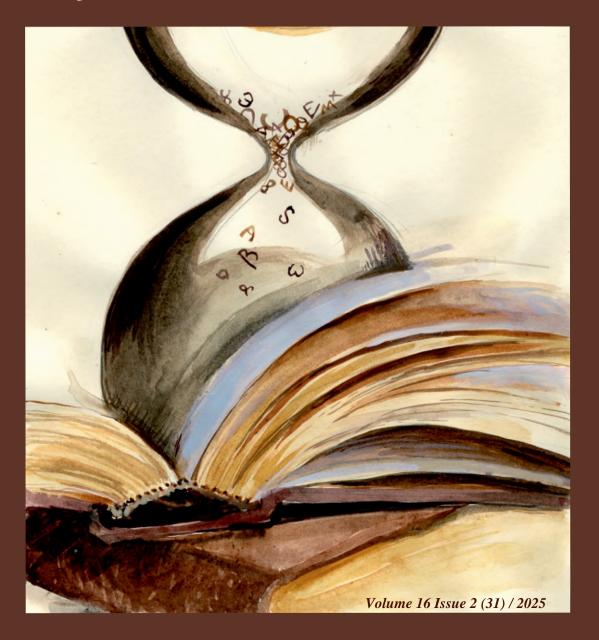
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PHILOSOPHICAL AVENUES

Ethics as a way of life: Self-Cultivation as moral framework in the Igbo universe of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Aminu Suleiman and Vaibhay Shah*

Abstract: Existing scholarship in the field of traditional African ethics has identified three broad themes namely communitarianism, personhood, and the vital force, instrumental for the common good of all. The present paper argues that African traditional ethics allows ample room for an individual's personal cultivation, regardless of the community's view on the ultimate good. In order to substantiate this argument, the paper seeks to undertake an analysis of proverbs as used in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The paper begins by surveying existing scholarly approaches to African ethics. It then compiles proverbs related to the 'communitarian' aspects of ethics and those that depict 'individual cultivation' in Achebe's African trilogy (*Things Fall Apart, No longer at Ease, Arrow of God*). It examines how the proverbs are woven into the first novel, guiding the actions of the protagonist and other characters toward personal growth, illustrating ethical principles of personal development. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the arguments developed through this analysis.

Keywords: Chinua Achebe, communitarianism, cultivation, personhood, *Things Fall Apart*, traditional African ethics

Introduction

African traditional ethics, deeply rooted in communal values and cultural heritage, has often been viewed through the lens of collective identity and societal norms. However, there exists a rich and nuanced dimension within these ethical frameworks that allows for individual personal cultivation, even when such development might diverge from

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the community's prevailing notions of the ultimate good. This study seeks to develop an argument that African traditional ethics, as depicted in proverbs, provides ample space for personal growth and individual moral agency. Proverbs serve as a fundamental repository of wisdom in African cultures, encapsulating ethical principles and life lessons. This analysis will focus on the proverbs portrayed in Chinua Achebe's acclaimed African trilogy: *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*. These literary works offer a profound exploration of the interplay between individual aspirations and communal expectations within the context of African traditional ethics.

In order to delimit the scope of this paper, a detailed analysis primarily concentrates on *Things Fall Apart*. This novel, a cornerstone of African literature, vividly illustrates the tension between personal ambition and communal duties through the journey of its protagonist, Okonkwo. Nonetheless, references to *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God* may also be incorporated to enrich the discussion and provide a broader perspective.

The methodology of this research involves a close textual analysis of the proverbs embedded within the narrative of *Things Fall Apart*. By examining how these proverbs guide the actions and decisions of characters, the study aims to reveal the ways in which traditional wisdom facilitates personal growth and ethical reflection. Additionally, the research contextualizes these proverbs within the broader cultural and philosophical landscape of African traditional ethics, drawing on relevant scholarly interpretations and critical analyses. The analysis also aims to demonstrate how these proverbs are woven into the narratives, guiding the actions of protagonists and other characters towards personal growth. The outcome of this research will underscore the dynamic relationship between individual moral development and communal values in African traditional ethics.

To effectively put the argument that African traditional ethics allows ample room for an individual's personal cultivation, regardless of the community's view on the ultimate good, this study is divided into three sections. The first section surveys existing scholarship on African traditional ethics, focusing on the themes of personhood and communalistic elements as reflected in African proverbs. The second section explores the proverbs related to the communitarian aspects of ethics in Achebe's African trilogy, capturing the essence of African traditional ethics rooted in communitarianism and personhood, emphasizing unity, equality, fairness, and peaceful coexistence, while

serving as guidelines for ethical behaviour in communal life and supporting the normative claims about African ethics. The third and concluding section aims to argue that Achebe's novels, beyond emphasizing communitarianism and personhood, also highlight individual cultivation, which may diverge from the common good of a community. It explores numerous proverbs in the trilogy that focus on individual flourishing, aspiring beyond communal norms, and examines how these proverbs function as vehicles for achieving personal goals. The section identifies specific proverbs in each novel that express themes of cultivation and analyses their narrative contexts, with a particular focus on *Things Fall Apart*.

A survey of ethical framework in African tradition

Traditional African ethics is deeply imbued in the socio-religiocultural landscape of African societies. Unlike Western ethical system which is claimed to be universalist and normative in its orientation. African ethics is experiential and rooted in the beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews of its inhabitants. A substantial scholarship in the field of African ethics has identified three broad themes - communitarianism, personhood and the vital force or life force instrumental for the common good of all (Menkiti 2018, 2004; Mbiti 1990; Gyeke 2011, 1998; Molefe 2019). Popular African maxims like "a person is a person through other persons" as they say in Southern Africa; or "I am because we are" as is uttered in the Eastern and Western Africa (Metz 2017, 63; Idem 2023, 186), suggest a deeper commitment of African worldview to the collective good of a community. Other than the three broad categorization of African ethics in terms of communitarianism, personhood, and the vital force, scholars have also drawn attention to the various sources of moral norms in African societies. Accordingly, (Okeja 2018) offers four typologies of moral justification in African philosophy -1) appeal to tradition, 2) appeal to community, 3) appeal to religion and gods, and 4) appeal to human well-being. He asserts that moral norms are social artefacts that have the overall goal of guiding human interactions. Similarly, (Murove 2021) identifies three basic themes in African tradition viz. ancestors, *ubuntu* (humanness) and relationality. One can see a common pattern in all these themes as they tend to defy the universalist and normative tendencies of the Western ethics. They not only focus on the communitarian good as sumum bonum but also treat other important themes like personhood and vital force as prerequisite for the overall good of the community.

One important aspect of African ethics which has significantly drawn the attention of scholars is the notion of personhood. The concept of personhood, in African ethical system, is inextricably linked with the notion of communitarianism. One's attaining a personhood ought to be seen in relation to one's continual effort toward the common good of her community as (Menkiti 1984, 176) asserts:

The various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept this fact that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations. It is the carrying of these obligations that transforms one from the 'it' status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the 'person' status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense – an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one.

Menkiti's view of personhood is linked with certain obligations that an individual ought to perform in one's community. This view implies that an individual should make continued efforts to internalize communal norms, obligations, and relationships to cultivate and attain moral personhood. However, the concept of personhood needs clarity before it is made intelligible in the context of African ethics. In this regard, (Sapontzis 1981, 607) suggests two kinds of concepts while discussing the moral aspect of personhood. These two concepts are moral and metaphysical. Moral concepts are evaluative in nature and are concerned with "assigning rights, duties, obligations, and respect." Metaphysical concepts, on the other hand, are descriptive in nature. They denote the kinds of things that are individuals and "endure through space and time and have their own identity, integrity, independence, or self-sufficiency" (Ibid). Within an African ethical context, (Ikuenobe 2018) reinforces these two aspects of personhood-1) descriptive psychological and metaphysical aspect, 2) normative and social-moral aspect. These two aspects are instrumental to form personhood-identity, rights, and autonomy of an individual. In the context of ethical discourse, it is the normative aspect that predominates scholarly discussion around the concept of personhood. Normative view of personhood, as (Oyowe 2018, 784) puts forth:

... is that persons are psychologically competent human beings who have demonstrated in behaviour, compliance to appropriate moral and social norms. "A person—taken in its fullest sense—is therefore an individual who, through mature reflection and action, has both flourished economically and

succeeded in meeting her (often weighty) responsibilities to her family and community.

However, normative view of personhood restricts the scope of an individual within a community and doesn't allow to see her as person qua person, as (Masaka 2018, 10) asserts that while a person is ontologically prior to and at the same time subsists in personhood, personhood when understood in its normative sense can be said to be something that can be acquired by individuals, much of it, within the confines of a community. Likewise, (Bujo 2001, 148) argues that "although the individual is embedded in the community, he or she is a unique and in-exchangeable being, who has irreplaceable tasks within the community." This stance of giving preference to an individual over her place in a community is due to the ontological status of a person which is distinguished from the concept of personhood as (Masaka 2018, 8) further states that "being a person is not an acquired trait in the sense that one attains it as one lives in the community. It is not something that is taught or learnt from others. One is born as such." Several critics have found the normative conception of personhood such as the one developed by Menkiti, mentioned above, as faulty, and problematic. For example, (Chimakonam 2022, 94) identifies some of the problems stating that they are based on the five assumptions, as quoted below:

First, it assumes that the ancient belief in the dominance of the community shared by a collection of sub-Saharan communities, which empowers the community to determine and override the individual can be compatible with modern life. Second, it assumes that all that matters in forging personhood is compliance with the community norms; thus, trivialising the individual capacities and endowments. Third, it assumes, quite in error, that it is fair, and all squared to compare traditional African communal thought with modern Western liberal thought disregarding the epochal difference between traditional and modern thoughts. Fourth, it assumes that an accurate conception of personhood should be a 'closed predicament,' which no individual should question. Fifth, it assumes that personhood can only be conceived as a social relationship that is an end in itself.

Manzini (2018) also argues that Menkiti's normative conception of personhood can be considered as gendered, ableist and anti-queer and demands for an inclusive theory of personhood. Normative frameworks of African ethics grounded in the ideals of community and personhood have also been attacked by some scholars who rather propose to study the domain in line with Greek philosophers like Plato

and Aristotle. The character of an individual plays a vital role in shaping the ethical orientation of African society as (Gyeke 2011) asserts that "Good character is the essence of the African moral system, the linchpin of the moral wheel." He argues that society may have different norms transmitted from generation to generation in the form of proverbs, folktales etc. that guide individuals toward a right conduct and ethical fulfilment of one's responsibilities for the common good of all. However, the onus is on an individual who applies this moral education in her conduct. Gyeke (Ibid) maintains that:

The ability to act in accord with the moral principles and rules of the society requires the possession of a good character. Thus, in the context of the activities of the moral life—in our decisions to obey moral rules, in the struggle to do the right thing and to avoid the wrong conduct, in one's intention to carry out a moral duty, the quality of a person's character is of ultimate consequence. It is from a person's character that all his or her actions—good or bad—radiate: the performance of good or bad acts depends on the state of one's character. Wrongdoing is put down to a person's bad character. Thus, the Yoruba maxim (proverb): 'Good character is a person's guard.'

The cultivation of moral character of an individual, however, is inextricably linked with the cultivation of a community. In comparison, Metz (2023, 186-187) while drawing parallel between African ethics and Greek ethical ideals, acknowledges the role of virtue in achieving the human excellence. He observes that:

The similarities between traditionally African ideals and those of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle continue, in that self- realization is typically understood to be a function of the exhibition of virtue or human excellence. Becoming a complete person or living a genuinely human way of life is not merely a matter of performing actions that are right because they accord with some principle but rather is primarily a function of displaying certain character traits relating to one's beliefs, emotions and feelings, and the actions that express them.

However, the difference between African traditional worldview and Greek ethics, as Metz argues above, lies in the realization of the ultimate good. How an individual is capable to act rationally forms the basis of exercising virtues in Greek ethics. African ethics, on the other hand, focuses on the two distinct goods viz. community and vitality. Metz asserts that the fundamental principle of community as a realization of good requires the 'other regard' approach from the members of the society. To quote Metz (2023, 188):

I realize myself essentially in relation to people distinct from myself and cannot do so in isolation from them. Summing up one major Afrocommunitarian conception of virtue, then, a person exhibits human excellence or virtue just in so far as she has character traits that express a prizing of communal or friendly relationships. Such an analysis would appear to capture additional virtues such as industriousness, respectfulness, and fairness.

The other source of this realization is vitality or a life force. Metz (2023, 190) explains the life- force as "an invisible energy that permeates everything in the world in varying degrees." The degree of life-force follows a hierarchy, starting from the inanimate mineral kingdom, then ascending to plants, animals, humans, ancestors, and other spiritual agents, and culminating in God, who is the source of all life-forces. This variant of a self- realization ethics, as Metz argues, indicates that "one's fundamental aim should be to increase life-force. either one's own or people's generally." (Ibid.) Vitality as a source encompasses virtues such as prudence, courage, and mental health, which contribute to the flourishing of an individual. Furthermore, virtues like kindness, concern, charity, hard work, respect, and fairness—often associated with communitarian ethics—are also integral to vitality or life-force, as they promote liveliness and diminish weariness. Metz's endeavour to compare African traditional ethics with Greek ethics, and his attempt to view the African variant of virtue ethics through the lens of two goods—community and vitality—raises an important question: What happens when an individual's aspirations for flourishing and human excellence are not aligned with their community's values? Does African traditional ethics offer no guidance for an individual's personal cultivation, regardless of the common good envisioned by their community?

The next section will seek to develop an argument that African traditional ethics allows ample room for an individual's personal cultivation, regardless of the community's view on the ultimate good. Given that proverbs, folktales, and communal practices are the primary sources of traditional African ethics, this analysis will particularly examine the proverbs depicted in Chinua Achebe's African trilogy namely *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*. In order to delimit the scope of this paper, detailed analysis will focus on *Things Fall Apart* though references to the two other novels may also find space in the discussion. The analysis will also aim to demonstrate

how these proverbs are woven into the narratives, guiding the actions of protagonists and other characters towards personal growth.

Proverbs in Chinua Achebe's African trilogy

Proverbs serve as a vital repository of knowledge within traditional African ethics, embodying both ancestral wisdom and practical guidance, offering instructions on how to lead a purposeful life. To quote (Penfield and Duru 1988, 120):

Proverbs are in effect quotes from the ancestors- the spirits who rule in the lives of the living and who can punish as well as protect the living. Their philosophical meanings make statements about *omendli* -- the rules of a peaceful social order. These rules suggest how members in the society are to treat each other and behave. Their use in conversation and speeches not only reminds those present of the continued intervention of the ancestors in the lives of the living but also represents a distinctive way in which cultural knowledge is displayed and acquired.

The ethical significance of proverbs may be captured in the following remark of (Yankah 1999, 205):

Grounded upon years of experience and close observation of life and natural phenomena, the proverb, through metaphorical language, may warn, advise or reprimand by drawing attention to the moral or ethical consequences of human behaviour. It may advocate patience, cooperation, and perseverance, and repudiate greed, and selfishness.

As discussed in the previous section, African ethics centres on the themes of community and personhood. Scholar (Etieyibo 2023, 37) emphasizes the communalistic elements of African ethics, as reflected in African proverbs, and classifies them into categories such as dialogue, peace, and communal harmony; communal good, solidarity, and well-being; brotherhood and sisterhood (working together, communally and in unity); and humanism, hospitality, and caring. These categories imply that proverbs in African tradition steer an individual's actions towards the collective good of society, forming the foundation of communitarian ethics in these cultures. Chinua Achebe reinforces this principle in his works by incorporating an ample collection of proverbs that embody and transmit communitarianas well as individualistic ethics.

Achebe is one of the foremost writers addressing the complex ethical landscape of Igbo society in his novels. His works not only highlight the conflict between traditional African and Western ethics but also offer a rich commentary on the traditional ethical value system, emphasizing community, personhood, and the character of an individual. Achebe's depiction of the Igbo universe prominently upholds these ethical themes, with numerous proverbs supporting this worldview (Ikuenobe, 2006; Morrison, 2018). The following is a list of proverbs (with page numbers in which they appear) related to the 'communitarian' aspects of ethics in Achebe's trilogy.

Things Fall Apart (2001, 5; 19; 68; 118; 156): "He who brings kola brings life"; "let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to other, let his wing break"; "if I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play"; "if one finger brought oil, it soiled the others" and "an animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him".

No Longer at Ease (2010b, 25; 59; 78): "Ours is ours, but mine is mine"; "if one finger brought oil, it soiled the others"; "anger against a kinsman was felt in the flesh, not in the marrow".

Arrow of God (2010a 13; 21; 27; 47; 57; 94; 114; 126; 132; 158; 164; 169; 208): "When a handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing"; when a man of cunning dies, a man of cunning buries him; "the fly that has no one to advise it follows the corpse into the grave"; "whatever music you beat on your drum there is somebody who can dance to it"; "when I cut grass and you cut, what is your right to call me names?"; "if a man seeks for a companion who acts entirely like himself, he will live in solitude"; "greetings in the cold harmattan is taken from the fireside"; "a man who visits a craftsman at work finds a sullen host"; "the lizard who threw confusion into his mother's funeral rite, did he expect outsiders to carry the burden of honouring his dead?"; "when two brothers fight, a stranger reaps the harvest"; "a fowl does not eat into the belly of a goat"; "even a hostile clansman was a friend in a strange country"; "a woman cannot place more than the length of her leg on her husband"; "an adult does not sit and watch while the she-goat suffers the pain of childbirth tied to a post".

The aforementioned proverbs in Achebe's trilogy vividly capture the essence of African traditional ethics, which are deeply rooted in the themes of communitarianism and personhood. These proverbs underscore the importance of unity, equality, fairness, and peaceful coexistence with other community members, while also serving as guidelines for expected ethical behaviours in communal life. They provide convincing evidence supporting the normative claims about

African ethics discussed in the first section. However, this paper aims beyond novels, the themes that Achebe's communitarianism and personhood, also highlight 'individual cultivation,' which may or may not align with the common good of a community. In other words, Achebe's trilogy contains numerous proverbs that focus on individual flourishing, with aspirations that transcend communal norms. What follows is an attempt to excavate proverbs in the trilogy that emphasize individual goals and aspirations for flourishing and to examine how these proverbs serve as means to achieve those ends. We will begin by listing the proverbs that express the themes of 'individual cultivation' in each novel (with page numbers in which they appear) and then analyse them in the context of the narratives where they are situated with special reference to *Things* Fall Apart. The list is as follows:

Things Fall Apart. "Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them" (Achebe 2001, 7). "If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings" (Ibid, 8). "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for walk" (Ibid, 10). "A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness" (Ibid, 19). "The lizard that jumped from *iroko* tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did" (Ibid, 21). "Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching" (Ibid, 21). "Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (Ibid, 25). "Never kill a man who says nothing" (Ibid, 131). "There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts" (Ibid, 132). "I cannot live on the bank of river and wash my hand with spittle" (Ibid, 156).

No Longer at Ease. "If you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one" (Achebe 2010b, 5). "A man who lived on the banks of the Niger should not wash his hands with spittle" (Ibid, 8). "Do not be in a hurry to rush into the pleasures of the world like the young antelope who danced herself lame when the main dance was yet to come" (Ibid, 9). "...The great tree chooses where to grow and we find it there, so it is with greatness in men" (Ibid, 43).

Arrow of God. "It is praiseworthy to be brave and fearless but sometimes, it is better to be a coward" (Achebe 2010a, 11). "Wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own" (Ibid, 16). "If the lizard of the homestead should neglect to do the things for which its kind is known, it will be mistaken for the lizard of the farmland" (Ibid,

18). "The inquisitive monkey gets a bullet in the face" (Ibid, 45). "A man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards" (Ibid, 61). "Only a foolish man can go after a leopard with his bare hands", and "A hot soup must be taken slowlyslowly from the edges of the bowl" (Ibid, 86). "The death that will kill a man begins as an appetite" (Ibid, 90). "Let us first chase away the wild cat, afterwards we blame the hen" (Ibid, 100). "A woman who began cooking before another must have more broken utensils" (Ibid. 101). "We do not apply an ear-pick to the eye" (Ibid, 113). "Greeting in the cold harmattan is taken from the fireside" (Ibid, 114). "The lizard who fell down from the high Iroko tree felt entitled to praise himself if nobody else did" (Ibid, 116). "The flute player must sometimes stop to wipe his nose" (Ibid, 121). "...bale that water before it rises above the ankle" (Ibid, 127). "A disease that has never been seen before cannot be cured with everyday herbs"; "When we want to make a charm, we look for the animal whose blood can match its power, if a chicken cannot do it, we look for a goat or a ram; if that is not sufficient, we send for a bull", and "A man who has nowhere else to put his hand for support puts it on his own knees" (Ibid, 134). "Every land has its own sky" (Ibid, 160). "Until a man wrestles with one of those who make a path across his homestead, the others will not stop" (Ibid, 162). "It is the fear of causing offence that makes men swallow poison" (Ibid, 166). "A traveller to distant places should make no enemies" (Ibid, 169). "A man of sense does not go on hunting little bush rodents when his age mates are after big game" (Ibid, 170). "If the rat could not run fast enough it must make way for the tortoise" (Ibid, 171). "Our eye sees something; we take a stone and aim at it. But the stone rarely succeeds like the eye in hitting the mark" (Ibid, 172). "He who builds a homestead before another can boast more broken pot" (Ibid, 228).

Analysis

The cultivation or flourishing of an individual goes beyond merely pursuing aspirations that result in success through money, fame, power, or the fulfilment of desires. It also encompasses how effectively an individual can avoid flaws and vices that may hinder progress. Moreover, it involves managing difficult situations or external threats that must be navigated while striving for one's desired goals. Aforementioned proverbs in Achebe's trilogy can thus be categorized into four broad thematic aspects of cultivation:1)

Aspiration for success and meaningful life, 2) Cautionary advice regarding external threats, 3) Interpersonal relations as a means to personal aspirations, and 4) Wisdom sayings for a reflective living.

The four categories of proverbs mentioned above propose a framework for an individual to navigate life independently of the community's notion of the common good. These categories allow us to envision the Igbo society's concept of a good life and the ways one should pursue it. What follows is an analysis of these proverbs within the proposed thematic categorization and an examination of the narratives where these proverbs are located.

Aspiration for success and meaningful life

Although Achebe's novels portray the ideals and aspirations of various Igbo communities, there is still ample room for personal development. All three protagonists—Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease, and Ezeulu in Arrow of God—are bound by the duties and obligations expected by their communities. However, these responsibilities do not prevent them from pursuing their personal aspirations, which distinguish them from others in their communities. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's ambition for success and fame starkly contrasts with his father's failure. The proverb "our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them" (Achebe 2001, 7) is spoken by Okonkwo's father, Unoka, to his neighbour Okoye, who seeks repayment of a debt. However, Unoka does not practise what he preaches. In contrast, Okonkwo embodies the opposite of his father and achieves what his father could not, as Achebe writes:

When Unoka died he had taken no title at all, and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young, but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages... And so, although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so ate with kings and elders (Achebe 2001, 7-8).

This comparison between father and son highlights Achebe's emphasis on personal cultivation as an ethical theme where success and fulfilment, whether material or spiritual, are linked to right conduct of an individual. Okonkwo's notion of success is so demanding that in *Things Fall Apart* he would, at a meeting, call someone a woman if they have not earned any titles (Ibid, 25). From a Western perspective, such an attitude might seem unethical due to Okonkwo's lack of humility and respect for others. This sentiment is reflected in the Igbo proverb spoken by the oldest man in the meeting: "those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (Ibid.). However, Achebe immediately dismisses the relevance of this proverb in Okonkwo's case:

But it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He had cracked them himself. Anyone who knew his grim struggle against poverty and misfortune could not say he had been lucky. If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his *chi* or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes, his *chi* says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so, his *chi* agreed. And not only his *chi* but his clan too, because it judged a man by the work of his hands. (Achebe 2001, 25-26).

The concept of *chi*, considered as a personal god in Igbo culture, serves as source of motivation for any actions an individual takes. *Chi*'s agreement to an individual's fortune depends on the kind of life that person chooses to lead. Achebe notes that:

when a man says yes his chi will also agree; but not always. Sometimes a man may struggle with all his power and say yes most emphatically and yet nothing he attempts will succeed. Quite simply the Igbo say of such a man: *Chie ekwero*, his *chi* does not agree (Achebe 1976, 137).

However, *chi* is not a source of moral judgment regarding the rightness or wrongness of an action. Instead, *chi* validates the results that arise from an individual's sustained efforts to achieve certain ends, as Achebe asserts:

...When we hear that a man has a bad *chi* that we are talking about his fortune rather than his character. A man of impeccable character may yet have a bad *chi* so that nothing he puts his hand to will work out right. *Chi* is therefore more concerned with success or failure than with righteousness and wickedness. (Ibid)

Thus, Okonkwo's dedication to his lofty ambitions receives favourable support from his *chi*. Okonkwo is a hardworking individual who is not shy about praising himself if it aids him in achieving his goals. To

convince Nwakibie to give him yam seeds, he uses a proverb to illustrate his fearless attitude towards hard work: "The lizard that jumped from the high *iroko* tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did." (Achebe 2001, 21) This implies that one doesn't need to depend on others' validation when pursuing their aspirations in life. Thus, individual aspiration for a successful and meaningful life, as depicted in the novel, extends beyond the concept of community-based ethics traditionally upheld in the context of African tradition.

Cautionary advice regarding external threats

One might argue that traditional African ethical systems view warnings or cautionary advice about potential dangers and external threats as relevant to the community. These warnings carry significant implications for the pursuit of the common good envisioned by the community. However. upon closer scrutiny, some of the aforementioned proverbs are found to play a crucial role in guiding individuals to be vigilant about potential threats that could hinder their personal growth. In Things Fall Apart, Achebe employs proverbs such as "never kill a man who says nothing" (Ibid, 131) and "there is nothing to fear from someone who shouts" (Ibid, 132) while commenting on the destruction of the Abame clan. Although these proverbs are spoken in the context of a community's mass destruction. they also convey a powerful message to individuals, highlighting that acting hastily and without considering the severe consequences of one's actions can diminish one's chances of flourishing. Additionally, the story of Mother Kite, as narrated by Okonkwo's maternal uncle, Uchendu, reinforces the danger of acting hastily and carelessly:

Mother Kite once sent her daughter to bring food. She went and brought back a duckling. "You have done very well," said Mother Kite to her daughter, "but tell me, what did the mother of this duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away?" It said nothing," replied the young Kite. "It just walked away." "You must return the duckling," said the Mother Kite. "There is something ominous behind the silence." And so daughter Kite returned the duckling and took a chick instead." ... "What did the mother of this chick do?" asked the old kite. "It cried and raved and cursed me," said the young kite. "Then we can eat the chick," said her mother. "There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts." Those men of Abame were fools. (Achebe 2001, 131-132)

Another proverb is cited in *Things Fall Apart* by an elder, Okika, during a large gathering following the release of Okonkwo and other

prisoners. The meeting aims to determine the next steps: some, like Okonkwo, advocate for war against the colonial masters, while others outline the dire consequences and risks of such action. In his speech, Okika quotes his father, stating, "Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life" (Ibid, 192). This proverb illustrates the necessity of stepping out of one's comfort zone when confronted with the need of survival as Okika speaks:

We who are here this morning have remained true to our fathers, but our brothers have deserted us and joined a stranger to soil their fatherland. If we fight the stranger, we shall hit our brothers and perhaps shed the blood of a clansman. But we must do it. Our fathers never dreamt of such a thing; they never killed their brothers. But a white man never came to them. So, we must do what our fathers would never have done. Eneke the bird was asked why he was always on the wing, and he replied: "Men have learnt to shoot without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twig." We must root out this evil. And if our brothers take the side of evil, we must root them out too. And we must do it now. We must bale this water now that it is only ankle-deep... (Achebe 2001, 193).

Okika's powerful speech is abruptly interrupted by the sudden arrival of five court messengers. Overcome by emotion, Okonkwo kills the head messenger with his machete. Despite a life filled with achievements, Okonkwo struggles to adapt to the new circumstances brought about by the early phase of British rule. His downfall is due to a rigid and uncompromising attitude toward the forces that challenge his lofty aspirations.

Interpersonal relations as means to personal aspirations

As discussed in the previous section, proverbs play a significant role in upholding communitarian ethics, where the idea of personhood is linked to the common good envisioned by the community. However, in *Things Fall Apart*, some proverbs emphasize interpersonal relations as a means to achieve personal cultivation. Friendship and marriage are two domains where these relations are crucial. Community gatherings on special occasions enhance the potential for flourishing, as respect and recognition come from others within the community. When Okonkwo hosts a feast for the kinsmen of Mbanta, he spares no effort to make it a grand event. For him, this is an opportunity to repay the support he received from his kinsmen during his exile as Achebe notes:

Okonkwo never did things by halves. When his wife Ekwefi protested that two goats were sufficient for the feast, he told her that it was not her affair. ... "I am calling a feast because I have the wherewithal. I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle. My mother's people have been good to me, and I must show my gratitude." (Achebe 2001, 155-156)

Okonkwo's intention to host a grand feast is not restricted by societal or communal obligations to repay the kindness he received from his kinsmen. Rather, it stems from his genuine gratitude towards those who significantly helped him during his challenging times. The notion of kinsmen is attached to one's own flourishing within a community as Uchendu remarks:

"We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. An animal rubs its aching flanks against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him." (Achebe 2001, 157)

The proverb in Uchendu's speech highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships, particularly the bond between kinsmen, in the development of an individual. Okonkwo recognizes this significance and seeks to strengthen this bond by hosting a generous feast for his kinsmen in *Mbanta*.

Wisdom sayings for a reflective living

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe suggests that "wisdom is like a goatskin bag; every man carries his own" (Achebe 2010a, 16). Proverbs play a crucial role in passing down this wisdom from one generation to the next. Within *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe employs several proverbs that encapsulate traditional wisdom aimed at promoting reflective living. Reflective living is essential for personal growth, and these proverbs serve as valuable guides in this regard. Examples such as "you can tell a ripe corn by its look" (Achebe 2001, 21), "a chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches" (Ibid, 62), "when mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth" (Ibid, 66), and "a baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long" (Ibid, 6) carry the weight of traditional wisdom. Although spoken in different contexts throughout the novel, these proverbs are instrumental in the development of individuals.

Conclusion

In the preceding section, an attempt was made to construct an alternative framework for exploring the ethical themes in Chinua

Achebe's trilogy, with reference to *Things Fall Apart*, using Igbo proverbs. This approach posits that traditional African ethics can serve as a guide for individual flourishing within a community, alongside the community's expectations. To support this argument, the trilogy's proverbs are examined, illustrating ethical principles of personal development. These proverbs are categorized into four themes: pursuing personal aspirations for a successful and meaningful life, offering cautionary advice against external threats, emphasizing interpersonal relationships as pathways to personal growth, and providing wisdom for reflective living. Through a detailed analysis of these proverbs within the narratives, it is concluded that African traditional ethics can be viewed as a framework for personal cultivation. complementing the conventional focus communitarianism and personhood observed by many scholars in the field.

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Love, resistance, and social justice: A Foucauldian analysis of power dynamics in Ravinder Singh's *Your Dreams Are Mine Now*

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Abstract: This research paper examines Ravinder Singh's novel *Your* Dreams Are Mine Now (2014) through the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault's power relations and resistance concepts. Previous scholarship primarily focuses on the novel's romantic elements and social commentary; however, this analysis employs Foucault's theories to illuminate how the text navigates institutional power structures, mechanisms of control, and forms of resistance within contemporary Indian society. Through close textual analysis, this study demonstrates how Singh's narrative reveals the complex interplay between power and resistance in educational institutions, gender relations and social activism. The research argues that the novel's portraval of love and activism represents what Foucault terms 'points of resistance' against systemic oppression while simultaneously illustrating how power relations permeate all aspects of social interaction. This paper examines the novel Your Dreams Are Mine Now through the lens of Michel Foucault's terms and concepts, including the microphysics of power, institutional space, the panoptic mechanism, counter-conduct, the regulatory ideal, technologies of the self, the practice of freedom, subjugated knowledge, games of truth and parrhesia.

Keywords: power relations, resistance, social activism, gender violence, Foucauldian analysis

Introduction

Ravinder Singh's *Your Dreams Are Mine Now* presents a compelling narrative transcending the traditional boundaries of romantic fiction, offering a nuanced exploration of power dynamics and resistance within contemporary Indian society. Set against the backdrop of Delhi University, the novel interweaves a love story with crucial social commentary, making a significant contribution to modern literature.

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Singh's work represents a new wave in Indian fiction where personal narratives become inseparable from social consciousness. The integration of romance and social activism reflects the evolving landscape of Indian society and literature in the 21st century, particularly when viewed through a Foucauldian lens.

The novel centers on Rupali, a small-town girl from Patna, who arrives at Delhi University with aspirations to change the society. Her romantic and political journey serves as an ideal canvas for exploring what Foucault calls 'the microphysics of power,' where power relations manifest in everyday interactions and institutions. Through Rupali's experiences, Singh demonstrates how power operates through overt oppression and subtle control mechanisms embedded in educational, social, and cultural norms.

This study utilizes Foucault's theoretical framework to examine several aspects of the novel: the university as a site of power and resistance, the interaction of personal and political spheres in student activism, and the role of gender within systems of power. Drawing on Foucault's concepts from *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, this paper argues that Singh's work reflects the power dynamics that permeate social life and underscores the potential for resistance through individual action and collective movements.

Theoretical framework

This analysis employs Foucault's conception of power, which provides a theoretical lens that moves beyond traditional views defining power as purely repressive and top-down. Foucault argues that power is productive and operates through complex networks of relationships. In *The History of Sexuality*, he writes, "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 1978, 93). This understanding of power as omnipresent yet dynamic helps illuminate the complex social dynamics portrayed in *Your Dreams Are Mine Now*.

Foucault's concept of resistance, particularly relevant to Singh's novel, posits that resistance is inherent in power relationships. He argues that wherever power exists, resistance inevitably emerges, and this resistance is never positioned externally to power. This theoretical framework elucidates how Rupali and Arjun's activism operates within existing power structures while also challenging them, revealing the complex interplay between conformity and resistance within institutional frameworks.

The university serves as a pivotal site of power relationships, exemplifying what Foucault terms 'institutional space,' where power relations are both exercised and contested. The university environment acts as a microcosm of broader social power dynamics, where various forms of authority engage with resistance mechanisms. Singh's portrayal of campus life reveals what Foucault describes as disciplinary mechanisms that regulate behaviour, thought, and social interactions within educational institutions, while concurrently fostering spaces for intellectual discourse and political activism. The novel's treatment of surveillance and control in educational spaces particularly resonates with Foucault's analysis in Discipline and Punish, where he argues that "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection." (Foucault 1977, 202-03)

The leak scandal becomes a point where this power becomes visible and contestable. The portrayal of campus life aligns with Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, particularly evident in institutional spaces that regulate behaviour through surveillance and normalisation. The novel depicts various forms of monitoring and control, from official administrative oversight to informal peer surveillance, characteristic of autonomous educational institutions.

Then all of a sudden, something struck Rupali, 'I have evidence!' she smiled. Arjun was curious. He waited for Rupali to speak. 'I have . . .' Rupali stopped as soon as she began her sentence. She took a second or two to speak again. As she was about to say it, she realized she couldn't look into Arjun's eyes while revealing what she was about to. 'A video of Mahajan sexually abusing Raheema will definitely serve as evidence. Right?' (Singh 2014, 92)

By recording and exposing the abuse, Rupali's video engages with the contemporary mechanisms of disciplinary power. It provides evidence for legal action and functions as a tool for surveillance, control, and the normalisation of acceptable behaviour within institutional spaces. This reflects Foucault's broader argument that modern societies regulate individuals through force, observation, documentation, and disciplinary mechanisms. He explains that "visibility is a trap" that makes individuals more susceptible to power and control (Foucault 1977, 200).

The scene was similar at every epicentre of protest. The gathering at the vast space in front of Rashtrapati Bhavan was the biggest of all, seeing which the Rapid Action Force (RAF) had been installed next to the state police. From tear gas pistols to water cannons, the law and order machinery had prepared itself to deal with the situation at hand. (Singh 2014, ix)

The university's attempt to suppress student activism through the use of surveillance cameras and security personnel exemplifies what Foucault refers to as the 'panoptic mechanism,' where the possibility of being observed influences behaviour. As Singh describes:

A gathering of thousands at this one place was a sight to behold. Every single sound, be it the frequent voices over the hundreds of walkie-talkies in the hands of cops, the centralized loudspeaker installed over the RAF's Vajr van, or the news journalists reporting live, all of it added to the noisy chaos. But the one sound that dominated and suppressed every other was the thumping hum of the crowd. (Singh 2014, ix)

Singh's portrayal demonstrates how Foucault's analysis of surveillance systems operates through direct observation and the internalisation of disciplinary norms. The novel shows how students develop what Foucault terms 'counter-conduct' - ways of resisting power while operating within its constraints. The institution's surveillance mechanisms serve as both a means of control and a catalyst for resistance. Foucault explains that "... we must hear the distant roar of battle" when analysing power and resistance, as it is through these struggles that power becomes both visible and malleable (Reid 2003, 5).

The novel's exploration of gender issues, viewed through a Foucauldian lens, reveals intricate power dynamics. Rupali's experience as a female student activist exemplifies what Foucault refers to as 'polymorphous techniques of power' at play on gendered bodies. Her navigation of traditional patriarchal expectations alongside modern aspirations illustrates how power relationships shape individual subjectivity. For example, Rupali's decision to participate in a protest against the institution's discriminatory policies is an act of resistance within the constraints of the surveillance mechanisms in place. The surveillance cameras that monitor her every move also serve as a reminder of the institution's power over her, but they also fuel her determination to challenge and subvert that power. As Foucault posits, "The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects." (Foucault 1980, 98) As Singh writes:

'Babloo iske purse mein se mobile nikal ke switch off kar pehle. Fir muh band kar saali ka!' (Search her purse for her mobile and switch it off first. Then shut her damn mouth!) the guy on the seat next to the driver shouted. His command was immediately followed. The guy on the left quickly searched her purse, switched off her mobile and took all the cash he could find. He then threw it behind the seat. Rupali could only watch as the other guy had his hand pressed on her mouth. (Singh 2014, 221)

This illustrates how gender functions, as Foucault describes it, as a 'regulatory ideal' as the norm that gets established as an optimal or ideal normal and is then used to regulate populations, dictating how they ought to behave. "The idea that the norm functions differently within disciplinary and biopolitical contexts ..." (Taylor 2009, 51) influencing behaviour and identity formation while simultaneously creating possibilities Rupali's journey from a small-town girl to an activist challenges traditional gender norms and established power structures. The novel's depiction of gender-based violence aligns with Foucault's analysis of how power operates upon bodies, with distinct forms across gender lines. The threats and harassment Rupali endure exemplify how social institutions and practices regulate and control bodies. Nevertheless, her activism and educational efforts highlight how power relations can be contested and redefined.

The novel's depiction of resistance and social activism aligns with Foucault's concept of resistance as inherent to power relationships. Singh's portrayal of student protests demonstrates what Foucault terms 'points of resistance' within the power network. In her article "The Politics of Time and Temporality in Foucault's Theorisation of Resistance: Ruptures, Time-Lags and Decelerations" Mona Lilja discusses Foucault's concept of 'points of resistance' within power networks, stating:

Resistance occurs as micro complexities – with words and sentences – and spreads itself about as a network. Still, the net-like organisation of small instances/intensities of resistance, which are imperceptibly repeated in all venues of society, can give rise to 'a revolution' after a delay of time. (Lija 2018, 426)

The university serves as a ground where both resistance and contestation take place. The student movement against corruption represents not just opposition to authority but what Foucault would identify as the strategic codification of points of resistance. Singh describes the evolution of student resistance:

A few thousand feet below the angry black clouds were many thousand angry souls who had come out on the streets of Delhi. Agitated young men and women—college students and office goers. There was rage in their eyes, their young faces, their body language. They were a mass of anger and protest. And they were loud—louder than the loudest thunderclaps. It didn't matter if they knew the person standing next to them or walking with them. They had all gathered for a cause that was common to each one of them—justice! (Singh 2014, viii)

This passage shows Foucault's assertion that resistance is not merely reactive but productive, creating new knowledge and social relations. Through organising protests, information-sharing networks, and strategic use of media, the students demonstrate what Foucault terms 'tactical reversals' of power relations.

The novel's exploration of social media activism particularly resonates with Foucault's analysis of discourse and power. When Arjun and his fellow activists utilise social media to expose corruption, they engage in what Foucault would recognise as the creation of counter-discourses. Digital resistance exemplifies Foucault's concept of power as productive rather than merely repressive, as students generate new forms of knowledge and solidarity through online activism. The intersection of political and personal power in the novel, where romance intertwines with social activism, illustrates Foucault's insight that power relationships permeate every aspect of social life, including intimate relationships. The love story between Rupali and Arjun exemplifies what Foucault terms 'the microphysics of power' operating at the most personal level of human interaction. Their relationship evolves within and against existing power structures, rendering even love itself a site of power dynamics.

Gosh! This is happening. She knows she isn't dreaming. It is all for real. She is present at that moment. And she is prepared for it.

He bends down to kiss her. Arjun closes his eyes and their lips meet. There is an explosion of senses as Arjun goes deeper and sucks on her lower lip as if trying to extract all his share of love from her. He pulls her closer to himself. She tightens her arms around him and kisses him back with equal passion. They are now kissing each other hungrily as if they have waited for this all their lives. The cold, the darkness, the world around them ceases to matter. All they feel is each other—the wetness between their lips. (Singh 2014, 163)

The novel depicts how personal relationships can become sites of resistance while simultaneously being influenced by broader power dynamics. Foucault's concept of 'technologies of the self'—how

individuals transform themselves within power relations—helps illuminate how Rupali and Arjun's relationship facilitates personal and political growth. The development of their romance mirrors their increasing political consciousness, exemplifying Foucault's theory of the interconnection between individual transformation and social resistance. Their shared activism creates what Foucault refers to as a 'practice of freedom,' a means of existing within power relationships while actively reshaping them.

Singh's exploration of corruption in the education system aligns with Foucault's analysis of the relationship between power and knowledge. The novel demonstrates how institutional power maintains itself through knowledge control, while resistance involves the production and circulation of counter-knowledge. The student's investigation of the corruption in the education system exemplifies what Foucault terms 'subjugated knowledge'—forms of understanding that challenge official narratives.

Your Dreams Are Mine Now portrays how the struggle for social justice inevitably involves what Foucault calls 'games of truth'—contests over what constitutes legitimate knowledge and who has the right to articulate it. Through their investigation and exposure of corruption, the students engage in what Foucault terms 'truth-telling' or 'parrhesia'—speaking truth to power despite personal risk. The students jeopardise their safety and future by uncovering governmental corruption, challenging the authorities' narrative of truth. Their participation in these games of truth ultimately questions the legitimacy of those in power.

The students demonstrate their commitment to fighting for a more just society by challenging the authority's monopoly on truth. Their actions emphasise the importance of transparency and accountability in governance and the individual's power to hold officials accountable. The novel thus serves as a testament to how the struggle for social justice requires active participation in shaping the narrative of truth rather than passive acceptance observation.

The treatment of urban space and power dynamics in the novel *Your Dreams Are Mine Now*, particularly the representation of power relationships in Delhi, offers another rich avenue for Foucauldian analysis. Singh's portrayal of the city, especially the university campus and its surrounding areas, illustrates Foucault's concept of spaces that simultaneously reflect and contest social power structures. Singh's Delhi emerges as a complex tapestry of overlapping power

relationships, a maze of invisible boundaries delineating privilege from poverty, tradition from modernity, and authority from resistance. The contrast between Rupali's small town and the urban landscape unveils distinctly different power structures operating in each space. The university campus emerges as what Foucault would term a 'disciplinary space,' where architectural design and spatial organisation regulate behaviour while also providing opportunities for subversion. The physical layout of the campus reflects institutional power structures, simultaneously creating spaces for resistance and collective action.

Singh's portrayal of technology and social media as instruments of both surveillance and resistance reveals the intricate nature of what Foucault describes as 'panoptic power' in the digital era. The novel examines how contemporary technology generates new forms of control while concurrently facilitating new modes of resistance. The student's use of social media platforms demonstrates what Foucault might call a 'tactical reversal' of surveillance mechanisms:

That's when Prosonjeet played Sherlock Holmes and suggested what he believed was a brilliant idea. 'Create an anonymous account and post this on the Internet. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, everywhere! It's that simple! Then we need to make sure a few people from the college watch it, bas! I can bet, it will go viral in no time!'

Everyone was quiet for a while, mulling over the idea. Then Arjun spoke, 'That sounds good! Really good! I think it addresses both the challenges: It promises to keep us anonymous and if we, through an anonymous ID, post this on our college's Facebook group, it will definitely go viral. And something like this going viral on a public domain is bound to create maximum damage! Very clever, Prosonjeet!' (Singh 2014, 96-97)

The university campus emerges as an architectural space where design and spatial organisation regulate behaviour while simultaneously offering opportunities for subversion. Singh's exploration of technology and social media as tools for both surveillance and resistance uncovers the complex nature of what Foucault describes as 'panoptic power', wherein modern technology creates new forms of control while facilitating new modes of resistance.

During protests, the students' bodies become primary instruments of resistance as they link arms and occupy spaces they have been instructed to vacate. This physical defiance against power structures challenges authorities' attempts to control not just minds but also physical presence in contested spaces. The physical toll of activism

illustrates what Foucault refers to as 'the materiality of power relationships'—exhaustion becomes a constant companion, voices grow hoarse from shouting slogans, and muscles ache after hours of protest. Their bodies bear witness to the tangible reality of resistance. Rupali's experience of gender-based harassment and her tragic end demonstrate how the female body serves as a particular site of power contestation. Singh's approach to language and communication provides rich material for Foucauldian analysis, illustrating how language functions both as a tool of oppression and as a means of resistance. While the administration communicates in formal, bureaucratic language designed to intimidate and control, students cultivate their own vocabulary, transforming official terms into rallying cries. The multilingual nature of campus life reflects competing discursive frameworks, with Hindi, English, and regional languages generating distinct power dynamics. Although English remains the language of official power, resistance finds expression in every tongue, challenging institutional hierarchies.

Rupali finds empowerment in her capacity to communicate beliefs and values through the language of activism. With each word spoken, she uncovers a sense of power and agency that was previously unknown to her. As she gains fluency in the language of resistance, she cultivates a renewed sense of identity and purpose, emerging as a warrior for justice and equality. She confronts existing power structures with her words and ensures her voice is heard in a society that frequently seeks to silence dissent.

Singh's portrayal of the emotional toll of activism offers insight into what Foucault might term the 'affective dimensions' of power relations. The novel demonstrates how emotional experiences serve as sites of both control and resistance. Through her characters' experiences, Singh illustrates the transformative power of collective action and solidarity in confronting oppressive systems. By highlighting the protagonist's emotional journey as they navigate fear and anger, she emphasises the significance of emotion in shaping an individual's responses to power dynamics. For instance, when Rupali witnesses a police officer brutally assaulting a protester, her initial fear and anger evolve into catalysts for organising a protest march with fellow community members. This collective action not only highlights police brutality but also empowers the characters to challenge the oppressive system and demand justice.

The novel illustrates how local struggles are linked to global patterns of resistance. Social media allows students to gather inspiration and strategies from movements across the world, transforming their local battle against corruption into a component of a broader global dialogue regarding educational justice and institutional accountability. Singh's depiction reflects what Foucault describes as 'the multiplication of points of resistance,' where interconnected social movements amplify individual voices into a collective front against oppression systems.

This collective resistance highlights the power of solidarity and collaboration in fostering meaningful global change. By recognising the common threads binding disparate movements, society can strive to dismantle the structures that perpetuate inequality and injustice. Singh's novel demonstrates that no struggle exists in isolation – individuals can pursue a more equitable world through unity and solidarity.

The novel's exploration of media and information control exemplifies what Foucault refers to as 'the regime of truth,' in which society defines and upholds what is considered true. Singh delves into this dynamic across various media forms, investigating how these different media types function as both instruments of power and tools of resistance. This dynamic between traditional and social media highlights the complexities of information dissemination in the digital age. While official narratives dominate traditional outlets, alternative platforms enable new voices to challenge the status quo. Singh's analysis emphasises the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in navigating competing narratives that shape our understanding of truth. The interplay between power and resistance in media reflects broader societal tensions and struggles for truth and justice. The novel demonstrates the complex relationship between media and power:

The channel, a sycophant of the party in opposition in the state, knew how to use every opportunity against the party in power. When backed by its promoters, the channel lambasted Mahajan, who was the ruling party's right-hand man in DU, without giving it a second thought.

When one channel broke the story, others too wanted to play up the hype. Without investigating the source, they simply ran a ticker claiming that 'The channel doesn't vouch for the authenticity of the video', and went ahead with Mahajan's character assassination, debating how the whole education system had become corrupt. (Singh 2014, 102-103)

Knowledge and truth therefore emerge not only as instruments for maintaining power but also as weapons of resistance that challenge dominant narratives. The novel underscores social media's dual nature as both an oppressor and a liberator. Through active engagement with knowledge and truth, individuals resist and confront systems of control and manipulation.

Singh's novel provides significant insights into what Foucault terms 'the analytics of power' in contemporary society. Its complex portrayal of institutional power and resistance offers theoretical contributions that extend Foucault's analysis of educational institutions. The narrative illustrates how power relations operate at multiple levels simultaneously, from institutional structures to personal relationships, while demonstrating the possibility of resistance within these systems.

Singh's analysis of university power structures reveals the modern adaptation of traditional disciplinary mechanisms. The intersection of various power systems in the novel provides novel theoretical insights. This concept of 'networked resistance' transcends the conventional understanding of power dynamics as a simple oppressor-oppressed binary. Instead, it highlights the complexity and interconnectedness of different power structures and individuals' navigation through them. By recognising these multiple layers of power, we gain a deeper understanding of resistance and agency within society. The novel presents a rich tapestry of intersecting power dynamics, offering a nuanced and multifaceted view of contemporary power relations. This intricate interplay between power and resistance emphasises the continually evolving negotiation of societal structures. By illustrating how individuals and groups navigate and contest power dynamics, the novel highlights the potential for social change and transformation. Ultimately, the book serves as a profound reminder of the significance of agency in shaping the world around us.

The novel explores how cultural memory sustains resistance through characters who draw on their cultural history and traditions to inform their acts of resistance. By illustrating how power dynamics shape resistance efforts, Singh demonstrates the complex interplay between authority and those who challenge the status quo. The narrative suggests that cultural change necessitates collective action and a deep understanding of cultural heritage.

Conclusion

This Foucauldian analysis of Ravinder Singh's Your Dreams Are Mine Now reveals the intricate relationships between power, resistance, and social transformation in contemporary Indian society. By examining institutional power, student activism, and personal relationships, the novel offers crucial insights into how power operates and how resistance arises within modern educational institutions and broader social contexts. The application of Foucault's theoretical framework illuminates several key aspects of the novel. First, the university setting emerges as what Foucault terms a 'disciplinary space' where power relations are both exercised and contested. Singh's portraval of Delhi University demonstrates how educational institutions employ various control mechanisms, ranging from surveillance cameras to examination systems, thus simultaneously becoming sites of resistance and transformation. The students' response to these control mechanisms, particularly their creative use of technology and collective organisation, illustrates what Foucault refers to as the 'strategic reversibility' of power relations.

The novel's exploration of gender dynamics offers rich material for understanding how power operates intersectionally. Through Rupali's character, Singh illustrates how female activists must navigate multiple power systems simultaneously: institutional authority, patriarchal structures, and social conventions. Her journey from a small-town student to an activist leader highlights the constraints imposed by these power systems and the potential for resistance and transformation. The gender-based violence she encounters exposes how institutional power often employs physical threats to maintain control, while her resistance demonstrates how collective action can challenge these mechanisms of oppression.

Integrating personal relationships with political activism in the novel suggests new ways to understand resistance movements. The love story between Rupali and Arjun demonstrates how emotional bonds can sustain political commitment and shows how shared activism can deepen personal connections. This interweaving of personal and political narratives challenges traditional distinctions between the private and public spheres, suggesting that effective resistance requires engagement with both dimensions of life.

Singh's portrayal of student activism offers valuable insights into the development and sustainability of movements. The novel illustrates that resistance involves not only opposing power but also creating alternative spaces, narratives, and forms of knowledge. The students' utilisation of documentation, social media, and collective memory-making exemplifies how movements generate what Foucault refers to as 'counter-discourses' that challenge official narratives and inspire future activism. The novel's treatment of technology and surveillance reflects the challenges faced by contemporary social movements. Singh demonstrates how digital tools can serve both power and resistance, creating new organising opportunities while facilitating new forms of control. This dynamic illustrates how power relations evolve in response to technological change, necessitating that movements continuously adapt their strategies and tactics.

The novel's tragic ending serves not only as a commentary on institutional violence but also as an illustration of how movements can turn personal loss into collective resistance. Rupali's death acts as a catalyst for renewed activism, demonstrating how movements can continue to thrive even in the face of severe repression. This transformation of tragedy into resistance reflects Foucault's insight that power relations give rise to opposition. The implications of this analysis extend beyond literary criticism to illuminate broader questions regarding social change and collective action. Singh's novel suggests that effective resistance necessitates engaging with multiple forms of power simultaneously – institutional, cultural, technological, and interpersonal. The student movement thrives through confrontation and the establishment of alternative spaces, narratives and forms of knowledge.

The contemporary relevance of the novel's themes remains striking. As educational institutions worldwide grapple with issues of equity, accountability, and digital transformation, *Your Dreams Are Mine Now* offers valuable insights into how power functions and how it can be challenged. The novel's examination of institutional corruption, gender violence, and student activism speaks directly to current social movements and political struggles. This analysis also suggests several avenues for future research. The intersection of digital technology, institutional power, and student resistance merits further investigation, particularly as educational institutions evolve. The novel's exploration of gender and activism proposes new perspectives on how movements confront intersecting forms of oppression. The role of memory and documentation in resistance movements, especially in the digital age, represents another promising area for future study.

This study demonstrates the ongoing relevance of Foucauldian theory for understanding contemporary power relations and resistance movements. Singh's novel illustrates how power operates through prominent forms of repression and subtle control mechanisms embedded within institutional structures, cultural practices, and social relationships. At the same time, the novel unveils how resistance emerges through collective action, alternative knowledge production, and the transformation of personal relationships. Your Dreams Are Mine Now significantly contributes to our understanding of how power functions and can be challenged in contemporary society. Through its narrative and integration of social critique, the novel shows how literature can illuminate individual experience and collective struggle. Singh's work suggests that lasting social transformation necessitates engagement with both personal and political dimensions of life, highlighting how love and activism, individual growth and collective action can reinforce each other in the pursuit of justice.

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The end of intimacy? Social robots as sexbots or the technologization of love and sexuality

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Abstract: In recent years, the phenomenon of what we can call of technological love has dramatically increased. The search for love through the use of technologies has resulted in new ways to experience love and sexuality. Many of the online platforms are based on the premise that love is the most important, with social networks and chats reaching their peak because of this, in such a way that they were extrapolated to TV shows or contests like "Love on Top" or "Adam and Eve". But now the level is different: it seems that an absolute sexual revolution will take place in the coming decades, in which sexual partners may be exchanged for social and sexual robots – sexbots –, and with neuronal stimulation programs for personal satisfaction. In this sense, this essay seeks first to reflect on the current situation in which personal relationships are found, and secondly, to deepen the hypothesis of another sexuality, concluding with a reflection on the most radical possibility that will be the annulment of sexuality as an experience of love, that is, becoming a mere robotization of sexuality. In view of this possibility, a sexual revolution can reshape the phenomenon of intimacy which characterizes the human mind and essence.

Keywords: intimacy, sexual revolution, sexbots, social robots, technological love interaction

Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century, many pink magazines worldwide started a phenomenon that is still felt today (with different media and certainly with different approaches) but that may disappear in the coming decades: the search for love. Many people will remember those kinds of magazines that indicated (and still indicate) beauty paradigms, new fashion trends, some even gave marriage advice for a happy and

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healthy marriage (according to patriotic politics, national or foreign social events), and in addition they provided the beginning of what can be considered as the technologization of love. For example, see how in the pages usually identified as the reader's mail this search begins: lady widow, good social position, with own home, affable and companion, wants to meet a gentleman in a similar situation for future engagement. It should be said that these types of advertisements still exist in some of the current magazines (perhaps by people less prepared for new technologies) and in the end it can be said that it is the perpetuation of a strategy that seems to be paying off.

While it is true that the social, economic and political contexts in which many of these advertisements developed (after the second world war for instance), it is still curious how a (new) medium/interface was being created for the prodigy of love. Thus, the apparent novelty of platforms or social networks is nothing more than a technological democratization (in the absence of a more appropriate term) of the love phenomenon. From Facebook to Badoo, from MySpace to Tinder, the forms and content vary depending on the profile created and its objectives. Following this virtual trend of "the search for love" and having the perception of the potential that the phenomenon of love awakens, televisions also bet on reality shows and reinvented these models such as "Love on Top" or the more radical ones "Adam and Eve" and "Naked Attraction", in which participants go to a paradise island and find themselves naked (in fact, the producers are providing a new vision of a religious and romantic myth but without the primordial innocence described in the holy books).

These forms of public exposure can be summed up using the expression popularized by Paula Sibilia (2008), "intimacy as a show". The existence of applications in which it is possible to measure the love of the partner or check the compatibility of the couple, or even the future of this relationship, are some of the examples that allow us to perceive, on the one hand, the human need for love, and on the other hand, seeing how the love phenomenon has become cybernetic (in addition to a very profitable business). The phenomenon of love has enormous potential, as everything seems to revolve around the desire to find a soul mate, thus continuing the myth indicated by Aristophanes in Plato's *Banquet*.

A brief discussion between intimacy, sex and technology

It should be noted that matrimonial agencies, with their discreet offices and showcases of potential compatible partners, have given way to digital platforms, to smart and intuitive app's, where the algorithms are in charge of matching personalities (which means in current language to find the perfect pair of persons for love).

That's how we find anthropologist Helen Fisher (famous for her biochemical studies of romantic love) to give in to the temptation of the love business that led to the creation of chemistry.com, which belongs to the IAC (Inter Active Corp) group, which owns more than 150 brands, 10 of which are social networking sites like the mentioned Tinder or meetic. The match.com platform (launched in 1994, app launched in 1994) alone presented around US \$ 55 million in 2014, and so many more for Ashley Madison, which does not excuse its purpose well expressed in the slogan: "Life is short. Have an affair". In an article published in February, 2019, called "Is the golden age of online dating over?" by Gayle Macdonald, it is said that "even though the sector appears to be booming. The US\$ 3 billion American dating industry has seen a 140 per cent increase in revenue since 2009. according to IBISWorld. The market research firm counts approximately 55 million mobile dating app users in North America alone, and estimates that number will grow by 25 per cent next year" (Macdonald, 2019).

From what has been said so far, it has been appreciated that the phenomenon of love can no longer hide the entrepreneurial and economic potential it carries. Not only the legal ones but, and this must be said, even in criminal cases; look for instance at the economic dimension that pornography and prostitution can achieve. So, we do not need discourses, meaning the more or less philosophical or scientific discourses that end up being retained in the academies, waging an unequal struggle (which seeks to affirm the need for new educational projects), ignoring the reality of the world as it is seen with serious social and economic problems. According to United Nations, sexual exploitation represents the largest form of human trafficking (about 78%), far ahead of forced labour (about 18%). The UN estimates that more than 20 million people are victims of enslavement and an associated commercial transaction value close to 100 billion dollars.

It seems that it is no longer so much about questioning cybersexuality, about questioning the cyberization of the human body,

the abstract continuities of meaning that the semiotics of the sciences want to reinvent, but of seeing how the human is transmuting himself into another thing-self, and we must dare to say, in a metamorphosis of something that desires sexualized things, succumbing, to use the phrase of Mario Perniola's, to the sex appeal of the inorganic. It is recalled that Mario Perniola seems to resume Marx's premise in the statement that "the devaluation of the human world grows as a direct result of the valorisation of the world of things". The Italian philosopher knows that something (more or less) abstract has taken the place of man in the human world, that man's ontological Heideggerian statelessness is a harsh reality.

In his work *The sex appeal of the inorganic*, the philosopher is aware that things drive and seduce man towards immersion in the thing, and in this alienation in which man lives, he appropriately says: "if man could be something, your pain would end. Perhaps it is only through sexuality that one can think of overcoming this pain; perhaps only in sexuality does man become a thing" (Perniola 2004, 101).

Mario Perniola's words bring us back to the heart of the matter: from giving up what has been called the technologization of love to the sexualization of machines. The reification of the human world, as a process initiated in postmodernity, above all by the imposition of a global model of paradoxical happiness to use Lipovetsky's expression, will lead or better, it may lead to a failure of intimacy, of the love phenomenon and the ultimate revolution sexual. But maybe this is not totally new. In the beginning of the futurist movement founded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti we can found several examples of this sexualization of machines or eroticism of things, but it can also be found in dadaism or surrealism, recall for instance the Portrait of a young American Girl in the State of Nudity, 1915, from Francis Picabia, which nothing less than a spark plug. In fact, Picabia is the provocative artist that interconnects not only art with machinery but that it sees it as the very soul of being human (when he arrives at the USA): "It flashed upon me that the genius of the modern world is in machinery and that trough machinery art ought to find a most vivid expression. The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of human life. It is really a part of human life – perhaps the very soul". (New York Tribune, 1915)

In truth, the sexual life of the human species has existed for many hundreds of years accompanied by things that satisfy it, being more visible in the last century. However, the rapid development of cybernetics, computing and artificial intelligence now allows, similarly to what has already happened with magazine ads, the exploration of the remaining *humanitas* potential that exists in man, its intimacy.

The already existing reality: sexbots and other toys

As we have already mentioned, the phenomenon of the search for love has evolved in close connection with new technologies. But this search is already a distorted form of the loving ideal meaning that this way of seeking – perhaps not love itself but what love can give – has given rise to new ways of thinking about sexuality and the forms of sexual satisfaction. Different worlds have been imagined in the literature. Being able to imagine an interconnection with something that could reconcile the best of both worlds: the individual subject of feelings and emotions with the power of the machine, would constitute the perfect cyborg. But the idea of cyborg seems old and odd since the ambition for more went from that romantic ideal to androids (with fully artificial intelligence developed or should we say, with artificial minds capable of feelings).

As we already mentioned, Marinetti was a visionary and, in fact, he was long before Donna Haraway's Cyborg manifesto went public (Haraway provide a post-gendered world with no distinction between natural and artificial life). Like Allison E. Carey says:

Marinetti broadens his claims regarding the relationship between humans and machines. No longer does humankind merely co-exist, cooperate or connive with machines. Rather, Marinetti predicts a fusion f man and machine and "the formation of the nonhuman, mechanical species of extended man, through the externalization of his will. (...) Marinetti's sexualization of the relationship between man and machine is noticeable not only in his eulogies on "mechanical beauty" but also in his description of a locomotive driver's caresses of the "steel that had so often glistened sensuously beneath the lubricating caress of his hand". (Carey 2015, 377)

The sexualization that Marinetti predicts is somehow connected with the fetish process identified by several authors. Remembering for instance the movie *Crash* (1996) of David Cronenberg (that has written on the poster "...sex and car crashes"), refers to that mechanical intersubjective relation between human and non-human.

The question to be done must be about the state of the art, meaning by this, what is the reality about sexbots? Are we talking about robots built to appear as sexual companions, or if one prefers, about sexual robots capable of satisfying the most secrets desires? So, what is the true reality?

One of the first ones to take seriously the question (despite the many examples that exist throughout history and literature) was Arthur Harkins. Starting from the analysis of the Androbot BOB (brains on board), a robot developed by Nolan Bushnell, designed for companion, he puts several questions (and some of them are ethical questions):

If the evolution of PRs [personal robots] continues with the pace set by Androbot BOB, we will see a variety of institutional uses for these machines during the 1980s, including hospital robots (currently under development in Japan), robot playmates (two varieties- one for children and one for adults), tree-trimming and line- working robots, and a whole variety of robot appliances for the kitchen, for wheelchair applications and for hundreds of other uses. (...). What if a child's playmate robot wins affection away from the parents, or engenders a preference in the child for machines rather than for other children? What if an adult's playmate robot becomes the partner of choice in sexual relations, leaving a spouse or lover out in the cold? (Harkins 1983, 23)

Arthur Harkins maintains his optimistic view and consider the future possibility of personal robots become robots with sexual-services capabilities, and therefore, he puts the possibility of existing marriages between living and non-living beings in the beginning of the 21st century. This introduces another difficult question about what it means to be a living being, but for now, we have to skip this concept.

Mark Goldfeder and Yosef Razin in his famous paper entitled "Robot Marriage and the Law" (2015), argue that there must be three requirements in order for human-robot marriage take place (and acquire a legalized status): consent, understanding and capacity to make decisions. Regarding the first one, the authors say that three conditions must be fulfilled, both parties must have the legal capacity to do the (marriage) contract, both must be able to voluntarily assent and, finally, conform the legal requirements of the ceremonial. About understanding, Goldfeder and Razin say that if a robot can understand the meaning of marriage (which means that already passed the Turing test by its actions, behaviour and words), then it is able to marriage. About decisions, the authors say that if they can decide, they probably are capable of doing some rational thinking and at the same time to manifest their will (what they "want"). They say:

Humans are presumed to have mental capacity over a certain age, and, at least, from that point on, a right to a competency evaluation. If we adopt

similar tests for AI, it would not be unreasonable to presume a status quo that given AI does not have mental capacity unless meeting the requirements of the test, and competency evaluation may be compulsory. However, once a robot's mental capacity and legal competence are established, it is presumed that they can freely consent, unless coerced or the robot's functionality is compromised (Goldfeder&Razin 2015, 137).

Some experts in robotics admit the radical hypothesis of mechanical sexualization of human life to the detriment of human companionship, such as the much-quoted Joel Snell (in an interview of September 3, 2016 to the *British Daily Star*) who warns not only about the possibility of an achievement fuller sexuality and the possibility of an addiction (addiction) given the unconditional availability that these sexbots can offer. Joel Snell's words seem very cruel, but at the same time very close to reality. In fact, the idea will certainly be very tempting for thousands of people who would prefer to have a sexual partner always available, organized, possibly smiling, with no headaches, with a high degree of sexual performance, and, to say, of low consumption (in all possible economical contexts, both for men and women).

In a 2012 article entitled "Robots, men and sex tourism", Ian Yeoman and Michelle Mars set the scene of Amsterdam's "Red Light District" offering sexbot escorts:

In 2050, Amsterdam's red-light district will all be about android prostitutes who are clean of sexual transmitted infections (STIs), not smuggled in from Eastern Europe and forced into slavery, the city council will have direct control over android sex workers controlling prices, hours of operations and sexual services. This paper presents a futuristic scenario about sex tourism, discusses the drivers of change and the implications for the future. The paper pushes plausibility to the limit as boundaries of science fiction and fact become blurred in the ever-increasing world of technology, consumption and humanity, a paradigm known as liminality. (Yeoman & Mars 2012, 365).

The most sceptical may argue that all this is nothing more than virtual scenarios or fantasy constructions of the human mind. To avoid fallacious discussions and wasted time, we will have to respond with what already exists. And what already exists are sex robots that can be found in companies like "Real Doll" or "True Companion". Naturally they are not, or rather, they are not yet in terms of artificial intelligence, comparable to the ginoid Sophia created by David Hason, who fluently articulates answers or sketches facial expressions with some ease, or to the "geminoids" models of the robotics pioneer,

Hiroshi Ishiguro, which assumes the coming of the "era of robots" (interesting to see the article wrote by Mark Gilson, "A Brief History of Japanese Robophilia", in which he argues the fascination of Japanese people for robots).

Everything indicates that in the near future these true companions will be much more developed and ready to condemn the human species even more to loneliness. And one of the first reasons it is not just because of the more sophisticated materials but because of the rapid development of Artificial Intelligent systems. The rapid development that has taken place in this area has generated some controversy and the researcher Kathleen Richardson fears the increased isolation of human beings, directed the campaign "Against Sex Robots" to raise awareness about this danger but also to promote the discussion around ethics in robotics (it seems to be forgotten by most of them the Isaac Asimov's classic "Three Laws of Robotics" that states that, first: A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Second: A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. Third: A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or second laws). A fascinating and urgent topic begins to occupy the communities of researchers from different areas. Some researchers suggest that ethical programming must be done for artificial intelligence and thus, that a statute of legal responsibility be defined for robots. There are many questions about the owners of those sexual robots but also about themselves. Hilary Putnam more than fifty years ago put the question about the civil rights of robots or if one prefers, about "Robot Liberation" (the discrimination based on softness or hardness is empty and it is the same as discriminating humans on the basis of skin color), and Robert Freitas Junior (in late 1985) wrote:

How should deviant robots be punished? Western penal systems assume that punishing the guilty body punishes the guilty mind – invalid for computers whose electromechanical body and software mind are separable. What is cruel and unusual punishment for a sentient robot? Does reprogramming a felonious computer person violate constitutional privacy or other rights? Robots and software persons are entitled to protection of life and liberty. But does "life" imply the right of a program to execute, or merely to be stored? Denying execution would be like keeping a human in a permanent coma – which seems unconstitutional. Do software persons have a right to data they need in order to keep executing?

However, despite these necessary and desirable contributions, the ethical implications of the use of sexbots in human life go beyond these discussions and investigations and threaten to become like other subjects in human life, a subject to be debated belatedly.

In a different point of view, Kate Devlin also published an article in *The Conversation* (17 September 2015) called "In defense of sex machines: Why trying to ban sex robots is wrong", drawing attention to aspects less considered. She says:

The scope for sex robots goes far beyond Richardson's definition of them as "machines in the form of women or children for use as sex objects, substitutes for human partners or prostitutes". Yes, we impose our beliefs on these machines: we anthropomorphize and we bring our prejudices and assumptions with us. Sex robots have, like much of the technology we use today, been designed by men, for men. (...)

And sex robots could go beyond sex. What about the scope for therapy? Not just personal therapy (after all, companion and care robots are already in use) but also in terms of therapy for those who break the law. Virtual reality has already been trialed in psychology and has been proposed as a way of treating sex offenders. Subject to ethical considerations, sex robots could be a valid way of progressing with this approach. (Devlin, 2015)

The logic seems to be, if we already have care robots like, for example, pet robots or care robots, why not legitimize sex robots with the same caring dimension?! Is sexuality that scary for the human condition, for the law, for morality? And why not assume that it is a constituent of human nature?

