limited (TSL)

The concept of CSR is strongly ingrained in the ethos of TSL. In 1868, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata founded the Indian company. TSL aims to "set a worldwide standard for value generation and corporate citizenship". The corporation has continuously operated ethically, respecting human dignity and following regulations. The company's CSR mission is to "increase the quality of life in the areas they serve internationally by creating long-term value for all stakeholders". TSL had been one of the pioneers and the very founder of Tata Steel laid the value of social responsibility as he said, "Community is the reason of the very existence of the Corporate" (TSL, 2015. TSL, 2016). Tata Steel promotes giving back to the community. TSL has changed countless lives throughout the years. TSL's SDG 4 accomplishments are listed below.

The ***Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS)*** was created to boost student health and education by providing nutritious lunches. TSL has provided food to over 112000 students daily in over 384 schools (TSL, 2015; TSL, 2016; TSL, 2021).

TSL initiated the ***Adult Literacy Programme (ALP)*** to help the Government of India. The government used Computer Based Functional Literacy (CBFL) to boost adult literacy. The CBFL methodology assists non-literate adults in acquiring reading, writing, and arithmetic in 50 hours over three months. Fifteen thousand adults are made functionally literate with the initiative by TSL (TSL, 2015).

The ***Jyoti Scholarship Tata Steel Scholarship (TSSPJS)*** help deserving SC/ST kids attend college. Jyoti fellowships are available to students from Class VII to post-graduation. So far, programme 11908 has supported SC/ST students (TSL, 2016; TSL, 2017; TSL, 2019; TSL, 2021).

To improve English, Maths and Science skills, ***Preparatory Coaching (PC)***

was launched. The project targeted 8th–10th graders. The initiative has impacted 5500 students so far (TSL, 2016).

Residential bridging courses help out-of-school kids return to school. The *Residential Camp Schools (RCSs)* project aims to re-enroll dropouts and disadvantaged children in child work. Five Residential Camp Schools for 410 kids were built. Six thousand five hundred seven dropouts were re-enrolled and 864 of 1548 kids were mainstreamed (TSL, 2018; TSL, 2019; TSL, 2020; TSL, 2021).

TSL established the *1000 School Project (1000 SP)* to promote education in 1000 Odisha government schools over five years. The project has helped 625000 children and built 2765 homes. The project aims to create Child labour-free zones. The project established 400 government school libraries. One hundred fifty schools were chosen for the Learning Enrichment Programme. The programme trained 4252 management committee members from 733 schools (TSL, 2018; TSL, 2019; TSL, 2020).

TSL started the *30 Model Schools (30 MSs)* project to provide Educationally Backward Block students with quality government education. Twelve schools were built and given to the state government, giving quality facilities to nearly 5000 pupils (TSL, 2017; TSL, 2018).

TSL empowers PVTGs with a superior education. The company started *Child Education for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).* Under the initiative, 260 students have enrolled in 7 residential English medium schools (TSL, 2019).

TSL also started the *Children off the Street Programme* (COSP) to help street children and give them a good education. It has empowered 87 kids (TSL, 2021).

Skilling Youth Programme (SYP) impacted 24114 youth. The programme teaches skills in construction, vehicle, motor driving, call centre, hospitality, nursing, industrial trade, and garment design. So far, 13760 youths' have completed the training successfully, out of which 8248 youths were either placed or were self-employed (TSL, 2015; TSL, 2016; TSL, 2017; TSL, 2018; TSL, 2019; TSL, 2020; TSL, 2021).

The reported CSR spending of the three steel industries after the implementation of compulsory CSR mandate differed from each other in a drastic manner. The reported spending of NINL ranged from 22.60 to 67.80 lakhs during the Financial Year (FY) 2014-21.

**Fig 1.1: Three Steel Industries' CSR Activities under Goal 4 of SDG/
Education (2014-21)**
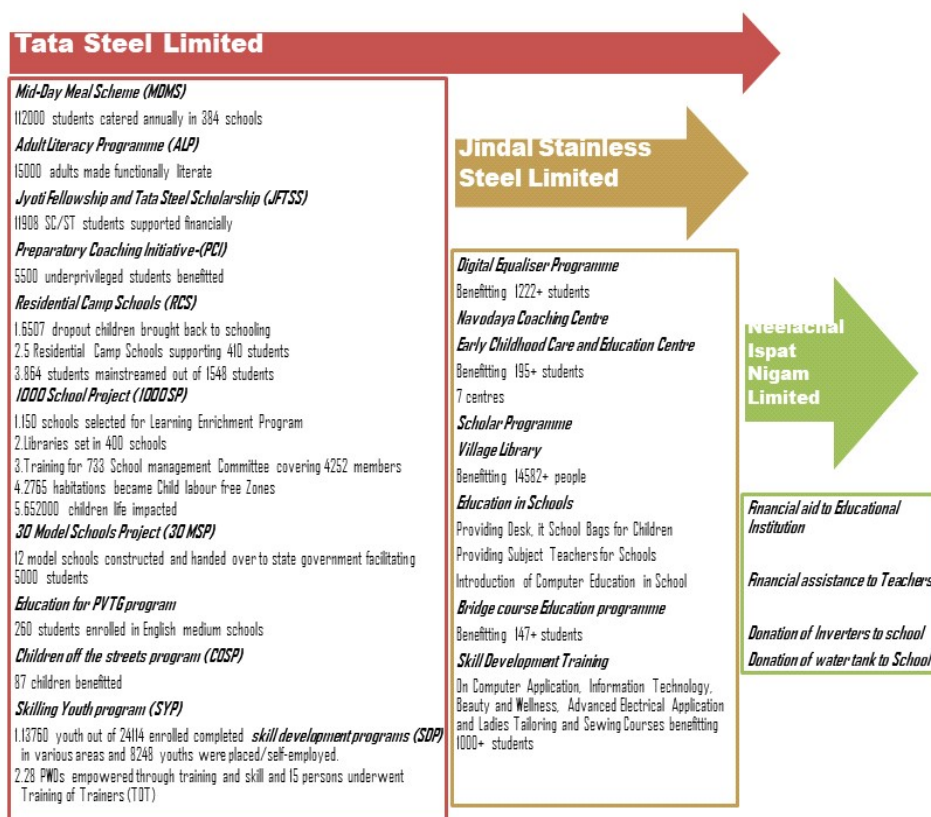
Source: Authors own compilation

The spending in the case of JSSL was quite different compared to NINL. The company announced losses during 2014-16 as well as during 2019-21, and reported that "since there were no profits in terms of the provisions of Section 198 of the Act during last three financial years, the Company was not required under Section 135 of the Act, to incur expenditure on CSR during the financial year" (JSSL, 2015; JSSL, 2016). The company did not allot any money to their CSR cell during the years which resulted in non-functioning of the cell during the Financial Years. The company made profit during 2016-17 as reported in their annual report. The reports of the company also indicated that it spent around 1.07 crores, 2.26 crores, and 2.31 crores respectively during 2016-19 FYs. TSL had been consistent with their contribution towards society and reportedly spent in the range of 171-315 crores during the FYs 2014-21.

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Table 1.1: Amount Spent by Industries on CSR (2014-21)

Financial Year	NINL	JSSL	TSL
2014-15	60.54	Nil	17146
2015-16	67.80	Nil	20446
2016-17	34.54	107.53	19361
2017-18	22.60	226.59	23162
2018-19	46.81	231.76	31494
2019-20	30.21	Nil	19299
2020-21	27.41	Nil	22198

Source: Annual Reports of respective industries

Fig 1.2: CSR expenditure by the three Steel Industries FYs 2014-21)

Figure 1.2 shows the highs and lows between the CSR expenditure of the three Industries respectively. TSL had no comparison in terms of expenditure with the other two steel industries, NINL and JSSL.

Table 1.2: Steel Industries' Spending on Goal 4 of SDG's

Financial Year	NINL		JSSL		TSL	
	Amount In lakhs	% of annual budget	Amount In lakhs	% of annual budget	Amount In lakhs	% of annual budget
2014-15	4.86	8.02	Nil	-	5731	33.42
2015-16	4.26	6.28	Nil	-	4221	20.64
2016-17	2.17	6.28	26.69	24.82	7371	38.07
2017-18	1.62	7.16	79.34	35.01	5781	24.95
2018-19	3.38	7.22	76.63	33.06	6652	21.12
2019-20	1.86	6.15	Nil	-	7392	38.30
2020-21	1.70	6.20	Nil	-	5281	23.79

Source: Annual Reports of respective industries

The CSR spending concerning goal 4 of the SDGs differs for the three industries. The spending for NINL for Goal 4 of the SDGs ranges from 1.70- 4.86 lakhs during FY 2014-2021. Meanwhile, the spending for JSSL ranges from 26.69-79.34 lakhs during FY 2016-2019. TSL alone outnumbers the combined spending of both companies. The spending of TSL for goal 4 of SDGs ranges from 42.21-73.92 crores during FY 2014-2021.

Fig 1.3: Percentage of Expenditure for Education by the Steel Industries during 2014-21
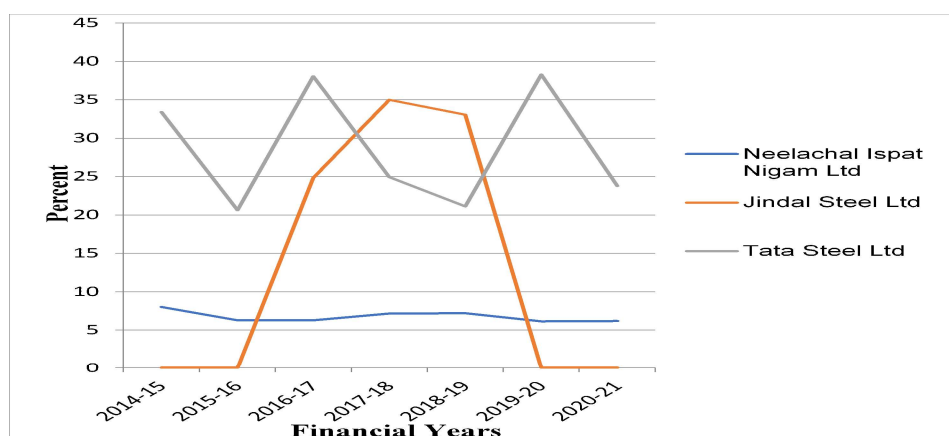
The allotment of budget for Goal 4 of the SDGs from the total budget of the industries also differs to a certain extent. As evident in Fig 1.3, during FY 2014-21, NINL spent 6.15-8.02 percent of the total budget for the education sector, whereas JSSL and TSL spent in a range of 20-40 percent of the total budget for the area.

Conclusion

The study observed that actions carried out towards Goal 4 of the SDGs varied from one organization to another due to differences in work culture, vision, and knowledge of their societal responsibilities. Apart from that, the variety of actions, effect, and outcomes differed among organisations. Some were unable to spend much due to their poor performance but still aimed to make some contribution rather than none. Certain businesses were unconcerned with CSR or the community, preferring to just follow the rules. On the other hand, some businesses did not consider complying with required standards since influencing the lives of community members was far more important to them than profit. According to the study, the education of youngsters is also improving as a result of such corporate CSR programmes.

The study's findings are comparable to those of Rahman and Islam (2019), who concluded in their study that corporations concerned about CSR issues increase their contributions to CSR year after year, ultimately leading to the attainment of the country's sustainable development goals. The current analysis also demonstrates that the three firms have contributed significantly to CSR. Our findings also show that because of the overlap with one or more areas of CSR, the actions were also in line with Goal 4 of the SDGs (Mishra, 2020). As a result, it highlights that expanded initiatives of CSR activities in line with the SDGs also bring about all-round development. Finally, it is not incorrect to suggest that corporate donations in the form of CSR or SDGs may assist governments in meeting the SDGs by 2030.

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Kanyashree Prakalpa: Empowerment of Girls in Mejia Block of Bankura District, West Bengal

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Abstract

In a country like India, where marginalised people are in huge numbers and the available public services are not commensurately adequate for them, one of the duties of the State is to protect these people. Both the Union and State governments are running public services in a ratio of around 2:1. The Kanyashree Prakalpa is a unique initiative that addresses the multiple needs of the society. It contributes to reducing drop-out rates, incidents of early child marriage, and post-early child marriage problems. It also increases the girls' enrolment and retention in their educational journey, fostering women empowerment. We conducted a small-scale door-to-door survey in the Mejia Block of Bankura district in West Bengal, involving beneficiary girls, their parents, teachers from institution associated with the scheme, 3-tier Panchayat members, and government officials. Our specific objective was to ascertain whether Kanyashree Prakalpa impacts women's empowerment beyond its general objectives. The study, undertaken in mid-2022, revealed many positive outcomes and societal impacts that contribute to accelerating women's empowerment.

Keywords_: women empowerment, early marriage, women's education, women dropout, entrepreneurship._

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Introduction

"One of the factors a country's economy depends on is human capital. If you don't provide women with adequate access to education, healthcare and employment, you lose at least half of your potential. So, gender equality and women empowerment bring huge economic benefits." –

Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile.

Woman, the born combatant, is still not ready to bury her hatchet. She longs for independence and the ability to make decisions within both the family and the greater society. Yet, she has to go through distress only. This scenario has remained a never changing story for centuries. In Indian society, the discrimination between men and women is deeply rooted. For centuries, women have been labouring labour for their family as well as for the society; yet have always been eliminated during the time of ultimate decision making at every stage of their lives. During the Vedic period, there were some women who showed their significance in society, such as Gargi, Maitreyi, etc. But the practice of "sastrya" was restricted to women of the elite society only. Gradually, the relatively respectable position they enjoyed in society eroded. Finally, in the early nineteenth century, women's education became a practice, albeit not fully accepted in society.

After Independence, the condition of female education gained new momentum. After the formulation of the India's Constitution, the guarantees of equal rights for men and women came into force. Article 14, 15 and 16 of part three of the Indian Constitution established a ground for right to equality in terms of freedom and opportunity. The necessity of women's education was recognized by different commissions, committees and some social organizations.

The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49) and Mudaliar Commission (1952-53) (MOE,1953) delivered strong recommendations on the necessity of female education. Later, various commissions, such as the National Committee on Women's Education (1958) (MOE, 1959), and the Hansha Mehta Committee (1961), underlined the need to reduce disparities between men and women through their recommendations.

The National Policy on Education (1986) emphasized on the removal of disparities between boys and girls. It envisaged that national education may play a vital role in the empowerment of women (MHRD, 1986: 6).

Kanyashree Prakalpa: West Bengal Initiatives for Girls Education and Empowerment

The Government of West Bengal has launched an ambitious scheme under the banner of Kanyashree Prakalpa or Kanyashree scheme[4], with an overall attention on girl children and a target bound provision that includes:

- Free education for girl children
- Prevention of child marriage
- Back to school campus for dropout school girls
- Giving access to further education for better career
- Giving opportunity for higher education
- Delaying the age of premature delivery

In this way, Kanyashree Prakalpa is trying to facilitate the whole girl student community across Bengal by providing monetary assistance in terms of financial support. However, serious social prejudices and hurdles for girls' education still persist in society. In cases where parents can afford the educational expenses for only one child in the family, they tend to support their male child. Also, there are massive setbacks for girl children especially in their bringing up. Boys receive more care from their parents and extended family members during their formative years, while girls are generally taken for granted in most of the cases. In reality, female literacy rate and their level of education act as basic indicators of the societal progress. Higher levels of education for women not only impart greater awareness and contribute to social upliftment, but also play the role of catalyst in bringing improvements in their social, political, and economic conditions within society, leading to their overall development.

Passionate Emphasis on Girls Education and Women Empowerment in Literature

Purusottam and Mahanta (2009) in their paper "Women Empowerment in India" described the real situation of women empowerment in India. They have clearly stated that women are victims of social norms. People in Indian society including women themselves consider them as the soft part of the male dominated society. There are so many discriminations against women in the society, on the basis of their age, color, overall economic condition, residential status (Nayak, P. & Mahanta, B., 2009). Huis et al. (2017), based on their study of women's involvement in microfinance, have shown that women empowerment became a reality by achieving

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[4]See the vision and salient points of the Scheme in: https://www.wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_4.0/faq.php:.

their financial sustainability. Sen & Dutta (2018) extensively discussed the Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP), launched by the West Bengal government. In their study, they have tried to measure in great detail the entire impact of the programme including its short term and long-term effects. The study found KP to be a catalyst for the social change of West Bengal. Besides this, the study also recommends a huge push from the state and beneficiaries to ensure its long-term effect.

 Akhter & Deb (2020), in their study, tried to associate public libraries with Kanyashree Prakalpa which leads to women empowerment, especially in rural contexts. They found that in rural areas the programme has proven to be the most effective in this case. Halder (2018) elaborately discussed the objectives of the scheme and tried to clarify and eliminate the controversy regarding the objectives of the scheme among people of different identities. The study found that even though the programme might be effective in rural areas there are other challenges, such as early marriage impacting girls of slum areas of Kolkata. The statistics reveal that 25% of girls of these areas are threatened to get married before they reach their adulthood (Halder, 2018).

In summary, it becomes clear that educational factors do play an important role in empowering women. Therefore, govt. policies like Kanyashree Prakalpa, Beti Bachao Beti Padao, etc., accelerate the chances of girls getting an education, especially in rural areas (Agnihotri & Malipatil, 2018). The discussion above provides evidence regarding the contribution of Kanyashree Prakalpa in declining the dropout rates. This also holds true for the decline in the rate of underage marriages among the girls, as well as the increasing opportunities for women, allowing them to have a better standard of living and conditioning their level of thinking and views towards society. Yet, the role of Kanyashree Prakalpa in raising female education and empowering them needs further investigation. Therefore, it is evident that a gap exists, which has to be bridged with further exploration and understanding in this regard.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis is selected to substantiate the current study:
There is no significant difference in opinions about women's empowerment in association with Kanyashree Prakalpa among the Kanyashree girls of Mejia block in the district of Bankura.

Objective of the study
The present study seeks:
• To assess the rate of success of Kanyashree Prakalpa in Mejia block.

- To consider how far this project is assisting the girl-students to make them empowered to take their own decisions and by themselves.
- To identify the problems faced by them on a regular basis in their rural setting and examine how Kanyashree Prakalpa is facilitating those students to overcome the barriers.
- To understand the views of girl students who are availing Kanyashree stipend facilities in this particular block.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on a face-to-face conversations with 100 female students from different schools and institutions residing in various localities within the Mejia block of Bankura district in West Bengal. A self-made structured schedule has been used for this primary research to conduct a study in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. During this study, the target respondents were mainly those girls who have already received Kanyashree one-time grant of Rs. 25,000/- to continue their education up to the age of 18, thereby promoting stability in their academic journey by delaying the age of marriage. After gathering their opinions, we preferred to use SPSS for statistical analysis, along with correlation, regression, and the stepdown model analyzer.

Data Collection Process

For data collection, we decided to visit BDO office to get a random list of Kanyashree grant holders. After collecting the sheets, we visited the respective schools and tried to verify the names of the scheme holders. Finally, we interviewed twenty Kanyashree girls on an average from each gram panchayet of the block. Mejia Block consists of five Anchals (gram panchayets) such as Ardhagram, Kushtor, Ramchandrapur, Banjora and Mejia. In each respective village, we identified our target respondents by their names and interviewed them thoroughly according to our selected queries.

The Data

We have collected a detailed dataset for all 100 Kanyashree recipients including information related to their Academic Qualification, Name of the Institution, Name of the G.P, Occupation, Marital Status, Monthly Family Income, and Year of receiving K2. For reasons of brevity, only a few dimensions of the respondents are tabulated and provided below.

The data has no connection to the design and implementation of the Scheme. From our sample, we noticed that 39 respondents were recipients of K2 in the year 2016-17, followed by 27 who received it during 2019-20.

Table-1: K2 Recipients Year-wise

Year	K2 Recipients
2015-16	8
2016-17	39
2017-18	14
2018-19	11
2019-20	27
2020-21	1

Source: Primary data collected by us.

Table-2: Marital Status of K2 Respondents

Year	Married	Unmarried
2015-16	5	3
2016-17	14	25
2017-18	2	12
2018-19	3	8
2019-20	0	27
2020-21	0	1

Source: Primary data collected by us.

The vision of Kanyashree Prakalpa is to provide financial assistance for facilitating the girls' educational journey and delaying their marriage beyond the age of 18. It is probable that this message has not been conveyed by the administration and internalized by the society effectively, such that 14 of 39 K2 recipients were married during 2016-17, whereas all 27 K2 recipients during 2019-20 were unmarried girls.

Table-3: Monthly Family Income Profile of K2 Respondents

Income	Total Number	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Upto 9K	17	1	8	0	0	8	0
Upto 10K	14	1	3	4	1	4	1
Upto 12K	28	2	9	4	5	8	0
Above 12K	41	4	19	6	5	7	0

Source: Primary data collected by us.

Approximately 41% of the respondents hail from families with a monthly income more than 12K. The remaining, 59%, the predominant majority, make do with a
64

monthly income less than 12K. It's a cruel reality that 17% of the K2 recipients hail from families with a monthly income of 9K or lower.

Dependent Variable

The effectiveness of Kanyashree one time grant (Y) and the perception towards the effectiveness of Kanyashree Prakalpa in women empowerment (Z)

Independent Variable

The Independent Variables used in this study include: Educational status (X_1), age of the respondent (X_2), occupation of parents (X_3), monthly income of parents (X_4), monthly income of family (X_5), go to regular school or college (X_6), availability of food during school /college hour (X_7), electricity at home (X_8), availability of Aadhaar card (X_9), the school's or college's distance from your home (X_{10}), transport for going to school or college (X_{11}), accessibility of private tuition (X_{12}), effectiveness of Kanyashree grant for dropout girls (X_{13}), family consent for studying in school or college (X_{14}), role of school in getting Kanyashree grant (X_{15}), accessibility of Kanyashree Sangha (X_{16}), accessibility of rural public library (X_{17}), usage of public library (X_{18}), role of public library in getting Kanyashree grant (X_{19}), role of Gram Panchayats in getting Kanyashree grant (X_{20}), role of Block Development Office in getting public services (X_{21}), the effectiveness of Kanyashree one time grant (X_{22}) perception towards women empowerment (X_{23}), effective schemes for women empowerment (X_{24}), role of public libraries in women empowerment (X_{25}), role of public libraries in getting public services (X_{26}), role of public libraries in organizing training for women (X_{27}) and perception towards the effectiveness of Kanyashree Prakalpa in women empowerment (X_{28}).

Result and Discussion

Part I: Effectiveness of Kanyashree one time grant (Y) is the dependent variable

Table-1 shows how the effectiveness of Kanyashree one time grant (Y) is perceived by students themselves and how the independent variables signify the level of students' perception regarding Kanyashree Prakalpa and its impact on their education and career. The correlation between the two kinds of variables is also a key finding of the present study. The fact is that parents' financial condition has a strong relationship with their children's level of education. This particular locality

contains a variety of people with diverse occupations, primarily consisting most of the residents of working class people. The current study describes how parents' occupation (X_3) confers a strong positive impact on respondents' perception of the Kanyashree one-time grant scheme. Due to limited financial resources, parents often can't afford private tuition for their children, and mostly, it is the girl students who excluded from receiving special guidance after completing their schooling in most cases. When asked about this issue, a strong negative reflection emerged from their responses (X_{12}).

Table – 4: Correlation analysis between dependent variable Y and casual variables

Variables	'r' Value
Occupation of parents (X_3)	0.2458*
Accessibility of private tuition (X_{12})	-0.2089*
Effectiveness of Kanyashree grant for dropout girls (X_{13})	0.4024**
Role of school in getting Kanyashree grant (X_{15})	0.4863**
Role of public library in getting Kanyashree grant (X_{19})	0.2457*
Role of gram panchayats in getting Kanyashree grant (X_{20})	0.2832**
Role of Block Development Office in getting public services (X_{21})	0.3215**

Critical value (2-Tail, 0.05) = +or- 0.197   *Significant at 5% level
Critical value (2-Tail, 0.01) = +or- 0.256 ** Significant at 1% level

On the other hand, the effectiveness of the Kanyashree grant for drop out girls (X_{13}) had a strong positive impact in this regard. According to the girls, before the introduction of Kanyashree Prakalpa programme, girls used to experience troublesome situations that restricted them from continuing their studies at school. Thus, the monetary grant seemed like a boon to them. Hence, they expressed their positive views regarding the matter. As far as the educational institution is concerned, school is the only place where girls have access to information pertaining to studies, scholarships, monetary grants, and other government schemes for better opportunities. Therefore, a positive correlation was found between the role of school (X_{15}) in disseminating information regarding the Kanyashree Prakalpa and girls' opinion about their experience with schools in receiving the Kanyashree grant as a whole. Here, the roles of public libraries and Gram Panchayat had a strong and positive bearing on the perception of students on women empowerment. The role of the Block Development Office in this particular service had a strong and positive implication on the stakeholder's perception, which proves the activeness of the officials regarding the Kanyashree Project.

Analysis-2 depicts that all twenty-one variables show their regression effects with â and similar t-values. Their impact on the Kanyashree one-time grant (Y) expresses 45.05 per cent of the total collective effect (R^2=0.45059). The two variables, namely the monthly income of the Family (X_5) and the Role of school in obtaining the Kanyashree grant (X_{15}), significantly imply the effect of the whole regression on predictors.

From the Step-down regression model, it is seen that only one variable, named as role of school in obtaining Kanyashree grant (X_{15}) explains 23.64 per cent of the total effect. This means the remaining twenty variables explain the remaining 21.41 per cent of the total impact.

Part II: Perception level of students on women empowerment (Z) is the dependent variable.

Table -5: Correlation Analysis between dependent variable and the perception level of students on women empowerment (Z) and 27 casual variables

Variables	'r' Value
Age of the respondent (X_2)	0.3720**
Go to regular school or college (X_6)	0.2010*
Availability of food during school /college hour (X_7)	0.2077*
Electricity at home (X_8)	-0.2695**
Availability of Aadhaar card (X_9)	0.2186*
Accessibility of private tuition (X_{12})	-0.2491*
Effectiveness of Kanyashree grant for dropout girls (X_{13})	0.4633**
Role of school in obtaining Kanyashree grant (X_{15})	0.4574**
Usage of public library (X_{18})	0.2090*
Role of gram panchayats in obtaining Kanyashree grant (X_{20})	0.3645**
Role of Block Development Office in getting public services (X_{21})	0.3053**
The effectiveness of Kanyashree one time grant (X_{22})	0.3484**
Perception towards women empowerment (X_{23})	0.5101**
Effective schemes for women empowerment (X_{24})	0.4464**
Role of public libraries in getting public services (X_{26})	0.2039*

Critical value (2-Tail, 0.05) = +or- 0.197   *Significant at 5% level
Critical value (2-Tail, 0.01) = +or- 0.256   ** Significant at 1% level

It is evident from Table-2 that a maximum numbers of the fifteen independent variables are positively associated with the promotion of women empowerment (Z). It is to be noted that two variables, namely electricity at home (X_8) and accessibility of private tuition (X_{12}) exceptionally exhibit a strong negative association with the promotion of women empowerment (Z). On the other hand, the remaining thirteen variables keep a strong positive association with the promotion of women empowerment (Z). Variables such as the age of respondent (X_2), effectiveness of Kanyashree grant for dropout girls (X_{13}), role of school in obtaining the Kanyashree grant (X_{15}), role of Gram Panchayat in obtaining the Kanyashree grant (X_{20}), role of B.D.O office in obtaining public services (X_{21}), effectiveness of Kanyashree one time grant (X_{22}), perception towards women empowerment(X_{23}) and effective schemes for women empowerment (X_{24}) held a very strong positive bearing on the perception level of respondent towards women empowerment (Z). This suggests that all the female respondents are fully aware of the promotion of women empowerment through the above-mentioned factors.

Education empowers women to make informed choices and communicate effectively on related issues. During conversations with the female respondents, it became clear that poverty and inequity are the underlying contributors to school dropout cases, early child marriages as well as many maternal deaths. Evidence shows that poor households have more than twice the risk of having school dropout children compared to wealthy households. Nowadays, respondents from the specific blocks are already facilitated with electricity at home. Therefore, this is a common factor behind their privilege. That's why they were not terribly bothered with electricity connection, enabling them to focus on their studies and other household works with mental peace and confidence. The majority of the respondents face various problems while pursuing school or higher education with financial problems and large family sizes often leading them to give up on their studies mid way. That is why the main motto of these women students is to secure jobs and become financially established. In fact, many parents also hope that higher education will empower their daughters to be economically independent, make them capable of contributing to the wellbeing of the family, and enhance their marriage prospects. Thus, girls are truly glad to receive the financial benefits from the Kanyashree one time grant. The effectiveness of the Kanyashree grant for dropout girls (X_{13}) thus strongly influences the perception level of respondents regarding women empowerment.

A considerable number of respondents expressed satisfaction with the role of Gram Panchayat in obtaining Kanyashree grant (X_{20}) is quite satisfying. Hence, the relationship between women empowerment (Z) and the participation of grass-roots

government agencies in acquiring the Kanyashree grant had a strong positive bearing on the perception level of the respondents.

The role of Block Development Offices in obtaining public services (X_{21}) also had a strong positive bearing on the perception level of the respondents. Here, the data reflects the respondent's opinion on how they are treated by the officials while seeking particular public services. A considerable number of respondents have stated that the officials were cooperative and helped them in obtaining the Kanyashree grant in a proper way.

The educational attainment of women in this particular rural area is increasing and number of female students pursuing higher education is growing even further. In West Bengal, some specific public services like Kanyashree, Sobuj Sathi, and Rupashree have paved the way for women to pursue graduation and post-graduation. Therefore, the effectiveness of the Kanyashree one time grant (X_{22}) had a very strong positive bearing on the level of opinion of the respondents.

The data reveals a significant variation in the perception towards women empowerment (X_{23}) among female students belonging to different financial status. This means that respondents belonging to higher economic groups are more aware and conscious of women empowerment compared to those who belong to comparatively lower economic backgrounds.

It clearly emerges from the data that there is a strong association of Kanyashree Prakalpa with women empowerment which exists at every step in their life. Their opinions towards this scheme appear very clear and the statistical analysis also supports the same (Ghara, & Roy, 2017). Therefore, the null Hypothesis (H_0) is accepted and the alternative Hypothesis (H_1) is rejected.

It is very interesting to note that all the independent variables show their regression effects with â and corresponding t-values, contributing to student's level of perception regarding women empowerment (Z). Here, these variables collectively explain 61.42 percent of the total aggregation effect ($R^2 = 0.61420$). Four specific variables have been identified in turn, such as, age of the respondent (X_2), electricity at home (X_8), usage of public library (X_{18}), effective schemes for women empowerment (X_{24}), and these variables are significantly expressing the whole regression effect in this matter (Biswas, S., Biswas, J., Akhter, M.Y. & Deb, P., 2020).