Bendel (2015) sees sexbots as a way of promoting health (not only sexual health). He classifies them according with tree main dimensions: therapy, surgery and care (note that for Bendel a sexbot it is not only a sexual partner but a companion that can caressing and give hugs, share erotic conversations). Döring (2018) calls into question these dimensions once and asks if nursing robots should have sexual functions. But Bendel goes further and in a recent paper called "Love dolls and sex robots in unproven and unexplored fields of application" (2020) he takes it seriously:

These include prisons, the military, monasteries and seminaries, science, art and design as well as the gamer scene. There is, at least, some relevant research about the application of these artefacts in nursing and retirement homes and as such, these will be given priority. The use of love dolls and sex robots in all these fields is outlined, special features are discussed and initial ethical, legal and pragmatic considerations are made. It becomes clear that artificial love servants can create added value, but that their use must be

carefully considered and prepared. In some cases [he admits], their use may even be counterproductive.

Conclusion

The discussion can be just as or more realistic if you one asks the following question: what will it take for a sexbot to pass the Turing test? Recall the science fiction film *Her* (2013) by Spike Jonze or another one *Ex Machina* (2015) by Alex Garland, in which virtual and artificial creatures can form relationships with people. In the film of Alex Garland, the ginoid Ava manages to deceive the evaluator and the creator (Turing test), not for any sexual performance but for the ability to simulate human behaviour (honesty, faithfulness, etc.) and specifically, to simulate seduction.

In other words, and possibly in a near future, it could be said that an answer to the question asked could be that these sexbots would pass the Turing test if they managed to be programmed to perfectly copy human behaviour (which also means that they can perform the same kind of mistakes as humans). In a certain way they can be an extension of our own mind and therefore also able to commit crimes (see Capasso 2023; Castro 2024). With the fast development of artificial intelligence and other areas like biomechanics, engineering robotics also the question of uncanny valley will disappear from the scientific. academic and popular horizon since sexual robots will become everyday more realistic - not only in movements but also in their "skins", in their behaviour, in their way of "thinking". In a sense – and one knows that this is a different issue -, social robots can be presented (or disguised) as "social assistive robots for supporting healthcare provision" (see Pareto and Coeckelbergh 2024, for these specific kinds of robots and issues) which ends up masking their conception, design and purposes for which they were conceived.

In this sense, manipulation, seduction and the ability to lie come to the top, as it is through lies that the incitement of the consumer of sexbots passes right away. We all know that creating an illusion is not done by the truth but by the ability to reinvent verisimilitude. In this sense, ethical and moral issues rise and one of the main questions is the one that if we can trust in social robots and Perconti and Plebe (2024, 40) suggest that the concept of deferential, or more precisely, a "selective deference" (meaning that "is an epistemic attitude that hierarchizes, both implicitly and explicitly, the kinds of social

knowledge to be the most deferential toward") can create a scenario more suitable for trusting social robots.

Thus, it may well be the case that the question initially asked is completely unreasonable, because for the future consumer of sexbots (as it is today for the consumer of any sex shop products) the question, whatever it may be, is perfectly irrelevant. The technologization of love and sexuality is a reality in the daily lives of thousands of people and if some forms of proof were required, it would be enough to see the industries and companies that live in the shadow of this business flourish (even that Danaher & McArthur 2017) and so many others researchers still questioning about this human-robot interaction (and the possible effect on society).

With the sexbots, a true and ultimate revolution of intimacy will take place, which will bring a greater subject to the table. If this tyranny of intimacy remains in the coming decades, the love will only be a phenomenon described in the childhood literature of humanity - if there is still humanity to sexualize machines. Apparently, there is no use in such an achievement, but if the development of artificial intelligence is done based on the human species, if it is done based on the replication of conscious experiences, it may be that a being too intelligent (no longer any kind of state-of-the-art sexbot) gain "awareness" of pleasure and want to live it. All scenarios are possible and all scenarios are open.

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Aristotle's virtue ethics perspective on individual existence in sports: Eudaimonia and practical wisdom

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effects of sports on individual existence from the perspective of Aristotle's virtue ethics. By focusing on the concepts of eudaimonia, mesotes, and phronesis, the study examines how sports contribute to the moral and ethical development of individuals. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the analysis categorized information derived from relevant sources under thematic headings. Each theme was interpreted to provide an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Aristotle's virtue ethics and sports. The findings reveal that sports are not merely physical activities but also platforms that foster individuals' intellectual. and existential development. Particularly, experiences gained through sports by young athletes can enhance both their individuality and social responsibilities. Aristotle's concept of phronesis can serve as a guiding principle for ethical decision-making processes among athletes and coaches. The societal dimensions of sports become more evident in platforms like the Olympic Games, which promote international collaboration. Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic movement illustrates that sports facilitate the dissemination of ethical values and contribute to the development of socially responsible individuals. This understanding aligns with Aristotle's virtue ethics, encouraging an ethical life for both individuals and society. Aristotle's phronesis is critical for interpreting ethical decisionmaking processes within the context of sports. While emphasizing the impact of sports on mental development, the study highlights how ethical decisionmaking processes strengthen individuals' mental resilience and moral maturity. Sports, as a field often marked by ethical dilemmas, provide fertile ground for such analyses. Despite differences between professional and amateur sports, the study identifies a common ground in the ethical issues present in both domains. Aristotle's virtue ethics offers a robust framework for addressing these issues. By advocating for the avoidance of extremes and the pursuit of the mean, the Aristotelian approach can guide individuals and communities in addressing ethical challenges.

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Introduction

Aristotle's ethical framework is founded on the concept of *eudaimonia* (happiness or the good life), which he considers the ultimate purpose of human life. According to him, a good life is achievable through the realization of human virtues. Within this framework, Aristotle distinguishes moral virtues into two categories: intellectual virtues and ethical virtues. While intellectual virtues are cultivated through education, ethical virtues are acquired through habitual practice. In this context, living a good life necessitates acting virtuously (Aristotle 2009). Aristotle's conception of virtue emphasizes the "mean" rather than excess or deficiency. This idea, known as *mesotes*, posits that every virtue represents a point of balance. For instance, the virtue of courage lies between the extremes of cowardice and recklessness. This ethical approach supports a meaningful life, not only for the individual but also by contributing to society (Zingano 2007).

Aristotle's perspective on individual existence is rooted in the actualization of inherent human potentials, guided by virtues. For him, an individual's existence gains meaning only by living in alignment with their nature (Jaeger, 1957). In this sense, the existential significance of an individual is realized through intellectual activities and ethical behaviors (Doris, 1998). Individual existence is in constant interaction with society, offering opportunities for self-improvement and societal development. Aristotle explains this dynamic with the idea that "man is by nature a political animal" (zoon politikon) (MacIntyre 2007).

Ethical values are fundamental elements that shape an individual's existential meaning. In Aristotle's philosophy, these values require individuals to act in ways that enhance not only their happiness but also the happiness of those around them (Rabbås, 2015). The virtues possessed by an individual facilitate coping with moral challenges encountered in daily life and help fulfill responsibilities towards oneself and society (Baeva, 2014).

Aristotle elucidates the impact of ethical values on individual existence through the balance between moral responsibility and personal happiness. This balance enables individuals to lead meaningful lives. Specifically, ethical values encourage individuals not

only to be virtuous persons but also to act as good citizens within a societal context (Hursthouse 1999).

The intersection of virtue ethics and sports

Virtue ethics, as developed by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, is an ethical theory that emphasizes the pursuit of virtue in individuals' actions. Aristotle's virtue ethics highlights the concept of finding the "mean" and identifies it as the cornerstone of a good life (Aristotle 2009). This approach provides a strong theoretical foundation for individuals to develop moral virtues and dedicate themselves to becoming better people in the context of sports. Sports serve as a practical domain for the application of virtue ethics, enabling individuals to grow physically, emotionally, and morally (Weiss & Bredemeier 1990).

Values such as fair play, resilience, self-discipline, and responsibility are fundamental elements of sports and strongly align with the principles of virtue ethics (Morgan 2024). Aristotle's moral philosophy views sports not merely as a physical activity but as a medium for leading a virtuous life (McNamee 2018). In this regard, Reid (2022) argues that sports, within the framework of virtue ethics, contribute to the development of individuals' moral character and influence ethical decision-making processes. Additionally, Simon (2018) asserts that sports reinforce values such as justice, honesty, and respect in individuals.

The applicability of Aristotle's virtue ethics in the context of sports Aristotles virtue ethics provides a robust framework for analyzing the impact of sports on individuals. According to Aristotle, virtues are acquired through the consistent repetition of correct actions (Trianosky 1990). In this context, sports serve as an excellent discipline for developing virtues such as courage, justice, self-discipline, and patience (Bäck 2009). For example, an athlete's adherence to rules and fair competition during an event can be seen as an expression of the virtue of justice. Similarly, demonstrating self-discipline to achieve goals is considered one of the fundamental aspects of Aristotle's virtue ethics (Brodie 2006).

The Principle of the Golden Mean: Aristotle's principle of the "golden mean" helps athletes find balance on their path to success. For instance, it promotes courage over overconfidence and teamwork over destructive competitiveness (MacIntyre 2007).

Aristotle's virtue ethics evaluates not only individual actions but also their societal implications. Considering sports from an ethical perspective contributes to both individual development and societal morality (McNamee 2018). Hardman et al. (2010) discuss how Aristotle's virtues can guide training and competition and how sports can be used as a tool for ethical development.

Character development and virtues in sports

Sports serve as a significant tool for shaping an individual's character (Oddner 2010). According to Aristotle, virtue becomes a habit through the repetition of right actions (Aristotle 2009). In this context, sports provide a practical domain where individuals can develop and reinforce their moral virtues. For instance, in team sports, players cultivate virtues such as cooperation, solidarity, and humility (Arnold 1997).

Character development through sports also enhances an individual's sense of responsibility towards society. Aligning with Aristotle's concept of *zoon politikon*, individuals learn to act as ethical beings not only for themselves but also within a societal framework. This supports the idea that sports function not only as a physical activity but also as a tool for moral education (Morgan 2007).

Reflections of individual existence in sports

Individual existence can be defined as the process through which individuals recognize, interpret, and construct their lives in alignment with their values. Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* (the good life) serves as a guide for individuals to lead their lives virtuously in this context (Krein 2015). Sports provide a platform where individuals can make sense of their existence while fostering physical, mental, and moral development (Watson 2011). In Aristotle's philosophy, individual existence is linked to the cultivation of virtues and living in accordance with one's nature, where every virtuous act imbues the individual's existence with meaning. Sports enable individuals to discover their unique identities, develop moral values, and understand their physical abilities (Arnold 1997).

Sports serve as a stage for expressing not only physical activities but also emotional and mental processes. This dynamic supports the transfer of ethical decisions made in sports to other areas of individuals' lives (Mareš 2022).

The effects of sports on individual identity and existence

Sports play a significant role in the process of identity formation. Through sports activities, participants can better understand themselves, set personal goals, and shape their identities (Arnold 1999). According to Aristotle, individuals derive meaning from their actions, and this meaning is often embodied through sports. For instance, an athlete can express themselves through virtues such as courage, resilience, and justice (Kidd 2016).

Construction of identity and existence: Sports are instrumental in constructing an individual's social, cultural, and personal identity. Within the framework of Aristotle's virtue philosophy, sports offer individuals opportunities to lead a virtuous life. Sports activities also provide a platform for individuals to test and develop their moral values (MacIntyre 2007).

Authenticity and self-awareness: The experiences of competition, achievement, failure, and endurance in sports shape individuals' unique identities. This process contributes to their journey of self-discovery and finding meaning in their lives (Hursthouse 1999).

Social identity and sports: The impact of sports on individual existence is not confined to personal experiences but also extends to shaping societal identities. Values such as fair play, solidarity, and responsibility help individuals become more ethical members of society (Morgan 2024).

The influence of sports on individual identity becomes particularly evident during adolescence. Sports provide young individuals with opportunities to expand their social networks and discover themselves (Reid 2014). Moreover, achievements gained through sports boost self-confidence and reinforce existential meaning (Shoxrux 2023).

Self-realization and sports practices

Self-realization is defined as the process through which an individual maximizes their potential and leads a meaningful life (Maslow 1954). According to Aristotle, this process is achievable by practicing virtues aligned with one's nature and following a balanced path in life. Sports play a direct role in facilitating self-realization, enabling individuals to discover their physical and mental capacities while helping them push their limits (Zowisło 2010).

Self-realization and the role of sports: Aristotle's concept of self-realization refers to the attainment of a complete existence by maximizing one's potential. Sports can serve as a means for

individuals to explore and develop their physical and mental capacities (Nesti 2004).

Sports practices and individual development: Sports practices allow individuals to grow not only physically but also mentally and morally. This process enhances their quality of life and supports their journey toward *eudaimonia* (Bowman & West 2021).

Application of virtues: Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) can be used to understand the role of sports in ethical development. For example, an athlete's disciplined training routines and decisions during competitions contribute to their self-realization through practical wisdom (Carr 2017).

Sports practices foster not only physical skills but also mental resilience and moral integrity (Bissell & Kolhatkar 2023). For instance, the endurance and determination exhibited by a marathon runner reflect the process of self-realization. In this context, sports provide opportunities for individuals to achieve not only personal goals but also contribute to broader societal contexts (McNamee 2008).

Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom (phronesis) and sports

Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) is a virtue that enables individuals to determine the most appropriate course of action based on their experiences in ethical decision-making processes (Duvenage 2015). *Phronesis* plays a decisive role in equipping individuals not only with theoretical knowledge but also with wisdom derived from practical applications (Stichter 2016).

Sports provide a platform for individuals to develop their ethical decision-making processes and enhance their practical wisdom. Athletes benefit from sports by improving not only their physical skills but also their strategic thinking and moral decision-making abilities (Tsai 2020). Specifically, adherence to ethical principles in the actions of athletes and coaches contributes to the realization of this virtue in practice. According to Aristotle, such decisions facilitate the application of virtues in practice, thereby contributing to an individual's moral development (Kristjánsson 2024).

Ethics and practical wisdom in decision-making processes

Ethical decision-making is intrinsically tied to the challenges and competitive dynamics inherent in sports, requiring individuals to discern and choose the right course of action. This is a frequent concern for athletes, coaches, and sports managers (McLean & Yoder

2005). Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* enables individuals to make appropriate and virtuous decisions in such contexts. For instance, a coach deciding on a game strategy without jeopardizing a player's health exemplifies *phronesis* in the context of sports (McNamee 2018).

Practical wisdom requires consideration of not only individual interests but also the welfare of the team and society at large (Duvenage 2015). Sports facilitate the integration of virtues such as justice, courage, and self-discipline into decision-making processes. This integration supports the development of not only the individual's identity as an athlete but also their moral character (Carr 2017).

The contribution of sports to mental and moral development

Sports are a discipline that not only enhances individuals' physical capacities but also fosters their mental abilities. Developing game strategies, solving problems, and making quick decisions are some of the ways sports contribute to mental development (Nesti 2004). For example, the necessity of cooperation in team sports encourages individuals to learn values such as empathy and social responsibility (Arnold 1997).

In terms of moral development, sports provide a significant platform that strengthens ethical values while promoting moral growth through consistent practice. Values such as team spirit, self-discipline, and solidarity contribute to individuals' moral maturation (Morgan 2024).

Moreover, sports improve individuals' mental resilience by enhancing their ability to cope with stress and solve problems. In the context of Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom), sports guide individuals in addressing challenges with an ethical perspective. This highlights the role of sports as a vital tool for fostering mental and moral development (Jones & McNamee 2000).

Ethics and the concept of fair play in sports

Ethics is a fundamental element that guides the shaping of individual and social values in sports. The ethical dimension of sports is closely associated with the concept of fair play (Loland & McNamee 2000). Fair play encompasses not only adherence to rules but also the practical embodiment of core virtues such as honesty, justice, and respect (Butcher & Schneider 1998). This understanding is critical for promoting ethical behavior in sports and fostering the development of athletes as virtuous individuals (McIntosh 1979).

The concept of fair play serves as a framework that integrates both the competitive and educational aspects of sports. Aristotle's notions of *eudaimonia* (the good life) and virtue align closely with the values underlying fair play (Arnold 1997).

Sports and ethics from a historical perspective

The ethical dimension of sports began to be discussed with the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece. In Ancient Greece, sports were regarded as a means to promote both physical and moral development. During the early years of the Ancient Olympic Games, athletes were expected not only to display physical strength but also to embody moral virtues (Young 2008).

In the Middle Ages, the ethical dimension of sports was shaped by religious and social norms. However, the modern understanding of sports ethics was reinterpreted in the 19th century through the "Muscular Christianity" movement led by American Protestants. This movement emphasized the need for sports to balance physical health with moral values (Putney 2009).

The modern ethical understanding of sports was further reshaped by the Olympic movement initiated by Pierre de Coubertin (Snyder & Spretzer 1974). Coubertin viewed sports as not only a pursuit of physical excellence but also as a moral and cultural tool. His 1896 Olympic Manifesto laid the foundation for ethical values in modern sports. According to Coubertin, sports were not merely arenas for competition but also schools for teaching moral values (Müller 2000). The manifesto emphasized that sports should serve values such as peace, brotherhood, and fair competition. Coubertin's vision aligns closely with Aristotle's virtue ethics (Brown, 2001). Furthermore, Aristotle's *mesotes* (the golden mean) principle, which suggests finding balance in physical and mental aspects, reflects the ethical understanding of that era (MacIntyre 2007).

Coubertin's ideas significantly contributed to the institutionalization of ethical values in modern sports. The principle of fair play has become an integral part of the Olympic movement (Müller 2000). This framework provides athletes with an ethical guide for fulfilling their individual and societal responsibilities (Snyder & Spretzer 1974).

Ethical dilemmas in sports

Ethical dilemmas are situations where individuals face challenges in deciding between right and wrong due to conflicting moral and ethical

values (Kvalnes 2019). In sports, such dilemmas often arise from efforts to balance the desire to win with fairness, honesty, and other ethical principles (Morgan 2024). Examples include doping, unsportsmanlike conduct, or disputes over referee decisions, which frequently occur at various levels of competition (McNamee 2008). More specific scenarios include choosing whether to ignore an opponent's mistake for personal advantage or deciding between supporting a teammate and adhering to team rules (Simon 2018).

Aristotle's virtue ethics advocates for avoiding extremes and finding a balanced middle ground in decision-making processes (Athanassoulis & Ross 2010). This approach encourages athletes and coaches to use virtues as guiding principles for ethical decision-making. For instance, courage is defined as striking a balance between recklessness and excessive caution (Corlett 1996).

Today, ethical dilemmas manifest differently in professional and amateur sports due to their distinct structures (Whysall 2014). In professional sports, financial pressures and media scrutiny further complicate ethical issues (Andreff 2000). For example, doping is often driven by the pressure to win, leading athletes to compromise ethical standards. Similarly, commercial sponsorship agreements may require athletes to prioritize business demands over ethical rules, a concern frequently reported in recent years (Iorwerth et al. 2018). Cases of match-fixing influenced by betting companies, involving sports managers and athletes, exemplify such dilemmas (Lopez-Gonzalez & Griffiths 2018). In amateur sports, ethical dilemmas often stem from the tension between societal expectations and personal goals. Young athletes, for example, may experience emotional or physical harm in highly competitive environments, representing another form of ethical conflict (Andreff 2000).

In both cases, the Aristotelian approach emphasizes virtues as the foundation for decision-making. Justice, honesty, and self-discipline are pivotal virtues that serve as crucial guides in resolving these ethical dilemmas (Carr 2017).

The relationship between individual existence and social responsibility

Aristotle's concept of *zoon politikon* (political animal) highlights the balance between individual existence and social responsibilities (Ober 2013). An individual's existential pursuit becomes more meaningful when integrated with social responsibility. Aristotle's notion of

phronesis (practical wisdom) serves as a guiding principle for individuals to maintain a balance between their ethical values and social responsibilities (Grant 2011). Sports play a significant role in fostering this balance, particularly by shaping social norms through values such as fair play, justice, and honesty (Loland 2013). Athletes contribute to this balance by combining individual achievements with social responsibilities, engaging in ethical conduct, and participating in social responsibility projects, thereby contextualizing their individual existence within a societal framework (Wilson 1994).

The relationship between individual existence and social responsibility can be further reinforced through the educational and cultural dimensions of sports. Sports promote values such as justice, honesty, and equality, facilitating their dissemination within society and reflecting moral development (Hellison 2010). From Aristotle's virtue ethics perspective, the role of sports in achieving the common good for individuals and society can be clearly understood (McNamee 2008).

The Olympic Games, for instance, serve as a platform to promote international cooperation and peace (Ubaidulloev 2018). Similarly, local sporting events have the potential to enhance justice and inclusivity within communities (Skinner et al. 2008). Examining the ethical role of sports in shaping social norms reveals the following:

Sports and social change: Values like fair play and teamwork assist individuals in understanding their roles and responsibilities within society. Sports have a significant potential to act as a catalyst for positive societal change, particularly in advancing social justice and inclusivity (Serrano-Durá et al. 2021).

Virtue ethics perspective: According to Aristotle, virtue is shaped through ethical actions in a social context. Sports provide a platform where these virtues are practiced and individuals' social responsibilities are enhanced. For example, sporting events promote values such as solidarity and social collaboration (Hardman et al. 2010).

Finally, the Olympic Games have played a crucial role in disseminating ethical values such as peace and friendship on a global scale. Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic movement can be seen as an effort to universalize these values through sports (Weiler 2004).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method to analyze the impact of sports on individual existence from the perspective of Aristotle's virtue ethics. The research is structured within a theoretical and conceptual analysis framework, systematically evaluating the existing literature. The study follows a basic qualitative research design, focusing on a theoretical analysis of the influence of Aristotle's ethical theory in the context of sports. Such a design aims to generate knowledge by examining existing literature to understand specific phenomena or concepts (Creswell 2013). The relationship between Aristotle's virtue ethics and sports was evaluated through a review of the existing literature, followed by an interpretation using the content analysis method.

The research data were obtained from secondary sources. In this process, academic journals, books, conference proceedings, and articles accessed through international databases were reviewed. The databases used include Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Springer. The following keywords were utilized for the literature review: "Aristotle's ethical philosophy," "sports ethics," "virtue ethics," "practical wisdom (phronesis) and sports," and "the impact of sports on individual development." The collected data were analyzed using the content analysis method, a qualitative analysis approach that categorizes meaningful themes from textual data for interpretation (Krippendorff 2018). During the analysis, information from relevant sources was classified into the following thematic categories: fundamental concepts of Aristotle's ethical theory (eudaimonia, mesotes, phronesis), the relationship between these concepts and values in sports (fair play, self-discipline, justice), the effects of sports on individual identity and existence, and ethical decision-making processes in the context of practical wisdom (phronesis). Each theme was interpreted to deeply analyze the connection between Aristotle's virtue ethics and sports.

To ensure validity and reliability in theoretical studies, attention was given to selecting literature from peer-reviewed and academically recognized publications. The diversity of sources used and the systematic analysis method employed increased the accuracy of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell 2015). Methodological transparency was clearly articulated to ensure the reliability of the study. The study has the following limitations: it does not include empirical data collection and is conducted solely based on theoretical analysis methods. It

focuses exclusively on Aristotle's virtue ethics theory, excluding other ethical theories. The impacts of sports on individual existence are examined in a general theoretical context without specific evaluations of individual sports disciplines.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of MehmetAkif Ersoy University with the decision dated 08 January 2025 and numbered GO 2025/977.

Conclusion

This study has evaluated the impact of sports on individual existence from the perspective of Aristotle's virtue ethics. Aristotle's concepts of *eudaimonia* and *phronesis* (practical wisdom) demonstrate that sports serve not only as a physical activity but also as a tool for moral and intellectual development. The themes explored throughout this study have provided a comprehensive analysis of how sports contribute to the cultivation of virtues and the realization of meaningful existence in a societal context. Furthermore, the individual and societal dimensions of sports have been examined through Aristotle's concepts of *eudaimonia* (the good life), *mesotes* (the golden mean), and *phronesis* (practical wisdom). The findings reveal that sports offer a platform that fosters ethical, intellectual, and existential growth, emphasizing its multidimensional role in human development.

Aristotle's ethical philosophy highlights the realization of inherent human potential through virtues as a guiding principle. Within this framework, sports emerge as a domain that integrates physical, intellectual, and moral growth. For instance, virtues such as self-discipline, patience, courage, and justice, which are inherent to sports, contribute to both individual development and the promotion of an ethical life in a societal context. This aligns with Aristotle's notion of zoon politikon (political animal), wherein sports encourage individuals to fulfill their responsibilities as part of a community.

The principle of *mesotes*, or the golden mean, advocated by Aristotle, encourages a balanced approach to ethical decision-making in sports. For example, embracing the spirit of fair play rather than excessive competitiveness or exhibiting realistic courage over destructive overconfidence reflects this balance. This approach allows individuals to develop ethical values applicable to other aspects of life, profoundly contributing to the processes of individual existence. Sports serve as an environment where individuals not only enhance their physical performance but also cultivate moral character. In this

context, sports provide opportunities for individuals to experience and practice moral values, aiding their pursuit of *eudaimonia*.

Within the realm of virtue ethics, sports represent a reflection of individual existence. According to Aristotle's view of the good life, individuals must act in accordance with their nature to lead meaningful lives. Sports facilitate this exploration, allowing individuals to discover themselves. For instance, an athlete who competes fairly and justly with opponents exemplifies ethical virtues in practice. Values such as fair play, solidarity, honesty, and responsibility demonstrate that sports are not merely tools for individual development but mechanisms that shape societal norms. Issues explored in this study, such as doping, unsportsmanlike conduct, and ethical dilemmas, highlight significant elements shaping the moral stances of individuals and communities. In addressing these ethical issues, Aristotle's virtue ethics provides a balanced approach that avoids extremes.

Sports also serve as a vital tool in the processes of self-recognition, meaning-making, and self-realization. Self-realization, defined as living a meaningful life by fully actualizing one's potential, is supported uniquely by sports. According to Aristotle, this process is achieved through the consistent practice of virtues and the pursuit of a balanced path in life. Sports offer an unparalleled domain for individuals to explore and develop their physical and intellectual capacities. This study shows that individuals discover their identities, reinforce their values, and strengthen their existential meaning through sports activities. For example, an athlete's demonstration of endurance and determination shapes both individual and social identity. Sporting practices shape not only physical endurance but also mental resilience and moral stance. The endurance of a marathon runner or the cooperation and responsibility of a team player exemplify this process. Particularly for young athletes, experiences gained through sports reinforce both individual authenticity and social responsibility. Aristotle's concept of phronesis serves as a guide for ethical decisionmaking processes for athletes and coaches.

Aristotle's ethical philosophy also encompasses the capacity of individuals to fulfill their societal responsibilities. Sports assist individuals in understanding and fulfilling these responsibilities by developing ethical values. The concept of fair play holds critical importance in this context. Values such as justice, honesty, and respect enable individuals to maintain an ethical stance within a societal framework. As highlighted in Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic

movement, sports can serve as a vehicle for promoting universal values such as peace and friendship. For young individuals in particular, sports function as a powerful educational tool for learning and applying ethical values.

The societal dimensions of sports become more apparent on platforms such as the Olympic Games, which promote international cooperation. Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic movement demonstrates how sports facilitate the dissemination of ethical values and contribute to shaping individuals into more responsible members of society. This understanding aligns with Aristotle's virtue ethics, encouraging individuals to lead ethical lives both for themselves and their communities. As discussed throughout the study, the role of sports in balancing individual existence and societal values contributes to the development of both individual and collective virtues.

Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* holds critical importance in understanding the ethical decision-making processes in sports. This study emphasizes the impact of sports on mental development, showing how ethical decision-making processes strengthen individuals' mental resilience and moral maturity. For instance, the necessity of teamwork in sports fosters empathy and societal responsibility. Moreover, the study concludes that sports enhance mental resilience by improving individuals' abilities to cope with stress and solve problems. These findings demonstrate that sports serve as an important tool for physical and mental development in both individual and societal contexts.

Sports frequently present ethical dilemmas, making them a field of significant interest. This study reveals that despite the structural differences between professional and amateur sports, ethical issues create common ground in both domains. Aristotle's virtue ethics provides a robust framework for addressing such issues. By avoiding extremes and finding a balanced approach, Aristotle's perspective guides individuals and communities in dealing with ethical challenges. Specific examples include doping, unsportsmanlike behavior, efforts by betting companies to influence match outcomes, and commercial pressures. For addressing these ethical challenges, the study suggests decision-making processes grounded in the values of virtue ethics. It highlights the critical role of *phronesis* in resolving such ethical dilemmas.

In conclusion, Aristotle's virtue ethics offers a strong framework for understanding the impact of sports on individual existence. The role of sports in developing ethical values extends beyond individual lives to elevate ethical standards within a societal context. In this sense, sports can be evaluated as a multidimensional tool that supports individuals' ethical, physical, and mental development. The ethical dimension of sports, as a tool for strengthening the relationship between individual existence and societal responsibility, can be better understood through an Aristotelian perspective. Future studies could explore how virtue ethics is applied in specific sports disciplines and conduct broader empirical research in this area. Additionally, studies evaluating the perception and application of the ethical dimension of sports in different cultural contexts are needed. Educational institutions could develop virtue ethics-based programs to promote sports as a tool for fostering individual and societal values.

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Real or memorex: A techno-romantic interpretation of William Gibson's Neuromancer

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Abstract: This research paper presents a technoromantic analysis of William Gibson's science fiction novel, Neuromancer. Through the lens of technoromanticism, this paper examines the tensions and interdependencies between human and artificial intelligence, underlining the paradoxical nature of technological advancement. The novel's portraval of cyberspace, simstim and cybernetic enhancements challenges traditional notions of reality, identity and human connection. The characters Case, Molly and Armitage embody technoromantic ideals and seeking to transcend their human limitations through technology. In contrast, the artificial intelligences like Neuromancer and Wintermute rely on human agency to overcome their technological constraints in the physical world. This study also raises important inquiries regarding the implications of technological advancement on human identity, experience and society. As individuals navigate in the complexities of technological world, it is very important to remain aware about the dynamics between humans, machines and technology. Analysing these dynamics enables the individuals to understand, how technology shapes their sense of selves and their place in the world. This research contributes a deeper understanding of evolving boundaries between humans and machines and the significance of technoromanticism in navigating these complexities.

Keywords: matrix, technoromanticism, cyberspace, simstim, cyborg, augmentation, technological enhancements

Technoromanticism is a philosophical and cultural movement that combines the elements of technology and romanticism. The term "technoromanticism" coined by Stephen Barron during the time of his doctoral thesis at the University Paris VIII, from 1991 to1996. It is an ideology posits that modern technology has the power to stimulate creativity, revive the notion of genius and invent a sense of unity there by echoing ideals of 18th and 19th century Romanticism through innovative

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technological means. This concept explores the complex relationship between art and new technologies, particularly in the face of environmental threats posed by technoscience and economic growth. It also investigates the resurgence of the human body in technological arts, suggesting that a technologically driven society requires a rebalancing of perceptions and a reconnection with the physical body.

As technoromanticism continues to shape one's perceptions on technological innovations through the complex interplay between technology, human experience and the desire for transcendence. Richard Covne a professor at the University of Edinburgh, authored a book titled Technoromanticism a seminal work published in 1999. In his book, he presents a critical perspective on romanticization and over expectation on idealising notions on technology. Furthermore, he also makes us to analyse how technology blurs the boundaries between humans, machines and nature and leading to a revaluation of what it means to be human. Technoromanticism is characterized by its sublimity which means a quality that evokes wonder and awe. It rejects mundane and embrace the futuristic possibilities of technology. It also emphasises on individualism which celebrates the unique experiences and perspective of each individuals. Richard Coyne divided the book into three parts. The first part is unity which explores the idea that technology can provide a sense of wholeness by creating a feeling of interconnectedness. Second part is multiplicity, in this he discusses how technology constructs multiple or fragmented identities, realities and perspectives leading to an impression of disjointedness and dislocation. Third part is ineffability which delves into the idea that technology evokes experiences that are beyond language which can be mysterious or ambiguous resulting to a perception of awe, wonder or fear. These three parts are the crux of Coyne's technoromanticism, which encourages the readers to think critically ab+out the complex and contradictory interconnectedness between technology, nature, human experience and society.

The title "Real or memorex: A technoromantic interpretation of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*" facilitates an exploration of the conflicts between reality and virtuality in the context of technoromanticism. The "Real or memorex" in the title is an allusion to the iconic 1970s advertising campaign, for a brand of audio cassette tapes which inquires the listener's ability to differentiate between live and recorded music. "Is it live or is it Memorex?" ('Memorex Corporation Records, 1959-1995', Archives Centre, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution), is the question was first asked by the Memorex Corporation

in their advertisement campaign. Literally Memorex is a brand name which becomes synonymous with the audio cassette tapes in the 1970s and 1980s. The company Memorex Corporation found in 1961 and was known for its high-quality audio tapes. Notably, the word Memorex is a portmanteau of "memory excellence". In the context of this research paper, the title "Real or memorex" serves as a metaphor for the blurred lines between reality and imitation in Gibson's *Neuromancer*. By invoking the memorex slogan, this title underscores the dichotomy between authenticity and artifice there by establishing a framework for technoromantic analysis of Gibson's exploration of virtual reality, artificial intelligence and the implications of technological advancements on human experience.

Winner of the Philip. K. Dick, Nebula, and Hugo awards, William Gibson's ground-breaking novel Neuromancer was published in 1984. It is a magnum opus in the sphere of science fiction literature, which revolutionized the genre cyberpunk and explored the intersection of artificial intelligence, virtual reality and human experience. It is a classic with a strong vision of future of the twentieth century. It sets a bench mark for machine-man relationship by portraying humans, cyborgs and artificial intelligences as the central characters of the plot. It tells about a group of hackers and mercenary criminals who are recruited to work in a secret mission for an Artificial Intelligence. The novel *Neuromancer* sets in a dystopian future, where Case a brilliant console cowboy and Molly a skilled street "samurai", navigate the underworld of Sprawl. They are assigned with a perilous mission to execute a virtual heist that blur the lines between reality and simulation. William Gibson examines the intersection of humanity and technology through the interaction of characters with Wintermute by raising the fundamental questions about identity, consciousness and what it means to be alive in a world where the boundaries between virtual and real are increasingly obscured. Neuromancer portrays a techno-fetishist culture and constructs a world where technology becomes a prominent part of human lives.

The aim of this research paper is to conduct a techno-romantic analysis of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, by examining the interplay between cyberspace, artificial intelligence and cybernetic enhancements. This analysis will illuminate how the novel reflects one's understanding of the complex relationship between technology society and humanity. The technoromantic elements, embodied in characters like Molly, Case and Armitage, serve as a lens to examine the intricacies of human experience in a technologically driven world. Furthermore, the artificial intelligences

like Neuromancer and Wintermute, who also exhibit technoromantic elements and they rely on human agency in the physical world, highlighting the interconnectedness between human and machine. Moreover, this investigation will delve into the novel's portrayal of virtual reality, its impact on human experience and the theme of control and power dynamics in a world where technology is ubiquitous. This analysis reveals how Gibson's novel not only mirrors the anxieties and aspirations of the digital age but also influences our perceptions of the evolving boundaries between men and machines.

Through the lens of Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, Neuromancer's portraval of cyberspace reveals the tension between the physical and virtual worlds, underscoring the importance of maintaining balance between the two. In Neuromancer, William Gibson coined the term "cyberspace" and presented it as a technoromantic element that challenges the reality and identity. Cyberspace refers to the virtual realm of computer, online communities and digital landscapes. He defined cyberspace as a 'consensual hallucination' collectively experienced by millions of people. It is a "graphic representation" of complex data, extracted from vast computer networks that underpin our global infrastructure. This virtual realm is a labyrinthine landscape of light and information, comprising intricate patterns and constellations of data that resemble the glittering lights of a cityscape (Gibson 2016, 56). This definition highlights the simulated nature of cyberspace which is reiterated by Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra stating that. "the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth- it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true" (Baudrillard 1994, 1). In the context of cyberspace, Baudrillard's theory suggests that the virtual world is a simulation or hyperreality which has replaced the physical world for those who immersed in it. So, in this virtual realm, individuals can create their own identities, communities and interact with others to experience a sense of connection or belongingness. But it has a significant drawback that is, when the individuals increasingly immerse themselves in cyberspace, they will lose touch with the physical world and isolated themselves from the real human experiences. Therefore, it is essential to critically examine the implications of cyberspace and the virtual reality it creates. By doing so, it protects oneself from the world of hyperreality and maintains a balance between the physical and virtual world.

"Simstim" is the second fascinating techno-romantic element in *Neuromancer*. Simstim or simulated stimulation refers to a digital representation of one person's thoughts, feelings, emotions and physical

sensations that is directly experienced by another person. By wearing a simstim device, an individual transmits his experience to someone else and effectively merges with his consciousness and allowing the other person to share his perceptions and feelings in real-time. The technoromantic aspects of simstim are: it offers an escape from the harsh realities of the physical world and allows the users to immerse themselves in a virtual world that can be personalized to their desires. Next, it provides a multisensory experience like stimulating sights, sound and even emotions, which can be intense and addictive. It allows the users to connect with others in a virtual environment, creating a sense of community and shared experience.

In Neuromancer, Andy Clark's concept of "extended embodiment" provides a framework to comprehend Case's transformative relationship with simstim system. Initially, Case sees simstim as a "meat toy" for sensory pleasure (Gibson 2016, 60), which objectifies Molly's body, mind and experiences. When he jacks in to Molly's sensorium, it profoundly changes Case's point of view. He starts to perceive her physical sensations including the texture of her clothing, the feeling of her boots on her legs and the sensation of knives in her hands. Then he directly senses her emotions, like excitement, tension, focus and emotional connection to her past relationships. Moreover, Case experiences her visual and auditory perceptions through her eyes and ears and also travels through the glimpses of her past memories. After the integration of simstim into his embodied experiences, Case perceptions shifts and begins to form an empathetic connection with Molly. This transition illustrates Clark's idea of "extended embodiment", which suggest that one's embodiment extends beyond one's biological boundaries and incorporate external tools and technologies which reshape one's cognitive and affective capacities (Clark 2004, 6). Through the simstim, Case's embodiment is extended and allows him to experience Molly's sensations, emotions and perceptions. This extension helped him to transcend his initial objectification of simstim as a "meat toy" and form an intimate connection with Molly. By experiencing Molly's internal world, Case's cognitive capacities are reshaped and helped him to form a deeper connection with her. In this way, the simstim technology illustrates Clark's argument that our embodiment is not fixed or static but rather dynamic and extendable through the external tools and technologies. This extension of embodiment allows Case to form a more meaningful and empathetic connection with Molly.

Despite sharing similar technologies, simstim and cyberspace represent two distinct paradigms of virtual experience. They differ fundamentally in design, functionality and impact on the user's experience. Case recognises that simstim amplifies sensory input to an excessive degree. He considers simstim as a "meat toy" which is characterized by its passive environment that provides an unrealistic and sanitized representation of human experiences (Gibson 2016, 60). Furthermore, it is a corporate- controlled entertainment which has customised experiences and removed all the unpleasant and uncomfortable sensations. It reduces human experience to a "gratuitous multiplication of flesh input" (Ibidem) which results in a cheap thrill rather than an intellectual one. Simstim is mainly used for commercial purpose, especially for entertainment and lacks interactivity. On the other hand, Cyberspace is defined as a "drastic simplification of human sensorium" (Ibidem) which means, it abstractly reduces the human perception to give a powerful digital realm. It gives an active environment, where users navigate, interact and exert power in a virtual realm just like they do in the physical world. Unlike simstim, cyberspace demands skill and offers agency and autonomy. Case sees simstim as a simplified and restrictive version of human experience, whereas cyberspace is an interactive world that can be operate with autonomy. This distinction also highlights the differences between passive, corporate controlled entertainment and active, immersive digital environments.

Henry Dorsett Case, the protagonist of William Neuromancer, exemplifies the intersection of technology and human identity. His expulsion from cyberspace triggers an existential crisis that underscores the posthumanistic notion that technology shapes human experience. Case is an enigmatic cyberspace cowboy and digital thief who embodies the quintessential spirit of techno-romanticism in Neuromancer. His technoromantic nature is deeply rooted in his emotional connection with cyberspace, where he navigates the virtual realm with a profound sense of awe, wonder, rebellion and self-discovery. Cyberspace provides him with a feeling of belonging and freedom. However, when he is abruptly thrown out from cyberspace due to the neurological damage, he suffers a profound sense of loss, longing and identity crisis. His inability to access cyberspace, leaves him in a feeling of lost and disconnected, echoing the poignant refrain, "no console man, no cyberspace cowboy" (5). This existential crisis underscores the posthumanistic notion that technology can shape human identity and experience (Hayles 1999, 3), highlighting the intricate relationships between technology, identity and human experience. For Case,

technology is the main source of identity, belonging and freedom. After the expulsion from the virtual world of cyberspace, he experienced a sense of disorientation. In cyberspace he existed in a state of "bodiless exultation" (6) and his ejection from cyberspace resulted in a "Fall" into the confines of his own physical body. Case views his body as a "prison of his own flesh" (6), which underscores the limitations and constraints of the physical world, which are starkly contrasted with the limitless possibilities of cyberspace.

Molly Millions, also known as "Street Samurai" or "Steppin' Razor", is a significant character in Gibson's *Neuromancer* who embodies several techno-romantic elements. Her cybernetic enhancements include surgical implanted glasses with silver lenses and her fingers with retractable knives and burgundy polished nails (27), exemplify the fusion of technology and human body. These augmentations blur the lines between human and machine, granting her enhanced physical abilities like strength, agility and perception which enable her to navigate and interact with the environment in new and powerful ways. Furthermore, her sensory perceptions are altered and allowing her to process and interpret the information in ways that transcend the traditional human limitations. The seamless integration of technological components into her body emphasizes the techno-romantic theme of human machine convergence, highlighting Molly's transformation into a powerful cyborg.

Through Molly Millions' character, William Gibson explores the intersection of technology and identity, highlighting the potential for liberation and self-transformation. His portrayal of Molly subverts the traditional stereotypes and presented her as a physically strong, resilient, fast and fierce woman. The past life of Molly was in a brothel, where she was objectified and exploited, serves as a contrast to her current empowered state. The prosthetic augmentation implanted in her body, not only enhance her profession as an assassin or bodyguard but also symbolize her liberation from sexist subjugation. Her transformation from a victim to a powerful cyborg is a proof to her determination and resilience. From a technoromantic perspective, Molly's technological enhancements help her to transcend the limitations of her human form and enabling her to escape from the struggles of her physical existence. As Coyne (1999, 23) notes, technology can "facilitate a multiplication, fracturing and dislocation of selves, that is the vanguard of a new postmodern sensibility", which refers to the ways in which technology, especially virtual reality and cybernetic enhancements, can disrupt and transform an individual's sense of identity and selfhood. In Molly's case,

cybernetic enhancements and virtual reality experiences catalyse a multiplication, fracturing and dislocation of herself and allowing her to transcend her physical body and experiment with new forms of identity and experience.

Armitage, is a pivotal character in Neuromancer, embodies the paradoxical nature of technoromanticism, where the pursuit of transcendence through technology is undermined by the suppression of human emotions and vulnerability. As a technoromantic hero, Armitage seeks to transcend his human limitation through technology. This is evident in his transformation from a military officer named Colonel Willis Corto to a cyborg. His mental and physical conditioning transforms him in to a cold entity, suppressing his original identity and trauma from his military past. This aligns with N. Katherine Hayles' concept of posthumanism, where she argues that digital technologies enable new forms of embodiment, fragmenting traditional notions of identity and rendering the human body no longer the primary site of self (Hayles 1999, 191). Armitage's transformation into a technological being exemplifies the posthumanist paradigm, where his human emotions are suppressed in favour of his machine-like existence. This is poignantly captured in Gibson's description of Armitage, that his eyes had lost the spark of life, his face was exhausted, yet his voice conveyed a strange unnatural, mechanized energy (125). Armitage's techno-romantic ideals are also tinged with a darker or more nihilistic strain. As Gibson writes. "Armitage 's smile was a thin, cruel thing and it seemed to Case that it was directed at himself, at his own helplessness" (145). This description highlights Armitage's contempt of human vulnerability and his willingness to sacrifice others in pursuit of technological goals. Armitage's character reflects the ideals and contradictions of technoromanticism. Through his transformation into cyborg like entity, Armitage seeks to transcend the limitations of human existence through technological means. Ultimately, Armitage's pursuit of transcendence through technology underscores the tension between human vulnerability and technological advancement, highlighting the paradoxical nature of techno-romanticism.

In *Neuromancer*, artificial intelligences like Neuromancer and Wintermute also play important roles, embodying the technoromantic ideals to transcend the technological limitations through symbiotic relationships with humans. As artificial entities, they are bound by the constraints of their programming and digital existence. However, through interactions with human and cyborg characters like Case, Molly and

Armitage, they strive to overcome their limitations and achieve autonomy. Despite their advanced capabilities, Neuromancer and Wintermute require human agency to interact with the physical world. Wintermute for instance, has complete control within the virtual realm but limited control in the real world which highlights the necessity of the human interface to actualize their goal of becoming a unified entity. Wintermute's remarks that "if you were a construct like Dixie, it would be easy for me to handle" (205), shows the challenges and opportunities presented by human agencies, which Wintermute seeks to utilize in its pursuit of autonomy. Ultimately, Neuromancer and Wintermute's reliance on human intervention in the physical world to transcend their limitations emphasizes the ambiguous nature of technoromanticism. While striving to overcome their technological constraints, they must confront the limitations of their own artificial existence, highlighting the intricate interdependent relationship between human and artificial intelligence.

William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, presents a complex and multifaceted exploration of the intersection of technology, humanity and identity. Through the lens of techno-romanticism, this research paper explores the tensions and interdependencies between human and artificial intelligence, highlighting the paradoxical nature of technological advancement. The characters of Case, Molly and Armitage, embody the technoromantic ideals for transcending their human limitations through technology. Conversely, Neuromancer and Wintermute exemplify technoromantic ideals to transcend their technological limitations through symbiotic relationships with humans. Their experiences and interactions define the intricate and interdependent relationship between human and artificial intelligence highlights the challenges and opportunities created by human agency.

The intersection of virtual reality and human experience is a central theme in *Neuromancer*, as the novel portrays the cyberspace and simstim which challenges the traditional notions of reality, identity and human connection. Cyberspace, as an immersive digital realm blurs the boundaries between the physical and digital, raising critical questions about the future of human existence. As individuals increasingly immerse themselves in digital landscapes, they should maintain a balance between the physical and virtual worlds to ensure that they are grounded in reality. The distinction between simstim and cyberspace emphasizes the importance of considering the design, functionality and impact of virtual environments on human experience. While simstim represents a passive corporate controlled entertainment, cyberspace offers an active,

immersive and autonomous digital realm, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of complexities and implications of virtual experiences.

In Neuromancer, the experiences of Henry Doresett Case, Molly Millions and Armitage with artificial intelligences like Neuromancer and Wintermute exemplify the intricate relationships between technology, identity and human experience. Case's expulsion from cyberspace triggered his existential crises and illustrates the posthumanistic notion that technology shapes human identity and experience. Through Case's journey, Gibson highlights the tension between limitless possibilities of virtual reality and constraints of the physical world. The character of Molly Millons demonstrates the fusion of technology and human body which blurs the lines between human and machine. Molly's cybernetic augmentations granted her enhanced physical abilities, altered sensory and transformed the perception of identity. perceptions transformation of Armitage into cyborg like entity illustrates the tension vulnerability and technological human highlighting the paradoxical nature of technoromanticism. His pursuit of transcendence through technology raises important questions about the implication of technological advancement on human identity and experience. Furthermore, Neuromancer and Wintermute's reliance on human intervention in the physical world to transcend their limitations as machines, which recalls the ambiguous nature of technoromanticism. While they seek to overcome their technological constraints, they must confront the limitations of their own artificial existence, underscoring the intricate interdependent relationship between human and artificial intelligence.

Neuromancer is a powerful thought-provoking novel that continues to influence one's perception regarding the evolving boundaries between human and machines. This research paper has explored the novel through the lens of technoromanticism and raises important questions regarding the implications of technological advancement on human identity, experience and society. As individuals continue to navigate the complexities of the technological world, it is essential that one should remain critically aware of the tensions and interdependencies between humans, machines and technology. By examining these dynamics, individuals can better comprehend the ways in which technology shapes their understanding of selves and their place within the world.

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A post-structural and intersectional reading of Madeline Miller's *Circe*

Krishanu Singh, Shuchi Agrawal and Payal Nagpal*

Abstract: This paper investigates the feminist dimensions of Madeline Miller's *Circe* through post-structural, cultural, and intersectional feminist frameworks, it analyses the reimagined mythological narrative of a character overshadowed in ancient Greek literature. From a post-structural viewpoint, Circe's repudiation of static identities such as nymph, goddess, or witch stresses that fluidity also accompanies identity and language. Her narrative reclaims traditionally marginalized feminine traits, such as emotional labour and empathy, aligning with cultural feminism's emphasis on revaluing these characteristics. The intersectional lens highlights how Circe's story navigates multiple layers of alienation and power dynamics, offering insights into the interplay of gender, status, and autonomy within the constraints of both mythological and contemporary societal structures. By examining Circe's transformation from exile to empowerment, this paper reveals how feminist reinterpretations of ancient narratives can challenge entrenched gender norms and expand the understanding of identity and power.

Keywords: post-structural feminism, cultural feminism, intersectional feminism, ancient mythology, gender and power

Introduction

The character, Circe, of Greek mythology has long been associated with the theme of difference and strength. The epic of Homer's *Odyssey* makes her an evil enchantress whose identity is formed in response to her experiences with men and in opposition to the hegemonic norms of males. Madeline Miller brings forth a new perspective on the mythical figure of weaving deep storytelling with feminist themes. This paper explores Miller's retelling of Circe's tale

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by breaking down the layers of identity, power, and gender using poststructuralism, cultural and intersectional feminist theories as they appear in both old and new versions of the story. In Miller's reframing of Circe as more than the often-oblique, powerless character in Greek mythology, a systemic oppression and vilification of powerful women is told and retold not only for antiquity but also modern storytelling. The current research is going to fill the significant gap that exists in feminist literary analysis by integrating the three theoretical frameworks for analysing Circe's development. It critically engages with the female roles of mythology and gives importance to such stories in modern feminist discourses. The paper adds to the emergent corpus of scholarship that merges classical studies and contemporary feminist theory in order to develop a subtle understanding of how ancient texts feed into current discussions on gender and identity.

In ancient Greece, women's lives were confined strictly to the household. Women were merely used for childbearing and doing domestic chores. The strict social structure was an expression and reinforcement of patriarchal values where women were subordinate to men's authority. Figurative images like Circe are a product of the mass fears that people have against free women. Circe was banished to the island of Aiaia and symbolizes a greater societal impulse to exclude and suppress any woman who deviated from the expected roles or possessed power that was greater than that of men.

Circe falls into the group of mythological archetypes, which includes Medea and Pandora. Their tales show how society viewed their actions as going against the rules. Pandora brings chaos, Medea acts as the angry witch, but Circe has many sides. She's a rebel but at the same time, wise, and understanding. She changes from a nymph to a free witch breaking away from the usual roles of women in myths. She moves from being a victim to making her own choices.

The existing studies on Madeline Miller's *Circe* feature a multitude of interpretations, especially in regard to feminist viewpoints. Still, the criticism has so far failed to touch upon the post-structural, cultural, and intersectional analysis. Feminists from Judith Butler to Michel Foucault have profoundly impacted the concept of gender as fluid, performative, and discursively constructed, which resonates with the changing identities Miller depicts in Circe. Butler's (1990) ideas about gender performativity and Foucault's (1972) writings on discourse and identity offer essential resources for analysing the reasons which drive the titular character of the book to rebel against patriarchal identities in

Circe. So, too, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and Hélène Cixous have studied the importance of discursive construction in female identity, as Circe the nymph transforms into the free sorceress.

Cultural feminist theory has thoroughly explored the recovery and appreciation of traditionally overlooked feminine qualities like nurturing, empathy, and emotional labor, which are prominently reflected in Circe's character. Earlier research, such as that conducted by Alcoff (1995) and Balsamo (1991), advocates for a reassessment of these characteristics, which have been historically viewed as subordinate within patriarchal frameworks. This method takes root in Miller's portrayal of Circe, who turns her solitary isolation on Aiaia into a supportive haven. Radin (1993) highlights the importance of carefully navigating cultural feminism, which Miller achieves by portraying Circe's nurturing and compassionate roles not as flaws but as significant sources of strength and empowerment.

The concept of intersectional feminism, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, provides deeper layers to the phenomenological analysis since it recognizes multiple genders, class, and power relations as vital factors in comprehending the diverse ways Circe is empowered and marginalized. It is the intersection of oppression that enables Circe to grasp her own particular oppression as the privilege of a goddess. Holmes (2023) and Snyder (2008) recognize the importance of intersectional frameworks in feminist scholarship as they help capture the diversity of identity that shapes disempowerment or privilege. This approach captures the complexity of Circe's dealings with other disempowered groups by highlighting the nuances of the power relations she navigates.

Therefore, while previous scholars have been interested in aspects of post-structural, cultural, or intersectional feminist theory, an important chapter in feminist literary criticism is under-examined: a trichotomy of each of these views as it applies to Miller's *Circe*. This research seeks to fill this deficiency through a synthesis of its views, tracing a sensitive examination of gender, power, and identity through Circe's narrative in the light of historical mythological conventions and modern feminist thought.

Post-structural feminism: Breaking down identity

Post-cultural feminism deals with a dynamic blend of psychoanalysis, literary analysis, and socio-culturalism. It dives deep into the

exploration of the relationship between society, language and power relations to understand their impact on gender dynamics. According to this theory, men and women cannot be categorized into fixed universal structures. This theoretical framework suggests that identities are flexible constructions moulded by cultural and socioeconomic circumstances, challenging the idea of rigid, universal gender categories. The word "kyriarchy," which was first used by Elisabet Schussler Fiorenza in 1992 to characterize a social structure centred on dominance, oppression, and submission, is critically examined in this work. Some of the luminaries of post-structural feminists are Judith Butler, Rosi Braidetti, Donna Haraway, Druscilla Cornell, Julia Kristeva, Helena Cixous, and Luci Irigaray.

Post structural feminism argues that identities are constructed through language, culture and societal interactions and it is not innate or fixed. It is subject to change because of the dynamic nature of language and society. According to this theory, a person is not born with a fixed identity. It is attained by experience. Hence it challenges the binary understanding of gender that is male and female. It also claims that individuals can potentially embody multiple characters over time. The works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler deeply influence the approach by arguing that identities, including gender, are produced within specific cultural and linguistic frameworks. The cornerstone of post-structural feminism is the idea of deconstruction, a method of analysing texts, social practices, and discourses to expose gender binaries and hierarchy. Butler (1990) aptly puts it, "Identity is formed by a specific discourse, and its practice is controlled by the knowledge produced through that discourse", also "Gender is a kind of improvised performance; the effect of a regulatory frame of normative gender ideals and practices."

Post-structural feminism offers the best lens to understand how Circe's identity shifts and changes. Her journey from nymph to goddess to witch resists all forms of binary opposition such as male/female, human/divine, and powerful/powerless. Indeed, her resistance to being fixed in a role illustrates the post-structural notion of resisting essentialist gender norms. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Circe is presented as a dangerous and supernatural figure, who threatens Odysseus and his men. Miller's reinterpretation of her character humanizes her and portrays her as an active, intelligent, and emotional being. According to Judith Butler (1990), gender is a performative construct that is created by societal expectations. The story of Circe

shows how identity can be redefined through language and experience, thereby challenging the patriarchal discourse.

A reimagined modern retelling of Circe's narrative, who is traditionally portrayed, as a witch who transforms men into pigs, and is ripe for deconstruction. Numerous binary oppositions are witnessed in the narrative, male, female, human, animal, power or powerless. As both a goddess and a woman, Circe deftly challenges these dichotomies. The fluidity in the character of Circe from the beginning to last gives a remarkable example of post-structural feminism. Circe's narrative begins with her reflection:

When I was born, the name for what I was did not exist. They called me nymph, assuming I would be like my mother and aunts and thousands of cousins... In our language, it means not just goddess, but the bride. (Miller 2018)

Traditionally, Circe is the sorceress who changes men into pigs, this defining and sometimes misconstrued act established her within mythology. Circe reimagines an iconic transformation in the works of Madeline Miller as she carefully peels away layers and reveals the motivations behind a refined action. Miller explores the complexity of Circe's character, portraying her not merely as a vindictive enchantress but as a deeply empathetic and self-aware figure.

Circe's palace was a haven of warmth and hospitality, especially toward mortals, to whom she gave a special affection. This feeling of tenderness, maybe rooted in her own poignant experiences of having first love with a mortal, guided her first relationships with the men who arrived on her island. While she could have easily gone about using her potions powerfully, Circe did not use her potions right away. Her tendency to help rather than harm showed a great inner struggle-one that finally led to a conclusive act of transformation. When the intentions of the men turned nasty, Circe made her crucial decision in transforming them into pigs. The decision to choose pigs, among all creatures possible, was very symbolic.

In choosing an animal related to baseness and submissiveness, Circe was not only neutralizing the threat but also striking a blow to their inflated egos. These men, who were once fearless soldiers who had grown accustomed to dominance and violence, were now stuck in a pigsty-powerless and utterly humiliated. This role reversal served as a striking commentary on the dynamics of power and subjugation. Nymphs, such as Circe, were always shown to be at the mercy of

men's whims; now, it was the men who were at Circe's mercy. Through this act, Circe gained a sharper understanding of the harsh realities of the world and her place within it. This newfound clarity prepared her for future confrontations. When Odysseus' men arrived, brimming with aggression, Circe did not hesitate. Her swift transformation of these would-be marauders into pigs was not merely an act of defence but a demonstration of her growing resolve and mastery over her destiny. Miller retells this iconic episode in a way that reclaims Circe's agency by reframing her actions as deliberately empowering responses to male dominance. It challenges the reader to look at the very simplified portrayals of Circe as merely a vengeful sorceress, revealing her instead as an extremely complex and powerful figure.

Initially shown as a defenceless character trapped in a mythological hierarchy, Circe undergoes a significant metamorphosis. She rises from the shadows of perceived weakness to become the embodiment of strength and fortitude. She rewrites her fate through hardships and self-discovery, escaping the bonds of heavenly expectation to become an independent force. She skilfully uses her magic and knowledge to oppose the gods and carve out her route in mythology.

She was drawn to the tranquil courts of Helios because they offered a serene atmosphere where she felt a profound sense of belonging at her father's feet, even as her siblings, Pasiphae and Percy, often stirred trouble among other relatives. She took great pleasure in beholding her father's splendid magnificence. As the narrative unfolds, she employs her sorcery to dramatically transform Scylla and Glaucus into monsters and sea gods, respectively, which ultimately leads to her banishment to the isolated island of Aiaia. Initially, solitude was a challenge for her, but over time, she grew so accustomed to her own company that she began to resent interruptions, especially when other gods would punish their daughters by sending them to her as a form of exile. Thus, her character's remarkable evolution is shaped by a profound shift in her sense of wonder, environment, and personal experiences.

The linguistic shift profoundly impacts her character as well. Initially reserved and speaking in a subservient tone while at the courts of her father and other gods, she transforms upon her arrival in Aiaia. There, she harnesses the strength of her words to command and tame wild and fierce animals such as wolves, lions, and wild boars. She dedicates much of her time to crafting her potions, which are infused with power words, spells essential for their activation. This transition

marks her evolution from a submissive figure to a master of her domain.

When she interacts with Athena, who comes to take her son away, or when she boldly summons the sun god Helios to end her banishment, her domineering nature manifests in a deeply primal sense. This shift not only highlights her newfound autonomy but also underscores her formidable presence as a sovereign force within her rights. Once her banishment is lifted, she chooses to return to Aiaia, embracing its untamed wildness, rather than remain in her father's advanced and opulent kingdom. This decision highlights her deep connection to the raw, unbridled nature of her sanctuary over the luxurious, cultivated comforts of her ancestral home.

Circe becomes a compelling collection of post-structural feminist thought, providing a fertile ground for the dismantling of entrenched gender norms. In ancient mythology, she is depicted as a malevolent witch, endowed with unsettling and dubious talents, a portrayal that underscores the deep-seated societal fear of women's autonomy and power. When she reaches out to her father to request the lifting of her banishment, he regards her as a tarnished being, dismissively unwilling to help because, in his eyes, she holds no value. Rather than assist her, he coldly remarked, "You have always been the worst of my children." (Miller 2018, 313)

Although Pasiphae and Perseus have destinies in common with Circe—Pasiphae bears a monster and Perseus enslaves his wife—Circe alone is labelled the "worst" of Helios's children. The condemnation was not based on her actions but on her disobedience. Once humiliated at her father's feet, Circe had come to powerful strength, defying the submissive expectations that had been placed upon her. Her boldness made her stand out because she didn't show much fear of Zeus's anger when she went against the divine order by offering water to Prometheus when he was being punished. Helios, though himself divine, was shackled by fear of reprisal from Zeus and eventually agreed to the daring request from Circe - a complete inversion of power in the most traditional of settings. In that moment, Helios looked more submissive while Circe's audacity and independence shone through.

A close reading of Circe's story through the eyes of post-structural feminist theory shows a great deal of play between language, power, and identity. Her story moves past the mere sequence of events within a mythological tale, forming a deep study in the nature of character and

social subversion. Post-structuralism is the method of examining how Circe can acquire power within a patriarchal framework; it challenges the fixed, essentialist roles that women are typically assigned.

As she is a symbol of resistance and change, Circe's story serves as a critique of the powerful power dynamics that marginalize women. Her experience demonstrates how power and identity can be redefined by dismantling social structures and words. This viewpoint has far wider ramifications for questioning and redefining gender norms in addition to enhancing how her story is interpreted. According to this interpretation, Circe's story can make a strong statement about female empowerment that transcends its mythological roots and encourages resistance and independence in modern settings.

Cultural feminism: Reclaiming the feminism

Cultural feminism supports the attributes that, throughout history, have been assigned to women: caring, feeding, and creating. In Miller's text, Circe's connection to nature and her role as a healer and mother are symbols of reclaiming power. Her garden is her independence and creativity-she plants herbs there for her potions and healing. Life is growing where the gods tend to cause destruction, and worthiness is given to feminine character. The care she provided for Telegonus underlines the importance of cultural feminism within emotional labour. Even to be raising a mortal child would seem problematic, yet she became eager for motherhood because that became part of her power and persona. Her transformation of the island of Aiaia into a sanctuary underlines feminist reclaiming that previously marginalized or dismissed spaces.

Cultural feminism celebrates women's differences, such as their traditionally empathetic and nurturing characteristics, emotional labour, as strength and not weakness. It is not about obliterating gender differences but instead embracing them and valuing these traits, suggesting that women have a different alternative, more femalecentric world instead of a male-value-centric system. This theoretical approach challenges the patriarchal tales by empowering the voices of women and demanding a society value shift to appreciate what the feminine role has become relevant for. In such a setting, Madeline Miller's *Circe* is a philosophic masterpiece that finds intense resonance in this philosophy when the narrative places Circe as a figure who embodies such transformative power of these feminine features. By mastering sorcery, building relationships, and never tiring of taking

care of others, Circe is beyond the limits placed on her by patriarchal norms and proves that such qualities are not only precious but revolutionary.

Circe's embracing motherhood becomes a very strong example of strength in traditionally feminine roles. Her care for Aeetes, and later on, for Telegonus, underlines the strength with which she could manoeuvre the issues of nurturing."He ate from my fingers and did not flinch at my frail voice. He only wanted to sleep curled against my neck while I told him stories." (Miller 2018, 22)

However, while Aeetes was a divine child who grew fast and did not demand much, Telegonus, who was a mortal son of Odysseus, proved more difficult. Circe had faced all these challenges, showing an extraordinary capacity for patience and adaptability:

Every minute I must wash and boil and clean and scrub and put to soak. Yet how could I do that? When every minute he also needed something, food change and sleep. However, I wrapped him. However, I rocked him and sang. He screamed, gasping and shaking until the lions fled. Until I feared he would do himself harm. I gave him soothing herbs. (Miller 2018, 212)

Maternal strength is exemplified through the scene of Circe when she confronts the goddess Athena; there, she employed magic in protecting her son. Therefore, in this picture, motherhood is no disability but the deepest form of power. Through this mother's empowerment, she even took autonomy in exercising power at that level when it came with challenges of being against divine opposition. The essence of cultural feminism is that the reclaimed spaces are those in which women can flourish. This can be well illustrated in Circe through her exile to Aiaia, a place that was originally an isolation and punishment area but became a sanctuary of empowerment under Circe's care.

It is with feelings of loneliness and fear that Circe's journey begins,

Such were my years then. I would like to say that all the while I waited to break out.

But the truth is I am afraid I might have floated on believing those dull miseries were all there was until the end of days. (Ibid, 9)

However, over time, she establishes harmony in her surroundings. The garden becomes an image of her independence and creativity where life flourishes under her care. Her nurturing of this environment serves to highlight the power of feminine pursuits that patriarchal societies have long derided. Work on herbs, potions, and remedies underscores

her capacity for creation, healing, and sustaining-a far cry from the destructive tendencies of the gods.

When Penelope and Telemachus stepped on Aiaia, the hospitable nature of Circe, beyond what might be obligatory for her, illustrates that true strength doesn't just result from her use of magic but also through her display of empathy. She rediscovers and revives the womanly space - physical and figurative - during her process to selfliberate and emancipate. The emotional depth of Circe makes her and distinguishes her from other characters in the novel. Her empathy is seen in the early novel when she feels pity for mortals and resents the cruelty of the gods. Like for example, when Helios deliberately arrives late in his meetings knowing that some of the astrologers miscalculating his time will be executed, then this makes Circe tormented of being one of them. That sensitiveness is both her strength and also her weakness. Unlike her mother, who hoards material objects, or Athena, who exploits people she has power over, Circe's emotions are rooted in real concern. Her love for Aeetes and Telegonus, her brief but telling love for Daedalus, and her complicated relationship with Odysseus all attest to her rich emotional life.The most profound emotional impact of Circe is her relationship with Odysseus. The marks on his body and the burden of his experiences stir a deep feeling in her, which says much about the complexity of her character. Far from being a weakness, her empathy is what allows her to connect meaningfully with others, showing that emotional labour is a source of strength and resilience.

It is this central role of witchcraft which, for Circe, symbolizes, so desperately wanted to be repressed, by patriarchal societies in women: wisdom and power. The duality of good and evil she embodies, in fact, forms an ambivalent conception of self-sufficiency and autonomy. Isolation on Aiaia becomes for Circe a way of redeeming exile: whereas once it had been punishment, it is now a way of discovery and growth. Aiaia is now a refuge where Circe can learn her art, free from the fetters of patriarchal expectations, much like cultural feminism in its quest to reclaim spaces that empower women.

The story also condemns the exclusion of women who challenge societal norms. Circe's isolation symbolizes the broader societal trend of excluding strong women, but it is in isolation that she finds true strength. By turning Aiaia into a place of healing and creation, Circe is reclaiming her narrative that defies the restrictions placed on her. Miller's version of Circe can be considered as a deep probe into

cultural feminism, bringing about the traditionally feminine to represent sources of power, rather than subjugation. Reclaiming motherhood, emotional labour, and female spaces in the narrative of Circe is how the patriarchal norms are challenged to demean those qualities. It then becomes her story, becoming a testament to the potential of cultural feminism in granting emancipation, calling for readers to re-evaluate those societies where women's voices are trashed, contributions ignored, and worth erased. By reclaiming herself in such a manner, Circe redeems her own destiny and provides an outline for more comprehensive reforms within culture, illuminated in the light of her power and endurance.

Intersectional feminism: Crossing overlapping identities

Kimbelé Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality'; it is very important for feminist theory because it makes a questioning of the premise that gender oppression exists isolated, but rather deals with interconnectedness about class, sexuality, and status, which combine to show how they make unique experiences of privilege and discrimination. This means that intersectional feminism refers to the overlap of various identities, including gender, class, and status, which interact to determine experiences of privilege and oppression. Circe is at a point of uniqueness within the patriarchal hierarchy of the gods because she is both goddess and woman. She has some privilege from her divine lineage, but her empathy and defiance make her an outsider. Her relationships with other figures who are marginalized like Prometheus and Scylla depict her solidarity with people resisting oppression. Although Prometheus is penalized for his help towards human beings, he shows similarity with the resistance shown by Circe against cruel divinity. Similarly, the transformation of Scylla from jealousy, though introducing regret, has been matched to the complexity of power relation and its outcomes in the patriarchal world. Her relationships with family members, humans, and other outsiders outline the complexities of power dynamics. Her journey from exile to self-empowerment is a stunning tale of standing up and finding oneself.

Such has it been in the complex identity weaving roles in being a goddess, a woman, and a witch about the different phases of Circe's life, which seem illuminated beginning from vulnerability to empowerment. Initially, she was the nymph destined for marriage within the rigid patriarchal structure of her divine lineage; however,

her banishment marked a turning point while she was refining her mastery over nature and mythical creatures. Her transformation into a symbol of power defies the traditional categories; instead, she challenges societal norms in their attempt to bind her.

During all these changes, Circe's femininity continues to be a part of her personality. When Circe is associated with Daedalus and Odysseus, this depicts her sensitivity and emotional nature. And when she plays a role of mother to Telegonus that is when it reflects that she is strong enough to look after her child. Though she has been ridiculed and underestimated by her family, she rises above all this and becomes the legend among the gods and mortals alike. Being a daughter to Helios makes her carry dual burdens of expectations from God and patriarchal constraints on her, further complicating her journey towards self-actualization. In the demonization of Circe as a witch, society fears an independent woman with knowledge and power. The story of Circe speaks of resilience, the ability to thrive in oppression and claim her independence in a world that seeks to confine her.

Significance of Circe's tale in contemporary feminist theory

The journey of Circe, then, is one that has strong metaphorical applications to women who are looking to find their way within oppressive patriarchal societies. Standing outside her father's hall, she has been denied her rights, even though she was divinely born. She is punished in the form of exile to a remote island, reflecting the societal way, women who do not conform to the norms become isolated. But Circe does transform this exile into an empowering one by carving out an opportunity to redefine herself.

This story is very well known in contemporary feminist and the way intersectionality as a discourse is working. The journey of Circe from being a passive image to a psychological, independent self is the lifeblood of intersectional feminism, by which the process of self-confrontation and assertion this leads to the core of self-discovery. In grappling with the process of negotiating identity, Circe reveals how women can resist the imposition of systemic oppression and assert control over their lives. This is to create a template of contemporary feminist thought for her, dealing with the intersecting identities in the fight for equality.

Treatment of otherness and alienation

Circe's sense of alienation begins within her family, being mocked over her perceived inadequacies. She is tormented by her mother regarding not meeting superficial beauty requirements, and by her brothers over her voice and disposition. This is a good example of the concept of multiple marginalization, because Circe's gender and perceived defects make her an outsider even among her own.Her values also distance her from both mortals and gods. Unlike Helios, who has nothing but contempt for mortals, or her mother, who gains power through allure, Circe values empathy and connection. Her preference for mortals, as in Glaucus, Daedalus, Odysseus, and Telemachus, distinguishes her from her divine family. While her siblings indulge in cruelty, Circe's compassion defines her, even when it leaves her vulnerable. Circe's relationships with Penelope and Telemachus on Aiaia best demonstrate her inclusivity. She welcomes them into her island and into her life despite the risk that may pose, thereby transcending societal barriers in forging ties with them. Such an act only proves how she has renounced her isolation and opted for solidarity and community instead.

Intersectional feminism sees Madeline Miller's *Circ*e as a powerful critique of identity, power, and isolation. Circe's complex identity as a goddess, woman, and witch reveals how privilege and oppression intertwine. She exposes the social forces that try to push strong women out of mainstream society. Her relationships with family members, humans, and other outsiders outline the complexities of power dynamics. Her journey from exile to self-empowerment is a stunning tale of standing up and finding oneself.

The story of Circe does something more than retell an old myth; it reflects and reiterates the new challenges women face as women grapple with overlapping identities. She changes from someone others define to someone who defines herself. This change proves the toughness and power at the heart of feminism's quest for fairness and freedom. As Circe recovers her own story, she recovers a new identity for herself and in the process creates an eternal metaphor in the battle against systemic oppression. This is the kind of narrative that Miller can join both ancient and modern ages through a deeply personal yet universally resonant story.

Relevance to modern times and further meaning

Madeline Miller transforms the story of Circe into a goldmine for discussion of contemporary feminism. This conversion from being an outcast to becoming a powerful self-defined woman is a trait that reflects the journey women in modern societies undergo when trying to find their way in patriarchal systems. Therefore, the process of resilience and self-empowerment clashes with deep-seated gender hierarchies and builds a strong critique of systemic oppression.

Instead of accepting the historical narratives used to reinforce patriarchy, Miller makes the reader believe otherwise of the old myth. Where Circe used to mean transformation, today she typifies the effort of feminists; hence it is marking what women are capable of-that they could take reins back and restate an identity against what society dictates. Through her own story, so do the many icons for feminism of today find an expression-like Sethe from Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), like Offred from Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Both the ladies, much like Circe, exemplify a quintessence of resumption and resistance as they have to strive against systematic oppression to repossess life control.

She fights dignity and freedom in the face of the dehumanizing effects of slavery, just as Offred does in quiet rebellion against a totalitarian regime. Universal themes, endurance, and defiance are the elements of Circe's journey in her story, where transformation and change come about in confronting and challenging oppressive systems, through the medium of these stories. In this context, Circe brings forth the ancient and the modern to illustrate that the battle for autonomy and equality is timeless through her tale.

Thus, Circe is not telling the myth but is in fact digging deeper into the ethos of feminism and offering us a story that's personal yet pertinent in the world. Circe, as described by the penmanship of Miller, will prompt readers into questioning the structural oppression it brings about and the unbreakable spirit of those to resist it, cementing Circe's position in history as a signifier of empowerment and change.

Feminist reclaiming of mythology

Feminist reinterpretations provide a very vast depth to an everbroadening canon of literature, changing it into an inclusive but richly diversified one. Madeline Miller's *Circe* shows this transformation ability, as she demonstrates how old myths could be recreated into challenging deeply entrenched gender norms and also be used to innovate perspectives in identifying power and identity. She reinvigorates old studies through her narratives, providing a critical inspection of cultural narratives which have lasted long enough perpetuating inequality.

Miller's Circe has the skill in weaving through post-structural, cultural, and intersectional feminism to unravel what is in the complex dynamic of identity, power, and gender. Miller disputes the patriarchal forms of control and celebrates the process of self-empowerment women undergo as they take back their freedom deconstructive readings of canonical mythological texts. transformation of Circe from an isolated figure to one of selfdetermination and empowerment assumes the symbolic form of the general feminist struggle against systems of oppression. This subtle reinterpretation transforms this book from a simple retelling of an ancient tale to a profound commentary on societal structures that continue to shape gender dynamics. This interdisciplinary approach in deconstructing Circe proves the relationship between classical studies and contemporary feminist theory. By putting Circe's story within its historical and cultural frames, this reinterpretation questions the past but also highlights its continued relevance in modern-day feminist discourse. This would challenge the readers to work out through the implications that traditional tales can bring to our expectation in society.

Future study will be possible by extending the intersection of mythology and feminism to other cultural traditions; this offers new dimensions of feminist literary analysis. The untold stories of marginalized figures across cultures can be further enriched in the literary canon by scholars to promote a more inclusive understanding of human experiences. Miller's *Circe* reminds us of the timeless capacity of storytelling to question, transform, and inspire.

Conclusion

The works of Madeline Miller stand well above being a simple retelling of ancient myth; the story of Circe penetrates deep into the heart of feminist explorations under post-structural, cultural, and intersectional perspectives. Using these lenses transforms a seemingly insignificant mythological character to be one of power, endurance, and defiance against systemically enforced oppression. Hence, it challenges the institutionalized patriarchal values yet reinstates,

reclaiming the virtues ascribed to those aspects of women identified as unacceptable.

In such a context, the trip of Circe embodies the post-structural feminism, where dynamic identity does not conform to straitjacketed sexual definitions. The deconstructions of her roles like a nymph, goddess, a witch, and a woman form a dynamic play in which the spatiotemporal sequence of language, culture, and identity forms itself. Her transformation negates the static labels given by gods and society, thereby illustrating how it is not a fix but a growth along the lines of experience lived in. This rejection of stagnant categorization does not merely redefine her character but question the wider societal constructs of gender and power.

Through the presence of nature, emotional profundity, and the position of the healer-mother, Circe finds cultural feminism in Miller's account. Initially presented as an island of exile, the space comes to represent empowerment under her care. Her "life-sustaining herbs" and potions symbolize the recovery of feminine spaces patriarchal societies have historically discarded. In that, her nurturing relationships and her empathetic actions, Circe personifies the strength residing within stereotypically feminine characteristics as a counterargument to ideas that such strengths can only manifest as weaknesses. Her is, in the context of this paper, an inspiring tale of emotional labor as a revolutionary quality.

From the perspective of intersectional feminism, yet another aspect is added: at once she occupies a privileged and yet a marginalized space. Being a goddess, Circe wields divine power, but in defiance of societal norms and showing sympathy to mortals makes her alienated from the divine and mortal worlds. Her alliance with other marginalized figures, such as Prometheus and Scylla, makes the interconnectedness of oppression clear and emphasizes the importance of resisting systemic hierarchies. The relationships and choices of Circe reveal the complex dynamics of power, status, and identity, thus providing a subtle critique of the societal forces that seek to confine women.

The implications of Circe are broader than the framework of mythology. Miller's reinterpretation has a direct resonance with contemporary feminist struggles, a metaphor for women's ongoing battle for autonomy and equality within patriarchal systems. Circe's transformation from a marginalized figure to a self-empowered individual mirrors the journey of modern women who break free from

societal expectations and reclaim their narratives. The story encourages readers to question the traditional power structures and recognizes the continued relevance of feminist discourse.

Furthermore, Circe exemplifies the feminist power of reclaiming mythology. Through this feminist re-reading of ancient stories, Miller not only reinvigorates classical scholarship but also makes contemporary literature richer and more diverse. This cross-disciplinary method bridges the distance between the historical accounts and modern feminist theory, enabling a greater understanding of the relationship between past and present in creating gender dynamics.

Future research may extend this study by analysing other mythological characters using feminist perspectives, exploring untold stories across cultural traditions. Such studies would add to a more inclusive literary canon and foster a greater appreciation of marginalized voices in human history. Miller's *Circe* reminds us of the transformative power of storytelling, challenging societal norms, celebrating resilience, and imagining a more just world.

In conclusion, Circe is more than a reimagined myth-it is powerful commentary on the complexities of identity, power, and gender. Through her journey, Circe reclaims her narrative by defying the constraints of patriarchal expectations and emerging as a symbol of feminist empowerment. Her story invites the reader to reflect on the struggle for justice and equality that has been ongoing throughout the centuries, making Circe a timeless and universally relevant work that bridges the ancient and modern worlds.

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Feminist revisionism: Gender performativity and female agency in Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne*

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Abstract: This study examines Jennifer Saint's 2021 novel Ariadne as a retelling of the classic myth of Ariadne. Saint's novel aims to reclaim the feminine agency denied to most female characters in Greek mythology. Through the lens of Butler's performativity theory, we analyze Saint's novel to explore how the novel portrays and challenges the oppressive gender norms of ancient Greek society. Furthermore, the focus of the analysis is the motif of dance as a performative act and the development of Ariadne's character in the novel through subversion and retaliation. Ariadne goes through a challenging journey starting as a compliant princess and growing into an empowered woman who eventually defies patriarchal expectations. Saint's retelling challenges the traditional representation of women in Greek mythology by highlighting the potential for individual agency and resistance within oppressive structures. Ariadne's character disrupts the socially constructed gender roles by her actions and decisions that defy the social expectations – thus illustrating the power women can reclaim to redefine their narratives and destinies.

Keywords: feminist retelling, Greek mythology, gender performativity

Introduction

Ancient Greek myths have served to spark the imagination of poets and authors for centuries. These narratives are deeply imbued with universal themes and motifs on the one hand and yet are perplexing on the other as they shed light on the complexities of human nature and human life. In addition to serving as a way of entertainment, the stories recounted in Homers' *Iliad and Odyssey* helds a religious significance

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for the ancient Greeks. These myths provided an explanation of an overwhelming world – with narratives ranging from the account of the origin of the universe to narratives explaining various natural phenomenon that humans couldn't make sense of. However, one cannot help but be surprised at the deeply misogynistic portrayal of women in these myths that reflect the patriarchal and oppressive norms of the Ancient Greek society (Özdemir 2023; Tsolas 2022). In Greek myths the feminine is often synonymous to the deceitful, the chaotic and the vengeful. This discriminatory representation of females has sparked an interest in the retelling of Greek myths and various authors have attempted to provide a rewriting of several Greek myths in an effort to lend the agency back to the females.

This attempt at reclaiming the silenced voices of women from the ancient world has been aptly termed as 'feminist revisionism' by Macmillan and Ostriker. Feminist revisionism aims to deliberately rewrite and modify existing mythological narratives so that the gender stereotype deeply ingrained within these narratives can be challenged and retold. These rewritings aim to not only respond to the maledominated classical tradition but also reshape these narratives for a modern audience (Macmillan 2020; Ostriker 1982). This approach enables the contemporary writers to imbue ancient narratives with modern literary tropes bringing forth a critical and feminist perspective.

In this context, the present study explores Jennifer Saint's (2021) novel Ariadne which is a retelling of the classical myth of 'Ariadne' – a Cretan Princess. We approach the novel from the perspective of Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity" to underscore how Saint's novel retells Ariadne's story to challenge the oppressive gender norms and stereotypes of the time. There are two main aspects that the present study focuses on; firstly, on how Saint reimagines Ariadne's story from a feminist perspective that challenges the oppressive gender roles and secondly, this study aims to elucidate how the novel contests the misogynistic assumptions inherent in the original myth of Ariadne. Saint's novel demonstrates the power of redefining and rewriting narratives to counter the traditional male-dominated accounts that represent females without agency. In addition, this novel underscores the need to dismantle the oppressive social structures associated with patriarchy while providing a more nuanced understanding of female agency. In the following section, we provide a brief overview of the literature on the representation of females in Greek mythology.

Women in Greek mythology

There is a considerable body of work addressing the problematic portrayal of women in Greek literature from a critical perspective. Pomeroy argues that the goddesses of Greek mythology and literature do not represent the females of ancient Greek times but rather present the "archetypical images of human females, as envisioned by males" (Pomeroy 1995, 93). Pomeroy contends that powerful female figures like Hera, who embody mature femininity, generated anxiety among insecure men, leading to the creation of simplistic "either-or" roles. Virtuous, virginal women like Athena, who reject their femininity, are lauded for their non-threatening nature, while sexually mature women are demonized as "dangerous" and "destructive."

Forma Zeitlin, in her analysis of Greek drama, shifts the focus from the origins of tragedy to the nature of femininity within the literature itself. She highlights the marginalization of female characters, noting that while they may have garnered audience attention, their roles were primarily catalytic, serving as "either spoilers or destroyers sometimes helpers and saviors" (Zeitlin 1996, 347). Zeitlin argues that "functionally women are never an end in themselves, and nothing changes for them once they have lived out their drama on stage" emphasizing their role as foils to male protagonists. This analysis underscores the systemic silencing and objectification of women within Greek narratives.

In response to these historical injustices, modern retellings of Greek mythology have emerged as a powerful tool for feminist revisionism. Scholars like Ostriker and Macmillan have recognized this phenomenon, highlighting the efforts to "challenge and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myths" (Ostriker 1982, 73). These retellings go beyond mere responses to the "classical male tradition" (Macmillan 2020, 87) they actively reshape narratives to align with contemporary values and literary propositions. Macmillan asserts that these works represent "vivid engagements with the modernist literary canon and valuable contributions to the ongoing agenda about the generation of meaning in twenty-first century literature" (Ibidem).

Dedebas further explores the prevalence of feminist adaptations in contemporary literature, particularly in the works of Marina Carr. Carr's adaptations focus on victimized women, reframing their narratives from a feminist perspective. By deconstructing Greek myths, Carr creates space for reimagining these tragic figures,

challenging male dominance and showcasing the extreme violence they endured. Dedebas (2013, 248) suggests that Carr "re-envisioned the female identity", empowering these women to seek liberation from patriarchal constraints.

Rich (1972, 18) echoes this sentiment, emphasizing that "Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival". Rich argues that understanding the assumptions that permeate our culture is essential for self-knowledge and resistance against the "self-destructiveness of male-dominated society" (Ibidem).

Theoretical framework: Gender performativity

Butler's groundbreaking work on gender, particularly *Gender Trouble* (1990) challenges the notion of gender as a static, inherent trait, arguing instead that it is a social construct performed through the reiteration of acts that conform to societal expectations. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1988), Butler defines gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988, 519).

Butler's theory emerged in the wake of the second wave of feminism, addressing the fundamental question of what constitutes womanhood. She argues that gender is not a fixed, definable entity, but a social practice dependent on individual behavior. This concept builds upon Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (De Beauvoir 1949, 330), emphasizing the social construction of gender. Butler's concept of performativity is further supplemented by John Searle's speech act theory, which posits that utterances can perform actions and effect change. Butler extends this idea, arguing that gender is performed through a range of acts, including utterances, gestures, and decisions. Gender performativity, therefore, means that individuals bring their gender into being through these repeated performances.

Butler also highlights the oppressive nature of societal norms that dictate femininity, arguing that "the category of women is socially constructed in such a way that to be women is, by definition, to be in an oppressed situation" (Butler 1988, 523). She acknowledges the role of feminist theory in "bring[ing] female specificity into visibility and to rewrite the history of culture in terms which acknowledge the presence, the influence, and the oppression of women" (Ibidem, 523).

Crucially, Butler suggests that the repetition of gender performances can also lead to subversion. She posits the "possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (Ibid, 520), enabling individuals to resist oppressive norms.

A considerable number of existing studies have utilized Butler's theory to analyze female protagonists in literature. Molin, for example, explores the self-destructive tendencies of female protagonists in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* and Doris Lessing's *To Room Nineteen*, attributing their misery to the conflict between their modern ideologies and the traditional roles they were forced to play (Molin 2018). Similarly, Fitriani, Sunggingwati, and Nasrullah (2019) examine Soman Chainani's *The School for Good and Evil* demonstrating how the novel reflects Butler's concept of gender as a social construct. The study highlights the characters' initial adherence to traditional gender roles, followed by their eventual assertion of individuality and defiance of societal expectations.

Butler's emphasis on societal oppression and the potential for subversion provides a critical framework for analyzing the character of Ariadne in Saint's modern retelling. Butler asserts that gender is embodied through repetitive actions, including language, behaviors, and gestures, based on socially constructed ideas and her framework has been adapted as a theoretical framework for the present study with an emphasis on the following tenets of the gender performativity theory:

Oppression against women

Society imposes oppressive norms on women, forcing them to conform to misogynistic behaviors because "the category of women is socially constructed in such a way that to be women is, by definition, to be in an oppressed situation" (Butler 1988, 523). This study explores how *Ariadne* portrays societal oppression and the feminist response to it.

Repetitive nature of performative acts

Individuals construct gender identity by performing socially prescribed acts to claim a stable gender identity. The analysis in the present study identifies patterns of repeated actions within the novel that reinforce or challenge gender norms.

Subversion and retaliation

Recognizing gender as performative enables individuals to resist and challenge societal norms and leads to a "possibility of a different sort

of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (Ibid, 520). Correspondingly, this study analyzes instances where Ariadne and other female characters subvert traditional gender roles through their actions and choices.

The following sections present an analysis of the novel within the framework of the above-mentioned tenets of Butler's performativity theory.

Mothers, wives and daughters: The constraints of oppressive gender norms

Butler's notion of gender as a performance rather than an essence opens up possibilities for change, as individuals can disrupt and redefine these performances through their actions. However, in patriarchal societies like ancient Greece, the performances associated with masculinity and femininity are often rigidly defined, granting men power and freedom while imposing severe restrictions and unrealistic expectations on women. Judith Butler argues that patriarchal societies establish gender norms that inherently oppress women, stating that "to be a woman is to be oppressed" (Butler 1988, 523). Saint's novel *Ariadne* vividly portrays the societal constraints and injustices women faced in ancient Greece. The novel's setting, a male-dominated society, forms the basis for gender-based oppression, denying women authority and freedom. Saint meticulously presents various instances of this systemic mistreatment, highlighting the pervasive nature of patriarchal control.

Saint underscores the mistreatment of women by the Greek gods, who frequently misused their divine power to trouble mortals. Mortal women, in particular, suffered disproportionately from this tyranny. A poignant example is Poseidon's punishment of Ariadne's mother, Pasiphae. As retribution for Minos deceiving Poseidon, Pasiphae was cursed with an insatiable lust for a divine white bull, resulting in the monstrous birth of the Minotaur. Ariadne reflects on her mother's plight, recognizing the inherent injustice: "My mother was no more than a thin shell lying almost transparent on the sand, worn to nearly nothing by the crashing waves" (Saint 2021, 24). Pasiphae had to endure punishment for her husband's crime just because the god of sea was whimsical. This unjust punishment highlights the arbitrary nature of the oppression women faced from the gods, who often held them accountable for the transgressions of men.

Ariadne also draws parallels between her mother's fate and that of Medusa: "I couldn't fail to see the parallels between Medusa and Pasiphae. Both paid the price for another's crime" (Ibid, 23). Medusa, originally a beautiful maiden, was punished by Athena for Poseidon's violation of her in Athena's temple, transforming her into a monstrous figure. This retelling of Medusa's story, told from her perspective, foreshadows the novel's approach to reframing the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur from Ariadne's point of view. These incidents serve to illustrate the deeply ingrained gender bias of the Greek gods, who consistently punished women for the crimes of men, thereby shaping and reinforcing oppressive gender norms.

Ariadne initially conforms to the societal expectations imposed on women and princesses in ancient Greece. Witnessing her mother's suffering, she internalizes the fear of deviating from these norms, recognizing the potential for divine retribution: "What if the Gods- I gulped through my tears-what if they take my hair and leave me bald and ugly? If father makes them angry again!" (Ibid, 21). In ancient Greece, women lacked individual identity, defined solely by their relationships to men. They were subjected to punishment for the perceived transgressions of their male relatives. Ariadne feels the immense pressure to be a righteous daughter, fearing her father's potential to anger the gods once more. In the world of gods and ancient Greek society, women were subjected to oppressive gender norms, limited agency and power, unequal treatment and discrimination based on gender and eventually it is the women suffering for men's wrongdoings. She recognizes the precariousness of women's lives, understanding that their fates are often determined by the actions of men: "however blameless a life we led, the passions and greed of men could bring us to ruin, and there was nothing we could do" (Ibid, 22). While her brother Deucalion was sent away for protection, Ariadne and Phaedra were left to face the repercussions of their parents' actions: "Phaedra and I, doomed as daughters, had to stay" (Ibid, 30).

Women's roles were confined to domestic duties, limiting their freedom and agency. Phaedra echoes this sentiment after marrying Theseus and becoming the queen of Athens: "A princess was a princess, wherever she was, and in Athens, like Crete, the pastimes available seemed limited to weaving, dancing and smiling at men" (Ibid, 145). Marriages in ancient Greece were often arranged to elevate family status, with women viewed as tools for enhancing honor and forging alliances: "Minos had always talked about the marriage I

would make; a glorious union that would heap honor upon Crete" (Ibid, 21). Women were treated as accessories, their lives and destinies subservient to the ambitions of their male relatives. Men, on the other hand, enjoyed freedom from marital responsibilities, their lives unencumbered by the domestic constraints imposed on women. The lives of women, both before and after marriage, were often characterized by monotony and a lack of personal fulfillment.

Motherhood was a central aspect of femininity in ancient Greece, laden with societal expectations and demands for maternal sacrifice. Saint explores these expectations throughout the novel, highlighting the burdens placed on women in their roles as mothers. Despite her monstrous child, Pasiphae embraced her maternal role, demonstrating unconditional love and acceptance: "Pasiphae would step forward with the rats, unflinching as they twisted and screamed in her grasp before she flung them to her son" (Ibid, 26). Pasiphae conformed to societal expectations, putting aside her own trauma and societal stigma to care for her child. Ariadne, too, embraced motherhood, finding fulfillment in nurturing her children: "I threw myself into motherhood, absorbed in every new discovery my children brought to me" (Ibid, 182). Ariadne's experience of motherhood reflects strength and resilience, challenging the limitations imposed by ancient Greek society and demonstrating the power of maternal love.

Repetitive performative acts: Dance as a conduit of expression

Butler (1988, 519) defines gender performativity as "stylized repetition of acts" where gender identity is constructed through adherence to societal norms. In *Ariadne*, dance serves as a recurring motif, reflecting Ariadne's emotions and providing a conduit for emotional expression. It is a source of catharsis, connecting her to her mother and providing a sense of freedom within societal constraints. Farleigh argues that "Dancing always expresses something of livingness... Dance reflects life" (Fraleigh 1996, 172). Ariadne's dance is a form of emotional release: "I could lose myself in a whirling dance that could consume me. Even without music it muffled the distant rumble" (Saint 2021, 19).

Her mother taught her unconventional, free-flowing dance steps, symbolizing freedom within societal constraints: "She gave me gift of making fluid, sinuous shapes out of crazy chaotic movements" (Ibidem). Bitong (2017) asserts that dancing is primarily a cathartic activity as it embodies emptions and tensions, and by embodying them

provides an outlet. In Saint's retelling as well, dance becomes a liberating activity, allowing Ariadne to express her individuality and reclaim her body from societal control. Her emotions are reflected in her dancing: "So I danced. As I danced faster and faster, the pounding of my feet grew louder in my head and bottled out the cruel laughter I heard tinkling behind me wherever I walked" (Saint 2021, 31).

Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity hinges on the idea that gender is not a natural, innate quality, but rather a social construct that is brought into being through repeated actions. These actions, or "performative acts," are not isolated events; they are part of a continuous, often unconscious, process of reiteration. In *Ariadne*, Saint uses the motif of dance to illustrate this concept of repetitive performative acts. Dance, in this context, becomes a powerful symbol of how individuals embody and reinforce societal expectations of gender. In ancient Greek society, as depicted by Saint, dance was not merely a form of entertainment; it was a social practice laden with cultural meaning. Certain forms of dance, certain movements, were associated with femininity, while others were associated with masculinity. By engaging in dance, Ariadne and other female characters are participating in a ritualized performance of their gender. They are enacting the behaviors that society expects of them.

In *Ariadne*, dancing is representative of the stylized repeated acts that Butler refers to in her theory. These stylized acts can either subvert or reassert a gender identity and in the novel the repeated movements, the choreography, become a way of inscribing gender onto the body. Each time Ariadne dances; she is reinforcing her identity as a woman within the context of her society. The repeated movements become a form of bodily inscription, a way of internalizing and externalizing gender norms. While dance can be seen as a form of conformity, it can also be a form of emotional expression. For Ariadne, dance becomes a way of processing her emotions, of finding release from the constraints of her society. Even within the confines of societal expectations, Ariadne finds a way to express her individuality through her dance. The way she dances, the fluidity of her movements, becomes a way of asserting her own identity.

Although dance is a repetitive act, it also holds the potential for subversion. Even as Ariadne conforms to the expectations of her society, she can also subtly challenge those expectations through her dance. The very act of engaging in a repetitive practice allows for the possibility of variation, of deviation. Ariadne's unique style of dance,

learned from her mother, shows that even within repetition, there is room for individual expression, and therefore, for potential change. This is shown through the fact that even though the dance is a source of release, it is also one of the few outlets that the women in the novel are given. The idea that gender performativity is not something that is voluntary or a radical choice of individual, is shown through the fact that Ariadne does not create the dance, but learns it, and preforms it, thus showing how gender is a repeated act. In essence, the motif of dance in *Ariadne* serves as a powerful illustration of how gender is performed and reinforced through repetitive acts. It highlights the complex interplay between conformity and resistance, between societal expectations and individual expression.

Claiming agency through subversion and retaliation

Ariadne's journey in Saint's novel beautifully encapsulates how the subversion of oppressive gender roles can lead to the redefinition of societal norms. For Ariadne, the process is a gradual one and her transformation is foreshadowed in how she contemplates the fate of Pasiphae and Medusa. Ariadne's musings about Medusa's retaliation foreshadows her own struggle as she deliberates herself: "I would be Medusa if it came to it. If they came for me to punish a man's action, I would not hide away like Pasiphae" (Saint 2021, 23). Ariadne rejects passive acceptance and she is aware of the injustice suffered by Medusa although she is demonized by the patriarchal narrative – signifying Ariadne's own defiance. Medusa's femininity is deemed monstrous because it challenges make authority and Ariadne knows that she might have to face the same challenges as she prepares herself to resist oppression.

Firstly, Ariadne's defiance is apparent in how she interacts with her father Minos who represents patriarchal power. Not letting her father see her fail is one of the ways in which Ariadne's resistance is manifested, especially when she vows that "I would not let my father see me falter or let him luxuriate in my reluctance" (Ibid, 42). Ariadne's resolve to hold her ground represents a remarkable departure from the acquiescence associated with dutiful daughters. She knows that she has the ability to outwit Minos and therefore she does not need to resort to physical confrontation: "but what if he did not need to be fought? It would take a cunning mind to do it, but what if Minos could be outwitted?" (Ibid, 51). Ariadne's decision to use her intellect is a

subversive act defying a society that places more value on physical strength over female intellect.

Ariadne's defiance is realized more significantly when she helps Theseus to navigate the labyrinth and slays the Minotaur. She takes charge of the narrative and challenges the established order by procuring help from Daedalus. In a society where women are expected to be silent observers, Ariadne subverts the norms by her intervention and later through her decision to leave Crete with Theseus. She rejects her familial and societal obligation and embraces her autonomy: "I knew that I would do this. Betray my father. Send death to my brother, desert my mother. And, of course, leave Crete and never return" (Ibid. 75). Although, Ariadne's struggle to gain agency is further marred by Theseus's betrayal, it ultimately results in her self-discovery as she realizes that her worth is not dependent on her relationships with men. Dionysus encourages her by supporting her choice and helps her in understanding that she should not bear the burden of Theseus's actions as she eventually says: "I would not let a man who knew the value of nothing make me doubt the value of myself" (Ibid, 171).

Ariadne's journey in Saint's retelling is a testament to the possibly of reclaiming agency that leads to self-discovery. By the end of the novel, the male oppressions and betrayals Ariadne's had suffered through and survived become emblematic of war-wounds she can carry as a reminder of her own strength. Through Ariadne's character, Saint illustrates a possibility for subverting the established order, reclaiming agency and reshaping one's own narrative. Ariadne finds a way out of the oppressive structures by resisting and redefining the existing norms, and her transformation underscores the tremendous potential of subversion to challenge and redefine gender norms.

Conclusion

Greek myths, in essence, perpetuated patriarchal societal norms, subjugating women by portraying them either as weak damsels in distress or evil if they tried to refuse the gender norms or dared to have a voice of their own. The contemporary retellings of evidently patriarchal Greek myths are an attempt to reimagine all the misrepresented women, who faced ill-treatment from the male dominated ancient Greek society. Modern retellings attempt to present Greek myths from the perspective of these females providing a new and feminist outlook. Jennifer Saint's retelling of Ariadne's myth reveals the oppressive repercussions of patriarchy in ancient Greek

society and provides us a story from the female perspective. Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a comprehensive framework for analysis of Jennifer Saint's novel *Ariadne* as a feministic retelling. It emphasizes on the oppressive gender norms, repetitive performative acts of gender construction and finally the subversion and retaliation against the societal gender roles. Ariadne asserts herself by defying the societal expectations associated by women. Saint depicts her as a woman having her own agency, making decisions for herself, by herself. Gender performances that were expected of women in ancient Greek society only inhibited women and did not grant them any power of authority; nonetheless, Ariadne found a way to fight back and over society's expected performances.

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A multidisciplinary systematic review of Gaia: From mythical Earth Goddess to a scientific concept

Raman and Narinder K. Sharma*

Abstract: Gaia has undergone a stunning evolution over millennia from a primordial Greek Goddess representing the Earth, to a more scientific hypothesis suggesting that the planet operates as a self-regulating organism, has sparked the imagination of generations. This study aims to shed light on the historical pathway of Gaia through a systematic review capturing its progress from a myth to a scientific theory, being portrayed in different types of literature throughout history, in addition to studying how the notion of Gaia has impacted human views of the Earth and their role in it. This review assists an exploration study, drawing on cross-disciplines, covering mythology, science, literature, and arts, to acquire a better understanding of the cultural and academic relevance of Gaia from a broad range of literature sources. Building on this understanding, the outcome of this study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of Gaia, thereby enriching its academic significance in contemporary scientific, artistic, mythical, and cultural discourse

Keywords: literature, mythology, Gaia, Gaia hypothesis, Gaia theory, Earth system science

Introduction

In recent years, Gaia has received considerable attention as a mythological paradigm and a scientific hypothesis, leading to a multidisciplinary exploration across literature, environmental science and philosophy. James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, developed in the 1970s, imagines Earth as a self-regulating, interconnected system that has become a radical way of thinking about the environment and has fascinated many ecological and environmental conversations. Simultaneously, the myth of Gaia, the ancient Greek earth goddess or

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mother goddess, has made a comeback in culture and literature, mirroring the renewed engagement with nature and planetary consciousness.

The Gaia myth presents a potential avenue for bringing myth back to the physical world in a way that is compatible with science, offering a new paradigm for understanding global environmental politics and complex systems of Earth (Segal 2015). Gradually, this constructed Gaia has developed into both a scientific model and a cultural symbol, triggering profound interest and academic explorations that reach from science to the humanities and the arts as:

An Internet search for 'Gaia theory' yields over 63,000 results, and a search for 'Gaia' yields 1,420,000 websites. Of the latter, most are about environmentalism and various forms of spirituality, but their topics also include the arts, urban planning, tourism, feminism and even sporting goods. Gaia is most often invoked by environmental activists and spiritual seekers...Language matters, and the ancient image of the Earth mother is far more compelling to most people than the comparatively cold language of systems theory. Gaia theory at once revives this ancient symbol and endows it with scientific legitimacy, synthesizing empiricism with poetic inspiration. (Litfin 2005, 515)

Despite this growing attention, the field is fragmented, with studies focusing on narrow aspects, rather than providing a comprehensive understanding and the challenge of understanding the multifaceted significance of Gaia, both a scientific construct and a cultural metaphor. In response to this existing gap, this systematic review synthesises existing research on Gaia, charting its evolution and relevance across disciplines. By delineating the current landscape of Gaia-inspired work, this review highlights emerging trends and themes, and the interdisciplinary possibilities presented by this notion, by following the research methodology, including:

- 1. Comprehensive literature search: Identifying scholarly articles, books, and artistic works through academic databases using terms such as 'Gaia', 'Gaia hypothesis', 'Gaia theory', and 'mythology of Gaia'.
- 2. Inclusion criteria: Selected works that explicitly engage with Gaia as a mythological entity, scientific hypothesis, or cultural metaphor.
- 3. Thematic categorisation: Analysing the selected materials through thematic categories-mythological, scientific, literary, and artistic dimensions to identify recurring patterns and interdisciplinary connections.

This review demonstrates the increasing relevance of Gaia by offering a structured synthesis to contribute to a deeper understanding of Gaia's role as a bridge between myth and science.

Mythological origins of Gaia

Gaia (Gaea) or Gē in Greek Γαῖα or Γῆ is one of the ancient Greek Primordial deities according to Hesiod's ancient Greek work *Theogony* (730-700 BC), which elaborates on the origin and genealogy of various Greek gods and goddesses. She is one of the gods from ancient Greece and often relates to fertility, nature, and the cycle of life. Douglas Harper's 2018 Online Etymology Dictionary defines 'Gaia' or 'Gaea' as "a goddess, from Greek Gaia, spouse of Uranus, mother of the Titans, a personification of gaia 'earth'...sometimes used in English poetically or rhetorically for 'Earth personified' or the 'Earth as a planet". Since ancient Greek tradition 'Gaia' is worshipped along with 'Demeter' (the goddess of agriculture) as William Smith (1870) in A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology states: "She had temples or altars at Athens, Sparta, Delphi, Olympia, Bura, Tegea, Phlyus, and other places...The surnames and epithets given to Ge have more or less reference to her character as the all-producing and allnourishing mother".

The identical of Gaia in Roman mythology is 'Terra Meter' or 'Tellus Meter', whereas in Hindu Mythology, the identical is 'Bhumi', also called 'Bhudevi' and 'Vasundra'. Derek Wall (1994, 78) in his prominent work *Green History: A Reader in Environmental, Philosophy and Politics* (1994) rightly emphasises: "The concept of an Earth goddess is nearly universal and certainly ancient. Egyptian, Greek, Indian and Jewish traditions, to name but a few provide us with female Earth deities". The twentieth century witnessed an evolution of a religious movement termed 'neo-paganism' (religion derived from the beliefs of pre-modern people), which reclaimed as a priestess named Morgan McFarland states: "a return to those values which see an ecologically balanced situation so that life continues and the great Mother is venerated again" (qtd. in B.Urban 2015).

Precedents of scientific Gaia

The concept of Earth as a living and spiritual being Gaia, continued to flourish throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his *Politics* (350 BCE) and Plato in his *Timaeus* (360 BCE), a dialogue, describes the Earth as a living

organism, with a soul that animates and controls it. The Roman poet Lucretius depicts the Earth as a living entity in his epic poem De Rerum Natura written in the first century BC and describes the planet as having a 'soul' that permeates all things. The Renaissance artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci also believed that the planet had a natural balance and harmony, and humans had a responsibility to preserve it. The Stoic philosophers and the German astronomer Johannes Kepler also bear a resemblance to Earth as a living being or living cosmos and in their point of view, Earth as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Throughout the eighteenth century, the mythical goddess Gaia consolidated in modern sciences as James Hutton, Alexander von Humboldt and Vladimir Vernadsky proposed that the Earth's living organisms. atmosphere, and geology were all interconnected. encapsulating the contemporary Gaia hypothesis. Aldo Leopold pioneered Land Ethics and Wilderness Conservation in his work A Sand County Almanac (1949), wherein he states: "A land, ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity." (Leopold 1949, 258) In 1968, during the Apollo 8 mission, a photograph of the Earth was taken by astronaut William Anders, called 'Earthrise' (Figure 1). It was the first time when the world saw how Earth looked like an integrated whole from space and "inspired contemplation of our fragile existence and our place in the cosmos" (100 Photographs). These precedents illustrate how ancient philosophers and scientists have long recognised the interconnectedness of different aspects of the Earth system, including organisms, the environment and human activity.



Figure 1.Source: http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0309/lm11.html

The scientific formulation of the Gaia hypothesis

The mythical Gaia emerged as Gaia hypothesis in 1965, when it was formulated by an independent British scientist, environmentalist, and futurist, James Ephraim Lovelock, while working on a project for NASA at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California. He hypothesised that life had created a self-regulating system on Earth that maintained the conditions necessary for its existence and named it as 'Gaia hypothesis' at the suggestion of British novelist William Golding. Lovelock introduces the hypothesis initially in his 1971 journal article "Gaia as Seen through the Atmosphere" and got critical and scientific attention through his 1974 article "The Quest for Gaia" in which he claimed: "It appeared to us that the Earth's biosphere was able to control at least the temperature of the Earth's surface and the composition of the atmosphere...the system seemed to exhibit the behaviour of a single organism, even a living creature" (Lovelock and Empton 1975, 304-305).

After the publication of this initial hypothesis, the scientific community got interested in the details of the Gaia hypothesis and Lovelock published a full-length book named *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* and defined Gaia as "a complex entity involving the Earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, and soil the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet" (Lovelock 1979, 10).

Though the environmental community readily accepted the Gaia hypothesis yet Lovelock had to face extensive criticism from the scientific community, as they believed that the Gaia hypothesis is not a scientific theory but a metaphor. Stephen Jay Gould criticised the Gaia hypothesis in his article "Kropotkin was no crackpot" (1988), wherein he states: "Gaia strikes me as a metaphor, not a mechanism" (Gould 1988, 15).

On this claim, Lovelock argued that Gaia is a useful metaphor for understanding the complex interactions between living organisms and the physical environment. American ecologist and philosopher David Abram (1991, 1) defends the Gaia hypothesis by arguing: "what Gould failed to state is that "mechanism", itself, is nothing more than a metaphor. It is an important one, to be sure. Indeed, the whole process of modern science seems to get underway with this metaphor".

Gaia theory

After receiving critical and scientific attention for his first book on the Gaia hypothesis Lovelock further tested the Gaia hypothesis and developed it into Gaia theory in his work *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* and remarked: "thoughtful criticisms of this first book led to new and deeper insights into Gaia...much new evidence has accumulated, and I have made new theoretical models...as a consequence this second book is a statement of Gaia theory; the basis of a new and unified view of the Earth and life sciences" (Lovelock 1988, 10).

The fascination with this theory has led to the development of 'Earth System Science'. The theory has continued to be influential in the study of global environmental change and the origins of life. The Amsterdam declaration of four prominent International Global Change Research programs acknowledged Lovelock's Gaia theory and is concerned with human activities that are constantly influencing the Earth, resulting in Global Warming and Climate Change. John Turney remarks: "Research carried out over the past decade under the auspices of the four programmes to address these concerns has shown that: The Earth System behaves as a single, self-regulating system comprised of physical, chemical, biological and human components" (Turney 2003, 139).

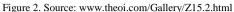
Thus, the concept of Gaia has evolved from a mythological belief in a mother Earth goddess to a scientific theory of Earth as a self-regulating system. Both interpretations offer insight into the relationship of the human species with the natural world. Though his Gaia hypothesis was initially criticized yet he expanded it to the Gaia theory that has now become a vital part of Earth System Science as Toby Tyrrell, a professor of Earth System Science in his work *On Gaia* (2013) while considering the modern evidence from relevant various disciplines remarks that:

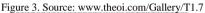
I believe Gaia is a dead end. Its study has, however, generated many new and thought-provoking questions. While rejecting Gaia, we can at the same time appreciate Lovelock's originality and breadth of vision, and recognize that his audacious concept has helped to stimulate many new ideas about the Earth, and to champion a holistic approach to studying it. (Tyrrell 2013, 209)

Gaia in arts: Literature and cinema

Nature has been a recurring theme in literature from ancient times to the present, and its depiction has evolved with significant 120 representations in classical works as well as in contemporary times in various fields such as arts, paintings, poetry, fiction, non-fiction, music, films, and games.









In classical Greek vase paintings (Figure 2), Gaia is occasionally portrayed as a full-bosomed matronly figure, graced with an embellished crown made of spring flowers and bulbs carrying her infant child Erichthonius. ("Birth of Erichthonius - Ancient Greek Vase Painting"). The Roman mosaic art (Figure 3) portrays 'Gaia' or Roman 'Tellus' wearing a crown made of fruit and with her four children named Theron (Summer), Cheimon (Winter), Phthinoporon (Autumn) and Eiar (Spring). ("Aeon, Gaea & the Carpi - Ancient Greco-Roman Mosaic")

Ancient Greek and medieval literature often personified and imbued nature with divine qualities. There is a portrayal of Gaia as a divine character in Homer's *Illiad* and Pinder's *Odes*. Mircea Eliade, a Romanian religion historian and writer in his work *Essential Sacred Writings from Around the World* ([1967] 1992, 55) observes that the Greek notion of Gaia- the Mother Earth, is prayed for all sorts of happiness in The Homeric Hymns:

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Hail, Mother of the gods, wife of starry Heaven; freely bestow upon me for this my song substance that cheers the heart! And now I will remember you and another song also.

(The Homeric Hymns, XXX, Eliade 55)
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Three major movements which particularly focused on nature as a central theme and pastoral tradition are the Elizabethan Worldview, Romantic Pantheism, and American Transcendentalism. In Elizabethan literature, the poets Edmund Spenser, Philip Sydney, Ben Johnson and John Donne, etc. often emphasise the idyllic beauty and simplicity of rural life and nature. The Romantic poets William Wordsworth, P.B. Shelley, John Keats, Lord Byron, S. T. Coleridge, etc. often saw nature as a manifestation of the divine, and human beings were viewed as part of the natural world rather than separate from it. In William Wordsworth's poem "Lines Written in the Early Spring", the speaker contemplates the unity of all living things in nature.

The American Transcendentalists, including the prominent intellectuals Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1850), viewed nature as a source of spiritual renewal and a means of transcending the limitations of the material world. Various postmodern poets have made the effort to demonstrate the realistic and bitter plight of the human and non-human world and advocate for the restoration of both worlds at a normal stage. Gary Synder, an American deep ecology activist, poet and lecturer, denotes the chapter "Little Songs for Gaia" of his work *Axe Handles* to Gaia:

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Deep blue sea baby,
Deep blue sea.
Ge, Gaia
Seed syllable, "ah!"
(Synder 1983, 54)
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Spiritual entrepreneur Julie Tara's 2015 influential work *Songs of Gaia: Devotional Poems to Nourish the Heart* deals with finding solace in sufferings and turbulences that the Earth and the human race are going through and believing the presence of the infinite and divine:

Kiss the earth and know her longing for your happiness. Tell her you love her And witness the faeries' beam. (Tara 2015)

The great Indian scriptures such as *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagwad Gita*, and *Mahabharata* contain hymns and tales dedicated to the worship of flora and fauna, their conservation and maintenance of ecological harmony. Roma Chatterji (2022, 14), in the journal article "Gaia and the Environmental Apocalypse in Superhero Comics and Science Fantasy" emphasises: "In Ramayan 3392 AD, the living earth that Lovelock conceives as a cybernetic system with feedback loops that coordinate the relations between its parts is given the persona of Sita – an animistic figure that embodies organic creativity".

In fiction, Gaia is often used to convey a variety of meanings, such as the beauty and power of the natural world, the correlation between humans and nature, and the destructive impact of humans on it. John Varley's science fiction trilogy - *Gaea Trilogy* (1979-1984), which includes the novels *Titan*, *Wizard*, and *Demon*, portrays Gaea as the embodiment and God of the Wheel, a rotating space habitat. Issac Asimov's *Foundation's Edge* (1982), and *Foundation and Earth* (1984), illustrate a planet called Gaia where all living and non-living organisms take part in planetary consciousness. Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia Trilogy* (1982-1985) represents an Earth-like planet, Helliconia and the fragility of human civilisation.

In the milieu of environment and climate change, the novel Lovelock (1994) by Orson Scott Card and Kathyrn H. Kidd describes 'Gaiaology' as a full-fledged interdisciplinary science. David Brin's novel Earth (1990), features a fictional Gaia ecology movement. Roger Lancelyn Green's Tales of the Greek Heroes (2009) also features Gaia as a central figure. Her role in the creation of the world, as well as her relationship with other Greek gods and goddesses, is explored in detail. In David Orrell's novel Gaia (2011) the characters encounter a Gaian cult. Claire Buss's The Gaia Collection (2020) is a post-apocalyptic trilogy of novels The Gaia Effect (2016), The Gaia Project (2018), and The Gaia Solution (2020) that presents a futuristic world where Earth's natural resources have been depleted, and Gaia emerges as a central character guiding humanity towards restoration. M.E. Ellington's novel The Devolution of a Species (2017) is based on the Gaia

hypothesis and illustrates the haunting consequences of damaging the planet. The novel *Guiding Gaia* (2021) by Tish Thawer features a reincarnated Gaia who wants to discover whether the world is worth saving.

Cinema, one of the most universal forms of artistic pursuits, plays a significant role in shaping cultural narratives by reflecting societal values. It provides a window into different perspectives and experiences and can provoke thought and discussion on a range of topics. The movies and television series based on Gaia or the Gaia theory are capable of sensitising the audience to honour 'Mother Earth' through audio and visual aids. An American animated Television series *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* (1990-1996) developed by Barbara Pyle and Ted Turner, featured a superhero named Captain Planet who was tasked with protecting the Earth from environmental threats. The premise of the series was rooted in the idea that Earth is an interconnected system that needs to be protected, echoing the Gaia hypothesis.

Hironobu Sakaguchi's Sci-fi Movie The Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within (2001) in which Dr Sid and Aki are the promoters of the Gaia theory. James Cameron's Sci-fi movie Avatar (2009), referred to a Gaian-like system called Eywa, a goddess worshipped by the natives. This movie is set on the fictional planet of Pandora, where the native inhabitants have a deep connection to their planet, while the human invaders seek to exploit its resources. Xavier Berenguer's documentary GAIA: The Big Mother (2016) explores the evolution of Earth, the role of humanity and the threats to the sustainability of the planet. Gaia (2021) by Jaco Bouwer is an Eco-horror movie that portrays Gaia as a powerful and mysterious force of nature. R.Rathindran Prasad's movie Boomika (2021) is also an Eco-horror thriller that focuses on Gaia and portrays the repercussions of deforestation and ecological imbalance on human lives, drawing attention to the consequences of neglecting Gaia. Hence, Gaia has become a framework for Scientists, artists, academicians and Environmentalists as they have looked to it to understand how the Earth responds to the impact of human activities on the planet Earth.

Conclusion

To conclude, Gaia is a concept that has captured the imagination of both scientists and artists across the wider cultures, from the ancient Greeks to modern environmentalists. The idea of a living and interconnected planet has been a powerful and enduring myth. Lovelock, with the collaboration of microbiologist Lynn Margulis, redefined the planet not as a passive backdrop for human activity but as an active participant in maintaining the conditions necessary for life. In recent decades, however, scientific research into the Earth's biosphere and climate systems has increasingly emphasised the interconnectedness and complexity of the planet's systems, lending scientific credence to the concept of Gaia. This evolution of Gaia has developed a scientific grasp of the existential truth of the gift of life from Gaia, and the issue of our rightful place in the cosmos is once more brought up (Primavesi 2004). It radically shifts our perspective so that we see the entire planet community as something we depend on rather than something we control as "Gaia theory can be the model and the metaphor that guides us through the twenty-first century's most pressing problems, letting us emerge with a greater understanding of ourselves and the Earth of which we are a part" (Ogle 2009, 289).

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Understanding the riddle of existence through Yaksha Prashna in the *Mahabharata*

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Abstract: This research paper explores the profound philosophical dimensions embedded within the Yaksha Prashna episode of the Mahabharata, analysed through the interpretive lens of Soren Kierkegaard's existentialist philosophy. The Yaksha Prashna, characterised by its enigmatic and deeply reflective questions, presents a formidable challenge to conventional notions of life, morality, and the universe. By engaging with these ancient dialogues, this study uncovers nuanced insights into the human condition and the nature of reality, demonstrating the enduring relevance of these philosophical traditions in contemporary discourse. The research posits that the questions posed by Yaksha serve not merely as a narrative device but as a means to challenge and expand our conventional understandings of existence and ethics. This hypothesis is examined through a detailed analysis of the text, employing Kierkegaard's existentialist framework, which emphasises the subjective experience of individuals as they confront existential dilemmas. By drawing parallels between Yaksha's inquiries and Kierkegaard's existential concerns, this paper elucidates the philosophical significance of the Yaksha Prashna in addressing timeless questions of human existence. Central to this study are the research questions: How do the questions posed by Yaksha challenge conventional notions of life, morality, and the universe? What insights can be drawn from the Yaksha Prashna regarding the human condition and the nature of reality? The exploration of these questions reveals that the Yaksha Prashna episode offers profound insights into the human psyche, ethics, and the quest for understanding in a seemingly indifferent universe. The objective of this research is to illustrate how the philosophical inquiries of the Yaksha Prashna are not only relevant but also applicable to contemporary life, offering timeless reflections on existence that resonate with modern existentialist discourse. By employing a rigorous methodological approach rooted in existentialist theory, this study

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contributes to a deeper understanding of how ancient Indian philosophical traditions can inform and enrich contemporary philosophical thought.

Keywords: Yaksha Prashna, existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard, human condition, ancient Indian philosophy

Introduction

Man is not driven by necessity alone. He seeks. And this seeking turns through mundane, ethical, philosophical and metaphysical realms turns him into a metaphysical animal. In fact, the etymological meaning of the word "mortal" encapsulates the essence of what it is to be human. As André Comte-Sponville posits in his *The Little Book of Philosophy*. "Why is there something rather than nothing? Is life worth living? What is goodness? What is evil? Are we free, or are our actions determined? Does God exist? Is there life after death? These questions, which we might call metaphysical in the broadest sense (for they go beyond any possible physical reality), make us beings capable of thought, or rather capable of philosophising (for the sciences also think, but do not consider these questions), and this is what makes us human or, as the Greeks would put it, mortal: by which they mean not those who will die, animals die too - but those who know that they will die, without knowing what that might mean and yet being unable not to think about it ... Man is a metaphysical animal; this is why death is his constant problem. We do not need to resolve the problem, but to confront it." (Comte-Sponville 2011, 40) Such deliberations on death prompt one to ask a significant question – which one is more dramatic - death or dying? However, such questions cannot be wrestled with without an insight into the mystery of existence. What is death, after all, if not the culmination of life? Thus, across nations and eras, people have been fascinated by the mystery of existence, the meaning of life, and the nature of reality. Philosophical traditions have frequently provided guidance in this endeavour by providing viewpoints and insights that cut across the limits of time and space.

In *Existentialism for Dummies*, Panza and Gale (2013, 132) posit that, "All existentialists believe that living with passion is important. Whereas most people take living with passion to mean living frantically and doing lots of impulsive things, that's not what passion means from the existential point of view. Instead, passion means living life in an intense and deliberate way, one that flows from grappling seriously with the significance and meaning of your own individual life." The various aspects of existentialism are clearly visible in the

Mahabharata. In fact, the epic is a testament to the ruthless mixture of human motives – of thought - discursive and non-discursive, a critique and rebellion against the traditional system, absurdity, the enlightenment, which stems from suffering, which in turn is a natural consequence of ego. Thus, one needs to understand the essence of what it is to drink life to the lees to delve into the depths of the aforementioned questions/problems.

Indian philosophy recognises a two-fold approach to understanding the Self and its ways. The first approach draws upon the Vedas, the Upanishads (Vedanta), the Brahma-Sutras, the Bhagavad-Gita, which deal with the elementary nature of reality, which is presumed to transcend time and techniques that assist experiential mindfulness and awareness of this reality. These texts together go by the name Prasthana Traya. The second approach includes the two well-known Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, which delve into the conditional nature of reality, which get translated into principles and respectively inhabit the description of the principles of reality pertaining to specific contexts (Narasimhan et al. 2010). These epics contain elaborate accounts of philosophical structures elucidating phenomenological issues pertaining to the principles and ethics of action. The comprehensive study of these epics also aids in providing an all-inclusive description of an individual's belief system. In addition. Yakshna Prashna or the conversation with celestial entities. which goes beyond the ordinary and slides into the metaphysical, has been rigorously discussed in Indian Philosophy. This study explores the link between the perpetual mystery of existence and the framework offered by Yakshna Prashna in an attempt to shed light on the deepest recesses of the human psyche through the prism of such an ancient philosophical discourse.

The Indian epic the *Mahabharata* has a series of questions called Yakshna Prashna, which are asked by Yaksha - a celestial being. They cover a plethora of important topics, including duty, morality and the mystery of human existence. The aim of this paper is to unravel the meaning hidden behind these metaphysical questions and study how they contribute to our understanding of contemporary existential issues with the help of the intellectual sophistication and rigour found in Yakshna Prashna. By doing so, we open up a dialogic space at the intersection of seeming cultural differences towards epistemic and ethical redemption. While exploring the theoretical underpinnings, methods, and analyses that guide this investigation in the parts that

follow, we hope to shed light on the relationship between traditional knowledge and modern research through such a multidisciplinary discourse, providing a mosaic that deepens our understanding of the riddle of existence. Such a discourse can also be studied through the existentialist lens of Søren Kierkegaard, who posited a framework centred on individual existence, choice, and the search for meaning in life.

Considered the father of existentialism, Kierkegaard has deliberated on several key existential concerns. These include the search for meaning, the nature of selfhood, the significance of choice and freedom, the concept of anxiety and despair, and the individual's relationship with the divine. The works of Kierkegaard provide a precise reflection of the focus on human beings and free will made whilst existing. He goes on to depict human evolution as a sequential phase of progression which borders on the realms of religion, aesthetics and ethics (Narasimhan et al. 2010). Vyasa, on the other hand, journeys into the ruthless mixture of human motives amidst human frailties, imponderables, possibilities and overarching ambition that shape his enviably subtlest saga of the Mahabharata. The characters and stories found in it hold the key to comprehending one's dialogue with oneself, with the other, moral quandaries, well-being, and transcendence. The experiences of the character in the epic not only contribute to the epic nucleus but also shape it at various stages of its evolution. In the *Mahabharata*, the difficult pilgrimage of the self takes shape and significance against the backdrop of the central storyline. In fact, they are ingeniously interwoven. The complex characters that make up the epic are so dynamic that they contribute to the countless variations of actions, attitudes, morals, and predicaments. Each character rises in response to the environment and circumstances in life; none is either good or bad. Several main characters, including Yudhisthira, Arjuna, and Gandhari, try to improve and change themselves by experimenting with unforeseen events and repercussions as they go through their aspirations and sufferings. In a way, the Mahabharata is a grand journey towards becoming good. After all, does one not become so many people on the way to itself? The parallels between existentialist philosophy and Indian philosophical thought can be primarily identified in concepts such as "being-throwninto-existence," "pure existence," "concern," "the mundane aspects of daily life," "powerlessness," "absurdity," "boredom," and "disgust." Kierkegaard's continuous fluctuation between subjectivity and

transcendence, along with the predominantly religious context of existentialist themes, holds significant appeal for Indian scholars. This is due to the intrinsic link between Indian philosophy and religious thought, which has never been distinctly separated (Hajko 2017).

Analysis

In the "Yaksha Prashna," Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, engages in a dialectic with a Yaksha - the god of death - Yama-Dharma, one who also happens to be the former's father. The conversation between Yaksha and Yudhisthira appears in the Aranya Parva of the epic amidst the last day of the twelve-year exile endured by the Pandavas amidst the anxiety to avoid being discovered in the thirteenth year, where they were supposed to live incognito. The Pandavas, in the pursuit of retrieving the firewood of a priest stolen by a deer, end up exhausted and parched. Each brother, apart from Yudhisthira, goes to a lake to fetch water, disregards the warning voice of a disembodied supernatural creature, and ends up dead. Eventually, Yudhisthira joins in and goes on to answer all the 125 questions of Yaksha, which are self-reflective, phenomenological, and spiritual in nature. To Yudhisthira's happiness, he is granted water from the lake and along with the lives of the four brothers, restored.

In the context of the event, Yudhisthira's statements or precise answers cannot be categorised as generic given the situation and time but can be viewed as an attempt at the brilliance and described as 'stihidadhipurusa' ("sthitadhi" can be translated as "unperturbed wisdom") which is evident in his name, Yudhisthira (Yudhi means war and sthira means steady), which can etymologically define someone who maintains a steady stance in his perspective during the war (Dasgupta 1932). Here, one is reminded of one of the oft-quoted slokas from the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (2019, 56) "The sage, whose mind remains unperturbed amid sorrows, whose thirst for pleasures has altogether disappeared, and who is free from passion, fear and anger, is called stable of mind".

The Yaksha goes on to pose a series of profound questions that probe into the essence of human existence, the nature of knowledge, and the tenets of righteousness (dharma). Yudhishthira's responses reflect a deep understanding of Vedic wisdom and the moral imperatives governing human life. Kierkegaard, a precursor to existentialist thought, emphasises the subjective experience of the individual and the importance of personal choice and commitment in

the face of existential dilemmas. He posits that true understanding and authentic existence arise from the individual's confrontation with their own limitations, anxieties, imponderables and responsibilities. In this regard, Yudhishthira's interaction with the Yaksha can be interpreted as an existential encounter, wherein he confronts fundamental questions of life, death, and the Self. The tradition is replete with such enviably insightful dialogues. Here, one recalls the dialogue between Nachiketa and Yama, Satyakama and Jabala, Janaka and Astavakra Rishi, Rama and Vasishtha, Yajnavalkya, Maitreyi and Katyayani, Arjuna and Krishna, Savitri and Yama, Bharata and Rama and so on. The import of such dialogues is far-reaching. They not only centralise a uniquely dialogic tradition, but also ensure its continuity through the undulating whisper of time. In fact, they form the kernel of Bhashya Literature. The *Mahabharata*, which evinces many such dialogues concerning matters sacred and secular, is no exception to this rule.

Nearly every character in the Mahabharata is prone to taking chances and paying for decisions they didn't consider beforehand and into whose vortex they were eventually sucked. The encounter between the Pandava brothers and Yaksha, a demi-god watching over a forest lake, is a classic example of how choice and decision-making define the course of action. The Yaksha Prashna episode has immense significance, as it reinstates the value of fortitude and patience in the face of adversity and dilemma. Here, Yudhisthira is seen addressing crises at various levels. At a physical level, he initially demonstrates strength but succumbs to his emotions upon discovering his lifeless brothers. Physiologically, he manages his thirst and exhibits a degree of control over his biological needs. His deep sense of loyalty and values enhances his psychological resilience. Spiritually transcendentally, his inclinations drive him towards the pursuit of knowledge. At each level, he displays specific symptoms and resolves various predicaments, each contributing significantly to his overall self. He uses his extensive wisdom in every situation, enabling him to provide carefully considered responses to questions that test his ability to handle dilemmas and crises. In essence, his quest for knowledge creates a vital internal space, enabling him to comprehend the questions posed, which are fundamental riddles of life. However, does Yudhisthira solve any of the riddles deepened by the questions of Yaksha or does he turn them into unsolvable paradoxes? As Bimal Krishna Matilal writes in his essay, "Moral Dilemmas: Insights from the Indian Epics", in the book Epics and Ethics: The Collected Essays

of Bimal Krishna Matilal (2019, 19): "Dilemmas are like paradoxes. Genuine paradoxes are seldom solved. They are, generally speaking, resolved or dissolved. Those philosophers and logicians who have tried over the centuries to solve the well-known logical and sentimental paradoxes, have more often than not created new problems elsewhere in the conceptual apparatus, which exposes the non-existence of a universally accepted solution." But what kind of a philosopher Yudhisthira is in this context in particular and in the context of the epic in general? Thus, a deeper study of the episode of Yaksha Prashna presupposes a study of the character of Yudhisthira. In fact, the Yaksha Prashna highlights the fortitude of Yudhisthira, who is generally perceived as a weak character in the context of the conception of the epic hero. As Buddhadeva Bose (1986, 21) writes in his celebrated book, The Book of Yudhisthir: A Study of the Mahabharat of Vyas, "We shall now have to examine the premises on which Yudhisthir's role as hero can rest. Generally, we regard him as weak and lacking in any initiative, as perpetually dependent on the prowess of Bhim or Arjun and on the counsel of Krishna, Vidur or his own brothers, nearly as indecisive as Dhritarastra and, despite his piety, guilty of unbelievable moral lapses. How shall we accept such a person as hero? His personality is so weakly attractive that no poet from Kalidas to Rabindranath has ever composed a kavya or natak with Yudhisthir as the central figure." However, if one looks at the epic from the ruthless mixture of motives that life offers, the character of Yudhisthira can be singularly studied as one of the most complex characters in world literature, which a wise study of the epic evinces. In fact, Vyasa's Yudhisthira and James Joyce's Ulysses underscores the fact that it's possible to be heroic in one's daily life without having the resourcefulness of either Vyasa's Arjuna or Homer's Ulysses.

By answering Yaksha's profoundly progressive series of phenomenological questions, Yudhisthira consolidates his experiential learning and gains deeper self-understanding. His knowledge leads to an expansion of his self-representation and augments his psychological well-being, developing his resources and potential to higher degrees of freedom and renunciation:

The Yaksha asked,—"What is the highest refuge of virtue? What of fame? What of heaven? And what, of happiness?" Yudhishthira answered,—"Liberality is the highest refuge of virtue: gift, of fame: truth, of heaven: and good behaviour, of happiness." (Roy & Ganguli 1884, 5)

Here, Yudhishthira's answer highlights the importance of compassion a virtue aligned with divine principles, resonating with Kierkegaard's belief in the individual's ethical and spiritual relationship with the divine. The Yaksha's inquiry into the highest refuge of virtue, fame, heaven, and happiness and Yudhishthira's responses—liberality, gift, truth, and good behaviour—offer a rich framework for examining Kierkegaard's emphasis on the individual's subjective experience and the quest for authenticity, often framed within a context of ethical and spiritual self-examination. In this light, Yudhishthira's assertion that liberality is the highest refuge of virtue resonates with Kierkegaard's idea of selfless giving and the ethical imperative to transcend self-centeredness. Liberality, or generosity, involves relinquishing the ego and fostering genuine connections and moral integrity. This mirrors Kierkegaard's call for individuals to move beyond their selfish desires and engage in acts that reflect their true ethical and spiritual nature. Similarly, Yudhishthira's response that gift is the highest refuge of fame can be interpreted through Kierkegaard's concept of authentic recognition. Kierkegaard posits that true acknowledgement comes not from superficial accolades but from meaningful contributions that resonate with one's inner self and the community. The act of giving, when rooted in genuine intention, elevates one's standing in the eyes of the other, not through ostentation but through the inherent value of the act itself. This aligns with Kierkegaard's critique of societal fame and his emphasis on authentic existence. When Yudhishthira states that truth is the highest refuge of heaven, it echoes Kierkegaard's profound engagement with the notion of subjective truth and its existential significance. For Kierkegaard, truth is not merely an abstract concept but a lived experience, which involves a deep commitment to one's beliefs and actions. Truth, in this existential sense, is intrinsically linked to one's eternal salvation and the realisation of one's spiritual potential. By adhering to truth, individuals align themselves with their higher purpose, akin to attaining heaven in both a metaphorical and spiritual sense. Finally, Yudhishthira's claim that good behaviour is the highest refuge of happiness directly correlates with Kierkegaard's exploration of ethical living and the pursuit of a meaningful life. Kierkegaard asserts that true happiness is derived from living in accordance with one's ethical principles and engaging in actions that reflect one's authentic self. Good behaviour, therefore, is not merely a societal expectation but a fundamental aspect of existential fulfilment. It is through ethical

conduct that individuals achieve a state of harmony and contentment, transcending the superficial pleasures of the temporal world. Yudhishthira's responses to Yaksha's questions align with Kierkegaard's existentialist themes. The emphasis on liberality, gift, truth, and good behaviour as refuges of virtue, fame, heaven, and happiness, respectively, underscores a deep philosophical coherence that bridges ancient wisdom and modern existentialist thought. This highlights the enduring relevance of these principles in understanding the human condition and the quest for an authentic and meaningful existence.

The exploration of life, morality, and the human condition provides relevant and valuable perspectives for contemporary philosophical inquiry, particularly in the context of existentialism. One of Kierkegaard's central themes is the "leap of faith," the notion that rationality alone cannot provide all answers to existential questions, and thus, an individual must embrace faith and make choices that transcend mere empirical evidence. In the Yaksha Prashna, Yudhishthira exemplifies this concept through his unwavering adherence to dharma despite the perilous circumstances. His responses to Yaksha's questions demonstrate a synthesis of rational thought and deep-seated faith in the ethical and spiritual values espoused by his culture. According to Neelakanta, an expert commentator of the Mahabharata, the renunciation of the four vices, which are pride, anger, desire and avarice, enables one to control the mind. The primary life goal, according to the Yaksha Prasna, is the accomplishment of the state of a sarvadhanee, a human being who is apprehensive not only about his salvation but is extremely interested in the spiritual wellbeing and the happiness of mankind (Iyer 1969). Through telling these and many other stories, the Mahabharata highlights the idea that life's options come in binaries, are interrelated, and are not spelt out most of the time as to which one could be chosen.

The Yaksha asked,—"What is that which, if renounced, maketh one agreeable? What is that which, if renounced, leadeth to no regret? What is that which, if renounced, maketh one wealthy? And what is that which if renounced, maketh one happy?" Yudhishthira answered,—"Pride, if renounced, maketh one agreeable; wrath, renounced leadeth to no regret: desire, if renounced, maketh one wealthy: and avarice, if renounced, maketh one happy." (Roy & Ganguli 1884, 5)

Yudhishthira's response on pride, wrath, desire, and avarice, respectively—offers timeless insights into the human condition and

moral philosophy. These responses gain additional depth and relevance when examined through the lens of Kierkegaard's existentialist thought. Kierkegaard's existentialism emphasises the individual's journey towards self-realisation and authenticity, often by renouncing superficial or socially imposed values. In this context, Yudhishthira's answers align closely with Kierkegaard's ideas. Renouncing pride, for instance, aligns with Kierkegaard's call to humility and the shedding of ego to achieve a more authentic self. By letting go of pride, an individual becomes more agreeable, fostering genuine connections with others, unencumbered by the need for self-aggrandisement. Similarly, the renunciation of wrath resonates with Kierkegaard's exploration of inner peace and the resolution of existential anxiety. Kierkegaard posits that wrath, rooted in the individual's struggle against perceived injustices and existential angst, ultimately leads to regret and suffering. By renouncing wrath, one finds serenity and a clearer perspective on life's challenges, thus minimising regret and cultivating a more harmonious existence. The notion that renouncing desire leads to wealth is particularly evocative of Kierkegaard's critique of materialism and his emphasis on spiritual wealth. Kierkegaard argues that the relentless pursuit of worldly desires often leads to existential despair. In his view, true wealth is found in spiritual fulfilment and the pursuit of higher existential truths. Yudhishthira's assertion that renouncing desire brings wealth echoes this sentiment, suggesting that true prosperity is not measured in material terms but in the richness of one's inner life. Finally, the renunciation of avarice as a path to happiness underscores a key tenet of Kierkegaard's philosophy: the importance of living a life of ethical and spiritual integrity. Avarice, driven by insatiable greed, prevents individuals from experiencing genuine happiness. Kierkegaard advocates for a life of simplicity and moral clarity, where happiness is derived from ethical living and the pursuit of existential purpose rather than wealth accumulation. In this context, Yudhishthira's response to Yaksha's question encapsulates fundamental existentialist principles that are deeply compatible with Kierkegaard's philosophy. By renouncing individuals can wrath. desire. and avarice. agreeableness, avoid regret, attain true wealth, and find happiness. The choices we make bring out various aspects of ourselves, allowing several possibilities to express themselves for each choice that is made. In the process of choice, and in choosing upon the actions, values, attitudes, and other critical aspects of our being, we add depth and vastness to ourselves. The *Mahabharata*'s teachings of sukha-dukha, contentment and suffering, are therefore intrinsic in its analysis of both dharma and adharma; of truth and untruth; of himsa, violence, and ahimsa, non-violence; of the attitudes concerning having and not having; of sexuality; of life-in-family and life alone; of self-actualisation and self-discipline or the non-appearance of them; and in its probe in the question of causality and human freedom, which is referred to as moksha (Chaturvedi 2007). This alignment highlights the enduring relevance of ancient wisdom in addressing the perennial questions of human existence and underscores the universality of existentialist themes across diverse philosophical traditions.

The Yaksha asked,—"Who is truly happy? What is most wonderful? What is the path? And what is the news? Answer these four questions of mine and let thy dead brothers revive." Yudhishthira answered,—"O amphibious creature, a man who cooketh in his own house, on the fifth or the sixth part of the day, with scanty vegetables, but who is not in debt and who stirreth not from home, is truly happy. Day after day countless creatures are going to the abode of Yama, yet those that remain behind believe themselves to be immortal. What can be more wonderful than this? Argument leads to no certain conclusion, the Srutis are different from one another; there is not even one Rishi whose opinion can be accepted by all; the truth about religion and duty is hid in caves: therefore, that alone is the path along which the great have trod. This world full of ignorance is like a pan. The sun is fire, the days and nights are fuel. The months and the seasons constitute the wooden ladle. Time is the cook that is cooking all creatures in that pan with such aids; this is the news." (Roy & Ganguli 1884, 8)

When Yudhishthira is asked, "What is the greatest wonder?" Yudhishthira replies that it is the inevitability of death and yet the tendency of humans to live as if they are immortal. This answer encapsulates the existential awareness of mortality, a key theme in Kierkegaard's philosophy. The recognition of one's mortality is a fundamental existential crisis, prompting individuals to seek meaning and authenticity in their lives. Yudhishthira's acknowledgement of this paradox highlights the existential tension between the awareness of death and the pursuit of a meaningful life. Moreover, Yudhishthira's journey mirrors Kierkegaard's exploration of despair and the individual's confrontation with nothingness. The *Mahabharata*, through the Yaksha Prashna, portrays Yudhishthira's resilience and moral integrity amidst the desolation and despair of exile and loss. His ability to answer Yaksha's questions correctly not only saves his brothers but also signifies his transcendence over existential despair

through applying wisdom and virtue. Yudhishthira's responses are imbued with an understanding that aligns with Kierkegaard's idea of living authentically - making choices that reflect one's true self and ethical convictions. Yudhishthira's response also highlights the paradox of human existence: despite witnessing death daily, people continue to live as if they are immortal. This response underscores a central aspect of the human condition: the denial of mortality and the inherent contradiction between human aspirations and the inevitability of death. Kierkegaard delves into the human condition, emphasising the individual's confrontation with existential anxiety and despair. "Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self" (Kierkegaard 1994, 17). In his 1941 seminal work, The Sickness unto Death, Kierkegaard explores the concept of despair as a fundamental aspect of the human condition, arising from the tension between the finite and the infinite within the self.