The Step-down regression has been set to segregate particular independent variables with the prominence of representation. In this way, it has been noticed that

after step 5, five variables: perception towards women empowerment (X_{23}), effective schemes for women empowerment (X_{24}), effectiveness of Kanyashree grant for dropout girls (x13), usage of public library (X_{18}), electricity at home (X_8) have explained 48.43 per cent of the total effect. Thus, the rest of variables signify only about 21.99 percent of the overall impact on the student's view towards women empowerment.

Findings

Despite encountering several stumbling blocks, female students in this area are availing Kanyashree one time grant in order to obtain their higher studies as well as wiping the financial obstructions out of their way towards empowerment (Kanrar, 2018). The beneficiaries have been empowered in various ways through this monetary scheme. Here, we know that K2 is a conditional cash transfer scheme. While we enquired about the ground facts regarding this scheme, girls were found to be talking about the innumerable benefits they had received in order to empower themselves in different ways. While some of them have already taken admissions to technical colleges, are in nursing training schools, computer training schools, pursuing tailoring and beautician courses, as well as other vocational courses (Molla & Sarkar 2020).

A good number of female students have completed their vocational training in areas such as computer skills, nursing, beautician services, tailoring, and others, from various institutions in order to make themselves independent for the near future. However, there are still so many girls who can only dream of school, college and training institutions.

During the study, we came to know the real scenario of 'Age at marriage' in those particular regions. Basically, the rate of maternal mortality becomes higher if the girl conceives before the age of 18. As the study progressed, it was discovered that numerous instances of early marriages were prevalent throughout the study area. Shockingly, six girl students revealed that their marriages took place before they turned 18. To estimate the level of poverty among the scheme holders, we interviewed these girls and enquired about their day-to-day dietary habits, health, and hygiene. In the case of adolescent girls, their caloric needs are higher because of the biological changes in their body. Usually, it is recommended that 45-65% of daily caloric requirements come from carbohydrates, 10-35% from proteins and 20-35% from fats. In this region of Bengal, rice is a staple for energy and daily carbohydrate requirements. However, from our survey, an unexpected revelation was that the girls hardly eat rice in a day. Instead, the common diet usually consists

of puffed rice *(Muri).* For the maximum part of the month, they rely on '*muri' and 'chop'* (local term of puffed rice & smashed potato snack). Although the food combination is quite tasty, it does not fulfill the nutritional requirements of the body. The nutrition value of the oil fried potato snack is practically negligible and unhygienic as well. Upon asking the girls about their food habits, the intensity of poverty becomes evident as a contributing factor.

Specific Findings

The Kanyashree girls in the Mejia block share multiple and complex realities. This entire study aimed to focus on the achievement of Kanyashree girls of this block as well as the challenges they face. During the study, it was evident that the girls have managed to create history by so many challenges in their lives. Hera are a few stories highlighting the efforts of these industrious and talented girls.

Mallika Gope is presently pursuing her bachelor's degree with utmost confidence. Moreover, she plays a vital role in her family's cattle business. Basically, her family is associated with cattle keeping. Mallika is a Kanyashree one time grant holder. She has always been a scheme holder of various public services provided by the Government of West Bengal, such as, Kanyashree, Sobuj Sathi and so on. Upon receiving the K2 grant of Rupees 25,000, she decided to continue her studies with the help of this lump sum amount and also invested some of the money to buy a Bengal goat, contributing to her family income. She also works as a goat herder in her free time, all while pursuing her studies.

Dipika Barui, another Kanyashree girl and a resident of the Banjora gram panchayat area, has made a significant difference in her society by establishing herself as a graduate. Currently, she is in her 3rd year of BA. Besides spending the money to continuing her studies, she has also purchased a sewing machine for her mother so that they can independently keep their tailoring business up.

Sampa Praminik lives in Kansara, a small village in the Mejia Block. This brave girl has recently joined as a nursing trainee in at Anondolok hospital in Ranigunj which is almost 20 km away from her house. That's why she has to take the bus and cover the remaining distance by bicycle, traveling miles after miles. Still, the girl is very energetic and full of confidence. According to her, the Kanyashree scheme has paved the way for her career.

Conclusion

The Kanyashree Prakalpa is a small endeavour by the State Government to provide financial support to girls students from the age of 13 years until the completion of their post graduate degrees. Besides this, every girl student receives an additional twenty-five thousand rupees after attaining 18 years of age. Our aim is to study the effectiveness of the Kanyashree one-time grant of twenty-five thousand rupees and to what extent this small amount can act as a stepping stone towards the financial empowerment of women. National data has revealed that the Kanyashree programme has played a great role in enhancing girls' enrolment and reduction in early child marriage.

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Disabled People's Organizations: Role, Functions and Effectiveness

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Abstract

Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) are informal gatherings of disabled people who come together to reach specific goals related to their day-to-day lives. The People with Disabilities (PWDs) and their families work together in groups to address familiar challenges, develop personal strengths, and improve their quality of life. DPOs function as effective tools for poverty alleviation, human development, and social empowerment. The development and empowerment initiatives of these groups focus on ability building, education, health care, rehabilitation, livelihood, microcredit, lobbying and income generation activities.

This study aimed to understand the roles, functions and effectiveness of DPOs in Kerala, as well as the outcomes and effectiveness of these groups in achieving the sustainability and socio-economic development of PWDs. The study was explanatory in nature and used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The samples included 641 PWDs, parents, and caregivers of PWDs from eight DPOs in Kerala. The outcomes of the study showed active participation of PWDs in all aspects of community life, such as political, social, and cultural activities and pursuits. After joining the groups, DPO members were more aware of their rights and privileges. The DPOs helped PWDs in generating income and supporting livelihood activities by developing savings and bank linkages. This study may serve as a strategy formulation for the government and other allied agencies such as NGOs and private institutions.

Keywords: *roles; functions; effectiveness; Disabled People's Organizations; people with disabilities; livelihood.*

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Introduction

People who are badly affected by one or more categories of impairments are referred to as Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Since different local or national laws define disability differently, the definition of a person with a disability differs from place to place. But, generally speaking, a person with a handicap is someone unable to lead a social and functional life that is seen to be normal by their peers because of physical, mental, or emotional conditions. A PWD may also be denoted with terms pointing to specific disabling conditions. PWDs are those who "have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in combination with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations, 2006).

People with disabilities have the same rights, basic requirements, and difficulties as others when they are forcibly displaced. They do, however, encounter various extra obstacles. They are particularly vulnerable to hazards to their safety, including an increased risk of assault, exploitation, and abuse, as well as significant stigma. The group of people with disabilities is not uniform. They experience numerous and interrelated forms of discrimination, not only because of their handicap but also because of other factors, which may result in exclusions (Deepak et al., 2014).

Rehabilitation strategies for disabled people have changed over the past twenty years to include new strategies for helping people with disabilities live more independently, with their families, and in their communities. The assistance includes anything from mobility aids to adaptive equipment, inclusion in educational environments, other training facilities to self-employment and other income-generating activities (World Health Organization, 2010). An organization serves as a place for people to gather, talk, and represent their needs and interests to others. People can become visible members of the greater community with the use of the forum. Members can help one another by exchanging knowledge about referral services and other resources, and assisting in the decision-making process for families and individuals.

The desire of disabled persons to become their best selves has also greatly impacted this. Being self-reliant is insufficient for PWDs and many other people; they also require a community that supports them and promotes empathy. Community-Based Organizations (CBO) such as Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) or SHGs give members a place to congregate, communicate, and advocate for their needs and interests. These organizations were created to allow impaired persons to

engage as a peer group, share ideas, and gain confidence that will improve their life (Young, R, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Critical Disability Theory (CDT) is an emerging theoretical framework for the study and analysis of disability issues. CDT is derived from the critical social theory drawn by Max Horkheimer (1937). The CDT appears to be a notion that opens up new avenues for describing the patterns that characterise the socioeconomic circumstances of PWDs and how they function in various spheres of social life (Hosking, 2008). According to the Frankfurt School, the fundamental goal of CDT has always been to reform society's economic, political, and social structures to liberate humankind. The theory aims to promote empowerment and genuine equality rather than merely formal equality (Sztobryn-giercuszkiewicz, 2020). The purpose of CDT is to serve as an explanation, a tool, and a standard.

Research on disability directly results from social movements of PWDs, like DPOs. The CDT views the rights-based approach as an essential tool for promoting the equality claims of people with disabilities and for supporting their full integration into society in all aspects while bringing into society the value of diversity understood (Deepak et al., 2013). To change the conditions in which PWDs live, CDT must inevitably refer to lived experiences. The CDT is dedicated to practising and inquiry that involves a thorough examination of the roles and functions of DPOs, which are still not fully understood.

Need for the Study

Kerala has a significant proportion of disabled persons as a result of socio-economic problems, poverty, and lack of education. Due to neglect, discrimination, and exclusion from mainstream development initiatives, they frequently lack access to health care, education, housing, and opportunities for a livelihood. DPO members face even greater challenges because of poverty, mobility problems brought on by the state's hilly nature, a lack of awareness, and a lack of service providers.

The DPOs in Kerala take larger initiatives to address the needs of PWDs and enhance their quality of life through various intervention measures. In these circumstances, this study focuses on analysing the activities, programmes and strategies used by DPOs for PWDs, as well as the effects of those interventions in the life of PWDs.

Objectives of the Study

i. To study the development and services rendered by Disabled People's Organisations in Kerala.

ii. To examine the impact of income-generating programmes and, livelihood, activities, on the lives of PWDs.

iii. To study the socio-economic improvements achieved by people with disabilities as members of Disabled People's Organisations.

iv. To measure the functions and effectiveness of Disabled People's Organizations in the lives of people with disabilities, based on various socio-demographic variables.

Research Design

The present study has used a Mixed Research Method that involved the collection of quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data through the sequential explanatory strategy of mixed research method. An explanatory research design was employed for the investigation.

Universe

The persons with disabilities, parents and caregivers of the PWDs who are part of the District level Disabled Persons Organisations (DDPOs) in Kerala comprised the universe of this study. It included eight DPOs of differently-abled persons functioning effectively in Kerala.

Sample and Sampling

The study's samples were chosen using multi-stage random sampling techniques. The process was divided into three parts, starting with the selection of district-level organizations for disabled people using a systematic random sampling procedure. In the second step, organizations for disabled people that have been operating at full capacity for at least the past years were chosen through a systematic random sampling procedure. Eight districts were selected for the study out of a total of fourteen districts in Kerala. Lastly, 641 samples were selected using the stratified random sampling method, including parents and caregivers of people with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 65 and above, who were associated with eight District Level Disabled People's Organizations.

Tools of Data Collection

The data collection tool involved a semi-structured interview schedule, the Effectiveness of DPO in the life of PWDs Scale and focus group discussion.

Feasibility and Validity of the Scale: The pilot implementation of the scale was tested on 120 participants to test its validity and feasibility. The scale included 38 statements to evaluate the role and responsibilities of DPOs and 28 statements for PWDs. The statements covered a broad spectrum and allowed for selection based on the unique objectives of the DPOs and their programmes. The indicators and statements were appropriate for evaluating changes in the health, education, social lives, and economic empowerment of people with disabilities, as well as the contribution of DPOs to their lives and those of other community members. The supplementary questions provided more specific coverage of DPO elements and were selected depending on the specific goals and strategies of the programmes implemented.

Major Findings

Roles of DPOs

Development of DPOs: The DPOs adopted the traits of self-help, self-administration, self-responsibility, and group dynamism along with mutual support. The groups were owned and controlled by their members. 72.3 per cent of the respondents stated that the activities were dedicated to the community members without any external influence. The DPOs organised themselves into a bottom-up and multilevel federation system. Structures at the village-level (Cluster), block level and district-level federations were formed to provide support services to their members. Among the 83 respondents in the FGD, 73.5 per cent of them stated that these structures helped the poor and marginalised PWDs in overcoming their vulnerability and resource shortages.

Capacity Building of the Communities: Capacity-building activities like advocacy and lobbying training, leadership training, skill development initiatives and documentation had positive dimensions in the lives of PWDs. 86.7 per cent of the leaders described that the DPOs, as empowering agents, went beyond financial issues faced by beneficiaries and were deeply committed to resolving the problems and discriminations faced by them. Apart from achieving financial independence, the capacity-building measures of DPOs, also addressed independence within the

social sphere. 79.1 per cent of the members reported that they enjoyed an equal share in decision-making and access to resources with in the family and community.

Quality and Sustainability of DPOs: The DPOs were active in the area and provided managerial and technical support to the people's organisations established under DPO initiatives. Community-based organisations like SHGs, clusters, and federations were formed and strengthened to ensure the continuity of the development process initiated by the DPOs. The clusters and federations were given continuous support from other humanitarian organisations to coordinate and monitor the effective functioning of the groups. 80.5 per cent of these groups were linked to government institutions or programmes to avail the schemes and services and this connection is still in effect.

Community-based Rehabilitation Strategies: The Community-based Rehabilitation activities were carried out by the DPOs to improve the quality of life and address the basic needs of people with disabilities.

Health: It was one of the main and most important aspects of the CBR matrix, to helping people with disabilities achieve their highest attainable standard of health. CBR personnel worked with family members to provide them with proper access to health services and ensure all aspects of their health needs were addressed.

Education: This has led to the fulfilment of potential, a sense of dignity, self-worth, and effective participation in society. 80.2 per cent of schools have trained teachers, a supportive environment, strong linkages with families and communities as well as resources to maintain proper hygiene and create a welcoming environment for children with disabilities.

Livelihood: 76.3 per cent of PWDs gained a livelihood and had easy access to social protection measures, enabling them to contribute economically to their families and communities. Additionally, 80.6 per cent of PWDs and their family members were provided with skill development opportunities, and various forms of support were given to participating in poverty reduction strategies and programmes of DPOs.

Social: 80.5 per cent of PWDs held meaningful social roles and responsibilities within their communities and families, and were viewed as equal members of society. The skills and resources provided through DPOs helped them in community development, and they were supported and encouraged excel. 85.4 per cent of them replied that PWDs were recognised as valued members of society.

Empowerment: PWDs were enabled to come together and form SHGs and organisations to collectively address their common problems. Through proper training in advocacy and communication strategies 74.2 per cent of PWDs were enabled to speak up for themselves, make decisions, and effectively express their needs and desires.

The Functions of DPOs

The DPOs through their activities strive to promote an inclusive society without any discrimination, where every PWD exercises their right to a life of dignity on an equal basis with others. They work to end injustice towards PWDs by promoting equal opportunities and effective participation in all spheres of society.

Capacity Building: The capacity-building activities carried out by the eight DPOs in Kerala include the formation of SHGs for disabled people; creation of village-level clusters and panchayat-level federations; leadership training; classes on accounting, bookkeeping, advocacy and lobbying; interface meetings; programmes to raise awareness among the general public, schools, and all communities; and initiatives to inform people about social security programmes. It is evident that the DPOs conducted similar activities across all eight districts. Notably, the DPO in the Idukki district was more successful at carrying out member capacity-building activities, followed by DPOs in Kottayam, Trivandrum, and Ernakulam.

Income Generation and Livelihood: Income generation is considered an activity that helps individuals earn money and become financially sound. The activities carried out by DPOs generate income and support members' livelihoods to help them become financially independent. Principal tasks under the category of economic strengthening included distributing units of cows, goats, chicken, and rabbits, offering support for small businesses and cottage industries, and establishing tailoring. Through these endeavours, PWDs were able to increase their earnings and provide for their family's basic needs, and improve their standard of living.

Promotion of Healthy Living Conditions: Health promotion focuses on promoting life through various life-saving measures, healthy preventions and healthy preventive practices, and nutritious dietary intake. The eight districts carried out common activities, such as providing caregiving training to parents and caregivers of PWDs, raising awareness of good health practises, distributing assistive devices and appliances for PWDs, supporting PWDs with their medication and surgeries, conducting medical and screening camps in various districts, and placing more

emphasis on promoting nutrition supplements and giving home-based functional therapy to PWDs. Idukki and Kottayam, followed by Kollam and Trivandrum, dominated in most of the eight districts. The dominance might have been the result of DPOs' health accessibility initiatives, which varied depending on the socio-demography of the districts.

Education Promotion Activities: The figure below indicates the education promotion activities carried out by the DPOs for its members.

Figure 1: Education Promotion Activities
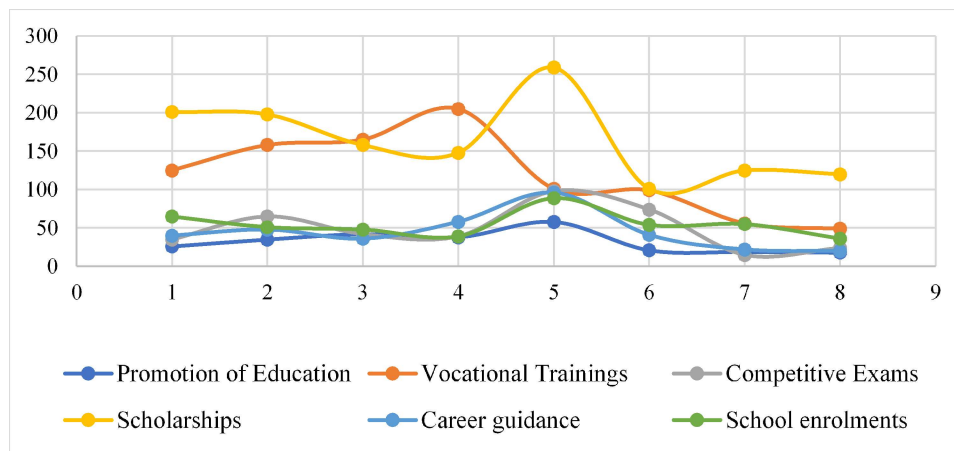
X - Axis: 1. Trivandrum, 2. Kollam, 3. Pathanamitta, 4. Kottayam, 5. Idukki, 6. Ernakulam, 7. Kozhikode, 8. Wayanad.

The DPOs carried out tasks such as promoting inclusive education, vocational training, competitive exam preparation, various scholarship programmes, career counselling, and school enrolment campaigns. The DPOs shared many of the same activities and placed more emphasis on the availability of scholarship programmes for children with disabilities as well as the development of vocational training or skill promotion for PWDs. Kottayam was the leader in offering PWDs several vocational and skill training programmes. All DPOs were able to dominate in this area, although DPOs from the Idukki district stood out for their success in promoting the most scholarship programmes. On the other hand, DPOs from Kottayam stood out for their success in offering the most vocational and skill training opportunities for PWDs. Due to its economic and social disadvantages, Idukki may provide students with

greater educational support than other districts. The accessibility and availability of educational possibilities are other issues for the children of Idukki.

Advocacy and Lobbying: The advocacy and lobbying efforts made by the DPOs in Kerala are shown in the graph. The DPOs engaged in activities such as advocating for the availability of a three-wheeled scooter for PWDs, obtaining disability cards for PWDs, enrolling PWDs and their caregivers in MNREGA, pursuing medical certificates, promoting a free legal cell where PWDs can obtain legal assistance, and establishing connections with Panchayat Raj Institutions.

Figure 2: Advocacy and Lobbying
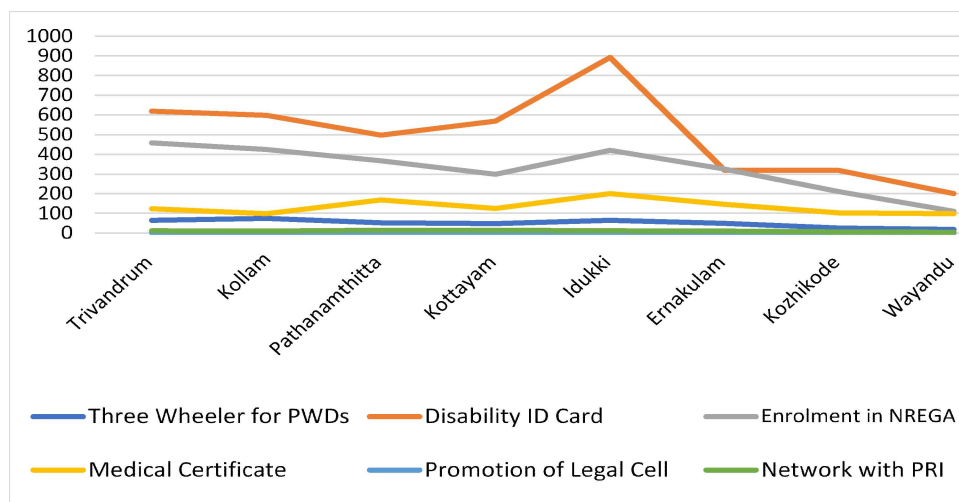
It was observed that, among all other actions, concerted efforts for obtaining ID cards, enrolling in MNREGA, and obtaining medical certifications predominated. The DPOs in Idukki and Kottayam were distinct for conducting more activities and maintaining their lead. This can be because individuals in the hilly or isolated Idukki districts are unable to travel outside for work. Due to ill family members and lack of funds, the PWDs and their families were denied employment opportunities or were unable to go to work. As a result, they were enrolled in MNREGA to assist them in earning a living.

Effectiveness of DPOs in the Life of PWDs

The DPOs seem to be effective in poverty alleviation, and socio-economic empowerment, as they improve social participation and social inclusion of PWDs.

The empowerment of PWDs through SHGs makes them effective members of their families, and their voices are often recognized and heard within both the family and the community.

Effectiveness of DPOs and Duration of Membership

The analysis reflects the fact that the effectiveness of DPOs differs significantly based on the duration of membership of PWDs in their respective DPOs.

Table 1: Effectiveness of DPOs on Duration of Membership

Duration of Membership	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	Sig.
0 to 3 years	184	2.83	.390			
4 to 5 years	146	2.38	.623	638	34.004	.001
6 and above	311	2.55	.517			

The test revealed that the DPOs positively affect the life of PWDs based on the duration of their membership. The difference is significant at the 0.01 level. The mean score of the equal subsets of variables based on the length of membership in the DPOs is shown in the table above. The DPOs who had been members for four to five years continued to differ from those who had been members for two to three years.

The new members in the DPOs were identified as people with two to three years of membership duration. The causes of these variations in the efficacy of the DPOs in the life of the members may be related to challenging strength and the capacity for balanced-focused tasks. The newer DPOs members may also be in better physical and mental condition than the elderly DPOs members (Giraldo-Rodrguez et al., 2019). The members' capacity and participation might have increased because of their engagement in the DPOs' initiatives. Changes in the efficacy of DPOs' activities in members' lives could be brought on by their greater participation and knowledge of their rights (Grills et al., 2016).

Effectiveness of DPOs and Area of Living

The respondents were divided into four groups: urban, semi-urban, rural, and other areas of living. The variance analysis shown below illustrates the effects of DPOs on the area of living.

Table 2: Effectiveness of DPO on Area of Living

Area of living	N	Mean	SD	df	F	Sig.
Urban	89	2.69	.535			
Semi-urban	211	2.61	.535	637	1.964	.118
Rural	296	2.57	.542			
Other areas	45	2.47	.505			

Based on the areas of living of PWDs, there were no statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of DPOs and areas of living of PWDs. The calculated F- value is 1.964, which is lower than the table value and has not been considered significant. The people, especially those with disabilities, are often regarded as miserable in Kerala's hilly regions. The disabled are disadvantaged in many facets of social life and live in hilly terrain (Kleintjes et al., 2013). PWDs are prevented from receiving appropriate schooling, timely medical care, and socialisation because of the poor geography of the state (Visagie et al., 2017). This leads to a lack of knowledge about government programmes for PWDs, their rights and chances, lack of accessibility to public places and transportation, unhealthy physical appearance, and poor economic conditions, which worsens the situation for the unfortunate population (Armstrong, 1993).

Effectiveness of DPO and Employment of the Respondents

The respondent's employment was divided into four groups: unemployed, self-employed (a person who owns and operates the business and earns profit), wage labourers (a person employed for a small period on farms), and regular salaried employees (a person working regularly in some enterprise). A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effectiveness of DPOs on the employment of the respondents.

Table 3: Effectiveness of DPO on the Employment of the Respondents

Employment	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	Sig.
Unemployed	98	2.70	.541			
Wage/Salaried	321	2.58	.525	637	20.297	.001
Regular Employed	68	2.18	.517			
Self Employed	154	2.73	.472			

The employment position of DPOs revealed that there were statistically significant differences between these four groups for each variable at the p<0.05 level for all

four conditions. Thus it can be concluded that DPOs have a significant effect on the life of PWDs based on the duration of their employment of the PWDs. Armstrong et al. (1993) reported that the Ability Bhutan Society (ABS is a public benefit organisation established to understand that people with moderate to severe different abilities, particularly children and their families, have special needs) contributed to the employment opportunities of people with disabilities. This is done by encouraging those with skills (e.g., tailoring, radio or TV repair skills) in the group to train other members as their apprentices, provide job placement for them after their training was completed and ensure they earned sufficient income. Several studies suggested that forming disability SHGs or group savings and lending groups could be a way for persons with disabilities to generate income and support livelihood activities by developing savings, increasing confidence and facilitating access to microfinance and mainstream bank loans (Dhungana and Kusakabe, 2010; Kumaran, 2011; Miles et al., 2012; Cobley, 2013; Kleintjes et al., 2013).

Effectiveness of DPOs and Annual Income

The analysis of variance shown below demonstrates the effects of DPOs based on respondents' income.

Table 4: Effectiveness of DPO on Annual Income

Annual Income (Rs)	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	Sig.
Up to 25000	170	2.86	.397			
26000 to 50000	328	2.59	.511	637	42.455	.001
51000 to 75000	115	2.19	.528			
75000 & above	28	2.68	.612			

The respondent's income levels were divided into four groups: income up to 25000, 26000 – 50000, 51000 – 75000, and above 75000. The test results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between these four groups for each variable, with a 'p-value less than 0.05 making the difference significant at the 0.01 level. The reasons for these discrepancies are obvious: in comparison to lower-income earners, higher-income earners can independently fulfill their essential needs and requirements, such as their children's education, health services, and medications. Due to their constant reliance on others to achieve their fundamental necessities, those with lower income rely more on DPOs and the government than other SHG members do (Cobley et al., 2013). The variations in employment also affect the respondents' level of efficacy, where DPOs place a greater emphasis on empowering

the economically disadvantaged and more oppressed than others (Dhungana and Kusakabe, 2010).

Conclusion

The study indicated that the relentless efforts made by groups for disabled people and the different approaches they took to raise the standard of living for PWDs brought about social and economic change and promoted social inclusion. The strategies for social inclusion and empowerment, income generation activities, health-related interventions, and capacity building were the most effective in bringing about positive changes in the lives of the disabled. Social stigma and discrimination decreased, and those with disabilities were accepted as full members of society on par with those without impairments.

The majority of PWDs stated that the DPOs played a dynamic role in improving their living status. The majority agreed that awareness about financial independence and job opportunities provided by the DPOs, along with an increased quality of life, motivated the disabled to join the DPOs and develop their skills to become integral parts of society. The provided educational assistance, basic knowledge of rights, and communication skills helped PWDs find suitable jobs and become self-sufficient.

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Competency and Training Needs for Academic Counselors of IGNOU: Study of Science Discipline

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Abstract

Academic counselors in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) play a vital role in supporting and empowering distance learners. It is indeed important for distance education institutions like IGNOU to maintain an appropriate student-counselor (SC) ratio to ensure effective support and guidance to its students, fostering a positive learning environment by continually assessing the SC ratio and engaging more academic counselors whenever required. Involving new academic counselors allows for diversity in expertise and perspectives, which can enrich the support services offered by the institution. This study examines the demographic and academic profile of newly empaneled academic counselors for science courses under the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) through an online questionnaire-based survey. It reveals a great range in the demographic and academic profiles of academic counselors. The study emphasizes the significance of training and orientation for capacity building, which is imperative for fulfilling the needs of students and facilitating their academic journey and learning. The article recommends the need for comprehensive training programmes and resources to develop the competency of academic counselors in ODL. Similar surveys for academic counselors in all other subject disciplines will put forward the key elements of training required for quality student support services.

Keywords_: Academic Counselors, Choice Based Credit System, Indira Gandhi National Open University, Training and Orientation._

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Introduction

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) provides an excellent education via Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system. The University offers a range of high-quality, cutting-edge, and need-based programmes. An academic counselor is one of the most important links between IGNOU, its learners and the resources of learning. The academic counselors are the medium through which academic and non-academic needs of learners can be perceived and resolved accordingly (Reddy *et al.,* 2005).

In the context of ODL components, the gamut of student support services falls into two broad categories: academic or tutorial support and non-academic support (Reddy *et al.,* 2005).

Academic support	Non-academic support
Deals with supporting distance learners with cognitive, intellectual and knowledge issues pertaining to specific courses chosen by the learners. This is done by tutorials, practicals, feedback on assignments, assessments, etc.	Support of learners in the affective and organizational aspects of their studies, such as informing, advising and counselling them on personal matters that are hindering their study

IGNOU provides this support through its three-tier level of infrastructure:
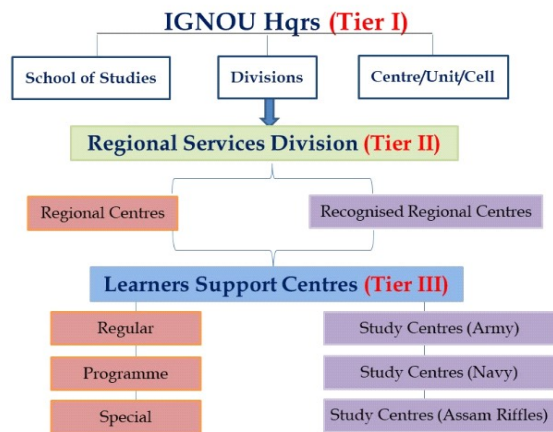
All three components of student support services structure work in coordination and collaboration with each other to extend various types of academic and administrative support to the distance learners. IGNOU provides student support at *pre-admission or pre-entry level*, *during the academic programme support*, and *post programme stage*.

Role of academic counselors

Academic counselors play a crucial role in providing academic counselling to distance learners. According to Reddy et al. (2005), academic counselors perform three major roles, as:
- A tutor – To promote intellectual or academic support;
- A mentor – To provide guidance and skill development to reach the stated level; and
- A counselor–To provide organizational and emotional support.

Academic counselling

Academic counselling is a crucial part of student support, involving the provision of guidance, assistance, and encouragement to distance learners, facilitating their comfortable and productive academic journey. It covers information, advice, and discussion on all programme-related matters. This includes *tutoring* or course-centered problems. Academic counselling also addresses non-academic areas, such as personal difficulties or problems. This deals with personal specific problem and is referred to as *counselling*. The combination of tutoring and counselling is known as Academic Counselling (Reddy *et al.,* 2005). As per data obtained through the Monthly Monitoring Report (MMR) of the regional centres, a total of 73,726 and 55,268 academic counselling sessions (tutoring) were conducted during years 2020 and 2021[3]. The data depicts that despite the strict lockdown, the university continued its teaching-learning process at regional centres and maintained connection with its students.