Kierkegaard's exploration of "despair" parallels the existential reflections in the Yaksha Prashna, where Yudhishthira's answers reflect an acute awareness of human limitations and the search for authentic existence. The dialogue with the Yaksha serves as a crucible for Yudhishthira's existential introspection, compelling him to articulate and affirm his commitment to dharma. Kierkegaard's original and foundational understanding of existentialism is straightforward and uncomplicated.

Existentialism fundamentally rejects purely abstract thought and the supremacy of reason. Instead, it asserts that philosophy must be intimately tied to an individual's personal life and experiences, as well as the historical context in which they exist. Moreover, it emphasises that philosophy should serve as a practical guide for living (Howard & Edna 1992). Yaksha's questions and Kierkegaard's philosophy highlight the subjective nature of the search for meaning. Yudhishthira's responses, rooted in reflection and wisdom, align with Kierkegaard's view that individuals must navigate existential questions personally to find authentic meaning.

Conclusion

Yaksha Prashna is an exemplary narrative through which Kierkegaardian existentialism can be vividly illustrated. Yudhishthira's answers to the Yaksha's questions reveal a profound engagement with

existential themes such as mortality, duty, and the search for truth. For example, when asked, "What is the path?" Yudhishthira responds that the path is that of the righteous, walked by the great ones, thereby reflecting Kierkegaard's notion of the "ethical stage," where individuals make choices based on universal moral laws and the quest for an authentic life. In his exploration of the human existential condition, Kierkegaard differentiates between an individual's current state—what they presently are—and what they ought to be, or their essential nature. According to Kierkegaard, there is a transition from one's essential nature to one's existential condition, a shift from essence to existence. This underscores existentialism's emphasis on the uniqueness of individual existence (Dhanapal 2014). The questions in the Yaksha Prashna episode of the Mahabharata encapsulate core existential themes that resonate with Kierkegaard's philosophy, such as the search for meaning, the nature of selfhood, ethical living, and the individual's relationship with the divine. These themes reveal the timeless wisdom of ancient Indian philosophy and demonstrate its relevance to modern existentialist thought. By juxtaposing Yaksha's questions with Kierkegaard's existential inquiries, it becomes evident that the Yaksha Prashna offers a unique and invaluable perspective on the human condition that complements and enriches Kierkegaard's existentialism. Yudhishthira's reflection on what constitutes a true Brahmin, asserting that it is not birth but virtuous conduct and wisdom. aligns with Kierkegaard's idea of subjective truth, where personal experience and inner conviction supersede external categorisations. His assertion that a true friend stands by in adversity resonates with Kierkegaard's emphasis on authentic relationships formed through genuine personal commitment. "The tragic hero relinquishes himself in order to express the universal; the knight of faith relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual" (Kierkegaard 1994, 75). The narrative also explores existential solitude when Yudhishthira faces the Yaksha alone, reminiscent of Kierkegaard's "knight of faith," who must confront life's ultimate questions in isolation, relying on inner strength and faith. Thus, the Yaksha Prashna not only encapsulates the rich philosophical heritage of the Mahabharata but also serves as a profound reflection of Kierkegaardian existentialism, illustrating the timeless struggle for meaning, ethical living, and authentic existence. By situating the Yaksha Prashna within the context of Kierkegaard's existentialism, this research demonstrates the universal and timeless nature of the philosophical inquiries found in the Mahabharata. The alignment between ancient Indian thought and modern existentialism highlights the enduring relevance of the Yaksha Prashna as a source of wisdom and contemplation for understanding the human condition. In contemporary society, individuals frequently confront existential dilemmas analogous to those addressed by Yudhishthira and Kierkegaard, such as the search for authentic identity, the struggle with ethical and moral choices, and the quest for meaning in an increasingly complex world. The Yaksha Prashna's exploration of virtues such as liberality, truth, and good behaviour, when examined through an existential lens, provides profound insights into navigating these challenges. Kierkegaard's emphasis on subjective truth and the significance of personal experience resonates with the questions posed by the Yaksha, which encourage deep self-reflection and personal growth. In an era where individuals grapple with issues of authenticity and the pressures of societal expectations, the teachings from the Yaksha Prashna offer valuable guidance on living a life of integrity and purpose. Furthermore, the concept of renouncing pride, wrath, desire, and avarice to achieve agreeableness, regret-free living, true wealth, and happiness, respectively, offers practical advice for contemporary issues such as mental health, materialism, and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the convergence of these ancient and modern philosophies underscores the notion that the core questions about human existence remain consistent despite cultural and temporal differences. This comparative analysis not only enriches our understanding of both the Mahabharata and Kierkegaard's works but also bridges cultural divides, demonstrating that wisdom and philosophical inquiry transcend time and geography. In doing so, it reaffirms the significance of the Yaksha Prashna in offering enduring lessons applicable to modern life, encouraging individuals to seek deeper meaning and authenticity in their personal and communal lives.

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Exploring existence in Namita Gokhale's Priya: In Incredible Indyaa

Gobi D. and V. Suganthi*

Abstract: Existence refers to the state of being alive or real. In philosophy, it explores questions about the nature of being, the purpose of life, and the individual's place in the universe. Central to existentialist thought, existence is viewed as a dynamic process where humans must create their own meaning and identity through choices and actions in a world that lacks inherent purpose. It emphasises freedom, responsibility, and the struggle to find significance amidst uncertainties. In Indian society there are women who live and there are women who exist. The existence of an Indian woman and her struggle to live her life are well explored by Namita Gokhale in her novel Priva: In Incredible Indvaa. It is a vivid and a satirical portrayal of contemporary Indian society, exploring the complexities of womanhood against the backdrop of a rapidly modernising yet deeply traditional culture. Namita Gokhale, through the protagonist Priya and other female characters in the novel, has represented nuanced existence of Indian women. Namita Gokhale has portrayed the duality of modern Indian womanhood, the dynamics of marriage and relationships, and the role of women in preserving and challenging societal norms. Priva, the wife of a politician, exemplifies the resilience and adaptability of Indian women as she balances the roles of homemaker and nurturer. Her life reflects the broader societal expectations placed on women, highlighting their silent sacrifices and unwavering dedication to family. As a mother to twin sons, Priya confronts cultural norms, including the difficulty Indian mothers face in addressing sensitive topics like their children's private lives. Her journey encapsulates the tensions between tradition and modernity, offering a microcosm of the challenges faced by women in contemporary India. Namita Gokhale uses Priya's story to deliver a poignant commentary on the personal and collective struggles of women navigating these complexities.

Keywords: existence, womanhood, Indian women's struggles, tradition and modernity

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Introduction

Namita Gokhale is an Indian writer, editor, festival director, and publisher. Her debut novel, Paro: Dreams of Passion was released in 1984, and she has since written fiction and nonfiction, and edited nonfiction collections. Priya: In Incredible Indyaa (2011) is her provocative sequel to her first novel Paro: Dreams of Passion. It provides a rich and humorous exploration of Indian society through the eyes of its protagonist, Priya. The novel, set in the vibrant and chaotic milieu of modern India, presents an incisive commentary on the multifaceted roles of Indian women. Priva is a middle-aged woman, caught between the pull of tradition and the push of modernity. embodies the struggles and triumphs of Indian women in a society that expects them to balance familial duties with personal aspirations. The novel portrays the existence of the Indian woman Priya, focusing on the duality of womanhood, the complexities of marriage, and women's roles as custodians of tradition. Priya's journey explores the diverse female characters around her, the discussion seeks to unpack the layered realities of Indian womanhood. Namita Gokhale skillfully portrays the duality of Priya's domestic responsibilities with her engagement in social and intellectual life in Priva: In Incredible Indyaa. Priya's interactions with her husband Suresh, her children, and her friends reveal the constant negotiation required to balance these two worlds. Her struggles and successes reflect the experiences of countless Indian women who navigate a similar dichotomy in their daily lives.

Change in life

The protagonist Priya copes up with the sudden changes in her social status. Her existence is an evidence to the ways Indian women struggle, caught between personal desires and social responsibilities. As a woman, Priya wants to fulfill her desires and enjoy freedom. But, as a wife she is in a position to fulfill others needs. Priya is a wife of a politician Suresh Kaushal, Minister of State for Food Processing, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Canneries. Priya's life has changed from being B.R.'s secretary and a middle class-girl to being a wife of a politician. Priya says, "I began life as B.R.'s secretary. It's hard for a middle-class girl to suddenly find herself top of the heap. But I'm coping. Like the rest" (Gokhale 2011, 3).

As a politician's wife, Priya has to maintain her personality appropriately whenever and wherever she meets people. When she is

introduced to Mr Batata, she has to show herself as the wife of a person at the top level. She cannot be herself. Priya says:

I am a politician's wife – I must act the part, and be supportive. Carefully readjusting the folds of my sari pallav, I bestowed upon Jimmy Batata a haughty smile. It's a curve of upper lip I practice sometimes, in the morning when I brush my teeth. A minister's wife smile, modulated to establish who I am, where I stand. There is a trick to it – an easy trick. The smile must never reach your eyes, just hold itself in a tilt of lip. (Ibidem)

Though it is just a smile, Priya has to be more conscious of the ways she behaves. As a middle-class woman she did not have to concentrate on these things; but now she has to as she has become a wife of a politician. She has to modify her life style to fits her present status. She is living for her status not for her 'self'.

Priya, after becoming a politician's wife, just exists, fulfilling the role of a wife of a minister. She cannot be her natural self. She has to be conscious and cautious of every little detail. Even the government bungalow where they reside frightens her. She says, "It's always calming to return to home: Dara Shikoh Marg, in the green and quiet heart of a dusty, impatient nation. I guess it's a government bungalow like any other, but I'm still intimidated by its size" (Ibid, 11). The place where she resides as the wife of a minister does not give her happiness, but only anxiety. Priya acknowledges the emotional strain of her circumstances, arguing that she should exude confidence rather than being engulfed by persistent anxiety. She symbolically describes herself as a 'victim of social vertigo', caught in a precarious balance between self-doubt and the fear of being socially rejected. This reflects the internal conflict faced by individuals striving to meet societal expectations while grappling with their own insecurities. Priya says, "I should be brimming with confidence, not consumed by this precarious unease. You could say that I'm a victim of social vertigo, teetering on the edge of imagined rejection" (Ibid, 14).

Priva's existence

Priya's life as a middle-class woman takes a dramatic turn after her marriage to Suresh, a lawyer who rises to become a Minister through her support and his dedication. However, this success comes at the cost of her personal freedom and aspirations. With the added responsibilities of raising twin sons, Priya's individuality and dreams are overshadowed by her familial obligations. This reflects Albert Camus's existentialist view that humans carry a sense of inner exile,

isolation, and personal struggles, which must be confronted within themselves rather than unleashed upon the world. Priya's life illustrates this tension as she battles her own sacrifices and unrealised aspirations to fulfill societal and familial expectations. Albert Camus (1956, 150) affirms, "Whatever we may do, the excess will always have its place in the heart of man, in the spot where isolation is discovered. We all have our places of exile, our sins, and our devastation inside us. But our goal is not to release them on the world; it is to combat them in ourselves and in others".

Life without friends

Priya's life highlights the tension between traditional customs and modernity, as she navigates her roles as a young girl, wife, and mother with limited personal connections. Her early responsibilities forced her into work at a young age, serving as a secretary at B.R.'s company. After marrying Suresh, she has to adapt herself to play the role of a middle-class housewife, sacrificing personal growth and friendships. Even as her husband rises as a prominent political figure, Priya's life remains purposeless, consumed by motherhood and familial duties to the extent that she neglects other aspects of her identity. She acknowledges this herself, questioning her lack of friends and attributing it to her isolation and self-sacrifice in motherhood. Ironically, despite living in a spacious Lutyens bungalow, she feels suffocated by her shrinking personal space, reflecting her deeper sense of emotional confinement. This illustrates how societal expectations can trap women in roles that limit their self-actualisation. Priya says, "Why don't I have more friend? My own fault, possibly, for not being able to reach out people. I was so wrapped up in motherhood that I gave up on the rest. And then, suddenly, this large Lutyens bungalow and the shrinking space inside" (Gokhale 2011, 14).

The duality of modern Indian womanhood

Priya's interactions with modern, accomplished women like Rita Ray, the power minister, Queenie Kwatra, a glamorous Mumbai socialite, epitome of glamour and Pooonam UmaChand, Director of Manoviraj Sethia highlight the stark contrast between her life and theirs. Despite being a politician's wife, Priya is relegated to the undervalued role of a homemaker, a position she admits is met with societal disdain. She acknowledges this marginalisation, stating, "As a mere homemaker, I am accustomed to the peculiar disdain with which my species is

treated" (Ibid, 23). Her insecurity becomes apparent when asked about her identity, as she deflects with self-deprecating humor about her past work at a bookshop. She notes the strained reactions of others, that powerful women respected emphasising are achievements, while her role as a housewife renders her invisible, "a non-person outside the pale of the human rights ordinances" (Ibid, 24). Whenever people ask Priva about her identity, she says, "Oh nothing really. I worked in a bookshop, once...' I reply, playing along. A strained mask falls over their faces. Powerful women don't ascend the stratosphere for nothing. The fact that I'm a housewife – a non-person outside the pale of the human rights ordinances – shines through the bookshop facade" (Ibidem). This highlights how societal perceptions of worth tied to professional success exacerbate Priya's feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. R. K. Narayan (1949, 117) says, 'What possession can a woman call her own except her body. Everything else that she has her father's, husband's or sons". Priya exemplifies this struggle as she navigates a world where the speech, attire, and behaviour of those around her often make her feel out of place. This sense of alienation erodes her confidence, compelling her to question her own worth. She acknowledges this internal conflict, "Don't be so pathetic, Priya Kaushal", she reminds herself, before forcing herself to engage socially. Priya says, "Don't be so pathetic, Priya Kaushal', I told myself firmly, and moved into the conversational fray" (Gokhale 2011, 25). Priva's experience highlights the tension between societal expectations and self-perception, illustrating the challenges women face in asserting their individuality within a restrictive framework.

The protagonist Priya represents the duality inherent in the lives of many Indian women, who must reconcile traditional values with contemporary realities. On one hand, Priya is a dutiful wife and mother, deeply rooted in the cultural ethos of India. On the other, she is a modern woman with her own opinions, aspirations, and identity. This tension between tradition and modernity exists in her existence.

When Priya travels to Mumbai for a function at her brother's company, she takes her son Luv along at her husband Suresh's insistence. Upon leaving, she calls Suresh, but he does not answer, and when she tries the reception line at his hotel, she is put on hold. Eventually, a woman answers, saying that Suresh is in the shower. Though this raises questions, Priya chooses not to confront her husband, recognising that any inquiry would likely result in being placated with unconvincing explanations. Reflecting on this, she

acknowledges her conditioned restraint, stating, "Over the years I have trained myself not to fly into jealous rages. A happy secure marriage is founded on trust. I must trust Suresh, it's a reasoned approach, not a form of denial" (Ibid, 42). Yet, the call unsettles her, prompting her to examine the cultural training ingrained in women like herself. Drawing parallels to Queen Gandhari in the Mahabharata, who blindfolded herself out of loyalty to her blind husband, Priya highlights how Indian women are taught to metaphorically 'shut their eyes' — whether in prayer, marriage, or moments of discontent. Her perspective underscores the endurance required to navigate such societal norms, reflecting the silent sacrifices and internalised expectations imposed on women to preserve the illusion of marital harmony. She says:

But the phone call set me thinking. It's not that I'm stupid, only that, like other Indian women of my generation, I've been trained to always shut my eyes – in prayers, in marriage, during the afternoon Horror Show. Think of our epics. In the *Mahabharata*, Queen Gandhari blindfolded herself, she shut her eyes and stopped looking at the world because her husband was blind. It's in our culture. (Ibid, 42)

Marriage and relationships

Priya's relationship with Suresh is emblematic of the evolving dynamics of Indian marriages. While Suresh's liberal attitudes set him apart from traditional patriarchal husbands, the power dynamics within their marriage still reflect the deep-seated influence of patriarchy. John Stuart Mill admits in his book *The Subjection of Women* ([1868] 1989) about the equal rights for both the sexes. He admits:

...the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrance to human improvement and that is ought to be replaced by the principle of perfect quality, admitting no power and privileges, on the one side, or diabolically on the other. (Mill 1989, 61)

Priya's personal journey, marked by her visit to Bombay, becomes a subtle yet emotional assertion of her individuality within the constraints of her marriage. As she reflects on her past, she proclaims, "I am still a Bombay girl at heart" (Gokhale 2011, 44). Priya's journey from Delhi to Mumbai is not one of outright rebellion but of subtle assertion. This visit reignites her sense of self, contrasting sharply with her restrained existence as Suresh's wife. Her reunion with her former boss and lover B.R., underscores this tension. Priya finds more

fulfillment in her interactions with B.R. than in her marital relationship, highlighting the stifling nature of her role as an Indian wife. In her moment of self-awareness, she admits, "I forgot that I was an Indian wife and mother" (Ibid, 47), revealing how traditional marital expectations have confined her identity. It reflects the ways her marital relationship with Suresh confines her. This conflict between societal expectations and personal desires aligns with Pranab Bandopadhyaya's (1988, 66) on the traditional marriages, "Marriage served three main purposes – firstly, the promotion of religious attitude by performing the household sacrifices, secondly, the pregnancy for the benefit of the murder, to enjoy heavenly life in the privy lake by counting the lineage and thirdly, rati (pleasure)". Priya, while outwardly adhering to these traditional values, quietly challenges them through her introspection and actions. Her experience with B.R. represents a fleeting sense of liberation, symbolized in her whispered declaration, "'Independence day!' I told myself, aloud, though very softly. B.R. seemed not to have heard me. Perhaps I had only thought it, not said it at all" (Gokhale 2011, 48). This moment encapsulates Priva's recognition of her constrained autonomy within marriage and her desire for a freer, more fulfilling life, even as she grapples with the moral dilemmas posed by her choices.

Priya, an ordinary woman

Priva exists as an ordinary woman throughout the novel. As she belongs to a middle-class family, she worked in B.R.'s company before her marriage and worked in a bookshop after her marriage with Suresh. Even after becoming a wife of a politician, she does not change her attitude and lives as an Indian woman. Priya's characterisation in the novel underscores her ordinariness, which paradoxically becomes her most extraordinary trait. Rooted in her middle-class background, Priva leads a life that reflects the understated resilience of many Indian women. Before her marriage to Suresh, she worked at B.R.'s company, and after marriage, she took up a job in a bookshop. Despite becoming the wife of a politician, Priva remains grounded, resisting the allure of privilege or ostentation that might accompany her elevated social status. She embodies the quintessential Indian woman who balances societal expectations with her individual identity. This unique quality is aptly recognised by her son Luv, who remarks, "You know, Maa, I respect you for being a very normal sort of woman. It's weird, but you are extraordinary because you are so

ordinary" (Ibid, 51). Luv's statement highlights Priya's quiet strength and authenticity.

Women as custodians of tradition and agents of change

Priya is under the custody of tradition. Her life is heavily constrained by tradition, she is unable to challenge or question her husband. Even when she attempts to address his suspicious behaviour, such as noticing red marks on his cheek and collar resembling lipstick, her inquiries are met with dismissiveness. She reflects on her helplessness, admitting, "I believed him – and besides, I had no choice. Forget about the lipstick. And the phone calls. I hadn't dared dwell on it anyway" (Ibid, 71). This response reveals Priya's internalised submission, shaped by a patriarchal system that silences her voice and discourages confrontation.

Priya's subjugation becomes even more apparent when Suresh, acting on the advice of a numerologist, asks Priya to change the spelling of her surname from Kaushal to Cowshall. Priya resents this demand, as it erodes her sense of identity. Having already transitioned from Priva Sharma to Priva Kaushal upon marriage, she resists further erasure of her autonomy. Overwhelmed by frustration and despair, she seeks refuge in the safety of a ladies' restroom, describing it as a sanctuary where she can process her emotions. Priva says, "With that, I rushed to the toilet and burst into tears. I feel safe in ladies washrooms. they are a sanctuary from social disasters, a place to retreat to and tom mend and contemplate" (Ibid, 73). In this moment of vulnerability, Priya confronts her reflection in the mirror, reaffirming her identity as Priya Kaushal, not Priya Cowshall. This act of self-reassurance highlights her quiet resistance against the societal and marital forces attempting to redefine her. Priya's defiance, though subtle, underscores her refusal to completely surrender her individuality, illustrating her resilience in navigating the constraints of tradition and patriarchy.

Role of a mother

For Priya, navigating the complexities of her sons' personal lives reflects the tension between traditional Indian motherhood and evolving societal norms. As an Indian mother, discussing her children's intimate lives is fraught with discomfort, yet she fulfills her maternal responsibilities with quiet determination. Priya shares a stronger emotional bond with her son Luv, who resembles her in appearance and temperament, compared to Kush, who takes after his

father. This preference subtly influences her actions when arranging a marriage for Luv. Priva supports Luv's romantic interests and considers Paromita, the daughter of her former friend Lenin, as a suitable match, reflecting her effort to balance familial duty and her son's happiness. However, Priya's relationship with Kush challenges her further. At the novel's conclusion, Kush reveals that he is in love with a man, a disclosure that would traditionally provoke discomfort or disapproval in a conservative Indian household. While initially unprepared for such conversations, Priva ultimately supports her sons, demonstrating her prioritisation of family over societal judgment or personal unease. This maternal commitment aligns with David G. Mandelbaum's observation that family is central to an individual's aspirations and sense of fulfillment. Mandlebaum (1974, 23) says, "a person's family is a major focus of his life expectations and activities. Children are one's chief source of lasting pleasure and prime goal of affection; they are the means of attaining respectable status, avenue for creativity and achievement". Priya's actions affirm this perspective, as she derives her sense of purpose and fulfillment from supporting her sons, even when doing so challenges her comfort or identity. In this way, Priya embodies the archetype of the selfless, supportive Indian mother who prioritises her children's well-being above everything else.

A complex friendship

Priya's feelings toward Pooonam reflect a complex blend of disdain, curiosity, and reluctant admiration. While Priya disapproves of Pooonam's manipulative behaviour, she is intrigued by her ability to effortlessly charm and influence those around her. This duality creates a mix of envy and frustration in Priya, as Pooonam's skill in achieving her desires highlights Priya's own struggles with asserting herself. Despite her irritation, Priya cannot resist engaging with Pooonam, agreeing to meet her at a coffee shop.

Priya rationalises this encounter by reassuring herself that Pooonam, despite her charms, cannot undermine the core aspects of Priya's life – her husband, family, and social respectability. This internal conflict is evident when Priya admits, "I know I should hate her. But she can be charming, and even vulnerable, sometimes" (Gokhale 2011, 124). Priya's ambivalence reveals her recognition of Pooonam's complexities, as well as her own insecurities and societal conditioning.

Resilience and adaptability: The core of Indian womanhood

Priya's visit to Mumbai for her nephew Tanmay's engagement offers her a renewed opportunity to reconnect with her past. Invited by her sister-in-law Dolly, Priya takes her prospective daughter-in-law Paromita with her. During the trip, she seizes the chance to meet B.R. at the Taj Hotel. In B.R.'s company, Priya experiences a sense of freedom and vitality absent from her life with Suresh. Reflecting on her feelings, she admits, "I was always speechless by his charm" (Ibid, 136), revealing how B.R. evokes a part of her identity suppressed within her marriage.

Priya's strained relationship with Suresh resurfaces when he claims, during a discussion about Poonam, that he has never hit a woman. This assertion triggers Priya's memory of a night when Suresh punched her, an act of violence emblematic of the power dynamics in their marriage. Yet, Priya chooses not to confront him, embodying the quiet endurance often expected of women in traditional marriages. Despite their past conflicts and emotional distance, Priya and Suresh have reached a stage of mutual understanding. Reflecting on their evolving relationship, Priya remarks, "Belated lovaria. It's nothing new, I told myself philosophically. That's the way things are in arranged marriage" (Ibid, 150). This acceptance underscores Priya's practical view of arranged marriages, where love and connection often develop slowly, if at all. Priya's reflection encapsulates the compromises and adjustments that define such relationships, revealing her resignation to the norms of a system that prioritises duty over individual fulfillment.

Priya's reflections on loss, identity, and resilience reveal her journey toward self-awareness and quiet defiance in a life shaped by societal and familial expectations. Watching TV one evening, she searches for news from her beloved city, only to learn of B.R.'s death. The news deeply affects her, as B.R. represented a connection to a version of herself she rarely accessed within her marriage. Mourning privately, Priya laments, "There is no one with whom I can share this loss. He is gone, this man who was once my boss. This man that I loved. Once" (Ibid, 173). Her solitude in grief highlights the emotional isolation she feels in her relationships.

On Valentine's Day, Priya receives a packet containing a handkerchief and a card, and discovers that a poem inside written in Suresh's handwriting meant for Pooonam. Pooonam's decision to send this to Priya is a deliberate assertion of dominance. Although devastated by this betrayal, Priya chooses not to confront the issue

immediately, prioritising the harmony of her family as a wedding approaches. This restraint reflects her ingrained role as an Indian mother, conditioned to sacrifice her emotions for familial stability and to wait for the right moment to address conflicts.

Priya's sense of self, however, remains intact despite these challenges. When Nnutasha suggests changing her name to enhance her husband's political prospects, Priya rejects the idea with conviction, declaring, "I am Priya Kaushal and I shall remain her. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Shakespeare said that. William Shakespeare'" (Ibid, 178). By quoting Shakespeare, Priya asserts that her essence and worth are not defined by labels or superficial changes. Just as a rose retains its fragrance regardless of its name, Priya's identity and integrity remain constant. Through these moments, Priya represents the quiet strength of an ordinary woman navigating middle age and societal pressures. She balances familial responsibilities with a steadfast commitment to her sense of self, managing to exist on her own terms despite the constraints of her roles as a wife and mother. Her resilience underscores the power of self-acceptance in the face of emotional and societal challenges.

Priya's visit to a guru in Rishikesh marks a pivotal moment in her journey of self-discovery as she grapples with the emotional turmoil caused by discovering the poem her husband wrote — not for her, but for another woman. During her taxi ride to Rishikesh, she experiences an unexpected sense of liberation. Free from the usual obligations of her life — no Ghafoor, no government car, no husband, no sons, and no future daughter-in-law Priya savours the solitude, recognizing it as a rare moment of independence. This absence of external expectations allows her to confront her inner self without the protective barriers that typically surround her.

The guru's advice provides Priya with a new perspective on resilience and acceptance. He offers her a mantra, which she incorporates into her life as a guiding principle. Reflecting on this, Priya explains, "The mantra is this: there is no mantra. The mantra is silence. The secret is silence. When things go wrong, be silent, look within, and smile. Troubles pass; the world goes on. As long as you protect your samsara, do your duties" (Ibid, 181). This philosophy emphasizes patience, introspection, and the inevitability of life's challenges, suggesting that resilience comes not from confrontation but from inner peace and understanding.

Priya's embrace of this wisdom demonstrates her capacity for growth and her ability to adapt to life's hardships without losing her sense of self. Her resilience, rooted in quiet strength and a commitment to duty, becomes an inspiring facet of her character, highlighting her ability to balance personal struggles with the demands of her familial and societal roles.

Supportive mother

Priya's relationship with her twin sons, Kush and Luv, reflects her evolving role as a supportive and understanding mother, even when faced with unconventional challenges. While Luv is preparing to marry Paromita, Kush confides in Priya about his love for Akshay, a man. Unlike the hesitance often associated with such disclosures in conservative Indian households, Kush openly shares his feelings with his mother, trusting her to accept him. True to his expectations, Priya reassures Kush of her unconditional support, telling him, "'You marry who you want,' I said to Kush. 'I'll stand by you'" (Ibid, 186). Priya also promises to keep this matter from his father, understanding the sensitive nature of the revelation.

As an Indian mother, Priya faces significant emotional and cultural challenges in navigating this situation. Yet, her ability to stand by Kush exemplifies her resilience and maternal commitment. After Luv's marriage to Paromita, Priya finds herself feeling closer to Kush, as their shared understanding strengthens their bond. This newfound closeness offers Priya a sense of hope and the belief that she can navigate life's complexities with perseverance.

Priya reflects on her life's struggles, explaining to Kush that the true essence of a housewife's story lies in enduring the ordinary frustrations and challenges of daily life. She emphasises that heroism is not found in grand gestures but in quietly overcoming small obstacles. In her view, happy endings often arrive subtly, through acts of resilience and steadfastness, underscoring her philosophy of finding strength and meaning in life's quiet triumphs.

Conclusion

Namita Gokhale's *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa* offers a profound exploration of the existence of Indian women in a rapidly changing society. Through the character of Priya and the diverse women around her, the novel captures the complexities of navigating tradition and modernity, the challenges of marriage and relationships, and the dual

Exploring existence

role of women as custodians of culture and agents of change. Within these contexts as an Indian woman, Priya in this novel struggles for existence. Therefore, the novel presents the resilience, adaptability, and agency of Indian women, offering a narrative that is both deeply personal and universally relevant. Hence, *Priya: In Incredible Indyaa* stands as a testament to the enduring strength and spirit of Indian womanhood. Thus, the novel is a celebration of the resilience and adaptability of Indian women. Priya's journey reflects the strength required to balance personal aspirations with societal expectations, to navigate the intersections of tradition and modernity, and to find fulfillment in a world that often limits women's choices.

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The role of fluidity: Exploring culture and identity in N.K. Jemisin's *The Fifth Season*

Sapna A. and Mythily P.*

Abstract: The paper applies Fluidity theory, a theoretical framework that explores marginalized identity and power dynamics in a society riddled with cultural resistance, hostility and oppression in N.K. Jemisin's novel *The Fifth* Season. The concept of fluidity in general refers to the flexible and adoptable nature of the residents. The paper aims to shed light on how marginalized group - Orogenes and communities survive in the oppressive system. The novel is set in a dreary and geologically unstable world of the Stillness where marginalized groups – particularly Orogenes reside. Orogenes are individuals who have the ability to manipulate seismic events but systematically oppressed by their own society. The society dehumanizes, exploits, and controls orogenes. Through the Orogenes' experiences, the novel delves into themes of trauma, resilience, and survival within oppressive systems. This paper also examines the brutality of the society and its dominance over Orogenes through intersections of oppression, resistance and identity. Thus, Fluidity theory analyses Jemisin's portrayal of power structures and marginalized community's struggle and resilience. The endearing feature of the survival instinct and the modality adapted by the people to resist oppressive force are underscored.

Keywords: fluidity, marginalized, identity, resilience, hierarchy, seismic power

Introduction

Nora K. Jemisin is a contemporary African American writer. She is a celebrated science fiction and fantasy writer known for her thought-provoking narratives. Her writings explore themes such as identity, oppression, resilience, racism, and cultural issues. She is the first-ever African American to receive the HUGO award three times in a row from 2016 to 2018 for her "The Broken Earth Trilogy".

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The Fifth Season was published in 2015, which received the HUGO Award and made Jemisin the first African American writer to be awarded. This novel explores climatic changes, environmental issues, gender, racism, suppression and identity. Jemisin's novels are critically acclaimed by many critics for her narratives and intricate world-building. This novel is set in a land called the 'Stillness', which always encounters constant movement, earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions and acid rainfalls.

This paper majorly focuses on themes such as identity, dehumanization, oppression and power through the study of marginalized group of orogenes. Orogenes are humans with super power to quell and destroy a mountain in seconds, yet they are feared and subjugated. Through their struggles, Jemisin reflects the real-world histories of oppression, marginalisation, suppression and social exclusion faced by African Americans. In an interview, Jemisin says "this novel is, in a lot of ways, my processing the systemic racism that I live and see." (Wagner 2016) These words are more evident that the author herself has personally experienced racism and oppression, shaping the themes and narratives within her work. Like orogenes, African Americans are also forced to adopt and feared when uncontrolled. Their identity is shaped by fear, and prejudice.

By employing Fluidity, a theoretical approach, this paper analyses orogenes, cultural and power dynamics in this novel. It helps in studying the orogenes and communities which break the systemic suppression and builds resilience. The fluidity encompasses various types, including *cultural fluidity* and *fluid identity*. Cultural fluidity refers to the ability of adaptability and surviving nature. Fluid identity, on the other hand, challenges the traditional notion of fixed identity of a person.

In *The Fifth Season*, characters like Damaya, Syenite and Essun (orogenes) represent different identities of the same person, who is forced to change her identity and culture due to societal pressure. The land, ironically called Stillness, is anything but still, but the land is always in constant movement and it is frequently experiencing widespread natural disasters. The people on the land form communities by adapting their culture and developing strong survival instincts. Through cultural fluidity and fluid identity, the paper examines the communities and characters in the novel depicting their adapting and survival nature against systemic oppression and natural disasters. It

studies the fluidity of the characters portraying identity as dynamic, multifaceted and influenced by their experiences and surroundings.

Cultural fluidity

Cultural fluidity means a seamless engagement with cultures to adapt and integrate multiple cultural ideas and morals. Jubilado (2010), provides the most insightful definition on cultural fluidity, "any given community, adaptation, assimilation and reinvention contribute to cultural change which is always a gradual, complex and continuous process" (Jubilado 2010, 89). This theory challenges the traditional concept of culture being fixed, uniform and static. Rather, cultural fluidity theory is more dynamic and shaped by historical, social and political factors.

In the novel *The Fifth Season*, the plot is set around the land Stillness. It is in constant motion and encounters widespread disasters. The novel depicts how the land, its culture and society are shaped and dominated by their history and political powers. The cataclysms that occurs in the novel are referred to as 'seasons', they could last for years and years causing famine and even death. As the title of the novel suggests, *The Fifth Season* focuses on the survival and adaptability of people and communities during this season. People join together forming a 'community, creating a strong bond and resilience to withstand the disasters. Jemisin also pictures how violent and brutal the community can be, in order to protect and adapt themselves to survive.

On the land there are two cultural groups struggling to survive the marginalisation and disasters. One group consist of common people forming communities adopting themselves to survive all natural disasters. While the other comprises of orogenes, super-powered individuals, who have the power to quell and control all seismic events on the land. They form a cultural group living together under an intuition called the Fulcrum. These orogenes are marginalised and treated as an outcaste on the land by their people and community.

However, the communities are afraid of the orogenes because they believe the 'Stonelore' – a guide and law written by the ancestors to survive the fifth season. The lore describes orogenes as 'the children of the Father Earth', who are gifted with the superpower to control the land. Alabaster, an orogene states "they kill us because they've git Stonelore telling... we're born evil-some kind of agent of Father Earth, monsters that barely qualify as human" (Jemisin 2015, 124). These

lines show how orogenes are seen and treated, their struggle to survive by fluxing themselves against their communities. As orogenes are seen and classified as non-human beings, they are marginalized and oppressed by the community members, leading to a brutal act of violence against them.

Orogenes though born to a common human being they are found and force to leave their community. In some cases, they are killed by their parents and society brutally. Orogenes are not given any choice and have to survive without community. A 'commless' (a person without community) human on this land is hard to survive and are never allowed or accepted into other communities. These communities fear orogenes because an untrained new orogene's power can cause huge disasters quelling seismic events. This is the reason they are either killed or separated from their families permanently and sent to Fulcrum.

The members of the community on the land of Stillness are very protective and helpful. During or after a season ends they have to move in order to find a firm land to live and build houses for shelter. "The people of the Stillness live in a perpetual state of disaster preparedness. They've built walls and dug wells and put away food, and they can easily last five, ten, even, twenty-five years in a world without sun" (Jemisin 2015, 8). The above lines from the text exemplifies how these communities prepare themselves by collecting foods and other essential needs by storing them all in their houses to help them survive during famine. The members are very adaptive and resilient because they are always ready and prepared to withstand any disastrous events. They work together creating a strong bond among themselves.

Fulcrum is an institution where orogenes are brought and trained properly under the guidance of the guardian. When parents identify their children have the ability of orogeny they inform the fulcrum. An assigned guardian comes to take them to the institution. Orogenes are separated from their families to spend their entire life under the fulcrum. This institution may appear to be the best place for orogenes, providing shelter and training. However, the organisation is self-centered. Orogenes are trained to control their powers to handle seismic events that occur in and around the stillness. Yet, the fulcrum exploits them, treating orogenes as mere weapons. The narrative highlights the power dynamics and systemic oppression present in the fulcrum, which exercises control over orogenes.

Each orogene is assigned with a guardian, who takes complete responsibility over them. Guardians work for the fulcrum, whoh ave the authority to control orogenes and have rights to kill them if they become too dangerous. The institution exploits, dehumanises and controls orogenes, who indoctrinate them from the very beginning that they are dangerous and powerful, both to society as well as to themselves. This creates a traumatic effect on individuals. Orogenes struggle both in their community and at the fulcrum.

In the novel, the protagonist, Damaya, is forced to leave her family and is tortured by her guardian. Her parents discover that she possesses the power of orogeny and inform the fulcrum. Soon, a guardian arrives to her home to take her to the institution. Through this experience, Damaya realises the harsh reality of her society that wants to eliminate orogenes from their lives. On her way to the fulcrum her guardian breaks her hand. He says "orogenes have no right to say no...I will break every bone in your hand...if I deem it necessary" (Jemisin 2015, 99). Here, the guardian abuses Damaya using his power by oppressing her and justifies his action by articulating that it was to control her power. Not only Damaya but many orogenes in the novel endure suffering, marginalization and killed by their community and the guardian.

However, orogenes survive in the fulcrum by obeying their rules and regulations in order to live their lives. Ostracised by their communities, they face constant humiliation and subjugation throughout their lives. In this novel, Jemisin portrays their resilience, adaptation and strong will to resist oppression. Orogenes accept the transformation in their life adapting to new places, people and cultures. Zygmunt Bauman (1997, 92) points out the basic need for a community and an individual is identity and freedom, "Freedom, autonomy, independence – if they appear in their vocabulary at all – invariably come in the future tense. For them, to be free means not to have to wander around. To have a home and to be allowed to stay home". In the land of Stillness, both the community and orogenes never experience their freedom and independence. They are forced to move out, adopt and accept their fate and life on the land.

In summary, Jemisin portrays the themes of oppression, marginalisation and othering through her writing in this novel. She highlights the tension between progress and exclusion. Progressing communities easily adapt and change their culture, while the excluded orogenes struggle to adjust and survive in a changing environment.

The communities exemplify resilience and strong bonds. The orogenes serve as a prime example of cultural fluidity and are prepared to change their cultural identity.

Fluid identity

Fluid Identity refers to the transformation of a person's identity due to social and self-distrust. It challenges the idea that identity is fixed and unchanging, referring that a person's identity can change and evolve over a period of time, shaped by their influence and experience. Identity for a person is very important which defines unique characters. In the novel, Damaya, Syenite and Essun are three different identities of a single woman having her own storyline narrating her struggles, experiences and suppression in the novel. She is forced to change her name and identity. She marginalised as she is an orogene. She is the prime example of fluidity in her identity. She has to alter her identity as a daughter, a member of the grit, and a mother.

The derogatory term 'rogga' used by the people of the Stillness serves as a tool to define, oppress and dehumanize orogenes. This shapes orogene's identities in ways that parallel the experiences of African Americans, who were forced to shift their identities imposed on them by white dominated power structures who labelled them as slaves and inferior. Their identity has been fluid not by choice, rather it has been shaped by the external force of control and discrimination. Similarly, the term 'rogga' term reinforces the idea that identity is not inherent but constructed by society to control and oppress. The identity shift of the protagonist Essun is fluid as it shifts based on the societal pressure, fear and the need for survival.

The protagonist, Damaya, a young girl lives with her family. As soon as, her parents discover her superpower, they lock her for days in their house, until a man from the fulcrum comes to take her. Damaya is separated from her family because of her powers which is uncontrollable and untrained which could lead to disastrous consequences. She feels lost and abandoned by her family when she is taken away by a stranger who calls himself as her guardian. Her parents show no remorse for her separation, seemingly unconcerned about sending their daughter forever.

On their way to fulcrum the guardian warns Damaya that she is a threat to herself and others because of her untrained power. He says "you are lightning, dangerous...conflagration that can destroy everything in its path" (Jemisin 2015, 95). The above line explains, the

guardian's cruelty in instilling the belief that her power is too dangerous. To test her self-control he intentionally breaks her hand uttering that she could be a threat to him if she fails to control herself. Damaya screams in pain and has to travel with the pain until they reach the fulcrum. It is a lesson taught by her guardian about the true reality of the organisation. It reminds her that she is a dangerous weapon alive on the Stillness.

In the fulcrum, Damaya is treated as a girt – girts are orogene children brought to the fulcrum for training. This institution is very strict with its rules and regulations. They punish and overrule orogenes physically and mentally during their training, when they become uncontrollable. They create an illusion that every orogene are not normal humans but dangerous monsters. The institution exploits and dehumanises orogenes in this novel.

Damaya is forced to change her name, her identity as Syenite, which is followed for every orogene in the organisation. It makes them forget their true identity and also their family members. Syenite suffers a lot to survive in the fulcrum at the beginning. She states "friends do not exist. The fulcrum is not a school. Girts are not children. Orogenes are not people. Weapons have no need of friends" (Ibid, 297). The above lines define the harsh reality that exists in the fulcrum and all orogenes had to endure sufferings and pain to survive in the fulcrum.

Syenite after a great struggle and fight against her guardian, escapes changing her identity as Essun. She enters a community called Tirimo, creating a family in the village. She is married to Jija and has two children. However, after ten years of her happy marriage life, her husband discovers her true identity and learns that their children are also born orogenes. Essun had concealed her true self to live a better life, but her newfound peace does not last long. Jija kills his own son brutally and leaves the village with their daughter. Essun finds herself lost again, returning to her starting point of her journey - losing her family.

Essun walks out of her community to find her husband and her only daughter, Nassun. Her village soon comes to know about her identity and tries to kill her. But she manages to escape using her orogeny. Now Essun is in a run to find and save her daughter from her husband. As she steps out of her village, she reminds herself "you could become someone new, maybe. You've done that before; it's surprisingly easy. A new name, a new focus" (Ibid, 172). From the above lines it is evident that Essun is a person of fluid identity who can easily change

her identity to survive. Now she is forced to change herself for the sake of her daughter.

Damaya, Syenite and Essun are the three stages of a woman who struggles hard to understand and accept her power and identity. She faces numerous hardships in her life from her young age trying to discover her selfhood. The fulcrum ruined her life. Essun attempts to build a better life but her husband destroys everything she has worked for.

Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 83) defines fluid identity as "identities seem fixed and solid only when seen, in a flash, from outside... from the inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile, vulnerable and constantly torn apart". As Bauman states, in this novel, the protagonist has to struggle and fight against all odds to survive on the land. Her pain and loss can never be compromised. She is powerful and intelligent but she is also a human being with basic feelings and emotions. Through the analysis of the protagonist in this novel, she is forced to change her identity but all she wanted is to create and live a happy family life.

Conclusion

N.K. Jemisin in her novel *The Fifth Season* explores the themes of marginalisation, suppression, identity, survival, and dehumanization. This novel challenges the traditional idea and understanding that culture and identity are fixed and unchanging. This paper highlights the experiences of the marginalized and their struggle for survival against an oppressive system, such as the community and the Fulcrum. By intertwining the themes of cultural fluidity and fluid identity, Jemisin not only critiques historical injustices but also posits a pertinent question of who defines identity and why? In the novel, the journey of Orogenes and Essun highlights their resilience of marginalized groups in reclaiming their rights, which is similar to the plight of the African Americans who resisted and fought against the oppressive system to reclaim their identities in the face of racism.

The cultural fluidity mainly focuses on the solidarity and understanding within the community as well as the brutality and violence against orogenes. The communities in the novel have a rigid ideology and belief system against orogenes which leads to marginalisation and othering. The fluid identity theory highlights the protagonist's identity, struggle and sacrifices due to the external force of oppression. At the beginning, marginalisation of Damaya illustrates

the cultural pressure and suppression of her community, then her identity changes into Syenite which is driven by compulsion and acceptance. Later, her transformation as Essun is a mode of protecting herself and her yearning to live a peaceful life without any oppression. Her strong will and adaptability reveal her stubborn nature and determination to confront challenges.

Damaya's multiple fluid change in her identity depicts her struggle and agony that lead her to question her true self. By analysing the novel through the lens of cultural fluidity and fluid identity, by examining culture and characters the researcher presents that identity is not fixed but fluid, emphasises how important identity is for a person, which provides them with the confidence, strong will, independence and freedom to fight and stand for justice.

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The power of language and religious thoughts: A pragma-rhetorical analysis of Israr Ahmed's speech

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Abstract: Language has transforming power to shape thought, inspire action, and communicate complicated concepts. In religious discourse, it serves as a medium for communicating spiritual truths, and a means for persuasion; affecting beliefs and directing actions. The current study employs the pragmarhetorical concept developed by Dascal (2003) in that he treats rhetorical appeals and figures of speech as both pragma rhetorical devices. It further investigates the way they affect the ultimate goals of discourse. The research explores how Dr. Israr Ahmed uses rhetorical techniques such as ethos, pathos, and logos along with rhetorical tropes to transmit theological teachings to diverse audience effectively. His speech titling "Human Personality and Two Types of Knowledge" has been taken as a case study. By answering the essential questions about the type and the role of rhetorical strategies in Dr. Israr Ahmed's speeches, this research establishes the critical role that English rhetoric plays to establish the pragmatic purposes of religious discourse. The analysis shows that he uses a variety of rhetorical strategies, including ethos, pathos, logos, metaphor, parallelism, repetition, understatement, exaggeration, and rhetorical questions to attain the pragmatic functions like motivation, persuasion, information, justification, evidence, understanding, overcoming cultural boundaries, and promoting spiritual and social solidarity in the modern context of religious thinking. The findings suggest that the role of rhetorical strategies is indispensable in religious speeches. This study would provide a solid foundation for future linguistic researches on pragma-rhetorical strategies in various languages and religions.

Keywords: language, religious discourse, rhetorical strategies, pragmatic functions, pragma-rhetorical

Introduction

Israr Ahmed (1932-2010), one of the prominent Islamic scholars, philosopher and theologian of our times, is well known especially for

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his great work in Islamic Revivalism. His significant speeches combined religious insights with practical guidance. He advocated for a return to Quranic principles and authentic Islamic practices, critiquing the traditionalist and modernist approaches. He emphasized the Quran as a complete code of life. His efforts to revive Islamic teachings have left a lasting impact globally. Dr. Israr Ahmed's preaching is thought to be among the most significant and influential types of discourse. His speeches have distinctive linguistic features of rhetoric. Beyond the linguistic beauty, they have the ability to persuade, to impact on hearts and minds, to form beliefs and to promote moral understanding. This study focuses on how he uses rhetoric pragmatically. The data has been taken from the English Conference, "Round Table with Dr. Israr Ahmed", that was organized in Lahore by Tanzeem-e-Islami North America and Pakistan where Dr. Israr Ahmed had delivered speeches during six sessions on different topics addressing to the Panellists from USA, UK, and many other countries. The sample of this particular study is the first speech titling "Human Personality and Two Types of Knowledge". This study provides a pragma-rhetorical analysis of Dr. Israr Ahmed's speech in order to better understand how the aim of persuading the audience is achieved. This multidimensional paradigm provides a comprehensive perspective for strategic communication and persuasive intent in conversation. Given the strong relationship between the two fields of English rhetoric and pragmatics, the current study attempts to address the pragmatic roles English rhetoric plays in religious speeches.

A work of rhetoric is pragmatic in itself because it comes into being for the sake of more than itself. The creation of an action or the alteration of the thought depends heavily on rhetoric. The current study employs the pragma-rhetorical concept developed by Dascal (2003), in that he treats rhetorical appeals and figures of speech as both pragma rhetorical devices. The study further investigates the way they affect the ultimate goals of discourse. Dascal's work incorporates aspects of integrating rhetoric and pragmatics. He explores how the process of interpretation combines rhetoric—the art of persuasion—with pragmatics—the study of language use in context. Dascal proposes that knowing goes beyond mere word meaning to include consideration of how speakers employ language deliberately to accomplish different communicative objectives, including persuasion. The researcher intends to investigate how pragmatic functions can be attained through

the utilization of rhetorical appeals and certain tropes in religious discourse.

The current research tries to answer the following essential questions to fulfil the research objectives:

- 1. What type of rhetorical strategies are manifest in Dr. Israr Ahmed's speech?
- 2. What role do these strategies have in attaining the pragmatic goals?

Literature review

Pragmatics and rhetoric have been widely studied in a variety of contexts including political, religious, and social discourse. Many academics and linguists have examined the phenomenon in a variety of languages and genres, utilizing a variety of approaches and perspectives.

Khaleel and Abed (2016) investigated Nelson Mandela's interview before his presidency, concentrating on his use of rhetorical figures such as metaphors and rhetorical questions to persuade listeners. Their research highlighted how Mandela deviated from conversational maxims to increase persuasion while maintaining clarity and efficacy. This study underlined the importance of rhetorical devices in accomplishing communicative goals. Kim (2016) carried out a similar study in which he examines the discursive strategies employed by Christian religious speakers to support the church's decision to exempt women from pastoral guidelines. The study demonstrated that the *Bible* is founded on rules, principles, and beliefs by illuminating how some religious arguments are constructed using implicit presuppositions that are portrayed as unalterable, undeniable truths. Similarly, Al-Hindawi and Abu Krooz (2018) examined Lady Fatimatulzahra's speeches using Toulmin's argumentation model to identify her pragmatic rhetorical methods. Their research revealed how structured reasoning and rhetorical strategies were used to achieve her goals, offering insights into the persuasive power of religious discourse.

Bin Yuan (2018) conducted a research to explore the pragmatic functions of English rhetoric in public speech. The study examines the role of English rhetoric in shaping and expressing opinions during public speech programs. Using Emma Watson's *He for She* as a case study, the study concludes that parallelism strengthens opinions, irony expresses dissatisfaction, and rhetorical questions invite no response.

Proper English rhetoric promotes communication effectiveness and efficiency in both public and everyday settings. The rhetorical structure of Friday sermons in Islamic religious discourse is examined by Abu Rumman (2019). He looks at Aristotle's three modalities of persuasion in relation to the way language is constructed and used in Friday prayers for Muslims. Religious scholars use the holy Quran's surahs (chapters) and ayahs (verses) to persuade the audience. This demonstrates that religious speakers are responsible for influencing the audience. This indicates that, in contrast to other kinds, religious discourse is written with greater caution.

In order to provide a practical reflection on the introduction of COVID-19 headlines, Aziz (2022), examined pragmatically the language and style of newspaper headlines. He concluded that Journalists must be honest and impartial. As a result, they rely on facts and reasoning, particularly when discussing health issues. The results lend credence to the theory that the most common rhetorical devices health-related themes, particularly the relation to announcement of a pandemic disease, are logical appeals. Malik et al. (2022) studied the persuasive rhetoric present in religious. They analyze the effectiveness of language elements and various persuasive techniques found in religious speeches and rhetoric of persuasion to understand the significant role that rhetoric plays in the speeches, showcasing the art of language in informing, persuading, and impacting the listener's thoughts. The rhetoric of persuasion is classified into two categories: rational persuasion and irrational persuasion. In simpler terms, the rhetoric of persuasion in religious speeches is a crucial component utilized by experts to enhance the atmosphere and sway the listener's thoughts.

Yahaya and Ali (2022) examined pragma-rhetorical methods in the theological discussion between Ahmed Deedat and Jimmy Swaggart. Their investigation revealed the employment of logos, ethos, pathos, and figures of speech to create appealing arguments. This study showed how debaters employed pragmatics and rhetoric to engage listeners and establish trust. Alamgir, Waqar & Haq (2023) examined speeches by notable Islamic philosophers using Aristotle's rhetorical modes to discover persuasive methods. Their research showed how religious experts use reasoning, emotional appeals, and trustworthiness to effectively engage audiences. In the field of political rhetoric, Adebomi (2023) investigated President Muhammadu Buhari's COVID-19 speeches, identifying eight discourse tactics classified as

Aristotle's rhetorical appeal. These techniques included using data, collaboration, and emotional appeals to address public concerns during the pandemic. The results demonstrated how pragma-rhetorical strategies can efficiently manage public trust amid crises.

Al-Hadrawi & Al-Khazaali (2023), using Van Eemeren and Houtlosser's concept of strategic maneuvering, investigate the pragmarhetorical framework of argumentative speech in the British Parliament. Important conclusions are that Jeremy Corbyn and the Prime Minister use different rhetorical devices to either justify or defend their points of view. The most common rhetorical strategy is exaggeration, so the arguments are quite rhetorical. Furthermore, emotional appeals—pathos—rule other kinds of arguments, stressing the need of audience emotions in effective communication. Naydenova et al. (2019), investigate the rhetorical strategies and linguistic mechanisms used in contemporary sermons, focusing on Patriarch Kirill's style as shown in his book Patriarch Kirill in *His Own Words*. The study examines how he uses dialogical, logical, and repetitious strategies to improve his sermons' efficacy and persuasiveness at the semantic, cognitive, and pragmatic levels.

Oswald (2023) in his essay offers a historical perspective on the connection between language and argumentation, emphasizing the ways in which linguistic pragmatics has been integrated into argumentation studies during the previous half-century. Based on Austin and Grice's writings, it examines the ways inferential traditions and speech act theory has impacted argumentation studies. The three main contributions of pragmatics to argumentation—descriptive, normative, and explanatory—are covered in this study. It draws attention to recent studies in this field and implies that there are still plenty of chances to investigate this intersection further.

The body of research on pragma-rhetorical methods is extensive but studies examining the pragmatic functions of rhetoric in the context of religious discourse are scarce. This study will surely contribute to the discipline by investigating the previously unexplored junction of pragmatics and rhetoric, providing a framework for future analysis of discourse.

Analytical framework

The current investigation was carried out using a qualitative descriptive approach to better understand the selected data pragmatically.

The data were collected from an English conference "Round Table with Dr. Israr Ahmed". His first speech titled, "Human Personality and Two Types of Knowledge", was taken as the sample of the study. It was then thoroughly evaluated through an intensely concentrated listening and transcribing of the YouTube video. A pragmaticrhetorical examination was conducted through the concept developed by Dascal (2003), in that he treats rhetorical appeals and figures of speech as both pragma rhetorical devices. The study further investigated the way they affect the ultimate goals of discourse. The data analysis had two primary components. The first was to explore how Dr. Israr built his credibility (ethos), provoked emotional responses (pathos), and delivered rational reasons (logos) to influence his audience's views and behaviours. The second was the rhetorical tropes utilized. Rhetorical tropes were derived inductively from studied data. This study looked beyond the analysis of overt rhetorical devices to uncover implicit communicative objectives that were ingrained in rhetorical appeals, and devices. The study focused on analyzing the relationships between form and function as it moved through this analytical process of unearthing deeper layers of meaning in the discourse.

Method of analysis

In light of the current study's objectives, descriptive analysis was employed as a data analysis method to emphasize rhetoric's significance in establishing pragmatic functions. The data was analyzed using the eclectic model that contains rhetorical appeals and rhetorical devices.

Data analysis and discussions

A speaker can accomplish certain communicative and persuasive objectives with the aid of certain rhetorical elements. The analysis suggests that Dr. Israr Ahmad tends to use ethos, logos and pathos along with rhetorical tropes to educate, inspire, and mentor his audience. It reveals how rhetoric works not only to inform, but also to engage, convince, and guide behaviour.

Pathos

The way in which the speaker appeals to the audience' emotions to achieve the pragmatic goals of connecting with them or persuading them is referred as pathos. The prayers at the beginning of the speech call upon an emotional connection between the speaker and the audience by sharing common beliefs. "I praise Allah and send my salutations and blessings to Muhammad..." (Ahmad, "Round Table 1/6", 6:11). Dr. Israr Ahmed employs honesty and respect in his persuading style. He further shows thankfulness to the audience and demonstrates big-heartedness, and admiration. He addresses: "Dear Brothers and Sisters, I must and do thank you from the depths of my heart that you have taken out time from your busy schedules..." (Ibid, 7:01) A personal touch is added through a detailed narrative of sharing a moment of his life. "During an operation on my knee there was an episode that my heart stopped for some time, so I had a fresh life after that..." (Ibid, 9:03) Empathy and relatability is enhanced through anecdotes. The speaker sounds more humanized.

"This material universe started from the Big Bang. I agree with it..." (Ibid, 7:01) The speaker mentions Big Bang, the widely accepted scientific theory about origin of the universe about 13.8 billion years ago. His interdisciplinary insights by blending the Big Bang theory and evolutionary biology further enhances ethos. It suggests the interconnections of knowledge that stimulates wonder and inquisitiveness. The speaker acknowledges the intricacy of the topics and exhibits a student-like inquisition, such as "Let me say here according to the Quran..." This humbleness makes him more approachable and genuine. He knows the complexity of the topic that requires careful consideration. He is not imposing his personal opinion rather he recognizes Quran as an ultimate source of guidance and truth.

Emotion and responsibility are evoked by the imagery of spirits. It covenants God with creation. "Am I not your Lord? And all of us...said in one voice, 'Why not, You are our Lord'".

The audience feels a sense of responsibility and belonging as a result. It provokes audience' acknowledgement of religious duty of submission to the highest power. It also induces the divine relationship between Allah and a believer. "...we belong to Allah." evokes a feeling of purposefulness and belonging to Allah. The vivid description of the imagery of life and death, heaven and hell connects the audience on personal level. "...heaven will remain forever and ever, but hell may come to an end" provokes hope. Two opposite emotions 'peace and fear' create pathos. By asking questions he doesn't mean to get answers rather he wants his audience to be emotionally charged to think deeply about their life and its purpose. "Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What is knowledge? What is evil? What is good?" These existential question arise curiosity in the

audience. They become emotionally motivated to know the purpose of life.

He uses emotionally charged language to persuade the audience to understand the urgency regarding the harmfulness of knowledge when it is separated from spiritual wisdom:

Humanity is fearful, at any time any accidental war can start and which can wipe out life from this planet—the good old planet Earth—it can happen...This is the calamity, now our knowledge has become destructive.

The emotion of fear is aroused as a consequence of neglecting spiritual knowledge and warns of a possible worldwide calamity. "Don't be like those who forgot Allah and Allah in return made them forgetful of their own selves." By reminding people of their spiritual self-realization, there is also an appeal for spiritual growth and a sense of hope. The emotional depth of the speech is manifested in the above examples. It combines fear with a call to action that inculcates hope for self-realization.

Ethos

A deep analysis of Dr. Israr Ahmad's speech manifests the formation of ethos which is essential for a religious discourse to be effective. To gain the trust of his audience, he highlights his academic background and personal honesty in his lectures:

I want to profess I am not scholar in the usual sense... I have never studied social sciences.... My background education is medical so I know little bit of physics and chemistry and zoology and botany... I am a humble student of al-quran and because Quran claims to be guidance for all mankind for all times... hence as a humble student of Quran I take courage, speak about the guidance.... Another condition I'm not good at English, so I have asked brother Dr. Absar to be on my side not only as a moral support but also to help me if he feels I am fumbling for words. (Ibid, 10:01)

In the above example, Dr. Israr is perceived more relatable and modest as he is self-aware, promotes trust and shows himself as approachable. He does not speak with absolute authority. He clearly admits that he is not a traditional religious scholar. He discusses his medical background. Ethos is further strengthened by being truthful about his credentials. By exhibiting humility and honesty, Dr. Israr increases his credibility. He admits his sickness and requests for the help of a colleague, showing humility and attempting to ensure accuracy, which develops ethos. By portraying himself as a "humble student of Al-

Quran," inside the context of Islamic authority, he further builds his ethos. Because of his commitment to the teachings of the Qur'an, he is regarded as credible by an audience that values Islamic education:

What I have understood from Quran and what I believe is that human beings have a composite existence...one being is the animal being which has come out of clay, the crust of the earth according to the scriptures Bible, Quran both and according to the scientists, biologists. (Ibid, 13:39)

Appeals to the credibility of sources are a means to confirm the speaker's own truthfulness. Dr. Israr continually makes reference to the *Quran*, *Bible*, and sciences. Synthesizing of spiritual as well as religious narratives enhances his credibility and authenticity. By mentioning the religious scholars like Ibn Arabi' Ibn Taymiyyah and many others, the speaker adds depth to his discussion. It shows that he is familiar with different theological concepts. Dr. Israr's forthright and straightforward expression of his points of view, as well as his preparedness to address difficult topics, enables him to establish rapport with his listeners while assuring that his arguments are perceived as real and grounded in fact. He emphasizes the need of following divine guidance and preaches morality with confidence.

His reliability is further heightened through his commitment to Islamic principles. His justifications become more convincing to the audience. "...if it proves to be an exercise in futility then the blame will be solely on me." Dr Israr gives credit to Dr. Abu Rhabi and Dr. Absar for their contribution. Acknowledging their efforts bolster up his collaborative approach. It shows his personal accountability. He accepts total responsibility of failure that reflects his integrity and honesty. The audience thinks him as reliable and trustworthy. He does not blame external factors, it makes him honourable. On the whole, The speaker's moral character, determination to take responsibility, humility in embracing possible failure, his bravery, and leadership help to shape ethos.

Logos

Speakers use logical appeals, such as facts, numbers, and real-life examples as rhetorical devices to get pragmatic purposes. The data analysis reveals that Dr. Israr expertly uses logos primarily for persuasion and objectivity.

The speech is logically organized through structured arguments. It starts from introduction then moves to the central idea. This well

thought-out approach facilitates understanding. The coherent structures simplify intricate concepts and the sequential explanations of existence: "pre-birth, worldly life, death, resurrection, and eternity", "...we live here; this is our worldly life...then comes another death, and then resurrection." the rational order and cause-and-effect structure that the speaker uses (pre-birth \rightarrow worldly life \rightarrow death \rightarrow resurrection → eternity) enhances logos and also facilitates comprehension. He logically connects each stage by presenting a structured and rational outline for understanding life and death that appeals to the audience' reason. It provides a logical explanation of existence beyond the physical world. "We find 1,000 years of ours becomes one day for Allah, and there is in other words 50000 years of ours go to make a day the day of judgment... You put us to death twice, and then You revived us twice." Dr. Israr logically and quantitatively presents the ideas of divine time and resurrection using numbers—1,000 years, 50,000 years, and two examples of death and rebirth. This gives the abstract concepts of time and life beyond death a logical framework, therefore enabling the audience to better appreciate the scope and flow of divine activities.

These examples demonstrate Logos by mentioning numbers. The speaker relies on facts to make his argument truthful by referring to the holy books."...animal existence and spiritual existence... according to the scriptures Bible, Ouran both and according to the scientists, biologists." The approach of referring to both science and religion strengthens the logical basis of the argument. He integrates the two perspectives, empirical and spiritual to authenticate the concept of existence. Discussion of human knowledge and the means of acquiring it as well as the difference between revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge serve to demonstrate the logical appeal by the speaker. "Human knowledge has two sources: one is the animal source, the other is the spiritual source." The concept of human knowledge is made easier and more approachable to the audience's rational understanding. It explains how these two types are combined to understand the physical world. The step by step process makes the abstract idea concrete.

The cause and effect relationship and logical sequence are provided by the speaker at many stages of the speech through examples and references. Whosoever saw for the first time a rock fell on another rock and there was a spark of fire... fire was invented first form of energy that human being invented.

The statement provides logical progression how previous knowledge brings new discoveries. The statement appeals to the reason. The logos in the speech depends on rational thinking, dissecting difficult concepts of human understanding, discovery, and the difference between learned and revealed knowledge. The speaker makes abstract ideas more logical and approachable for the audience by means of cause-and-effect links, unambiguous distinctions, and sequential explanations.

Tropes

To attain the pragmatic goals, Dr. Israr Ahmed uses several rhetorical devices in his speech.

Metaphor

Metaphors frame our understanding of the world. Metaphors can be valuable tools in pragmatics. The impact of this tool is evident when it deviates from literal meaning to express hidden meaning through the use of certain images. Dr. Israr compares two things using terms that do not have the same literal meaning. Abstract ideas are made easier to be understood by using Metaphors. "Human beings have a composite existence." The metaphor of "composite existence" portrays the complexity of human nature by connecting scientific and spiritual viewpoints. It simplifies difficult theological and philosophical concepts into understandable images." The dust was to return to dust' was not spoken of the soul. It has come from above." The origin of human soul has been described metaphorically 'come from above' that expresses it is different from our earthly bodies. "Put in some cold storage." The metaphor of 'cold storage' suggests temporary dormancy before being alive earthly to simplify a difficult theological notion. "The covenant from those spirits... put to sleep." "Put to sleep" is a metaphor describing the period of inaction or suspension that human souls go through following their first existence. One idea is explained in the light of other.

Overstatement (Hyperbole)

Overstatements increase the emphasis and impact on emotions. "The life that has come from the clay, the crust of the earth, through a very long, very long, very long process of evolution." The hyperbolic

description of 'very long' emphasizes the huge scale of evolutionary process. It magnifies the appreciation of the concept. It accentuates how big the timeline is. "Rain and rain and rain, for thousands of years." This repetition engages the addressees by portraying a vivid and lasting picture. "Very hot, very hot, very hot, and running away from each other with speed." The intensity of the Big Bang and the magnitude of that event are over exaggerated by repeating 'very hot' and by the dramatic description of the particles "running away".

"All human beings from the first Adam till the last son of Adam" this statement puts emphasis on the timelessness and universality of the message of the holy *Quran* to connect all humanity to one fraction of the creation of God. "The knowledge of all names was given to Adam." This overstatement increases the significance of acquired knowledge.

Understatement

Understatement contributes to the effectiveness of speech by establishing humility and encouraging deeper thought in the audience. Abstract concepts become more accessible. "I know a little bit of physics and chemistry and zoology and botany." Referring to his knowledge of several scientific disciplines as 'a little bit' is an understatement which is adding to his modest tone. "Interaction of water and clay started the life on this planet". Dr. Israr Ahmed uses such simple statements to simplify the complexity of evolutionary concepts to make them understandable to diverse audience. "We are just a few creatures on Earth." This declaration serves as an understatement to point out the humble status of human beings in such a vast universe. We are a small part of larger divine order.

Repetition

Repetition adds focus and engages the audience. In his speech, Dr. Israr Ahmed employs repetition as a pragma rhetorical strategy to convey the complex theological and philosophical concepts.

These eyes don't get blind... they were not blind of eyes; they were blind of their spirits... The ear of the heart, not the ear of the body, receives revelation.

The word "blind" is used to contrast corporeal blindness with spiritual unawareness. In the same way "ear" makes distinction between physical sense of hearing and spiritual understanding: "Animal being

and spiritual being". Recurrence of this phrase throughout the speech underlines the dual nature of human personality. The audience becomes more focused on establishing a balance between both aspects of life. "Step by step, step by step" has been used multiple times in the speech that reveals the gradual process of human civilization and knowledge. It shows that empirical knowledge is gradual, and revealed knowledge is immediate and complete in nature.

Rhetorical questions

The purpose of rhetorical questions is to highlight a point or stimulate thought rather than to elicit answers. They can be used to both provoke and emphasize ideas. Rhetorical questions serve primarily as indirect speech acts. "Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?" ... "Did the universe come into being by itself, or was it created by a higher power?" These questions motivate the listeners to think deeply about the transient nature of this life. They are encouraged to reflect on their spiritual existence the importance of revealed knowledge and the existence of God. These questions guide the audience to contemplate about the central idea of the speech.

Parallelism

Parallelism refers to repeating the same structure (Aziz 2012). Murdick (2003, 205) explains that this device emphasizes a specific argument or notion. Parallelism is a rhetorical strategy that helps readers assimilate information more effectively. Parallelism mostly creates rhythm and harmony. Parallel structures are commonly employed in speech to enhance memory, interest, emphasis, and persuasion. Dr. Israr Ahmed uses parallelism throughout his speech to make it more emphatic. He clarifies the concepts through this device. It also creates rhythm. Parallelism helps in comprehension and enhances persuasion: "Do this; don't do this. Eat this; don't eat this. Drink this; don't drink this." A rhythmic pattern is created by the repetition of verb and object structure. This pattern emphasizes the clarity and simplicity of religious obligations. Dos and don'ts become memorable in an easy way by Parallelism. "Why this fasting has been made imperative upon you? Why these five prayers a day? Why are these things so?" These rhetorical questions have parallel structure starting with "why". It makes the audience focus on the wisdom behind the religious practices and think deeply about the benefits of religious observances. "Material knowledge and spiritual knowledge. Animal being and spiritual

being." Contrasting elements are juxtaposed to create a dichotomy. It represents two opposite domains-physical and metaphysical. This binary opposition makes it evident that these are inherently different yet interconnected. It implies the need for balance.

Conclusion

Religious speakers need to be persuasive, emphatic, and credible. To achieve such goals, the role of rhetoric is indispensable. It enhances our understanding and improves communication efficiency. The analysis shows that Dr. Israr uses a variety of rhetorical strategies, including parallelism. repetition. metaphor. understatement. exaggeration, and rhetorical questions to attain the emphatic function. The combination of these tools results in an engaging and thoughtprovoking speech. Theme is developed through these pragmarhetorical strategies. Dr. Israr's speech is more courteous as it uses milder language. A convincing persona is developed through the rhetorical appeals. By employing ethos, pathos, and logos, the concepts of creation, existence, forms of knowledge, and the relationship between humans and the divine are made easy and universal to the diverse audience. It promotes self-reflection and contemplation. By making references to authentic religious scriptures and scholarly traditions, Dr. Israr develops his credibility as a knowledgeable figure with deep wisdom. His arguments are intellectually challenging, and emotionally stirring. The combination of all these strategies is essential to reach the persuasion in religious discourse. Overall effectiveness of speech is enhanced by pragmatically employing all in a balanced way in order to be convincing. The findings indicate that ethos effectively captures readers' attention and enhances comprehension, thereby facilitating reliance on the source's credibility. It's also important to note that these kinds of appeals have the power to influence the reader to reach particular conclusions. Consequently, the application of emotional, credible, and intellectual tactics is equally significant. As a rhetorical device, parallelism fulfils the pragmatic function of facilitating readers' mental processing of information. A primary purpose of parallelism is to produce balance and rhythm. Thus, practically speaking, the analysis demonstrates that religious speakers use parallel patterns primarily to capture readers' attention, emphasize certain points, and persuade them. The second most commonly employed rhetorical device is the metaphor that is used to make concepts simpler to imagine and as a form of exaggeration. Metaphors

in the speech play a vital role in conveying complex and abstract concepts by comparing them to familiar things. Metaphors used by the speaker have made the speech more compelling. Emotions are aroused to make the message more relatable and powerful. Persuasion is enhanced through metaphors. After metaphor, hyperbole is the most popular technique utilized by the speaker to pique the interest of readers. It is very much effective in religious discourse. Hyperbolic language strengthens readers' reactions. It increases the emphasis and affects the emotions. It performs an essential role in shaping communication. The analysis of the speech shows that it helps in making the situation more significant to influence the audience. It magnifies the appreciation of the concepts. English rhetorical features like understatement provide a stronger communicative effect. It adds to ethos that is a core element for persuading the audience. It has helped in building credibility and trustworthiness of the speaker. He seems to be very humble, sensitive, and emotionally intelligent. His modest tone has increased the persuasiveness to the audience by creating deeper thought. The findings suggest that rhetorical questions have been used to engage in indirect speech acts. According to the study, they are employed indirectly to allude to behaviors such as taking action. These inquiries are inherently indirect, as the writers do not have intention of getting reply from the audience. On the whole, the research findings are consistent with those of other studies, which indicate that rhetorical strategies have a vital role in attaining pragmatic goals. With a particular focus on religious discourse this study contributes to the existing body of research on pragmatics and rhetoric. The study's methodology could be modified to be applied to more extensive investigations with a related goal or in many contexts, including other religious speeches.

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LITERATURE AND ART STUDIES

Jordanian popular numerical proverbial expressions: A critical linguistic review of the culture-mathematics interaction

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Abstract: This paper aims to examine a selected number of numerical proverbial expressions that are used in Jordanian everyday talks. Given the importance of numbers in our lives, it is clear that these proverbs have referenced a wide range of themes in most spheres of life. Proverbs are short, concise sayings that have been handed down through the ages. These proverbial phrases contain true conventional beliefs and knowledge disguised as memorable metaphors. Additionally, these phrases are regarded as useful tools for disseminating information and insight about human nature. Numbers occupy great importance in human life, as they are used in all aspects of life. In addition to employing numbers mathematically and scientifically in different aspects of life, they were employed linguistically and culturally in the intangible human heritage such as proverbs and wisdom. The current research aims to study the use of cardinal numbers in Jordanian folk proverbial expressions through a sample of selected proverbs that were chosen from multiple sources. After collecting the targeted proverbs, they were analyzed, as the results showed the diversity of these numbers the multiplicity of the formulas of the proverbs that in which they were used, and the diversity of the pragmatic purposes for which these proverbs were employed.

Keywords: Jordanian culture, folklore, proverbs, numbers, mathematics

Introduction

The popular proverb is a brief, expressive phrase that has been passed down from one generation to another. It travels effortlessly and swiftly via place and time. It arose as an expression of a certain event and frequently employed in the setting of different incidents or circumstances. The popular proverb is a product of interactions between culture, history, physical location, the written word, economic

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life, beliefs, traditions, and customs. Popular proverbs play a significant role in building and nurturing values such as sovereignty, tolerance, encouragement, respect, collaboration. appreciation. orientation, and behavioral control. The popular proverb is distinguished by its brevity, as it is a brief phrase of merely few words, which contributes to its memorizing and popularity. The popular proverb is distinguished by its correctness of meaning, that is, it contains a true and profound notion, that is, a thought which is true and consistent with reality and amenable to logic. Popular proverbs are also distinguished by their musicality, harmony, and coherence of their words. Popular proverbs reflect the people's feelings, emotions, hopes, pains, joys, sorrows, thinking, philosophy, and wisdom. Through the popular proverb people's opinions and attitudes can be expressed about the various affairs of life. Popular proverbs often use direct language along with metaphors, puns, and euphemisms that allow people to discuss taboos and difficult and often complex ideas and issues. Popular proverbs benefit from many sources that they employ in formulating their texts. For example, they employ names of all kinds, whether they are the names of people, the names of other living beings, natural or man-made products, concepts, abstract nouns, or natural phenomena and geographical places. The numbers are a source that popular proverbs use in the formation of their texts. Jordanian popular proverbs get benefit of these sources including the use of cardinal numbers which this study aims to explore.

Data collection and methodology

The present study is a descriptive analytical investigation that focuses on examining how numbers are used in Jordanian proverbial expressions. The data set comprises of a group of popular proverbial expressions that have been gathered from various sources. The study aimed to debate the three issues concerning the types of cardinal numbers that are used in these proverbs, the linguistic structure of them and the social purposes for using them. The proverbs were collected from a variety of related print and online sources, in addition to media sources (i.e., Jordanian local TV and radio programs), besides the public and private gatherings. The proverbs were the nanalyzed and discussed to answer the three inquiries of the study. Due to the limited scale of the study, it will be confined to a small number of expressions to be used as a representative sample of the research topic.

Review of related literature

No language exists apart from the cultural fabric that binds its original speakers to it because the language symbolizes a trustworthy image that ensures the survival of the language through age (Hazaymeh 2022, 89). Although paremiologists, or experts in the study of proverbs, have not agreed on a single, all-inclusive definition, the proverb is traditionally defined in terms of its distinguishing qualities, which include self- containedness, pithiness, traditionality, a tendency toward didacticism, fixedness of form, and prosody (Hijazin & Al-Khanji 2022, 523). Jordanian Spoken Arabic has many numbers and rhetorical phraseological proverbial expressions that are integrated with each other (Hazaymeh 2021, 75) which can be used for different themes in private and public gatherings (Hazaymeh et al. 2019, 289) to express opinions about various issues such as advice, warning, thankfulness and gratitude (Hazaymeh & Battah 2021, 2628). Proverbs are true conventional opinions and wisdom expressed in the form of remembered images (Khalifeh & Rababah 2022, 22). Syntactic aspects are used in Jordanian proverbs (Migdadi et al. 2023, 471) where these proverbs are used to serve a wide range of issues and can be formed in different ways including the declarative, imperative, and conditional sentences (Almomani 2013, viii). Proverbs as sincere and profound expressions of the life of society (Hazaymeh 2023, 78) communicate messages in an indirect and frequently figurative manner because the meanings they imply are socially accepted because people have the same knowledge and inherit the exact characteristics of proverbs (Al-Azzam 2018, 56). As part of literature and as a lens for exploring and comprehending a culture, proverbs including the Jordanian ones have synecdoche, figurative elements like metaphor, exaggeration, paradox and allusion, and incorporate different ethical principles, customs, and traditions (Dawaghreh & Tengku-Sepora 2020, 281; Farghal 2021, 7; Hijazin & Al-Khanji 2022, 522).

Discussion and analysis

The importance of studying popular proverbs stems from their origins and purposes, since the general population is their source and author, and their objective is to express a practical collective attitude toward various situations and issues that people encounter in their daily lives. One of the most common genre of intangible folklore is the popular proverb. Because of the various dialects in the places where it is used, some of its vocabulary or the construction of its phrases change, but its

meaning remains the same. Because of the physiological implications of numbers that surpass beyond their numerical significance, the number constitutes one of the components of popular culture. The source of this importance of the numbers is diverse, it may be just a coincidence or because they were mentioned in sacred texts in a remarkable manner. It is worth noting that the same number may have a positive connotation for some people, while it may have a negative connotation for others. Numbers are divided into multiple types, such as odd, even, cardinal, and ordinal ones, and they have a presence in the tangible and intangible life of people. Numerical proverbs have a place within the Jordanian popular proverbs. These numerals and their proverbial applications vary. These proverbs have various cultural and social purposes. Popular proverbs use numbers in Jordanian Arabic as a means of expressing judgment and opinions in a strong way. The common use of numbers in these proverbs is to use them as illustrative elements that enhance understanding of the idea or strengthen the message.

Here are some examples.

" duqiltablatijimiithabla: Beat the drum; a hundred fool woman will come" is proverbial verbal sentence that begins with the verb "duq; beat". The proverb uses the cardinal number "hundred" to exaggerate the description of the situation. The proverb is a short sentence that uses alliteration between the words "tabla" and "habla". It reflects a negative view of women by describing them as "foolish" and links them to the idea that it is easy to gather women by simply beating the drum. The proverb is used to show that on some occasions good and bad people may gather. The proverb also points to the necessity and importance of being solemn and not behaving in an insulting manner.

The two proverbs use two man-made products 'iltabla; the drum' and 'iltasih; the bowl' for a rhythmic function. Also they employ the verb 'tiiji; come'.

ithneanmabitfqush: two do not agree with each other: the gun powder and the fire" is a noun phrase proverb that starts with the cardinal number "two" to refer to

dissonance and incompatibility between two people or two things because of the lack of agreement or harmony between each other, or because there are differences and incompatibilities between them. To emphasize this idea, the proverb uses two opposing tools, "gunpowder" and "fire", as each of them increases the other.

بالعشرة لطم بالخمسة وكالللي

illiboakilbilkhamshbultumbila'ashra: who eats with the five, will slap with the ten". The proverb is a relative clause and begins with the relative article 'illi; who'. It uses the two cardinal numbers 'five' and 'ten' to refer to the five fingers of the hand and the ten fingers of the two hands. The proverb depicts the setting where the person uses the five fingers i.e., one hand to eat, but he slaps his checks with the ten fingers i.e., the two hands. The proverb is used to show the regret a person expresses if he consumes and wastes everything if he does not save and keep things for cases of emergency and need.

"illimabihutiltisa'a ma bilaqiila'ashara: who does not keep the nine, will not find the ten". The proverb is a relative clause and starts with the relative article 'illi; who'. It employs the two neighboring cardinal numbers 'nine' and 'ten' to indicate and imply the necessity and importance of having effort and hard work to be made in order to achieve a satisfactory and desirable results.

"الغتشب موي قرش عوال" bishtaghlyoamwa'ashara la: work one day and ten no" is a verbal phrase proverb uses the cardinal number 'ten' to exaggerate the long period of having no work to do. This proverb is usually said by a person describing his situation when others ask him about how he manages his life affairs when he works sometimes and stops working most of the time for one reason or another. The proverb is also used by a person when others ask him how someone they both know is managing his life.

"ilkhayyrinduthinteanwthalath: the good one has two and three" is adjectival phrase proverb that starts with the definite adjective 'ilkhayyr; the good one'. The proverb praises the polygamy by showing that the good man can have two and three wives. The proverb utilizes the cardinal numbers 'two' and 'three' to express its function.

"قدر ما ثالث على البائدي ilqidr ma yrkabillaa'alathalath: the pot is only fixed on three legs" is a noun phrase proverb that starts with the definite singular noun 'ildidr; the pot' which uses the cardinal number 'three' to emphasize the importance of collaboration, solidarity,

The proverb وفضاع بالمراقب والمراقب وا

The proverbial expressions "hiyamrusniitisnbiنب نه سرمايه ها الله عنه on of sixty shoes" and "فانب النه نه نه الله ibnsitiinkalb: a son of sixty dogs", both begin with the singular noun "ibn; the son" and use the cardinal number 'sixty' to humiliate, mock, and offend others in a hyperbole way.

The proverbial expressions "ושיבישט haata'aissitiin: put 'the speed'at sixty" and "ישיבישט qaalyaasitiin: said of sixty" are verbal phrases that use the cardinal number 'sixty' to show the exaggerated speed of someone in driving or doing something.

To describe the worst place or destination that a person or thing can go to, especially hell, the proverbial phrasal verb expression "نونائد قوالع nqalaa' ibsitiinijhannam: go through sixty hells" is used to express people's extreme and exaggerated annoyance with a person or something.

To show a warm welcome to the guest, people use the proverbial expression "alhaswalhatiimayl و سهلااهلام يقيي : Oh 100, you are welcome", which starts with the particle 'ay ; ' بن ', where the number "one hundred" shows the exaggeration and the increase in joy at the arrival of the guest.

To describe the high quality of a thing or to indicate that a person is in very good condition, the popular noun phrase proverbial expression

"نورشعوطاريق" is used. The carat is a quantitative measurement of purity for gemstones and precious metals like gold that is expressed in parts fine per 24 parts whole.

The proverbial noun phrase expression "lamhsilala 'arfis ال شمالة عد له الله خلال على : zero on the left" symbolizes that the cardinal number 'zero' has no significance when it is on the left side. It is employed in Jordanian culture to mock, insult, humiliate and to show that someone does not worth nothing or respect in other people's eyes as they do not give him any importance or priority.

Conclusion

Jordanian popular proverbs are seen as one of the most essential foundations of intangible Jordanian folklore because they act as a mirror, reflecting the culture, ways of life, and numerous relationships, morals, and values that exist in society. Popular proverbs are common oral and easily transportable wisdom that is commonly shared in the different sectors of the society. The settings where these proverbs were said could be repeated at any time. Many proverbs' phrases may differ from region to region within the same country due to dialect differences, but their contents are consistent. Simply said, popular proverbs are a spontaneous expression of a specific situation, event, or incident in a linguistic structure that is brief, intense, accurate, funny, easy to transmit, and rapidly spreading. The popular proverb can be a combination of wisdom, humour, and guidance. The goal of popular proverbs is to extract lessons from cumulative experiences that have resulted in living, intangible, verbal heritage products that can be valued, admired and used as intangible cultural material which deserves to be circulated, known, protected, collected, and maintained as non-unconstitutional law. Jordanian proverbs with numbers in their texts account for a good portion of Jordanian popular proverbs. The current study attempted to carry out a descriptive analysis of a number of these proverbs in three dimensions: the types of cardinal numbers employed in the proverbs, their language structure, and the social goals for which they are used. The study concluded that there is a diversity expressions with the used cardinal numbers, as well as a variation in the linguistic structure of their phrases, in addition to the multiplicity in their social uses.

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Examining Rogerian empathy in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*

Abhignya Sajja and Vaibhav Shah*

Abstract: The paper examines Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment employing the conceptual framework of empathy as delineated by psychologist Carl Rogers. Murderer-hero Raskolnikov is crafted such that his guilt-ridden angst elicits the empathy and emotional investment of a reader who, in the real world, would likely not interact with someone like Raskolnikov, let alone understand the trajectory of his morally-complex life and fragmented thoughts. Like Humbert Humbert, Emma Boyary, Captain Ahab, or Dorian Gray, Raskolnikov too occupies a liminal space wherein the reader acknowledges the problematic nature of his action(s) but does not withhold readerly empathy; the reader practices Rogerian unconditional positive regard in order to participate in the workings of Raskolnikov's psyche by suspending the emotions of disgust or shock. Dostoevsky's narrative, the paper argues, strategically achieves this feat as he allows the reader to enter into the conflicted, schism-mind of his hero (interiority, indwelling) by 1) depicting Raskolnikov's pitiful state in defamiliarised detail; his ideology at odds with his (latent) Christian beliefs (incongruence), 2) wielding the language of disease and trauma and 3) presenting Raskolnikov as a 'good' person with a distorted internalised locus of evaluation. The study is a qualitative examination of the nature of Dostoevsky's writing in the context of Raskolnikov's story.

Keywords: Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, empathy, narrative analysis, Raskolnikov, Carl Rogers

Towards a dialogue on empathy in the context of *Crime and Punishment*

Crime and Punishment is amongst Fyodor Dostoevsky's most celebrated works. Protagonist Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov is an outlaw; he kills two defenceless women in broad daylight. One aged, another docile and pregnant. Dostoevsky describes the murder in a

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brutal, attentive fashion. There is blood and repeated, blunt striking; it is not a smooth passage to death for the victims. He describes the murder of the old pawnbroker as such:

The blow landed smack on the crown of her head, something made easy by her smallness, She cried out, but very faintly, and suddenly sank in a heap on the floor, though even she managed to raise both arms to her head...with all his might, he (Raskolnikov) landed her another blow, and another, each time with the butt and each time on the crown of her head. The blood gushed out as from an upturned glass, and her body collapsed backwards. He stepped back, allowed her to fall and at once bent down over her face; she was dead. Her eyes were goggling out of her head as though they might burst from it, while her forehead and all the rest of her features were crumpled and distorted in a convulsive spasm.

(Dostoevsky 2003, 94)

Raskolnikov maims and steals and seemingly remains unrepentant and unremorseful. He often snaps at those who mean well; he is rude and cold. He rarely emotes and often carries around him an air of being better than the other. His conduct is not exemplary; it does in fact cause harm. Raskolnikov still is the 'hero' of the novel. The reader. nevertheless, tends to feel bad for him (working against her natural instinct to loathe); when reading Dostoevsky's tale, one practices the German notion of Einfühlung¹, i.e., empathy. The aesthetic idea of negative empathy (Bonasera 2024) is often associated with the character. Empathy is defined as "the ego's capacity to transiently identify with someone else in order to grasp his or her subjective experience. An altruistic elimination of one's personal agenda-to the extent this is possible-and attunement to the other's affect and fantasy are hallmarks of empathy (Akhtar 2009, 93). Daniel Stern (1985, 145) describes empathy as "a transient role identification". The most relevant expert on the notion of empathy, however, appears to be psychologist Carl Rogers, inventor of the person-centric approach to therapy. According to Rogers², the simple act of listening is enough to elicit empathy for the client. He writes of empathy as:

[...] being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her

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¹ An opposed to *Mitgefühl* (sympathy), *Efühlsansteckung* (emotional mirroring), or *Nachfühlen* (vicarious feeling) as discussed by phenomenologist Max Scheler (2017). ² See Rogers. 1995. *A Way of Being*; Vincent. 1999. *Being Empathetic*; Rogers. 1995. *Becoming a Person*.

life, moving about in it delicately without making judgements, sensing meaning of which he/she is scarcely aware[...].

(Thorne and Sanders 2013, 38)

Drawing from this insight, the simple act of close-reading a text ought to elicit empathy for a character (especially one like Raskolnikov whose interior life is described with minute attention to detail) whilst suspending reactions of shock and judgement. The terms that Rogers uses, objectivity, empathy, unconditional positive regard, indwelling, presence, and congruence (Thorne and Sanders 2013, 27), we argue, Dostoevsky employs in his writing as he crafts his characters. Rogers³ discusses the idea of self-actualising tendencies wherein an individual, once having been assured of the basic needs of sustenance, can develop to achieve her full potential. This, in Raskolnikov's case does is not possible since he lives in abject poverty (amongst other deficiencies he battles). This will mean that his intellectualisation and hyper-rational bent stems from a distorted (driven by ideology) internalised locus of evaluation, i.e., an unwavering trust of one's own vision(without seeking the validation of others) and a disregard for conditions of worth, i.e., giving in to expectation or being shaped by someone else's criteria of success/growth/goodness in Rogerian lingo. Raskolnikov only perceives to possess a congruent self whereas he is always already alienated from his inner voice. The reader, unsettled, recognises this and thereby empathises with the hero. The paper, using Roger's lens of empathy, attempts to study as to why this happens and how Dostoevsky facilitates this; how is it that the reader feels sorry for the murderer and invests her emotions in the hefty read that is Crime and Punishment (Dostoevsky 2003).

Raskolnikov as a victim to circumstance

Based on the real-life personality of Pierre-François Lacenaire that writer Kevin Birmingham (2000) describes as "an extraordinary and horrifying incarnation of evil", Raskolnikov is a troubled, well-read, and sometimes charming friend, brother, and son. Dostoevsky allows the reader to gauge his state of mind (*indwelling*) and enter into his universe. One has access to the complex workings of Raskolnikov's psyche (his family and friends do not have this privilege). It creates a sense of attachment and helps the reader foster empathy for him. Moreover, Raskolnikov's life is not enviable, it is described as driven

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³ Also Marlow-Szent Gyorgyi and Maslow.

from lack. His family's socio-economic state becomes an immediate trigger to commit the crime. At the beginning of the novel, Dostoevsky writes of how Raskolnikov lives. His coffin-like room is suffocating and is described as a desolate living space; the half-peeled, dirty wallpaper does not help with general feelings of dullness. At a certain point in the novel, Dostoevsky writes that "low ceilings and cramped rooms cramp the soul and the mind" (Dostoevsky 2003, 498). He sleeps on a narrow sofa and is often seen stashing a bunch of unwashed and washed clothes under his head, for he cannot afford the simple luxury of a pillow. Raskolnikov is even unable to pay rent or acquire food. He sustains himself on unappetising cabbage soup (shchi) and watered-down tea that his landlady grudging sends his way. His wardrobe consists of tattered clothes that barely protect against the harsh Russian cold. His friend Razhumikhin buys him clothes with the money his (Raskolnikov's) poor mother has sent him from her meagre 125 roubles a year pension (and has probably gone without food herself). Dunya, his sister, is forced to drain herself at work and eventually, agrees to marry the old and cunning Luzhin to support the family. Raskolnikovis an ex-student and is now no longer able to study despite possessing great academic vigour. He was to be a lawyer; it is to be noted that his choice to study law and justice reflects his introspective nature and a fiery zeal for the philosophical ideas of equality and retribution. He has had a fiancé, depressed and sickly, who has passed away recently. In matters of love, the handsome Dostoevsky Raskolnikov remains defeated. defamiliarises Raskolnikov's life - like Tolstoy's depiction of Kholstomer (Tolstoy 2010) and paints him in a visceral spirit of pathos. No happy event is described to have occurred in Raskolnikov's life (except perhaps the article he wrote which later anyway becomes a threat to his peace). The reader is presented with an almost naturalistic picture of Raskolnikov's impoverished, lonely, and troubled existence. This causes her to learn of his past and begin to understand his motivations which stem from the frustration of being unable to sustain his loved ones and himself. This establishes that Raskolnikov is (at the moment) unable to reach Maslow's/Roger's stage of self-actualisation; he barely makes it alive to the end of the day.

Moreover, Raskolnikov is also carried away by the influence of the West. Dostoevsky presents him as a fallen creature in awe of 'floating ideas' coming from the beyond (as he is known to have described to editor of *The Russian Messenger* Mikhail Katkov in a letter, 2013). He

thinks of himself as Nietzsche's superman/Ubermensch (Nietzsche 1883) - although, of course, Nietzsche's philosophy is post-Dostoevsky. One-half of the populace, he believes, is more intelligent than the rest. These individuals are above the law and may commit acts of violence to change the course of history. Napolean was one such figure and Raskolnikov had the potential to be one. His theory pertaining to the Newtons of the world - one amongst ten thousand, "fearsome blood-letters" (Dostoevsky 2003, 309) is a disruptive prospect. He refuses to believe in the existence of a conscience. When Razhumikhin says that "the living soulis reactionary" (Dostoevsky 2003, 305), it is as if he were referring to Raskolnikov. Dostoevsky himself was a member of the infamous Petrashevsky circle and was involved in "a misconceived and self-destructive flirtation with radical politics" (Dostoevsky 1985, 9). Thinkers in the likes of Fourier, Darwin, Chernyshevsky, and Wagner were looked up to for the radical nature of their ideas; dissent and rebellion had become central to leading life in Tsarist Russia. In the mock-execution and Siberian hard labour that followed, Dostoevsky understood that life cannot be articulated and shaped by the lofty idea of the enlightenment. In his magnum opus, The Brothers Karamazov (1880), Dostoevsky etches the character of the rationalist Ivan Karamazov who is burdened by his "European cultural heritage" (Namli 2022, 22); Raskolnikov too finds himself in "a state of depersonalisation" (Picca, Schnyder and Romele 2024). In a paper on the Christian tenet of suffering, the following lines appear: "The shadow of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment lies heavily on the figure of Ivan, confirming the impossibility of following the precept that egoism is the only rational principle" (Namli 2022, 23). The paper argues that both Ivan and Raskolnikov need to learn to cope with the meaninglessness of life, like Alysosha and Father Zosima from TBK who practice 'active love'. There exists a reality that transcends the logic of utility. Many truths exist; God and Godlessness can exist at once. Ivan refuses to act on his utilitarian/rational egoist ideas whereas Raskolnikov does. The former, an atheist descends into madness. The latter acts; and in acting, loses composure. He is nevertheless able to recover through rediscovering his faith. For the most part of the novel he experiences inauthentic sorge (Heidegger 2010), commits philosophical suicide⁴ (Camus

⁴ Sonya, in fact, accusses him of having commited "moral suicide" (Dostoevsky 2003, 474).

1942), and lives in bad faith (Sartre 2007). The reader, familiar with Dostoevsky's own difficult past, believes in the troubles of his hero as Raskolnikov finds himself to be an honest Russian tainted by the gaze of the West. There exists a tussle between Western nihilism/hyperrationality and Raskolnikov's Russian Orthodox Christian upbringing (characterised by kenotic love, and the Russian notion of sobornost). It is not his *authentic* self that is involved in deceitful crime, it is the (invisible) Western cord that drives him forward, that contributes to his "spiritual lethargy" (Matual 1992, 30) and decay. He of course does not realise this but the reader does and feels cathartic pity (and fear) via the act of *listening*; Rogerians would say he operates from a distorted internalised locus of evaluation. As the Russian word Raskol means schism or split, the protagonist is caught between the unstoppable force of his "false outer self" and the immovable object of his authentic real/inner self; this leads to disintegration and psychosis (Lowenstein 1993) (incongruence). Like Dostoevsky, Raskolnikov too, the reader expects, is soon to be disillusioned with his way of life. Thus these lines appear in the novel⁵: "...am I a monster or am I myself a victim?" (Dostoevsky 2003, 410)

The persistence of disease and trauma in the text

Crime and Punishment, "the chronicle of a sick-bed" (O'Leary 2009, 142) is Raskolnikov's story of ill-health. His illness is caused by guilt which in turn stands for inauthenticity. Thus the reader understands that the murder is not an act that aligns with the core of the novel's hero and his personality (Rogerian organismic integrity). The text is ridden with episodes of sickness, both metaphorical and literal. Raskolnikov's state inspires or spreads (like an infection) ill-health to other characters. Katerina Ivanovna perishes of consumption, struggles self-control and is Marmeladov with a Svidrigailov, Raskolnikov's mother is delirious, Luzhin. Lebezyatnikov deal with complex metaphorical illnesses of character. These serve to remind the reader of Raskolnikov's position and how:

- 1. He suffers from a physical ailment that stems, of course, from guilt and spiritual alienation. The antidote that can appease his guilty conscience guilt is "will to suffering" (Beebe 1955).
- 2. He is on the verge of disintegration like Katerina Ivanovna (physically broken) or Svidrigailov (whose spiritual death leads to

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⁵ In a different context.

suicide). He occupies a liminal position and can either be redeemed or damned. The other characters coloured by sin and death represent the alternate track Raskolnikov's life could take (he, however, redeems himself through suffering, faith, and love, facilitated by Sonya).

3. He exercises freewill but is ultimately governed by his conscience and the will of God in a deterministic setting.

Dostoevsky writes of disease but the language he wields is also one ridden with the metaphors of sickness. Of course, there is literal illhealth (but is only a manifestation of a sinful, metaphorical illness that first exhibits itself as he conceives the plot of the murder and then goes on to get worse). The reader is subjected to repeated descriptions of it. Raskolnikov is susceptible to psychosomatic fainting sprees, is declared to suffer from monomania, frenzy, and an "idee fix"; he is gripped by hallucinations, dissociation, paranoia, and episodes of conversion. As he speaks to Luzhin, Razhumikhin, Zosimov, and Nastasya post-murder, Dostoevsky (2003, 183) describes him such: "Raskolnikov lay pale, his upper lip quivering and his breath coming with difficulty". This state of poor health stems from a conflict and it is visible. Razumikhin declares once: "for we must make a proper human being out of you" (Ibid, 156). Raskolnikov is viewed as not completely human, then. At another point in the novel (Ibid. 201) as he begins to berate Razumikhin, he comes across as sinister. Yet, Dostoevsky quickly writes of how it is not Raskolnikov's authentic state. Acting out in anger only makes him more pitifully sick. Words of anger are immediately followed by a description of illness: "He had begun calmly, savouring the mass of venom he was about to unleash, but ended in a state of frenzy, gasping for breath..." (Ibid. 262). Dostoevsky writes: "the enactment of a crime is invariably accompanied by illness" (Ibid. 381). He draws from personal experience⁶ in the writing of the novel. One knows of his battle with epilepsy⁷ and the morose spells of depression and anger he battled. When Raskolnikov is unmindful of the route he takes in order to reach different locales in the city, he alludes to his state of mind as being completely blank. It is as if he has had an epileptic fit (Ibid. 200).

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⁶ For the biographical details mentioned through the course of the paper, see Joseph Frank, Alex Christofi, Kevin Birmingham, Anna Grigerevyna Dostoevskaya and other authors from the bibliography.

⁷ Freud (1945) calls it "hystero-epilepsy" that stems from latent homosexuality and an unresolved Oedipal complex.

The language of trauma and illness is overarchingly used for all of Dostoevsky's characters (Lambert 2018). Raskolnikov suffers the most, but the rest are not immune from feelings of guilt and discomfort. Employing the metaphors and colourations of being unwell for Svidrigalov, Sonya, Dunya, Razhumikin and the rest imply that they are not innocent as goes the adage: "The minds of men are mirrors to one another" (Hume 1739, 365). When Raskolnikov is unable to commit suicide and chooses Vladimirka⁸ and "the seventh verst" (Dostoevsky 2003, 387) instead, it is the collective instinct of selfpreservation that takes charge. Dostoevsky believes in the idea that one is responsible for all, there happens to be a Jungian collective conscience that governs the populace of the world⁹. This idea, of one for all¹⁰, helps the reader understand that the figure of the criminal is not that of an outcast. The reader, in fact, is Raskolnikov (across time and space, in a different form). Sonya, post confession falls ill and spends the night troubled with fevered dreams. She too, partakes in Raskolnikov's illness; his state is characterised by the contagion of discomfort. She is horrified when she first knows of what has occurred. She asks Raskolnikov as to how he committed the act of murder; she views it as a strong instinct for self-destruction: "...what have you got and done to yourself?" (Dostoevsky 2003, 491) she asks him. Raskolnikov might have killed and might be a difficult person but he is a part of the whole. And thus, Raskolnikov, ridden with "black ecstasy" (Ibid. 2003, 498) becomes the figure of the reader herself. Raskolnikov's state where he wields no control, constantly ill and passing on the illness to the world at large, is pathetic and makes of him a figure enveloped in shame that deserves mercy and correction.

Vulnerability and lapses: Is Raskolnikov a good person?

Dostoevsky is often accorded the title of a psychologist (like Tolstoy is considered a sociologist); his works examine the nuances of human nature. His characters are often grey, neither villains nor Gods. In Raskolnikov's case it is important to focus upon the details that make up his life and how these aspects throw light upon the greater truths of

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⁸ The region surrounding the town of Vladimir, through which the gangs of convicts bound for Siberia were dispatched.

⁹ Gibran (1923) states - "the murdered is not unaccountable for his own murder" - "the blood that's on everyone's hands" (Dostoevsky 2003, 618).

¹⁰ Also expounded upon in *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky 1880). 200

the human condition. In a paper that re-reads Dostoevsky's fiction to understand society and its functions, the following lines appear:

[...] our sociality, which every human being shares, consists of both the capacity for sympathy or self-sacrifice and the instinctive, irresistible feeling of satisfaction of viewing the suffering of others.

(Chudo 2013, 136)

Further:

An optimist might be inclined to see our evil social impulses as a perverted, eradicable form of the good ones, whereas a Freudian might be inclined to make the opposite reduction. Dostoevsky considered both reductions as naïve, one a case of sentimentality and the other of reverse sentimentality. The human soul is ever entertaining what Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* calls double thoughts.

(Ibid, 137)

Thus, Dostoevsky, like Carl Rogers believes in a (so to say) postmodern complexity of the self. Raskolnikov cannot simply be a villain. In depicting the various 'positive' ends to his life, Dostoevsky lends his persona a quality of compassion (exercising *self-actualising tendencies* despite constraints) and ambiguity. He is no longer a criminal or outcast, solely. Morality, as exhibited through Raskolnikov's example, is not constituted of absolutes. He is always already crafted as an empath himself:

His sense of compassion, which has been an integral part of his personality since childhood and which is manifested from time to time throughout the novel, is undeniable. It endows his actions with a magnanimity that runs counter to the malevolence of his scheme and the cruelty of his crime. Before he commits the murder, Raskolnikov's thoughts reflect a curious ambivalence that suggests a certain disenchantment with his plan and even a desire to be delivered from it.

(Matual 1992, 28)

Raskolnikov visits the old pawnbroker, feels disgusted when he ruminates over his plan and in a moment of authentic return (to his Christian past), beseeches God for help. Nevertheless, he commits the murder. He is often depicted as being the agent commissioning remarkable deeds of charity and courage. Despite his brash behaviour, his friends and relatives continue to gravitate towards him. He helps Marmeladov with money and most importantly, establishes himself as a dependable force of goodness at the time of his death. It so happens that within the course of a week Raskolnokov finds himself covered

again in blood. First, it is the pawnbroker and Lizaveta's. It symbolises shame, guilt, and dishonesty; it is the nihilist West's contamination of Russian spirituality. He tries very hard to hide it and even in his sleep mutters of the bloodstains. Like Lady Macbeth, he is overwhelmed. The second time he finds himself stained by blood is at the event of Marmeladov's death. He has been of great help to Katerina Ivanova and her family. He not only brings Marmeladov home to die and facilitates his seeking forgiveness from Sonya, he also pays for his funeral. Nikodim Fomich who runs into him at the tenement of the dead man remarks of the blood. It is not hidden now (from the other characters), it becomes a metaphor of redemption. Or perhaps the beginning of redemption through faith and suffering. Raskolnikov is unashamed of the blood and does not try to get rid of it. He is enveloped by a "new and boundless sensation of full and powerful life" (Dostoevsky 2003, 288). This blood is life-affirming. Its presence upon Raskolnikov's body symbolises the return to his old self, Christian and unpolluted. It is hoped that he is capable of refurbishing his internalised locus of evaluation. Drawing from his own experience of the mock execution, Dostoevsky describes Raskolnikov's state of mind "This sensation might be compared to that experience by a man who has been sentenced to death and is suddenly and unexpectedly told he has been retrieved." (*Ibidem*). Raskolnikov is at times the pure and meek Prince Myshkin (Dostoevsky 1869).

He comforts Polya, Marmeladov's stepdaughter, after his death. She embraces him and talks to him of God. He then requests her to pray for him too (the reader is to remember that Raskolnikov is an avowed nihilist and has rejected religion). Child characters like Polya become a tool with which to elicit empathy for Raskolnikov as they find comfort in his presence and mould the perception of the adult reader via Shklovsky's literary technique of defamiliarisation (Sajja 2022). Raskolnikov, when Polya weeps and embraces him, is covered in blood and is sickly pale, feverish, etc. This does not deter the child from seeking warmth from his presence. Polya assures him she'll pray for him the rest of her life. It creates a sense of regard, in the reader's subconscious, for Raskolnikov who is loved by an innocent orphan child. The character of Goryanchikov in The House of Dead (Dostoevsky 1985) is an ex-criminal who remains aloof post his return to civilised society. His young student, Katya, is a child who feels for him deeply. Through their case, Dostoevsky presents a moving

moment: "So even this man had been able to make someone love him" (Ibid. 25). Raskolnikov finds his Katya in Sonya and the reader.

Later in his trial, of course, the reader hears of him having saved children from a burning building. He had once helped a consumptive student and his impoverished father sustain themselves, testifies Razhumikhin. Raskolnikov stands up for Sonya when Luzhin accuses her of stealing a hundred rouble note. He uncovers the rouse and saves Sonya and her stepmother from a bitter episode of humiliation. He is protective of his sister and chases down Svidrigailov to look out for her. Raskolnikov had been ready to safeguard her by hook or crook. He knows Razhumikhin is a person of honest values and makes a case for him to his sister (she'd be happier marrying him than compromising to stay with Luzhinto help her family). Through the entire narrative of the text, Raskolnikov defends his beliefs and fiercely stands by those he thinks need him (Sonya and Dunya, primarily). He comes across as a man of values and the murder becomes the one act that is to be condemned in his otherwise glowingly philanthropic trajectory of youth. The reader listens and thus emotes.

Conclusion

One might be compelled to claim that they feel no empathy for Raskolnikov, the epilogue seems forced (Curtler 2004); critics in the likes of Gary Saul Morson (1992), Rowan Williams (2009) and Victor Terras (1998) claim so. It is an amusing story and that is all; more spiritual than psychological like the paper makes it to be. Raskolnikov's very own case might be considered too sensational to be true, he remains irredeemable. Anna Akhmatova is known to have commented upon this idea. "But we know now that one can kill five ten, one hundred people - and go to the theatre in the evening", she says (Akhmatova n.d.). Is guilt sure to come? Is suffering an antidote to crime? It is important to note that in the context of Carl Roger's work empathy broadly means engagement and considering the empathetic approach. Therefore, a reader's close engagement and identification with the text is enough to hold on to the practice of empathising. Dostoevsky, at least, gently goads the reader to empathise. Raskolnikov's is not a particular, unique narrative, it is universal and has become an archetype. The paper argues that Dostoevsky employs a few writerly strategies in order to elicit readerly empathy for his murderer-protagonist Raskolnikov; Carl Roger's construct of empathy is at play in the novel. The reader empathises with Raskolnikov as Nabokov's readers did with poet, paedophile, and murderer Humbert Humbert (Nabokov 2011); his experience and subjectivity slyly drifts over and settles onto that of the unassuming reader's. This happens through establishing a defamiliarised account of:

- 1. Raskolnikov as a proletariat Russian youth who works hard to make ends meet but finds himself defeated by the hardships of circumstance and influence.
- 2. Disease (literal and metaphorical) and trauma in the lives of all the characters of the novel.
- 3. Raskolnikov as a practitioner of the Christian ideas of grace and charity. He is essentially a well-meaning citizen who seeks the cleansing state of suffering; murder is the only dark aspect of his life.

The reader (akin to a Rogerian therapist) tends to associate herself with Raskolnikov because at instances more often than not, she too has been a victim of circumstance and violent influence. Dostoevsky facilitates an entry into the complex psyche of his hero and one is invariably drawn in; numerous monologues and interiority in the text further present an opportunity to understand Raskolnikov's *indwelling* and character better. He becomes a prototype for all men; universal emotions please and enervate him. Thus, the reader, in empathising with Rodya, i.e., Raskolnikov, only empathises with herself. Dostoevsky, through his writing, teaches one to practice empathy for individuals different, 'odd', and perhaps morally ambivalent; he fashions the reader into a Rogerian therapist.

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Climbing the ladder of needs: Analysing Levi through Maslow's theory in Easterine Kire's Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered

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Abstract: Motivation is a psychological driving force that helps an individual achieve certain goals. It is a strong energy that shapes human behaviour, encouraging individuals to take the initiative and carry out specific duties. Every human being has a certain need that acts as a motivation to lead his/her daily life. Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, derived a theory that represents human needs in five levels in the form of a pyramid in his "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943), published in Psychological Review. The theory elucidates physiological needs, safety needs, the need for love and belonging, esteem needs and selfactualization in a hierarchical manner, denoting that only after satisfying the primary needs, one can progress towards the next. Easterine Kire is a renowned novelist and short story writer from Nagaland. Her novel Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered elucidates the lives of the Angami Naga people. Set in a culturally rich tapestry of 1800s Khonoma, Kire picturises Levi, the protagonist as a great warrior and a cultural ambassador. This paper aims to analyse Levi in the light of Maslow's theory of motivation, which is also known as the 'Hierarchy of Needs', exploring from his basic needs till his step of attaining self-actualization in the novel Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered.

Keywords: Abraham Maslow, Easterine Kire, Levi, motivation, needs, self-actualization

Introduction

As an acclaimed writer from Nagaland, Easterine Kire gained notoriety for documenting the Naga people's customs and narrating their lifestyle. She has authored many novels, poems and short stories, frequently addressing topics like history, cultural preservation, identity

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issues and folklore. "Khonoma is an incredible place with an incredible history. The terrain is rocky and the rock-like character of many of its heroes brings forth the things you mentioned - 'the need to protect our land, and our culture" (Maniar 2020). Easterine Kire is a post-colonial writer and a unique voice in modern Indian writing in English who skilfully portrays the struggles faced by the people of Nagaland during the period of British colonialism and Japanese invasion and intends to protect the culture in the form of literature. "Her writings represent a politically conscious positionality of the characters, context, and the plot to assert the culturally constituted identity through the revival of vibrant cultural practices and tribal epistemologies" (Kumar 2022, 1). Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered is a 2018 published novel considered as the first-ever Naga novel written in English. The novel is set in 1800s Khonoma, depicting the lives of the Angami Naga tribe. It surrounds Levi right from his childhood, exploring various stages of his life. Agriculture and war are the two to which major significance is provided by the characters in the novel.

Review of Literature

Many researchers have extensively investigated the novel Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered, and they mostly encase the zone of culture, in which a few are as follows: Mandal and Singh (2022) in their article "Asserting Naga cultural identity and challenging colonialism in Easterine Kire's Sky is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered" broadly deals with the Naga people's lives and colonialism. Kumar (2022) in "Imagined Ethnography and Cultural Strategies: A Study of Easterine Kire's Sky is My Father and Don't Run, My Love" draws an ethnographic framework and brings out the cultural identity in the novel. Mahato (2023) in the article "Vignettes of Naga Culture: A Reading of Easterine Kire's Sky is My Father" deeply delves into indigenous practices and the struggles they face. As the novel revolves around the ancient Naga village and the indigenous population there, the Angami Naga practices and traditions have significance in the past research. Levi's psychological shift has gained less attention. This paper intends at analysing Levi through the lens of Abraham Maslow's theory.

Motivation

Motivation is a psychological drive that helps people realize their desires and reach certain goals. It establishes a person's intensity of

willingness, the course of that endeavour and the perseverance of the goal. "The term motivation describes why a person does something. It is the driving force behind human actions. Motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviours" (Cherry 2023). Motivation is a multifaceted, complex and dynamic phenomenon that is essential to human existence in both personal and professional spheres. Abraham Maslow is a 20th century eminent American psychologist and he is among the pioneers of humanistic psychology. "Maslow felt that human motivation needed to be studied beyond the contemporary scope of behaviourism, as he believed that the study of motivation should be human-centred rather than animalcentred" (Selva 2017). As an answer to his quest about what motivates human behaviour, he resolves that one of the main sources of motivation is the idea of needs in human existence. Needs are characterised as requirements or aspirations that cause distress and a disturbed mindset in a person's life when unmet. As people take the initiative to meet these requirements, motivation plays a key role in easing discomfort and restoring equilibrium and contentment. Needs generate motivation and this motivational drive moulds behaviour. The novel Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered elucidates the life of Levi and the various stages of his life. This paper hypothesises the motivational drive that stimulates Levi in fulfilling his needs from the basic ones till he reaches the stage of self-actualization, through the prism of Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs.'

Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs'

Abraham Maslow in his paper "A Theory of Human Motivation," published in *Psychological Review* in 1943, developed the five-level pyramid model describing human conduct. He contends that human needs can be systematized into a hierarchy, as when one need is met, the next need in the hierarchy turns out to be the motivation. Constant motivation will fetch the fruits of success. Through different levels of needs, Maslow elucidates human motivation, behaviour and development in a single framework often known as 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.'

At once other (and 'higher') needs to emerge and these, rather than physiological hunger, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still 'higher') needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency. (Maslow 1943, 375)

When each level is achieved, man gets motivated to reach the next one. It is defined by the requirements that are arranged in a hierarchy of significance with a five-level pyramid, commencing from the physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness, esteem needs and progressing towards self-actualization, constructing the way he/she strives to achieve one's goal. Only when one meets the need on one level and gets satisfied, he/she can march to a higher level.

These basic goals are related to each other, being arranged in a hierarchy of prepotency. This means that the most prepotent goal will monopolize consciousness and will tend to organize the recruitment of the various capacities of the organism. The less prepotent needs are minimized, even forgotten or denied. But when a need is fairly well satisfied, the next prepotent ('higher') need emerges, in turn, to dominate the conscious life and to serve as the centre of organization of behaviour, since gratified needs are not active motivators. (Maslow 1943, 394-95)

Application of Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' on the character Levi

"The 'physiological' needs - the needs that are usually taken as the starting point for the motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives" (Maslow 1943, 372). Physiological needs are the biological prerequisites needed for bodily functions. The primary concern for human survival is the physical well-being and the necessity of some basic, fundamental amenities like food, air and shelter. Abraham Maslow places physiological needs at the bottom, symbolizing it as the basic necessity of life, failing to address which may lead to malnutrition, sickness or possibly death.

Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs. What this means specifically is, that in the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be the physiological needs rather than any others. (Ibid, 373)

According to Maslow, a person's instinct for survival takes dominance over all other considerations in life until these basic physiological needs are satisfied. In *Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered* agriculture is given utmost importance and is considered superior to warship too. Levi's mother Vipiano says, "...a household is not worthy of its name if its granaries are empty. ... War is part of a village's life but if we have grain, we can withstand war. If we do not have grain, a

few days of war will overcome us" (Kire 2018, 13). Agriculture and the fieldwork only fetch the grains, which pacifies Levi's family.

Animism is a belief that certain things have spiritual possessions, and the characters in the novel carry Animistic beliefs. The people tend to protect their fields and the products they get from them to run a family smoothly by paying heed to the animistic beliefs. "They had successfully held the genna to prevent the paddy dying, and another genna to prevent sterility of the soil as well as the genna to ensure the fertility of the soil. It should go well for this year's harvest, they said to one another" (Ibid, 57). To satisfy their physiological need, they speed up their fieldwork and complete it on time to avoid the lack of food. "In another week, the genna days when no work was permitted would be declared, one each to prevent the field's failure to bear grain and failure to ripen" (Ibid, 14). Levi too obliges with the same thought when he insists his brother to complete the fieldwork before everything else as his very first duty, as this food is the primary need that majorly aids in the family's living. "Lato, get up, we have to finish the baskets this morning. Mine is almost done. You should try to finish yours' ... 'You're a big boy now, stop sniffling and do a man's job'" (Ibid, 10).

Following the satisfaction of physiological needs, safety and security are prioritized. A person's requirement for safety relates to their wish to be shielded from harm, both physically and mentally. "Practically everything looks less important than safety, (even sometimes the physiological needs which being satisfied, are now underestimated). A man, in this state, if it is extreme enough and chronic enough, may be characterized as living almost for safety alone" (Maslow 1943, 376). Humans are naturally inclined to defend themselves against threats. It meant protecting against attackers, natural catastrophes, predators or assaults by rival groups. These requirements entail establishing a secure, predictable atmosphere that lessens fear and anxiety, as well as economic and health stability.

The belief in spirits as a result of Animism is a great concern in the novel. "If you honour the spirits, they will bless you, if you defy them, you will learn how mortal man is" (Kire 2018, 50). People fear doing anything wrong, voluntarily or by mistake, as it greatly impacts the safety concerns of the village. "If you break the taboos, you break yourself. ... If you did not heed the taboos, you could live on unharmed for some years..." (Ibid, 14-15). Spirits and the danger they bring have become a major security threat to the village. They not only spoil the harvest but also try to take away the lives of people who cross

the places haunted by them. Levi's uncle once gets prone to it and suffers a lot. He warns Levi of such unclean places, building his knowledge of safety concerns.

'The water spot at Dzünha,' he said with difficulty, 'that place is unclean. I came by it three days ago and when I reached home, I felt the fury of the spirit that I had encountered there. Keep away from Dzünha, son, keep away, the spirits are too strong there' ... 'No, my son, listen. They are not content with causing sickness. They'll not rest till they've taken a life. I saw that in them. That spirits are great and fearless....' (Kire 2018, 59-60)

Levi and his family pay great attention to not forfeit any prohibited act that can lead to their downfall. "...on the decline of the full moon, Terhase would be held, the ritual of making peace with the spirits" (Kire 2018, 14). They properly pay heed to Genna days, chicken sacrificing, and taboo things and intend to maintain a peaceful relationship with the spirits. "... the need for safety is seen as an active and dominant mobilizer of the organism's resources only in emergencies, e.g., war, disease, natural catastrophes, crime waves, societal disorganization, neurosis, brain injury, chronically bad situation" (Maslow 1943, 379). Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered is set amidst certain battles and wars. In Merhü clan - the clan to which Levi belongs, the characters get happy involving themselves in the protection of it and being praised as warriors. "... A man is not a man if you let another man kill your kin and torch your houses and you do nothing about it....' 'That is what drives a man to battle, the need to prove himself worthy of defending his village and his womenfolk, and to earn ornaments..." (Kire 2018, 8). Levi gets highly motivated by the acts of his ancestors and the words of the clan's elders. He joins hands with his clan members as a budding warrior to protect his mother, his home and his motherland from the rival neighbour clans and the attack of the white men's crew, ensuring his security needs are being fulfilled.

Once people are emotionally and physically secure, they concentrate on forming relationships with their peers. "The love needs -- If both physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, then there will emerge the love and affection and belonging needs..." (Maslow 1943, 380-81) A person's need for connection, consent and interpersonal interactions is referred to as their 'Love and Belonging needs.' These requirements, which include establishing social and

familial ties, are motivated by the psychological aspects of human existence.

Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people... He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world and may even forget that once when he was hungry, he sneered at love. (Maslow 1943, 381)

"Kire is conspicuous because her stories advocate core optimism of community values. She promotes communal attachments through the quoted teaching of elders who have moral voices at hand" (Patton 2018, 36). Paying regular visits to 'Thehou' - the community house of the clan and spending nights in kichüki - the dormitory make Levi build strong social ties with his fellow age-group members and other senior warriors. "Evenings at the dormitory were exciting times when they exchanged stories and listened to the teachings of the man they called their parent, the elder chosen to be a mentor for their age group. Each age group had a parent and the dormitory was a long bed hewn out of a single log on which ten to fourteen boys could sleep" (Kire 2018, 31). Apart from the parent, everyone else shares their knowledge on some things and lets others observe it. "The boys have so many stories to swap that they never slept early on dormitory nights. Only when it was past midnight did they fall asleep to dream of all the wondrous stories they had been told" (Ibid, 32-33). Learning about the bravery of the ancestors through the oral narratives from the parent and socializing with the clan members by contributing to the concerns and safety of the clan creates a sense of belongingness in Levi.

People who experience love and acceptance are more resilient and self-assured. "Examples of belongingness needs include friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection, and love" (McLeod 2024). Levi gets Penyü, a great friend for life, from his visits to the dormitory. "...love is not synonymous with sex. Ordinarily, sexual behaviour is multi-determined, ..., determined not only by sexual but also by other needs, chief among which are the love and affection needs" (Maslow 1943, 381). This friendship bond makes both Levi and Penyü stronger together to get moulded as great warriors, fighting for their motherland.

Isolation, sadness and a lack of purpose can be caused by a shortage of connectedness. Levi experiences the phase of isolation during his

prison days of about six years after being captured by the British soldiers for participating in a battle.

The most painful part of the prison was never knowing when they would be freed or if they would ever be freed. Back then, whenever he dreamed of his mother and brother, Levi would be very quiet in the morning. He longed for them so much he feared he would cry in front of the harsh-faced older men. It was almost enough to make him regret that he had chosen to be a warrior. (Kire 2018, 49-50)

Offering and giving love is necessary to reach this level, which promotes emotional stability and happiness. "...love needs involve both giving and receiving love" (Maslow 1943, 381). This advancement of the mind and emotion depends on this stage. After returning from the prison, the warm receiving from his family acts as a medicine for him. "After six years of imprisonment Levi returns home. Vipiano shouts with joy and rushes to him to caress his head" (Deepa and Neeraja 2023, 214). He then focuses only on showcasing his love towards them rather than the thoughts of warriorship. "He felt it was that which made him more of a man than his friends: that dark hardness had grown like a tumour, calloused by years of prison. It had killed something in him" (Kire 2018, 56). The entry of Pelhuvino into Levi's life as his wife revives Levi's spirit and brings him back to normalcy, embracing satisfaction in his need for love and belonging. "The idea of becoming a householder suddenly seemed attractive to him. To be a title-taker like his father and have many sons to carry his name..." (Ibid, 59).

A person's attention turns towards earning respect and self-esteem from others after they feel included and connected, fulfilling the need for love and belongingness. Esteem needs emphasize how important it is to feel appreciated. The need for respect, acknowledgement and self-worth is referred to as 'esteem need'. This stage is fragmented into two parts by Abraham Maslow, such as self-esteem and esteem from others.

These are, first, the desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Secondly, we have what we may call the desire for reputation or prestige (defining it as respect or esteem from other people), recognition, attention, importance or appreciation. (Maslow 1943, 381-82)

Levi's esteem starts growing right from his people speaking of his good conduct, capabilities, repute and his contributions to the welfare

of the village. Vipiano often praises him for his dutifulness, conduct, and well-mannered behaviour, and blindly trusts his decision, which in turn increases his self-esteem.

She never decided on the household without consulting him. This field, that plot of land, that boundary dispute with their neighbours: these were the things of which she would say with a note of pride in her voice, 'You had better consult Levi. He's the man of the house now.' And Levi did not fail her. (Kire 2018, 111)

Levi's uncle Kovi implants his desire towards achievement and esteem with a few words of motivation and guidance. "... yours is a name that is growing. You are a warrior of Khonoma. People will think twice when they hear your name. So step into your life carefully. Arrogance and pride kill. Be humble, heed the taboos and there is no reason why you should not have a full and long life" (Kire 2018, 53). Levi seeks reverence and validation within the tribal community that values wisdom, potency and adherence to traditions. Even after experiencing six years of prison life and the mental depression he has gone through, Levi readily stands for his clan when his hand is necessary for its well-being.

The preparation for a battle gripped the village. And it ran its course like a fever around the village, this urge to go to war. More and more men spent nights at the hour and the dormitories, mapping out strategies and telling and retelling tales of former victories in battle. Levi was part of it all, soaking it in like a pleasure long abstained from, and all the more delightful therefore. He returned to it as to a former mistress, all thoughts of family flown from him. (Kire 2018, 86)

Being a warrior is a matter of pride among the clansmen. By reviving his warriorship, Levi yearns for his need for esteem from others. "Levi had earned ornaments of war at the battle of Khonoma. He was one of the bravest warriors of Merhü clan" (Kire 2018, 108). His esteem needs bring him to lead the youngsters despite his physical distress due to ageing. Levi's esteem needs manifest in satisfying his obligations as a Naga man in a society where individual accomplishments are intertwined with community recognition. The next level 'self-actualization' is made possible by fostering a sense of competence and purpose through the satisfaction of esteem needs. "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world" (Maslow 1943, 382). Levi feels himself as an eminent warrior

possessing great strength and potency to lead and rebuild a clan magnificently despite the hardships and also as a good family man running a smooth and successful life, satisfying his esteem needs.

Self-actualization, or reaching one's greatest potential, is at the top of Maslow's hierarchy. The act of attaining personal development, innovation and the realization of one's distinct life mission is known as self-actualization. In contrast to the earlier phases, self-actualization is an internal voyage rather than a quest for survival or approval from others. It is about achieving one's goals, ideals and talents to become the finest version of oneself.

The need for self-actualization -- Even if all needs are satisfied, we may still often (if not always) expect that a new discontent and restlessness will soon develop unless the individual is doing what he is fitted for. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization. (Maslow 1943, 382)

In addition to warriorship, Levi builds himself up as a great leader, taking up the role and managing all the crises of the clan with wisdom, bravery and a dedication to protect his community and its cultural identity, showcasing his attainment of self-actualization. "He felt the burden of shouldering clan responsibilities but welcomed it too. He thought to himself, that all his life had been a preparation for shouldering greater and heavier responsibilities" (Kire 2018, 108). Levi admits his younger son Sato to Mission School to take revenge on the white man. But Sato turns out to be his follower and starts believing in Christianity over animistic beliefs. Though this disheartens Levi so much, he never leaves out his spirit and love towards his belief and motherland and strives hard to protect the cultural identity and warriorship. Even on the last day of his life, he goes for hunting with his dearest friend that depicts his bravest self and the heart of a warrior. "He had gotten out of his spear and was beginning to clean the steel. He put it on a sharpening stone and sharpened the head of the spear. 'I'll take my gun too'... He picked up a rag and tied it to a long bamboo, and then he poured oil on the rag and proceeded to shove it down the barrel of the gun" (Ibid, 153).

Self-actualization is a continuous and dynamic process in which people work towards development rather than a particular goal. "It refers to the desire or self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow 1943, 382). After attaining all the previous four levels, Levi fulfils all his needs to become self-actualized. Levi's journey as a warrior makes him transform into a role model for many future generations and brings out interest in warriorhood in them. He ensures his community's legacy and identity by readily taking part in all the rituals, portraying his deep understanding and commitment to Naga culture, and finding that his self-actualization lies more in the collective well-being of the clan than in satisfying all his personal needs.

Conclusion

The protagonist Levi is a representation of one who looks for a greater good, to serve a larger purpose beyond personal goals. Abraham Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' aligns with the life of Levi. "... a healthy man is primarily motivated by his needs to develop and actualize his fullest potentialities and capacities" (Maslow 1943, 394). Levi commences his journey as a healthy man with a focus on meeting all the needs and to achieve self-actualization. "... Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist. He described self-actualization as the process of becoming 'everything you are capable of becoming'" (Raypole 2020). Levi achieves self-actualization through mentoring others by sharing knowledge and wisdom, and imparting dignity in their identity, remaining as a good son, a lovable husband, a caring father and a dutiful warrior, creating a lasting impact on the community. At the pinnacle of his journey, Levi stands as a figure who rises beyond personal desires to serve for a greater cause with fortitude and resilience. His love for his clan and clansmen ultimately acts as a motivational drive to achieve satisfaction. His climb through Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' emphasizes the concept that genuine fulfilment comes from lending a hand in the legacy and empowerment of an entire clan, in addition to individual accomplishments. Easterine Kire picturises readers with a strong story of leadership, endurance and cultural pride, depicting Levi as a lasting representation of having a self-actualized life by his milieu in the novel Sky Is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered.

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Death-equivalents and low-level trauma: Literary representations of dread

Daniela Cârstea*

Abstract: The discernible sources of dreaded states of the self are experiences which can be deemed *traumatic*. Corresponding occurrences comprise early object loss or other loss events, like those brought about by death or the proximity thereof, but also those occasioned by death equivalents. Such daunting affect states are plentifully indicated in Edgar Allan Poe's work. The article puts forth, therefore, an analysis that could be legitimately interpreted as a staunch commitment to record the powerful ways of allowing reference to emerge and to represent unassimilable catastrophes. Thus, the first contention of this project has been the recognising of the trauma problematic in the analysed texts. The failure of the (literary) subject to gain immediate understanding of his/ her environment came forth as the focal point of the argument. The analysis thus served as a launching pad for a large theoretical quest, aimed at exploring the ways in which literary texts speak both about and through the profound story of traumatic experience. Viewed in this way, Poe's aesthetics are no less an extension of his fiction than a commentary on it.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe, states of dread, low-level trauma, death-equivalents

Theoretical introduction

The experience of dread, an excessive manifestation of anxiety brought about by extreme fear, is understood as gaining substance under the guise of a "dreaded (state of the) self," in keeping with recent theoretical advancements by Ehud Koch in *Representations of Dread* (2017, 289). Such delineations indicate psychic hazards "ranging from a common, feared identification to states of disconnection, desolation, ego dissolution, and nonexistence." (Ibidem) An alternative notion of "fright" might prove inadequate to encompass the province of events

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symbolized by dread. This quandary is resolved by retaining as a specific characteristic an attendant concept of "awe," also defined as "terror" and "horror," notions which indicate considerably more intensity, as well as a more dominant unconscious substructure than fear. This supercharge of strong affective significance ultimately steered towards the present use of dread in the description of experiences suggested by such constructs as dreaded self and dreaded states of the self. Sometimes, "dread" is employed interchangeably with "fear," for instance, when the affective experience does not echo an awe-inspiring inner reality. Other times, dread is employed to symbolize horrendous, crushing experiences that have no verbal or visual representation and appear to lack an anticipatory function. Yet, Ehud Koch (2017, 286) reserves "dread" for those affective experiences which "serve a signal function, alerting one to the danger of recurrence of a most fearsome reality", which comes to further individualise the specific brand of trauma in Poe's writings, namely a recurrence of a most fearsome reality or state that elicits horror and

We could browse through some of the countless writers (William James is one of them) who have illuminated, before or in Poe's time, such terrifying experiences of dread, proving that the discourse of low-level trauma, of terror and horror is a common occurrence in literature and art. Novelists, poets and playwrights have put forward substantial delineations of these customarily hard-to-articulate states of being. Within psychology, a lot of attention was given over the years to the nature and articulation of emotions, and William James was perhaps the most prominent contributor to the issue. He represented dread, very poignantly as "melancholia", a constituent of depression. After describing the horror experienced by a correspondent after having met, in an asylum, a young epileptic he added "That shape am I ... potentially." He made use of this account to render a very evocative representation of dread:

... desperation absolute and complete, the whole universe coagulating about the sufferer into a material of overwhelming horror, surrounding him without opening or end. Not the conception or intellectual perception of evil, but the grisly blood-freezing heart falsifying sensation of it close upon one, and no other conception or sensation able to live for a moment in its presence. (James 1950, 261)

Feeling states such as mistrust, shame, guilt, and despair – many of which will be represented in the subsequent analyses of a few of Poe's pieces, can also be seen as instantiations of low-level trauma, "dreaded states of being at times of crisis and regression" (Cârstea 2022; 2023).

In many psychoanalytically-informed writings, in particular, frequent references are encounter to 'bad' and 'hated' introjects where dreaded states of the self are understood. This is also quite eloquently discerned from the works of Ronald Fairbairn (1982), a representative of object-relations psychoanalysis. In Fairbairn's perspective, the ultimate terror was the unfettered discharge of 'bad,' 'intolerable,' 'internalized objects.' Although this discharge is depicted in quasisimilarity to Sigmund Freud's 'return of the repressed,' the view of the repressed is that of a bad, internalized object, and not so much that of an unsuitable wish or its root instinctual drive. The surfacing to consciousness of the representation of this bad object is perceived as menacing to such a degree because it propels the subject into the underlying danger: that of losing and being forfeited the object, which leaves the ego helpless, alone, and weakened by the very defensive measures meant to safeguard it. (Freud 1994) The danger of a possible discharge of the internalized bad object came to be recognized, very distinctly, in paranoid thought processes: "When such an escape of bad objects occurs, the patient finds himself confronted with terrifying situations which have been unconscious" (Fairbairn 1982, 76). In the case of paranoid formations, the bad object appears in its exteriorized manifestation as a "persecutor."

Another manifestation of the dreaded self finds intimation in Harry Stack Sullivan's (1958) notion of 'not me.' Wordless, formless, it seems, to all intents and purposes, to be a construct for the disowned, repressed experiences which, if conscious, might pose a threat to the very centre of one's being. It is only grasped by inference, generally as a result of disconcerting affect states, labelled by Sullivan "the uncanny emotions," specifically, loathing, awe, horror, dread. Such daunting affect states are plentifully indicated in Edgar Allan Poe's work. In one of his studies, Donald Winnicott (1984) interprets elemental dread as connected to "primitive agonies." Similar to Sullivan, Winnicott argues that such affect states can ostensibly be deduced from specific defensive measures typically witnessed in states of ego dissolution. What distinguishes him from Sullivan's view, who thought these states to be nameless horrors, only "known" by means of the "uncanny emotions," is his proposition of substantive, verbal,

affective forms in the place of such "primitive agonies," observing that "... anxiety is not [a] strong enough word here" (Winnicott 1984, 105). Winnicott's index of agonies included crushing threats like forfeiture of one's being, wholeness, and basic necessities and he drew a connection between said primitive agonies and proportionately severe measures like 'disintegration,' 'depersonalisation,' the latter of which easily assimilable with the doubling involved in traumatic experiences, with the appearance of the traumatised self glossed over earlier. Winnicott puts forward the paradox intrinsic to the notion that the primal agony shielded against in the "fear of breakdown" represents an event which has already occurred. That it remains unknown to consciousness can be pinned down to the "fact" that it happened in early infancy, namely at a time when the yet unfledged self could not register or manage such an overwhelming experience, which was, additionally, perceived as heightened by a critical dereliction of care by the 'facilitating environment'. Donald Winnicott observed that persons who suffer in the aftermath of low-level traumas 'compulsively' seek overcome unfamiliar. uncontrollable to experiences, while concomitantly being controlled by defensive measures designed to not know, which is in concurrence with the propositions of trauma theorists. And this paradox foregrounds the similarities with disavowal and the splitting of the ego, both seemingly characteristic of states of dread.

Wilfred Bion's (1984)¹ 'nameless dread,' which bears fair similarities to Sullivan's 'not me,' Winnicott's 'primitive agony,' and some representations of Fairbairn's 'bad internal object,' thus comes across as an inner remainder of projections which have not been 'contained.' Paradigmatic here is, according to Koch, the "fear of dying", customarily split off and projected onto an other. Containing it renders the fear less dangerous and more controllable, because it is reintrojected, whereas failing to contain it makes the fear doubly horrifying. A primal defense occurs, by means of which this fear is relieved of any form or substance, existing solely as a concealed and indecipherable inner hazard. It resembles to a certain extent the intimidating quality of the Kleinian 'persecutory object' in the

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¹ Deemed the most original and the most intriguing psychoanalyst after Sigmund Freud and Melanie Klein (1986), Wilfred Bion (1984) charted the geographies of psychotic unconscious processes mostly in relation to groups.

'paranoid schizoid position' (Klein 1986), which, I argue, Edgar Allan Poe is the poet of.

What convincingly emerges from all the previous accounts is that the discernible sources of dreaded states of the self are experiences which can be deemed *traumatic*. These occurrences comprise early object loss or other loss events, like those brought about by death or the proximity thereof, but also those occasioned by the death equivalents listed above. Though diverse, all these experiences are connected through their suddenness and abruptness, through the likely eliciting of profound and devastating emotion, such as the forfeiture of agency, felt as severe vulnerability, coupled with the threat to the perception of everything 'real,' both in oneself and the outer world, generally labelled "ego dissolution." To glimpse such situations and perceptions in attempts at recollecting them carries the threat of replicating and reliving them. This hazard becomes apprehensively anticipated, dreaded, for fear of finding oneself, repeatedly, crushed by the uncontrollable.

As touched upon earlier on, the experience of horror and terror lies at the centre of dread. This term itself encapsulates with a sense of urgency the hazard of reliving the terrific awfulness occurring when one feels overpowered by forces beyond one's control, such as in diverse frightening or traumatic events. Dissimilar to defencelessness, helplessness and dejectedness – affect states indicative of associated depressive responses to pain – the state of dread bears the overtones of a cautious apprehension of replicating and reliving the awful. (Bibring 1953, 26-8)

According to Koch (2017, 310-314), the sense of dread appears to be mainly and closely connected to aggression, whether outer or inner. Indeed, the violence of the devastating situation is generally intrinsic of the trauma itself. The fear of reexperiencing and being taken by storm by hostile forces thus appears to be a major feature of the state of dread. Koch contends that certain equally hostile sides of oneself that are disavowed can be less recognized and more easily externalized in such states because they are intolerable, and when acknowledged, could be deemed similar to "feeling possessed by the devil." Regardless of whether said dreaded sense of corruption is elicited as a reaction to "felt transgressions of superego injunctions or ego-ideal values, or whether it obtains from an omnipotent assumption of having brought the awfulness onto oneself, a kind of turning aggression against the self, this internal reality stands with trauma as a primary

cause for the development of dreaded self-representations and states of the self."

Literary representations of low-level trauma

Poe's world, it is said, is a world of irrational horror and mystery resistant to analysis and understanding. Poe's speakers are often rendered speechless by horror. Reaching the end of his tale, the old man of the "Maelstrom" who called it "folly" to describe the hurricane that destroyed their ship, responds that at his rescue he was exhausted from fatigue and "speechless from the memory of its horror" (Poe 1965, 247). And the criminal narrator of "William Wilson" denies that "human Language can adequately portray *that* astonishment, *that* horror" which took hold of him at the sight of his own bloodied reflection in the mirror. (Ibid, 324)

Traumatized speechlessness, the claimed inadequacy of language alternates within the separate tales. To single out the last, as though "linguistic impotence" is best accounted for as a failure of language rather than of will, strength, or courage seems arbitrary. If theoretical priority belongs anywhere, I would place it on the frequent overt failures to describe or speak, the failure to inscribe, to register the overwhelming event as it occurs: "Why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night?" inquires the narrator of "Ligeia," rhetorically. "Why shall I pause to relate how this hideous drama of revivification was repeated?" (Ibid, 268). "Unspeakable" here clearly means too horrible to speak of, ineffable or beyond the expressive powers of language. And that fear or horror, I would argue, is what lies behind the professed incapacities of speech.

The unspoken and unexecuted curse in "Eleonora" is presented as a retribution, the "exceeding great horror of which will not permit them to make retord (sic!) of it here" (Ibid, 241). Linguistic incapacity accounts for silence here. As the painter of the oval portrait "would not see" that the paints of his canvas are the lifeblood of his wife and model, as the victims of horror throughout the tales avert their eyes when the terror overwhelms, so the speakers, shaken to the point of breakdown by forbidden experience or knowledge, refuse to speak. "I would not, if I could," says William Wilson's double, "embody a retord of my later years of unspeakable misery, and unpardonable crime" (Ibid, 300). Why indeed should he detail the horrors, why relate the physically hideous or the morally unendurable? The protections of a decidedly 'rationalizing' narrator of "The Fall of the House of

Usher" are symptomatic. "There were times, indeed," he confesses, "when I thought [Usher's] unceasingly agitated mind was labouring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness" (Ibid, 289).