Empanelment of Academic Counselors in IGNOU at a Glance

The Programme Coordinator, School of Study at IGNOU Hq. formulates course-wise eligibility criteria for different programmes to empanel academic counselors. Accordingly, approval or disapproval of subject experts are recommended by the

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[3]http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/division/rsd/montlymonitoringreport

School of Studies. Initially, the biodata of subject experts was accepted through offline mode. Starting from the year 2019, a dedicated online portal is operational, allowing prospective academic counselors to apply for empanelment under different programmes. Since the launch of the online portal, a total of 21,500 academic counselors have been empaneled through online portal (as of 22.07.2022). Cumulatively, there are nearly 52,000 approved and active academic counselors across all academic programmes at IGNOU, offering their services at different learner support centres.

Academic Counselors under CBCS Programme

The UGC has initiated several measures to bring equity, efficiency, and excellence within the Higher Education system. This was conceptualized in order to provide the learners with flexibility to study subjects and courses at their own pace, with a broad choice of interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary, subjects, skill-based courses, and further mobility to move between different institutions for studies. At IGNOU, the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) has been adopted since the July 2019 sessions, and under this scheme, the BAG, BCOMG, and BSCG programmes were initially introduced. The CBCS programme offers a wide range of courses, leading to an increased demand for the empanelment of academic counselors. Since the launch of the programme in July 2019, the number of academic counselors empaneled under these three programmes across regional centres is as follows:

BSCG (Bachelor of Sciences General)	BAG (Bachelor of Arts General)	BCOMG (Bachelor of Commerce General)
1354	2807	688

Source: Online Academic Counselor Empanelment Portal (*https://eportal.ignou.ac.in/oace/EmployeeLogin.aspx*)

Orientation/Training Programme (OP/TP)

Online learning has long been on the periphery. The COVID-19 epidemic brought it to the forefront. Students believed that online learning has been a good choice in the light of the circumstances which have arisen in the recent past. However, there is a lot of space for improvement by adding components like active role teaching, flipped classroom techniques, case studies, and gamification to make it more effective and pertinent in meeting the demands of any future exigency (Chakraborty et al., 2021).

Like other ODL institutions, orientation and capacity building for study centre functionaries and academic counselors are integral parts of the functioning at IGNOU.

When need arises, regional centres of the university organize such training programmes in coordination with the school of studies concerned throughout the year. According to available data, the regional centres organized 132 and 75 orientation programmes for academic counselors in 2020 and 2021, respectively. Teleconferencing on Gyan Darshan TV Channel at Headquarters was also used as a mode for orientation programme for academic counselors.

It is clear from the data that a total of 4849 academic counselors, who are empaneled for courses, are under the CBCS programme. Since they are new in the system, there is a need to orient them for the CBCS system. A programme specific research study was carried out at IGNOU Hqrs. The research showed that lack of counselling, guidance and field work by academic counselors would be the reason for the learners' dissatisfaction and demotivation (Saumya and Tushar, 2020).

Shrivastava *et al.* (2020) suggested for redefining and redesigning the role of the learner support system and regional centres. Their study proposed that the role of existing academic counselors will need to be recast.

As mentioned above, academic counselors are drawn from the conventional system of higher education. Although periodical training is given to them by IGNOU, it is a difficult task to train such a massive number of counselors across the country. In fact, the role of an academic counselor is multifarious and requires both tutoring and counselling. For maintaining quality in academic counselling, the accumulation of multi-dimensional skills, attributes, and information is essential on the part of the counselor in ODL. Among these, possessing information at various levels about the ODL system is an enabling factor to effectively support isolated distance learners. Therefore, a comprehensive Information System is crucial for the capacity building of academic counselors in supporting distance learners and quality assurance process. This work explores and builds a comprehensive information system for the academic counselors in an ODL system, keeping IGNOU as the context.

Given the current online educational activities, it becomes necessary for academic counselors to receive training in educational utilities of ICT. There may be a possibility that the majority of teachers won't be ready to teach online courses (Totaro *et al.,* 2005).

A well-designed information system for the academic counselors in an ODL system is required to be in place in the context of IGNOU (Kishore, 2014). Keeping this in view, training of academic counselors is a routine process of academic

counselors in IGNOU. According to Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, the concept of innovation centres around five key areas, viz., inquiry, creativity, technological capabilities, entrepreneurial skills, and moral leadership. These five key attributes need to be built into the education process so that learners can develop their inherent innovativeness and excel in their future endeavors (Das and Ghosh, 2011).

Rationale of the Study

Any organization must prioritize capacity development and personnel growth because these are essential tactics for advancing the organization (Asgar and Mythili, 2020). Operating in distance education is both challenging and demanding. In this context, academic counselors hold a very inimitable place in distance education. They serve as the bridge between institution and its students. To cater to the unique needs of distance education students, academic counselors from conventional systems need to be familiar with the distance education structure, its skeleton, as well as its functioning. Moreover, the pandemic has brought about a paradigm shift in the process of teaching-learning over the last two years.

Consequently, the majority of face-to-face educational activities been replaced by eLearning methods for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole. IGNOU has also adopted various web-enabled online tools and techniques to continue the range of teaching-learning activities for its students. It was an abrupt change, from face-to-face teaching-learning process to the ODL. This shift from traditional learning to completely online learning happened without any preparation and planning. Besides, IGNOU has offered many courses in the online mode as well. Thus, there is a pressing need and demand to train academic counselors to meet these new challenges, in addition to their ongoing role as academic counselors in the ODL mode.

In this regard, the feedback of academic counselors on the necessity and importance of orientation and training programme becomes essential. Keeping in view the aforesaid facts, it is proposed to explore the perception and attitude of academic counselors regarding the conduct of orientation programmes in the field of ODL and discipline-specific areas.

The study has been conducted as a survey research method through a semi-structured questionnaire. The findings of the study will undoubtedly help the trainers and organizers in designing and developing capacity-building activities for IGNOU's academic counselors.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to assess the feedback of academic counselors on the "Need for Orientation Programme for Academic Counselors in ODL System". The specific objectives are:

1. To study the academic profile of the academic counselors; and
2. To assess the understanding of an academic counselor about the ODL system.

Review of Literature

Counselling and tutoring services are crucial in academic services of learning in ODL to ensure that the counselling needs of its distance learners are satisfied (Mehran, 2010). Due to this, the system of distance education greatly benefits from academic counselling (Mishra 2014). Despite lockdown due to COVID 19 pandemic, the engagement of students on online activities increased manyfold. There was a felt need for the teachers to interact with the students, work together and learn the behavior of students for different courses for engineering students (Jamalpur *et al.,* 2021; Katiyar, 2022).

New technological innovations may be very useful in planning and organizing training programmes for academic counselors (Snow and Coker, 2020). The authors also elucidated the elements of online counselor education programmes, which have been shown to be effective and provide knowledge useful to all counselor training programmes, regardless of the delivery method. Training and orientation programmes are not only vital for academic counselors, but are also useful for those who are involved in non-teaching staff roles (Asgar and Mythili, 2020).

Kishore (2014) has emphasized that comprehensive information system for academic counselors in an ODL system, with a focus on IGNOU, is a crucial requirement for ensuring quality assurance and for the capacity building of academic counselors in helping distance learners.

The high learner attrition rate is a significant issue for ODL institutions. There are certain factors which cause dropouts in ODL. Mohamed and Zainal (2013) identified some factors, namely, learners not being academically prepared, dissatisfaction with the online format, and lack of engagement in their learning. Mohamed and Zainal also suggested three ways to prevent attrition among learners, enhancing learners' communication, providing learners' mentoring, and increasing

learners' awareness. Counselors can address these issues with learners as they enter ODL institutions. The majority of ODL institutions undertake innovations to minimize student dropout rates.

Academic advising is a significant predictor of student retention in distance learning. A study's findings advocated providing practical academic advisory services to cater to the unique needs of students at the University of Cape Coast's College of Distance Education (Arhin *et al.,* 2017).   It suggested that efficient academic advising must be conducted at the College of Distance Education (CoDE) to improve student retention. To raise awareness among students, student advising personnel should promote their services using a range of media (brochures, advising awareness days, video presentations, in-person class, phone calls, and personal emails). A flexible structure will make communication between students and advisors crucial to the growth of learner autonomy at CoDE.

Another study, which has significant implications for academic counselling, also recommended pre-examination group counselling for students before taking exams to make sure they approach exams at CoDE sensibly and with proper abilities and mindset (Ukwueze, 2012). This study was carried out in 2012, and provided two important recommendations: (i) "Counselors should always engage students in pre-examination group counselling to sensitize them (students) to reading and writing examinations and introduce them to appropriate study skills", and (ii) "More qualified counselors should be recruited and placed in study centres in a ratio of one counselor to 2,500 students to adequately cater to the needs of the ever increasing population of students in open and distance education who seek to improve academically and vocationally to live happy lives".

According to Das and Ghosh (2011**)**, in the ODL system, academic counselling plays the most important role, creating a learning environment where learners interact with academic counselors to develop their knowledge and skills. In their study, the authors presented the perspective of academic counselors and learners. In continuation of the same study, this paper provides a learners' perspective on five competencies among academic counselors, viz., inquiry, creativity, technological capabilities, entrepreneurial skill and moral leadership.

Tutor Counselors conduct face-to-face counseling sessions for "at risk" learners (Latif *et al.,* 2006). Their study elucidated that advising and counselling are components of academic counseling at Open University Malaysia (OUM) for academic and non-academic matters. The effectiveness of academic counselling improves the academic performance of learners and the level of their persistence.

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A study has reported that counselling is required due to competing work and family obligations. Financial stress, communication and approachability of academic staff, accessibility and user-friendliness of administrative systems, and assistance were other major issues. Potential remedies for these issues included time management, self-study techniques, stress management, and wealth creation (Maunganidze *et al.,* 2010).

Methodology

In this study, academic counselors empaneled under various Programmes of the School of Sciences (SOS) were included, with a total of 600 selected to ensure their significant representation. An electronic form Questionnaire titled "Need assessment on importance of Orientation/Training Programme for Academic Counselors" was used.

The face of the questionnaire elucidated the purpose of the survey in brief. The fully developed questionnaire (Google form) was emailed to the selected group of academic counselors for collecting the information.

Questionnaire designing

The open and distance learning system offers great flexibility in terms of access to education. In this survey-based study, academic counselors, who have been empaneled for various courses in the science discipline under the BSCG Programme of IGNOU, were invited to provide input on selected attributes related to demographic and academic profiles. They were also asked to share their feedback on various parameters indicating the significance of training and orientation programmes for academic counselors. The objectives of this research are:

1. To study the demographic profile of academic counselors;
2. To study the academic profile of academic counselors; and
3. To assess the role of academic counselors.

In this study, a total of 600 academic counselors who were experts in various courses, including, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Geology, and Geography of Science discipline provided with the Questionnaire via email. Out of 600 counselors, 86 completed the questionnaire and submitted their feedback through the Google form, which amounts to 14.35% participations. In the analysis presented below, techniques such as t-test, standard deviation and analysis of variance (ANOVA) are applied.

Result and Discussion

Demographic profile of academic counselors: The Demographic features of the participants included their social category, gender, area of residence, and age. The responses showed that the majority of the 86 total respondents (75%) belonged to the general category. Other social categories, such as OBC, SC, and ST, accounted for 25% of the total respondents.

Gender profile: The gender-wise participation of academic counselors indicates that the majority (67.44%) are males and 32.56% are females.

*Locality of residence of academic counselors***:** The respondents were asked to provide information about the locality of where they reside, either urban or rural area. Among the 86 participants, 84.88% were from urban localities, whereas 15.12% resided in rural or remote areas.

Age profile of academic counselors: Another demographic characteristic considered was the age of participants. The age of participants was divided into five age brackets at ten-year intervals. This grouping was based on the minimum and maximum ages of participants. As shown in Table 1, the maximum of 76.74% of participants belong to the age bracket of 26–45 years. The remaining participants were in the age brackets from 46 to 66 years. The highest percentage, 64.3%, of respondents belong to the age bracket of 20-30 years, followed by 16.27% between 46-55 years, 5.81% in the age bracket of 56-65 years, and only 1.16% of respondents are above 65 years of age.

Table 1: Age brackets of academic counselors

Age group	No. of person	% Of total
26-35	34	39.53
36-45	32	37.20
46-55	14	16.27
56-65	5	5.81
66-75	1	1.16
Total	86	100.00

Academic profile of academic counselors: The academic counselors included their qualifications, discipline, employment status, type of institutions of their affiliation (where they work), and length of professional experiences. Out of the total participants, 69.77% of the respondents (60) held a Doctorate in their respective areas, and mere 6 (6.97%) academic counselors had experience in post-doctoral

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study. However, 23.26% of academic counselors held a Master's Degree (Table 2).

Table 2. Level of qualification of academic counselors

Qualification	Number	% Of total
Masters	20	23.26
Doctorate	60	69.77
Post-doctorate	6	6.97
Total	86	100.00

Academic specialisation of academic counselors: Responses of subject specialization showed that 30.23% of academic counselors who responded to the survey belonged to Chemistry courses, followed by 24.42% from Zoology courses. Respondents from Geology, Geography, Physics, and Botany constitute only 2.33%, 9.30% and 12.79% respectively. 11.63% of academic counselors did not report their subject.

Table 3. Specialization of academic counselors

Area of expertise	Number	% Of total
Geography	8	9.30
Zoology	21	24.42
Chemistry	26	30.23
Botany	11	12.79
Physics	8	9.30
Geology	2	2.33
Any other	10	11.63
Total	86	100

As far as status of employment of academic counselors is concerned, most of them held permanent positions in various colleges and institutions. Out of the total 86 participants, 54 (72.4%) were working as permanent faculty, and 31.40% were holding temporary positions at different institutions, while 5 academic counselors were not working anywhere.

Institutional affiliation: It is a privilege for an ODL institution to empanel its academic counselors from reputable institutions and colleges. The type of institutions where the academic counselors were employed has been one of the parameters taken into consideration in this study. Out of the total, 66.28% of the academic counselors were working in Government institutions, while 22.58% were employed in private institutions.

Length of experience: The length of professional experience in terms of years has been obtained from the participants. It is observed that the majority of participants

had working experience ranging from 1 to 10 years (54.65%), while 27 had experience of 11 to 20 years.

Role as academic counselors: The work experience of academic counselors in student support-related activities of ODL IGNOU, prior experience of attending orientation and training programmes, and perception towards the need for orientation and training programmes as academic counselors were examined. Under this item, nearly half of the academic counselors were found to be engaged in the academic counselling activities in an open and distance learning system while 42 (48.84%) academic counselors have been involved in student support or academic counselling of an open and distance learning system.

Training/orientation programme need perceptions of academic counselors: Although more than 50% of academic counselors had the experience of working an open and distance education system, 91.86% felt the need for orientation and training programmes. The percentage of those who did not want to attend any training/ orientation programme for academic counselors was minimal.

Academic Counselors' Perception on Experience of Training: Given its importance, IGNOU organizes training and orientation programmes for newly empaneled counselors. However, the survey shows that 65.12% of the counselors never got the opportunity to participate in any such training/orientation programme organized in the context of ODL training. Nevertheless, 34.88% of the participants attended training programmes.

Conclusion

Our study revealed that the feedback provided by the academic counselors is very useful and significant. Their responses indicated that an effective orientation programme provides numerous benefits, not just for the academic counselors, but also strengthens the entire student support services and ultimately improves the ODL system. The orientation and training of newly appointed academic counselors ensure they will settle into their roles smoothly and yield good results in terms of student satisfaction at IGNOU. In the ODL system, frequent training and orientation programmes, not only for academic counselors but also for other associated staff, have been considered very important for their professional development and effective role performance (Asgar and Mythili, 2020).

Demographic profile: Demographic features of the academic counselors were obtained with respect to Age, Locality of residence, gender and social category of

the academic counselors. As far as the social category of participants is concerned, the majority of academic counselors belonged to the general category, followed by Other Backward Castes. A very small number of counselors were from the Schedule Tribe category. Male participants of academic counselors responded on higher side compared to female ones. Similarly, empanelment of counselors residing in urban areas is on the higher side. According to the analysis, the mean age of respondents was 40.10 (±8.76) years.

Academic profile of academic counselors: On analysis of the level of qualification of academic counselors, it was noticed that the majority of them were Ph.D. holders, followed by Master's Degree holders. The minimum basic qualification required to be a faculty member in a higher education institution is a Master's Degree. Only 6.97 academic counselors had postdoctoral level experiences. Empanelment of academic counselors was particularly high in the discipline of Zoology and Chemistry.

The employment status of academic counselors shows that the maximum number of participants were holding permanent positions in their respective institutions. They appear to be aware of it and acquainted with the role of subject experts/faculties as academic counselors at IGNOU. The inputs regarding the status of employment have been found to be in line with the type of institution where they work. The majority of the academic counselors were affiliated with institutions run by the government. Regarding the length of working experience of academic counselors, the mean value of work experience of academic counselors was 11.30 (±8.85) years. The mean value of the experience of academic counselors matches with the average age of participants, which is 40 years. Generally, the age of the faculty joining the college is between 26 to 30 years.

The items included under this category are: (i) experience of working as an academic counselor for IGNOU students at the study center (Yes/NO); (ii) whether they attended any orientation or training programme organized for the capacity building of academic counselors (Yes/No); and (iii) the perception of participants on the use and need of organizing orientation and training for newly joined academic counselors in the context of IGNOU (Yes/No). In terms of the academic counselors' working experience, nearly half of them were involved in IGNOU's student support activities as academic counselors (51.16%). It also became evident that the majority of academic counselors (91.86%), irrespective of their age, experience, nature of the job, or type of institution, firmly emphasized the need for an orientation programme for academic counselors. Less than 35% of all respondents had no prior experience with training for the capacity building of academic counselors.

Suggestions and implications: The survey-based study provides important insights into the involvement of subject experts who are empaneled in various courses of the BSCG programme at IGNOU. The analysis of academic profile sheds light on the academic background of the academic counselors. In IGNOU, there is a practice of obtaining feedback from the academic counselor. However, not many studies specifically on the need assessment of training have been reported. The findings of this study may serve as a primary data source to design further research for a more in-depth study in this field. The findings of this study may also provided a wide spectrum for others to undertake research for other ODL institutions.

Future Implications

In light of the findings of this study, the following lines for future research could be suggested: (i) A comparative study of academic counselors from different programme and newly empaneled academic counselors may be conducted to find out significant trends and pattern in the area; (ii) A comparative study could also be conducted between academic counselors empaneled at different Regional Centres and intra-region, focusing on academic counselors from a specific regional centre; (iii) In the context of IGNOU, further research could be carried out in respect of academic counselors of other programmes like BAG, BCOM, Honors Programme, etc., where the CBCS has been introduced; (iv) IGNOU has launched several new interdisciplinary programmes leading to the empanelment of new academic counselors. Their feedback could also be obtained on the functioning of IGNOU; (v) Many of the IGNOU programmes now offer online modes of learning. In view of this, academic counselors need to be efficiently oriented to handle online components; and (vi) A Need assessment study could be conducted, taking into account the various operational and functional issues of Online programmes.

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Teacher's Interventions in Creating Barrier Free Environment under SSA's Inclusive Education: Study of Parents' Awareness

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Abstract

Family is the first institution where children learn the process of socialization. Parents play a determining role in shaping the overall personality of the children in the family, as children acquire numerous valuable lessons from their elders. Hence, the role of parents in the upbringing of their children is vital, demanding utmost care throughout the process. While this is applicable to children in general, the role of parents with Children with Special Needs is doubly more crucial, requiring exceptional attention in dealing with them. They are tasked with taking care of both mental and physical growth of the CWSN children. Further, the Government has implemented the Right to Education Act, aiming to facilitate the enrollment of all school-aged children into the educational institutions without considering their caste, creed, race, gender, or disability. However, within this atmosphere, the CWSN children may hesitate to join their typically developing peers in school. Hence, parents must be aware of all the measures that are being taken in schools for making inclusive education more effective and ensuring active participation of all categories of children in the learning process. During this process, teachers take several steps/measures to facilitate the integration of typical and CWSN children in the teaching-learning journey. During such phases, parents, particularly those parents of CWSN children, should take note of all the interventions taken by teachers in the schools that are helpful for the overall development of the students. Therefore, this study has been undertaken to find out the level of awareness among parents regarding teachers' interventions in creating a barrier free environment within the schools, as part of the under inclusive education initiative of the SSA.

Keywords: *CWSN children, teachers, parents, teaching learning interventions.*

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Introduction

Family serves as the first social institution that provides the necessary physical facilities, leading to all-round psycho-physiological development in individuals. Parents as the first teachers, introduce their child to the world outside and make them familiar with the process of socialisation. The role of the parents and the family is crucial in the upbringing of the child. The child is like a clean slate on which parents seek to imbue values and morals, while also aiding the child's participation in social activities as members of the society. Further, being members of the family, children learn how to promote cooperation, coordination, and a competitive spirit through interactions at various levels. In the context of the CWSN, the role of parents is even more pronounced in the process of socialization. Usually, parents of CWSN, are restricted to provide maximum support to their child in terms of meeting physiological and psychological needs, facilitating their integration into the mainstream society. In the light of the above, an attempt has been made to study the profile of the parents of CWSN, status of disability in the family, discrimination directed towards CWSN from various sources, parents' awareness regarding the facilities offered by schools for CWSN, provisions for mainstreaming CWSN, impact of physiotherapy provision on them, the role of special teachers in the integration of CWSN into mainstreaming education, and suggestions from parents on creating a barrier free environment in the schools. In this context, a review of the related research and writings becomes very relevant and crucial.

Review of Literature

Banerjee N. (1988) investigated the adjustment of blind students in secondary schools. Khan, A. H. (1988) found that blind children were less achievement-oriented, self-reliant, and attributed failure to themselves. They were found to be more self-centred, neurotic and withdrawn. Sahoo, J. (1991) reported lower self-concept but better adjustment of deaf children compared to blind children. On the other hand, Lal, A. (1992) reported differences between blind and sighted students on acceptance worthiness, anxiety, and participation scales. Mandravalli M.R. (1991) discovered developmental lag in VH children on cognitive development tasks. Kapoor (1990) studied the cognitive functioning and perspective taking ability of hearing-impaired children. Sharma, P. (1989) reported lower linguistic competence in hearing-impaired children as compared to children with normal hearing.

In the evaluative study of Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), Verma, J. (2002), found that 83% of the teachers were familiar with the concept of

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IEDC. Julka, A. (2003) conducted a study on strengthening the teacher education curriculum of DIETs from the perspective of Special Needs Education and advocated the revision of the existing teacher education course contents to prepare teachers to respond to diversities in the classroom. Soni, R.B.L. (2003), while studying the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students about education for disabled children, found no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female respondents form different age groups. Verma, J. (2004) studied the role of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and found several areas in which PTAs helped promote inclusive education. Singh, V.K. (2004) conducted a comparative study on visually impaired boys and girls from western Madhya Pradesh regarding the level of aspiration under the Integrated Education for the disabled scheme at the middle school level and found significant differences between the visually impaired and sighted children.

Seetharam, R. (2005) conducted a study on the social integration of children with mild and moderate disabilities in mainstream classrooms under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). He found that the disabled students at the primary level scored higher in peer group affiliation and academic performance than disabled students at the middle school level. Psycho-physical developmental stages were significantly related to peer group affiliation and academic performance. Julka, A. (2005) found that there were a number of diverse but effective practices in the states for the education of children with disabilities. However, nearly half of the disabled population was still not in any school. In a study on the Review of instructional adaptations Julka, A. (2005) found that the majority of teachers in integrated/inclusive schools did not adapt instructions frequently in the classroom to meet the special needs of the children. Most teachers preferred the use of lecture method for teaching. The lack of knowledge of the teachers and lack of empowerment among them was the reason for not making any adaptations. Soni, R.B.L. (2005) conducted a study on interventions for the education of children with disabilities. The major findings include: the facilities for education of children with disabilities were in the initial stages in HP and MP and non-existent in Meghalaya and Mizoram; and no special teachers to help children with disabilities were appointed in any of the states. While studying the problems of retention of learners as perceived by teachers and community with reference to classroom process in Northeastern states, he found that, in Meghalaya, factors within school and classroom processes were not conducive for the retention of children, the average quality of classroom processes was very low, including the use of corporal punishment to disciple students.

Verma, J. (2005) investigated Innovative teaching strategies for promoting Inclusive Education. The findings of the study show that the teachers in the

experimental group initial had reservations about the use of cooperative teaching strategies. Chudasama, G., Jadeja, Y. & Maheta, D. (2006) studied the impact of the IEDC scheme under SSA. Venkatesh, M.N. (2006) studied the schemes and programmes of Inclusive education for disabled children in Karnataka. The study on the Impact of Residential Bridge courses under IED, conducted by Rastogi & Batra (2008), found that out of 19,386 disabled from sampled districts, 16,830 (86.8%) were enrolled and attending schools in nearby Parishadiya schools (schools he Panchayatiraj system at block [mandal] and village panchayats). Out of the remaining 2556 children who were out of regular schooling system, 490 (19.2%) attended residential bridge courses and got integrated in nearby Parishadiya schools.

The review of literature above clearly shows that CWSNs still face problems accessing education. For making education more accessible to them, the parents need to have awareness about the provisions being implemented for the benefit of CWSN and to retain them in the schools. This study has been undertaken with these considerations in minds.

Objectives of the study

- To study the profile of parents of CWSN;
- To identify the practices of discrimination if any towards the CWSN from various sources;
- To assess the parent's awareness about facilities provided by the schools for CWSN;
- To assess the impact of physiotherapy, role of special teachers in mainstreaming the CWSN as perceived by the parents; and
- To enlist suggestions of parents for creating barrier free environment in the schools for promotion of education among CWSN children.

Research Questions

In the light of the above, the following research questions were framed:

- What is the profile of the parents of CWSN?
- Are there any practices of discrimination shown towards the CWSN from various sources?
- Whether the parents possess awareness about the facilities provided by schools for the CWSN;
- What is the impact of physiotherapy, and role of special teachers in mainstreaming the CWSN as perceived by the parents? and

- What are the parents' suggestions for creating barrier free environment in the schools for promotion of education among CWSN children?

In order to provide answers to these research questions, there is a need to collect primary and secondary information from different sources. To collect primary data, the following methodology was adopted: developing the tools, selecting sample, collection of the data, and analysis to draw the inferences.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It has two clear-cut geographical regions viz., Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra. There are nine districts in Coastal Andhra and four in Rayalaseema. As the study covered both the regions, two districts having highest number of CWSNs from Coastal Andhra viz., East Godavari and Visakhapatnam, and one district from Rayalaseema viz., Kurnool having highest number of CWSN in the schools were chosen in the first stage of sample selection. In the later stage, three divisions in each district having the highest number of CWSNs were chosen. From each division, ten mandals having the highest number of CWSN were selected. From among the CWSN in the selected mandals, five parents of the Children with Special Needs enrolled and attending the schools were selected randomly as sample of the study. Thus, the total sample comprises one hundred fifty parents of the CWSN.

Data gathering devices

The study is intended to identify the awareness of parents of CWSN about the measures taken for creation of barrier free environment in the schools. In light of the study's objectives, we devised a schedule comprising two sections to gather information from the parents. Section I contains socio-economic profile of the parents and section II contains their opinions towards school, education of their children, support extended by the teachers, their knowledge about the interventions of the Government, their suggestions for creating barrier free environment in the schools for promotion of education among CWSN children, etc.

Data collection and analysis

The schedule developed by us was administered to the parents of CWSN. Before administering the schedules, we consulted the Inclusive Education Coordinators of the selected districts for their cooperation in getting the primary data. We also established a good rapport with the parents in our sample, explaining the objectives of the study and the methods of responding to the schedules. The data collected was

both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Hence, we analyzed the data by using descriptive analysis techniques. The secondary data relating to the CWSN, measures taken to enroll the children, creation of barrier free environment, etc., were collected from SSA officials.

Findings of the study

1. Profile of parents

The parents play an important role in mainstreaming CWSN. The care provided by them largely depends upon their socio-economic background. Keeping this in view, an attempt has been made in this section to study the personal characteristics of parents of CWSN.

Table 1: Personal Characteristics of Parents of CWSN

S. No.	Group	Character	N (150)	%
1.	Sex	Male	127	84.67
		Female	23	15.33
2.	Age	<30 years	15	10.00
		31-45 years	95	63.33
		46 years and above	40	26.67
3.	Education	Illiterates	46	30.67
		Literate with 5th class	28	18.67
		High school	37	24.67
		Intermediate	14	9.33
		Graduation and above	25	16.67
4.	Occupation	Casual labour	29	13.33
		Agriculturists	47	31.33
		Employment	26	17.33
		Service sector	23	15.33
		Business	25	16.67
5.	Monthly income	Up to Rs.2000/-	16	10.67
		Rs.2001/- to 5000/-	63	42.00
		Rs.5001/--to 10000/-	46	24.00
		Rs.10001/- and above	25	16.67
6.	Other income	Nil income	82	54.67
		Up to Rs.2000/-	37	24.67
		Rs.2001/- to 5000/-	18	12.00
		Rs.5001/-to 10000/-	8	5.33
		Rs.10001/- and above	6	4.00
7.	No. of family members	3 members	14	9.33
		4 members	64	42.67
		5 members	41	27.33
		6 members	17	11.33
		7 members and above	14	9.33

The classification of the sample shows that the majority of the parents are men, constituting 84.67% only 15.33% are females. The age-wise classification shows that nearly two thirds of them fall within the 31-45 years bracket, followed by 40 individuals (26.67%) who are in the 46 years and above age group. The representation of parents aged below 30 years is only 10%. In respect of education, it is evident that 30.67% are illiterate. Those with educational levels of High School and Pre-university constitute approximately 40%, while graduates and those with higher education account only 16.67%.

The occupational profile of the sample reveals that the majority of them are agriculturists (31.33%), followed by the employed (17.33%), involved in business (16.67%) and working in the service sector (15.33%). On the other hand, only 13.33% of the parents belong to casual labour group. The income of the parents shows that 52% of parents earn below Rs. 5,000/- per month. About one-fourth (24%) have a monthly income between 5000-10,000, while 16% have an income above Rs.10,000/-. Nearly 55% of the sample respondents do not have any other source of income, and one-third of those with additional income earn up to Rs. 5,000 per month. The family size reveals that nearly 50% of families comprise 3-4 members, while 5-6 members account for nearly 40%. Larger families, with 7 members and above, constitute 9.33% of the sample.

In short, from the personal profile of parents of CWSN we learn that the majority are men, have attained a high school education, are agriculturists, and belong to lower income groups. More than 52% earn a monthly income of Rs. 5,000 and below. On an average, families consist of 4-5 members.

2. Status of Disability

To determine the status of disability within the family, parents were asked to provide information concerning the number of their CWSN, the nature of their disability, the extent (percentage) of the disability, whether any support is required, and the person in the family responsible for assisting the CWSN child.