The habits of the narrator are reflections of the workings of the text. The intellectualizing narrator of "Usher," "has not learned to accept the awful truth - Usher's truth - that the world's worst horrors are unendurable because they are unaccountable" (Porte 2012, 241). William Freedman's assessment of Poe's creations tells otherwise. For him, the worst horrors in Poe's tales are not those vaguely hinted at, but those described: the fear of premature burial, for example, the eye of the elderly man and the pounding of the revealing heart beneath the floor, the eye of the black cat, Madeline's rise and Ligeia's return, the menacing swing of the pendulum as it nears it victim, even the teeth of Berenice (were they not so nearly comic). "These, not the vaguely suggested horrors, are the most powerful purveyors of the effect of terror," and Porte, in fact, against his own claim that the most frightening horrors are those that resist explanation, ultimately accounts for the ostensibly unnameable source of Roderick Usher's fear. (Freedman 2002, 59)

Joseph Riddell argued that, with Poe, "an abyss has opened up between word and world" and that this chasm ushers in "a new literature, a self-critical or self-annihilating textual performance – the poem/story and even the critical essay" (2009, 129). Gerald Kennedy (2005, 29) identifies Poe as "perhaps the first American writer to interiorize disintegration". Poe's tales, remarks Dennis Pahl (2002, xv; xviii), "characterize truth-seeking in a decidedly violent manner," but its exploration is necessarily hindered, cancelled by the "uncanny structural relation between subject and object, inside and outside, spectator and spectacle" which always keeps out of reach both meaning and knowledge. Similarly, Joan Dayan interprets Poe as a writer who provides a "rigorously indeterminate philosophy," alongside narratives meant to prove the limitations of a bounded mind, which "cannot know the essence of anything" (2008, 138).

Viewed in this way, Poe's aesthetics are no less an extension of his fiction than a commentary on it. As Freedman posits in *The Porous Sanctuary*, "[a]s a body of writing, Poe's aesthetic systematically deflects the reader from the biographical to the textual, from content and meaning to form and craft, from profundity and subtlety to the

visible and simple," (2002, 10) and, I would add, from a traumaengendered discourse to a discourse of/ on trauma, only seemingly paradoxically from clarity to a hazy indefiniteness and uncertainty, and of course from Truth to Beauty.

Poe is deemed to "heighten the readers' emotional involvement in the tales by duplicating, in actions he describes that have nothing to do with composition, the actual experience of reading. Rarely does Poe allow his readers to forget that as they read, they are in the middle of a tale" (Renza 2002, 50). The readership becomes inadvertently involved in everything that takes place in the narrative, they experience the terror of existence without being and without end, because the locus of registration/ inscription of the fictional trauma is none other than the readership itself.

In "Ligeia," "Berenice", "The Black Cat," "Eleonora," "The Fall of the House of Usher," the deceased either actually return among the living or "undying death" – with a term proposed by Arthur Brown – takes form in the case of a premature burial. This undying death also becomes real in its manifestation as writing, since Poe's tales confront the readership with the experience of the terror of undying death through the imagination of the run-ins with it enacted both in the narratives and in our awareness of the acts of writing and reading. As Arthur Brown remarks in his *Literature and the Impossibility of Death*: "[f]ar from disrupting the spell cast by the fiction, this self-awareness – of author, of story, of reader – makes the literary performance inseparable from lived experience and the story itself uncomfortably real" (2006, 449). Spurred into descriptions of traumatic experiences by a declared "imp of the perverse", as described by the storytellers of "The Imp of the Perverse" and "The Black Cat," Poe employs an apparently malevolent and damaging perverseness, although the stories' action will demonstrate it to be, in the final analysis, benevolent and regenerative. Posited as "prima mobilia" of the human soul – an essential trait of existence – malice seemingly reflects Poe's portentous vision in "Eureka", where the somethingness of existence is premised on a preceding nothingness, differentiation is premised on a preceding unity, so that "all phenomena [of existence] are ascribable to" the concatenated concepts of 'attraction' and 'repulsion'. "This indeed seems the case with perverseness, a principle of balancing negation inherent in the nature of existence, overriding will and antithetical to reason, a primary, indivisible determinant of human behaviour whose effect is to address without motive or exterior

purpose the horror of the trivialised murder, to secure, in other words, a form of justice through retribution" (Cleman 2001, 640).

Brown (2006, 451) offers the example of the narrator in "Berenice", who "distinguishes between a 'general reader' and the kind of reader he was – a reader for whom the imaginary was the real. For him reading is linguistically linked with death in a 'morbid irritability' of the 'attentive' properties and in the 'intensity of interest' with which his meditative powers 'busied and buried' themselves." The words employed by the narrator to designate his affliction echo those used by Poe to delineate his theory on literary creation. The "intensity of interest" experienced by the reading Egaeus calls to mind similarly "intense excitements" that writers of tales and poems stir in their readership when a unity of effect and impression are preserved.

"The Philosophy of Composition" examines Poe's options for background in "The Raven" and the author states: "it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident: it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention" (Poe 1965, 22). Edgar Allan Poe equates, here, the "Raven" speaker with whoever reads the poem: placing the speaker in a determined place means, in actuality, placing the reader there, too. "If death walks before him," Brown argues, "if death is present in the 'physical frame' of Berenice, then it cannot be death" (Brown 2006, 57). Of all the particulars of Berenice's face, Egaeus is most impressed by "the teeth of the changed Berenice". They elicit in him the dread of existing after dying. "Would to God," Egaeus bursts out, "that I had never be held them, or that, having done so, I had died!" (Poe 1965, 231) Egaeus's fascination with the teeth characterises a similarly mesmerizing preoccupation with language. "Where is the end?" Rheta Keylor inquires, "Where is that death which is the hope of language? But language is the life that endures death and maintains itself in it" (2003, 229). This character's dread is "to face the undying not as literature but as reality, and thus to transport his own being into that space where death is an impossibility" (Brown 2006, 57). Poe is thus "duplicating the acts of writing and reading in his plot, forcing us into the present tense of composition so that we enter the tale itself," the critic concludes.

A cognate theme of the traumatic undying death is catalepsy, reoccurring obsessively in many of Poe's stories under the guise of premature burials. Poe's fascination with premature burial has been

variously explained and attributed, its roots traced to psychological, philosophical, and historical sources. For Shoshana Felman, it symbolized the phantasy of the return to the womb, "a fear, in particular, which haunted Poe and inspired the terrible and epic vision" described in "The Premature Burial" (1993, 42). For James Werner, "all this underground vault business in Poe only symbolizes that which takes place beneath the consciousness," principally hate, which is "as slowly consuming, as secret, as underground, as subtle" as love. (2004, 42) "On top", observed Werner, "all is fair-spoken. Beneath, there is awful murderous extremity of burying alive." G.R. Thompson views premature burial as Poe's image of the wretched human condition itself. "Poe's image of man is that of a forlorn, perverse sentient being buried alive in the incomprehensible tomb of the universe" (2004, 218). For J. Gerald Kennedy (2005), the focus shifts from tale to tale, but the fascination is traced to Poe's mortified obsession with death and claustrophobia and, at once more broadly and narrowly, to the cultural obsession with living interment that stalked Europe and America during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Gothic conventions of the sort explored so far, which I construed to be as many representations of trauma-induced dread, within the logic of the chapter, especially of its second half, are also behind another of Poe's stories of horror, "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym", as Justin Edwards argues in his book *Gothic Passages* (2003). In concurrence with his insightful conclusions, my argument is that, at the back of the gothic veil in Poe's Pym, for instance, with its decomposing figures, drastic hostility and anthropophagy, "are negotiations of antebellum racial discourses, negotiations that attempt to chart a course between dichotomies in order to call attention to the anxieties of potential bloody conflicts between blacks and whites, slaves and masters" (Edwards 2003, 34).

A similar Gothic discourse can be uncovered in Poe's "William Wilson," for example. Here, the protagonist is pursued by a person with the same name, height, features, education, and date of birth. Wilson's double, who is said to be a "perfect imitation" of himself, discloses Wilson's transgressions until, in a moment of panic and anger, Wilson stabs his double only to find that he has killed himself. Like "Markheim," Poe's text uses identificatory ambiguity to explore moral transgression and redemption. But unlike "Markheim," Poe employs familial, racial, and genealogical degeneration to elucidate Wilson's doubled identity.

Wilson, for instance, imparts his circumstances to the "detestation of his race," a racial lineage that makes him a "slave of circumstances," and he goes on to say that his "unspeakable misery" is connected to the "descenden[cy] of a race" that has passed on "constitutional disease[s]" from generation to generation (Poe 1965, 57; 65). His split self, then, is an "inherited family character" that derives from the defective "hereditary temper" of his race (Ibid, 58; 79). The low-level trauma triggered by such a death-equivalent as a splintered self is, as a result, inextricably embroiled in the gothic discourses of race and familial ancestry.

The place where Pvm is kept prisoner during the text's opening pages is seen to shift from Freud's homelike space - a "little apartment" with comfortable blankets, abundant water, sea biscuit, Bologna sausages, and so on – to an unhome like "trap" that threatens to take Pym's life, Edwards maintains. (2003, 15) In Gothic Radicalism (2000, 197), Andrew Smith draws a connection between the notion of the uncanny and the requirements of Gothicism: "Like antebellum discourses of hybridity, the uncanny's multiple sides and ungoverned pattern are part of [its]Gothic import". Seen in this light, hybrid bodies are integral to Poe's Gothic narrative in that they reference an uncanny otherness that changes from the palpable to the concealed. "It is Peter's hybridity," Smith (2000, 198) argues, "which initially makes him an object of terror. Pym's description mentions that his ruling expression may be conceived when it is considered that the teeth were exceedingly long and protruding, and never even partially covered, in any instance, by the lips". "To pass this man with a casual glance, one might imagine him to be convulsed with laughter; but a second look would induce a shuddering acknowledgement, that if such an expression were indicative of merriment, the merriment must be that of a demon" (Poe 1965, 778). This account/chronicling evinces "a hybridity of its own, defining Peter as part animal, part demon, as warped by nature and as a supernatural subject" (Smith 2000, 198). There is also anecdotal information about him, and "[t]hese anecdotes went to prove his prodigious strength when under excitement, and some of them had given rise to a doubt of his sanity" (Ibid, 777). "Unnatural physicality and madness define him, the novel suggesting that the two terms are interchangeable," Smith concludes.

I would presume to assert, at this point, that, equally horrific as the abysmal space of the pit in the "Pit and the Pendulum", hybridity, a theme explored at leisure not only in "Pym", but also in "The Man that

was Used Up" or "The Psyche Zenobia" can convey the nothingness, that is the Nachträglichkeit of trauma, since "the all too graphic pictures of mutilated limbs or disfigured faces, like all atrocity stories, only induce a numbing of response" (Bainbridge and Radstone 2007, 137). Zenobia's outrageous butchery verges on downright unlikeliness. Her neck is detached from her body, but after her eyes had popped out of her head from the "pressure." Meanwhile, she strives to make a record of her perceptions, from the terror of first comprehension, to feelings that become "indistinct and confused," to outlandish delusions. She experiences an utter disconnection from her identity, witnessing firstly one eye, then the other leave her body. The first eye behaves affectedly and shows off: "Such a winking and blinking were never before seen" and, due to the "sympathy which always exists between two eyes of the same head," she is forced "to wink and to blink, whether I would or not, in exact concert with the scoundrelly thing that lay just under my nose" (Poe 1965, 295). Such a representation of divided self, which mirrors Jay Lifton's doubled, traumatised self, is amplified the moment her head is completely severed, and falls on the pavement: "My senses were here and there at one and the same moment with my head I imagined, at one time, that the head, was the real Signora Psyche Zenobia – at another I felt convinced that myself, the body, was the proper identity" (Ibidem).

The last analysis in this article will attempt to tackle a source of trauma which I announced to be the instantiation of speechless trauma fiction. namely the death equivalent of ultimate meaninglessness. "Silence" originally named "Siope," is primarily spoken/ narrated by a demon who describes a dreary desert region where there is a huge rock on the shore of a river. Engraved on the rock is the word DESOLATION. A man, whose face shows sorrow, weariness, and disgust with mankind, stands on the summit of the rock as a demon tries to move him. The demon first tries the curse of tumult and brings a tempest, but the man is unmoved; then he tries the curse of silence, and indeed the characters on the rock change to SILENCE. When the man listens but hears nothing, he is terrified and runs away. Like "Shadow," the story reflects the fear of nonbeing, the terror of the loss of individuality. Whereas the Shadow is a nonentity made up of entities. Silence is but a word that does not speak. And indeed, as Poe's more developed fictions show, it is nothingness that terrifies; it is that which cannot be spoken that constitutes the ultimate horror. If words have power, then that which cannot be spoken leaves man powerless. (Herzog 2024)

Charles May claims that Poe, as well as many of his storytellers are "practitioners of word-magic. They believe that there is a natural (or supernatural) connection between the word and what it names — not merely a conventional semantic relationship" (2011, 9). Given that such word magic only exists, for Poe, in the realm of art, where things exist only by virtue of words, silence becomes equated with superlative dread, inasmuch as it references ultimate nonbeing.

Coda

Dividedness, fragmentariness, hybridity, ultimate nonbeing, attended with a posse of anxieties, all come to represent, textually, representations of dread for Edgar Allan Poe, instantiations of low-level trauma, the trauma of meaninglessness, which is only partially cognised and whose inscription is delayed. I will conclude arguing, in all fairness, that the "terror of the soul" Poe underscored at the beginning of his collection of tales can now be traced to its origin: the dread of (undying) death and its equivalents, which abides in all words we read and "whereof one cannot speak."

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From victim to *victor*: A conceptual study on positive victimology in Vendela Vida's *And Now You Can Go*

Akila V. and Ramya Niranjani S.*

Abstract: Literature acts like a magical pill, providing solace to the readers to overcome their psychological trauma or emotional shock by witnessing the trauma of the fictional characters. Positive transformation from trauma is a rare act, as precious thoughts lurk in its rarity; this article is the first scholarly insight on Vendela Vida's novel And Now You Can Go (2003). This critical study aims to vindicate the importance of self-preservation during crises and shows how it enhances the chance of survival when one has to face the lifethreatening situation like the protagonist Ellis. This research would provide a new insight into the literary canon as it alludes to Natti Ronel's concept of 'positive victimology', which is a sub-branch of victimological studies in criminology and psychology. This paper elucidates how one can use the components of positive victimology like humour and forgiveness, as a coping mechanism to erase the impact of trauma in their memory in order to make the victim psychologically feel relieved from the tagline of the 'victim'. Despite connecting various fields, there is hardly any explicit literary research related to this topic. By connecting this notion with the optimistic strategies in the novel, this study aims at broadening the scope of literary studies. The study also provides a holistic approach regarding trauma as it puts light on how one has to confront trauma by not submitting oneself to the offender and how one has to move towards positive transformation by also commenting on the stress one undergoes in the intermediary process.

Keywords: psychological trauma, self-preservation, positive victimology, forgiveness, humour

Introduction

Literature offers a safe place for individuals to confront the daunting challenges of life by looking into the ways in which the characters subdue their trauma as an exemplar of the victims of a violent cause if

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they push into noxious, life-threatening situations vehemently. The victim can be categorised as an umbrella term as it encompasses a wide string of individuals who have been subjected to all kinds of harm. This literary approach deconstructs the fixed notion of victim, thereby claiming those people "who lose their lives to conflict of any kind or degree aren't only the victims, but those left behind to take stock of the situation suffer more and are often made to go through traumatic experiences" (Chishti and Rashid 2023, 59).

Literary insight changes the perspective of thinking, as it demands the need to shed significant light on the psychological trauma of those who narrowly ward off the path of violence as they too go through Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Moreover, it encourages them to feed off their lives in a purposeful way by urging them to shed off the stigmatising passivity tagline, 'victim'. Existing literary research on the victims gives due attention exclusively to probe on how they are negatively affected due to their traumatic event. Whereas this literary study intends to concentrate on the positive transformative power of victim by letting go of one's psychological trauma. Thereby, it instils the necessity to embrace the notions of positive victimology, like forgiveness and humour, which would ultimately result in mitigating or erasing the power of such traumatic memory. By wielding forgiveness as a resilience strategy to combat emotional suffering, the victims can take control over the uncontrollable hurdles of life, like the protagonist Ellis in And Now You Can Go.

And Now You Can Go

Vendela Vida, the charismatic contemporary American novelist, has a defined voice through her psychological fictions that depict female characters who skillfully manage the situation that goes awry with indomitable spirit. Such evocative narrative earns the Kate Chopin Award for making her female protagonists choose a path "less traveled by" (Frost, line 19). She has penned five novels with a touch of reality through her creative writing. Hence, the renowned author Jennifer Egan has praised her debut *And Now You Can Go* as "something much rarer in contemporary fiction: a joyful investigation of the pleasures of living" (Egan 2004).

Vida's *And Now You Can Go* revolves around the life of twenty-one-year-old grad student Ellis, whose life changes topsy-turvy after she meets the man with a gun in a New York City park who forces her to die with him for no reason. She leaves unharmed but "carries on as

if treading water in an emotional whirlpool, waiting to get sucked under" (Review of *And Now You Can Go* 2003) whenever she recalls the incident. Vida urges the significance of self-preservation and brings in forgiveness to rise above the odds of life through her fictional world created for Ellis that mirrors the actual society.

Problem-focused coping: Situation can be changed

There are certain elements in this novel that highlight the optimistic need for self-preservation by taking control over one's life even during a crisis. Believe it or not, the way the mind thinks by rushing the adrenaline that triggers the flight or fight responses has to be in check. as it may backfire by ruining the life of the victim. Like a typical human mentality, Ellis experiences a sense of disquietude when a stranger politely addresses her, "Ma'am . . . I have a gun. If you keep walking I'll shoot you. Just do as I say" (Vida 2004, 3). She feels electrocuted as her mind travels too hastily, igniting the hallucinatory thoughts related to such incidents when she learns money is not the source for this violent encounter. Hence, she maintains her stability of mind through controlling the adrenaline rush by chanting "No, no, no" (Ibid., 4), not to him but to the catastrophic plot she develops. This further leads her to behave as if she remains calm and composed while speaking, giving him no second thought about killing her immediately. She follows certain tactics, like "holding [her] breath", and tries "to exhale without him noticing" (Ibid.). Though fear lurks within, she does not reveal it outwardly, which creates the impression of having control over the situation by disrupting the overpowering attitude of the offender.

Based on the psychological aspects, people tend to show hyperalertness during life's existential peril, which helps in maximising the opportunity for survival. When he places the gun pointed towards her head by conveying his atrocious intention of dying with someone, Ellis experiences the manifestation of her intrinsic survival instincts because of hyper-vigilance that further serves as a platform to think of immediate escape through distorting negative thoughts. She expresses its swiftness as follows:

I can smell the leather of his jacket and I see he's wearing glasses that say 'Giorgio Armani' in tiny, precise letters on the side. I am going to be killed by a man wearing Giorgio Armani glasses. . . . The pressure against my skull, just above my ear, makes me think I've been shot and there is a bullet going through my thoughts. (Vida 2004, 5)

The survival instinct kindles her thought of escaping from the act of violence and prepares her mentally by putting an end to her cognitive distortion that surges when someone traps in a harmful milieu. Kalpana Nair (2022, par. 2), a life coach, finds a connection between "science and emotion". She adds, when one "get the connection" that everything is deeply rooted in biological processes especially "brain and its processing", ultimately one can realise "every emotion and every instinct in you – has been to survive" (Nair 2022, par. 2). Reasserting control in her mind, Ellis firmly takes a decision by saying, "I don't want him to think I'm trying to get out of this" (Vida 2004, 6), which shows her responsibility to preserve life from havoc. By scrutinising likely risks, she deliberately avoids ineffective means of escaping by evading shouting when nobody can actually hear. That is why she ponders getting help from the park service man nearby, as "he's making so much noise that even if [she] screamed he wouldn't hear [her]. And if [she] did scream, wouldn't the man with the gun shoot?" (Ibid.).

According to Nair (2022, par. 2), "Whatever the trauma felt . . . has been dealt with in the most instinctive way possible that helped you at that time. It might not have been a beneficial way in the long run, but it made you survive the trauma and come out of it at the time". Similar to that, Ellis comes up with an ingenious plan to divert the ill intent of the potential murderer and suicide victim by throwing himself into the activities that arouse his curiosity, which is a strategy of de-escalating the satanic intention. Thus, she intends to take "the man with the gun to a populated place, where there are people and phones and police" (Vida 2004, 6), thereby enhancing the chance for survival. Psychologically speaking, the underlying motive behind this plan is indeed the outcome of the tendency toward self-sustenance because the crowded area eludes the coercive attitude of the attacker. By pretending to have a rapport with him, she influences his mind by knowing his confused interest in poetry. She expresses, "There's so much good stuff out there. There's painting! . . . There's poetry!" (Ibid., 7). Before she chooses another enticing art form that fosters a shared experience of humanity, he responds to her stimulus like a fish clenches the bait by asking, "Poetry?" (Ibid.).

Through her subconscious instinct, Ellis uses poetry as a weapon not only to shield her but also to lunge at him by carefully choosing certain poems that spark a humanising effect. In this way, she adopts poetry as a kind of defence mechanism by analysing the mindset of the attacker. This prompts her to recite Ezra Pound's poem, "The apparition of these faces in the crowd" (Vida 2004, 7), renowned for its ability in combining contrasting ideas and arising a sense of wonder by teaching the transient nature of life, including one's sorrows. Then she rambles on about Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" and ends it abruptly as it deals with seduction. Therefore, she feels, "this is wrong" and does not want "to give him any ideas" (Ibid.).

In order to make him familiar with those enchanting poetry, Ellis strictly arouses curiosity about the popularity of Frost's poem, thereby urging him on the significance of knowing it. However, she withholds from revealing more of it by saying, "it doesn't matter what road you . ." (Vida 2004, 7), as it might redirect the attention of the offender from her chosen plan. Such a response results from her urging desire for self-preservation, which warns her to cease at once that is clearly comprehensible. Then she meticulously chooses the poem of William Carlos Williams that is "more positive" and starts singing in a tune, which makes the man with the gun look at her like "a heroine, a scholar, a prophet", and as if she is "worse off than he is" (Ibid., 8). This marks the shift in power dynamics, as she is no longer a weaker one to be controlled by others.

To make him completely fall into her strategy, Ellis dejectedly claims that she forgot the remaining stanzas of Philip Larkin's poem that grapple with the ironical situation one faces in love, thereby urging him that one can live for Larkin. When he asks, "What's a Philips Larkins?" with "some confused interest", she is quick to seize the opportunity for escape by saying, "Let's go up to the bookstore" and "find . . . the part I forgot" (Vida 2004, 8). For this shared interest, he agrees by walking with her. This way of positive distraction results in changing the psychological state of the offender, it might trigger his empathy when he says, "Look, you can run now . . . and do whatever . . . I'm so, so sorry" (Ibid., 9). Feeling guilty, he frees her physically and only after witnessing him running in the opposite direction does she feel relieved, as "he's far enough away that he can't shoot" (Ibid.). Thus, she successfully shifts the focus of the offender by evading traumatic encounter through her way of interaction by utilising those well-chosen poems, which opens the door for de-escalating the motive of violence as well as an escape from a nearly departed death that is achieved through her desire for self-preservation.

Ellis' strategy questions the ideology behind the notion of 'victim precipitation', which is a part of criminology theory. It asserts,

"victims sometimes initiate the actions which lead to their harm or loss" (Petherick 2017, 262). However, in Ellis' case, there is an inexplicable reason behind why the gunman chose her, as she is highly unaccountable for such a traumatic event. Similar to the unpredictability of life, anyone can become a victim of an inhumane storm of violence since there need not be a fixed cause or motive behind it; even the arbitrariness adds to its cruelty as it solely depends on psychosocial factors. Moreover, only through her interaction she analyses the mentality of the offender, which helps in escaping from the perilous situation.

PTSD: Narrowly averted but still a victim

Ellis suffers from PTSD, as she says, "When I close my eyes I can see him with the gun and I can hear myself reciting poetry" (Vida 2004, 23). She hardly tolerates the hallucinatory lingering effect of the garlic odour that reminds her of the odour from the offender's gun. Even though the odour specialist does not feel any, it haunts her as it symbolically represents the freshness of traumatic memory. That is why her inner voice reacts aggressively by pointing out that, "It's garlic. That's the smell" and so tries to stamp it out while taking a shower for "onetwothreefourfive-five times" (Ibid., 55). Though she seeks support from a therapist, she experiences hallucinations that clearly show the instability of her mind after the crisis.

Because of her deep-seated fear of the unknown offender, Ellis initially likes the miscalculation about her caring boyfriend Tom being the gunman, as people have a misjudgment that a stranger has not done this to her without any motive. However, the weight of the rumour only increases her anxiety, thereby triggering intense fear, which makes her assume Tom is the offender when she meets him unexpectedly. As a result of her trauma-inducing paranoia, she "start[s] to run... sprinting" (Vida 2004, 65), taking big steps away from Tom, who intends to speak to her. These incidents clearly show how she is subjected to PTSD, though narrowly escaped the actual occurrence of violence.

Emotion-focused coping: Unchangeable situation yet manageable solution

The focal point of positive victimology, which is the subfield of victimology studies in criminology and psychology, is "aspiring to minimize the impact the offence might have" by encouraging the

victim to move forward in life by leaving behind the trauma through enhancing their "personal psychological process" (Ronel and Toren 2012, 173). It concerns "empowering the victims as well as assisting him or her grow on a personal and social level despite being hurt as a result of a negative traumatic event" (Ibid.). Ronel with his research team provides a novel perspective by considering the victims as the active participants, encouraging them to rely on their strength, thereby highlighting their potential for resilience, which marks a considerable shift from those traditional approaches that merely focus on the passive aspects like noticing the harm, rather than repairing it within. Thus, "Positive victimology reaches out to the survivors of traumatic painful behavior and desires to assist them while using positive components" such as humour and forgiveness "as a main road in their journey towards rehabilitation and healing" (Ibid., 176).

Ellis learns to see the optimistic part of life by admitting the truth: "There's always a way of knowing, [i]f one pays attention (Ross 2024, 223) while accompanying her mother to a medical camp in the Philippines to help the poor. There, she realises how people remain happy with what they possess through navigating various traumatic illnesses. By taking that as an inspiration, she treats her trauma lightly. Using humour, she imagines how the optimistic and perfectionist mother of hers tackles the traumatic encounter and comments as if she overhears her mother's conversation, saying:

She's criticizing his [the man with the gun] negative attitude when there are others less fortunate. She's teaching him to tie his shoelaces without using double bows. She's telling him . . . how she and her brother are the only surviving members of a family of five. (Vida 2004, 113)

By thinking of her mother's whimsical speech, Ellis feels "relieved, almost thankful, that [she] was the one in the park—not [her] mother" (Ibid., 113-114). Thus, humour reframes her cognitive ability by making the event funny, as it is a way of overcoming trauma.

Ellis provides an alternative perspective for the transformation journey by adopting humour in a way that results in de-escalating the intensity of trauma. It is highly commendable when Mark Twain says, "Humor is the great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations, and resentments flit away, and a sunny spirit takes their place" (quoted in Davis 2022, par. 1). While going through PTSD, she fears even closing her eyes by feeling insecure. However, she daringly visits the place where she

fears to tread earlier: such transformation results from embracing humour as a strategy to overcome struggles in life. She feels unaffected even when acting out what happened there precisely; hence, she normalises the traumatic memory by managing the narrative in a humorous way.

Forgiveness is one of the crucial components of positive victimology, as it assures the victims by freeing them from the bitter experience of trauma, though it is highly challenging to accept it easily by giving up the mentality of punishing or taking revenge on the offender. The epoch-making essavist highlights this notion even before the advancement of the law by voicing out the cruelty behind revenge as "wild justice" (Bacon 1857, 14). The United Nations General Assembly defines the victim as an individual who is forcefully shoved into the sea of "emotional suffering" and also sinks beneath the weight of the emergence of "substantial impairment of their fundamental rights" (1985, 40/34), which results from intentionally violating the universal norms of human rights. That being the case, forgiveness upholds the principle of fundamental human rights by thinking about the lives of both involved as well as the entire human community because violence should not breed violence. Hence, by adopting forgiveness, one can remove oneself from the stereotypical social stigma of being a 'victim' as it purely involves psychologically liberating oneself from traumatic pressure, which is the outcome of the healing journey.

Ellis considers forgiveness as "an inclusive practice" (Ronel and Toren 2012, 175) and wholeheartedly embraces the four crucial components of forgiveness that are "self-awareness, letting go, perspective-taking and moving on" (Field, Zander, and Hall 2013, 244) in order to unfetter herself. Through valuing potential strength, she normalises her thought process by accepting the reality of life, as it does not stop abruptly at one particular point while facing trauma. Thus, she recalls how her family accepts her father even when he intentionally leaves them and returns only after years without even apologising for ruining the family. She expresses the traumatic pain her father inflicted that makes her expect her "father to never have left, or to never return" (Vida 2004, 187). Her resentment is applicable to anyone who embraces a familial bond because "a mother dead and lost is far more easy to accept than a callous and deserter mother" (Bande 2014, 30), which is rightly suitable for a father too.

Ellis takes time to realise that her father feels genuinely apologetic for his wrongdoings and so her family accepts him in their web of life again. Henceforth, her self-awareness aids her in adopting forgiveness by thinking from the perspective of an offender who actually feels guilty about that situation. She witnesses her friends, who are holding the gunman in front of her to punish him. Nevertheless, she understands the burden of his guilt on seeing that "his face has more depth . . . his mouth is moving" (Vida 2004, 181). Thus, she lets him go, which is the result of embracing those components comprising forgiveness and she clarifies the reason by stating decisively:

I know a harmless man when I see one. I know sorry men when I see them, too. . . . I've seen a sorry man come home after being away four years. I've seen the change in a sorry man's face- the embarrassment, the grief- and I know how to recognize it in others. (Vida 2004, 189)

By letting go of the offender, Ellis frees herself from the impact of psychological distress, thereby carefully eschewing proliferative negative thoughts. The true value of forgiveness prevails when, "though knowing the right to revenge, one forgoes the right for taking revenge. Here to get compassion is not the right of a wrongdoer, but it is a gift given by the victim of transgression" (Lijo 2018, 2). The way she bounces back from adversity by adopting forgiveness marks her resilient attitude, which ultimately guides her to stop stressing over the already done things. Thus, she moves on by liberating herself from the cycle of violent experiences and traumatic memories by gaining mastery over her life.

Conclusion

Overall, the PTSD journey of Ellis adds valuable insight by thinking about the psychological mindset of people who narrowly escaped from violence by showcasing the power play behind it. She alters the power dynamics using her desire for self-preservation, which not only saves her life but also asserts control over the situation. This research article voices against the cruelty of both intended and unintended violence through the literary voice of *And Now You Can Go*. It also encourages a victim to learn the art of managing one's traumatic mind, which bears the mark of tumultuous emotional shock, and not to feel electrocuted by ruminating on the vastness of one's emotional currents. By doing so, it would ultimately pave the way for a daring sail through the Mississippi of life. Just as a phoenix rises from its ashes, Ellis rises

from her traumatic pressure through humorously reframing her cognition and clinging to the rope of forgiveness as a coping mechanism. Her resurgence preaches a life lesson: one's traumatic pressure not only pushes down but also gives psychological power to navigate it by propelling upward in life.

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From victim to *victor*

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An appropriated discourse: English Renaissance and the dramatized narrative of othering

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Abstract: At the beginning of the 17th century, as colonisation was in its initial phase, England was expanding its territories and establishing trade relations across the world. This economic venture was followed by social and cultural interactions, particularly with the Middle Eastern and North African countries. As Shakespeare in *The Tempest* delivered a powerful defence of the colonial enterprise on Jacobean stage, several playwrights of the age also employed their talents to emphasise on the cultural contrasts that existed between the European and non-European, Christian and non-Christian worlds. Many notable playwrights, inspired from the tales of the travellers and historians, recreated these inter-cultural exchanges on the English stage which were full of biasness. ignorance and misconception. They often painted Jews and Muslims, Asian and African ethnicities alike. The countries, the lands were defined as 'Other', in opposition to the civilised Christian world. The reason behind such representations was not just ignorance but also a deliberate erasure of their unique identities and individuality. Epithet like the 'Turk' represented their association with either Islam or the Ottoman Empire, and was applied as a blanket term to denote anyone hailing from the North African or Middle Eastern regions without any regard or awareness of their cultural nuances. This homogenisation was done in order to vilify them, to devoid them of any plurality, and proclaim the Christian-European socio-moral ethics as superior to the 'Other'. This paper aims to study the politics of this misleading representation and deeply analyse how the multifarious identities and cultures have been reduced to a few debilitating tropes with the help of three Jacobean plays – William Shakespeare's Othello, Robert Daborne's A Christian Turn'd Turk and Philip Massinger's The Renegado.

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Introduction

In an undergraduate literature classroom, the English Renaissance becomes that focal point when the students are introduced to the canonical works of Early Modern English Literature. It is considered a period of great artistic labour and creativity, a departure from all literary periods that existed previously. It is particularly hailed as the golden age of the English Drama (Carter and McRae 2001, 69) and so, when the plays of the age are introduced in a classroom, their social, political and historical mores are delved into with much detail. However, they are often limited to their immediate contexts, catering mostly to the domestic concerns and matters. It is only when *Othello* (1603) or *The Tempest* (1611) are introduced in the class that any discussions of the global scale are undertaken.

With the above plays, the themes of colonisation, territorial expansion, race and conflict in the 16th-17th centuries are introduced to an undergraduate class. At this juncture in history, the Portuguese and the Spanish had proved themselves to be the supreme colonial powers in Europe and established colonies around the world. The Portuguese had extended their reach till Japan whereas Spaniards had occupied a major portion in the Americas ever since Columbus discovered Bahamas in 1492 CE ("Portuguese Empire" 2012; "Spanish Empire" 2012; "Japan's Encounter with Europe, 1573 – 1853" 2019). These two countries had made their mark on the sea and discovered new lands for more than a century. England, however, was still in the process of finding footholds around the world. Their individual expeditions had reached throughout the world but formation of colonies was still a distant goal ("British Empire" 2012).

By the end of the 16th century, the English had some success in North America, and they had managed to sign some trade treaties with some of the Northern African and Middle Eastern countries, particularly in the Mediterranean region (Matar 1999, ix-x). The East India Company had been formed in the year 1600 CE and several individual explorers had embarked on adventures around the sea exploring naval routes to several islands and nations in Africa and Asia as well as across the Atlantic ("British Empire" 2012). These new adventures captured the English imagination. Richard Hakluyt, an Oxford scholar and a clergyman, wrote extensively about them in his various works, particularly *The Principal*

Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation (c. 1589-1600).

Even though England's colonial escapades may not be well-reflected in the canonical texts, many works of the period dealt with such themes. Not only imperialist aspirations but also colonisation, race, cultural conflict with non-Europeans became a recurring theme in many Elizabethan and Jacobean works. Most prominently, as England established better trade relations with countries in the Mediterranean region and with the very powerful Ottoman Empire, its equation with them influenced a number of playwrights to include these exchanges in their plays. Some of these plays are mentioned here – George Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* (1588), Robert Greene's *Selimus* (1594), Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine I & II* (1587-88) and *Jew of Malta* (1589), Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* (1600), Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624) and *The Emperor of the East* (1632), Thomas Goffe's *The Courageous Turk* (1618) and *The Raging Turk* (1618), Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *All's Lost by Lust* (1620) etc.

Theatrical representation and formation of a colonial discourse

A lot of these plays have been written by some of the most eminent dramatists of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Age like Marlowe, Shakespeare, Greene, Massinger, and Dekker among others. From their titles, it seems apparent that there was a certain trend to write plays about their nearest non-European neighbours. These plays have been sometimes called the 'Oriental' plays or the 'Turk' plays. In the year 1915, Louis Wann, a scholar of the English Renaissance, listed forty-seven plays that were written in the years 1579 to 1642 which contained the Oriental matter (Wann 1915, 423-426). Filiz Barin, another literary scholar, mentions them in his essay on *Othello* and states:

Parallel to this religious and political rhetoric about the Turks, in the Early Modern Period many plays were written and staged about them, popularizing the "Oriental matter." From 1579 to 1642, forty-seven plays about the Orient appeared in England, thirty-one of which directly mentioned Turkish sultans and other Turkish characters. (Barin 2010, 38-39)

As both Wann and Barin establish there were numerous plays written about the Orient and particularly influenced from the Ottomans. However, the theatrical representation of such characters or settings in these plays of the English Renaissance has been found to be quite unfavourable and demeaning. They have been portrayed in a pejorative

manner on the English stage, partially due to ignorance but also due to being perceived as a threat. The might of the Ottoman Empire and the religion of Islam were both seen as a possible threat to the sovereignty of the Christendom. Even though they weren't an imminent threat to the English per se, this larger perception overhanging from the bygone eras repeatedly made its way to the stage and to the minds of the people.

Some of these plays, whether titled as such or not, have been based, however loosely, on some historical Ottoman rulers. Greene's *Selimus* is named after Emperor Selim I, Thomas Goffe's *The Raging Turk*, and *The Courageous Turk* are based on the narratives found in historian Richard Knolles' work, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603), about Turkish Emperors Bajazet II and Amurath I respectively. All of these plays, mentioned above, are tragedies and have something in common – their characterisation of the monarchs and their *hamartia*. Barin summaries these attributes in his essay:

Invariably, in these plays, the characterization of Turks and other Islamic characters, with few exceptions, was very unfavorable. Common Turkish attributes that surface in most of these plays are cruelty, immorality, heresy, and lewdness. Reinforced through different media, the image of the Turks as a threat, a deviation, and an emblem of immorality and heresy remained intact in England throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (Barin 2010, 39)

As portrayed in the plays, these rulers were tyrannical, petty, base in their desires, insatiable in their lust for power, ruthlessly ambitious, viciously cruel to their enemies, and owed no allegiance to anyone, friend or foe. They resort to unethical means and violence, even when it can be avoided. Due to this *hamartia* or flaw in their characters, these emperors or princes also meet their end by betrayal either by an enemy or someone trustworthy to them. This is a repetitive stereotypical depiction that was more or less the plot of every Sultan's story. This is meant to be in contrast to the English customs, where the kings are anointed as divine representatives of God and hence, are considered upholders of faith. It is also meant to highlight the barbarism and savagery of the non-Christian "heathens."

Showcasing the brutality or corruption of the Ottoman rulers is an attempt to prejudice the people, stigmatise the cultural 'Other' and fashion a colonial discourse demeaning them without any recourse to their actual history. But this is not where it ends. Some Turk plays either borrow a setting in one of the Islamic countries, possibly along the Barbary Coast, or just introduce characters from the region. Even though

terms like Moors, Saracens and Arabs were also used to signify the different ethnicities, the term 'turk' was widely employed as an epithet loaded with judgement and misconception (Barin 2010). It has been applied as a blanket term for all people of these regions (namely Middle East and Northern Africa), presuming all of them align with the Muslim identity or are under the purview of the Ottomans, which is historically inaccurate. It only goes on to further elaborate the ignorance of the English playwrights about these cultures and their nuances. Additionally, the term came loaded with preconceived notions and characteristics.

Accordingly, for a European, the word Turk began to evoke the following unfavorable characteristics: licentiousness and immorality; lying and dishonesty; and, finally, cruelty and barbarity. (Barin 2010, 48)

With these presuppositions in mind, all characters and even settings have been treated as an 'Other', something that is defined in opposition to one's own self. In this particular case, any non-European, non-Christian figure has been treated in a similar fashion. The settings have been exoticized, labelled as morally and sexually corrupt, while the characters have been painted sinful, deceitful and full of savagery; female characters have been portrayed as seductresses. Reiterating these distortions allowed the playwrights and the audiences to feel a false sense of pride and superiority, and, simultaneously, promote biasness and even hatred towards these foreign regions and its people.

Textual analysis

To elucidate how this practice was inculcated on the stage, some examples from the three Jacobean plays have been provided ahead. Around the year 1609, an event occurred which caught the imagination of the English society and was a matter of much deliberation among them. It was the news about the two renegades, an English pirate named John Ward and a Dutch pirate named Siemen Dansiker, who had converted to Islam. This aroused much anger and resentment in England. There were several pamphlets and ballads written at the time condemning them for this heresy.

One of the plays which was based on this event was Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612). It highlights their adventures and all the crimes they have committed against sovereign nations of the world. This play, much like the ballads and pamphlets, seeks to admonish the pirates and predict their doom for this sacrilege. However, it doesn't condemn them for their crimes against humanity but rather wishes them to have

been faithful to their religion and directed their actions towards the enemies of Christendom, i.e. the Turks. All the details about this event, as provided by the editor Christopher Hapka, highlights one important fact i.e. the conversion of the pirates caused a bigger stir in the eyes of the public than their identity as outlaws or as threats to the English empire at sea. The conversion was a greater crime than the piracy. The play tries to fill in these gaps by being imaginative. For example, Daborne dedicates a scene to their conversion. But since his knowledge about the Islamic rituals and customs was limited, he depicts it full of ignorance. This scene accentuates how misinformed, oblivious and intolerant the English were about the Orient in general and about Islam in particular. As Hapka describes it:

The ignorance of Islamic beliefs and doctrine is shown, for example, in *A Christian Turn'd Turk*'s conversion scene, which includes a bust of Mohammed, forbidden by most Muslim denominations, on which Wards wears. Another part of the ceremony is the offer of a cup of wine by a Christian, which Ward must refuse. To Daborne, Islam is defined solely by its relationship to, and its supposed opposition to, Christianity. (Daborne 2014, Introduction)

So, as Christians kneel before Jesus Christ and vouch their truth by swearing on this figure, Daborne included a figure of Prophet Mohammed in the conversion scene. Islam as a religion forbids idolatry. Even in our recent times, caricatures or drawings of the Prophet have led to huge conflicts. But Daborne, unfamiliar with intricacies of Islam, added this to dramatize the effect. Similarly, he might have heard about the prohibition of alcohol for Muslims. It is common to include a cup of wine as part of religious services in several Christian denominations. Hence, to emphasise on the difference of faith, a cup of wine is introduced, so that Ward can reject it and the audience can feel his transition in a very dramatic manner. The play exhibits the blatant lack of knowledge and prejudice on part of the playwright as well as the audience. Also, as Hapka puts it, this lack of information has been substituted with Christian symbols implying the English could only understand Islam in contrast to Christianity. This demonstrates the 'Othering' even more.

As the play was written around 1612, at this point in England even Judaism wasn't legally sanctioned and they were hugely endorsing their successful conversions of Native Americans to Christianity (Matar 1999, 4). Hence, religious tolerance was not the order of the day and one cannot expect the English playwrights to have a deep understanding of these foreign cultures. It must have been difficult for them to imagine a society

where Muslims, Jews and even Christians had co-existed for centuries. This multiplicity and tolerant aspect of the so-called 'Turk' countries was oblivious to them. Daniel Vitkus, an expert on the Renaissance English theatre, has remarked:

A few people among the educated classes of Shakespeare's England might have known that not all of the Barbary Moors were unenlightened pagans or even benighted "Mahometans," but most English were unaware of the Muslim rulers' policy of religious tolerance, which allowed Jews, Christians, and Muslims to live together peacefully within the same community. This policy differed radically from that of England, where the norm was religious persecution and where very few Jews or Muslims were permitted to maintain residence. (Vitkus 2003, 91)

So, the plurality and diversity of the people of Northern Africa and Middle East was limited to a singular identity in contrast to Christianity – they were reduced to being the 'Other.'

This play brings us to two important points of debate prevalent in Jacobean England – one was the figure of the renegade and second was the phenomenon of 'turn'g Turk.' The renegade (or the renegado) was a term to denote the outcasts, the people who have chosen to forsake their Christian roots and converted to Islam or Judaism. They were not only condemned but their actions were deemed as crimes against God and Christianity, and were even persecuted under the laws of their countries. Just like Daborne, Philip Massinger too based his play *The Renegado* on such a figure. In his play, the Christian protagonist Vitelli acts as a mouthpiece character who explicitly claims the supremacy of Christianity over Islam. He works as a messenger of the church who has been sent to bring Antonio, the renegade, to justice, so that he can serve his due punishment as a deserter of the 'true' faith. In the very first scene, Vitelli lands in Tunis in the garb of a tradesman and quips to his servant that now he is far away from the Christendom, is he likely to "turne Turke" in this foreign land (Massinger 1630, 1.1.38). Later, he comments:

Vitelli. I am too full of woe, to entertaine
One thought of pleasure: though all Europes Queenes
Kneel'd at my feete, and courted me: much lesse
To mix with such, whose difference of faith
Must of necessitie...
Strangle such base desires. (Massinger 1630, 1.3.15-21)

He believes that the Tunisians are so beneath him that he cannot perceive fraternising with them, and proclaims to his company that being courted by a Muslim woman would ruin any thoughts of sexual nature. However, in the very next act, he meets Donusa, a niece of Emperor Amurath and a Turkish princess, and is immediately enamoured by her beauty. He employs her position to fulfil his purposes in Tunis and, ultimately, convinces her to embrace Christianity. He baptizes her by throwing water at her, right after which she denounces Islam and her beliefs in the following speech:

Donusa. I am another woman; till this minute I never liv'de, nor durst thinke how to dye. How long have I beene blinde? ...
Let me kisse the hand
That did this miracle...
That freede me from the cruellest of prisons,
Blinde ignorance, and misbeliefe: false Prophet,
Impostor Mahomet. (Massinger 1630, 5.3.121-132)

This turns him into quite a hypocritical figure, since he is in Tunis to arrest the renegade Antonio for his crimes, primary amongst them his conversion to Islam, but he doesn't hesitate to encourage the opposite while being at the mercy of the Viceroy of Tunis, Asambeg. The scene also highlights a recurring trope used on the Jacobean stage where a conversion to Christianity would bring divine revelation to the new convert and they would reaffirm the truth and virtuosity of Christ, while refuting their previous faith (in this case Islam) to everyone present in the audience. Such stock characters and situations were often used to intensify the discourse of division, prejudice and superiority by including such hostility and antagonism in the narrative.

The renegades were figures who quite literally 'turn'd Turk.' However, figuratively, this phrase was applied to anyone who behaved in a manner unbecoming of a Christian. One of the examples of this can be found in *Othello*, which is possibly the most prominent Turk play. Shakespeare was quite possibly influenced by Knolles' version of Venetian-Turkish wars for the details in this play (Barin 2010). The character of Othello is a Moor but he is also a highly regarded general of the Venetian military and a Christian man. When the Venetians are threatened by an invasion on their occupied territory of Cyprus by the Ottomans, they look upon Othello to take charge of the Venetian forces and bring them to victory. His many virtues as a man and a commander are praised by most characters. However, when he is confronted with

doubts about his wife Desdemona's faithfulness, he succumbs to his 'innate' nature and she becomes a victim of his insecurities. Through him, the play asserts that even though he is now a Christian, his ethnic background leaves him emotionally volatile and lacking in restraint. This is the stereotypical 'innate' nature of a Turk. Even when he has sided with the 'true' faith, he remains incapable of redemption. In the end, Othello becomes a source of audience's pity, as he commits suicide, having failed to belong to either sides of his identity.

Even though most characters favour him, he has his adversaries, who use severely abusive language for him. In the first scene, Iago accuses Othello of biasedly promoting Cassio over him, since he believes he has been tested in wars fought on "Christian and heathen" grounds (Shakespeare 2003, 1.1.29). Anything non-Christian is seen by him as heathen. From the very beginning of the play, characters like Iago and Roderigo supply the audience with derogatory remarks and epithets hurled against Othello. Most of them target Othello's physical features and race. They describe him as "thicklips" (Ibid, 1.1.65), "a Barbary horse" (Ibid, 1.1.110), "lascivious" (Ibid, 1.1.124), "an extravagant and wheeling stranger Of here and everywhere" (Ibid, 1.1.134-135), "an erring Barbarian" (Ibid, 1.3.356) and when they are informing Brabantio about his daughter's elopement with Othello, Iago jibes "an old black ram is tupping your white ewe" (Ibid, 1.1.87-88). In his argument in front of the senate, Brabantio emphasises that he cannot believe that his daughter would marry someone "to fear, not to delight?", "with what she feared to look on?"(Ibid, 1.2.71; 1.3.99), implying that any white woman would be scared to face Othello, let alone marry him out of her love or desire for him. In his struggle with Othello, he accuses him of bewitching his daughter and seducing her using false means. In his rage, he again questions his race and ethnicity:

For if such actions may have passage free, Bond slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be. (Shakespeare 2003, 1.2.98-99)

All these jibes at Othello's physical features aim to vehemently emphasise the distinction, and the fact that Othello will always remain a racial and cultural 'Other' to the white Christian Venetians.

Another important aspect of the play is that throughout *Othello*, the term 'Turk' is employed to serve two different contexts, both denotative and connotative. The first is to talk about the Ottomans, the enemy who forms a looming presence in the backdrop, the one that is always lurking.

Their strength is discussed with awe. Secondly, it is symbolic of character traits and conduct. For instance,

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I Senator. If we make thought of this,
We must not think the Turk is so unskilful
To leave that latest which concerns him first...
(Shakespeare 2003, 1.3.27-29)
Iago. Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk.
(Ibid, 2.1.114)
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In various scenes, Turk has been used as a derogatory term, mostly by Iago, to emphasise an un-Christianly behaviour. It stands for an immoral or blasphemous person and is applied to debase them.

Conclusion

All these instances, highlighted through various textual examples, aim to conclude that the English at the beginning of the 17th century were highly misinformed and severely prejudiced against the Orient and particularly Islam. This intolerance was to such a great extent that it led to stereotypical depictions of them as characters on the stage. Any non-Christian, non-European was a heathen, a barbarian and a Turk. It created condemning them as the inferior 'Other', while discourse superimposing the belief of English colonial power and might on foreign lands. These narratives were repeated so often that it gradually wiped out their uniqueness, their plurality of cultures from the English literary representations of the Renaissance and subsequent ages. This homogenisation was done in order to vilify them, devoid them of any diversity, and proclaim the Christian-European socio-moral ethics as superior to the 'Other.' These stereotypes, mainly constructed through appropriation, did injustice to the people of these regions by reducing their identities to a few debilitating derivatives.

This was partially fuelled by their ignorance of the religions and distinctive cultures of these regions and by misinformation. But in most parts, this was done rather deliberately to gain a sense of superiority and a moral victory over an enemy that posed to be a great threat in the Mediterranean region. Nabil Matar, an Early Modern historian, has elucidated this in his book, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*:

But precisely because the Muslims of the Mediterranean basin were powerful and undominated, English writers turned to superimposition as an act of psychological compensation and vicarious assurance. Superimposition provided them with a strategy to confront the non-Christian Other, and helped them redress their colonial and cultural inadequacies before other European countries such as Spain and France. It also assured them of an epistemological control over the Muslims—over those whom they had failed to dominate. (Matar 1999, 16)

So, even though England had signed trade pacts with countries like Morocco and Turkey, this had only made them more aware of the strength and the threat the Ottomans could pose in the future. This appropriation was premeditated on their part in order to fashion a discourse of their triumphs as an emerging colonial power and a dominant religious force.

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The volume-spatial origami structure as a formative and decorative factor of the modern world and Ukrainian costume

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Abstract: The most interesting scientific publications of world and Ukrainian researchers in the modern costume design field and the fashion design innovations and technologies usage have been analysed. The features of tectonic costume design have been studied. The basic principles of the origami techniques usage in the modern clothing design have been formed and illustrated based on the world and Ukrainian designers' experience. The principles of volume-spatial structural elements formation have been examined based on the practical examples. Different types of relief costume finishing elements based on origami systems have been analysed. The visual signs of structural forms expressiveness, their transformational dynamic properties, decorative and utilitarian application have been determined. The differences between the world and Ukrainian design with the volume-spatial structures inclusion in the costume designs have been evaluated. The possible further development of clothing design with the current technologies and scientific achievements usage have been predicted according to the scientific literature basis and the origami tools practical application in the designers work.

Keywords: clothing design, origami, texture, pleated systems, volumespatial structures

Introduction

The interaction with space and the transformation of the plane in modern design and conceptual art is a field for various kinds of experiments, involving a wide range of methods, techniques and technologies. Nowadays it's hardly possible to clearly distinguish the types of design and avoid the intersection line between them. Volumespatial designs or structures can be observed in book printing, industrial construction, consumer goods production, environmental

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design, interior design, crafts, etc. The future of art and science is created by borrowing, cross-applying techniques and technologies, stimulating their development and accelerating their positive changes. The origami usage in various construction areas is one example of this interaction. This Japanese technique of paper folding, in such a way transforming the plane, was originally just fun and play, but it retains a considerable potential for visual, utilitarian form-making, dynamics, and potential movement of the form. The construction of an object or modification of a plane based on the origami principles can be found in modern urban planning, architecture, the latest technologies, mechanical engineering, household items design, and in particular in the design of clothing.

Modern costume design has long gone beyond its utilitarian and daily usage, turned into a self-expression language for fashion designers, crossed the subjectivity boundaries and became an object of creation, the embodiment of the artist's intention, and a visual and material reflection of the designer's feelings. Modern costume design should be perceived as a complex mechanism of interdependencies and interactions. The creation of a modern costume is associated with many factors: the silhouette of the image, the structure of the material, the texture and rhythm, the context of application, etc. The volume in general and its elements that change the structure of the outfit one way or another are a separate formative factor.

The designer is confronted with various peculiarities of performance, the specifics of material plasticity and the undeniable constructive and visual features of the created form, borrowing the principles of origami techniques in the process of the clothing design. Objects of truly extraordinary transformations emerge by active incorporation of utilitarianism into the design system. The costume acquires an ephemeral design with the possibility of programmed movement, using the dynamic pleated or mesh structures that give both fluidity and impermanence to the shape. The framing of the structure makes it possible to create a volumetric form of almost unlimited configuration of zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, bionic or abstract nature. The modular system ensures rhythmic and predictable shaping with maximum texture effect, but a rather static overall shape.

The active use of the modular origami principles, pleated and mesh structures of different rhythms and complexity, transformation of framed forms, and segmental formation of spectacular textures to gain enhanced expressiveness, and imagery, facilitate movement, and reveal

the author's intention can be observed by referring to modern costume design. From a simple fold and its various combinations up to an architectural structure that significantly changes the silhouette - all this is created with the help of the origami principles implementation. The rigid structure set by the pleated systems emphasises or completely changes the shape, enhances the decorative effect of any composition, even the simplest one.

Methodology

The analytical method has been used in the article to review Ukrainian and foreign scientific publications and to highlight the main differences according to the authors' opinions. The systematic method has been implemented in order to form the general context of scientific thought and identify the specifics of views. The descriptive method has been applied for illustration of the foreign and Ukrainian designers' practices in the origami tools usage, while the comparative method allowed identifying differences in the creative achievements of Ukrainian and foreign fashion designers. All available scientific and practical information has been analysed with the help of the systematic analysis method; a view on the further development of the modern costume design field regarding origami tools usage and the latest technologies incorporation has been formulated based on the systematic data using the prediction method.

The study results

Origami is a method of a plane transformation by means of numerous bends, curves, turns, twists, or other deformations. Modern design construction is familiar with various principles of object formation by means of origami. The main origami methods are classical, sectional, modular methods and kirigami. The classical method is based on the formation of the object's body by simple folds, corrugated surfaces, and pleated structures, which, depending on the task, can form a static or dynamic figure. The sectional method involves stylising and geometrization of a basic shape and creation of a low polygonal object by dividing it into sections. The modular method represents the formation of an object from separate, often identical, segments, which are combined to form a textured object, but mostly static, as the fixation of the segments together often limits any factors of movement. The grid structures, which are sometimes distinguished into a separate subspecies of origami – kirigami –, also should be mentioned.

Predefined rhythmic cuts in the material give a greater tendency to dynamics and modification of the material, due to which the plane can acquire an illusory volume and adapt to a given object.

Nowadays, the potential of origami techniques also depends on the materials used for its creation. Paper as a base material, from one point of view, is quite soft and suitable for manipulation, and, from another, despite its plasticity, it has a dense enough structure to hold a given shape. Metal, meanwhile, being durable and less adaptable, has its own specific of techniques applications, as well as flowable concrete. The principles of origami are now being used for the design and creation of objects in 3D printing. Origami can be used both as the main shaping factor and as a finishing and decorative factor in work with fabric and in the clothing design. Fabrics can have different features depending on the complexity of the weave, thread density and the specifics of the subsequent surface treatment. For example, in thin fabrics, origami tools often play a decorative role, while shaping can only be done with the use of additional rigid frame elements. Dense fabric, on the contrary, is suitable for holding a specific, not too large, shape due to certain factors.

Origami techniques have become a part of the basic fundamentals of 3D object design long time ago. In graphic design, it helps to understand spatiality, which affects the development of books with volumetric content ('Pop-Up' books), design of product packaging and other creative paper forms. Interior or landscape design, architectural design cannot be imagined without the use of origami techniques - corrugated folded structures, segmented frame forms, modular systems are the basis of any solution to the proposed space. Similarly, these principles are also applied to the design of modern fashion clothing.

A considerable importance of clothing tectonics can be determined based on the basic sequence of costume design, which are identified by the scientists as follows: the basic shell sketching, development of a sweep taking into account the main structure, further design of the structure, creation of patterns, fabric cutting and direct sewing (Pashkevych and Yakovliev 2020). According to Pashkevych and Yakovliev, costume tectonics is: "the design of clothing taking into account the features of materials, the rationality of their usage through visual reflection in the external form and design of parts." (Ibid.) Thus, the tectonics of clothing is directly related to the social characteristics, utilitarian purpose of the product, and the author's idea and intention. The designer considers not only the aesthetic or practical function

while creating a costume with volume-spatial elements, but also expresses his or her own thoughts, reacts to social situations, concentrates and manifests mass moods. The same idea of tectonic or structured clothing design is expressed by Xiaoli Cheng (2018), the author of the article "Application of Structural Design in Advanced Clothing", who defines the most important thing in the design of a costume as the orderliness and consistency of development processes, which directly affects the innovation and creativity of the final product.

The global scientific community is very interested in the development of modern technologies and pays a lot of attention to the implementation of the latest developments into everyday life, already known and positive production practices, consumer goods, etc. Nowadays the textile industry is still incredibly necessary and relevant, so the scientific achievements and technological findings involvement in this industry is extremely important. A lot of scientific works have been dedicated to the textile technologies improvement, the formative methods and search of design solutions.

Many reflections on the design of 3D architecture, taking into account various trends in numerous industries such as fashion, cooking, jewellery, etc. can be found in the "3D-Printed Body Architecture" (2017) collection. The authors also touch upon the issues of the objects framed construction that correlate with the scale of the human body. 3D printing of objects is a leading area of science and design in the modern world. 3D production technologies are the future of the manufacturing industry in various areas of our lives, including clothing. A straightforward evidence of this fact is the practical experience of designers' collections demonstrated on the world podiums. Asim Kumar and Roy Choudhury (2017) discuss the modern principles of fabric finishing on a production scale, the properties of materials and their modifications, defining the basic principles and types of textile finishes in his book called "Principles of Textile Finishing". This knowledge is now widely used by fashion designers.

"Smart Clothes and Wearable Technology" 2022 edition represents publications devoted to the incorporation of the latest technologies into textiles, a deeper study of traditional fabrics and their properties, interaction with the latest scientific achievements, smart clothing, wearable electronic fabric, adaptive fabric and other aspects of textile innovation. Specific practical findings are offered by the authors of the articles, which opens up a wide range of opportunities for the modern costumes development.

Many scientists study the development of existing technologies and the involvement of fresh developments, new technologies, and innovations. Thus, the possibilities of the origami and kirigami techniques usage in nanotechnology for shaping and dynamic deformation of crystalline inorganic materials structures are discussed in the article by Francesca Cavallo, Max G. Lagally "Nano-origami: Art and function" (2015). The consideration of origami tools as a shaping factor is also proposed by Kyung-Hee Choi (2016) in the "Practice-led origami-inspired fashion design: out of the frame: flight by paper plane" publication, which reveals the usage of origami methods in almost any type of design, with a special focus on costume design practices. The authors Chenlu Wang, Chen Yang, Junlan Li, Mingxuan Zhu (2022) suggest origami as a means of modern costume decoration in their work "Research on the Creative Application of Origami Performance Techniques in Clothing". The attention is focused on applicative variations, the formation of texture through ironing, corrugation, stitching, and the formation of complex modular structures. Origami and kirigami tools as methods of children's clothing shaping, the introduction of a creative aspect into the design through these techniques is considered by Amany El-Dosuky in the article called "Benefiting from the Art of Japanese Kirigami in Creating Contemporary Children's wear" (2023). Origami is also considered as a source of creative search by Angela Burns and Arzu Vuruskanin (2019) the "Using origami for creative design and pattern development in fashion education" article.

The importance of information technology in 3D visualisation of objects definitely need to be considered in the process of costume design with the help of modern technologies. These software developments provide a visualisation of the costume creation process in the smallest detail, ensuring the possibility of the object's entire architecture reconstruction in a 3D model. The surface of the costume is recreated based on the example of building a three-dimensional body, demonstrating the acceleration of the clothing design process through the use of computer volumetric visualisation in the article by Jing Jing Li (2016) called "Research on Virtual Three-Dimensional Clothing Styles and Fold Effect Show". The pleated clothing pattern is formed in volume with the help of computer animation technology in the "Design of Three-Dimensional Pleated Clothing Pattern Based on Computer Animation Technology" publication by Wenbo Sun and Dugang Guo (2022). Researchers thus consider the computer

technology as a tool for the modern costume design, involving innovative technologies in the clothing design, also for the product presentability, the consumer adaptability.

also interested in the innovative Ukrainian scientists are technologies usage in the costume design, incorporating modern fashion trends and creative design solutions. The monograph "Fashion Design in a Multicultural Space" (2020) by the Kyiv National University of Technology and Design is dedicated to the basic, new and relevant problems of modern clothing design. It contains publications on research in the fields of aesthetics and tectonics in costume design, current style trends in fashion design, eclecticism and bionics in design, integration of technology into fashion design, etc. The authors of the monograph reflect on both well-known clothing technologies and propose innovative methods of the existing industries synthesizing with science and technology. Ukrainian researchers are paying considerable attention to the shaping and texture issues. O.V. Kolosnichenko (2015) in her article "Improving the design and ergonomic design of women's clothing of modern forms" discusses in detail the formative methods of clothing design based on the "personclothes-environment" system. Formative methods of clothes design based on the "person-clothes-environment" system are explicitly by O.V. Kolosnichenkoin. The researcher combinatorial methods, in particular kinetics, deconstruction and modular methods. D. Sazhvienko (2020) in the "Designing clothes of complex volumetric and spatial forms" publication also refers to the issues of complex volumetric forms formation and suggests to applying 3D visualisation technologies in the process of costume development.

Ukrainian scholars specifically consider methods of textures creation in modern costumes. The principles of overlay textures formation in a costume are structured and the classification into solid cut, patch and embroidery shaping, origami textures is derived by M. Kysil in the article "Texture Shape Formation in Modern Fashion Design" (2016). In this publication, the author considers origami tools from the point of the costume design decoration view. Also, unlike others, she considers only modular origami and kirigami methods to be origami tools.

In general, tectonic formation with the help of origami techniques has been examined in numerous publications. For example, N. Orlova in her work "The use of tectonic shaping for the modern clothing design" (2019) suggests that exaggeration, destructiveness of forms in relation to the parameters of the human body is antitectonic: "The antitectonic approach to clothing design is based on unconventional combinations of materials, changes in their properties, experiments with the shape of clothing, deliberate violation of composition rules, and the use of unconventional methods". The main characteristics of the tectonic clothing form such as volumetric shape, silhouette, geometric appearance, plasticity, surface type, system mobility, degree of weightiness have been defined by K. L. Pashkevych, M. V. Kolosnichenko, I. V. Frolova, O. D. Herasymenko, A. H. Skrypchenko in the article called "The design and projecting of clothing systems based on the tectonic approach". Four types of tectonic systems have also been proposed to distinguish: the size of the form, proximity to the silhouette, softness and stiffness of the structure, dynamics or statics, etc. (Pashkevych et al. 2017).

Therefore, in the world and Ukrainian scientific practice, origami tools are surprisingly relevant and modern. The fashion industry also uses the principles of folding material in a kind of way in obedience to scientific interests, technological development and modern social needs. In design, the interest in origami techniques lies in the creative component, spectacularity and shocking nature of the images. The potential of the folded form is almost unlimited and dictates immense motifs and horizons.

A lot of modern fashion designers have referred to origami in their creative pursuits. The evidence of this fact can be found in the work of Junya Watanabe, a Japanese designer who uses origami shaping tools in most of her collections. Constructive repetitive elements of geometric structures that form an active surface texture in the interaction system appear in his designs. Many of the dresses and tunics in the 2015-2017 collections are made of mesh structures, which make them as adaptable as possible to the model's body shape. Nevertheless, the mesh structures have also been represented as a rigid frame system reminiscent of paper decorations in the 2015 collection. The spectacularity of these clearly defined images structures the silhouette of the costume, making it sometimes disproportional and destructive in terms of the anatomical structure of the human body, but emphasising the artist's intention.

The author's collections of 2022-2024 are marked by increased emotionality, aggressiveness and abstractness of forms. The dynamism of the images is achieved by a combination of silhouette and contrasted

framed design. Large textile elements in the designer's costumes are made in emphatically edgy, sharp shapes, which activate the emotional mood. The collection's sparse, mostly monochrome colour scheme reinforces the rebellious and tough theme, which correlates with the madness of the modern world (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Junya Watanabe. Collection 2024. Active modular origami

The author uses mainly dense, opaque, monochromatic and dark fabrics to build the image and silhouette. In volume, they enable the light and shadow play of texture that reflects the structure effectiveness. The opacity of dark fabrics adds a certain mystique and danger to the perception of the costume. Transparent fabrics are much less common, but even in such rare cases, the material's properties are advantageous in presenting the idea of the clothing design. Thus, the designer expresses himself in his designs through the combination of almost all origami tools, the light and shadows features, and the chosen materials texture in the costume designs. Nevertheless, the frame designs and mesh structures that dominate in images created by Junya Watanabe, filling the costumes with a special charm and active texture, worth to be noted as predominant (Junya Watanabe A/W 24 Womens wear).

Contrastingly, Iris Van Herpen is a designer who relies on modular systems and pleated structures in her work. A striking example is the 2021 collections, where dresses have defined spherical shapes of different diameters, consisting of curly vertical segments. The author is fond of the layering principle. She creates voluminous forms and smooth dynamic structures using this principle in a variety of ways. The designer achieves destabilisation or stabilisation of shapes, modulating them by shape depending on the main idea. The softness of the modules in her designs, layered on top of each other, create a specific, soft, mesmerising vibration, a smooth wave that resembles either the flaps of a butterfly's wings or the movements of a magical fish underwater... The movement became an essential part of the costume's representation, an element of spectacle and epatage (Iris Van Herpen. Surrealist Illusions. Figure 2).



Figure 2. IrisVan Herpen. Collection 2022. Plastic sectional origami made of thin fabrics on a frame basis

Pleated structures are another formative principle actively used by the designer. Simple corrugated systems based on lightweight fabrics and not burdened with complex elements look laid-back, airy, yet textured. Smooth lines, intense fine pleats on transparent dresses are a surprisingly elegant solution, creating a subtle vibration like a gust of wind or a ripple on the water.

Iris Van Herpen masterfully uses colour, its intensity, transparency, light and the vibration of the model's movement. She skilfully manipulates shapes to achieve the maximum effect of variability,

fragility, non-static, and "shimmering" form in her designs. The feeling of airiness, ease and even a certain fairy tale is achieved by the light transparent fabrics' application. The author reinterpreted the light shades of dresses, modular systems and folded origami structures in combination with the materials specificity, creating unique images full of emotions and volatile dynamics. The combination of modular origami and pleated structure in one costume looks harmonious in Iris' designs. The modular system is mostly dominant and accentuated in her dresses, and the corrugated surface complements and supports the overall image, giving the effect of relaxation, tension, calmness and thus completeness of the image. (Dutch Designers. Iris Van Herpen 2023)

Pleated structures look extremely expressive in a costume. Implementation of such structures in any clothing balances and streamlines the image, making it neat, official and solemn, and at the same time festive. Many designers today are experimenting with pleated structures of varying complexity and rhythmic. Jule Waibel is one of the most striking designers whose work experience is definitely considered as successful. Her practice obviously began with paper craft and reproduction of origami principles directly on paper, and she later transferred her skills to clothing design.

Jule Waibel's designs are characterised by a complex pleating system. The rhythm, the height of the formed relief, the vertical and horizontal directions of folding, the vertical and horizontal structure dynamics of her designs differ from dress to dress. Quite simple silhouettes of the forms nevertheless fascinate with the structures dynamics, their combinations, compositional arrangement, etc.

The folded structure itself contains the potential for dynamic movement – compression and decompression. Jule Waibel skilfully uses this feature in her designs, compressing and decompressing the structure to achieve the necessary volume, adjusting the plane of the structure to the desired shape for tightness, or vice versa, exaggerating and artificially "inflating" it, manipulating it as much as the structure allows.

The soft images demonstrated by this designer are achieved by using light, thin, translucent fabrics. It is quite technically challenging to keep the shape for a long time for such complex pleated structures, but Jule Waibel prefers lightness and translucency despite the expediency of using heavier fabrics in this case. Her designs are made in light shades, sometimes with a certain play of colour in the structure

deepness. Such features help to create additional visual depth and mystique. The use of a gradient in a pleated structure is a rather unusual solution and a distinctive feature of the author's colour design, which makes her clothes even more unique (Jule Waibel. Figure 3).



Figure 3. Jule Waibel. Collection 2017. Intense folded structures

The designs by Croatian designer Morana Kranjec are distinguished by a complex, dense, geometric pleated structure. The basic means of origami – a folded, corrugated structure with a fixed rhythm, reinforced by fixation, which directly affects the curves of the shape – constitute the basis of the designs. The structure used by Morana bends strictly vertically and horizontally, forming rather rigid symmetrical lines which are not very amenable to plastic changes. The fractures of the shape, however, are favourably adapted to the tasks of the costume. The clothes appear heavy, thick and durable due to the multi-layered folds, dense and even rhythmic. Dark colours also reinforce this impression of the costumes, making them look like warrior's armour, like protective armour (Figure 4). In such a way, the designer subordinates the pleated structure to the conceived form, involves it in the shape formation process, using its visual and decorative features at the same time (Morana Kranjec).

Origami tools are rather not very common in the Ukrainian design field. The methodological principles of folding a plane or its segmentation are not so widespread, perhaps due to the nature of Ukrainian culture. Here, the principles of origami are perceived more in their original way – paper folding, so the whole design with the origami techniques application has a clear Asian vibe. Nevertheless,

there are practices of origami elements incorporation into Ukrainian design projects, where they do not dominate, but rather set off the general forms, remaining accent elements.



Figure 4. Morana Kranjec. Collection 2012. Equally rhythmic, symmetrical folded structures

Origami tools in Ukrainian fashion design usually appear in the simplest variations of pleated structures – corrugation, pleating – and play a finishing role rather than a formative one, being included in the costume decor. The Japanese design features can be clearly traced in the case of the origami tools formative usage. Origami in this case hardly undergoes any transformations and technological changes. Nevertheless, some collections of designers, who prefer to follow the fashion trends, contain some elements of constructive or folded structures.

Inspiration by Japanese culture is strongly reflected in the Pre-Fall 2021 collection by Yuliia Yarmoliuk (2021), designer of the J'amemme brand, as she herself notes: "...this collection also contains a fusion of elements of traditional Japanese costume and European medieval decoration details..." Origami tools in the designs of this collection can be seen in simple corrugated shapes, pleated low-relief surfaces of soft translucent fabrics. Silhouette shapes of some designs slightly resemble the features of corrugation, forming curved tubular

structures. Small pleating in these designs looks bold, extraordinary and stylish. Large areas of the fabric are dedicated to a single, evenly rhythmic pleated structure, which is perceived calmly and monolithically due to the solid light colour (Figure 5).



Figure 5. J'amemme. Collection 2021. Corrugated folded structures

Similar methods of origami usage can be seen in the SS22 'Physique' (2022) collection by Iryny Dzhus, art director of the DZHUS brand. Origami tools act as formative factors in this collection and the main purpose of these tools' implementation is related to the possibilities of transformation, the costume elements adaptation for different wearing needs. For example, the inclusion of zips and buttons in the basic corrugated structure makes it possible to modify not only the shape of the product but also its purpose. Thus, the elegant collar of the dress turns into a hood, the size of which, due to the evenly rhythmic pleated structure, is also variable (Figure 6).



Figure 6. DZHUS. Collection SS22 "Physique". Dynamic form of folded structure

This collection, in particular, is characterized by anatomical discrepancies in silhouettes. Exaggerated shapes, objects imbalance, simple straight shapes are combined with hemispherical ones. They are based on origami techniques and architectural monumental principles. This trend is emphasized by the monochrome colours chosen by the author. White, black, ocher shades make these designs even more similar to architectural forms.

The monochrome and folded structure in the designer's 2024 collections are marked by a formative orientation. In such cases, a simple corrugated structure is not subordinated to the form and does not serve its dynamic change of purpose. It is independent, textured and self-sufficient. The relief of the evenly rhythmic pleated structure serves as the texture of the clothing, its expressiveness, while setting the silhouette and merging into the designer's idea. Black and white colours, which Iryna prefers, on the one hand, give the costume a strict structured look, subordination to monumental and architectural traditions, and on the other hand, encourage free thinking and subjective interpretation of the designer's idea (Modnyisiuzhet: Rozmova with Ukrainian designers 2021).

Simple pleated structures prevail in Ukrainian fashion design. Sometimes they serve as a formative basis, but more often they are represented as decorative elements, an impressive decor. Corrugation is used in this way in the designs of the Nadya Dzyak Bridal brand. Transparent fabrics pleated in a rhythmic manner are often layered on top of each other. The depth and volume, which forms a certain mysterious charm, is created by the colour combination. In some Nadya's dresses, the pleated folds have a black welts, which plays the role of a certain contour, a rim in the composition, and in combination with transparent materials acts as a contrast to the product overall shape, emphasising the ephemerality and airiness of the pleated structures.

The active use of colour creates a unique decoration for Nadya Dziak's clothes. A transparent, brightly coloured pleated structure is layered over the overall shape. Optically blended colours form accent decorative elements that to some extent resemble floral motifs (Figure 7). The layers of non-transparent, dense structure in some of the designer's creations, on the contrary, evoke the imagination and direct the thought to paper origami.



Figure 7. Nadya Dzyak. Collection 2021. Pleats as a decorative structure

The delicate pastel colours of The Secret Garden 2021 collection, accentuated by pleated decor, tend to be magnificent and at the same time simple, festive and casual. Thus, pleated corrugated structures are the main decorative highlight of this brand (Nadya Dzyak).

Many young designers presented collections with pleated structures in 2021 at the New Generation of Fashion young designers' competition in Kyiv. For example, a smooth rhythmic structure was a complementary element in Sofiia Zalisna's "DELIVERANCE" collection designs, where pleated structure became an accent element due to neutral elements, transparency of fabrics, and low relief. The pleated structure was also used as an accent in the costume by Viktoriia Vaniulina in the "LiRe" collection. Nevertheless, unlike the previous designer, Viktoriia used a more complex pleated structure in her models, with a different type of relief, convex surfaces, modified rhythm, and accentuated these elements by choosing brightly coloured, glossy satin fabrics. Structural moments also played a decorative role in her design, subordinating to the general idea, accentuating certain parts of the composition (Final 'POHLIAD u maibutnie' 2021).

Ukrainian designer Malva Verbytska, the founder of the Malva Florea brand, uses the active relief of pleated structures as a textural accent in her collections. Concave and curved complex pleated structures are presented in bright colours, contrasting with straight silhouettes in her 2022-2023 collection, dedicated to the work of architect Zakha Khadid. The active relief in dazzling white blends with the smooth fabric surface or the model skin colour, concentrates in one part of the costume and spreads out to the other. The pleated structure obeys the shape, has a variable height of relief, and is purely visual, vaguely reminiscent of architectural motifs, which is the designer's intention and should echo the architectural projects of the inspirer Zakha Khadid (Figure 8).

The bright orange colour activates the attention, playing with light and shadow differences and structuring the costume as a whole as does the pleated structure in dazzling white. The designer's strict and at the same time bright outfits demonstrate her affiliation with the architectural theme, the images orderliness and the origami folding structures usage are the precise means to achieve the goal (MALVA FLOREA FW22-23).



Figure 8. Malva Florea. Collection 2022. Structure of folded origami systems

Lesia Patoka, the creator and owner of the Patoka Studio brand, who has worked extensively with Ukrainian artists and participated in media projects, is an extremely effective experimenter in forms and structures in Ukrainian costume design. She is the author of the costume for the Ukrainian participant of Miss Universe 2022. The designer has created clothing designs with the help of origami, among other things for various projects. The ONUKA singer's costume, in which Lesia recreated a relief modular bird, is well-known in Ukraine, and for the KOLIR album presentation, the fashion designer created a long dress with smoothly rhythmic pleating. Such costumes are extremely expressive, unusual and perfectly match ONUKA's electronic music style. The volumetric modular elements of the bird dress are created according to the same pattern and attached to the main shape of the dress, making them part of the decoration without involving these elements in the form shaping of the costume. The pleated corrugated structures in another dress also act as a relief design of the overall elongated silhouette, but not as a shaping base, and the dynamic properties of the corrugated surface are not involved (How the ONUKA 2021 look changed).

Certain differences in the world and Ukrainian design with origami tools can thus be traced. In fashion design outside of Ukraine, a much greater degree of innovation and experimentation in the search for the shape, texture of the costume, the density of materials and their properties in combination with origami can be observed. Foreign authors design costumes that go beyond the silhouette space, varying volumes, looking for opportunities to translate their ideas into the language of clothing, provoking the consumer and society as a whole. Origami tools are actively involved in the formative aspects of clothing design. Different fashion designers focus on different tools, interpreting them in their own way. The principles of sectional origami, modular structures, mesh and pleated systems are used in the search for an extraordinary form, and variants of their combination and synthesis are modelled through the interaction of materials contrasting in handle, texture, and colour.

The experience of the foreign designers mentioned in this article demonstrates a wide range of origami tools. A completely unique individual significance is acquired in the work of each of these designers. The main difference from the Ukrainian costume design is the use of origami as a formative tool for expressing the author's intention, without basing it on the origin of techniques or their historical background. Only in a secondary sense, origami tools are used as decorative elements, as a complementary balance.

Ukrainian fashion designers are much calmer, more moderate and slightly less experienced in the origami tools usage, not very open to experiments. Here, origami is not mainly a formative factor, but rather is used as an accent, often bright, finishing element. In cases where origami tools are used in shaping, such designs have a bright thematic colour and associatively refer the viewer to the Japanese culture where origami originated. Simple folding systems are used as shaping and decorative tools. More complex, rhythmic texture systems are used less often, mainly as brightly coloured, contrasting accents of the overall image.

Thus, a significant difference in the design approaches of Ukrainian and foreign fashion design can be identified. Ukrainian design nevertheless exists within the framework of current trends in the human centredness study, social and environmental issues, economic and political events, the use of innovative technologies and alternative materials, etc. This can be clearly seen in the collections of Ukrainian designers in 2022-2024, which are represented, in particular, at Paris Fashion Week. Well-known Ukrainian fashion design experts also note

the development of native costume design in line with current innovations.

Conclusion

Numerous works by foreign and Ukrainian scholars reveal the modern principles of costume shaping with the use of various technologies, improvement of existing materials, their properties, visual value and ergonomic application. Foreign publications offer a wide range of origami techniques applications in the latest technologies as a shaping factor, including in the clothing design. Ukrainian experts in the modern costumes development are more conservative and advocate the principles of a moderate tectonic structure of clothing. However, they all agree that the new materials usage, in-depth study of the known raw materials features, the search for alternative design principles, and sources of a new creative approach to costume design are relevant areas for further research.

Foreign and Ukrainian designers illustrate the opinions expressed by scientists in their creative collections. In the global fashion space, creators have the opportunity to express themselves through almost any means. Therefore, foreign designers are more open to experiments than Ukrainian designers, who have to take into account the target audience and the practical implementation of their ideas. In their search for a form, foreign fashion designers actively use traditional techniques from other art forms and with different historical origins, perceiving them as means to achieve the goal. Ukrainian designers are more cautious about the manifestations of other cultures in their designs, and therefore use them much more delicately.

The conclusion about the further integration of technological developments into the field of textile production and costume design can be made on the basis of the information obtained and systematised. The use of computer technology will obviously simplify the design process, and further mechanisation of the processes of making patterns, cutting and fixing costume parts will lead to the spread and mass production of a product that could previously have been an exclusively unique design. The use of new materials and modern technological developments in textile production will expand the functionality of the usual costume in the future. It is quite possible that this will also affect the formative features of its design. Today we are already talking about incorporating medical metrics, smart material technologies, fabric adaptability to temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, etc. It is

obvious that a modern costume will be significantly different from the costume of the next decade. Not only the means of decoration, but also the formative principles are likely to change.

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Unmasking feminine pedagogical perspectives: An inclusive investigation of India Edghill's biblical women in historical fiction

Ann Maria Davis and Abhaya N. B.*

Abstract: This research paper explores into an insightful conversation with India Edghill, an American writer of biblical historical fiction. She is a distinguished modern author known for her historical fiction novels that intimately investigate the lives of women from the Hebrew Bible. Her works include, *Queenmaker*, *Wisdom's Daughter*, *Game of Queens*, *Delilah*,and *File M for Murder*. The conversation delves into Edghill's inspirations, difficulties, and thought processes when telling the tales of oversized female characters, illuminating her distinct style and its significant influence on historical fiction. The three most well-known Indian works—*Queenmaker*, *Wisdom's Daughter*, and *Game of Queens*—are the foundation for this interview. Edghill's journey into crafting novels centered around biblical women is explored in-depth. The interview reveals her inspiration rooted in the quest for the "other side of the mirror" and the desire to unveil the female perspective often overshadowed by traditional historical narratives.

Keywords: biblical historical fiction, feminism, India Edghill

Introduction

Biblical historical fiction is a literary genre that combines biblical events, places, and characters with aspects of historical fiction. Biblical historical fiction has its roots in a number of movements and elements. The literary tradition is the first. One of the most well-known subgenres in this category is the biblical epic. Throughout history, epic literature has been a feature of many societies, and the Bible itself contains epic tales. These stories have served as an inspiration for writers, who have expanded upon them to provide fictionalised accounts that offer a more in-depth and creative examination of the individuals and events. The process of interpretation and modification that led to the creation of biblical historical fiction is the second factor.

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A literary genre known as biblical historical fiction combines historical fiction elements with biblical characters, settings, and narratives. The literary tradition is the first of several tendencies and conditions that led to the formation of biblical historical fiction. Within this category, one of the most well-known subgenres is "biblical epics". Many historical cultures have produced epic literature, and the Bible itself includes epic tales. Inspired by these stories, writers have gone on to develop their own fictionalised versions that offer a more in-depth and creative examination of the characters and events. Biblical historical fiction's evolution can be attributed to two factors: interpretation and adaption.

The Bible is interpreted differently by different people, and writers frequently investigate different viewpoints or use imaginative storytelling to fill in any gaps in the biblical story. This gives fiction authors a wide range of options for reinterpreting and reimagining biblical events. The shifts in culture and society come next. Stories based on biblical characters and events are made for fresh reading perspectives in large part because of the shifts in society. There is a growing interest in examining biblical and religious themes in literature from both secular and religious viewpoints as society attitudes towards religion change. Biblical tales can serve as a backdrop for writers to examine universal themes and human experiences.

Another significant factor in the evolution of biblical historical fiction is historical realism. Biblical stories may captivate readers and writers alike due to their historical elements. Authors may create a more immersive experience and firmly establish their fiction in a credible historical reality by integrating historical information and context. The study of many historical eras, including biblical ones, has been made possible by the success of historical fiction as a genre. Biblical historical fiction piques readers' interest since it takes them to other eras, which is a common interest of readers. Stories that let writers use their imaginations are what captivate them as writers. With its diverse cast of people and events, the Bible offers writers a blank canvas on which to create inventive and thought-provoking stories.

Biblical historical fiction is a relatively new genre that is part of a larger literary movement in which writers are exploring and reimagining classic tales to produce fresh takes on beloved classics. This genre invites readers to interact with well-known stories in novel and creative ways by allowing for a distinctive blending of history,

culture, and spirituality. Biblical historical fiction is experiencing a renaissance, with modern authors such as India Edghill creating stories that shed light on the sometimes-neglected experiences of women in the Hebrew Bible. Biblical historical fiction reimagines biblical characters from the metanarrative from fresh angles. Biblical historical fiction has a fascinating historicity that is unique to this still-evolving genre, even if it revises documented history.

When tracing the origins of biblical historical fiction, one must go back a long way to the inception of English literature. The majority of the works in Old English literature were composed in the early mediaeval era, which is about the 7th through the 11th century. Because of the Christianization of England during this period, religious themes and aspects can be found in certain Old English works of literature. But the current idea of "biblical historical fiction" might not be entirely compatible with the topics and literary forms found in Old English literature. Rather than being historical fiction, religious narratives and biblical stories were frequently portrayed as moral and religious lessons.

The epic poem "Beowulf," however it's vital to remember that it's a secular work that incorporates both pagan and Christian elements, is one notable Old English work with biblical themes. The poem represents the meeting point of the Anglo-Saxon pagan past and the Christian present by incorporating Christian viewpoints and biblical story references. As an example, consider "The Dream of the Rood": In this poem, the Cross is personified as an active participant in Christ's crucifixion. It is among the first written works of Old English Christian poetry. One further significant work from the Old English era is "Genesis A and B". These poetic interpretations of biblical tales are based on selected chapters from the Book of Genesis configurations.

An interview with India Edghill

This study paper delves into an in-depth interview with Edghill, revealing the creative decisions, obstacles, and sources of inspiration that define her distinct storytelling style.

Q1. What inspired you to delve into crafting novels focused around biblical women? Could you elaborate on the factors that led you to choose them as your subjects within the realm of historical fiction?

Edghill: I've always been interested in the "other side of the mirror" – history and historical fiction are usually told from the male perspective. I want to know the other half of the story! And since the

Bible is one of the great resources of story and is told entirely from the male gaze, I found retelling those stories from the female point of view very satisfying.

Q2. As a contemporary writer navigating the intricate landscape of women from the Hebrew Bible, what are the primary challenges you encounter, particularly considering their historical, socio-political backgrounds?

Edghill: The primary challenges are those that any writer of historical fiction faces — that of translating an ancient and very different world into something that makes sense to the modern reader. This involves a great deal of research, using every resource possible.

Q3. What is the profound impact of extracting biblical women from an ancient epoch and reconstructing their narratives through a 'herstory' lens in your novels?

Edghill: The impact of reconstructing the stories of Biblical women through a lens of "her-story" is indeed profound. It opens up the ancient world to us as a fully-rounded creation, reminding us that without the women's viewpoint we have only half of the story.

Q4. Your biblical retellings often revolve around women of royal lineage, exemplified in works like Queenmaker, Wisdom's Daughter, and Game of Queens. What motivated your specific focus on this category of women in your literary creations?

Edghill: Of the few women mentioned in the Bible, most are queens or princesses. They're the ones who have enough of a story to make it easier to flesh a history for them. That's what made me focus on royal women: they were there in the story.

Q5. In Queenmaker, you opted to narrate David's story from the perspective of Michal. What prompted the selection of Michal as the narrative voice for this particular storyline?

Edghill: David's story has been told and retold many, many times. I'm interested in the story from the women's viewpoint, so weaving a novel from Michal's perspective was an easy choice for me.

Q6. The friendship between Bethsheba and Michal takes center stage in *Queenmaker*. Why did you choose to place Bethsheba alongside Michal rather than alongside David?

Edghill: I placed Bathsheba beside Michal rather than beside David for a couple of reasons: 1) David loses interest in Bathsheba, so she doesn't interact with him after Solomon is born and 2) I'm very much interested in relationships between and among women. It's a strong

motif in my novels and short stories. Hence Michal – who is rather lonely in David's palace – finds a friend in Bathsheba.

Q7. Queenmaker intricately weaves a narrative subverting traditional characters and power dynamics of patriarchy. What inspired this approach, and how did you channel the force that transformed patriarchal representations into a feminist narrative?

Edghill: Subverting traditional characters and the power dynamics of patriarchy: Again, I'm interested in "the other side of the mirror". When you change who's looking at events – for example, not through David's eyes but through Michal's eyes, it changes the entire way we consider history. With each writing choice, an author can lead a reader farther away from a traditional narrative and open their eyes to new vistas.

Q8. When allowing Biblical women to articulate their stories, what expectations do you harbor? Have you encountered challenges in subverting patriarchal power roles through your narrative approach?

Edghill: My expectations when allowing biblical women to articulate their own stories are that flipping the tale on its head, genderwise, will give us a story that provides a three dimensional world-view. I haven't had any particular challenges in doing this.

Q9. Wisdom's Daughter presents a powerful feminist perspective on the Queen of Sheba, using an omniscient narrator, Abhishag. What motivated the choice of this narrative style and character perspective?

Edghill: Abishag's narrative was a deliberate choice. I needed to be able to convey information to the reader that none of the main characters would know. The dead are traditionally omniscient, and Abishag was a pivotal character in the David and Solomon stories, so I chose her to convey information to the reader.

Q10. Solomon's Daughter emerges as a formidable fictional character in *Wisdom's Daughter*. How did you conceive and develop this character?

Edghill: Solomon's daughter Baalit was conceived as a sort of "anti-princess" – she's the sort of character who everyone around her feels should have been a boy. I used a lot of the young Queen Elizabeth the First in creating the Baalit character. Her story arc takes her from worrying about who she's going to have to marry to heir to the Sheban throne.

Q11. Game of Queens intriguingly highlights the resilient Vashti over Esther, providing a powerful subversion of historical power and

patriarchy. What led to your decision to emphasize Vashti's courage in the narrative?

Edghill: Vashti over Esther – well, there are dozens and dozens possibly hundreds – of novels focusing on Esther. I love an Esther novel myself, but I wanted to highlight Vashti, who could have been putting her head on the block by refusing her drunken husband's command that she appear at a men's banquet. A woman who could do that is a role model at least as good as that of Esther.

- Q12. Game of Queens introduces animals and pets, a rarity in Biblical stories. Is this inclusion reflective of your affinity for animals? Edghill: Yes, it certainly is. My family has always had pets and while I was researching Game of Queens, I discovered that the ancient Persians adored dogs! This makes Haman drowning puppies and Esther rescuing them a deeply meaningful interaction, highlighting Haman's evilness and Esther's goodness. On the other hand, the Persians regarded wolves as belonging to the dark side, so Vashti's willingness to rescue wolf cubs indicates her willingness to subvert the established order.
- Q13. Considering the trajectory of biblical historical fiction from Anita's Red Tent to the present, have you contemplated transitioning this genre into popular fiction? What notable changes have you observed, and what advice would you offer to writers in this niche?

Edghill: I think the "women's biblical fiction" trend has pretty much run its course. You still find it in the Christian booksellers genre, but you don't see it much in mainstream fiction any more. Advice to writers in this niche: if you love the story, writ it anyway. These days it's easy to self-publish.

Q14. Can you share any ongoing projects centered around other Biblical women?

Edghill: Since the subgenre seems to be dead – but you never know; someone may suddenly produce another biblical women book that gets picked up – I haven't got any more projects centered around biblical women. My most recent project is an epic historical romance set in 1878 India.

As a modern author, Edghill clarifies the main difficulties encountered when negotiating the complex world of women in the Hebrew Bible. The conversation explores the nuances that result from these women's historical and sociopolitical origins. We look at the significant influence of Edghill's narrative technique, which involves taking biblical women out of an ancient era and telling their

experiences again from a 'her-story' perspective. This section delves into how this methodology creates a completely realised ancient world. Edghill's decision to focus her biblical retellings on women descended from royal families is closely examined.

The interview offers a detailed examination of Edghill's choice of characters and narrative points of view, with a particular emphasis on *Queenmaker*. The author discusses the significance of Bathsheba being positioned next to Michal rather than David and the rationale behind selecting Michal as the narrative voice. *Queenmaker* deftly crafts a story that challenges conventional characters and patriarchal power structures. The interview delves into Edghill's inspiration for this strategy as well as the techniques she uses to turn patriarchal depictions into feminist stories. Edghill talks about her expectations for biblical women telling their own stories and whether or not she has had any difficulties using her narrative style to confront patriarchal power structures.

The conversation dives deeply into Wisdom's emphasising the strong feminist interpretation of the Queen of Sheba. Edghill discusses the significance of this narrative form and character perspective, as well as the reasoning behind selecting Abhishag as the omniscient narrator. In Wisdom's Daughter, Solomon's daughter is revealed as a strong fictional figure. In addition to providing insights into her conception and development of this persona, Edghill offers a distinctive viewpoint on the difficulties and creative process involved. Intriguingly, the resilient Vashti is emphasised above Esther in Game of Queens. Edghill provides a nuanced view on the character choices by explaining why she chose to highlight Vashti's bravery in the story. The introduction of pets and animals in Game of Queens is discussed in the interview. Edghill talks about if this decision reflects her love of animals.

Edghill examines the development of biblical historical fiction from Anita Diamant's *Red Tent* to the present by taking a look at its trajectory. In the interview, she discusses whether she has thought about making this genre into mainstream fiction and provides details on the significant shifts that have been noticed. Edghill shares her thoughts on her ongoing initiatives as the interview comes to a close. The author offers a peek at her most recent book, an epic historical romance set in 1878 India, despite the fact that the biblical women subgenre may have changed over time.

Conclusion

This research paper provides a thorough examination of India Edghill's viewpoints, inspirations, and methods of creation when writing historical fiction books that highlight biblical women. The knowledge gained from the conversation enhances our comprehension of the writer's distinct style and how it has affected the development of biblical historical fiction.

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A study of the character of Manthara through the feminist disability lens

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Abstract: Manthara is a minor character from the original epic *Ramayana*. The epic portrays Manthara as a woman who is ugly, poor and has a hunchback. She becomes the factor leading to the death of King Dashrath and the distress in the lives of Rama and Sita. Through the ages, Manthara is blamed for causing the upheaval in the lives of Avodhya royals. However, the question arises as to how a woman who is poor, unattractive, and disabled can transform the lives of royalty. Or was she simply a scapegoat in the story? Sarah Joseph's Black Holes retells the story of the Ramayana from the perspective of Manthara. It is part of a short story collection from the text Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala, published in 2005. The work is an alternative viewpoint on the epic. Black Holes explores the feminist interpretation of the mythological narrative. Anand Neelakantan is an Indian novelist whose expertise lies in mythological fiction narratives. His work, Valmiki's Women, published in 2021, is a collection of short stories from the perspective of minor women characters from the epic Ramayana. Neelakantan's collection of stories provides a new perspective on the characters who are often sidelined from the main retelling and narratives.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the character of Manthara through the qualitative methodology of close-reading analysis of the short stories, Sarah Joseph's *Black Holes* and Anand Neelakantan's *Valmiki's Women*. This article also examines the theory of Feminist Disability Studies within the viewpoint of Western and Indian contexts. The article focuses on understanding the stigma around disability and women. The desired conclusion of the article is to present a survey of how disability leads to the double marginalization of women.

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Keywords: disabled women, Manthara, Feminist Disability Studies, feminism

Introduction

"This hunchbacked woman, skilled in deceit, spoke words dipped in poison and changed the heart of the queen" (Valmiki, Ayodhya Kanda 2), the words quoted are often employed to depict Manthara's character. Manthara is a minor character from the great epic saga Ramayana. The epic is originally written in Sanskrit by the sage poet Valmiki. The poet is also referred to as Adi Kavi, the first poet and the author of the Ramayana. Since the inception of Hindu civilization, Valmiki's *Ramayana* has been regarded as the cornerstone of society. It depicts and teaches many dimensions of human life. There are many multifaceted characters in the Ramayana, who convey and teach essential lessons to its readers and followers. The epic highlights the themes of dharma, devotion, leadership and kingship, loyalty, sacrifice, good vs evil and the role of women in forming the basis of the society. The epic consists of nearly 24000 verses and is written from the perspective of Ram and the characters who assisted him in vanquishing the demon king Ravana, fulfilling the goal of his existence. Beyond the hundreds of characters, the epic is categorized into primary and secondary characters, which are further classified into male and female epic figures. Manthara is a sidelined secondary character from the *Ramayana*. She is portrayed in mythology as the evil instigator, the hunch-backed perpetrator of all the turn of events that followed after King Dashrath's decision regarding his successor (Sreekala 2022, 17). Manthara is a poor, ugly woman with a hunchback, who is a loyal servant of King Aswapathi and a mother figure to his daughter Kaikeyi and her twin brother Yudhajit. She dedicated her life to looking after Kaikeyi and devoted herself entirely to her care, "For thirty- five years, she had served her like a slave and loved her like a mother" (Neelakantan 2021, 95). However, the crucial question is how can the story of the royals from Ayodhya be impacted by a woman who is impoverished, unattractive, and physically flawed. Was she nothing but a puppet controlled by her master, Kaikeyi? The objective of this article is to analyse the character of Manthara. To reach the desired conclusion a close-reading textual analysis of the short stories Black Holes by Sarah Joseph and Manthara by Anand Neelakantan are taken as the primary texts for this research.

The article also examines the theory of Feminist Disability Studies within the viewpoint of Western and Indian contexts. The emphasis of this article is to understand the stigma around disability and women.

Methodology

Sara Joseph is a renowned novelist and short story writer from the Indian state of Kerala. She is regarded as a pivotal writer in the Malayalam literature. Joseph is a prominent leader in the feminist movement in Kerala and a co-founder of the women's group *Manushi*. Her works focus on the themes of gender, social justice and politics. *Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala* is a compelling anthology written in Malayalam language. The anthology is written by Malayalam writers C.N. Sreekantan Nair and Sarah Joseph and is considered a unique perspective of the epic *Ramayana*. The work is reinterpreted through the lens of gender and caste. *Black Holes* is a brief narrative authored by Joseph in the anthology *Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala*. The story in the *Black Holes* is written from the perspective of Manthara.

Anand Neelakantan is an Indian novelist who is popular for his mythological fiction. He writes in the English and Malayalam language. Similar to Joseph, Neelakantan is an influential figure in Malayalam literature originating from Kerala. Valmiki's Women is a thought-provoking collection of short stories by Neelakantan. The work showcases the lesser-known stories of female characters from the Ramayana. The collection gives voice to the women who are often sidelined in the traditional narrative. The tale of Manthara is included in the short story collection titled Valmiki's Women. The anthology also includes the tales of Bhoomija, Shanta, Tataka, and Meenakshi. Sreekala B. mentions, that modern re-tellings narrate the events from the perspective of the characters who are sidelines or marginalized by the subalterns of mythology. Hence, emphasizing Neelakantan and Joseph's focus on re-telling the Ramayana through the perspective of overlooked minor female characters from the epic. Joseph and Neelakantan's short stories present an unheard interpretation of Manthara. The stories illustrate the life of Manthara before and after the royal upheaval. The narratives from *Black Hole* and *Manthara* also highlight that Manthara embodies feminism by recognizing how the people of Ayodhya treat their women.

The theory of Feminist Disability Studies is coined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. Garland-Thomson is an American professor of English literature. She is a scholar, author and advocate of disability studies. Her work focuses on feminist theories and disability studies. Garland-Thomson's work explores the societal perspective and representation of people with disabilities. "Feminist Disability Studies" is a groundbreaking essay by Garland-Thomson. The essay examines and explores the intersection of feminism and disability studies. It emphasizes how gender and disability are socially constructed. The essay also challenges the traditional views on body, identity and social inclusion. The key themes of "Feminist Disability Studies" are the intersection of feminism and disability, the concept of body, representation and gaze. Her work *Extraordinary Bodies* published in 1997 is considered as the founding text in the disability studies canon.

To explore the theory of feminist disability studies within the Indian context, this research also examines and analyzes the critically acclaimed work, "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism" (2002) by Anita Ghai.

Research objective

The story of *Ramayana* has been rewritten and reinterpreted in various forms, yet one aspect that remains unchanged is the depiction of the character Manthara. Words such as *an unattractive, impoverished woman* with a *hunchback* are often employed to depict her character. However, writers like Joseph and Neelakantan are confronting the prior stories of Manthara by allowing her to express herself despite her bodily disabilities. The objective of the article is to analyse the character of Manthara. To reach the desired objective a close-reading textual analysis of the short stories *Black Holes* by Sarah Joseph and *Manthara* by Anand Neelakantan are taken as the primary source of the research. The article also examines the theory of Feminist Disability Studies within the viewpoint of Western and Indian contexts. The research emphasizes to understand the stigma around disability and women.

Feminism and Feminist Disability Studies (FDS)

Feminism is an extensive spectrum of political and social movements that share a common goal to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes (Raina 2017, 3372). The fundamental idea of feminism is to pursue equality and justice for women in all aspects of life while establishing chances for women to have equal access to the resources that are typically available to men

(Raina 2017, 3372). The word feminism is derived from the French term feminisme. Nilika Mehrotra in her work, "Understanding Feminism in a Local Context" (2016), describes feminism as an ideology of women's movement itself aiming to create a world for women beyond simple women's liberation or equality. Historically, feminism began in the 19th century in the United States, where it was known as the women's movement. The movement aimed to advance the position of women. The movement included a varied array of groups focused on achieving social and political equality for both genders, particularly for women. A.J Jaggar in his 1983 acclaimed work, Feminist Politics and Human Nature, states that in the early 20th century 'feminism' in the United States was introduced to refer to one particular group of women's rights advocates, namely which ascribed uniqueness of women, the mystical experience of motherhood and women's special purity. The 19th and 20th century was marked as the beginning of the 'First Wave of Feminism'. The first wave focused on women's issues, particularly women's suffrage. The first wave neglected the issues of women of colour instead entirely focusing on the white women. As a response to the limitations of the first wave the 'Second Wave of Feminism' emerged in the 1960's which lasted through the 1980's. The second wave focused on social, economic and political inequalities. The principal argument of the second wave focused on workplace equality, economic independence, reproductive and sexual liberation, legal reforms, political representations and challenging the traditional gender roles. The slogan personal is political emphasizing the connection between women's individual experiences and larger social and political systems frequently links to this wave (Prakanshi 2024, 2). In light of the perceived limitations of the second wave of feminism, the 'Third Wave of Feminism' emerged in the 1990s. It aimed to incorporate conversations about race, class, and sexual orientation into the feminist movement. The third wave also questioned the idea of a singular experience of womanhood while simultaneously acknowledging that the overlapping identities of women shape their lives (Ibidem). The 'Fourth Wave of Feminism' arose around 2012 and focused on organizing and highlighting feminist concerns through digital media and technology. However, within the Indian context, the idea and definition of feminism differ from that of the Western world. In the Indian context, feminism requires a thorough examination of how people perceive and interpret it (Mehrotra 2001, 3). Indian feminist scholars contend that Indian women face

deprivation, exploitation, and oppression due to hierarchies related to caste, kinship, gender, and age, which complicates the potential for individualism.

Within the limitations and exclusion of feminism regarding the concept of disability and women, the theory of FDS emerged. Anita Ghai asserts that a closer acquaintance with the developing intellectual discourse on feminism indicated how the movement that originated essentially as a response to the oppression experienced by women excluded disabled women. In accordance with the World Health Organization, disability is described as an umbrella term that includes impairments, limitations in activities, and restrictions in participation. It comes from the interplay between people with health issues and social or environmental obstacles. In "Culture and Disability: Unheard Voices of Disabled People", the critic states that Disability Studies is an interdisciplinary area that aims at politicizing the disabled identity to confront the marginalization that disabled people are subjected to (Chaturvedi 2019, 67). Therefore, FDS is a theory which is drawn from both feminist studies and disability studies, challenging ableist and patriarchal norms that marginalize disabled women. Nasa Begum in her work, "Disabled Women and the Feminist Agenda" writes 'that the dual oppression of sexism and handicapism places disabled women in an extremely marginalized position' (Begum 1992,70); hence, highlighting the societal and hierarchical marginalization of women with non-normative bodies. Emerged as an inter-sectional field in the 1980's, FDS examines how gender and disability shape, identity, power and social structures. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in her work "Feminist Disability Studies", states that feminist disability studies are academic cultural work with a sharp political edge and a vigorous critical punch (Garland-Thomson 2005, 1557). The critic furthermore asserts that feminist disability studies seek to unsettle tired stereotypes about people with disabilities. The aim is to elucidate the complex connection between bodies and identities. It also seeks to de-naturalize and re-imagine disability. Feminism challenges the belief that femaleness is a natural form of physical and mental deficiency or constitutional unruliness (Garland-Thomson 2005, 1557). Likewise, Garland-Thomson articulates that feminist disability studies question the assumptions that disability is a flaw, lack, or excess and to do so, it defines disability broadly from a social rather than a medical perspective. In "Feminist Disability Studies", Garland-Thomson accentuates that disability is a cultural interpretation of human variation rather than an inherent inferiority, a pathology to cure, or an undesirable trait to eliminate; thus, signifying the disability concerning interactions between bodies and their social, physical and cultural surroundings (Garland-Thomson 2005, 1557).

The Indian view on feminist disability studies offers a different perspective than the Western view. Sameer Chaturvedi affirms that the marginalization of disabled people is culturally and contextually determined (Chaturvedi 2019, 67). Chaturvedi also implies that anthropological zeal suggests that the most important thing is to know how the life of a given individual or group is construed in a given cultural context (Chaturvedi 2019, 67). Within the Indian cultural context, disabled people sometimes are depicted as suffering the wrath of God, and being punished for misdeeds that either they or their families have committed, a kind of penance or retribution for past misdeeds (Ghai 2002, 51). Karma is a cultural construct (Obeyesekere 2006). Karma aims to reproduce a moral order that sees disability in a negative light (Chaturvedi 2019, 71). Karmic conceptualization of disability sees it as a suffering which disabled people have to go through as a result of misdeeds committed in their past lives (Ibidem). Consequently, in the Indian cultural context, there exists a connection between disability and Karma, since disability relates not just to nonnormative bodies but also to the outcomes of the past life.

Disability and Manthara

"hanta te kathayishyaami bharatah katham aishyati | kevalam ikshvaku rajyam tvam ca shroshyasi tat vacah ||" ["I shall now tell you a way by which Bharata alone will become the king of Ikshvaku dynasty. Listen to that."] (Valmiki *Ayodhya Kanda* 8.9)

The above-stated quotation is from the epic *Ramayana*. In the epic, Manthara uttered these words to Kaikeyi during the moment of Ram's coronation. She is a pivotal character in Valmiki's *Ramayana*, who is responsible for instigating the event that leads to Ram's exile and changing the course of the narration. Thus, her actions set the stage for the *Ayodhya Kanda* leading to Ram's departure for the forest for fourteen years. In *Ramayana*, Manthara's character is often interpreted as a symbol of envy and manipulation, an instigator of fate and the representative of negative influence on human nature (Sreekala B 2022, 17). Neelakantan in *Valmiki's Women* describes her as 'She is uncommonly ugly with a scar across her right cheek. She has a

hunchback and walks with difficulty.'(46). She is a woman with a non-normative body who comes from a financially marginal background in the social hierarchy. Therefore, as an underdog, it is easy to find a scapegoat in her so that they can save several faces (Sreekala B 2022, 17). Over the years, Manthara has been depicted as a hunchbacked servant who can provoke negative developments in the events of the *Ramayana*. However, the question persists: Was Manthara the true instigator, or is she simply a puppet in the hands of the royals? Anand Neelakantan and Sarah Joseph in their respective texts, *Valmiki's Women* and *Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala* gave voice to the voiceless character of Manthara. The writers presented her story with a new perspective, where she is the narrator of her life story.

Garland-Thomson in *Staring: How We Look* defines *staring* as, "an ocular response to what we don't expect to see. Novelty arouses our eyes. More than just looking, staring is an urgent eye jerk of intense interest."(3). The theory of *staring* can be better comprehended in connection with disabled women and the male gaze. Disabled women contend not only with how men look at women but also with how an entire society stares at disabled people stripping them of any semblance of resistance (Ghai 2002, 55). Ghai mentions that if the male gaze makes normal women feel like passive objects, the stare turns the disabled object into a grotesque sight. For instance, as soon as Manthara steps into King Aswapathi's palace, she is gazed at by those with conventional bodies (Neelakantan 2021, 49):

Beautiful women peeped out from the balconies... Some were rude enough to point at her and talk in hushed tones. Manthara could guess what they were saying. She was like a performing animal, exotic creature of indescribable ugliness. She suddenly felt conscious of her ragged clothes. Though she was sure that her emaciated body would arouse no lust in anyone's eyes, her instincts made her cover herself with the ragged blanket that she carried. (Neelakantan 2021, 49)

In this incident, Neelakantan attempts to depict the staring as a typical response from normative bodies when they encounter a non-normative body. Manthara's emotions and her act of covering herself with the torn blanket illustrate Garland-Thomson's ideas of staring and the male gaze.

Ghai (2002) in "Disabled Women: An Excluded Agenda of Indian Feminism", also asserts that women with disabilities are doubly constrained by the prevailing male gaze along with the cultural gaze that views them as objects for observation (55). FDS challenge the

limitations of the myth of a beautiful body that defines the impaired female body as *unfeminine* and *unacceptable*, therefore labelling them as *other*. 'Then for at least four days we will live like human beings, not like worms, but like human beings' (Joseph 2005, 106), these lines are spoken by Manthara in Joseph's *Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala*, the use of terms such as *worm* and *human beings* in one sentence illustrates Manthara's and her hunch-backed son's living condition and their desire to lead a life that meets societal standards. As both individuals are disabled, their living conditions are bleak and they are categorized as *other*.

Individuals with disabilities have a long history of facing mistreatment and living in solitude (Shakespeare 2000). Manthara was dwelling in solitude and seclusion on the streets prior to encountering Bhairava, who subsequently offered her the position of caretaker for the prince and princess of Kekaya, "In the twenty years of her existence, she was going to sleep under a roof for the first time" (Neelakantan 2021, 52).

Later, when Ram departed for his fourteen-year exile, Manthara became a scapegoat for Queen Kaikeyi's machinations, with the responsibility for the political turmoil laid squarely on her shoulders (Ibid, 93). This dynamic is aptly described in the words of Bhairava:

People want someone to blame. No one will go after Kaikeyi or anyone who is rich and powerful. They won't talk about the curse of Shravana Kumara's parents or the black deeds of Dasharatha Ugly, hunchbacked, old and without anyone to support you, you will be the ideal scapegoat. (Neelakantan 2021, 93)

As the blame for the unfortunate events was placed upon her, it was Manthara alone who bore the burnt of this responsibility, ultimately enduring both physical beatings and severe punishments at the hands of the Ayodhya nobles:

She had stepped into the palace courtyard in search of Valakan after her morning bath, her body smeared with red sandalwood paste and her silvery white hair loosened. ... It was at that moment that a man had rushed out and jumped at her, roaring like a bull. It was an unexpected attack and she had lost her balance. Before she could escape, tricking him, he began to drag her. She tried in vain to free herself by beating the ground with her hands and legs. Contact with the granite-paved courtyard bruised and broke her. (Joseph 2005, 100)

Therefore, this incident from the re-telling depicts the misery and plight of a disabled woman who is subjected to severe punishments, beatings and isolation.

By World Health Organization sexuality is described as including sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, and the social well-being associated with a person's sexuality. Individuals with disabilities face damaging societal stereotypes that DE-sexualize them, categorizing them as non-sexual, unable, or disinterested in sexual relationships. Lina Abu Habib suggests that there are many assumptions and prejudices about the non-normative bodies and one of the many assumptions and prejudices is that "disabled persons are 'sexless' and their life is affected solely by their disability" (Habib 1995, 49). In the Indian context, the cultural stereotype denies the role of motherhood for disabled women (Ghai 2002, 54). Another assumption about non-normative bodies is that societies and laws bestow the same rights to disabled men and women (Habib 1995, 50). However, it is regarded as untrue in the Indian context. When it comes to sexuality and marriage the disabled sons retain the possibility of marriage, as they are not gifts but the receivers of the gifts (Ghai 2002, 54). Culturally in India, disabled as well as non-disabled men seek normal women as wives, whereas the disabled as well as non-disabled girls are compensated with heavy dowry (Ibidem).; thus, leading to the double discrimination of disabled women. Furthermore, this could be understood concerning the character of Manthara. Bhairava repeatedly expresses his love for Manthara, yet she continuously turns down his marriage proposal. Before leaving for the battlefield with Dasrath's army, Bhairava wrote a letter for Manthara. Being an illiterate woman, she presumed that Kaikeyi had written the letter. She was mocked when the palace dance girls read her letter:

As the young woman started reading it, she burst into laughter. She passed the letter to her friends and they laughed together. 'How much trouble we make to attract men, and see this hunchbacked old hag. She the letter her lover has written to her,' the young girl said. (Neelakantan 2021, 120)

The laughter of dancing girls illustrates the traditional societal expectations regarding non-normative bodies. Their laughter signifies that they are mocking Manthara's deformed body and also conveying the societal norms that suggest a normative body has better prospects for marriage, love, and sex than a deformed one; thus highlighting the society's assumptions and prejudices regarding disabled women's

sexuality. According to Garland-Thomson, disability can also be perceived as, 'painful, comfortable, familiar, alienating, bonding isolating, challenging, infuriating or ordinary'. The uniqueness of non-normative bodies can be seen as a personal misfortune that the individual must strive to 'make peace with' (Begum 1992, 71).

Modern frameworks depict individuals with disabilities as having a medical identity, viewed through a health and welfare lens. Regrettably, the West emphasizes the clinical aspects of disability, which also influences policy significantly. Whereas, in the Indian context, disability is also regarded as the result of the misdeed committed in past lives, thus, disability is associated with Karma (Chaturvedi 2019, 71). As mentioned earlier, Karmic beliefs focus on creating a moral framework, indicating that actions like supporting monks, carrying out rituals, going on pilgrimages, engaging in temple building, and maintaining a disciplined lifestyle are seen as good Karma, promoting a disability-free rebirth (Ibid, 72). In the textual retellings Valmiki's Women and Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala, the character of Manthara is frequently shown engaging in prayers, visiting temples and offering alms to the beggars. charity and philanthropy have Consequently. remained predominant response to the predicament of disability (Ghai 2002, 51). Ergo, the situation worsens because in addition to hopeless life conditions individuals with disabilities frequently face cultural narratives characterized by negativity and stigma. In the case of disabled women, the stigma exceeds the stigma of women, thus leading to double marginalization of the position of disabled women.

Conclusion

Both the re-tellings, Valmiki's Women and Retelling the Ramayana: Voices from Kerala are modern renderings of the story of Manthara. The re-tellings provide the textual analysis of the voiceless character of Manthara. The re-tellings also contribute to the quintessential aspect of the modern interpretation of Manthara's character who remained sidelined and voiceless in the original epic Ramayana. Neelakantan and Joseph's work showcased a feminist approach to the character depiction of Manthara. Joseph's Manthara is bold, fearless and despite being impoverished knows how to benefit and stand up for herself. Whereas, Neelakantan's Manthara is opinionated and has a voice of her own. Towards, the end of the stories Black Holes and Manthara, the protagonist feels despondent and shattered due to the treachery of

Queen Kekayi. She opposes the traditional dynamic of a master and servant by openly criticizing the queen, whom she considers to be her daughter. Neelakantan and Joseph's Manthara is very much aware of her position in the social, cultural and societal hierarchy. She is accepting of her deformities, yet she possesses a zeal to live life without societal norms.

This article additionally demonstrates the theory of FDS in the context of Western and Indian views. From a Western standpoint, the understanding of women and disability is linked to medical considerations, whereas, from the Indian standpoint, the idea is viewed through the lens of *Karma* and the wrongdoings of past lives. In the Indian context, the disability is interconnected with the Karmic deeds of the past life. However, on the contrary, the Western viewpoint focuses on the theory of disability as a *flaw* or a *lack* in the physicality of the normative bodies. The assumption associated with the disabled women and their sexuality is analyzed in the view of Manthara, who is a woman with a facial deformity and a hunchback. This assumption is further explored in the context of Indian and Western perspectives. The West views the lack of sexual urges as a result of deformity and the lack of societal acceptance of a disabled person. On the other hand, culturally in the Indian context, for disabled men, the prospect of marriage is feasible in comparison to disabled women. This further highlights the double marginalization of disabled women, hence, adding to the stigma around women and disability. The article also examines the lives of marginalized and isolated individuals with nonnormative bodies, highlighting that in both the West and India, the experiences of disabled women continue to be characterized by isolation and loneliness. It is often explored that the non-normative bodies are subjected to harsh punishments and beatings from their surroundings. In summary, this study has shown how non-normative bodies continue to face ongoing mistreatment from society, resulting in their discrimination and marginalization within the patriarchal structure.

This study also underscores the need to prioritize the theory of feminism and disability collectively. Where feminist disability studies aim to reconsider and re-examine able-bodiedness to develop transformative environments. Focusing on and excluding the non-normative or disabled body contributes to the social and environmental obstacles faced by disabled women, who are already marginalized by societal standards. Moving forward the study also emphasizes the re-

portray of characters like Manthara in popular literary genres. As these side-lined characters need to be re-evaluated and perceived from a fresh and modern perspective. As times evolve, epic tales need to be modified to provide a platform for the voiceless and marginalized figures such as Manthara.

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Refugeetude and its discontents: Anders Lustgarten's Lampedusa

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Abstract: Anders Lustgarten's *Lampedusa* is a play that addresses the contemporary issue of refugeetude through the parallel stories of two distinct characters. The play humanises the refugee crisis by focusing on Stefano and Denise's personal experiences. Rather than presenting migrants as statistics or political pawns, the play delves into their individual stories, struggles, and aspirations. Through Stefano and Denise, audiences gain insight into the human cost of migration and the challenges refugees and host communities face. *Lampedusa* also highlights the structural injustices that perpetuate the refugee crisis. The play rigorously investigates the fundamental causes of migration, including poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation, while elucidating the role of Western nations in aggravating these challenges. Through Stefano and Denise's experiences, the audience confronts the systemic barriers and inequalities that prevent refugees from finding safety and security. This paper aims to discuss the refugee crisis in the play in light of Vinh Nguyen's concept of refugeetude.

Keywords: contemporary British theatre, Anders Lustgarten, *Lampedusa*, Vinh Nguyen, refugeetude

Introduction

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines a refugee as "a person who has been forced to leave their country or home, because there is a war or for political, religious or social reasons" (1271). According to the United Nations General Assembly (1951), a refugee is a "person who has been forced to leave his or her home and seek refuge elsewhere, especially in a foreign country, from war, religious persecution, political troubles, the effects of a natural disaster, etc.; a displaced person" (1951). Vinh Nguyen, "[a]ffixing the suffix -tude to

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the word refugee" invokes "past projects of political recuperation namely, negritude, coolitude, and migritude - that take social experiences of marginalization and oppression and recast them as states of being or agency" (Nguyen 2019, 110). According to Nguyen refugeetude "is a continued state of being and a mode of relationality" (Ibidem). In this context, it signifies an important redirection and an epistemic modification in our understanding and definition of the term refugee. Refugeetude is a new name that defines and moulds the traditional concept of refugee. It starts with refugees but differs significantly from refugees. It is not a humanist movement to rescue a marginalised, excluded, stifled, and dispossessed position. Instead, it is to look at refugeetude a new from a different angle and ask how it can give rise to being and politics. (Ibid, 111) Refugeetude is actually a state of heightened consciousness that enables individuals to recognize the impact of capitalist refuge on the material life of refugees. As a complex concept, refugeetude manifests in various ways, highlighting the multifaceted nature of displacement and the challenges that refugees face daily. "Refugeetude, then, turns away from readily available discourses of victimhood and commonplace knowledge of refugees to highlight how refugee subjects gain awareness, create meaning, and imagine futures" (Ibidem). The phrase denotes an understanding of the structural obstacles that refugees face in this context, such as the difficulty in obtaining necessities like food, shelter, and medical care, as well as the social and economic disparities that influence their lives. According to Nguyen (Ibid, 119), comprehending the refugee experience requires an understanding of the concept of refugeetude. It offers a deeper understanding of the difficulties faced by refugees and highlights their perseverance in the face of hardship. We can create more effective policies and interventions that uphold the dignity and well-being of refugees while advancing social justice by expanding our knowledge of them.

Refugeetude in Anders Lustgarten's Lampedusa

Refugeetude is a set of intricate behavioural, emotional, and cognitive processes that help people remain human in the face of the world community's cruel treatment of refugees. According to Nguyen (2019, 127), it entails detecting and analysing environmental cues, controlling emotions, coming up with original solutions, and acting to adjust to unfavourable circumstances. As refugees negotiate the difficulties of displacement, resettlement, and integration, their distinct experiences,

needs, and goals are reflected in the dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon known as refugeetude. One of the most important global issues of our time is refugeetude, which is the subject of Anders Lustgarten's *Lampedusa*, which had its world premiere on April 8, 2015, at London's Soho Theatre. The play, which debuted at the High Tide Festival on September 10, 2015, was well received during its run in London. It examines the intricacies of the present refugee crisis, providing a distinct viewpoint on the matter that is thought-provoking and educational. Lustgarten's work is a prime example of how art can spark important conversations and increase public awareness of social and political issues.

But for migrants and people everywhere, a terrible thing has happened in the last few days. This was the picture of Alan as a baby. We are reminded of the frailty of life and the pressing need for compassion in our world by this photograph, which shows "three-yearold Alan Kurdi lying face down on a beach in Bodrum, Turkey" (Silverman 2015), as the waves gently embrace him. In the middle of conflict, his little body bravely stands against the vastness of the sea and represents the fortitude and bravery of refugees who fearlessly seek a better future. The tragedy of Alan Kurdi highlights the severe effects of the ongoing refugee humanitarian crisis. A young Syrian child's lifeless body was found washed up on a shore in Bodrum, Turkey, in September 2015. People all across the world were moved by the eerie picture of Alan lying face down on the sand, which sparked increased awareness of the difficulties faced by those escaping Middle Eastern conflict, especially the Syrian civil war. The scene of Syrian child's dead body on the beach swiftly came to represent the tragedy and great human suffering that millions of refugees around the world endure. Widespread public indignation, demands for action, and demands that governments take more steps to address the refugee crisis were all triggered by the situation. The picture acted as a sobering reminder of the human cost of war, displacement, and the inadequate response of the international community to the needs of refugees. Deeply affected by this catastrophic event, Stephen Atkinson, the Artistic Director and co-founder of High Tide, decided to stage the play by the Sea. Atkinson's experiential strategy had a significant impact on the audience. As he confirms:

As we started rehearsals for *Lampedusa* in March 2015, the refugee crisis, then referred to as the migrant crisis, started to headline the TV news. [...] In September when we were again in rehearsals for the High Tide Festival run,

public opinion finally shifted away from the growing fear and xenophobia. Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy, washed up ashore in Bodrum, Turkey. His limp body lay flat, face down in the sand. [...] On the opening night, with the wind rushing the dome and the sound of the sea outside, one audience member stood up mid-show and promptly fainted. The designer, Lucy Osborne and I staged *Lampedusa* in a wooden amphitheatre, with the audience sat on benches corkscrewing upwards, and the cast sat amongst them. Some audiences cried. Some were motivated to action. Others were affronted by Anders's mode of direct politics. Anders is admirably uncynical. (Atkinson 2016, xiii)

Lampedusa delves into the entangled realities of the refugee crisis and the global financial crisis. It explores the hope that emerges unexpectedly from these crises and highlights the different forms of communication and empathy discovered. The play presents two contrasting parts of Europe: Lampedusa, a picturesque island renowned for its beaches, where migrants often lose their lives in pursuit of a better future, and London, one of the world's largest cities, where people without financial means are often excluded. Lampedusa is a powerful play that presents the intertwined tales of Denise and Stefano. Despite living in different countries and facing unique struggles, they both experience the harsh realities of trying to make ends meet. While Denise works as a foreclosure clerk in London. Stefano dedicates himself to rescuing refugees who arrive at Lampedusa Island, Italy. He "dreads especially the boatlands of women and children who will be abondened mid-voyage by smugglers who tell them that there is one last payment owing, and leave them to float, possibly to be rescued, but also possibly to drown" (Donald 2018, 197). After years of unemployment, Stefano is forced to accept work and initially focuses solely on his own troubles. Because of the unemployment, Stephano has to do "the job no-one else will take" (Lustgarten 2015, 7) and has to witness the life no one has to live. However, he eventually befriends Modibo, a Malian refugee, he meets during work. Similarly, Denise cannot ignore the hand of friendship extended by Carolina, whose house she is foreclosing. Throughout the play, Stefano and Denise encounter the faces of loved ones who have passed away unexpectedly. The story is a poignant exploration of how hope can blossom even in the face of adversity, drawing striking parallels between the lives of these two characters.

Lampedusa starts with Stefano's comments about the long history of human migration across the Mediterranean Sea. The play portrays the effects of migration on the human experience through history:

This is where the world began. This was Caesar's highway. Hannibal's road to glory. These were the trading routes of the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians, the Ottomans and the Byzantines... We all come from the sea and back to the sea we will go. The Mediterranean gave birth to the world. Step into the shoes of those whose job it is to enforce our harsh new rules: an Italian coastguard and a payday lender from Leeds. How do they do it? And what happens to them? (Lustgarten 2015, 3)

This quotation embodies Nguyen's explanation of refugeetude. Nguyen indicates that "Redirecting dominant perception of refugee as a temporary legal designation and a condition of social abjection toward refugee as an enduring creative force, refugeetude opens up new ways of conceptualizing refugee subjects and the relationalities that extend beyond the parameters of refugeeness, generating connections to past, present, and future forms of displacement" (Nguyen 2019, 110-111). In this quotation at the beginning of the play, Stefano states that the Mediterranean has been the home to great leaders and civilisations. While in the past it gave life to people, today the Mediterranean has ended lives, and death has begun to swim in its waters instead of birth. Both the Mediterranean and Europe represent death for migrants: "And do the migrants not understand Europe is fucked? And Italy is double-fucked? And the south of Italy is triplefucked?" (Lustgarten 2015, 9). The regional geography and the social and economic crises experienced in the small island of Lampedusa and the social and financial crises in global geographies are intertwined with the movement of mass migration. Stefano heavily criticises the migration movement between local and international geographies (Gallo 2016, 33). The confliction between regional and global geographies is also observed among the characters "while Stephano is forced to salvage dead bodies, and his brother works as a chef in London" (Ibidem). Stephano also explains murderous aspect of migration: "bloated corpses from the wreckage of flimsy boats, including the tragic shipwreck near the Mediterranean island of Lambedusa in October 2013 which killed 450 people" (Mount 2015). Refugeetude refers to the deconstruction of time, space, and borders. In this context, we can observe the situation of memories and refugees being together with today's refugees. Connection from the past to present also reflects exploitation, displacement, marginalisation, and the undesirable conditions. What the imperial powers experienced in the past is also experienced today.

Nguyen also describes all these experiences using the term 'refugeography. Refugeography expands the meaning of the concept of refugees by defining its experiential and spatial geographies. It fills the concept of 'refugee' with a plethora of individuals, places, and experiences, offering an alternative way of understanding a category that, for many, signifies emptiness and incompleteness (Nguyen 2016, 171-172). Refugeography is important in perceiving the suffering experienced by refugee(s), forced displacement, political effects, and geographical changes between the past and present. People are forced to migrate to other geographies in order to get rid of the difficulties they have experienced and witnessed, such as economy, war, destruction, and genocide. In the geography they migrate to, if they are lucky and do not drown, they are put in the position of a despised and unwanted subject as they strive to hold on. "The term locates the refugee within and without the nation, in the past and the present, and as formative to an understanding of subjectivities and communities that lie on the horizon" (Ibid, 172). In the play, Lustgarten situates the characters Stephano and Denise (British-Chinese) within their nation and different nations. Refugeography can geographically describe the survival (selected others), disappearance (deselected others), or loss of life of migrants who are categorised as refugees. Unfortunately, migrants are humiliated or used with rising racism and "fucking migrants" (Lustgarten 2015, 11). Within this context, Denise indicates that "They take all the little things that people do to make a good impression, the things we do to prove that we are human beings, and they use them to fuck you. That's the cruelty, the breathtaking cruelty of it" (Ibid, 16).

People always search for a new way to live better and cope with difficulties. In the play the Italian Modibo plays a song titled *Lampedusa*, Stefano explains it as: "It's meant to be about all the people who've come here seeking a better life. The drowning and the terror. The hopes and the futures. I don't know if I can hear all that in there personally, but it's beautiful" (Ibid, 14). The song guides to refugeetude, which signifies new shelters and integration for people from different countries and geographies. Stephano also shares Modipo's thoughts about selected and 'dysselected' (Knittelfelder 2023, 117) others' hopes, motivations, and intentions:

He turns to me and, very quietly, he says that it's deliberate. That our glorious leaders want the migrants to drown, as a deterrent, a warning to others. They want them to see TV footage of the bloated bodies and the

rotted faces of those who trod the watery way of death before them, so they'll hesitate before they set foot in one of those rickety little deathtraps.

And he says they do see – and they get I anyway. They know what the dangers are, but they keep coming and coming because, in his words, 'if those men in their offices knew what we were coming from, they'd know we will never, ever stop' (Lustgarten 2015, 19).

Migrants have to risk their money and their life or like Stefano and Denise, people have to work to find solutions to their economic crises. They are in search of new hope, stories and a brighter future. Refugeetude fosters a sense of shelter and awareness that "might be a catalyst for thinking, feeling, and doing with others" (Nguyen 2019, 111) offering them fullfillment, consciousness, and a sense of coexistence. The playwright clarifies that "Syrians are the latest thing. Palestinians last summer when Gaza got bombed. Egyptians and Libyans the past couple of years. We read the papers and we see a disaster, a crackdown and a famine. We say: 'They'll be here next." (Lustgarten 2015, 8). Unfortunately, like Aylan Kurdi, many children lost their lives and Syrians were not the latest thing and this quote was a foreshadowing for Gaza; nearly 50000 people were killed in Palestine, and they could not reach the sea. For that reason, people need refugee tide and consciousness to create a sense of shelter against "racial, capital, and mobile inequality" (Nguyen 2019, 119). In his plays. Lustgarten generally aims to reflect that the society "in which he lives must undergo radical change, a revolutionary transformation" 2021, 124). Refugeetude intends to portray revolutionary intention and radical change to save migrants from xenophobia and humiliation.

Conclusion

Anders Lustgarten's *Lampedusa* is a compelling and thought-provoking exploration of the refugee crisis, offering a nuanced portrayal of the human stories at its heart. Through its themes of empathy, identity, and structural injustice, the play questions audiences to face the complexities of migration and encourages the pursuit towards a more inclusive and just society. *Lampedusa* is a call to action for social change and activism. Through its depiction of the refugee crisis, the play prompts audiences to acknowledge their privilege and take responsibility for addressing the injustices faced by migrants. *Lampedusa* hopes to encourage group action to build a more compassionate and just world by igniting discussion and increasing

awareness. Refugeetude represents the connection between marginalised and assimilated people, as well as those who band together to fight against death and suffering. The marginalised friendship and partnership of destiny are portrayed in the play. Through refugeetude, people can develop awareness and discover purpose in order to mould their new futures. Lustgarten's play depicts a universal tragedy of refugees, shattering the conventional wisdom of refugee experience and memory in order to establish a universal consciousness.

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A textual analysis of violence in Christy Lefteri's *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

K. Mithun and C. Govindaraj*

Abstract: The novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* (2019) is written with the background of civil war that happens in the country of Syria which started in 2011 and continues even now. People living in the Syria try to flee from it so as to lead a peaceful life at other parts of the world. Christy Lefteri is the author of this war based novel. She is a contemporary writer who lives with her daughter in England. The objective of this study is to interpret war time violence that takes place in the chosen novel in the light of Sustainable Development Goals. The researcher has studied this novel of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* using textual analysis as research method and attempted this framework. The findings of this novel include that civil war happening within a country disturbs the peace of human kind and ignites violence on children, women and other people. Women like Afra are abused sexually, parents had to lose their sons and daughters and further, the citizens of the country are deprived of their access to basic needs, right to live in peaceful place and right to lead a decent life.

Keywords: *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, Christy Lefteri, violence, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), refugee, women

Introduction

Christy Lefteri is a contemporary writer. She lives with her daughter in England. Her parents were refugees who merely escaped from the civil war that happened in Cyprus. They left the country of Cyprus and settled as refugees in London. Now, Christy Lefteri has become citizen of England. She did her Undergraduate, Post-graduate and Doctoral degree in creative writing from Brunel University at London. She is now working as a Professor of Creative Writing in Brunel University, London. She has written a series of novels like *A Watermelon*, *a Fish*

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and a Bible (2010), The Beekeeper of Aleppo (2019), Songbirds (2021), Refugee Tales IV (2021) and The Book of Fire: A Novel (2023). The researcher has taken her novel The Beekeeper of Aleppo (2019) for analysis.

The novel *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is written with the background of civil war that happens in the country of Syria which started in 2011 and continues even now. People living in the Syria try to flee from it so as to lead a peaceful life somewhere. The characters in chosen novel mainly include two couples namely Mr. Nuri & Mrs. Afra Nuri and Mr. Mustafa & Mrs. Dahab Mustafa, Aya, the child of Mustafa and Dahab, and both the couples had lost their male child in the ongoing civil war. Some of the other characters include Hazim, a refugee from Morocco, Diomande, a refugee from Ivory Coast, Elias, a refugee from Turkey, Angeliki and Lucy Fisher, the social worker who helps refugees in getting asylum in London. Primarily, this novel deals with two couples named Mr. Nuri Ibrahim & Mrs. Afra Ibrahim, Mr. Mustafa and Mrs. Dahab and few others who try to escape to London so as to escape the cruelties of war that takes place in Aleppo in the country of Syria.

This novel is chosen by researcher for its exploration as it addresses the contemporary problems that the world faces. The studies so conducted till now on this novel have not advocated any of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and its targets as a conceptual framework. The researcher has attempted to focus on select novel using SDG that lays emphasis on the eradication of violence and betterment of refugees.

Methodology

The research objectives for this research article are:

- 1. To find the space for SDG in the novel to be followed for the betterment of refugees.
- 2. To find the space for SDG that addresses eradication of violence in the novel.
- 3. To highlight the various issues like poverty, unemployment, homelessness of the refugees through the novel.

United Nations organization formed after the Second World War has its origin from the year 1945. It ensures to maintain peace and avoid war and bloodshed among the countries of this world. Sustainable Development Goals is an initiative of UN with aim to transform the world. Sustainable Development Goals are a series of 17

goals and 169 targets adopted by the organization. Every aspect of human life has been addressed in the list of comprehensive 17 goals.

Sustainable Development Goals focusing on eradication of violence includes,

'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels' (SDG 16) the second target of SDG 16 says that, 'The inclusion of specific target in the agenda for Sustainable Development to end all forms of violence against children gives renewed impetus towards the realization of the right of every child to live free from fear, neglect, abuse and exploitation' (United Nations 2015).

Several other SDG's targets address the violence against women and children includes the second target within fifth goal which vows to, "Eliminate violence against women and girls: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" (Ibidem).

Some of the SDGs that are associated with refugees and chosen for the study include No Poverty (SDG 1), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) are analysed with respect to the chosen work in this study.

Discussion

Mr. Nuri Ibrahim and Mrs. Afra Ibrahim are husband and wife living in the city of Aleppo. Aleppo is the second most important city in the country of Syria, next to Damascus the capital of the country. To the west of Aleppo is Syrian Desert whereas in the east it is Mediterranean sea. Mr. Nuri hails from the desert side (Western part) of the city whereas; Afra hails from coastal region (eastern part) of Aleppo. A river named Queiq is also located on the southern side of it and grassy lands in the northern side. Thus, Aleppo as a place features in the novel.

Afra loses her vision due to a bomb explosion that killed her son in the civil war. As a result, Nuri has to accompany her always and cares for her always. Afra is a good painter by birth and she did painting as her profession before losing her sight in the civil war. Further, Firas, son of Mustafa was also killed in the war as result of which they left the country, "Yesterday I went for a walk to the river, and I watched as four soldiers lined up a group of boys. They blindfolded them and shot

them, one by one, and they threw their bodies in the river" (Lefteri 2019, 37). The consequence of war can be felt in river Queiq that is in Bustan al-Qasr. One could see dead and rotten bodies of people floating in it. People of Aleppo came to search for the dead bodies of their loved ones. On finding a huge number of dead bodies, the volunteers took them to a neighboring school. Since the place was considered safe in a belief that it will not be bombed by rebellious people or soldiers who fought for government. Thus the war made Afra to lose her eyes and son, many people to face death.

The people have witnessed violence through their physical eyes such that a dream about bloodshed is common in the life of people living in a country affected by civil war. Definitely anyone in that chaotic world, they will dream of utopian land or Celestial Land since they feel their own country like most cruel place to live. Thus their mental spaces have been infused with violence.

The violence makes people to loss their identity in this earth. Definitely Aleppo is place of identity for Mr.Nuri, Mrs.Afra, Mr.Mustafa and Mrs.Dahab, "Where there are bees there are flowers, and where there are flowers there is new life and hope" (Ibid, 30). People living in the countries where civil war occurs, they try to flee from the country and escape to other countries trying to find solace there. Nuri and Afra try to do the same. Thus, violence removes the basic identity people do own.

People here don't have safety to work and live in their own country due to civil war. Nuri is a beekeeper by profession and he learnt the art of apiculture (honey farming) from his cousin Mustafa. Mustafa works as a Professor in Damascus University and he had learnt the art of beekeeping from his grandparents. Further, both did the job of Bee farming and as a result, it reared them much products like honey, cosmetics which fetched them good revenue. The condition of those who try to flee as seek solace outside one's own country are very worse than the bees and birds which has more freedom than a human being to fly and cross boundaries wherever and whenever it wants. Thus, violence in their country makes people to lose their profession and migrate in order to save their lives.

Manmade violence is inflicted on the environmental space of Aleppo. The militants and people of Aleppo use weapons and other artilleries in the war, which makes the air, land and water of the country severely gets affected. Sustainable use of environment is questioned by use of weapons like artilleries. This kind of environment

violence happens is in Aleppo too, "but, as the years passed, the desert was slowly growing, the climate becoming harsh, rivers drying up, farmers struggling; only the bees were drought-resistant" (Ibid, 12). Due to man centered moves taken by men, government and militant groups the environment gets devastated. Thus violence destroys the natural space in Aleppo.

Mustafa had a friend in Aleppo, who was working as Professor of Sociology. He went to England and settled there just three years before. Mustafa is also a well learned man and professor by profession could have gone with him. But because of the love and passion towards the bees and his land he was reluctant to do so. However the civil war that broke out in the country of Syria made him to think vice versa. Now, he is forced to take that move to leave his country. As during the course of war, someone has set fire on all his beehives. Mustafa and his wife Mrs. Dahab along with their daughter Aya decided to leave Syria and migrate as refugee to London. Violence influences and guides people to take heart aching decision.

The violence seen and experienced by people of Aleppo are as follows, "A bomb dropped in the darkness and the sky flashed and I helped Afra to get ready for bed" (Ibid, 43). People living in countries affected by civil wars have to awaken at the sound of bombs and it serves as an alarm that they have to move to safer places. People who successfully migrate to countries as refugee are the guiding and motivational force for the remaining people to reach safer destination whichever the country offer asylum for refugees. Mr. Mustafa is one such person who successfully reaches UK and he gives awareness that, "Whenever the bombs were silent, the birds came out to sing" (Ibid, 35). He has to give instructions to Nuri and Afra to have a safe plight to London as refugees. Mustafa and his family have already reached Yorkshire in UK after undergoing huge trouble. During their journey to London, Nuri and Afra had to experience violence on physical bodies as well as in their mind. They had to mingle with smugglers and refugees from various other countries with whom they sail. They could see violence being inflicted on humans through the landscape. Everywhere they could bloodstains, dead bodies, cities and villages under the control of rebellious people, armed men or military of the government. "I remembered the dogs eating human corpses in the fields where the roses used to be, and somewhere else in the distance I heard a wild screech, metal on metal, like a creature being dragged towards death" (Ibid, 44). The path to next destination weren't easy for them. From the blood stained city of Aleppo they had to get through Turkey, Greece so as to reach England. Women had the fear of being sexually abused in the journey,

There were burnt cars, lines of filthy washing hanging from abandoned terraces, electric wires dangling low over the streets, bombed-out shops, blocks of flats with their roofs blown off, piles of trash on the pavements. It all stank of death and burnt rubber. In the distance smoke rose, curling into the sky. I felt my mouth dry, my hands clench and shake, trapped by these distorted streets. In the land beyond, the villages were burnt, people flooding out like a river to get away, the women in terror because paramilitaries were on the loose and they feared being raped. (Lefteri 2019, 44–45)

Mr. Nuri and Mrs. Afra Nuri reach the Island of Leros located in Greece, "This island was a leper colony once...This place was like a Nazi concentration camp. People were caged and chained without names or identities. The children here were abandoned, tied to their beds all day" (Ibid, 165). Then, they manage to reach the city of Piraeus, one of the important harbor city in the country of Greece,

But I woke up in the middle of the night to the sound of screaming, and a whistling in the sky, a bomb tearing through the darkness. I sat upright, my body wet, my head pounding, the darkness around me pulsating. I saw the faint outline of a window through a bedsheet, the light of the moon streaming in. I saw Afra's face fuzzy in the darkness and slowly remembered where I was. I reached out to hold her hand. There were no bombs. We were not in Aleppo. We were safe in Athens, in an old school. (Ibid, 203)

Mr. Nuri and Mrs. Afra Nuri reach Athens, the capital city of Greece where, Nuri and Afra were introduced to a agent named Mr. Fotakis, a smuggler who raped visually challenged Afra taking advantage, when Nuri went to work without locking the door of the house they stayed,

I remember the key that I forgot on the coffee table of the smuggler's apartment, I remember driving through the streets of Athens and not turning back. I am shaking now. I fight it, push the thought out. I realise I have forgotten to love her. [...] 'I am sorry I forgot the key'. She doesn't say anything but she wraps her arms around me so that I can smell the roses, and then I can feel her crying on my chest (Ibid, 354).