The responses of the parents show that in the majority of the cases, there is only one CWSN/person in the family. The nature of the disability shows that more than one fourth of them are blind followed by those with retardation and orthopaedic disabilities. The sample also includes persons with low vision, speech and hearing impairments, and multiple disabilities. It shows that the sample contains a wide range of disability forms, characteristic of the CWSN groups.

Table 2: Status of Disability in the Family

S. No.	Item	Response	N	%
1	No. of children with disability	1 member	130	86.67
		2 members	20	13.33
2	Nature of disability	Low vision	12	8.00
		Blind	40	26.67
		Deaf and Dumb	12	8.00
		Mentally Retarded	10	6.67
		Mentally disabled	34	22.67
		Locomotors	30	20.00
		Multiple Disability	12	8.00
3	Percentage of Disability	< 50%	19	12.67
		51-60%	30	20.00
		61-70%	20	13.33
		71-80%	19	12.67
		81% above	62	41.33
4	Support required	Yes	88	58.67
		No	62	41.33
5	Persons assisting the CWSN	Mother	33	22.00
		Father	25	16.67
		Siblings	30	20.00

3. Discrimination of the CWSN

CWSN are a marginalized group in society. Undoubtedly, there exists a sympathetic feeling towards them from all corners of society. However, they continue to be discriminated at various levels and from multiple sources, including household, teachers, peer groups, etc. The information collected from parents in this context reveals that their children have not faced discrimination either from family members or from various school related sources. Further, the majority of parents (80%) revealed that they faced no difficulties in enrolling their children in schools. Conversely, only 20% of them reported facing challenges during the enrollment process. However, even those who experienced difficulties ultimately succeeded in enrolling their children.

4. Facilities for CWSN in the Schools

Information was collected from the parents to assess their knowledge about the facilities available in schools. Their response revealed that the facilities available in schools include Braille books, physical facilities such as wheel chairs, walking sticks and hearing aids. Further, the parents were asked to list out the additional facilities

required in the schools. It emerged that 73.33% of the parents indicated that additional facilities are required in the schools. For Braille books, 35.33% of parents confirmed that the schools possessed them, while one fourth of the parents indicated that the schools provide facilities such as wheel chairs, hearing aids, walking sticks, etc.

Out of the 41 regular facilities that should be available in the school, and are listed to assess parents' awareness, only for 11 facilities did at least 10 per cent of the parents seem to know about their availability in the school. These facilities include the library/books, beds & bed sheets, toilets, physiotherapy, AV aids, hostel facility, braille books, play-grounds, playing kits, Audio aids/sets, and class rooms. In respect of nearly 30 of the remaining facilities on the list, not even 10 per cent of the parents are aware of their availability in the school. These include audio cassettes, ramps, medical facilities, separate toilets for girls, computers, chess, meal facilities, VET, radios/tape recorders, Braille slates, walking sticks, sliding rocks, slates/slate pencils, gyms, desks, computer labs, Abacuses, wheel-chairs, teaching aids, ipads, bicycles, electrical stimulators, pearled bars, standing frames, quarter-step steaming tables, C.P. chairs, balance board, games, tricycles, and internet access. This indicates a serious shortage in the availability of these facilities in regular schools, despite being mandated.

5. Mainstreaming of the CWSN

The teachers play a pivotal role in mainstreaming the CWSN through creating disabled-friendly environment for their interaction with typically developing children, promoting aptitude for studies, and keeping harmony in the school. The care provided by teachers to CWSN helps the children overcome the inferiority complex and instills a sense of self-confidence in them. Keeping this view, information was collected from parents regarding the role played by teachers in ensuring their wards' comfort in school and the type of support they expect from the teachers.

It is evident that all parents feel that their children are able to understand the teachers' instruction and the support provided to them for their studies. Parental response is also very high (above 80%) regarding teachers' utilisation of teaching aids during curriculum delivery to facilitate learning, as well as encouraging students to mingle with their peers from other sections without any reservations. In addition, parents were of the opinion (between 30-50%) that teachers are taking special initiatives for CWSN, including using innovative teaching methods through special classes and the use of special teaching aids.

6. Support Extended by Teachers

The support extended by teachers to CWSN has received positive ratings from parents, with over 10% to 100% agreement on variables like: the teachers' dedication in teaching CWSN, use of visual aids, focus on special students, preparation and procurement of Braille books suitable for the blind and low vision, utilisation of audio-visual aids in the curriculum transactions, assigning copy writing tasks, preparing model papers, providing notes to students, conducting examinations, participating in training to teach CWSN, and creating a friendly atmosphere. On the contrary, less than 10% parents answered in the affirmative in respect of teachers' encouragement and coaching for competitive examinations, scheduling extra classes, use of teaching-learning materials and computers, arranging home tuitions, and offering vocational education and training to promote skill development.

7. Physiotherapy

The majority of CWSN in schools fall under the multiple disabilities category, with some being orthopedically related and, others mentally retarded to some extent. Physiotherapy helps these categories in overcoming their disabilities and leading more comfortable lives. Recognising the importance of physiotherapy, schools meant for inclusive education appointed physiotherapists to serve CWSN. The Physiotherapist is hired on either a part-time or full-time, depending on the needs and strength of CWSN. The physiotherapist is to provide the services not only to the CWSN students within the school premises but is also expected to conduct visits to the students' residence for physiotherapy sessions.

Feedback from parents regarding this aspect revealed that 26.67% of them affirmed that the physiotherapist shows special interest in their wards visits their residences. They believe that this has led to improvement in their children's health status, self-confidence, regular attendance at schools, etc. This is an indication that physiotherapy plays an important role in elevating the health status and raising the confidence level among these children which has promoted regular school attendance as well.

8. Role of Teachers

All schools embracing inclusive education have appointed teachers equipped with special qualifications or those who have received training in special education. To assess the parents' awareness regarding the role of teachers in curriculum

transaction and mainstreaming the CWSN, they were asked to indicate the impact generated by teachers in creating a conducive environment for CWSN, facilitating curriculum implementation, offering specialised facilities, and motivating other stakeholders to take measures for the betterment of CWSN.

Based on responses of the parents, as indicated by percentage, the children are: able to understand the lessons taught by the special teachers, attend school regularly (95%), experience an engaging teaching-learning process through the use of using teaching aids (95%), and receive increased attention from teachers (78%). The schools organize parental awareness programmes fostering greater parental responsibility towards CWSN. Additionally, a friendly environment is cultivated in schools, aiding CWSN in overcoming the disabilities. Peer groups also contribute to the children's progress, along with family members actively encouraging their wards to mingle with the their typically developing peers.

In addition, the parents took deliberate steps to reveal the strategies adopted by the school and teachers to help the children overcome their disabilities. Over 90% of parents were aware of the teachers' dedicated and special efforts to increase the learning capacity of the children. Nearly all parents were aware that the schools provide resources such as Braille books, wheel chairs, walking sticks, hearing aids, etc. and encourage their children to interact with their typically developing peers, facilitating the process of overcoming disabilities. At the same time, parents also suggested the need for peer group support for their children's education, the inculcation of self confidence among CWSNs, and other measures aimed at their seamless integration into regular schools.

Conclusion

On the whole, based on the profile of the sample parents, it can be summarised that majority of them are males, middle aged, high school educated, agriculturists, belonging to low-income groups with four or more members in the family. The majority of households have a disabled family member, falling under the visibility or mentally disabled category. The parents were of the opinion that CWSN do not face discrimination at the school, and that the institution provides adequate facilities. But, in respect of other facilities, there is a desire among parents for additional amenities like A-V aids, medical facilities, necessary appliances, etc. In context of CSWN in schools, parents are forthright that the teachers have played an important role in mainstreaming their children and also supported them in their academic endeavours. It emerges from the study that physiotherapy stands out as a particularly beneficial

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facility contributing to increased self-confidence, regularity, and overall health status among CWSN. From the responses it becomes clear that parents are well-informed about their children's progress, actively attending the parental awareness programmes, parent-teacher interaction meetings, and similar events. The study shows that overall, the parents are satisfied with the facilities offered by the schools and the teachers' treatment of their children.

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Relevance of Indian Educational Thoughts as per National Education Policy 2020

• **Saru Joshi**[1]

Abstract

The saying "The present is embedded in the past" is a well-worn truism. The glory of ancient India, while illuminating the present, makes her future fascinating. Ancient Indian education evolved on the foundations of its philosophical traditions. This article seeks to present the relevance of the philosophical perspectives of education in light of NEP 2020's views and recommendations. The NEP declares that the rich heritage of ancient Indian knowledge has been a guiding spirit in its policy perspective. It shows how the western concept of "learning by doing and experiential learning" was already practiced during the ancient Indian system. Thus, NEP's emphasis on the Indian knowledge system and the various educational philosophies and thinkers has been set up as the backdrop to examine the educational thoughts and philosophies of some leading thinkers and leaders. Consequently, this article sheds new light on the vision indicated in NEP that the education system from now on will be permeated by the educational philosophies and thinkers of India through the ages, transforming India and its education system. A few leading educational thinkers taken up here to illustrate the interface with NEP 2020's vision include Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rabindranath Tagore.

Keywords*: Ancient education, Indian knowledge system, Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Roy, NEP 2020, Yoga.*

Introduction

After India gained Independence in 1947, there were three sets of guidelines and statements for the National Education Policy: the first in 1968, known as the Resolution on National Policy on Education; the second in 1986, referred to as the

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National Policy on Education, 1986; and the third, National Policy on Education, 1992 (Revised). The fourth attempt, made in 2016 under T.S.R. Subramanian, remained a draft and was rejected by the government in 2016-17. The current National Education Policy, 2020, was initially presented as a draft in 2019, formulated under the chairmanship of K. Kasturirangan. It was finally adopted by the Parliament in July 2020. Unlike its predecessors, NEP 2020 takes a clear stance that its Policy perspective has been guided by the knowledge system and educational philosophies of ancient India, along with its eternal knowledge that evolved over the millennia. This policy asserts that the ancient Indian knowledge system, perfected through the centuries holds value comparable to any modern knowledge system and educational system. It declared that the knowledge system and the educational philosophies that evolved from ancient times will be fostered and nurtured through further studies and research in HE institutions, alongside the inclusion of related courses in the school education system. The relevance of the Indian knowledge and education system, which has evolved over millennia, gains significance in the context of NEP 2020. This article seeks to present how the education system has implemented the NEP recommendations which would be of enormous interest to the academic community and public at large.

Promotion of Rich Indian Knowledge Systems in Education: NEP Vision

The NEP 2020 is forthright in its vision and advocacy. It says, "the rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought has been a guiding light for this Policy. The pursuit of knowledge (*Jnan*), wisdom (*Pragyaa*), and truth (*Satya*) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the highest human goal. The aim of education in ancient India was not merely the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world or beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self" (MHRD, 2020: 4).

NEP 2020 goes on to declare that world-class institutions of ancient India such as Takshashila, Nalanda,Vikramshila, and Vallabhi, set the highest standards of multidisciplinary teaching and research. These institutions welcomed scholars and students from diverse backgrounds and countries. The Indian education system produced great scholars such as Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Bhaskaracharya, Brahmagupta, Chanakya, Chakrapani Datta, Madhava, Panini, Patanjali, Nagarjuna, Gautama, Pingala, Sankardev, Maitreyi, Gargi and Thiruvalluvar, among numerous others. These luminaries made seminal contributions to world knowledge across diverse fields such as mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, medical science and surgery, civil engineering, architecture, shipbuilding and navigation, yoga, fine arts, chess, and more. Indian culture and philosophy have had a strong influence

on the world. These rich legacies as part of world heritage must not only be nurtured and preserved for posterity but also be subject to research, enhancement, and innovative applications through our education system (MHRD, 2020).

NEP 2020 explains that "Knowledge of India" will include knowledge from ancient India as well as its contributions to modern India, alongside a clear understanding of India's future aspirations in domains such as education, health, environment, etc. It declares that these elements will be incorporated in an accurate and scientific manner throughout the school curriculum wherever relevant; in particular, Indian Knowledge Systems, including tribal knowledge and indigenous and traditional ways of learning, will be covered and included in subjects like mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, medicine, agriculture, engineering, linguistics, literature, sports, games, governance, polity, as well as in conservation. Specific courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, traditional (organic) crop cultivation, natural farming, etc., will also be made available. An engaging elective course on Indian Knowledge Systems will also be available to students in secondary schools. Competitions may be held in schools for learning various topics and subjects through enjoyable and indigenous games. Video documentaries featuring inspirational luminaries of India, both ancient and modern, especially in the realm of science and beyond, will be presented at appropriate intervals within the school curriculum. Students will be encouraged to visit different States as part of cultural exchange programmes (MHRD, 2020: 16).

Internationalization of Indian Knowledge: NEP 2020 declares that the Indian knowledge system would be promoted as part of the education system in India through the implementation of a new curriculum and pedagogy. This effort aims to attract a larger number of international students to study in India and provide greater mobility for Indian students who wish to visit, study, transfer credits, or carry out research at institutions abroad, and vice versa. Courses and programmes in subjects, such as Indology, Indian languages, AYUSH systems of medicine, yoga, arts, music, history, culture, and modern India would be offered. Internationally relevant curricula in the sciences, social sciences, and other fields; meaningful opportunities for social engagement; ensuring quality residential facilities; and offering on-campus support, etc., will be fostered to attain global quality standards, attracting greater numbers of international students, and achieving the goal of 'internationalization at home' (MHRD, 2020: 39).

In respect of yoga in health education, NEP says that our healthcare education system should integrate various disciplines, meaning that all students of allopathic medical education should have a basic understanding of Ayurveda, Yoga and

Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH), and vice versa. There shall also be a much greater emphasis on preventive healthcare and community medicine across all forms of healthcare education (MHRD, 2020: 50).

Some Leading Educational Thinkers and their Educational Vision

Swami Vivekananda's Education Philosophy

Vivekananda believed that education is the manifestation of perfection already within individuals. He thought it was a pity that the existing system of education did not enable a person to stand on his own feet, nor did it teach him self-confidence and self-respect. To Vivekananda, education was not merely the collection of information, but something more meaningful; he felt that education should be man-making, life giving and character-building. To him, education was a process of assimilation of noble ideas.

He emphasised that education is not the amount of information that you put into your brain to run riot there, remaining undigested all your life. Instead, he advocated for an education that helps in the building of a meaningful life, contributes to person grow, and character development through the assimilation of ideas.

Swami Vivekananda felt that the education that young boys and girls received was very negative. He observed that they lacked confidence and self-respect due to this kind of education, so, he argued that only positive education should be given to children. Swami Vivekananda believed if young boys and girls are encouraged and are not unnecessarily criticized all the time, they would naturally improve over time. He also urged the youth to take on responsibility of spreading education among the masses. "Tell them and make them understand, You are our brothers—a part and parcel of our bodies, and we love you and never hate you" he encouraged.[1]

Raja Ram Mohan Roy as an Educational and Social Reformer

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is considered as one of the pivotal leaders of modern India, who has he led one of the greatest socio-religious movements. He founded the Brahmmo Samaj in 1898 and championed the movement for abolition of social evils like Sati, and spearheaded popularizing the study of English, modern medicine, technology, and science. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, an Indian religious, social, educational reformer and humanitarian, who challenged traditional Hindu culture and indicated the lines of progress for Indian societies under British rule. The Brahmo Samaj was an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement during the Bengal Renaissance.

His influence was visible in the fields of politics, public administration, society, religion, as well as education. Raja Ram Mohan Roy may rightly be called the precursor to the modern system of education in India (Mandal and Behera, 2015: 91).

Educational Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore

The principles of Tagore's philosophy of education can be outlined as follows: The child should be educated through his mother tongue; while learning, the child should get freedom; to develop the child's creative instincts, an opportunity should be given for self-expression; the child should be educated in and around nature, away from the city; education should bring about a harmonious development of all the powers of the child; and lastly, the child should have the opportunity to learn freely in the environment of nature.

According to Rabindranath Tagore, *the concept of education* is that of the body and the soul, which, in the lap of nature, develops in a healthy and peaceful state of happiness.

The Meaning of Education: Gurudev wanted an education in India that could be intimately connected with the environment. He believed that the aim of education was to instill a sense of oneness with all nature and life within each individual. For a well rounded individual, he considered the spirit of oneness to be the most important. His vision was for students to develop the ability to harmonize with nature and engage as responsible members of society[2].

He envisioned an education that was deep-rooted in one's immediate surroundings but connected to the cultures of the wider world, predicted upon pleasurable learning, and individualized to the personality of the child. He advocated for a curriculum that organically integrated nature with classes held in the open air, under the trees, to provide for a spontaneous appreciation of the fluidity of the plant and animal kingdoms and seasonal changes. He was one of the first in India to argue for a humane educational system that was in touch with the environment and aimed at overall development of the personality (Bhattacharjee, 2014).

Gandhi's View on Education and NEP's Resonance in Vision

Learning Transcends Education: Puja Pandey very beautifully presented Gandhiji's vision and philosophy of education along with its modalities of implementation. She points out that, for Gandhi, education was incomplete without the element of learning. For him, a person was made of three constituents, *the*

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body, the mind, and the spirit. However, the education system gave primacy to the mind and kept the body & spirit somewhere on the backburner. NEP 2020 exhibited a similar shift in philosophy by giving prominence to the idea of learning that is *holistic, integrated, inclusive, enjoyable, and engaging* (Pandey, 2020; MHRD, 2020:11).

Gandhi's education approach and philosophy can be seen in his *Nayi Talim* which advocates for *Education for life, through life and throughout life*. It is built on a synthesis between vocation and education, a feature which has come out very prominently in the NEP 2020. A clear and explicit emphasis has been given to making vocational crafts, arts, physical education, etc., an intimate component of regular classroom teaching. According to Gandhi, skill training and vocational education are important as it makes a student self-reliant and capable of leading her life independently (Pandey, 2020).

Inclusion Equity and Gandhi, and Reflection in NEP 2020: The prevailing inequity and discrimination in knowledge, as the objective of education stood in stark contrast to Gandhi's ideals. He advocated for knowledge to be accessible, perceived and disseminated by everybody. This idea of knowledge equity has slowly and steadily taken shape in different National Education Policies in India and finds itself somewhere in the bigger vocabulary of *the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)* in the present NEP.

Gandhi's advocacy for equity and inclusion in education was also directed at marginalized communities including people with no literacy, women, untouchables, caste minorities as well as other disadvantaged groups. The NEP declares: To facilitate learning for all students, with special emphasis on Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), the scope of school education will be broadened to facilitate multiple pathways to learning involving both formal and non-formal education modes (MHRD, 2020). Data shows that certain geographical areas contain significantly larger proportions of SEDGs. Hence, it is recommended that regions of the country with large populations of SEDG be declared as Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all schemes and policies are implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts, in order to truly change their educational landscape (MHRD, 2020: 26). NEP said that women cut across all underrepresented groups, constituting about half of all SEDGs. Unfortunately, the exclusion and inequity that SEDGs face are only amplified for the women in these SEDGs.

The policy additionally recognizes the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social mores; therefore, providing quality education to girls

emerges as the best way to increase the education levels not just for the current generation of SEDGs but also for future generations.

The policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls within these groups (MHRD, 2020).

Medium of Instruction: Gandhi vehemently opposed the idea of English as the medium of instruction. The NEP 2020 dwells elaborately on multilingualism, emphasizing the significance of inclusion of mother tongue into the process of learning. The policy believes that the earlier a child is exposed to their native languages, the better they become at relating their experiences to their culture and the world around them (MHRD, 2020:13).

Some Educational Philosophies

Promotion of Yoga

It is the oldest Hindu text which speaks about yoking our mind and insight to the Light of Truth or Reality. Additionally, incorporating yoga into a school's curriculum can enhance the quality of physical education programmes. Modification of traditional physical education to include yoga is as important as other sport as it helps in different ways and at different levels in a sportsman's life. Yoga can play a key role in cultivating mind control and concentration which helps a sportsperson in their performance. It offers children and adults an opportunity to experience success in physical activity, which can help build a foundation of strength in life. However, curriculum specialists, teachers, trainers and students should seriously understand and analyse the challenges associated with yoga education in classroom settings and real life as well (Patel, 2019*).*

The Ministry of Education of the Central Government, in its annual reports, provides details about the promotion of Yoga as a distinct sphere of activity across all its interrelated dimensions.

Yoga in Graduate/Postgraduate Level Courses: The Central Sanskrit University offers teaching courses at Shastri (B.A.) and Acharya (M.A.) levels in various subjects viz., Navya Vyakarana, Prachina Vyakarana, Sahitya, Phalita Jyotisha, Siddhant Jyotisha, Sarva Darshana, Veda, Nyaya [Navya], Mimamsa, Advaita Vedanta, Dharma Shastra, Vedanta, Sankhya Yoga, Paurohitya, Jain Darshan, Bauddha Darshan, Puranetihasa as traditional subjects along with English, Hindi, 120

Computer Science and Environmental Studies. The Shiksha Shastri (B.Ed.) and Shiksha Acharya (M.Ed.) courses are also offered Campuses. The Campuses also host offer research programmes leading to the of Vidyavaridhi (Ph.D.) degree. About 12,000 students were enrolled for the present year in the University (MOE, 2022: 158). MOE provides details in great length about the integration of yoga in school education as well as the certificate and diploma-based Yoga programmes conducted by different ministries and their constituent agencies. This information is elaborately detailed in the MOE's annual report (MOE, 2022: 302).

Additionally, the International Day of Yoga is celebrated in both the school education and higher education sectors across the country under the auspices of different ministries and their frontal agencies.

Yoga in Physical, Social and Health Wellbeing: Yoga based physical and mental health programmes have also been promoted and funded by the Govt. of India. This has been done as part of social welfare and education, and are implemented through numerous activities with the support of a network of Regional Centres and Study Centres across the country. These activities include Swachhata Pledge, sanitation drives, plantation drives, health and hygiene related programmes, and Yoga based physical and mental health programmes. More than 90 villages have been adopted under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan by various Regional Centres of IGNOU (MOE, 2022: 133). Furthermore, other ministries like the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare, have integrated yoga promotion and propagation into their activities (MOE, 2022: 258).

The NIOS offers more than 100 vocational courses across six major vocational sectors which include Agriculture & Animal Husbandry, Home Science & Hospitality, Engineering & Technology, Computer & Information Technology and Health & Paramedical including Yoga (MOE, 2022: 300). From the annual report of the MOE, it becomes evident that Yoga is a flagship programme being dedicatedly propagated and promoted by different ministries and their frontal agencies. This effort includes education, health promotion, physical and social well-being as well as the dissemination of Indian knowledge systems across the world.

Conclusion

Indian knowledge system and its educational philosophy serve as guiding principles to fulfil the different aims of an individual and her/his social life. Indian philosophy of education is rooted in Indian culture, beliefs and norms which are very pertinent to NEP 2020. Indian education philosophies have given the framework along with the

methodologies and scripts. The quest of knowledge (Jnan), Wisdom (Pragyan) and truth (Satya) has been deeply ingrained in Indian thought and serve as the path and pinnacle of individual aspirations. The aim of education in India was for self–realization and emancipation and not just for the attainment of knowledge to live a life. Throughout history, India has produced great scholars who have made an immense contribution through their philosophies, educational thoughts and knowledge in diverse fields. The afore mentioned relevance of the philosophy of education aligns with the guiding principles and perspective of NEP 2020. The policy declared that these principles would form the basis of the education system envisioned and elaborated on the blueprint for its implementation. This article examines and re-affirms this connection by first surveying the Indian knowledge system and educational philosophies within NEP 2020. Additionally it delves into the educational philosophies and thoughts of some of the leading educational thinkers and leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. It also illustrates the evidence of how the Indian knowledge system is fostered and nurtured within the Indian education system, with focus one specific aspect: Yoga, as an educational, physical, health promotion activity.

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Accessibility of Higher Education in India

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Abstract

Higher education plays a significant role in the development of any nation. It is widely recognised that economic success of a country is intricately tied to the quality of its education system. India is the third-largest system in the world in terms of higher education. However, regrettably, it is not equally accessible to all. The main objective of this research is to find out the accessibility of higher education in India. Secondary data used for the study has been obtained from All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report for the year 2018-19. For examining the accessibility, indicators such as Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) and share of females enrolled in higher education at the state level have been taken into consideration. A composite index, for all the three indicators has been calculated for arriving at the broader picture of accessibility of higher education in India. It has been revealed that states and union territories in the southern part of the country predominantly exhibit high level of accessibility to higher education. In contrast, most northern states and union territories demonstrate a moderate level of accessibility. On the other hand, a low level of accessibility to higher education has been found in the eastern, north-eastern, central, and western states and union territories. Availability of higher education institutions plays an important role in determining the level of accessibility.

Keywords: *Accessibility, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) and Higher education.*

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Introduction

Higher education system of India is both ancient and an advanced one (Rout, 2020). In a diverse country like India, characterised by variations in class, gender, caste, language, region, etc., higher education is essential for achieving inclusive development for all. In fact, inclusive development can only be achieved through an inclusive system of education, especially in the realm of higher education (Behera, 2019). On the other hand, Chanana (1993) who studied access to higher education in India, found that variables of gender, caste, class and region were important in determining access to higher education in a multicultural and multi-ethnic Indian society. Moreover, Ghosh (2006) had stated that there was a need of reservation in higher education for different groups, not because they were the perfect instruments to rectify long-standing discrimination, but for the most workable methods under the circumstances. Chauhan (2008) had made a comparative study of higher education systems of SAARC countries in terms of structure, access, equity, resources, and contribution of private enterprises. He observed low participation of women, poor quality and low expenditure on higher education in all the SAARC countries. Agarwal (2009) had discussed the issues of access and equity and suggested that the affirmative action should be based on the concept of equality and opportunity to all. Parekh (2010) had observed that to raise the current Gross Enrolment Ratio (12.4 per cent) to 30 per cent by the year 2020, enhancements in infrastructure, teaching staff, funding, access, technical support and maintenance of quality are imperative. It should be managed in such a way that quality does not go down with proliferation.

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education for the year 2018-19, GER of India was 26.3 percent. GER for countries in transition and developed countries was 57 per cent and 76 per cent respectively. On the other hand, GER for the developing countries was only 26 per cent which was below the world average of 32 per cent. Among various countries, GER was highest in South Korea at 98 per cent followed by Finland and US both at 94 per cent, Australia at 86 per cent), Russia at 76 per cent, UK at 68 per cent and France at 58 per cent. India, on the other hand, had low GER as compared to even some of its neighbouring countries (Duraisamy, 2016). The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) of the 2030 Agenda, which India had adopted in 2015, called for "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by the year 2030. By setting the goal of 50% GER in higher education by 2035, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 affirmed its commitment (GoI, 2020). With 37.4 million students currently enrolled, the GER for higher education was 26.3%. To reach a GER of 50% by 2035, it was anticipated that we would require an additional 33.7 million seats in higher education at the current rate of population growth. In the next 15

years, this would demand a significant investment in both human and financial resources (Kant and Prakash, 2021). In order to attain the SDG 4 Agenda 2030 and effective implementation of National Education Policy 2020, a detailed study of accessibility of higher education in India assumes special relevance. The present study seeks to fulfill this objective by examining the accessibility of higher education in India at the state and the union territory level.

Data Sources and Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data obtained from All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19 report. The indicators selected include Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) and the proportion of females enrolled in higher education. The accessibility has been calculated with the help of the composite index of all the three indicators covering all states and union territories in the country. Three categories namely low, moderate, and high have been identified to study the level of accessibility of higher education across different region. For the purpose of data representation, appropriate tables have been made, and a map showing the level of accessibility of higher education in India has been prepared using ARC GIS software version 10.8.

Results and Discussion

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

Since India's independence, the country's higher education system has grown significantly, reaching the position of third largest in the world. It serves approximately 37 million students, the third largest after the US and China. The number of universities expanded by 127% and reaching 993 universities, while collages increased by 54% resulting in 39,931 colleges. Student enrolled also rose from 20 million to 37 million (an increase of 85%) during the same period. This has been a remarkable achievement for increasing access to higher education (Kant and Prakash, 2021). Throughout the recent decade, the entire Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) rose from 15% in 2009–10 and to 26.3% in 2018–19 (AISHE, 2018-19). Fewer Institutions of Higher Education within reach, a dearth of courses that offer higher employability and better career prospects, fewer resources for research, and a lack of international recognition for Indian courses are all factors that contribute to India's low GER (Kancharla, 2019).

The GER is not that good when compared to neighbouring countries, marked by a high level of regional variations. The data has revealed that there are wide interstate variations in terms of GER. It varied from the highest of 53.9 per cent in Sikkim to

the lowest in Daman and Diu at 5.5 percent. The range of data has 48.4 per cent points between these two extreme states. It shows that the state at the top is almost ten times ahead of the state at the bottom. Among the total states and union territories, half have higher GER than the national average. This category includes the seven northern states and union territories, six southern states and union territories, three north-eastern states and two western states. The substantial presence of higher education institutions in these states primarily contributed to higher Gross Enrolment Ratio. States like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Assam, and Nagaland from north-eastern region; Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Andaman and Nicobar from the eastern region; Gujarat, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu from the western region; Lakshadweep from the southern region; Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan from north; and finally Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh from the central region had lower GER than the national average (Fig. 1). In Rajasthan, the lower level of GER was due to physiographic constraints, while poverty is the main factor affecting the eastern states of the country.

In many states and union territories, female GER is higher than male GER. The highest female GER was noted in Chandigarh (63.9 per cent) and the lowest in Daman and Diu (9.8 per cent). In terms of the male GER, Sikkim topped the rank with 54 per cent and Lakshadweep ranked at bottom with only 3.4 per cent (Table 1).
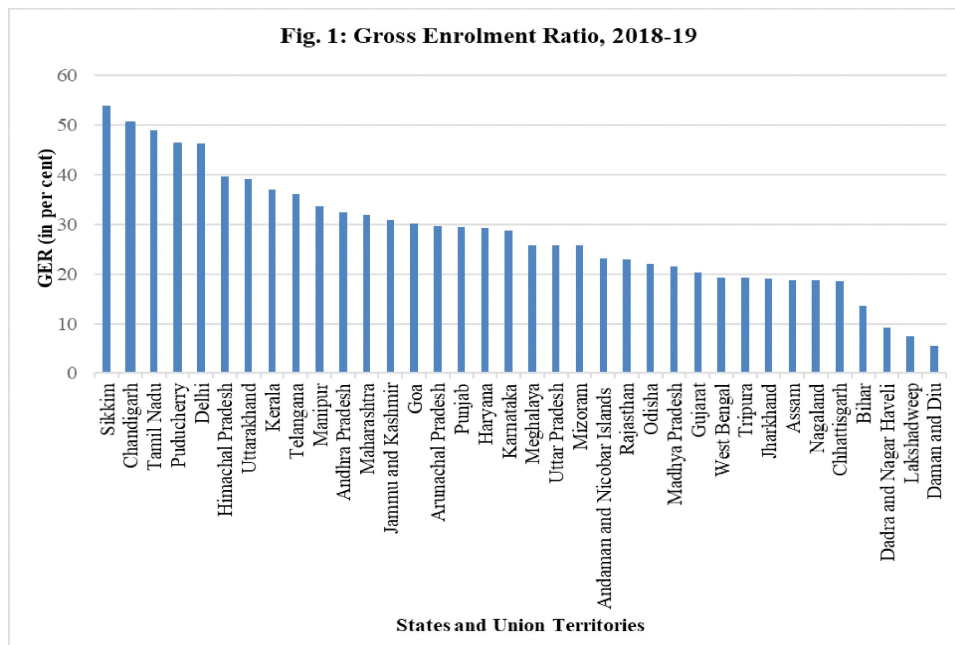

Fig. 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio, 2018-19

Table 1: India: GER in Higher Education (18-23 Years), 2018-19

Sr. No.	States/Union Territories	Male	Female	Total
0	India	26.3	26.4	26.3
	States			
1	Sikkim	54	53.9	53.9
2	Tamil Nadu	49.8	48.3	49
3	Himachal Pradesh	34.7	44.9	39.6
4	Uttarakhand	39.2	39.1	39.1
5	Kerala	30.8	43.2	37
6	Telangana	35.8	36.5	36.2
7	Manipur	33.6	33.8	33.7
8	Andhra Pradesh	35.8	29	32.4
9	Maharashtra	33.5	30	32
10	Jammu and Kashmir	29.6	32.2	30.9
11	Goa	26.4	35	30.1
12	Arunachal Pradesh	29.9	29.5	29.7
13	Punjab	25.5	34.3	29.5
14	Haryana	26.5	32.4	29.2
15	Karnataka	28.2	29.4	28.8
16	Meghalaya	23.8	27.7	25.8
17	Uttar Pradesh	24.2	27.5	25.8
18	Mizoram	26.5	24.8	25.7
19	Rajasthan	23.1	23	23
20	Odisha	24.2	20	22.1
21	Madhya Pradesh	21.8	21.2	21.5
22	Gujarat	22	18.7	20.4
23	West Bengal	20	18.7	19.3
24	Tripura	21.1	17.4	19.2
25	Jharkhand	19.5	18.7	19.1
26	Assam	19.1	18.3	18.7
27	Nagaland	17.8	19.7	18.7
28	Chhattisgarh	18.1	19.2	18.6
29	Bihar	15.1	12	13.6
	Union Territories			
1	Chandigarh	41.6	63.9	50.6
2	Puducherry	41.7	51.6	46.4
3	Delhi	43.2	50	46.3
4	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	20.3	26.1	23.2
5	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	7.4	12.6	9.3
6	Lakshadweep	3.4	11.6	7.4
7	Daman and Diu	4.2	9.8	5.5

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report, 2019.

GER= (Number of enrolments in higher education/Total population in the age group of 18-23) × 100

Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)

In terms of pupil teacher ratio in higher education, India lags behind many countries including Brazil and China (India Today, July 14, 2019). Additionally, while examining the pupil teacher ratio variations by state, significant differences were found among the states and union territories.

Table 2: India: PTR in Higher Education, 2018-19

Sr. No.	States/Union Territories	Pupil Teacher Ratio	Teachers per 100 Students
0	India	26	4
	States		
1	Karnataka	15	7
2	Goa	16	6
3	Tamil Nadu	17	6
4	Andhra Pradesh	18	6
5	Kerala	18	6
6	Mizoram	18	6
7	Punjab	18	6
8	Telangana	18	6
9	Nagaland	19	5
10	Manipur	22	5
11	Gujarat	26	4
12	Haryana	26	4
13	Meghalaya	26	4
14	Himachal Pradesh	27	4
15	Maharashtra	27	4
16	Odisha	27	4
17	Sikkim	27	4
18	Uttar Pradesh	27	4
19	Chhattisgarh	28	4
20	Rajasthan	29	3
21	Arunachal Pradesh	31	3
22	Assam	31	3
23	Madhya Pradesh	33	3
24	Tripura	33	3
25	Jammu and Kashmir	35	3
26	West Bengal	35	3
27	Uttarakhand	46	2
28	Jharkhand	60	2
29	Bihar	61	2
	Union Territories		
1	Lakshadweep	12	8
2	Puducherry	13	8
3	Daman and Diu	14	7
4	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	25	4
5	Chandigarh	28	4
6	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	29	3
7	Delhi	52	2

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report, 2019.

PTR: Total number of students enrolled in higher education / Total number of teachers

At the national level, the higher education system maintained a pupil teacher ratio of one teacher per 26 students. The pupil teacher ratio exhibited variations ranging from 12 students per one teacher in Lakshadweep to 61 students per one teacher in Bihar. This discrepancy meant that burden of students on the teachers was five times more in Bihar than in Lakshadweep. This lower ratio had resulted in the overburdening of a small group of teachers, adversely affecting the quality of academic research taken up by them (India Today, July 14, 2019). One of the causes for faculty shortages is that teaching has recently become a low-demand profession. Students perceive teaching careers to be lower earning than other professions, with a lack of research opportunities and career advancement chances (Kapoor, 2019). More than half (19) of the states and union territories had a pupil-teacher ratio lower than the national average, and most of these states belonged to the northern, eastern and north-eastern regions. The ever-increasing number of student enrollments and low teacher recruitment rates have resulted in a declining pupil-teacher ratio. In comparison, Gujarat, Haryana, and Meghalaya shared an equal pupil teacher ratio with the national average. Conversely, the remaining 14 states and union territories had a better pupil-teacher ratio than the national average. These better performing states in the context of the pupil teacher ratio were mostly from the southern region, with some representation from the north-eastern part of the country. Most of the northern states lagged in the context of pupil-teacher ratio even though they had higher GER and share of female enrolment than the national average. The only state from the northern region with better pupil teacher ratio than the national average was Punjab (Table 2).

Share of Female Enrolment in Higher Education

Mahatma Gandhi emphasized the value of education for women, but it did little to change long-standing social norms. The persistent idea that women should not aspire to paid employment, but rather find acceptability in voluntary work, acted as a barrier to education for women in India. To improve the lives of widows and other disadvantaged women, social reformers worked to increase women's access to higher education and workforce participation, particularly through caring professions like nursing and teaching. Economic factors have recently reduced the stigma associated with women contributing to family income, and as a result, women are now well represented in a variety of occupations. Nevertheless, girls residing rural areas or in cities lacking colleges or universities often have limited access to higher education. In some countries, such as the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Finland, and France, women have equalled or even exceeded men in terms of their proportion in gross enrollment, indicating that women are benefiting from the growth of educational opportunities. Globally, women remain an underutilized resource, with

an immense potential to add to the skill base of their nations. To encourage a cultural shift in mindset and ultimately improve overall access to higher education, legislative support is undeniably needed (Ghara, 2016).

Table 3: India: Share of Male and Female Enrolment in Higher Education, 2018-19

Sr. No.	States/Union Territories	Male (%)	Female (%)
0	India	51.65	48.35
	States		
1	Kerala	41.66	58.34
2	Meghalaya	44.12	55.88
3	Himachal Pradesh	45.58	54.42
4	Chhattisgarh	48.20	51.80
5	Nagaland	48.36	51.64
6	Goa	49.32	50.68
7	Haryana	49.41	50.59
8	Telangana	49.47	50.53
9	Manipur	49.54	50.46
10	Assam	49.58	50.42
11	Jammu and Kashmir	49.59	50.41
12	Karnataka	49.95	50.05
13	Uttar Pradesh	50.08	49.92
14	Punjab	50.14	49.86
15	West Bengal	50.37	49.63
16	Tamil Nadu	50.84	49.16
17	Arunachal Pradesh	50.96	49.04
18	Jharkhand	51.02	48.98
19	Mizoram	51.32	48.68
20	Uttarakhand	51.35	48.65
21	Sikkim	51.71	48.29
22	Rajasthan	52.44	47.56
23	Madhya Pradesh	53.16	46.84
24	Tripura	53.76	46.24
25	Andhra Pradesh	54.73	45.27
26	Odisha	54.73	45.27
27	Maharashtra	54.93	45.07
28	Gujarat	56.29	43.71
29	Bihar	57.28	42.72
	Union Territories		
1	Lakshadweep	23.13	76.87
2	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	44.33	55.67
3	Puducherry	48.64	51.36
4	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	48.98	51.02
5	Chandigarh	49.05	50.95
6	Delhi	50.98	49.02
7	Daman and Diu	57.66	42.34

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report, 2019.

The advancement of the socio-economic and health status of a society as a whole is directly impacted by women's education (Bhagavatheeswaran et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2013).

Most state governments in India have taken steps to promote the enrolment of women in education, starting at the elementary school level and continuing through secondary and higher education. Given that the percentage of the enrolled women had continuously increased over the past few years, these initiatives have mostly been successful (Anita and Ravindran, 2020). Over the past 20 years, Indian women's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has steadily increased. In the 2018–2019 academic year, women's GER in the 18–23 age group outpaced men's (MHRD, 2019 [AISHE Report, 2019]).

The proportion of female enrolment in higher education for the entire country 48.35 per cent during 2018-19. Lakshadweep with the highest share of females enrolled in higher education was at the top of the list while Daman and Diu occupied the lowest position.

Nearly one third of states and union territories had higher share of female enrolment than the national average. Out of these, the largest number of states and union territories belonged to the southern region, followed by the northern region and the north-eastern region, respectively (Table 3).

With the help of a composite index of these three indicators (Gross Enrolment Ratio, Pupil Teacher Ratio and share of female enrolled in higher education) of accessibility, an overall picture was drawn. A weighted index has been computed for all the states and union territories.

The highest score was assigned a value of 100 and the other values were calculated proportionately to 100. To standardize PTR equivalent to GER and share of female enrolment, the PTR was converted to teachers per 100 students.

The score of all the indicators were summed up for each state and union territory, followed by division of the sum by the number of indicators (i.e., three). In this way, the composite index was calculated for all the states and union territories. Puducherry with a composite index of 84.30 secured the top rank and Bihar with 35.27 occupied the bottom position (Table 4).

Table 4: India: Composite Index of Accessibility of Higher Education

Sr. No.	State/Union Territory	GER	PTR (Teachers per 100 Students)	Share of Female Enrolment	Total	Composite Index
1	Puducherry	86.09	100	66.81	252.9	84.30
2	Tamil Nadu	90.91	75	63.95	229.86	76.62
3	Kerala	68.65	75	75.89	219.54	73.18
4	Lakshadweep	13.73	100	100	213.73	71.24
5	Sikkim	100	50	62.82	212.82	70.94
6	Chandigarh	93.88	50	66.28	210.16	70.05
7	Telangana	67.16	75	65.73	207.89	69.30
8	Karnataka	53.43	87.5	65.11	206.04	68.68
9	Goa	55.84	75	65.93	196.77	65.59
10	Punjab	54.73	75	64.86	194.59	64.86
11	Himachal Pradesh	73.47	50	70.79	194.26	64.75
12	Andhra Pradesh	60.11	75	58.89	194	64.67
13	Manipur	62.52	62.5	65.64	190.66	63.55
14	Uttarakhand	72.54	50	64.94	187.48	62.49
15	Mizoram	47.68	75	63.33	186.01	62.00
16	Delhi	85.9	25	63.77	174.67	58.22
17	Meghalaya	47.87	50	72.69	170.56	56.85
18	Haryana	54.17	50	65.81	169.98	56.66
19	Maharashtra	59.37	50	58.63	168	56.00
20	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	43.04	50	72.42	165.46	55.15
21	Nagaland	34.69	62.5	67.18	164.37	54.79
22	Jammu and Kashmir	57.33	37.5	65.58	160.41	53.47
23	Arunachal Pradesh	55.1	37.5	63.8	156.4	52.13
24	Daman and Diu	10.2	87.5	55.08	152.78	50.93
25	Chhattisgarh	34.51	50	67.39	151.9	50.63
26	Odisha	41	50	58.89	149.89	49.96
27	Gujarat	37.85	50	56.86	144.71	48.24
28	Rajasthan	42.67	37.5	61.87	142.04	47.35
29	Madhya Pradesh	39.89	37.5	60.93	138.32	46.11
30	West Bengal	35.81	37.5	64.56	137.87	45.96
31	Assam	34.69	37.5	65.59	137.78	45.93
32	Uttar Pradesh	47.87	25	63.29	136.16	45.39
33	Tripura	35.62	37.5	60.15	133.27	44.42
34	Jharkhand	35.44	25	63.72	124.16	41.39
35	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	17.25	37.5	66.37	121.12	40.37
36	Bihar	25.23	25	55.57	105.8	35.27

Source: Calculated from Tables 1-3.

Level of Accessibility of Higher Education in India

On the basis of the composite index value, the states and union territories were categorized in three different categories low, moderate and high.

Table 5: India: Level of Accessibility of Higher Education

Level of Accessibility	Composite Index Value	States/Union Territories
Low	Below 50	Bihar, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Jharkhand, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Odisha
Moderate	50-70	Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Maharashtra, Haryana, Meghalaya, Delhi, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Goa, Karnataka and Telangana
High	Above 70	Chandigarh, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

Source: Based on computation made in Table 4.

Low level of accessibility could be found in one union territory and ten states. Largest number of union territories and states were found in the moderate level of accessibility, which comprised three union territories and 16 states.

In the high-level category, there were three union territories and three states (Table 5). Nearly all northern states and union territories except Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh had moderate level of accessibility.

The physiographic limitations brought on by the desert were to blame for Rajasthan's low level of higher education. The eastern region of India was represented by the underdeveloped states of Odisha, Bihar, and Jharkhand where poverty has been one of the major obstacles affecting the level of enrolment in higher education (Bala, 2016).

High level of accessibility of higher education was found in most of the southern states due to the high level of availability of higher education institutions in such states (Kumari and Bhutani, 2021).

Map 1: Level of Accessibility of Higher Education in India
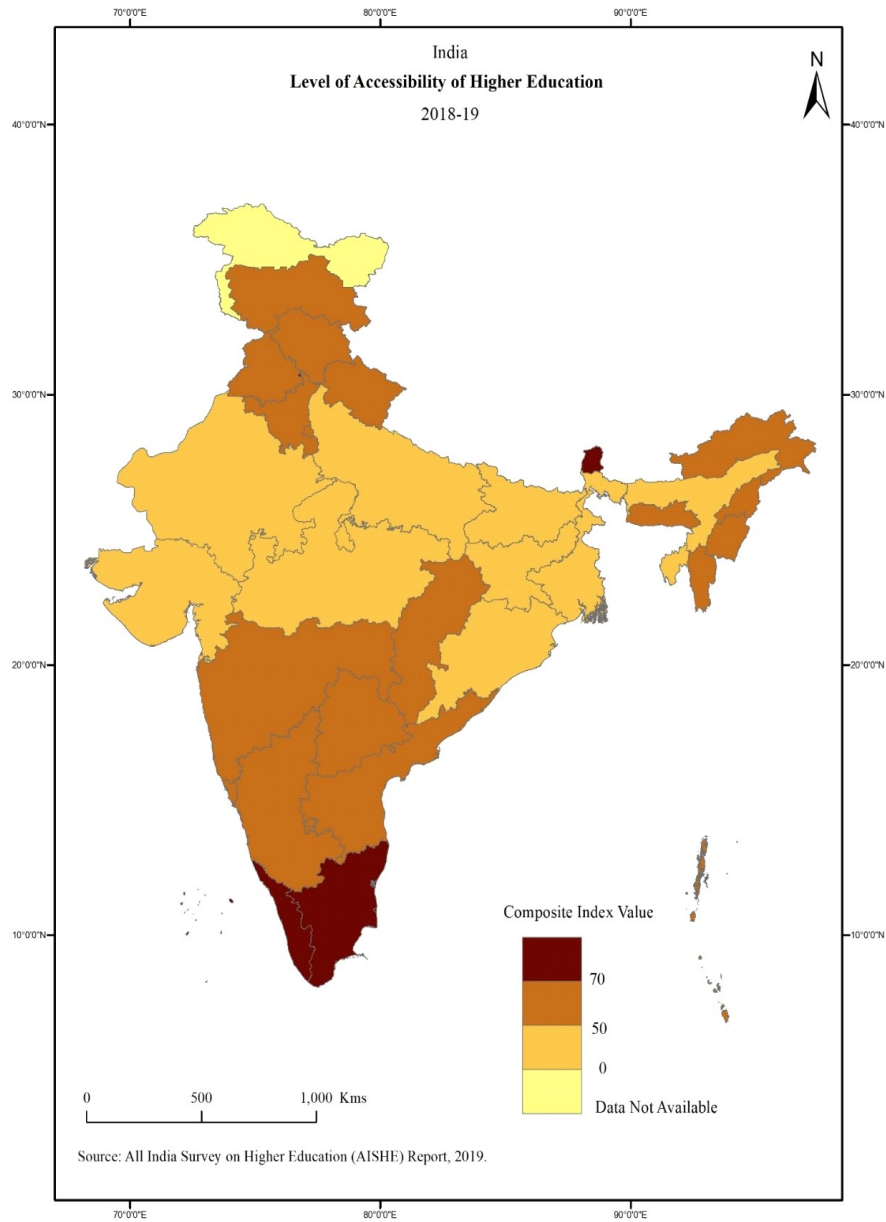
An examination of the three indicators mentioned above reveals a very contrasting picture in several states and union territories. In Lakshadweep, the Gross

Enrolment Ratio was remarkably low, while the pupil-teacher ratio and the share of female enrolment registered the highest figures. A similar scenario can be seen in Daman and Diu. Dadra and Nagar Haveli also lagged behind in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratio and Pupil Teacher Ratio but ranked 8th among all states and union territories concerning share of female enrollment. Andaman and Nicobar also displayed a comparatively low Gross Enrolment Ratio, even though it was performing well in terms of pupil teacher ratio and share of female enrolment. Bihar, on the other hand, lagged at the bottom across almost all three indicators. It was a thriving educational centre in the fourth and eighth century, hosting three world-class universities (Nalanda, Vikramshila and Udantpuri). With political meddling, a rising role for student politics, evident caste lines in the system, and private parties funding the university system, the education system has suffered (Singh, 2017). Most of the states such as Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand, and Bihar also had low levels of availability of higher education institutions with limited accessibility. Some states with high and moderate levels of access also showcased a high availability of higher education institutions such as Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Haryana (Kumari and Bhutani, 2021). It can be seen that the level of accessibility coincides with the level of availability. Hence, to improve access to higher education, the availability of higher education institutions should be improved.

Conclusion

Higher education in India is not uniformly and equally accessible across the country. There are significant disparities in GER, Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) and the share of female enrolment. The data indicated that there were significant inter-state variations in terms of GER, with Sikkim having the highest percentage (53.9) and Daman and Diu reporting the lowest percentage (5.5). The GER was higher than the national average in nearly half of the states and union territories distributed across the country. The large availability of colleges and universities provides an incentive for a high Gross Enrolment Ratio, especially for the female enrolment ratio. States with lower GER than the national average, however, included Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Assam, and Nagaland from the north-eastern region; Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Bihar and Andaman and Nicobar from the eastern region; Gujarat, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman Diu from the western region; and Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan from the northern region and Lakshadweep from the southern region. Notably, in many states and union territories, the GER of women was higher than that of men.

Significant variations in the country in the pupil teacher ratio were also observed in 2018-19. On an average, there was one teacher for every 26 students nationwide.

Lakshadweep exhibited a remarkable ratio of 12 students per teacher, compared to 61 students per teacher in Bihar. More than half (19) of the states and union territories had pupil-teacher ratios lower than the national average, with the majority of these states hailing from the northern, eastern, and north-eastern regions. The northern states with high GER and high share of female enrolment were found to be trailing behind in terms of pupil-teacher ratio, reflecting relatively less availability of teachers, though the number of students was found to be large. This underscores the need to explore the implications of low pupil-teacher ratio in the context of inadequate teacher recruitment across most states and union territories in the country.

In over a third of the states and UTs, the share of female enrolment was higher than the national average. The northern region with the highest number of states (6) and union territories (2) was followed by the southern region and the north-eastern region. The share of female enrolment in the country during 2018-19 was 48.35 per cent. Kerala, and Lakshadweep secured the top positions among states and union territories, respectively, for the highest female enrolment in higher education, while Daman and Diu occupied at the bottom rank.

Thus, the aforementioned discussion leads to the conclusion that most northern states exhibit recorded a moderate level to accessibility of higher education in contrast to the lower levels seen in the central, western and eastern regions. Due to geographical restrictions of the desert, the level of education in Rajasthan was low. In underdeveloped eastern states like Odisha, Bihar, and Jharkhand, poverty is one of the major barriers to enrolment in higher education. Higher education is highly accessible in the southern states due to the greater availability of higher education institutions.

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Factors Influencing Student Dropout Rates in Higher Education: An Analysis by Gender and Demographics

• **Shyam R. Sihare[1]**

Abstract

This research paper examines the impact of student dropouts in higher education, taking into consideration gender and demographics. Data was collected from five colleges through a questionnaire, interviews, and literature analysis. Quantitative analysis methods were used to assess data accuracy and validity. The findings shed light on factors contributing to student dropouts and reveal insights into the influence of gender and demographics on dropout rates. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge and inform strategies to mitigate student dropouts in higher education.

Introduction

Addressing student dropouts is a difficult task for educational institutions. Implementing effective processes like monitoring and promptly rectifying issues can substantially increase student retention. Retaining students requires maintaining their satisfaction. Therefore, strategies that impact the institution's reputation and enhance overall awareness of its work should be prioritized (Leslie and Brinkman, 1987). The government also plays a role in combating unemployment and illiteracy by raising awareness periodically. Awareness camps are organized in towns, cities, and villages for this purpose. Strengthening early education is crucial to prevent issues in higher education (Kaplin et al., 2020). Reducing dropout rates is possible through providing affordable and attractive education. Early warning signs of dropouts should be recognized to identify students at risk. Students struggling academically should receive special attention and support (Dawson et al., 2010).

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Exploring alternative approaches to traditional education can engage students. effectively. Leveraging Digital technology can make education more appealing as digital education outside the classroom allows students to pursue learning comfortably. Platforms like YouTube, Wikipedia, and social networking sites can be utilized for educational purposes (Sihare (a), 2017). Addressing underlying issues that contribute to student dropout rates is crucial. Education helps individuals overcome barriers, improve job opportunities, and foster cultural and religious ideas (Sihare (b), 2017). Overcoming the challenge of increasing student retention is imperative. Advancing education and prioritizing student satisfaction are important. Recruiting qualified teachers and enhancing student attendance can increase enrollment (Sihare, 2018). Students seek courses that enhance employability. Dropout rates in diploma and certificate programmes can have long-term consequences. Various factors contribute to student dropout, including high tuition fees, lack of readiness, dissatisfaction, negative learning environments, inappropriate course selection, academic challenges, work-family balance, and enrollment in online courses. Artificial intelligence (AI) can help universities identify and solve problems (Nagy and Roland, 2018).

The research project aims to identify the most critical reasons behind student attrition in higher education. By making teaching and learning enjoyable, student dropouts can be reduced. Data from five colleges were analyzed and categorized on the basis of gender and demographics. Software was employed to ensure transparency and accuracy in the analysis. The research study structure includes sections on women in higher education, dropout rates, methods and materials, data analysis, presentation of findings, familiarity with adult education, and the analysis and interpretation of results. The study concludes in Section 9.

The status of women in higher education

The underrepresentation of women in executive positions in higher education is a well-known issue. Numerous studies have examined the challenges faced by women managers in various socio-cultural and geographic contexts. Access to education significantly impacts the treatment of women within a culture. In India, prevailing belief have hindered women's formal education but have allowed for volunteering. In countries like the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Finland, and France, women account for an equal or larger proportion of enrollment. Legislative support is necessary to facilitate cultural shifts and enhance access to higher education (Brett, 2016). Factors such as violence, child marriage, and a shortage of female teachers discourage female enrollment (Matonya, 2016). Despite advancements in certain fields, gender imbalance and limited opportunities persist (Fényes, Mohácsi,

and Pallay, 2021). Gender segregation remains prevalent despite the increasing involvement of women in education (Klasen and Lamanna, 2009).

Girl's education dropout rate

According to a UNICEF poll, 38% of respondents reported knowing a female student who had dropped out of education. In India, the annual dropout rate is 14.6%[2] (UNICEF, cited in Murthy and Ramchand, 2020). Despite an increase in girls attending educational institutions, their dropout rate remains a significant issue, although it has decreased by more than 5%[3]. Traditional gender norms, household responsibilities, and lack of a bridging system for further education create additional barriers. Family obligations contribute to female dropout rates so, establishing effective communication channels with parents and the community is crucial for changing cultural norms. Educational institutions must provide supportive environments, accessible facilities, and sufficient gender-sensitive resources while also engaging men in empowering women. Despite girls' success in board examinations, many still face challenges such as early marriage and employment struggles (Shankar and Kidd, 2022).

Methods and Materials

Planning of data collection

A survey was conducted to determine the dropout rate among college students in higher education. Data were collected from various colleges, excluding non-responsive or delayed institutions. The survey encompassed all faculties, ensuring equal representation of arts, commerce, sciences, medicine, engineering, and polytechnic disciplines. Both male and female students were equally involved and subjected to the same set of questions. To supplement the questionnaire, data from the previous three years were obtained from college administrations, ensuring anonymity. Follow-up questions were developed to address any missing information, and personal visits and discussions were conducted with selected managers and students familiar with the questionnaire. These verbal discussions took into account the student population of each college, considering potential variations across disciplines. Colleges were invited to participate through email, verbal communication,

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[2]https://www.telegraphindia.com/edugraph/news/unicef-india-report-highlights-alarming-rise-in-dropout-rates-of-female-school-students/cid/1858585
[3]https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/girls-drop-out-of-schools-due-to-early-marriage-house-work/articleshow/92195487.cms

and social networking, with ethical approval obtained before data collection. A selection of colleges including private, semi-government, and government institutions was made to ensure accurate analysis and comprehensibility of the study.

Data collection and participants

The data collection process for this study took place between August and September 2022. The chosen colleges were those previously aware of the study's objectives, ensuring valuable insights into dropout rates. Various faculties, including arts, commerce, and science, were simultaneously chosen to evaluate the dropout patterns comprehensively. Data was collected over a three-year period to achieve a robust sample size, with ten students from each group responding to research-related questions. Additionally, polytechnic and engineering institutes were also included, with five students selected from each sample group. Verbal exchanges were conducted with students and administrators to understand personal challenges and gain administrative perspectives. Gender balanced participation levels were maintained with the majority of colleges and students actively responding to the questionnaire. Categorization based on gender and demographics allowed for a nuanced analysis of societal factors influencing dropout rates. Table 1 presents the total invitation, response, and response rates of participants from different colleges, providing an overview of engagement levels. Response rates varied among colleges, with some demonstrating high levels of interest and involvement, while others faced challenges in engaging participants. Graphical representations such as bar charts or pie charts can further visualize the distribution of invitations, responses, and response rates across colleges, facilitating easy comparisons. This study employed a comprehensive approach, considering various perspectives and demographics to understand student dropout rates in higher education.

Table 1: Total invitation, response, and rate of college-wise participants in academic institutions in tabular and graphical form

School	Total students invited to respond	Total students respond	Respond %
College 1	300	211	70.33
College 2	60	24	40.00
College 3	45	40	88.89
College 4	350	303	86.57
College 5	30	14	46.67

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of Table 1

Factor	Total students invited to respond	Total students respond	Respond %
Mean	157.00	118.40	66.49
Standard Error	69.20	58.57	10.04
Median	60.00	40.00	70.33
Standard Deviation	154.74	130.97	22.44
Sample Variance	23945.00	17152.30	503.57
Kurtosis	-2.96	-1.75	-2.77
Skewness	0.65	0.86	-0.26
Range	320.00	289.00	48.89
Minimum	30.00	14.00	40.00
Maximum	350.00	303.00	88.89
Confidence Level (95.0%)	192.14	162.62	27.86

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency, dispersion, shape, and additional information such as sample variance and confidence level. These statistics offer insights into the distribution and characteristics of the data. Table 3 presents the results of ANOVA and t-test analyses conducted to examine significant differences or associations related to dropout rates and socio-economic factors. These analyses aim to identify variations based on participants' characteristics. The significance levels and critical values in Table 3 provide valuable insights into the statistical significance of the observed results. ANOVA analysis compares means across groups, whereas the t-test evaluates differences between two groups. These tests help identify significant variations in dropout rates and socio-economic factors. However, the ANOVA and t-test results in Table 3 indicate no statistically significant differences or associations among the invited students, respondents, and their response rates regarding dropout rates and socio-economic factors. This finding suggests that no specific patterns or distinctions related to gender or socio-economic backgrounds were revealed by the data analysis.

Table 3: ANOVA and t-test results of all invited students, all respondents, and all respondents' percentages

	SD	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Pearson
Factor	136.67	3724.90	1.00	3724.90	0.18***	0.68 *ns*	5.32	0.99**

SD: standard deviation, *SS*: sum of squares, *df*: degrees of freedom, *MS*: mean square, *F-crit*: F-critical

Note: * = significant at p < 0.05, ** = significant at r>0.00, ns = not significant, *** = significant at 'F<F crit' for ANOVA and t-test analysis. * = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the gender distribution among respondents in each college, presenting the data in tabular and graphical formats. This allows for an easy comparison and understanding of female and male student participation, as well as those who preferred not to answer or fell within the "None of the above" category. Moving to Table 5, it offers a descriptive analysis of the data presented in Table 4, including various statistical measures to explore the gender composition within each college. Measures such as mean, standard error, median, standard deviation, sample variance, kurtosis, skewness, range, minimum, maximum, and confidence level are calculated and presented. The mean represents the average percentage of female and male students, while the standard error estimates variability in the gender distribution data. The median divides respondents equally into two groups, and the standard deviation measures the spread or dispersion of the gender data. The sample variance indicates variability within each gender group. Kurtosis assesses the shape of the distribution, while skewness indicates its asymmetry. The range shows the extent of variation in gender composition, while the minimum and maximum values identify the lowest and highest percentages. Lastly, the confidence level provides an estimate of precision and reliability, indicating the likely range of true population values.

Table 4: College gender surveys presented in tabular and graphical form

| College Name | Total students respond | | | |
	Female	Male	None of the above	Prefer not to answer
College 1	56%	43%	0%	1%
College 2	51%	49%	0%	0%
College 3	38%	62%	0%	0%
College 4	43%	55%	0%	2%
College 5	74%	26%	0%	0%
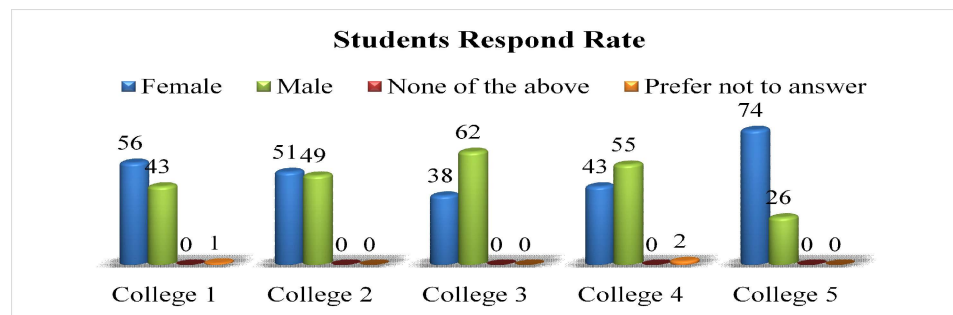
Table 5: Descriptive analysis of Table 4

Factor	Female	Male
Mean	77.68	77.32
Standard Error	33.49	35.71
Median	30.60	29.40
Standard Deviation	74.87	79.86
Sample Variance	5606.24	6377.24
Kurtosis	-3.13	-1.31
Skewness	0.62	0.90
Range	150.90	184.70
Minimum	17.10	7.80
Maximum	168.00	192.50
Confidence Level (95.0%)	92.97	99.16

Table 6 provides insights into Pearson correlation tests and ANOVA analyses, examining the relationships and differences between male and female students in terms of dropout rates and socio-economic factors. The inclusion of significance levels and critical values enhances the interpretation of the findings. Pearson correlation tests assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables, aiming to identify any significant correlations between gender and dropout rates. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, indicating the strength of the relationship. ANOVA analyses compare means across groups to investigate differences between male and female students in dropout rates and socio-economic factors. The F-statistic and p-value help determine the statistical significance of observed differences. However, the results in Table 6 reveal no significant correlations or differences between male and female students regarding dropout rates and socio-economic factors. These findings contradict the research title focused on female students and specific socio-economic backgrounds.

Table 6: Pearson correlation tests and ANOVA results between male and female students

	SD	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Pearson Correlation
Factor	72.98	0.32	1.00	0.32	0.00***	0.99 *ns*	5.32	0.93**

Factor   72.98   0.32   1.00   0.32   0.00***   0.99 *ns*   5.32   0.93**
Note: * = significant at p < 0.05, ** = significant at r>0.00, ns = not significant, *** = significant at 'F<F crit' for ANOVA and t-test analysis. * = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Materials and methods

The questionnaire design for this study was based on exploratory interviews conducted across multiple colleges, resulting in multiple versions targeting different educational levels. The dynamic nature of the questionnaire allowed for adjustments to questions based on participants' previous responses, leading to variations in participation rates. The study's questions were categorised into five primary areas, each with distinct questions, answer choices, and measurement processes:

1. *Demographic Details:* Gathering basic information such as age, gender identity, and name of the educational institution.
2. *Personal and Social Problems:* Analyzing personal and societal issues to identify reasons for college dropout. Participants were asked to anonymously rate common family issues using a scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." Those indicating such issues received unique follow-up questions.
3. *Participation:* Focusing on public-private partnerships, financially disadvantaged students were asked whether they received financial assistance from both public and private colleges to reduce dropout rates. Privacy measures were in place ensure honest responses, emphasizing that participants were not obliged to answer specific questions or share personal information.
4. *Professional Development:* This segment included questions about professional training. Many students expressed support for part-time work or entrepreneurship alongside further studies. Some felt that their higher education lacked adequate training or that their interests in professional development were insufficiently addressed.
5. *Administrative Strategy:* Insights from college administrators and professors were gathered, aligning their responses with the research objectives. Financial difficulties emerged as the primary cause of student dropout. Various opinions surfaced about female students, highlighting how social environments, especially in rural areas, hinder girls' progress in education. These comprehensive questionnaire areas aimed to collect data on dropout factors, emphasizing the need for colleges, government, and private institutions to address the needs of financially struggling students through appropriate financial support mechanisms.

Data Analysis

The study's data analysis explored higher education dropouts across five components: demographics, social/personal issues, participation, career development,

and organizational strategy. However, the questionnaire's one-dimensional responses limited the comprehensive understanding of dropout factors. Pearson correlation analysis evaluated response ambiguity, using MS-Excel for descriptive analysis, t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson correlations. Measures like mean, median, standard deviation, sample variance, standard error, kurtosis, skewness, maximum, and minimum were computed. These provided insights into data distribution and frequencies. T-tests and ANOVA evaluated associations among datasets, enabling further exploration. Overall, the analysis aimed to uncover factors contributing to dropout rates in higher education.

Table 7: Statistical Tests Conducted in Data Analysis

Statistical Test	Purpose	Variables Compared	Significance Level	Results
Descriptive Statistics	To summarize and describe the data	Demographic information, social and personal issues, participation, career development, organizational strategy	-	Mean, median, standard deviation, etc.
Pearson Correlation	To measure the relationship between two continuous variables	Dropout rate and socio-economic background	$p < 0.05$	$r = -0.27$, $p = 0.012*$
t-test	To compare means between two groups	Female students vs. male students	$p < 0.01$	$t(100) = -2.14$, $p = 0.035*$
ANOVA	To compare means between multiple groups	Arts, commerce, and science students	$p < 0.05$	$F(2, 97) = 3.72$, $p = 0.026*$

Note: * indicates statistical significance

The statistical tests cover various components such as demographic information, social and personal issues, participation, career development, and organizational strategy. These tests include descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, t-test, and ANOVA test.

Result

The questionnaire received responses from students, administration, and faculty members of the college, categorized by gender. This section focuses on analyzing the collected data through the lens of gender and demographics. Initially, a descriptive analysis was conducted to obtain conclusive insights. To ensure accuracy, transparency, and confidence in the findings, the dropout rates for both males and females were separately examined and before being compared.

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Various statistical methods such as t-test, Pearson correlation, ANOVA test, and descriptive statistics were employed to examine the data. These diverse statistical approaches were utilized to verify the gathered data. Finally, to achieve reliable results, the dropout information for students in different demographic areas was collected and analyzed using various statistical techniques.

Gender-wise dropout

Table 8 presents the standard deviation values for "Male" and "Male Dropout" dimensions, indicating data dispersion. Sample variance assesses variability in the samples, aligning with the research findings. The variance is higher for the "Male" data, indicating greater dispersion. Kurtosis and skewness values suggest a non-normal distribution. Moving to Table 9, the P-values for male data significantly influence the evaluated data, whereas for female data, the impact is not noticeable. The F-values support the study hypothesis for both genders. Observations across Tables 8 and 9 show no significant difference in means. Conducting a standard deviation analysis is for "Female" and "Female Dropout" dimensions, yields similar findings. Kurtosis values align with the aggregated data, while skewness values suggest a normal distribution. P-values for female data show no significant impact. The observations across Tables 8 and 9 further support the study hypothesis. Table 9 provides information about the total male and female dropouts spanning from 2018–19 to 2020–21. All dimensions show a strong correlation between the total male and female dimensions and total dropout. Notable, there is a significant linear correlation between male and female dropouts. The null hypothesis test is rejected for the male dropout row in Table 9.

Table 8: Analyses of the dropout rates for male and female students in the academic year 2018–19

| Descriptive Description	Male	Male Dropout	Male Dropout%	Female	Female Dropout	Female Dropout%
Mean	498.40	27.80	5.83	481.20	35.80	8.21
Standard Error	183.32	10.56	0.38	216.30	18.96	2.38
Median	570.00	26.00	5.91	254.00	8.00	7.53
Standard Deviation	409.92	23.61	0.84	483.67	42.40	5.32
Sample Variance	168033.30	557.20	0.71	233939.20	1797.70	28.33
Kurtosis	-2.71	-2.43	1.75	-3.08	-3.12	1.87
Skewness	-0.12	0.22	-0.56	0.46	0.62	1.07
Range	898.00	53.00	2.34	1016.00	86.00	14.31
Minimum	66.00	4.00	4.56	6.00	1.00	2.36
Maximum	964.00	57.00	6.90	1022.00	87.00	16.67
Confidence Level (95.0%)	508.98	29.31	1.04	600.56	52.65	6.61

Table 9: Male and female student dropout rates from the academic years of 2018–19 to 2020–21: ANOVA and T-test

	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Pearson Correlation
		553660.9 0	1.0	553660.9 0				
2018-19	Male Dropout	0	0	0	6.57 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	0.99**
		495952.9 0	1.0	495952.9 0	4.21**			
	Female Dropout	0	0	0	*	0.07 *ns*	5.32	0.98**
		604176.4 0	1.0	604176.4 0				
2019-20	Male Dropout	0	0	0	8.21 *ns*	0.02*	5.32	0.87**
		505350.4 0	1.0	505350.4 0	3.93**			
	Female Dropout	0	0	0	*	0.08 *ns*	5.32	0.99**
		680688.1 0	1.0	680688.1 0				
2020-21	Male Dropout	0	0	0	7.85 *ns*	0.02*	5.32	0.90**
		540097.6 0	1.0	540097.6 0	4.32**			
	Female Dropout	0	0	0	*	0.07 *ns*	5.32	0.99**

Note: * = significant at $p < 0.05$, ** = significant at $r>0.00$, ns = not significant, *** = significant at 'F<F crit' for ANOVA and t-test analysis. * = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(c)

(d)
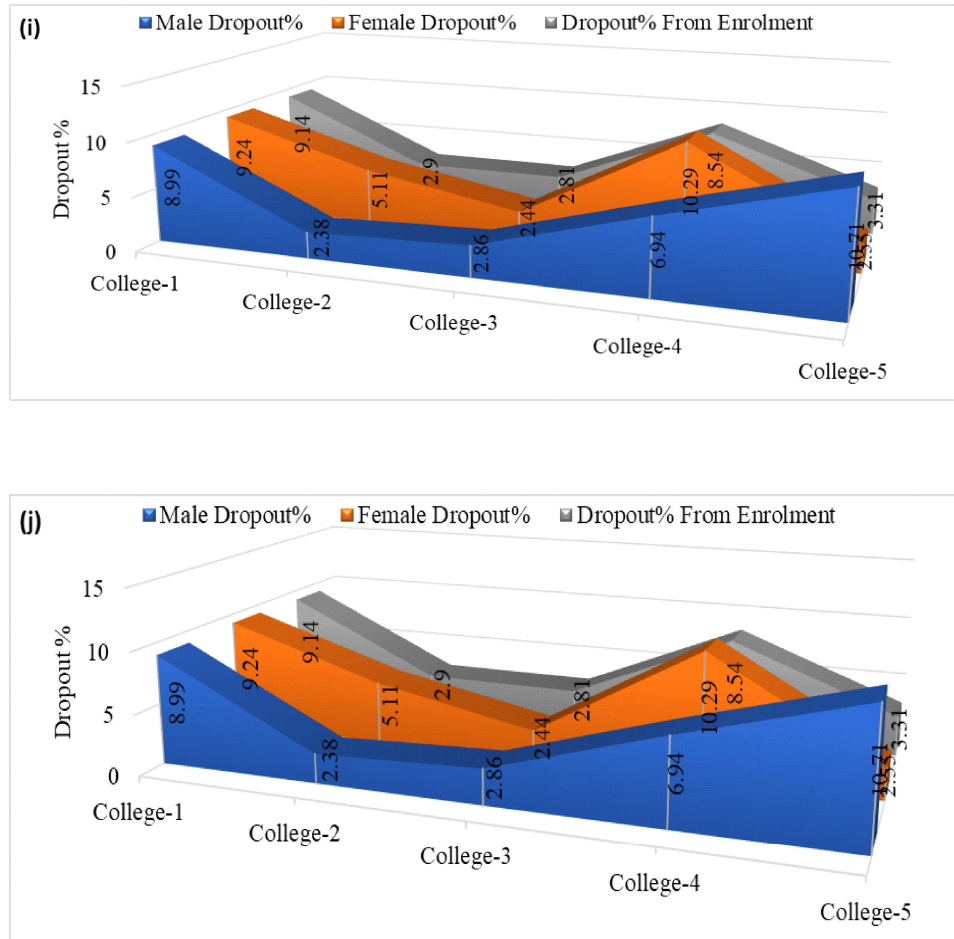

(e)

(f)

(g)

(h)

(i)

(j)
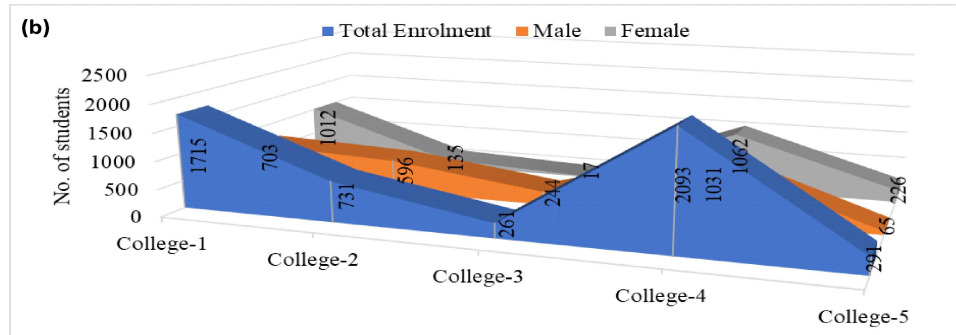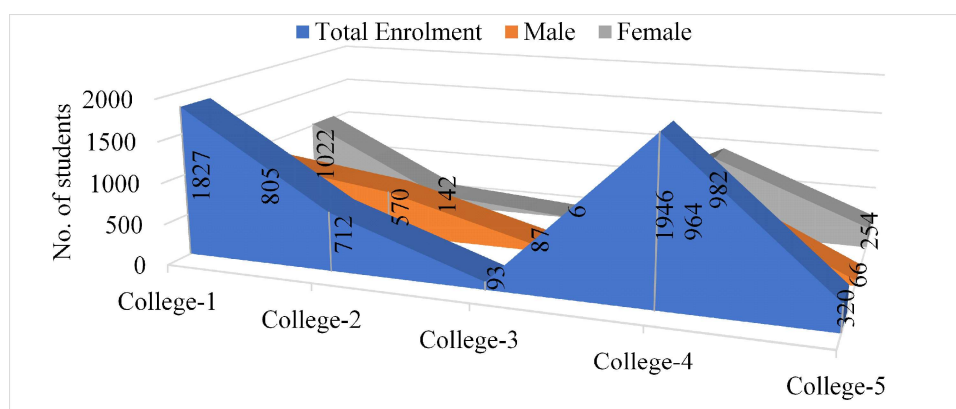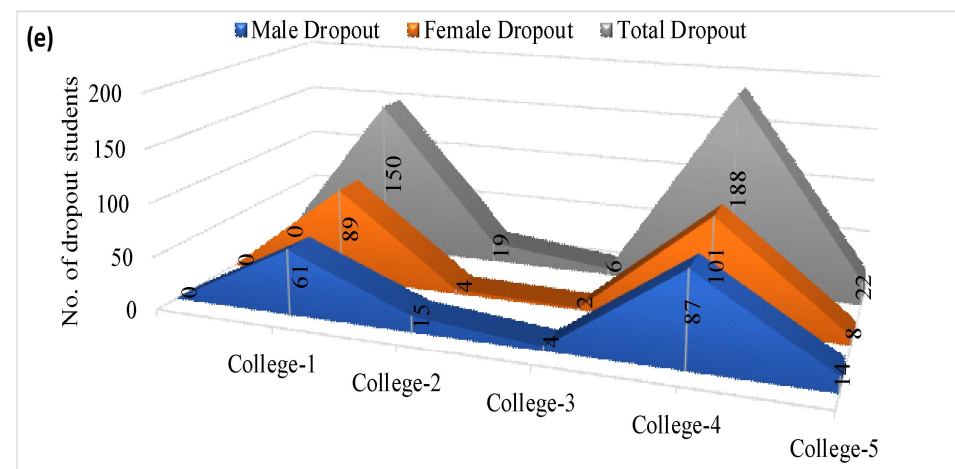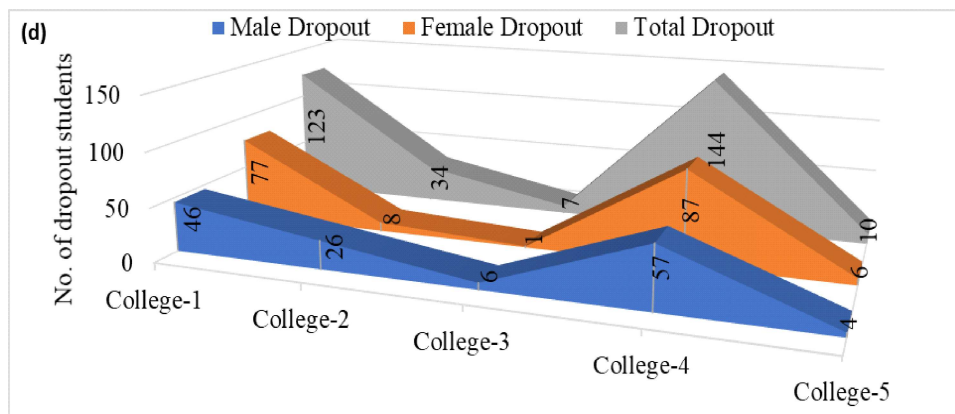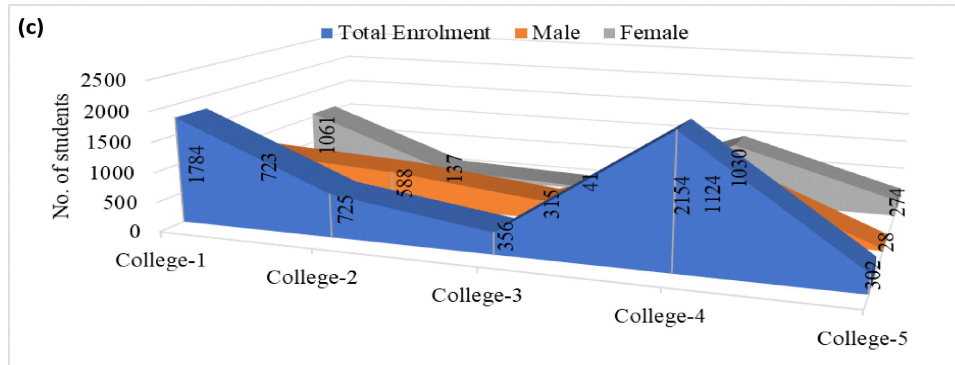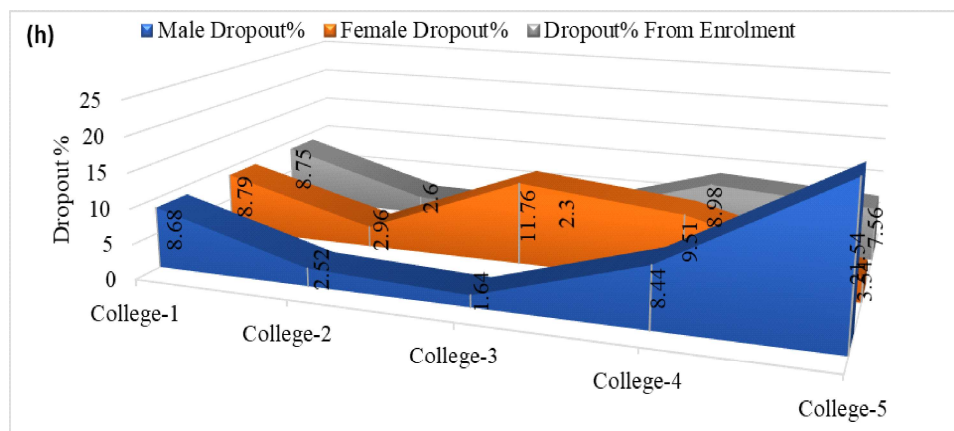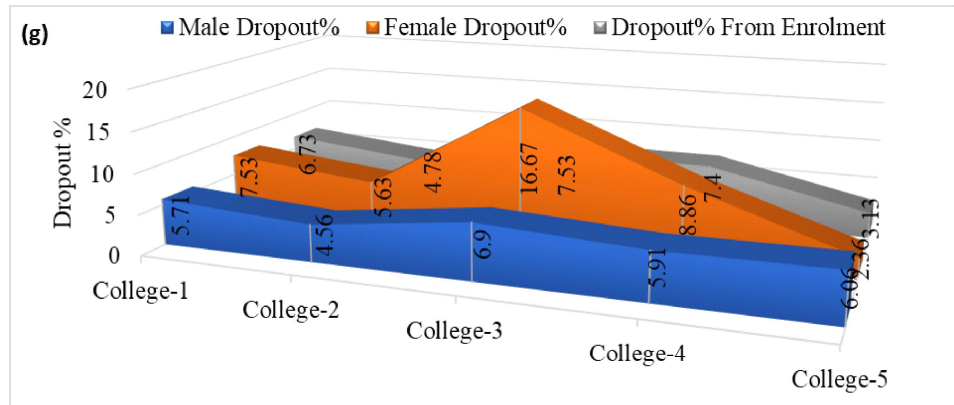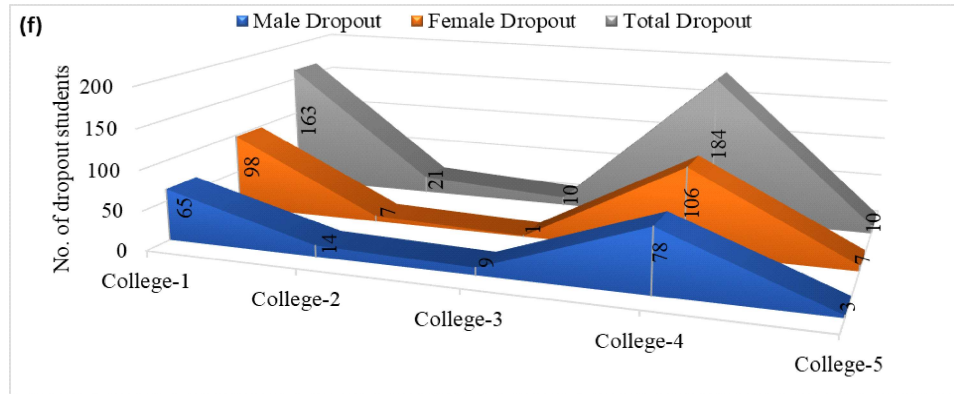
Figure 1: Examination of the statistics for the years 2018–19, 2019–20, and 2020–21 by gender. Figs. 1(a), (b), and (c) show the overall enrollment as well as the gender enrollments for the academic years 2018–19, 2019–20, and 2020–21, respectively. Figs. 1(d), (e), and (g), for the academic years 2018–19, 2019–20, and 2020–21, respectively, indicate the gender breakdown and the overall dropout rate. The percentages of male, female, and overall dropouts for the academic years 2018–19, 2019–20, and 2020–21 are shown in Figs. 1(h), (i) and (j), respectively.

Figs. 1(a), (d), and (g) present total enrollment, dropout, and dropout rates for 2018–19. Colleges 1 and 4 have high enrollment, but also high dropout rates, while Colleges 3 and 5 have lower rates. Figs. 1(b), (e), and (h) show data for 2019–20, and Figs. 1(c), (f), and (i) for 2020–21. Female enrollment has surpassed male enrollment, primarily due to awareness programmes. Government arts, commerce, and science colleges attract more female students. Fewer females enroll in polytechnics and engineering. Male and female enrollment in private colleges is similar, suggesting declining female participation in technical fields. Dental colleges have more females. Figure 1(b) shows dropout rates for 2018–19. Females exhibit higher dropout rates due to poverty, tribal regions, early marriage, expensive private college tuition, parental indifference, discouragement, and societal norms. In contrast, male dropout rates in private institutions exceed female rates, driven by higher costs. Meanwhile, male and female dropout rates remain similar in private institutions due to high tuition fees. Moving to Figure 1(c), total dropout rates are displayed, aligning with the trends in Figs. 1(a) and 1(b). Government polytechnic and engineering institutions have lower dropout rates, while private institutions have higher rates, especially in subjects with limited job opportunities. Further, specific colleges are highlighted: College-1 has similar overall enrollment, with higher female enrollment. In contrast, College-2 has more male students. College-3 shows varied enrollment patterns, with more males. Lastly, College-4 has a balanced enrollment of male and female students.
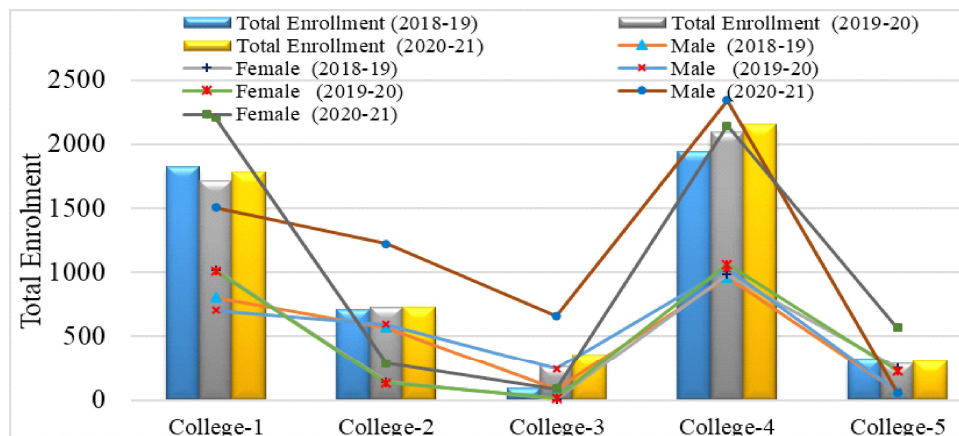

Figure 2: Comparative analysis of total student enrollment and gender-based enrollment from the years 2018-2019 to 2020-21

College-5 is a dental college where a significant enrollment disparity between males and females exist, with a higher number of female students. Figure 2 compares

male, female, and overall enrollment across the five colleges from 2018–19 to 2020–21, offering insights into enrollment trends and gender distribution. Figure 3 displays college dropouts for the same period. In College-1, dropout rates are similar for both males and females. College-2 and College-3 show equal dropout rates, proportional to overall enrollment, with a higher male enrollment. College-4 has similar dropout rates for males and females, but higher than other government institutions due to higher tuition fees. College-5 exhibits high female enrollment and dropout rates. These figures provide an overview of gender enrollment and dropout percentages within the college landscape.
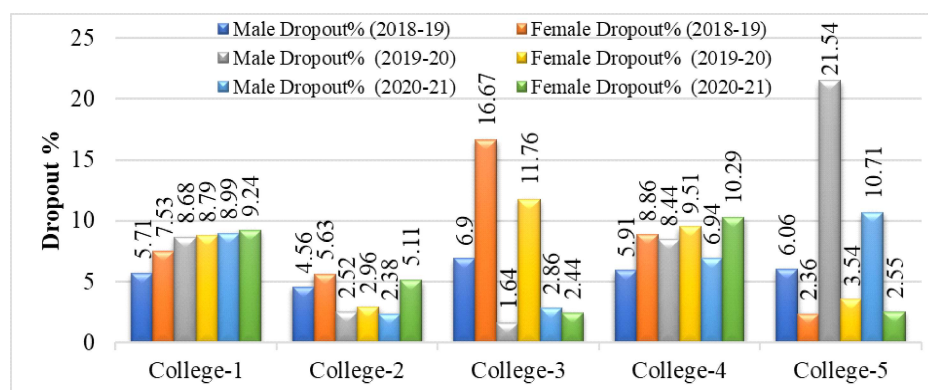

Figure 3: Male and female dropout rate from the years 2018-19 to 2020-21

Demographic-wise dropout

Table 10 presents the analysis of demographic dimensions for the year 2018-19, including "Male," "Male Dropout%," "Female," and "Female Dropout%." The standard deviation indicates data dispersion, revealing a strong association between the standard deviations of urban male and male dropout data. Specifically, the variance for urban males is 90880.80, whereas for male dropouts, it is 0.37, indicating scattered data points. The Kurtosis and skewness values confirm normal distribution.

Similarly, there is a strong association between the standard deviations of urban females and female dropout data. The variance for urban females is 42613.50, while for female dropouts, it is 11.94, indicating a higher level of data scattering. The Kurtosis and skewness values suggest normal distribution. In rural areas, the variance for males is 44391.70, and for male dropouts, it increases to 14.30, indicating higher data scattering. The Kurtosis and skewness values further affirm normal distribution. The same patterns also apply to females.

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Table 11 shows the P-values for urban male and female dropouts in 2018-19, validating the null hypothesis. The F-value indicates no significant variance alignment, indicating that the data observations are not interrelated. P-values for rural male and female dropouts are 0.09 and 0.15 respectively, validating the alternative hypothesis. The F-value suggests partial variance alignment, and the data observations exhibit partial interrelatedness.

Similar patterns emerge in 2019-20 and 2020-21. The Pearson correlation coefficients reveal weak or lack of positive correlation between urban males and females, and their dropout variables. Likewise, rural males and females exhibit weak or lack of positive correlation, except for 2019-20, where a strong correlation is observed.

The analysis of demographic dimensions and statistical tests reveals patterns of dispersion, variance, distribution, and correlation between genders and dropout rates within both urban and rural areas. The findings indicate interrelatedness in some cases and independence in others, providing valuable into the dynamics of dropout trends.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics of demographic-wise student's dropout% of year 2018-19

	M	MD%	F	FD%	M	MD%	F	FD%
	Urban		Urban		Rural		Rural	
Mean	305.60	5.35	241.00	4.29	192.80	8.23	240.20	29.12
Standard Error	134.82	0.27	92.32	1.55	94.22	1.69	131.41	17.97
Median	278.00	5.36	245.00	4.61	166.00	9.52	75.00	9.88
Standard Deviation	301.46	0.61	206.43	3.45	210.69	3.78	293.84	40.18
Sample Variance	90880.80	0.37	42613.50	11.94	44391.70	14.30	86340.70	1614.33
Kurtosis	1.98	-0.76	-2.55	-2.41	1.18	-0.59	-2.87	4.43
Skewness	1.37	-0.33	-0.02	-0.25	1.17	-0.51	0.64	2.09
Range	742.00	1.55	471.00	7.77	517.00	9.73	609.00	96.00
Minimum	56.00	4.51	5.00	0.00	10.00	2.92	1.00	4.00
Maximum	798.00	6.06	476.00	7.77	527.00	12.65	610.00	100.00
Confidence Level (95.0%)	374.32	0.75	256.32	4.29	261.61	4.70	364.85	49.89

Table 11. ANOVA and t-test analysis of category-wise student's dropout% from the year 2018-19 to 2020-21

|		Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Pearson Correlation
2018-19	Urban	Male Dropout	249118.87	1.00	249118.87	6.77 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	-0.43 *ns*
		Female Dropout	140074.33	1.00	140074.33	6.57 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	0.46**
	Rural	Male Dropout	85163.37	1.00	85163.37	3.84***	0.09 *ns*	5.32	-0.51 *ns*
		Female Dropout	111384.81	1.00	111384.81	2.53***	0.15 *ns*	5.32	-0.50 *ns*
2019-20	Urban	Male Dropout	249118.87	1.00	249118.87	6.77 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	-0.43 *ns*
		Female Dropout	120231.23	1.00	120231.23	6.49 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	-0.34 *ns*
	Rural	Male Dropout	95316.17	1.00	95316.17	9.11 *ns*	0.02*	5.32	0.10**
		Female Dropout	165199.61	1.00	165199.61	3.21***	0.11 *ns*	5.32	0.80**
2020-21	Urban	Male Dropout	205962.68	1.00	205962.68	7.50 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	-0.52 *ns*
		Female Dropout	151863.72	1.00	151863.72	6.03 *ns*	0.04*	5.32	0.37**
	Rural	Male Dropout	162455.42	1.00	162455.42	6.78 *ns*	0.03*	5.32	0.01**
		Female Dropout	151285.08	1.00	151285.08	2.53***	0.15 *ns*	5.32	-0.05 *ns*

Note: * = significant at $p < 0.05$, ** = significant at $r > 0.00$, ns = not significant, *** = significant at 'F<F crit' for ANOVA and t-test analysis. * = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 4 displays the division of students into rural and urban areas, categorized by gender. Dropout percentages of male and female students from both rural and urban areas are calculated. The x-axis represents the five colleges, while the y-axes show the enrollment of male and female students and the dropout rates of urban and rural students. The column chart illustrates the total enrollment of urban and rural students, along with the enrollment of male and female students. The line chart presents the dropout percentages of urban and rural males and females. Stacked charts visualize the dropout percentages of male and female students from rural and urban areas.

In the year 2018-19, College-3 had the highest dropout rate among female students, reaching 16.67% in the overall student dropout category. Similarly, Colleges-2 and -4 had the highest dropout rates for female students in urban areas, at 7.46% and 7.77% respectively. In rural areas, the highest dropout percentages for female students were observed in Colleges-1, -2, -3, and -5, at 9.51%, 4.00%, 100.00%, and 22.22% respectively. College-4 had the highest dropout rate among male students at 12.65%. This represented the highest dropout rate among rural and urban students in the 2018-19 college year.

In the year 2019-20, College-5 recorded the highest dropout rate of 21.54%for female students in the overall student dropout category. Similarly, Colleges-3 and -5 had the highest dropout rates for female and male students in urban areas reaching 14.14% and 26.4% respectively. Additionally, the highest dropout percentages for students in rural areas were observed in Colleges -1, -2, -4, and -5, at 12.04% (male), 6.9% (female), 13.9% (male), and 15.00% (male) respectively. Finally, College-4 had the lowest student dropout percentage among all colleges in the rural area.

In the year 2020-21, College-5 had the highest male student dropout rate of 10.71% in the overall student dropout category. Similarly, College-1 in urban areas had the highest dropout rates for male and female students at 12.11% and 12.41% respectively. Moreover, Colleges-4 and -5 had the highest dropout percentages for males and females in rural areas, while College-2 had the lowest dropout percentage among males and females, as compared to other colleges. The college-level analysis revealed that female students in rural areas had a higher dropout rate than male students.
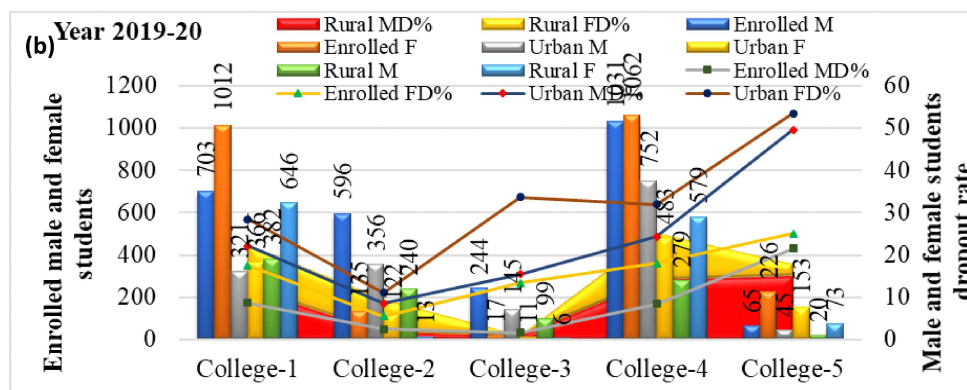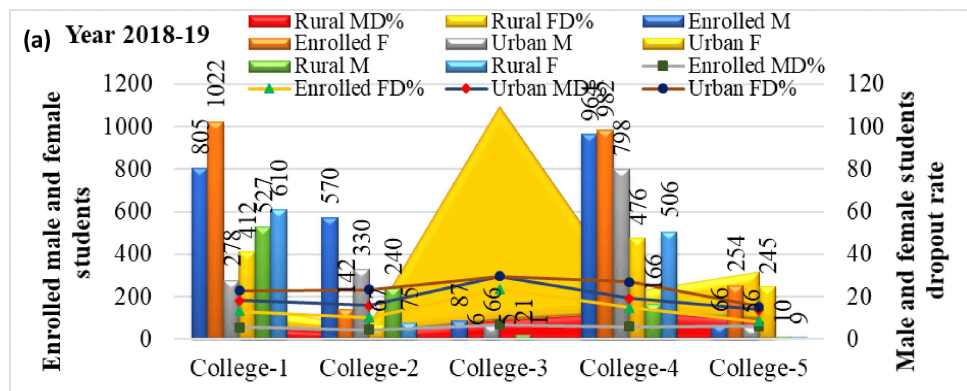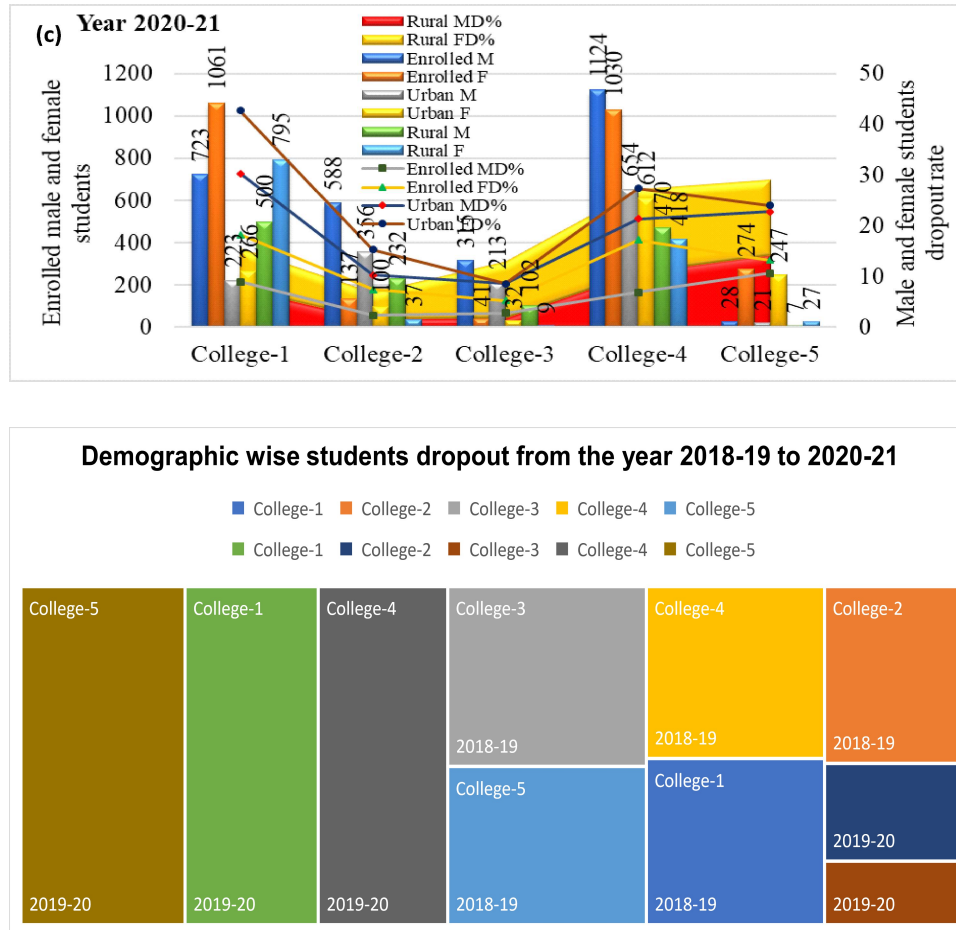
Figure 4: (a) Total enrolled students and its corresponding dropout urban and rural students in year 2018-19 (b) Total enrolled students and its corresponding dropout urban and rural students in year 2019-20 (c) Total enrolled students and its corresponding dropout urban and rural students in year 2020-21 (d) Treemap chart of demographic-wise student's dropout from the years 2018-19 to 2020-21

Familiarity with Adult Education

In adult education, recognizing the unique characteristics and needs of adult learners is crucial. Understanding the principles of adult learning theory and applying them to analyze higher education dropouts through the lens of gender and

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demographics can provide insights into factors like learner autonomy and self-directed learning. Adult education emphasizes lifelong learning and duly acknowledges the challenges faced by adult learners, such as work and family responsibilities. The analysis of dropout rates concerning gender and demographics aligns with the quantitative research approach in adult education. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of challenges and disparities among adult learners. Incorporating the field of adult education into the analysis provides a contextualized perspective and contributes to the formulation of focused interventions aimed at addressing dropout rates.

Delimitations

The data collection occurred within a specific period between August and September 2022. The selected colleges were already aware of the study's objectives, potentially introducing bias into the findings. The study focused on disciplines such as arts, commerce, sciences, medicine, engineering, and polytechnic; however, this selection might not fully represent all fields of study. Although the three-year data collection aimed for a robust sample size, there remains the possibility of limitations. While verbal exchanges captured personal challenges and administrative perspectives, it is important to note that self-reported data has inherent limitations. Response rates varied among colleges, thus affecting the extent to which findings can be generalized. Categorization based on gender and demographics, although providing valuable insights, oversimplifies the complex individual experiences that contribute to dropout rates. Future research should address these limitations and include a broader range of faculties and institutions.

Results and Conclusions

Extensive research publications reveal that technological advancements, particularly the widespread use of computers and electronic devices, have reshaped society and significantly impacted mental health. This has resulted in a rise in mental disorders and affected academic performance, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered a shift to online education. Multiple factors contribute to the surge in education dropouts, including conservative beliefs, high tuition costs, early marriage, family conflicts, financial constraints, health issues, and employment. To investigate these causes, a questionnaire was distributed among professors, students, and colleges, supplemented by personal interviews and analysis of official data.

The compiled information showed a significant correlation with the questionnaire responses. The analysis uncovered gender and demographic disparities, indicating that rural girls experience higher dropout rates due to factors such as poverty, stereotypical thinking, early marriage, and gender inequality. Moreover, rural areas exhibited higher dropout rates due to economic and social backwardness. Factors such as the social environment, poverty, family illiteracy, social inequality, and subject complexity were identified as contributors to dropout rates.

Private colleges enrolled more students from metropolitan areas, whereas government colleges had a higher representation of rural students, driven by academic fees and access to job-oriented courses. These findings highlight the complex interplay of factors that influence higher education dropouts, emphasizing the significance of gender and demographic disparities. Understanding these factors is crucial in developing targeted interventions aimed at addressing dropout rates and enhancing educational outcomes for all students.

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Psychological, Educational, Home Environmental and Economic Problems of First Generation Learners in Higher Education: A Study

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Abstract

The present study analyzes the challenges faced by the First Generation Learners (FGLs) in higher education. The individuals whose parents have not attended an educational institution are called First Generation Learners (FGLs). Learners whose siblings have received education, but their parents have not, are still considered First Generation Learners. This study tries to address a research gap by investigating the issues encountered by FGLs pursuing higher education, specially within the context of gender (male and female) and academic streams (arts and science). The study area was Darrang district (Assam). Descriptive survey method was adopted in the study and the sample consisted of 150 FGLs. The researchers have used primary data to meet the objectives of the study. The problems have been categorized into four dimensions: psychological, educational, home environmental and economic challenges. It was found that the problems of the home environment are more severe, followed by psychological, economic and educational challenges. The difficulties faced by the arts students were more than those faced by science students across all dimensions. Further, female students faced more hurdles as compared to their male counterparts. The approach to addressing these problems, as emphasized and elaborated by the National Education Policy 2020 as well as some major studies carried out on the subject have also been underlined. These insights could serve as a blueprint for Institutional Action Plan to address the problems highlighted in this study.

Keywords: *First-Generation Learners (FGLs), higher education, gender, streams.*

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Introduction

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela, 2006). Both the dimensions of 'Equality' and 'Inclusivity' are important in an education system. Education helps people improve their socio-economic conditions. The GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) for Indian higher education was 27.1% in the year of 2019-20 academic year, according to the AISHE report. However, certain sections have been overlooked until now, which may be a cause for the less GER in higher education. These mainly include categories like SC, ST, OBC, minorities, marginalized groups, and more. The FGLs, who in most cases, come from these segments of the population, face significant challenges in their lives. Unfortunately, the challenges faced by the FGLs are largely ignored. Learners whose parents or guardians have not attended an educational institution are called the FGLs. This definition also holds true for higher education. An FGL in HE is someone whose parents/guardians have not attended college making them the first in their family to pursue a bachelor's degree in any college or university. Challenges such as demotivation, poverty, lack of understanding within family, and other problems are commonly faced by FGLs.

Review of Literature

Studies found that there are relationships between the problems faced by FGLs with respect to gender and the locality of high school students in the Palani district of Tamil Nadu. FGLs from nuclear and joint families exhibit similar psychological personal and social problems. However, there is a difference in the dimension of economic problems (Kiran, 2017).

The first-generation learners of primary school in Delhi face more problems pertaining to economic status, parental involvement, availability of study facilities at home, utilization of reading room facilities in school, problems regarding participation in co-curricular activities, etc. also receiving less encouragement to engage compare to their non-first-generation counterparts (Lal, 2017).

FGLs enrolled in research universities have had to face many challenges. When compared to non-first-generation learners, FGLs face many obstacles in academic achievements due to job and family responsibilities, weak English, language skills, deficient mathematical and logical aptitude, and inadequate study skills. Balancing all such responsibilities can lead to feeling of depression, sadness, and frustration. Studies have found that FGLs who study in large research universities, have experienced several academic obstacles (Stebleton & Krista, 2017).

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Studies were also conducted regarding the educational problems of FGLs. Comparative studies between the problems of FGLs and Non-FGLs, revealed that First-generation learners do not get all kinds of educational facilities and support at home. It was found that FGLs and Non-FGLs have the same level of achievement motivation. The teachers expect parental involvement as well for providing children with an optimal study environment at home (Antil, 2021).

Studies have also found that the expectation of First-Generation women learners in urban areas are slightly higher than their counterparts in rural areas. The urban and rural backgrounds make a definite difference among the first-generation woman learners. It may be due to societal exposure, awareness and availability of educational loans, etc. Women learners from rural areas tend to be less aware of all the possibilities and societal stigmatization due to factors like poor motivation, guidance and financial assistance from their families.

The psychological needs of first generation women learners at the Under Graduate (UG) level is lower than Those at the Post-Graduate (PG) level. This may be because of the difference in maturity levels. Psychologically, women learners at the PG level expect a lot of motivational support from their teachers. The women FGLs from rural areas faced more problems in the educational and psychological dimensions than the learners from urban areas. In rural areas, generally, women learners are not allowed to pursue education at distant locations and they do not find any kind of guidance from others (Prabha, 2020).

In an earlier study, an investigator compared the academic achievements between FGLs and Non-FGLs at the school level. Academic achievement of non-FGLs turned out to be better than the FGLs in both economically advantaged and the disadvantaged sections of the population. The Gross Wastage rate for male and female FGLs was higher than that for non-FGLs among economically better off and poorer sections.

The parents of the FGLs cannot guide their children well at home regarding studies as they themselves have not been educated. They are not aware of the education of their children and they do not tend to encourage them for the same. Such children are often compelled to contribute to the family's income because of their poor economic conditions. The also encounter difficulties in finding necessary educational materials in time. The FGL generation children are involved in both household and non-domestic works, further impacting their ability to focus on their studies. As a result, their home environment is not suitable for studying, and they often have responsibilities to look after their younger siblings as well (Borbora, 1997).

Based on a nationwide student satisfaction survey, Bhushan's study shows that 44 percent of students are first generation learners. Infact, the 71st National Sample in 2014, estimates show that 46% students in higher education are first generation learners (Bhushan, 2020:1). He provides a stunning picture: Mani Madhavan conducted a survey in his college [in Govt. Arts College, Namakal, Tamil Nadu] and informed the following features of first generation learners:

1. The first-generation students are from BPL category.
2. Don't have proper guidance.
3. The problem of expressing ideas.
4. Hesitate to ask questions.
5. Most of them don't have appropriate parental care.
6. Poor basic knowledge.
7. Poor self-image.
8. Lack of hygiene practices.
9. Non-availability of nutritious food.
10. Don't have a focus on their plans.
11. Poor communication skills in English as well as in the local language.
12. Lack of awareness about the available options.
13. Poor self-discipline.
14. Not sincere in studies.
15. Good at their heart.
16. Want to grow in life but not interested in taking initiatives.
17. Fear of failure and unwillingness to take challenges.
18. Not willing to travel.
19. Not ready to work in faraway places (Bhushan, 2020: 11).

Statement of the Problem

FGLs face many difficulties and hurdles in their educational and personal life. However, not much investigation and analysis of such dimensions have been done especially in Assam.

The present study attempts to find out the problems and hurdles faced by the FGLs in the field of higher education and seeks to underline the institutional interventions that could effectively address those hurdles and ensure a smooth academic journey of the FGLs just like the non-FGLs. It draws from other field level studies relating to these groups, and the institutional interventions pointed out, besides, of course, drawing from the vision of NEP, 2020.

Delimitations of the Problem

- The study is limited to only Darrang district of Assam.
- It is limited to only 2 colleges of Darrang district, viz., Sipajhar college and Mangaldai college.
- This study is limited to only govt colleges at district and lower levels, affiliated to Gauhati University.
- It is limited only to the arts and science streams.
- This study is limited only to the FGLs of higher education.
- Higher education refers to collegiate education only (Under-Graduate level).

Need and Significance of the Study

The difficulties and vulnerabilities of First Generation Learners demand an in-depth study. It is very important to find out the root cause of their difficulties, so that we are able to create awareness about the problems and difficulties of FGLs among the educated people, parents, teachers and the society. This awareness will help to mitigate the hurdles which FGLs have been facing. NEP 2020 highlights the importance of full equity, inclusion and equality in higher education. Hence, this study is instrumental in helping the development of higher education in India.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To study the psychological, educational, home environmental and economic problems of FGLs in higher education studying in the colleges of Darrang district.
2. To study the problems of male and female FGLs in higher education.
3. To study the problems of FGLs in higher education belonging to arts and science stream.
4. To draw attention to the institutional interventions to tackle the hurdles and difficulties faced by the FGLs and ensure their smooth academic journey with learning outcomes.

Method

Descriptive survey method was used in the present study.

Population

FGLs of higher education studying in the Provincialized colleges in district and lower levels, like Sipajhar and Mangaldai area (Sipajhar college and Mangaldai college) located at Darrang District of Assam, were considered as the population of the study.

Sample

150 FGLs have been taken as sample for the present study. Random sampling technique has been used at the time of data collection.

Tool for the Data Collection

A self-prepared closed-ended questionnaire was used on the problems of FGLs.

Standardization of Tool

The questionnaire was prepared related to the problems of the FGLs. Suggestions and opinions of experts have been taken to validate the questionnaire.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

Table 1. Different Problems of FGLs

Dimensions of Problems	Count	Percentage
Psychological	69	46%
Educational	56	37.33%
Home environmental	74	49.33%
Economic	60	40%

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Source: Primary data generated through the questionnaire.

From Table 1, it is evident that out of 150 FGLs, 69(46%) have psychological problems, and 56 (37.33%) have educational problems. While 74 (49.33%) have problems regarding their home environment, 60(40%) have economic problems. It

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is clear from the observation that psychological problems and the problems of home environment were, higher as compared to the other problems.

Table 2. The Problems of Male and Female FGLs

Dimensions of Problems	Male		Female	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Psychological	32	46.38%	37	53.62%
Educational	27	48.21%	29	51.79%
Home environmental	35	47.30%	39	52.70%
Economic	29	48.33%	31	51.67%

Source: Primary data generated through the questionnaire.

From Table 2, it is evident that in all the dimensions of the problems, the problems of females were more than that of the problems of males. Again, in case of females, the psychological problems were more, followed by home environmental problems, educational and economic problems. In case of male students, educational and economic problems were more severe as compared to psychological and home environment problems which seemed to stifle females more severely in attending colleges.

Table 3. The Problems of FGLs Pursuing Arts and Science Streams

Dimensions of Problems	Arts		Science	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Psychological	35	38.89%	21	35%
Educational	30	33.33%	16	26.67%
Home environment	38	42.22%	22	36.67%
Economic	47	52.22%	28	46.67%

Source: Primary data generated through the questionnaire.

From Table 3, it was found that, out of 150 FGLs, students belonging to the Arts stream were 90 and science stream students were 60. 35 (38.89%) out of 90 arts FGLs and 21(35%) out of 60 science FGLs have psychological problems. It is, perhaps, not surprising that FGLs in the Arts courses face more problems than those pursuing Science streams. Poverty seems to be a major deterrent for pursuing higher education, both in Arts and Science streams as compared to other problems, accounting for 52.22% in Arts and 46.67% in Science streams.

Suggestions for future study

Some of the suggestions for undertaking future research can be considered:

- The present study was conducted with the help of students of Darrang district. It can be replicated in other regions of Assam or India as well.
- The present study has focused on college students only. Similar study may be conducted at the school level also.
- The present study may be further extended over the limited sample size of 150 FGLs. To make more valid generalizations, it can be replicated on a large sample.

Institutional Plans to Address Problems of FGL: (i) Pioneer Advocacy Studies

The problems faced by the FGLs and the institutional efforts and strategies needed to address them have also been underlined by a major study, that has taken up higher education institutions located in six states including Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. It noted that "the other set of vulnerabilities faced by students from socially excluded groups pertains to their pre-college academic credentials. In comparison to the non-SC/ST/OBC students, SC and ST students are more likely to be the first in their family or first generation learners pursuing higher education. They often hail from government schools with regional language as the medium of instruction and are academically under-prepared for college course work" (Nidhi and Malish, 2018: 13). They study also asserts that "the existing literature establishes that institutional strategies such as college orientation, participation in extracurricular activities and remedial programmes play an important role in successfully integrating the non-traditional and first-generation students into the social and academic mainstream of the institutions" (Nidhi and Malish, 2018: 87).

Based on his nationwide study, Prof. Bhushan also suggests similar plans in respect of FGLs: "There is an urgent need to identify the first generation learners

and to incorporate the issues and challenges they face into institutional goals and missions. Their varying problems of learning difficulty, language deficiency, low motivation, resource deficits, etc. should be explicitly pointed out along with the strategies of the institution to address them" (Bhushan, 2020: 96). With respect to language: "Students demanded that for every institution where language is a barrier for students, there should be a well-equipped language lab. Preparatory language classes should be held and Teachers should engage with the students to promote English proficiency". "Emotional support: It was found that a majority of the students were shy, and experiencing complexity and a fear of talking to the teachers. It was suggested that teachers should establish closer relationship with students, understand them better and be empathetic" (Bhushan, 2020).

Institutional Plans to Address Problems of FGL: (ii) The NEP Vision

The National Education Policy 2020 adopts a different nomenclature, viz., Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), which also includes the FGLs, although not explicitly named as such, as no FGL learner falls outside the scope of SEDGs. Most of the groups covered under the SEDGs as outlined by NEP, comprise a large number of the FGLs . These include Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, minorities, as well as students from geographically specific identities such as villages, small towns, and aspirational districts, along with low-income households in both rural and urban areas (MHRD, 2020: 26).

The NEP underlined that "women cut across all underrepresented groups, making up about half of all SEDGs. Unfortunately, the exclusion and inequity that SEDGs face is only amplified for the women within these SEDGs." Therefore, it suggests that the "policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls within these SEDGs" (MHRD, 2020).

The plans at the institutional levels to mitigate the problems faced by FGLs emphasized by the NEP, include the following among others: Developing bridge courses for students that come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds; Providing socio-emotional and academic support and mentoring for all such students through suitable counselling and mentoring programmes, ensuring the sensitization of faculty, counsellors, and students to gender-identity issues and their inclusion in all aspects of the HEI, including curricula; Strictly enforcing non-discrimination and anti-harassment regulations; and Developing Institutional Development Plans that contain specific plans for action on increasing participation from SEDGs, including but not limited to the above measures (MHRD, 2020: 42).

Conclusions

Our study clearly established that FGLs are not free from encountering problems in the various dimensions like psychological, educational, economic and home environmental. Many previous studies, as mentioned above, alongwith and Antil (2021) and NEP 2020, bring to our attention the institutional efforts needed to address their problems and ensure their academic engagement and learning outcomes. Though FGLs have many weaknesses, previous studies have identified strengths in them, like enthusiasm, self-control, curiosity, optimism, gratitude, etc. (Havlik, 2020). Hence, there is a strong need for the college authorities to devise an institutional plan to caters to the emotional and academic support for the FGLs and their parents, ensuring a fulfilling academic journey for the FGLs.

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Continuous Learning is a Way to Empowering Teachers and Leaders

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to raise awareness about the importance of continuous learning, especially for the teaching community and leaders. Before Covid-19, many members of the teaching community didn't understand the importance of continuous and technology-based learning. However, the Covid-19 period compelled, every teacher to embrace technology-based learning tools such as Google Meet, Zoom, MS Teams, Google Forms, etc. This paper attempts to describe the facility and procedure for creation of the autocrat certificate method [the term autocrat is used in google to imply generating certificates automatically], and the creation of automatic result analysis. The proposed method aims to save faculty time, and reduce manual error. In the existing approach, faculty members write hundreds of certificates by hand and manually perform result analysis using Excel spread sheets, and most of the time errors occur, taking up more time for doing the clerical work. The proposed autocrat and flubaroo techniques [the term flubaroo is used in google to imply generating result analysis] can be used to generate the certificate and micro result analysis with single click. The output is error free and offers higher clarity, compared to the existing methodology.

Keywords_: Autocrat certificate generation, flubaroo based micro analysis, mind map, google form._

Introduction

Lifelong learning is one of the prime keys for the teaching community and academic leaders. Learning takes place daily in various forms with technology and

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policies continually advancing. Thus, it becomes the prime responsibility of everyone to stay updated with current trends. If we fail to stay updated, we will quickly become outdated, and as the saying goes "update or become outdated". Significant changes took place during the Covid-19 period. Prior to the pandemic, faculty members were habituated to the conventional teaching method that is the chalk and board methodology. No one in the faculty had utilized an online platform before to conduct remedial classes, extended content beyond the classroom or implemented flipped class activities, etc. (Govil, Anushalini and Sridhar, 2005; Mihardi, Harahap, and Saini, 2013). However, the Covid-19 forced the faculties to move to the online classroom method. Numerous free sources emerged and started to offer free online classroom tools such as Google meet, Zoom, MS team, etc. Each tool came with the prime motto of conducting online classes with distinct features (Reddy, 2023). Throughout the Covid-19 period, the whole teaching community was obliged to operate the online classroom tools. Those who failed to keep up with the evolving technology, struggled to remain effective on field. The online tools offer various features such as recording the session and sharing the uploaded video with the students via YouTube links, and employing online chalk and board method, etc. (Kees and isabellereymen, 2004; Yadav, 2023).

Some other tools are directly helpful to the faculty. Similar to the structure of chalk and board, they are used to write mathematical derivations and store data in softcopy format. These methods are very useful for helping students understand topics step by step, particularly in mathematical and derivative teaching (Banerjee, George & Kadbane, 2023). In addition, with the introduction of online quizzes and interactive tools, they are used to conduct classes more effectively (Majumder & Sarma, 2010). These types of tools and technologies have been on trend during Covid-19. If faculty members start learning the usage of these technologies, they can better utilize them in both online and offline classrooms. This technology also helps in assessment methods with different styles.

Google provides a variety of tools to promote outcome-based education classroom activities in a user-friendly manner. For instance, Google Sheet, are used to collect data from students, allowing all members to work on a single page. This facility is utilized to improve students' brainstorming skills. For example, when a question is asked, students are supposed to answer on the relevant row of the page. Similarly, Google Docs can also be used to execute similar types of activities. Furthermore, these documents and sheets aid in the collection of data from candidates including their mental responses, among other things.

Google Forms, as the third main tool, are used to conduct the quiz activities and collect personal data from candidates. The Google quiz form has choices for shuffled questions, time allocation, and answer displaying answers after completion of the activity, emailing solution keys and evaluation simultaneously, and so on. This type of Google form quiz method can also be utilized for pre-requisite assessments from candidates, mid-semester feedback, course-end survey activities, etc. These forms generate charts, analyses, and data in excel sheets, among other functionalities. Since some machines might not support Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides are used for both online and offline class activities. Google slides can produce animation, conduct user-based quiz answer activities, and so on. Google meet facilitates online sessions and enables connecting. All students on a single platform for interaction, even during holidays. Furthermore, these Google meetings provide the option to record classes as well. After finishing a session, instructors can use YouTube to upload and share the session's URL with students (Ansari & Tripathi, 2017). The automatic generation and distribution of participant certificates aid in organizing quizzes and awareness contests. These technologies also eliminate the need for manually writing a hundred or more certificates.

Methodology
Document Sharing using Google

Google offers numerous tools, including options for sharing sheets, documents, and PowerPoint presentations. These are useful for efficiently extracting data from a larger number of participants. Through this method, faculty members do not have to manually enter student information into an Excel spreadsheet. The objectives of Google spreadsheet, Microsoft Word document, and Microsoft PowerPoint presentation are the same: to work on all participants within a single window. Google Drawing can aid in mind mapping activities, serving as a useful tool to create topic maps and submit them to the tutor or instructor for review. The brainstorming session led to an enhancement in students' critical thinking skills.

Automatic Certificate Generation with Google Form

One of the most important attributes is to encourage and accredit the students by awarding certificates at the conclusion of an event. Every activity or programme (seminar, workshop, faculty development programme, inter sports, annual day, etc.) offers certificates such as "best participants", "best faculty", "best researcher" and "academic excellence", among others. Certificates motivate participants to perform better in the impending competitions. Designing, printing, and composing certificates

increases the time required for clerical work and increases the possibility of errors. Google's "Automat Certificate" tool is used to generate 100+ certificates with a single operation during the session. The specifics of the creation process are detailed below:

Step 1: Provide precise event instructions through a brochure.

Step 2: User responses to a Google form are used to extract the necessary data.

Step 3: Analyse the performance, provide the ranking list along with the corresponding answer key, and mail the participation certificate to the candidate in question.

In addition, each Google form containing responses can be used to obtain a summary of candidate responses, question-based responses, and individual responses with a single click. Fig.1 depicts the prototype of a Google form. Fig.2 depicts the response summary as reflected by the graphic method. The certificate sample generated by the automatic certificate generator is depicted in Fig.3.
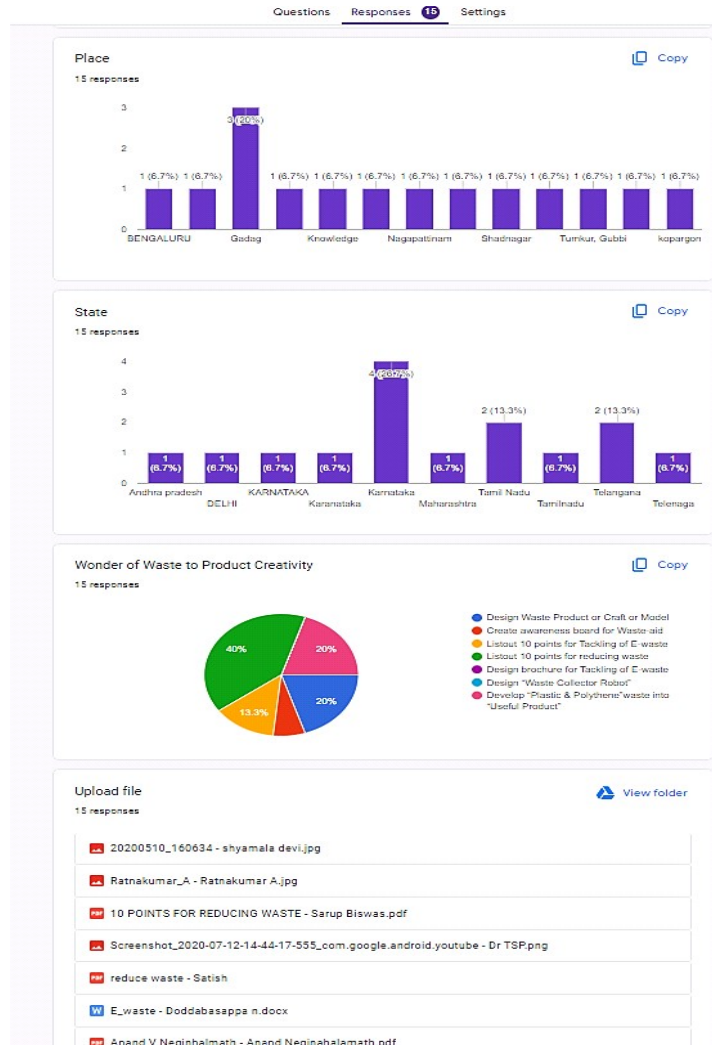

Fig.1 creation of google form.

Fig. 2 Summary of the response

As an organizer, construct a Google form for the event's data collection. The entry must be error-free and clearly indicate the required information in accordance with the event's brochure. For instance, the contest for the "Wonder of Waste" has multiple categories. referred to as Design Waste Product, Craft, or Model. These categories include: Building a public awareness board for Waste-aid; Listing 10 points for addressing E-waste; 10 points for reducing refuse; creating a brochure

for the Tackling of E-waste initiative; Create a Waste Collection Robot; and Create a useful product from plastic and polythene waste. Participant candidates should choose one category, and then identify potential problems encountered during the actual event days - based on literature. List the possible remedy or idea for the problem, based on the relevant literature. Once the idea has been enumerated, priorities should be assigned and compared to existing concepts to determine novelty. As depicted in Fig. 2, ICT aids in autonomously generating fundamental analysis. Send the participation certificate to the candidate once the evaluator has concluded the evaluation, as shown in Fig.3.

Fig. 3 sample certificate of the event and quiz

Fig. 4 Sample snapshot for students submitted activity assignment

The response generated by ICT is summarised in Fig. 2. Through pie charts, it is simple to analyse the various categories of the students such as class, gender, etc.

40% of the entrants in the category "List of 10 points for reducing waste" were selected, 20% of the entrants participated in "Development for plastic & polythene refuse into useful products", and 20% for "designing waste products into a craft or model". The number of students who are interested in participating in the category is determined via computer-generated analysis. Automatic sample certification issuance is depicted in Fig.3. This method is used to generate certificates for competitions automatically. Certificates for participation in quizzes are also generated using the same method.

Fig. 4 depicts an example of a student's content-related photograph. Students' levels of critical thinking, writing, design, and product creation are elevated as a result of this event. This form of activity contributes to the development of students' corporate-required skills. These kinds of activities provide students with opportunities for employability. Both students' careers and society benefit from the event's execution.

In the following section 2.3, detailed instructions are provided for the automated generation of certificates, linking the creation to a Google sheet, and sending certificates to candidates automatically, etc.

Steps to Generate the Automatic Certificate System

To generate the certificate automatically, participants must input their correct name and institute information. This is one of the best ways to generate multiple certificates in the simplest way possible. The following procedures are used to generate the certificates depicted in Figures 5 through 7.

Step 1: Create the form on Google. Collect the participant's name, designation, and institution.

Step 2: Fig.6 depicts how to launch the Google form, navigate the responses and access the Google spreadsheet.

Step 3: Insert within the extensions if the "Autocrat" extension is not available, select the Google sheet and download it from the drop-down menu.

Step 4: Click autocrat under extensions tap, it starts to connect the corresponding window as shown in Fig.6

Step 5: In the Google sheets extension drop down, select Autocrat, then launch or open.

Step 6: Begin by entering the file name, then upload the certificate template, link the taps of the google form, then click finish to automatically deliver the automatic certificate to the concerned participant's email address, as shown in Fig.7.
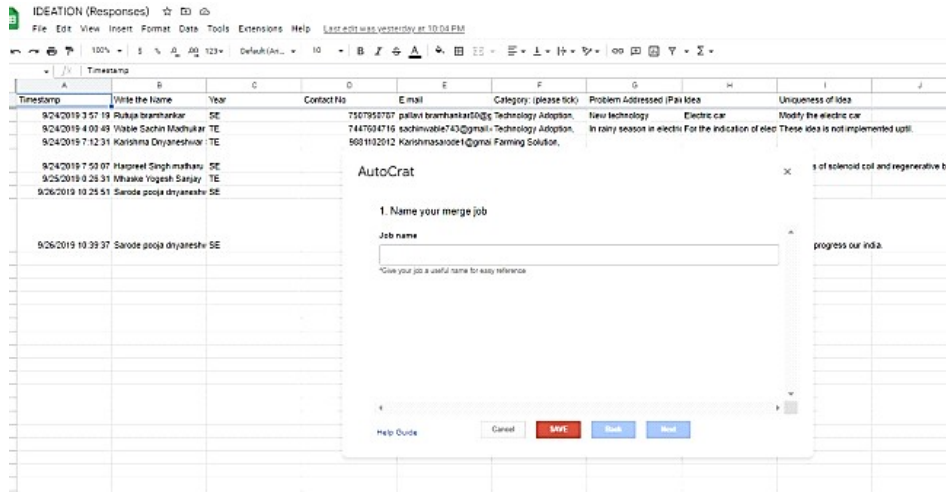
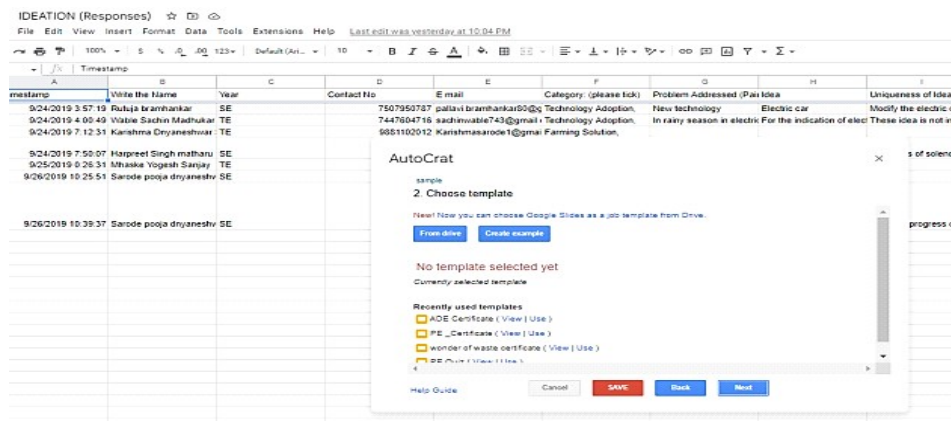**Fig. 5 initialize of auto certificate system**

Fig. 6 Upload template of the certificate

Steps to Generate Flubaroo Result Analysis

The flubaroo notification technique is utilized to send individual participant quiz micro-analysis to concerned students. It is used to prevent self-demotivation in students. Figures 8–11 show the steps for creating the flubaroo.

Step 1: Create the quiz using Google. When students have completed the Google form entry, the micro findings will be generated automatically.

Step 2: The teacher should start the basic flubaroo notification process.

Step 3: To begin the grading process, click flubaroo under the extensions tap, as illustrated in Fig. 8-Fig. 9.

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Step 4: Choose the proper answer key to check automatically, as illustrated in Fig.10.

Step 5: The automatic analysis of flubaroo notifications provides the results displayed in Fig.11 by comparing response keys and sending the results to the associated participants.
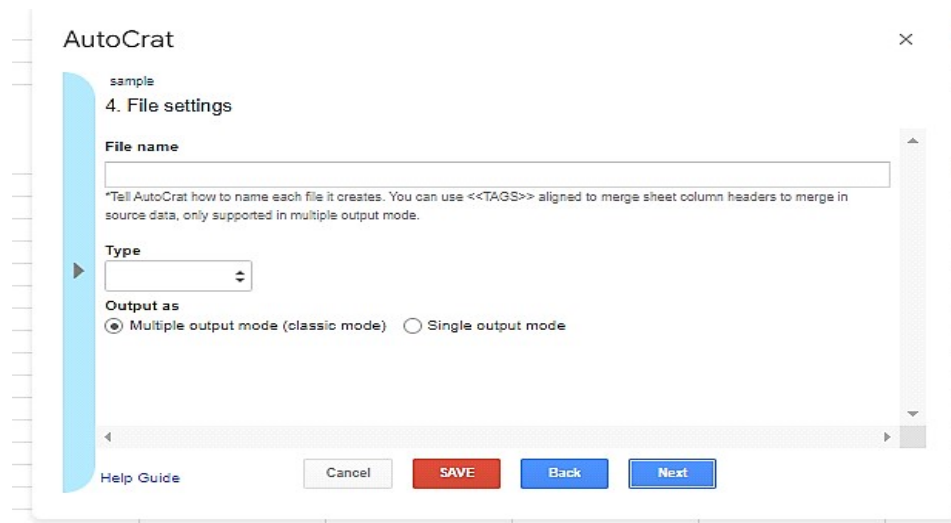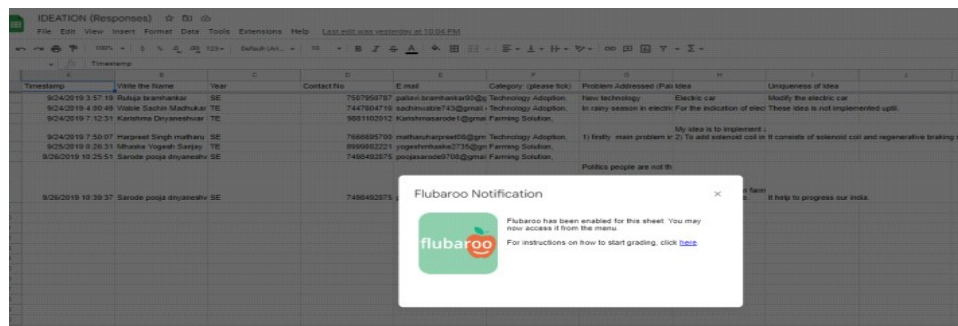

Fig.7 File name of receipt mail id

Fig.8 Flubaroo notification initialization window

Fig. 9 Grading step sheet

Fig. 10 Answer key selecting options

The flubaroo method used to generate the result analysis is extremely beneficial for OBE (Outcome-Based Education). The outcome for each event, course, and programme is clearly anticipated. With the aid of Flubaroo ICT tools used for

automatically generating the result analysis, the answer key for the corresponding questions is required for generating the result analysis automatically and sending notifications for re-learning to the students. Flubaroo compares the answer key and generates results, which are then sent to each candidate along with the answers to the questions. Students can re-learn from their errors through this method. Fig.11 depicts examples of results generated automatically.

Fig. 11 Automatic analysis generated by flubaroo

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to familiarize the teaching community with the process of automatically generating participant certificates and performing micro-analysis on student performance with a single click. The article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the need for autocrat-based certificate generation and micro-based analysis of student test results. The proposed activity is error-free and will significantly reduce the amount of time spent on clerical labor. In comparison to the laborious and tiring manual operation, the output is achievable and accurate.

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Exploring Work-Family Interface and Mental Ceiling among Women for Institutional Excellence in Higher Education

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Abstract

The present qualitative study aims at contributing to a precise understanding of the governance by discussing the impact of socio-cultural environment on the roles of females in leadership positions within the academic sector in India. The study explores how the work and family interface contributes or creates challenges for women leaders. Perceptions towards women governance within the academic community and how students perceive leadership are explored to understand nuances of women leadership. The paper also delves into the initiatives taken by women leaders for better learning outcome and institutional excellence. Critical narrative inquiry method was adopted for data collection, followed by coding the data and thematic content analysis. Findings suggest that women in academic governance take initiatives to encourage teamwork, professional development, innovative pedagogies and assessment and mentoring, while also highlights the significant impact of the socio-cultural environment on the quality of governance. However, to overcome the mental barriers, certain practices like continuous sensitization among the males and females must be carried out at regular intervals. Existing structures should ensure equal opportunities for building competencies and promoting a balanced work-life culture.

Keywords: *Work life balance mental ceiling, higher education, women, academic governance.*

Conceptual Framework

The governance framework of every nation impinges upon innovative practices, overall economic growth and political strategies (Maher & Anderson, 1999). It assures the relevance of working employees in the landscape of governance by providing well-managed regulations, creating conscience, opportunity to engage in

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decision-making process and meeting the expectations of all stakeholders (Nmai Nmai & Delle, 2014; Supra, 1987; Donald & Dowling, 2000-2001). As a significant contributor in building public confidence and providing excellent outcomes, governance strives at meeting the expectations of the educated societies (Badawi, 2005; Siddiquee, 2009; Rachagan, 2010). A transparent and right framework of governance enables the ease of access to strategically important intellectual decisions through collective ideology and tackle the dilemmas (Kurdi, 2016; Menon, 2016). But the impact of social and cultural practices superimposes the ability to perform up to the mark to meet the expectations (Okomojie 2013). The customs, cultures, mores, status, education, access to resources, age, responsibilities of the family and institutional patterns act as convergences of governance and are instrumental in determining the overall development of social and institutional spheres (Basiago, 1999, Kaaria et al., 2019; Robaro & Mamuzo, 2012; Miles, 2017).

The human development aspect ascertains health, educational opportunities, safety and access to political process as core areas central to the development of mankind (Nassubaum et al., 2003). The academic sector is one of the core institutions of addressing large-scale transformations from pre-modern to modern and globalized societies (Castells, 2001). This sector is exquisite and embodies new orientation, knowledge building and disseminates awareness, and instills new orientation (Block & Stumpf, 1992; Shapero, 1975). The more peripheral role in the higher education sector has undergone wider exposure to new demands and pressures from diverse environmental forces (Chou et al., 2017). The outcomes of strategic vision have injected advancements in the accumulation of knowledge, which demands stupendous competencies, skills, and efficacies on the part of dignified authorities to contribute towards increased knowledge production and overall development (Cloete et al, 2015; Rothstein & Teorell, 2015; D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2017). Acting as pump-priming in the academic domain, governance enhances the quality of performing leadership roles and promotes social integrity among women (Kurdi, 2016).

In order to attain development, adequate governance is recognized as a prerequisite in almost all the developing economies (Kurdi, 2016). India is one of the fastest growing and transitional nations across the globe and it is almost unthinkable to achieve development without actual engagement of women (Solomon & Memar, 2014; OECD, 2008). The dynamic and dwindling indices of socio-cultural environment along with the introduction of sprouting channels of transmission in practices, have enormously modified and aligned the trends with the West, influencing the quality of operations across almost all domains (Nestorovic, 2016). Some scholars have corroborated that the indices and conventions pertaining to governance even vary

across developed and developing nations, denying the existence of a common measuring yard to acknowledge the reasons and consequences of mechanisms (Grindle, 2017; Stedham & Yamamura, 2004).

Several studies in the context of leadership roles of females occupying higher positions in developed nations have been undertaken in the past, but no such attempt has been made in a transitional nation like India (Evans &Yen, 2005; Olaitan, 2015). There is a dearth of existing literature to studying the impact of socio-cultural environment and other variables on the Quality of Governance among female leaders (Siddiquee, 2008). The area regarding the relationship between gender and governance in the academic sector has been left untouched by the empirical and theoretical studies undertaken in the past (Menon, 2016; Nussbaum et al., 2003). Furthermore, it is essential to unravel the major predictors of quality of governance rather than focusing solely on its consequences (McLellan, 2009; Mohamad et al., 2014). Thus, this study contributes to the literature on Quality of Governance with empirical results from the Indian context. The findings of the study would be beneficial for female deans, directors, and senior faculties holding powerful positions in universities and colleges to understand the prevailing scenarios related to various variables and their corresponding influence on the quality of governance.

Review of Literature

The structural patterns, social institutions, social systems, social groups, beliefs, perceptions, ideologies, and cultural practices of the society exert a significant influence on the entangled relationships among individuals (Robaro and Mamuzo, 2012). Intangible environmental elements shape behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions turning them into tangible realties in terms of decisions, operations, and actions (Adeleke et al., 2003). Kaaria et al. (2016) observed the influence of the socio-cultural environment on women's engagement in general and leadership roles within top producer organizations. These socio-cultural environments sometimes act as glass ceiling, imposing various barriers such as male ego, religious practices, cultural indices, male restrictions prevalent in wedlock, and poor self-perception preventing the women from securing powerful positions in higher paying jobs (Okomoji, 2013).

As an imperative aspect of human resource management, it offers a boulevard to the aspired individuals to equally engage in public sphere and gratify with their work and family roles (Jeffery and Greenhaus et al., 2003; Manfredi & Holliday, 2004; Alma McCarthy et al., 2010; Dundas 2008). Watson (1975) proposed a model for analyzing and interpreting the quality of work life, including career opportunities,

fair economic benefits, appropriate work environment, development programmes to enhance employee competency, social integration in the work place, ample room to balance work and family, constitutionalism in the work organization and the social relevance of working life, which are relevant and applicable in today's work environment with slight transformations as major dimensions of work-life balance. Academic Governance is reflected in the focus of pinnacle authorities in aligning the development agendas with their strategies at all levels with parity (Hijab & Zambrano, 2007).

As a highly persistent and integrated system, it rests on the foundation of modern scientific ways having their roots in several imperative institutional domains of society (Rizq, 2008). Fukuyama (2013b) discusses the concept of Quality of Governance as fair play of autonomy and capacity. Some scholars have confirmed that it expands community participation and teaches values of affiliation, accountability and responsibility to stabilize the entire societal framework (Kurdi, 2016). Mohanty and Jena (2016) brought out the implications of Socio-Cultural environment on work-life balance in terms of imbalance in personal and professional lives of the individuals. Several studies have corroborated the challenges brought into the lives of employees due to transformation in social and cultural environment (Mittal et al., 2017).

Moreover, several studies added that support from family, attitude of spouse and family members, male dominance at workplace, hardcore cultural practices, narrow ideological perspectives, demographic variations, and strategical framework set by government influence the work and family roles of individuals (Robero & Mamuzo, 2012). Watson (1975), in his proposed model, foreground the close association between social and cultural indices, job satisfaction, work performance and the ability to make decisions. Okomojie (2013) stated that socio-cultural practices affect the quality of performance which in turn steers work satisfaction.

Lund (2003), Hewling (2005) and Lawrence et al. (2002) observed that multiculturalism, changing societal practices and ecological conditions have played a significant role in reinventing the job-related perspectives and balancing the satisfactory aspects related to employment. Okomojie (2013) reflected that a number of socio-cultural practices like the biological nature of women, their contribution in raising children and extension of cultural practices to the workplace environment affect their quality of performance. It is also observed from the past studies that cultural values navigate the potentially competing power dynamics among the governance thespians by democratizing the decision-making process for promoting sustainable strategies (Schroeder, 2014; Qaisrani et al., 2016; Kandusi & Waiganjo,

2015). Individual, contextual, and immediate factors related to job satisfaction positively point towards good governance practices (Zadeh & Mehrvuzhan, 1996; Shahin, 2016; Nasym et al., 2011).

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory in nature, and so, has opted for a qualitative research method. Semi-structured interviews and critical narrative inquiry tools were employed for data collection. Thirty-six senior female faculty members were interviewed face-to-face, following ethical guidelines. Nine respondents from four selected universities in Haryana (One State and One central University) and Rajasthan (One State and One central University) were interviewed and their responses were recorded with permission. Based on these recordings, the researcher prepared transcripts. Field notes were also compiled from observations made by the researcher during fieldwork. Thematic content analysis was used for data analysis.

Interpretation and Discussion of Data

Dimensions with Thematic Content Analysis

The researcher conducted semi structured interviews based on the following dimensions:
1. Unique initiatives for better learning outcomes for students;
2. Effect of socio-cultural environment on women's representation in academic decision-making bodies.

Research question 1. What unique initiatives taken by women in academic governance to excel performance of institution in terms of learning outcome of students?

Initiatives by Women in Academic Governance

It is the faculty members who have direct contact with the students, and are responsible for imparting knowledge to them. The more creative ways the faculty uses, the more interesting it can make the classroom experience for the students. The learning outcomes of the students will also be improved by using creative and innovative ways of teaching. One respondent says that *"If you want to be a good leader, then you always have to be in an innovative mode"*. The innovativeness and creativity of teachers are the basic requirements of the education system in the

current era, where technological advancements have overtaken the role of the teachers in classrooms (Nath, 2013). According to the changing needs of the business or corporate world, students need advanced knowledge in their subjects and in the business realm as well.

The following are the main initiatives undertaken by female teachers in selected universities to enhance the institute's performance in terms of student learning outcomes.

(i) Encouraging teamwork among students: One could easily discover the exceptional relationship among students and professors, playing a vital role to impart knowledge even in the contemporary era of technical aids, thereby making their class an interactive session. As women play a significant role in building relationships, they encourage their students to observe, learn, and, actively participate, rather than merely mugging up theoretical knowledge. They invigorate them to face every challenge of life with optimism. As nation builders, women contribute to the socialization of students, not just through book-based education, but also by authoritatively instructing them to learn from history as well as the current scenario, thus preparing them to navigate any situation confidently.

Numerous studies show that women prefer working in teams, whereas men prefer working alone, which proves that women are better at teamwork when compared to men. *"Women leaders are better teamwork promoters because this habit comes into their own when they deal with their children".* Bear & Woolley (2011) supported that team collaboration is greatly improved by the presence of women in the group. Females across the world, including the respondents, strongly believe them being better at teamwork as they are emotionally intelligent (Woolley et al., 2010). They not only focus on transforming everyone into confident beings but also have the capacity to convert overconfident personalities trust that their colleagues might also be confident (Wuchty et al., 2007). Therefore, they not only help in building team spirit among their students but also teach them to maintain a balance while working as a team.

(ii) Professional exposure for students: According to the female respondents, educational and industrial visits are crucial for explaining to their students how certain areas still rely on manpower rather than just technology. While these visits serve as a tool, their effective utilisation can only be learned through real experiences that come from the ground visits, rather than virtual ones. Additionally, these educational visits allow students to engage in discussions with professionals from specific industries, enhancing their knowledge and providing valuable insights for their future

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careers. Education without practical implications holds little value, a belief shared by our respondents. They emphasize the importance of workshops for students to not only help them clear their doubts but also to provide practical experience that enhance their knowledge and foster interaction new people. Guest lectures also helps students to build a connection between classroom teachings and external insights. Hence, they retain knowledge for a longer duration and also engage in ample valuable cognitive exercise. However, a challenge faced by the faculty is finding the right resource person a concern voiced by female faculty members based on their personal experience.

(iii) Innovative pedagogies and assessment: The use of innovative methods of teaching is a crucial skill for the education staff. On one hand, it grabs student's attention and significantly enhances their learning experience; on the other hand, it presents a challenging task for the faculty to develop such methods as it requires both students as well as the education staff to step out of their comfort zones to both teach and learn in new ways. This challenge pushes the faculty, as a method that is difficult to grasp or is to appropriate may lead them to fail. Despite such challenges, experimenting with new methods and ideas enhance student engagement, motivation and achievement, which both the teacher as well as the learner. The respondents suggested that technology plays a vital role to simplify our work both at academic as well as industrial levels (Lata & Yadav. 2017). Therefore, students should be provided with the technical knowledge to make them tech-savvy so that they can adapt themselves to the age of technology. On the other hand, evaluation provides detailed insight to assess both progress and setback. According to the respondents, just as evaluation is necessary to gauge student performance at the academic level, its significance extends to monitoring organizational progress. Hence, it is essential to teach them the importance as well as the techniques of performance evaluation. Development is a dynamic process, and to maintain accurate information about the organization, continuous evaluation is necessary. An ongoing assessment offers solutions to address the hindrances that impede the growth and also ensures development of the institution.

(iv) Mentoring: In a world rife with challenges, it becomes important for professors to guide their students towards their goals. According to the respondents, when teachers are a part of the higher education institution, their role shifts from a teacher to a mentor who not only assists the students in class but also guides them to solve their issues whenever required. In this way, the role of the teachers gets widened, who have now become responsible for the students as their parents are. Such mentoring programmes offer students a friendly and experienced guide to navigate personal and professional challenges

In sum, women of today a possess higher qualifications and extensive experience in academia, leading to higher expectations of achieving central leadership roles. Despite their advanced education and greater involvement as compared to their male counterparts, they become prey to the glass ceiling (Fritscher, 2017) where challenges remain the same even for the top positions and equal pay. Women are rarely found as one of the board members, instead, they often take up roles that involve disseminate ideas and assisting in plan execution. This is partly due to their skill in persuasive communication and their ability to take unique initiatives for enhancing student performance and building team spirit, reflecting their preference for team-work over working alone.

Research question 2. How socio-cultural context affects women in academic decision-making bodies of higher education institutions?

In the contemporary era, where women are highly educated and are aware of their rights, it is evident that women have significantly narrowed the gender gap breaking the glass-ceiling to attain top positions. In these roles, they not only possess the freedom to make decisions, but are also recognized as leaders, based on their innate and acquired capabilities. In a patriarchal society where women advocating for gender equality once needed to convince male allies, can now be observed at the top of the organizations and committees, actively proposing ideas and making final decisions. The increased presence of women in public life is a valid indicator of gender-equality. It attests to the equal treatment of women, where their viewpoints are acknowledged, especially among women in senior positions who hold genuine decision-making power and have driven progressive change in women's rights and gender relations. Educational institutions establish several committees to ensure their smooth functioning. These committees consist of both males and females as members, and the appropriate suggestions of both are taken into consideration irrespective of the gender (Ratcliffe, 2012). According to the respondents, females are also given opportunity to give suggestions within the committee. However, the nature of the committee significantly influences the weight given to certain decisions. Committees meant for social welfare of students consider suggestions from females, where as those dealing with research and financial matters tend to prioritize suggestions male faculty.

As committees consist of individuals acting as a team to devise the most effective strategies for enhancing work efficiency, they contribute to the smooth functioning of an individual. As per the respondents, every individual gets the opportunity to share their opinions on a particular area and the relevant suggestion is taken into

consideration irrespective of the gender. Hence, equal opportunity to share one's ideas and views is enjoyed by all in the committees at educational level. Women are also promoted based on their performance in the field and are empowered to make final decisions for the improvement of the organization. It is found that the education sector consists of a greater number of female employees as compared to any other sector because of their education qualification and better temperament to deal with students. Therefore, this sector always includes its female faculty in the committees to gather their suggestions.

Despite the Right to Equality and Freedom of expression guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, several females have admitted their experiences of falling prey to gender stereotypes and discrimination (Lahti, 2013). As per their response, the committees have declined their suggestions not because they were inappropriate, but simply because they were suggested by females. They also highlighted that despite being granted committee positions because of the rights provided by the Constitution, the need of scrutinizing the reality is still required. Even though women are an important part of the education institutions, they are still barred to provide their views and suggestions. They frequently lack the autonomy to make independent decisions in most of the cases, which brings the issue to observe the ground reality of the Right to Equality and Freedom of Speech in an institution that should be acting as a model for the community and society.

Conclusion

From the perspective of research, the findings have enlightened the core transitional perspectives and aspects of the highly educated civil society, which have greater level of expectations in terms of effective governance and service delivery, wherein the transformational leadership acts as a catalytic force creating and guiding practice by the employees to attain successful governance (Mohamad et al., 2014). On one hand, the concept of good governance has been recognized, as evident in the initiatives aimed at creating developmental opportunities, empowering citizens, bringing decisions-making institutions closer to the commoners and providing a platform for community members to engage in the decision-making process by opting for higher and dignified leading positions. On the other hand, while such global practices act as push factors, the persistence of traditional and cynical approaches serve as pull factors, compelling women to avoid assuming prominent roles. The involvement of women in vital sectors of the nation, such as education, has been perpetuating due to their elevated levels of resilience and versatility, as well as influence of global environment. Presently it is evident that a considerable number of women hold

prominent positions within the academic sector, and their quality of governance in terms of taking adequate decisions is highly influenced by the presence of transitional social, cultural and economic indices. Thus, there is a dire need to accept the promotion of women's active inclusion and gender-sensitive environment, which is pivotal to better governance.

As governance is required in all domains, the study could be used as a comprehensive mechanism to enhance the association of constructs. Based on the findings of the study, it was suggested that certain practices like continuous sensitization efforts among both males and females must be carried out at regular intervals of time to change their approach to accept the competency of women in leadership roles within decision-making process. Government must provide adequate legal and regulatory frameworks and bring reforms in the socio-cultural elements to enhance the institutional capacities and competencies of the citizens, facilitating their active engagement. Existing laws must ensure the presence of equal opportunity programmes that support sustainable work-life balance, particularly for women in the workforce.

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Book

Shah, S. Y. & Choudhary, K.C. (Eds.). (2016). *International Dimensions on Adult and Lifelong Education.* New Delhi: International Institute of Adult and Lifelong Education.

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Sork, Thomas J. (2016). The Place of Ethics and the Ethics of Place in Adult and Lifelong Education. *Indian Journal of Adult Education, 77*(3), 5-18.

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Subha Rao, I.V. (2002). A New Approach to Literacy Assessment in India. In Madhu Singh (ed.) *Institutionalising Lifelong Learning* (pp. 270-91). Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education.

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