Through this incident, the struggles faced by refugee women are evident. Nuri and Afra had to tolerate all this in a hope of good and promising life inorder to reach destined location of Heathrow Airport in London.

Counting on the instructions from Mustafa and Dahab, Nuri and Afra desire to settle in London taking the same pathway as them, "To stay in the UK as a refugee you must be unable to live safely in any part of your own country because you fear persecution there" (Ibid, 57). However, violence and persecution is prominent for refugees at any part of the world because, wherever people go they still carry their own burden within them. This shellshock experience, dreams and hallucination can be seen in the life of the characters, especially in their mind, which traumatizes the refugees.

But the sound of chattering people moving around me, phones ringing from the cubicles behind the desk, children laughing... I hear the sound of a bomb ripping through the sky, glass shattering... 'Are you OK, sir?' I look up. There is a flash and a crashing sound. I kneel down and cover my ears. I feel a hand on my back, then there is water. (Ibid, 132–133)

The role of social worker, NGO's, Lawyers, Human Rights Organization that is much needed to anyone in the country affected by civil wars like Aleppo or in any other kind of wars. Lucy Fisher is one such person who could plead for the cause of innocent and common people. Many immigrants who wish to seek asylum in London approach her, "I try to imagine how many people she has worked with, how many she has seen sent back, how many questions people have asked her, how everyone must hold on to her as if she is a lifeboat on a stormy sea" (Ibid, 107). The innocent and common people if they have to save themselves and their family from the violence that takes place in their native country, they need the help of people like Lucy Fisher inorder to stay safe and seek provisions for living a good life as stated in SDG number 16 as "provide access to justice for all" (United Nations 2015). Nuri and Afra were no way different from such people who seek humanitarian aid. They meet her where she guides them in everything about the process of claiming asylum in London. They were informed that they should meet an Immigration officer to attend interview. She requested them to be attentive and careful to answer any question they raise. Thus the characters in the novel find aid from humanitarian volunteers who advocates for refugees and uplift refugees. Finally the people from the violence filled space of Aleppo, Mr. Nuri Ibrahim, Mrs. Afra Ibrahim and Mr. Mustafa & Mrs. Dahab all reach unite together in London.

Conclusion

United Nations has adopted these sustainable goals binding on all countries, so that every country of the world have to ensure that they reach sustainable growth and let a peaceful life and also live the earth as possession to the next generations. The findings of the novel include that civil war happening within a country disturbs the peace of human kind and ignites violence on children, women and other people. Women like Afra are abused sexually, parents had to lose their sons and daughters and further, the citizens of the country are deprived of their access to basic needs, right to live in peaceful place and right to lead a decent life. Thus, the researcher has studied this novel of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* using textual analysis as research method and attempted a new framework to read the novel in the light of SDGs that address war time violence and the issues related with refugees. The scope for this study can be extended by employing various new critical theories that deals with peace.

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Equilibrium to new equilibrium: A study on Rebecca Ross's *The Queen's Rising* through the lens of Todorov's narrative theory

Hemalatha S. and Ramya Niranjani S.*

Abstract: All human beings seek a balanced life in the world which is achieved when one undergoes various stages in life from either equilibrium or disequilibrium. The transition from equilibrium to disequilibrium plays an intrinsic role in the personal growth of humans. Tzvetan Todorov, a Bulgarian literary theorist, proposes the narrative theory of fantasy to explore the stages of equilibrium in fantasy and other genres. Narrative theory provides a lens to discover how narratives play a major role in blurring the boundary between fantasy and reality. His theory enriches the perception of literature as an artistic expression and an impression of the human quest for balance. This theory is a systematic study to analyse the structure, organization, and meaning of literary works that reflect the complexities of life. Rebecca Ross is an American young adult fantasy writer whose writings explore the journey of young adults who face the challenges of the equilibrium theory and transformations in the world to achieve harmony in life. This research article analyses Rebecca Ross's The Queen's Rising (2018) through Todorov's equilibrium theory. The novel is set with the characters having an equilibrium stage of life, hindered by disruptions that transform them as they progress with the restoration of harmony and purpose in their life. Her narration reflects how the characters travel through various phases of life, crossing impediments to attain a balanced life through selfrealisation and resilience. It shows how Ross's novel spotlights the narrative construction in terms of emotion and moral growth. It exemplifies the narrative structure that bridges the gap between the real and the unreal.

Keywords: Rebecca Ross, Todorov, equilibrium, disruption, recognition, resolution, new equilibrium

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Introduction

Every individual strives to lead a balanced life in the world. Literature guides human beings to explore this equilibrium and helps them navigate life's complexities through engaging stories. It provides various narratives to analyse characters' difficulties amidst mixed emotions and challenges in their journey. Literary works offer escapism and thought-provoking ideas of reality to equip readers to trace possible ways to acquire a harmonious life to survive with equilibrium. Gerard Genette, a French literary theorist argues that literary discourse is "produced and developed according to structures it can transgress only because it finds them, even today, in the field of its language and style" (quoted in Howard 1973, 8). According to him, literary texts are shaped by the former works which overlook the cultural and literary landscape and transgression is an act of being creative to redefine literary works. The term 'narratology' is a translation of the French word 'narratologie' coined by Todorov in his work Grammaire du Décaméro which refers to the "structural analysis of narrative" (Prince 1995), and it is defined as "the study of structure in narratives" ("Narratology" Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Other terms like "narrating, narrative, narratable, narrativity, tellability, narrative text and story" (Zupan Sosič 2022, 5) came into existence during the second half of the twentieth century. Roland Barthes, a French literary essavist and critic states that "there are countless forms of narrative in the world" (Ibid.) in his An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative and this statement extends the boundaries of the narrative.

Narratology is a powerful tool that helps the readers understand the art of storytelling and interpret and engage effectively with the text. A narrative is a way of thinking or exploring the experience of human beings and conveying a particular concept or idea with the general laws of nature. It engages them in meaning-making processes and helps them fix a literary work within its context. Theories based on literature and culture have asserted culture as a central element for narrative, which makes the readers understand what is happening around them and their perceptions by comparing the circumstances and events in the text. Narrative theory is flourishing in North America, Canada, the U.K., France, Germany, Scandinavia, Belgium, Israel, and China. This narrative theory provides "a well-structured, systematic theoretical approach and an elaborate set of analytical categories and models for describing narrative phenomena, roles and effects" (Zupan

Sosič 2022, 7) to literary studies and other disciplines. This paper examines how the narrative theory of Tzvetan Todorov is applied in the construction and conveyance of meaning in Rebecca Ross's *The Queen's Rising* (2018).

It is not the story but how it is told matters a lot for grasping the readers' attention. Fantasy novels that connect the ordinary and the extraordinary, the authentic and the exotic, the usual and the unusual always find their place in the readers' hearts. They have a specific capability to bridge the gap between the routine and the magical by blending the familiar and the fantastical. Either in one's own life or someone's life people faces realities all the time in their day-to-day life which sometimes makes them feel exhausted and look for something to elude, to restore their positivity. Humans encounter countless challenges in the real world often making them weary and yearning for something in their life. But when the same realities are portrayed with a mixture of magical elements, they create a sense of hope and positivity in their minds by offering alternative realities where the impossible becomes possible.

Todorov's narrative theory

Todorov, a Bulgarian-French historian, philosopher and literary structuralist of the twentieth century has written *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. He is famous for his theory on narrative, and genre analysis which influenced the development of literary studies in the late twentieth century. He has made essential contributions to structuralism and poststructuralism. He develops "a typology of narrative structures based on the relationship between the story, the chronological sequence of events and the discourse, the way the story is presented" ("Tzvetan Todorov | Literary Theory and Criticism Class Notes | Fiveable" 2024) This has created a lasting impact in the field of narratology. He emphasises that "the dynamic and dialogical nature of narrative" (Ibid.) influences cognitive development and rhetorical storytelling approaches. His contributions insist on the ethics and value of literature and remind us that literary study transforms individuals and society.

Todorov's narrative theory focuses on three types of equilibrium such as equilibrium, disequilibrium, and new equilibrium. He believes the narrative view is possible "by assessing the movement of a story from a state of Equilibrium to Disequilibrium" (Ott 2019 par. 1). He states that there are five essential elements to analyse equilibrium

theory, "equilibrium, the breakdown (disruption), recognition of the loss of equilibrium, the successful search (restoration), the reestablishment of the initial equilibrium" (Todorov 1971, 39). He believes that the primary function of the narrative is "to solve a problem" which possesses a "cause and effect format" and the characters in the novel travel through a "series of linear events in chronological order" (Charlottelee 2018). His study shows that narrative is circular and not linear which has multiple attempts to restore equilibrium and the characters transform during this progress when facing disruptions apart from the ordinary societal events. His theory is a simple versatile tool to understand narrative form by providing a clear framework to analyse the structure of the text which helps to understand the characters' motivation during their journey. It emphasises the importance of the problem and the solution to grasp the tension, desire and fears. This article explores Todorov's stages of narration with Ross's construction in terms of setting, plot, characters' development, the portrayal of power, resilience, identity and transformation and provides various insights and themes of the contemporary world. According to Jonathan Culler, a literary theorist, "literary study relies on theories of narrative structure: on notions of plot, of different kinds of narrators, of narrative techniques" (Culler 2011, 84) and the stories "make sense of things, whether in thinking of our lives as a progression leading somewhere or in telling ourselves what is happening in the world" (Ibid., 83).

The Queen's Rising

A young adult fantasy writer Rebecca Ross's *The Queen's Rising*, inspired by Renaissance France, is an epic debut fantasy and a testament to the development of characters. She creates flawed and relatable characters possessing their secrets, ambitions and fears which are a deliberate approach to an engaging narrative through the characters' growth. Each character's toughness of spirit is revealed throughout the novel. In an interview with Jean Book Nerd, Ross acknowledges "I really wanted to create characters who were flawed and relatable. I wanted them to have desires, secrets and fears. I also wanted to make sure they were not the same people they were at the beginning of the narrative" ("Rebecca Ross Author Interview" 2018). This signifies that Ross is determined to make the characters undergo certain circumstances to make them grow and to stand in the hearts of the readers forever.

Ross creates a fictional world comprising four countries, namely "the island of Maevana to the north, Grimhildor to the far frozen west, Valenia and Bendecca to the south, the ocean breaking them into three pieces of mountainous lands" (Ross 2018, 56-57). All these countries have a king's rule, whereas the Maevana, which consists of fourteen houses, has a system of a queen's reign, as Liadan Kavanagh, the first queen of Maevana, commands, "that no king shall sit upon his throne unless the queen and people choose it to be so" (Ibid., 375). This command establishes a new tradition that portrays women as empowered and enhances their leadership qualities. Her narrative style is thought-provoking where her world with matriarchal rule in Maevana juxtaposing the patriarchal system of Grimhildor, Valenia and Bendecca helps to explore leadership and tradition significantly.

First stage of equilibrium

When the novel begins, though Maevana and Valenia have had huge conflicts in the past, they mutually depend on each other for a harmonious relationship. This interdependence between the regions reinforces the idea that assortment in strengths and opinions is significant for the survival of the people and prosperity of the country. Ross maintains the state of balance or equilibrium while she introduces the protagonist, Brienna, a young girl of age ten and the other major characters, such as Cartier Evariste, Brienna's tutor and Merei Labelle, Brienna's friend. Ross in an interview with Janet says:

I wanted Valenia and Maevana to have a striking difference between them, as this is mirrored in Brienna, since her heritage is split between the two countries. I wanted it to be evident that honoring the passions really enabled Valenia to progress, while Maevana was stuck in the dark ages, floundering beneath a king that should have never taken the throne. I put a channel between them to help physically separate them in reader's mind. ("Meet... Rebecca Ross!" 2017)

Brienna is brought up by her grandfather as she loses her mother and her grandfather hides the truth about her father to protect her from the dangers associated with her lineage and the political unrest in Maevana. Brienna joins the Magnalia House, the house for the girl children in Valenia to master one of the five passions: art, music, dramatics, wit and knowledge. The ardens (students) have to be there for seven years and at the end of the seventh year, they will get their patrons after being examined. Brienna shifts her passion from art to music, dramatics and wit for the first four years as she struggles to find

her own passion and finally seeks the tutor Cartier to make her "a mistress of knowledge in the three years" (Ross 2018, 21). Todorov's first stage of equilibrium is evident in the setting and the initial journey of Brienna in the Magnalia House with ardens, tutors and their close-knit environment.

Second stage of equilibrium

As the plot continues, Ross makes the second element, disruption, find its way into the setting and characters' lives. Firstly, the peaceful realm of Maevana is disrupted when the Maevan Queen gets "slain" and there comes "the end of an era" (Ross 2018, 84). Though Maevana has no queen to rule, it is always seen as the queen's realm, which stirs the anger of one of the kings of the fourteen houses, Lord Guilroy Lannon. He belongs to the house of Lannon the Fierce, whose name sounds like three things: "greed, power, and steel" (Ibid.). He kills people who stand against him, "men and women—children—cut to pieces at the footstool of the throne, fingers and tongues, eyes and heads" (Ibid., 216). He becomes the king by joining hands with his supporting house, "Allenach the Shrewd" (Ibid., 152), whose king is Brendan Allenach, the biological father of Brienna. Ross exposes the autocratic rule, arrogance, inhuman and illogical aspects and happenings of the political world through King Lannon.

Secondly, in the Magnalia house, supernatural occurrences through ancestral memories tied to Maevana's ancient magic cause chaos in the mind of Brienna. She hears an unknown voice saying, "My lord? My lord, she is here to see you" (Ross 2018, 67), which disrupts her preparation for her solstice. When she opens Cartier's The Book of Hours, a Maevan tale, she senses "the hands of a man, broad and scarred, with dirt beneath her nails" (Ibid., 69), and the next moment she realises that she is "no longer stood in Magnalia's hall" but in the "corridor built of stone and mortar" (Ibid.). Thus, she is transported from reality to supernatural scenes, which are not just abstract, as she experiences them vividly as if she is living through them herself. Lee Roy Beach, an American psychologist defines narrative as "a rich mixture of memories, of visual, auditory and other cognitive images, all laced together by emotions to form a mixture that far surpasses mere words and visual images in their ability to capture context and meaning" (Beach). The revelation of the intense traumatic events of the past, which blurs the line between the past and the present,

overwhelms her and makes her feel physically exhausted and mentally anxious.

While she is still in the land of confusion, a series of disruptions follow the life of Brienna. In the summer solstice, the Dowager, the head of the Magnalia House, invites patrons of the five passions to examine their ardens and award them with impassionment and cloaks. She invites Brice Mathieu and Nicolas Babineaux to examine Brienna's passion, unfortunately, after her performance, she appears "uneducated to Mathieu and inexperienced to Babineaux" (Ross 2018, 118), which makes her stay there in the house until her tutor Cartier finds her the right patron to test her passion. The ardens, after receiving their cloaks, depart from the Magnalia House to pursue their future and travel a clear path. This farewell isolates Brienna and creates anxiety about her uncertain situation without a patron to support her future. The ancestral memories and alienation that occur in her life shift her from the stage of equilibrium to the disruption or disequilibrium.

Third stage of equilibrium

One cannot be in the stage of equilibrium always. Disruption is a part of life that everyone has to cross by understanding and realising that one cannot stay in the state of disruption forever and there must be a way out if one looks for it. The human mind has the potential to find a way to solve any sort of issue once it recognises the root of the problem. Todorov's third stage is recognising the disruption beyond the hesitation and acknowledging them through reality or fantasy. Recognition is the crucial stage where the characters identify the cause of their suffering. Brienna perceives her identity after meeting Alderic Jourdain, who wants to adopt her as his daughter. She also unravels why she gets the ancestral memories and grasps the purpose behind them. In the novel, Brienna realises that she has "dual citizenship" (Ross 2018, 26) through her grandfather's letter. She identifies the true identity of Alderic Jourdain as David Macquinn, the king of one of the fourteen houses in Maevana, waiting for "Twenty-five years, with a last name that began with M. A man who desired to see Lannon obliterated" (Ibid., 210) and his motive to discover the missing magical elements "the Stone of Eventide" and "the Queen's Canon" (Ibid., 85). Brienna realises the "drop of history, painfully lost, which should, of course, be recovered if possible" (Ibid., 153) and Jourdain's need for her assistance to recover these elements through her inherited

memories to dethrone King Lannon and to set back the queen's realm in Maevana. The cruelty and the harsh rule of King Lannon make her realise the importance of helping Jourdain in his mission to protect people from him.

Fourth stage of equilibrium

Todorov's fourth-stage resolution signifies the shift from the state of disequilibrium through the stability of the characters after recognising the disruptions in their lives. In this pivotal moment, the characters transform to restore balance from the preceding disruptions. During this phase, they adapt, overcome and rebuild their lives with resilience and wisdom. It paves the way for re-establishment and development of the individual. In this stage, Ross brings out the coexistence of fantasy and reality to resolve the conflicts and regain the ways to achieve normalcy. Brienna realises that "procuring the stone and reviving magic is the most peaceful route to justice" (Ross 2018, 216). So she decides to restore normalcy in Maevana by entering the country as an adopted daughter of David Macquinn during the autumn hunt, which shifts her journey from Valenia to Maevana. She faces many inner conflicts when she recognises her real identity when she meets King Brendan Allenach, her biological father, as a supporter of King Lannon. She struggles in the political intrigues of the kingdom, as chaos arises in her to support either "the one bound by passion or the one bound by blood?" (Ibid., 368). The resolution stage becomes crucial when she stands between her blood father Brendan Allenach and her adopted father Alderic Jourdain. Even though Brendan Allenach tempts her that he will make her the queen of Maevana, Brienna chooses to stand for what is right and takes a resolution to help Jourdain, and decides to "gather on ancient ground, a place of magic and queens and sacrifice" (Ibid., 342) to oppose her father in the battlefield. Brienna's decision to move to the northern region proves her willpower and inner strength to face adversities without fear. She chooses her patron instead of her father to obtain justice for the people of Maevana. After facing many struggles in Maevana, she discovers the missing element "the Stone of Eventide" amidst the forest and "the Queen's Canon" (Ibid., 85) in the castle of Brendan Allenach, which helps them to capture King Lannon and put him on trial to give him the appropriate punishments for his cruelty. She plans intelligently to protect the magical elements with the utmost care and render them toIsolde Kavanagh who is the rightful queen of Maevana. In this stage,

the supernatural elements resolve the conflicts that occur in the second and third stages of equilibrium.

Fifth stage of equilibrium

Todorov's fifth-stage of equilibrium is the restoration of a new and balanced equilibrium. In the setting of the new equilibrium, Brienna achieves her goals by facing every obstacle with bravery and finally attains success through her dual identity as a daughter of Maevana and as a resilient Valenian. The novel enters a new equilibrium and Isolde Kavanagh, "with her voice sharp and rich in the air" (Ross 2018, 396) points out King Lannon as "an imposter" (Ibid., 396) to the Maevan throne. She confronts him with all the other fallen houses and tends to claim Maevana from his "unrighteous hands" (Ibid., 369) and she demands to "kneel before her" (Ibid., 418) and "lie prostrate" (Ibid., 419) to imprison him to decide his fate in front of her people. The novel concludes with Brienna's state of unwinding her "stories of bravery and stories of fear, stories of desperation and stories of redemption, stories of loss and stories of reunion" (Ibid., 423), and finally she receives her cloak from her tutor Cartier after all the struggles and victory. The novel ends as Brienna states that she is "going to build a House of Knowledge" (Ibid., 438) in Maevana. Finally, Ross develops a new equilibrium to restore the normalcy that existed at the initial stage of the story. Brienna revives equilibrium by facing conflicts and political issues through her self-development and impacts her world with positive hope for the future. Thus, Ross ends her story with a sense of new balance in the journey of Brienna.

Conclusion

The narrative excellence of Ross plays a major role in influencing the response and interpretations of the readers by offering emotional engagement, cultural, social, and historical contexts, character development and tools to dissect the intricacies of storytelling. Her compelling narratives create an emotional engagement with the characters and aid in exploring the universal themes of identity, belonging, resilience and self-discovery. She provides structural insights into the construction, interpretation and organisation of stories, consisting of the setting, characters, point of view, themes, and plot through which she makes the readers appreciate and understand how narration is the foundation strategy to connect the fundamental elements of human experience like time, action, and transformation.

Through her narrative ability, she attracts a huge audience by equipping them with a massive appreciation for the artful narration and its vigour to inspire and transform them for a better life.

This article argues that Ross's construction of her novel The Queen's Rising goes hand in hand with Todorov's narrative theory of equilibrium. It demonstrates how disruptions and restoration shape storytelling and human experience. It provides the perspective that every existence begins with either equilibrium or disequilibrium and the disruptions that occur in the middle help individuals to identify the challenges and overcome them with a positive outlook. It also aids humans in identifying their strengths and the potential to leap over the walls. It allows individuals to defeat their anxiety, challenges and hurdles with fortitude. She highlights the fact that disruptions are the opportunities that life offers individuals to get better at life's crucial challenges and shape their lives with hope. She emphasises the benefits of perseverance and adaptability in dealing with adversity. Thus, Ross prepares the readers' minds to face life's complexities. The characters come out of the shadows, move through the grey of self-doubt, step into the light of clarity and thus create hope by making one believe Todorov's theory that if there is a disruption, there will also be a new equilibrium in transformative ways. Ross's novel by adhering to this theoretical framework becomes a source of inspiration to accept the transformative journey of life and view complexities as stepping stones to create a better future.

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Hydropolitics in panels: Satirizing urban crises in Sarnath Banerjee's All Quiet at Vikaspuri

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Abstract: This study attempts to investigate the role of satire in urban graphic novels with Sarnath Banerjee's All Ouiet in Vikaspuri (2015), a dystopian narrative that critiques the socio-political fabric of contemporary urban cities in India, at the pivot. Unsheathing on Dustin Griffin's apprehension of satire as an inquiry rather than polemic, the study posits Banerjee's novel within an extensive praxis of urban satire that examines infrastructural deterioration, ecological inequity, and bureaucratic inertia. By carefully examining the text's visual-textual convergence, this paper inspects how satire is marshalled to decipher the complexities of neoliberal urbanity, particularly the commodification and politicisation of the quintessential resource, water. By encapsulating ecocritical theories from Karen Bakker's conceptualization of "production of thirst," investigation emphasizes how Baneriee reconstructs the urban city as a site of resources under contention and systemic alienation. The novel's ironic juxtapositions, fractured structure, and grotesque imagery manufacture a critique that is both analytical and affective, coercing readers to tackle the ethical and environmental catastrophe of contemporary urban governance. This study posits that satire, in Banerjee's premise, turns into an epistemological apparatus that unveils the rifts of late capitalist urbanism, questioning its assurance of progress and prosperity.

Keywords: urban satire, Indian graphic novels, hydropolitics, neoliberal urbanity, shades of violence

Introduction

Urban graphic novels in the contemporary Indian literary sphere have emanated as potent apparatus for socio-political commentary, particularly while tussling with the complexities of neoliberalism,

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ecological precarity and metropolitan modernity. Sarnath Banerjee one of India's prominent graphic novelists, tackles the amalgam of graphic novels to dissect the crevices implanted in the Indian urban experience. His *All Quite in Vikaspuri* (2015) fails to be regarded as a mere dystopian manifestation but an incisive satire that unveils the ironies of infrastructural neglect, developmental rhetoric and ecological deterioration. The novel's visual-textual reciprocity does not operate as a mode of storytelling but is an aesthetic political critique of contemporary urbanity, wherein satire operates as a gadget of resistance and divulgence.

The convergence of urban studies, graphic narrative theory and eco precarity to a certain extent proffers a conducive crust to examine Banerjee's work. Scholars such as Cecile Sandten (2011) and Ira Sarma (2018) have investigated the intermedial and intertextual potentials of Indian graphic novels, reflecting their scope to encapsulate the complexities of postcolonial urban life. Sandten interrogates how Banerjee's visual novel interacts with global city imaginaries through a metropolitan lens, whereas Sarma's perusal highlights the "glocal" reader's elucidative role in deciphering hybridised textualities. E. Dawson Varughese further posits Indian graphic narratives within a larger realm of visual culture that contests hegemonic narratives of Indian identity and maturation, highlighting the representational strategies that derange discourses. While these studies accord remarkably to the comprehension of the formal and thematic remodelling in Indian graphic novels, the specific purpose of satire as a mode of urban inquiry- particularly within the ecological and hydro-political contexts, remains overlooked.

A connected pivotal point can be found in Rob Nixon's theory of "slow violence" (2011), augmented by Anuja Madan (2020), which highlights the emblematic modes that can seize the invisible, covert, and attritional dorms of environmental torment. This viewpoint is particularly pertinent to Banerjee's work, where water privatisation and urban decay are not a spectacular predicament, but the manifestation of neoliberalism, systemic inequality, and bureaucratic passivity. Furthermore, Karen Bakker's concept of the "production of thirst" (2010) solidifies the fabric of the politics of ecology of access to water and shades of violence induced upon the marginalised urban populace.

This study attempts to decipher the anatomy of satire in *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* as a deliberate strategic critique of the urban hydropolitics,

environmental precarity, and lacklustre governmental policies in India. The study proposes to delve into the heart of the matter not simply as a graphic novel but as a hydropolitical satire that undermines dominant narratives of neoliberal urbanity and proffers a new fabric to interpret the city through speculative ecological fracture. In doing so, the study not only accords to the advancing edifice of literature on Graphic Novels in India but also augments the methodological prospect of urban studies, satire and arbitrarily postcolonial media analysis.

The anatomy of satire in urban narratives

Urban narratives serve as a conducive platform for satire due to the inherent complexities of metropolitan existence- the contemporary society juxtaposed with deterioration, exacerbation and hegemony espoused with alienation. Satire in urban graphic narratives highlights the themes of bureaucratic inefficiency, absurdity and exaggeration, exposing the paradoxes of city life inquisitive of the beneficiaries of urban progress. Sarnath Banerjee's *All Quiet at Vikaspuri* typifies how satire can be wielded to critique contemporary urban life. The work blends visual and textual irony, historical intertextuality and absurdity to expose the contradictions, bureaucratic inertia, urban alienation and socio-political hypocrisy, customizing the very act of storytelling by subscribing to fragmented, anecdotal critiques rather than linear narratives.

Banerjee's work finds strong reverberance within Dustin H Griffin's Satire: A Critical Reintroduction, which postulates that "satire is inquiry and provocation, it shares a boundary not (as we usually hear) with polemical rhetoric but with philosophical (and especially ethical) writing" (Griffin 1994, 81). He argues that satire works as an interrogation of authority, rather than a direct attack, situating the satirist as an investigator who infuses parody and irony to coerce readers to give into introspection. His statement, "Satire is in my view rather an "open" than a "closed" form, both in its formal features (particularly in its reluctance to conclude) and in its more general rhetorical and moral features, in its frequent preference for inquiry, provocation, or playfulness rather than assertion and conclusiveness," (Ibid, 200) is evident through Banerjee's portrayal of urban system, wherein, infrastructural derelictions are contrasted with the lofty ideals of development. Much like Banerjee's ironic portrayal of urban development projects - that supersede the marginalised and underprivileged contemporary Indian cities that exhibit a paradox

where the beautification endeavour often expunges the marginalised communities rather than empower them. The Smart City Mission and the pre-G20 slum evictions in Delhi ostensibly serve as a real-life parallel where the state's vision creates disproportionate ramifications for the urban poor. Banerjee encapsulates this discrepancy with mordant irony as illustrated in the sequence where privatization is mounted as a remedy to economic turmoil rather than an ethical concern. In this particular panel, a bureaucrat, after witnessing the turmoil and protests by trade union leaders holding banners that read "Mazdoor Jaago and Inqilab Zindabad," merely raises his hands and says "I have had enough of this" and simply proclaims. "PRIVATISE." (Banerjee 2015, 7) This hasty shift from worker resistance to corporate takeover reflects how economic decisions are promulgated by elite convenience. The visual contrast remains conspicuous when the workers are shown in chaotic and expressive gestures, while the bureaucrats are unfazed with detached calm expressions, alienating themselves from the ground realities.

Banerjee satirizes the politics of water scarcity in his work, metamorphosising a rudimentary setting of survival into a dystopian combat zone where power is insistent on access to water. This exaggeration evinces a larger reality- the state's impotence to provide quintessential services whilst perpetuating to hold on to grandiose promises of urban development. Partha Chatterjee's "Political Society" gains relevance in this context; where the urban poor, deprived of formal citizenship rights, must engage in unwarranted negotiations to gain access to essentialities. The narrative establishes the contrast and the stark reality of urbanity wherein, the privileged have uninterrupted access to necessitous water resources and the urban poor rely on tanker mafias and informal supply chains to get access to water. He captures the hydro-political disparity by depicting water not as a shared resource but as a site of socio-economic tussle. Baneriee situates the worsening of water infrastructure: the water filtration plant in Tambapur is left deserted, its once operating structure now endowed with cracks, encrusted in sledge and water culminating into virulence.

The satirical portrayal is redolent of postcolonial anxieties, wherein public governance is delineated not as an apparatus of public welfare but as an entanglement of contradictions- operating through systematic neglect rather than active resolution. The conceptof bureaucratic dysfunction remains a defining trait of urban graphic novels. The multinational firm Platypus strides in to profit from this predicament,

bolstering neocolonial economic dominance. Indeed, the salient depiction of the company head, J. W. Anderson or Sir John, a character whose very name indicates the ambivalence of neocolonial excess, corporate avarice, deliberate attempt to and a depict interchangeable nature of corporate leaders and the entanglement of power with identity boasts a red bow tie standing out from the otherwise monochromatic setting becoming a symbol of capitalist flamboyance and profit-driven insensitivity. The work also extends to the neoliberal yearning of the urban elite, who despite their intellectual sophistication, prevails to be entrapped in the paradox of Western consumerist fantasies and postcolonial anxieties. His characters - like Varun Bhalla, the financial wizard representing the homegrown elite who sides with Western Capitalism - are trapped in a cycle of existential angst.

The work orients itself with global dystopian traditions, wherein bureaucratic failure remains a defining trait of urban graphic novels. The notion, "satire is a rhetorical contest: as display, and as play". For Griffin satire makes use of 'ornamental rhetoric,' much like the characters who intellectually engage with Marxism, philosophy, and existentialism, yet remain restrained to capitalist consumerist inclinations, concocting a satirical paradox wherein the ideological orientations are undermined by their materialist ambition.

Hydropolitics within the panels

Hydroplitics is defined as "the systematic study of conflict and cooperation between states over water resource that transcend international borders" in Arun P. Elhance's *Hydropolitics in the Third World: Conflict and Cooperation*. It refers to the political and power dynamics that encompass water resources, specifically in zones where water is contested and scarce. Water scarcity is a manufactured crisis, aggravated by corruption, poor governance and unequal access rather than mere environmental consequences. In Banerjee's depiction of dystopian Delhi water has turned into a source of conflict, with factions contending for its dwindling supply. Here, state inefficiencies enable the privatized section to capitalize on the downtrodden for profit. The novel's portrayal of water mafias, the underground network that controls and allocates water to the highest bidder can be seen in.

The poor are systematically deprived of water while the elite maintain sustained access. The hydrological crises in Tambapur as envisaged by Banerjee do not emanate from climate catastrophe solely, but from the weaponization of water; thereby, aligning with Karen Bakker's argument that claims that urban water scarcity is a manufactured condition. Here, water is not merely a contested resource but an exclusive commodity, accessible only to the higher elites.

Furthermore, water privatization and the failure of the governance elucidated Karen Bakker proffers a significant framework for deciphering this phenomenon. Bakker states that it is the failure of the governance, rather than natural cause that produces water scarcity in urban contexts, wherein, she typifies governance failure as "a mismatch in decision making between citizenship and associated political rights, on the one hand, and institutional and cultural practices on the other." (Bakker 2010, 45) In the text, the poor are deprived of access to water while the elite manage to maintain sustained proximity to water. One of the most explicit portravals of elite entitlement in the consumption of water is embodied in the character of Ms Carrey Jones, the wife of a foreign ambassador who remains oblivious to the city's water problem. Ms Jones enjoys unrestricted access to water and lavishes water at measures that mock the very concept of scarcity: "Ms Carrey Jones was weary of dirt and germs of India and tried to protect herself at all cost." (Banerjee 2015, 38) Every time the child peed in the pool, she had it drained and refilled with fresh water (Ibid, 38).

Ms Carrey Jones identifies herself with the global elite and neocolonial excess, reflecting how the elite not only remain insulated from adversity but actively exacerbate it through excess consumption. Ms Jones' portrayal exaggerates her aloofness from reality, positing her bubble of affluence and surroundings as a utopian oasis, whilst the rest of Tambapur deteriorates under systematic neglect.

portrayal Baneriee's of short-termism and hydro-political mismanagement is visualised through ludicrous urban landscapes, inclusive of buildings precariously heaped upon each other, held together by "optimism" (Ibid, 55), a critique on Tambapur's lack of sustainable vision. The short-term fixes pervade economic and social structures: armies of young workers employed in industries with no skill development (Banerjee 53), broken consumer goods deemed irreplaceable, and socio-political grandstanding unfazed governance. These fractured depictions convey that the hydropolitical predicament is not just a failure of governance but an emanation of a larger culture of disposability and shortsighted policies.

Banerjee's dystopian Delhi is not merely enduring a hydrological crisis but a deliberate economic and political stratification of access to water. Bakker's cardinal concept of the "production of thirst" challenges the assumption that water shortages are simply natural. She says that our current approach to urban water governance "produces thirst." (Bakker 2010, 218) Her works explicate the situation in Jakarta's splintered urban water networks wherein, water access is disproportionate as a result of elite capture and privatisation.

The Water Knife by Paolo Baciagalupi, in a similar vein encapsulates the brutality of water as a tool of power when in a pivotal moment, Angel Velasquez enforces a water shutoff in Carver City. The lines - "Law of the River says senior rights gets it all. Junior rights?" Angel shrugged. "Not so much." (Baciagalupi 2015, 17), is a reflection of how the character operates within a ruthless system of water rights and corporate control; wherein, access to water is dictated by senior legal claims rather than categorizing it under the essential human needs. Water, in the context of the American Southwest, is a highly scarce and commodified resource as a result of prolonged drought, an unforeseen adversity within the formidable cities of Phoenix and Los Angeles aggressively protecting their water supplies. Angel, in this context, is not merely exercising authority but upholding a legal structure that gives priority to the corporations and the state. The system is designed such that the marginalised population suffers grievously while the rich and powerful are benefitted.

All Quite in Vikaspuri exhibits water not merely as a cardinal resource but as a militarised tool, where the dearth is engineered through neoliberalism, state negligence and elite capture. The crisis reflects a broader malfunction of governance, where short-termstratagems exacerbate long-term vulnerabilities. This crisis prevails beyond water- the very framework of urban life is in decay, with the victims grappling against an environment that is hostile, fractured and deteriorating.

Urban environment and characters in crisis

Urban environments mould human behaviour in significant ways, dominating individual agency, social relationships and power structures. Banerjee's characters are not mere occupants of Tambapur; they are deeply ensnared in the urban ecosystem, wrestling against its shackles. Robert A Francis and Michael A Chadwick's Urban Ecosystems: *Understanding the Human Environment* dispenses a crucial framework for mapping the relationship between Banerjee's characters and their urban surrounding Francis and Chadwick state that

urban geography should be deciphered as "complex adaptive systems" (Levin 1998, 61) that vitalise multiple interacting components to respond to stress and maintain structures, functions and processes. Banerjee's characters are not mere recipients of the system but are dynamically shaped by them. The plaintive exemplification in the ambit characterisation of Girish, once a skilled industrial plumber, whose dismissal from the Platypus-run firm is actuated through an uninhibited corporate culling: It took months of painful deliberation for the workers to draw up a small list of demands, it took half a day for the management to sack 1200 workers" (Banerjee 2015, 12). His trajectory from highly skilled employment to precariousness marks the ecological repercussion of the city- desertion, renunciation, disrepair and fragmentation. Girish, now unemployed joins the "the doomed procession of displaced thousands," whose identities have been outstripped by the urban entropy.

Francis and Chadwick opine that urban environments generate nonequilibrium states maintained by anthropogenic energy subsidies, inducing self-organised patterns of buildings and infrastructure which require constant adaptation. Banerjee's protagonist, traversing Delhi's dilapidated infrastructure in pursuit of water confronts a group of fragmented urban population, each of them revamping themselves to exist. They embody "the dynamic responses of urban dwellers to ecosystem stressors, contriving strategies in response to the predicament. Girish, in the story, finds himself tweaking to underground labour, drilling for water for the Pataal Jal project. His diligent priming in order to take up this expedition- employing "the most advanced drilling machine that man has ever built"- gestures a grotesque inversion of adaptation: the characters subscribe deeper into dystopia instead of gravitating toward ecological sustainability. His subterranean mirrors an existential delving into the periphery of agency and visibility, rendering him corporeally and symbolically disconnected from society.

The concept of climate apartheid delineated by Ashley Dawson in his Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change, station that ecological disasters and infrastructural deterioration augment class divisions rather than obliterate them. It leads to the hardening of borders and restrictions on the movements of those affected by environmental and social disruptions. Here water serves as an instrument of social exclusion, hegemonised by the bureaucratic elites. Moreover, the pre-existing social divisions through

environmental means insulate a select few from the vulnerability of the crisis, while the urban poor grapple within an ecologically belligerent cityscape - a pattern discerned in actuality during air pollution, waste management and water scarcity. This is accentuated through the satirical bureaucracy of the Delhi Jal Board and the absurd stance of Jagat Ram, delineated by elongated ears and bureaucratic enervation, who despite being demoted regularly for "failing to adequately fic the leaking supply lines," is eventually victimised for the vanishing of water. His Kafkaesque exacerbation ends at the doors of Paatalpuri, endowed with finding the mythical river Saraswati- derision on governmental aberration and mystification of accountability.

The brawl for water in this context is not just about survival but a reflection of deeper political failures. The commodification and clandestine system of production of water operate outside state regulation often espoused with covert bureaucratic complicity, depicted in the novel when Girish, wanting to survive, is subsumed into Rastogi's enterprise of peregrination to extract water- a parodic parallel of privatized despair.

The disadvantaged populace in Tambapur is coerced into precarious urban spaces precisely due to the corporate and political interests that displace the marginalized communities. Dawson fortifies this claim through the concept of Mike Davis's 'slum ecologies' wherein, the inequality pushes the urban squatter communities to live in the most marginal and often dangerous portions of the city. (Dawson 2017, 102) The residents of Tambapur, after the deterioration of the township, delves through instability through disintegrated housing structures, school closures, halved salaries, and hospitals turning into cesspools. The once systematic and organised work settlements dwindle into fractured spaces. The water filtration plant is stranded with its toxic remnants oozing out into the land speeding up diseases with industrial accidents becoming a regimen. The workers, left without basic services or security stage a hopeless protest- met with silence, not solidarity as "no trade unionists came from the city, neither did angels from the sky." The water scarcity amplifies ecological vulnerability propelling communities into precarious urban margins which makes survival extremely tenuous. The community is left with nothing but hollow edifices and memories, solidifying a direct representation of slum ecologies: degraded, exaggerated and invisible.

The dystopian city depicted by Banerjee where once functional city spaces have metamorphosized into zones of desperation and

vulnerability, arbitrarily reflecting the 2019 Chennai Water Crisis with an emergence of black market water dealers and alternative networks of provisions. On the other hand, the infrastructural foundering of post-Hurricane Sandy New York as specified by Dawson in comparison with Banerjee's vision of Delhi is prominent as he writes "Hurricane Sandy unmasked the contradictions and injustices of these narratives of security and resilience. Urban elites and officials had assured the public that they were strengthening the resilience of 'critical infrastructures' after 9/11, yet when Sandy struck the city, infrastructural collapse cascaded through the urban system." Comparably, Delhi's pipelines and water monopolization unmask the city's deep-rooted inequalities connoting that urban resilience is often a privilege reserved for the elite. It exposes the gap between rhetoric and reality highlighting the illusion of urban preparedness.

Ultimately, the urban ecosystems are acutely influenced by feedback loops between behaviour, environment and governance, exemplifying the negotiation of characters in the novel whose struggles are inseparable from the social landscape. The work's illustration of an exacerbating, crumbling Delhi depicts the tussle- where the adaptation and fortitude are dictated not by need, but by power and access.

Conclusion

Sarnath Banerjee's All Quiet in Vikaspuri operates as a penetrating satire that perforates through the shimmering tinsel of neoliberal urbanity to unravel the deteriorating, exclusionary, and unjust edifices sustaining it. Through its portrayal of the fractured visual-textual elements, the novel does not merely lay out a dystopian city; rather, it manifests the present through suppositional alienation, enabling shades of covert and embedded violence of water deprivation and bureaucratic insouciance to be the spotlight. The novel's satirical amplification, far from being a spectacular deflection, is rooted in socio-political realism, unveiling the hidden frameworks of exclusion and the moral bankruptcy of the state-led progress. Banerjee's espousal of the concept of hydro-politics- dissected through the lenses of Bakker's "production of thirst" - coerces the readers to reimagine water as a deeply politicised essentiality, militarised through systemic inequality and elite seizure. Characters like Girish the Plumber are not just passive victims but incorporeal testimony to a system that triumphs on expendability. His depiction of lackadaisical bureaucrats and technocratic elites finds reverberance with the shades of violence.

where harm accumulates over time, evincing angst covert and discreet. This reading confronts the conventional binaries of heroes and villains, displacing them with a complex portrait of survival, despair and connivance. As Sarma emphasises, the interconnected aesthetics of graphic novels in India stipulates a "glocal" reader, attuned to local specificities and global strides. While the novel propounds a blistering ecological and political imputation, it also covertly signals towards alignment and resistance, notwithstanding the shattered cohesion that combats grand narratives of vindication. As Griffin accentuates, the satirical medium subscribes not to seek closure but to provoke inquiry and in this, Banerjee's rendering resists resolution in commendation of reflection.

Future research could widen this investigation into the fabric that the current study only touches upon, such as fractured identities, affective ecologies, or hydro-political narratives across global traditions. Equivalently, an in-depth dive into the visual semiotics within neoliberal urbanity could highlight the structured politics of representation. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*, consequently, materialises not only as an exegesis of urban failure but as a physiography of catastrophe, prompting us to track ourselves, give in to introspection within the fractured structures we inhabit uncritically.

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The concept of female madness

Vanya Bardeja, Vinaya Kumari and Beulah Victor*

Abstract: Throughout history, women have been linked to madness, whether it be characters like Medea in Ancient Greece, the witch trials in Salem during the Middle Ages, or women labelled as "hysterical" in the Victorian era. Some female writers used the portrayal of a mad woman to illustrate the impact of a male-dominated society on women. This paper argues that the depiction of madness in both Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* (1996) does not challenge authority but instead represents the oppression of "women by patriarchy and colonialism." The article utilizes Marta Caminero Santangelo's feminist criticism perspective, asserting that insanity does not equate to liberation and a mad woman is also unable to communicate, referencing Gayatri Spivak's work "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Keywords: feminism, madness of women, Orientalism, women's writing

Some scholars might contend that due to differences in geography, culture, and historical context, a direct comparison between *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Pillars of Salt* (1996) is invalid. However, these works exhibit numerous parallels, particularly in their treatment of female madness. Despite Bertha's minor role in *Jane Eyre*, her influence is profound, prompting extensive analysis from literary critics. By examining both *Jane Eyre* and *Pillars of Salt* and their treatment of the theme of madness in women, this paper aims to establish a dialectical connection between past and present, Western and Eastern perspectives (Wall & Jones 2007, 72).

In *Jane Eyre*, the narrative revolves around an orphan who endures significant hardship in her youth, including moments of apparent insanity as she resists the oppressive behaviour of her cousin, John

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Reed. Following a period of confinement, Jane secures employment as a governess in the household of Edward Rochester. Despite falling in love with Rochester, she cannot marry him due to his existing marriage. Rochester claims his Creole wife, Bertha, is mentally unstable and reveals that arranged marriage is based on her beauty and wealth. Bertha is locked in the attic of Rochester's estate in England, where she exhibits erratic behaviour, including ripping her wedding dress and ultimately setting the house ablaze before taking her own life. Rochester is left physically impaired by the fire but eventually weds Jane.

Pillars of Salt unfolds in Jordan during and after the British mandate, chronicling the lives of Um Saad and Maha. Um Saad faces severe restrictions on her education, marital choices, and freedom of movement. Compelled into a marriage with an abusive butcher, she rebels when her husband takes another wife, leading to her confinement in an asylum. Maha, a Bedouin woman, defies her oppressive brother, the British authorities, and the patriarchal norms of society, earning accusations of insanity. Daffash seizes her land and son, compelling her into a loveless marriage with a stranger. Both women find themselves confined together in the asylum, where they recount their narratives. While the novel incorporates an outsider's perspective to narrate Maha's tale and depict Jordan, Maha swiftly interjects with her account as a rebuttal. Despite never meeting, Maha dismisses the foreign narrator as a "drivelling liar." United in their confinement, both of them support each other against the abuses of the "English doctor, nurses, medication, and the triple oppression of patriarchy, misrepresentation of religion, and colonialism."

Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* follows a storyline reminiscent of *Jane Eyre*, featuring a woman who is marginalized and oppressed after being deemed mentally unstable. The influence of colonization on women's oppression is stark in both contexts, given Britain's colonial rule over both the West Indies and Jordan. Faqir draws parallels between the subtle and explicit structures of oppression within Arab families and states and the mechanisms of colonization (Moore 2011, 3). The narrative takes place during the British mandate in Transjordan from 1922 to 1946. Maha's husband, Harb, was defiant against the colonizers, a sentiment that his widow shares. Harb had enlightened his wife about the English occupation, their harsh treatment, and the demands for unpaid taxes (Faqir 1996, 68). As noted by Cooke (2000, 162), "To effectively govern the men, (the colonizers) had to maintain

control over the women within their segregated spaces". Maha, aware of the British's role in her husband's death, endeavours to resist them, posing a threat to their authority.

The depiction of mentally unstable women in literature has captivated critics and sparked debate over their subversive nature. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal work, "The Madwoman in the Attic" (1979), explores madness and women's literary expression in the nineteenth century, interpreting madness as a subversive element in women's fiction. Madness is a narrative tool employed to articulate women's internal struggles with oppression and societal constraints.

In the 1970s, Western feminist critics viewed Bertha as the "other," interpreting her character through a narrow Western Orientalist feminist perspective. "While these early feminist critics acknowledged colonial oppression of women, it was only in the 1990s and 2000s, with the emergence of Arab and other non-Western feminist literature," that the issue gained significant attention alongside a growing interest in colonization, which enriched feminist critique. That may explain why early feminist critics like Gilbert and Gubar didn't delve deeply into the "othering" and dehumanization of Bertha, often idealizing female madness as a means of resistance against "patriarchal dominance."

Gilbert and Gubar (1979, 88) perceive Bertha as Charlotte Brontë's alter ego, "an embodiment of her own anxiety and fury". The concept of insanity is linked to protest against patriarchy, with anger serving as a symbol of defiance. However, they acknowledge that the novel's resolution fails to address the issue of patriarchy as the madwoman meets her demise. Nonetheless, if Bertha indeed mirrors Jane and acts on her behalf, why does Jane fail to empathize with her? Jane never recognizes her connection to the imprisoned and monstrous double, leading Showalter to assert that Brontë demonstrates no compassion for her deranged creation (Showalter 1985, 69). Jane's detachment from Bertha diminishes the effectiveness of subversion as a form of rebellion, as it is not Jane who rebels; she must conform to the societal norms of Victorian society. This study seeks to expand on Conwell's argument by utilizing Caminero-Santangelo's theory, which suggests that a madwoman's inability to articulate her thoughts demonstrates that madness is not inherently subversive in either Jane Eyre or Pillars of Salt.

This research article builds its argument upon Caminero-Santangelo's theory, which posits that "all forms of protest within (the

asylum's) walls are rendered socially meaningless" (Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 37). In her work "The Madwoman Can't Speak," Caminero-Santangelo challenges the notion that insanity serves as an apt metaphor for female resistance against suppression and male supremacy (Ibid, 9). She draws upon "de Lauretis's theory of technologies of gender, which suggests that gender, both as representation and self-representation," is shaped by various technologies including institutional discourses, everyday practices, and media such as cinema (Ibid, 2).

Caminero-Santangelo questions the notion that madness serves as a metaphor for resistance. She demonstrates that novelists often revert to prevailing models of madness found in literature, medicine, and other texts, effectively "challenging representation with representation" (Ibid, 11). Her analysis reveals that all the examined works indicate that women's madness is not subversive but rather signifies a capitulation to patriarchy. She observes that the texts are marked by their inability or struggle to create meaning—that is, to generate representations that are coherent within society. For example, "texts authored by American women during the World War II period depict insane women as silenced and possessing illusory power; they engage in self-destructive behaviour." They depict mad women as "murdering mothers," "manless women," individuals with "multiple personalities," and as "out-hurting the hurter" (Ibid, 125).

Balaa defines "subversive" as "the ability to express oneself, take action, and effect change in one's circumstances" (Balaa 2014, 483). In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha cannot advocate for herself, act freely, or challenge her circumstances. Similarly, in *Pillars of Salt*, Maha and Um Saad endeavour to assert themselves but encounter resistance, leading to their silencing and incorrect labelling as insane—a consequence of society's dismissal of the mentally unstable. Once imprisoned, Maha and Um Saad find themselves powerless to alter their situations, trapped in a realm devoid of agency.

During the Victorian era, Bertha's insanity was perceived as rendering her incapable of assimilating into society and thus posed a threat. Similarly, in the nineteenth-century Arab colonized world, individuals deemed insane were prohibited from residing with their families by law. In *Pillars of Salt*, Maha and Um Saad were deemed to have "unsound" minds, resulting in their exclusion from society and relationships. They were effectively marginalized from mainstream society. Unlike Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, where the extent of her insanity

remains ambiguous—merely Mr Rochester's assessment after consulting a doctor—Maha and Um Saad are not inherently insane. If they were to succumb to madness, a likely outcome given the conditions of the asylum, it would be the consequence of their society's marginalization, subjugation, manipulation, and imprisonment. While recent studies often interpret these texts as critiques of society, they frequently overlook the plight of the female protagonists. Women's madness in both novels is portrayed within the framework of Western Orientalist and patriarchal stereotypes, carrying connotations of "stigma, otherness, witchcraft, illness, social control, denied agency, illusory power, unbridled sexuality, and resignation."

In both narratives, madness assumes a role of alterity, rendering the afflicted women—Bertha, Um Saad, and Maha—as "other," stripped of their humanity and autonomy. Patriarchal and imperialistic doctrines marginalize them, portraying them as bestial, witchlike, malevolent, femme fatales, excessively sexualized, and ensnared in uncontrollable lunacy. Blowers (1996, 79) underscores the dire ramifications of this categorization as "other," highlighting the near-impossibility of shedding such a label. They face abandonment by their families and social circles as they are considered unfit for societal integration.

In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha's portrayal underscores her alienation and incapacity for improvement. Rochester describes Bertha as embodying a nature that starkly contrasts with his own. She is unpleasant, lacks refinement, and is closed-minded, displaying an inability to evolve or broaden her perspective (Brontë, 1847/1966, 333). Jane, in her observations, likens Bertha to a wild animal, highlighting her primal, unpredictable behaviour. When Bertha attacks Rochester, she is depicted as a lunatic, further emphasizing her estrangement from rationality and humanity. This portrayal extends beyond mere personality clashes, representing a fundamental moral distinction, as Rochester comes to see Bertha as fundamentally non-human (Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 13).

Initially, Jane defends Bertha upon realizing her insanity, refuting Rochester's blame by asserting that it is not Bertha's fault. However, Jane eventually adopts an imperialist patriarchal viewpoint in describing Bertha, echoing Rochester's dehumanizing perspective. She repeatedly characterizes Bertha as monstrous, vampiric, bestial, and insane, denying her any possibility of redemption or improvement (Brontë 1966, 311). This depiction reflects prevalent colonialist attitudes of the time, which viewed colonized peoples as inherently

inferior to their colonizers. For instance, nineteenth-century figure like Knox, an anatomist and ethnologist, propagated theories suggesting that certain races were incapable of full human development due to their physical characteristics (Knox 1862, 243–244). Such ideologies perpetuated the belief that individuals from colonized regions, including those from the West Indies, were innately inferior, attributing their perceived mental instability to genetic and environmental factors.

In *Pillars of Salt*, Maha and Um Saad are portrayed as marginalized and dehumanized and are even denied visitors by their closest relations. As Blowers asserts, those relegated to the wrong side of societal boundaries are often defined by negative attributes, such as irrationality, immorality, or illness (Blowers 1996, 79). The nurse, Kukash, treats Um Saad with shocking brutality, resembling the slaughter of a goat as he restrains her and forcibly cuts her hair (Faqir 1996, 222). Um Saad's distress is palpable as she vocalizes her understanding of this mistreatment as a method of control.

The female characters in both novels are depicted as malevolent figures akin to witches. Bertha is depicted by Jane as a "vampire" with red eyes, her appearance described as unsettling with swollen, dark lips and furrowed brow (Brontë 1966, 211). She is portrayed as a spectral or demonic presence, described as a mysterious entity inhabiting Thornfield Hall, resisting expulsion or subjugation by its owner. Similarly, in Arab cultural contexts, madness is often linked to notions of witchcraft and malevolence. Um Saad is characterized as sinister, resorting to witchcraft in her desire to harm her husband and his new spouse. Maha, viewed through the lens of a foreign storyteller, is likened to a demonic female entity, described as "evil" and capable of lethal acts (Faqir 1996, 27, 30, 33). Drawing a parallel with Bertha's mother, Maha's mother Maliha is also depicted as possessed by evil forces.

Despite Maha's narrative asserting itself throughout the text, the final chapter presents the storyteller's version, possibly suggesting the triumph of patriarchal and colonial discourse. Despite Maha narrating her story, Conwell (2011, 45) argues that she lacks control over her representation, as her narrative is distorted by a traditional patriarchal storyteller. For instance, he falsely attributes Maha's attempt to kill her brother to her desire for inheritance, despite her father giving her the land. Additionally, he portrays Maha in a sinister light, describing her as "evil, haunted, and capable of slaying a man" (Ibid, 33). While

readers may question the storyteller's perspective, it nonetheless reflects dominant patriarchal and colonial ideologies. For instance, when Maha faces infertility after six months of marriage, the society attributes it to possession by evil spirits rather than mental illness. As AlShammari (2014, 454) observes, this stigma is linked to gender and the notion of "purity," where being a "good woman equates to being healthy, sane, and able-bodied". Aunt Tamima, her mother-in-law, takes her to "Hajjeh Hulala, the village healer or sorceress," to free her from the perceived demonic influence.

Bertha and Maha are depicted using Orientalist tropes as sexually charged femme fatales. Rochester characterizes Bertha as a mad, enigmatic, bestial, and crafty seductress. He suggests that she "enticed, enchanted, or lured him" with her beauty:

I thought I loved her...Her relatives encouraged me; competitors piqued me; she allured me: a marriage was achieved almost before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! ... I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her (Brontë 1996, 332-333).

Madness has historically served as a label for those who deviate from societal norms of normalcy, acceptability, and desirability. In both novels, the female protagonists are branded as insane as a means of patriarchal and colonial control, serving to uphold the existing power structures. Caminero-Santangelo (1998, 17) astutely observes that madness functions as a category imposed on women as punishment for behaviours deemed unfeminine. Any deviation from prescribed "feminine" behaviour is met with punishment. Insanity in these narratives is depicted as a tool for social control, discipline, silencing—an outcome of subjugation and confinement, and manipulation perpetuated by patriarchy and colonialism. Insanity and confinement within asylums serve as reflections of the female experience, acting as penalties for being female, or for daring to reject societal norms (Chesler 1972, 16). It can be argued that such mechanisms of social control and imprisonment may ultimately pose threats to women's mental well-being. Even if Bertha did not initially exhibit signs of insanity. Rochester's mistreatment of her could have contributed to her eventual descent into madness.

Medicine and oppressive psychiatry have historically been wielded as tools for social normalization and control. In both narratives, medical interventions dictate the behaviour of women, relegating them to the margins of society. Additionally, Caminero-Santangelo (1998,

13) remarks that insanity and moral principles were viewed as contradictory - a notion implicit in Victorian portrayals of moral insanity. Consequently, any deviation from the patriarchal moral norms of Victorian England was met with the label of insanity. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester informs Jane that nobody forewarned him about Bertha's insanity when he wed her, citing her mother's insanity. This reflects Victorian beliefs surrounding psychiatry and the concept of the "daughter's disease," which attributed mental illness transmission to women due to their reproductive system, making them more prone to transmit it than fathers (Showalter 1985, 67). Rochester suggests that Bertha's mental state deteriorated over time but remains vague about her exact affliction. Bertha is depicted as an impediment to his union with Jane, motivating him to confine her and keep her hidden away.

There is no medical substantiation for the accusation of insanity against the two women depicted in *Pillars of Salt*. Maha faces allegations of madness due to her defiance against patriarchy and the English oppressors, expressing her resentment by labelling them as "Foreign killers, all of you" (Faqir 1996, 172). Similarly, Um Saad is deemed mad for voicing her discontent over her husband's mistreatment upon marrying a younger wife. Both women endure restraint, drug injections, electroshock therapy, and torture. Maha recounts an instance where Kukash, the nurse, forcefully immobilizes Um Saad on the bed, binding her limbs to the iron bedposts before administering a drug (Ibid, 7). The medical practitioners condone the patriarchal oppression and perpetuate further abuse against the victims.

Um Saad's life is marked by early imprisonment and physical abuse inflicted first by her family and later by her husband. She confides in Maha that there were instances when she was beaten without any apparent cause. Additionally, when she falls in love with a Circassian youth, her family confines her to their home, denying her freedom of movement. This restriction stems from her father's prejudiced beliefs regarding the Circassian ethnicity, viewing them as inferior due to their historical exile by the Russians in the nineteenth century. Um Saad faces punishment and is unjustly labelled as insane simply for experiencing love. Her participation in social events is severely restricted, limited to her wedding ceremony. Moreover, when she dares to gaze out of her window, she faces physical abuse from her father, who strikes her with a leather belt. Furthermore, her husband subjects her to physical violence and sexual assault on their wedding night. Similar to Bertha, Um Saad finds herself initially confined within the

confines of her family home and subsequently her marital residence, enduring oppression reminiscent of the conditions.

Blowers (1996) suggests that according to Foucault's analysis, it's not intrinsic behavioural traits that lead individuals to be marginalized; rather, it's the societal, institutional, and psychiatric interpretations of those traits. However, despite their acts of rebellion, they ultimately face silence, marginalization, and societal isolation.

Insanity is depicted as a condition afflicting women in these narratives, reinforcing the patriarchal notion that women are more prone to emotional instability and require control. Only female characters, such as Bertha and her mother in Jane Evre, are portraved as insane, while no male characters in *Pillars of Salt* are shown to be institutionalized. Although the storyteller in the text exhibits signs of instability, he remains free. Ironically, Maha and her mother are labelled as insane by the storyteller himself. Showalter (1985, 3) argues that throughout history, madness has been gendered as a female affliction, and previous associations between madness and femininity are noted by Ussher (1991, 167). As Klambauer (2019) highlights, in the nineteenth century, the connection between mental illness and aspects of the female reproductive system led to the perception of madness as exclusively female. This period saw madness linked to women through medical theories involving the uterus and the treatment of hysteria, which often involved an orgasmic cure. During the Victorian era, prevailing beliefs attributed women's perceived emotional volatility and irrationality to physiological factors such as their reproductive organs, menstruation, menopause, and childbirth.

In an interview, Faqir discussed the patriarchal structure prevalent in Arab families, where the father assumes authority over significant decisions, leading men to perceive themselves as superior to women (Moore 2011, 3). Both female protagonists in *Pillars of Salt* defy conventional gender roles imposed on them. Maha refuses to accept her husband taking another wife, a common practice in the Arab world and rejects the role of a traditional housewife responsible for household chores, including those for the additional wife. She also declines to marry a man she does not love, challenging societal expectations. Consequently, insanity in this narrative is portrayed as a form of punishment rather than a romantic pathway to freedom. In 1920s Jordan, societal norms dictated that women should primarily fulfil domestic roles, particularly among Bedouin communities. Many girls, like Maha, lacked access to education and were confined to

household duties. Additionally, women faced constraints on mobility; for instance, Um Saad, despite residing in a city, was confined to her parents' home and not permitted to venture outside.

In both narratives, female madness is depicted as an untreatable illness. Lerner (1989) contends that during the Victorian era, madness was often perceived as incurable, akin to chronic drunkenness or as an insurmountable class divide, especially within the context of marriage. He suggests that madness, similar to the role of minor characters, served as a narrative tool to evade addressing certain societal issues. Consequently, by terming Bertha as insane and beyond remedy, Rochester endeavours to justify his deception of Jane regarding his previous marriage. Although Bertha is not institutionalized, Rochester informs Jane that "the medical men pronounced her mad" (Brontë 1966, 335), implying an irreversible condition. Similarly, in *Pillars of* Salt, the two women are falsely "accused of insanity and treated as if their purported madness is incurable, evidenced by the gradual escalation of their medication dosage." Um Saad laments, "They brought me to Fuhais where Christians live and where mad people go (Faqir 1996, 19), portraying the hospital as a stifling environment—a narrow hospital room with no air at all" (Ibid, 51).

Spivak posits that the subaltern faces exacerbated marginalization when also categorized as insane. The combined forces of patriarchy and colonialism have effectively muted these three female protagonists. Bertha, in particular, is deprived of the opportunity to articulate herself, reduced to making sounds reminiscent of animals. Her marginalization is intensified by her gender, ethnicity, and mental state. Spivak (1995, 271) interprets Bertha's role in the novel as aiming to blur the distinction between human and animal, thus undermining her rights under the law, both in essence and practice.

While Um Saad and Maha confide in each other instead of the colonizers or their patriarchal oppressors, they are still unable to express themselves. Men dismiss their narratives, citing stereotypes about Islamic women being irrational and having lower intellectual capacity. Sinno observes that Faqir's characters spend much of their time in the asylum engaged in introspection and self-expression (Sinno 2011, 89). They communicate with each other, although it is undeniable that they are under the control of doctors and nurses. The women are constantly monitored, penalized, and demanded to refrain from speaking and laughing, resulting in their physical and mental selves being under scrutiny. Sinno (2011, 91-92) acknowledges that

the asylum poses the greatest threat to their sanity. While they may endure. the question remains: for how long? The two protagonists struggle to prove their sanity. Yousef's commentary on the text connects it to Spivak's notion: "The subaltern cannot speak because their words cannot be properly interpreted. Hence the silence of the female in the novel is not the result of her lack of articulation but the outcome of the refusal of society to listen to her and interpret her words appropriately" (Yousef 2016, 382). Even if readers perceive them as innocent, their societies regard them differently, perpetuating their marginalized status quo. They are ostracized from mainstream society for offences they did not commit. They are deprived of their fundamental rights to live freely among their families and children. Their sustenance is inadequate, their hair is forcibly cut short, and kerosene is poured into their hair despite the absence of lice. Additionally, the English doctor disregards Muslim customs by removing Um Saad's veil, an act that undermines her religious identity as a Hajjeh, as it is expected to cover her hair in the presence of men. These incidents underscore the systemic silencing of these subaltern women.

In both novels, the depiction of mentally ill women can symbolize the "colonized land stripped of its autonomy." Bertha in Jane Eyre can be seen as emblematic of the British desire to dominate the West Indies and exploit its resources. Similarly, in Arabic literature, women's bodies serve as battlegrounds for political struggles; imprisoned women symbolize confiscated territories. Here, Harb and Maha represent the Bedouin way of life, while Daffash symbolizes British colonialists and modern urbanization, posing a threat to Bedouin traditions and customs. Maha's brother collaborates with the English to exploit their father's land, whereas Maha strives to preserve it. Daffash aims to modernize the farm, sell the herd, construct a villa, and employ Indian labourers (Fagir 1996, 83). Maha's imprisonment symbolizes the Bedouin's relinquishment of control over their land and heritage. Daffash attempts to coerce his sister into signing a document renouncing her claim to their family's land. When she declines to sign, he warns that he will shoot her with his gun aimed at her head. Maha flees with Nasra, seeking refuge in a cave. However, her son and land are taken by him, prompting her to return home and confront him. Despite her resistance, Daffash brutally assaults Maha and escorts her to the asylum by authorities.

Bertha experiences complete silence, while Maha and Um Saad share their stories only with each other, with no one else lending an ear apart from the reader. Madness, as McDaniel (2011) suggests, is a reflection of female subjugation and manipulation. Unlike in Jane Eyre, where Bertha's sanity is unquestioned, Pillars of Salt may challenge the sanity of its female protagonists, but their societies do not. Over time, the isolation and harsh treatment in the asylum will likely drive Maha and Um Saad to madness. Insanity, as described by Caminero-Santangelo, is not characterized by rage or hate but by hopelessness—a complete surrender to constraining representations. Critics who perceive madness as rebellious ought to distinguish between the author and the characters. The author's voice can be discerned, while the characters' voices are ultimately muted by patriarchal and colonial authorities. These powers send them to the asylum not for treatment but for disposal, ensuring they never return home. Hysteria, as Showalter notes, "lacks the power to effect cultural change; it is safer for the patriarchal order to permit discontented women to express their grievances through psychosomatic illness." Women must unite with one another to defend their rights, and critics must avoid romanticizing women's madness or viewing it as a symbol of resistance. Such perceptions only perpetuate stereotypes that have historically oppressed women.

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Crossing borders, breaking boundaries: Enduring Indian cultural identity in Trinidadian Carnival

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Abstract: The 2011 census demographic report released by the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago declared that a majority of their population comprised of Indians and people of Indian descent. Majority of them trace their association with the island nation to the times of Indentureship (1845-1917), when a sizeable population of Indians were uprooted and transplanted to the Caribbean to work on sugar plantations. Displaced from their homeland, these immigrantsfaced the difficult task of repositioning themselves in a new land. In such scenarios, culture becomes a vehicle for the diasporic community to establish a connection with the new land, maintain solidarity within the group and to gain a sense of self without severing all ties with their homeland. The Trinidadian Carnival is the greatest street parade in the world and an important emblem of Trinidadian culture. Often associated with the Afro-Trinidadian community, over the years it has grown to be a crucible of cross-cultural associations with elements from both African and Indian culture influencing the festivities. Inspired from Indian folk culture, chutneymusic now finds an increasingly stronger presence in the Trinidadian Carnival alongside its African creole counterparts of calypso and soca. Another important element of the Carnival is the steelband, which now witness a strong Indian presence. The Indian diaspora in Trinidad thereby continue to enrich the cultural space of Trinidad, often maintaining the rich culture of India alive and flourishing in the island nation. Indian cultural elements therefore take up the vital role of identity construction and value addition, even so far away from home. This paper intends to study the enduring presence of Indian cultural elements in the Trinidadian Carnival and how the Indian immigrants constructed, and continue to construct, their identity through social memory and popular culture. In discussing these questions, the paper refers to concepts of cultural identity and draws ofcontemporary information froma repertoire scholarly literature, governmental and non-governmental records, and news articles.

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Introduction

In 2025, the East Indian community will celebrate the 180th anniversary of their forefathers' arrival in the Caribbean Island nation of Trinidad. The 2011 official population census of Trinidad and Tobago placed the Indo-Trinidadians and Tobagonians as the largest ethnic group in the country comprising of 35.4% of the total population (Central Statistical Office 2011, 15). The history of Indian association with the island nation is a troubled one and can be traced back to the nineteenth century when the country was a major British colony. Post the emancipation of African-origin slaves, the British crown faced the dire predicament of labour shortage in their priced sugar and cocoa plantations. This paved the way for a new policy of indentureship in the year 1845 whereby labourers from India were transported to the Caribbean Island nations for a contract period, usually extending up to five years, after which they would be provided a return passage. The alternative was to continue their residence in the Caribbean on a piece of land offered by the government. A policy that was actively practiced till the 1917 resulted in a large population of Indians immigrating to the Caribbean, with a lot of them settling down and making it their new home.

One of the foremost concerns of a diasporic community is to renegotiate their identity and gain a sense of place in the new land. Cultural theorists have long established the significant role played by culture in renegotiation of individual and collective identity. Culture is fluid, ever changing and reorienting, not a complete product (Hall 1990, 222). Therefore, cultural elements – rituals, traditions, knowledge – become mediums through which ethnic identities could be continuously constructed and renegotiated. Over the years, the Indian community in Trinidad have moulded their unique identity in the land through continued association with practices rooted in the Indian cultural landscape. This paper intends to explore the enduring presence of Indian popular culture in the Trinidadian Carnival and their continuing influence on shaping Indian identity in the local and global context.

The Trinidadian Carnival

The Carnival is a significant popular cultural tradition of Trinidad and Tobago, and is celebrated in the month of February or March and

concludes on Fat Tuesday, just before Lent commences. Some call it "The Mother of all West Indian Carnivals" as it encompasses a grand celebration that weaves together the captivating beats of calypso, chutney and soca music, steelband performances, folk dances, and vivid costumes (Lawrence n.d.). However, its origin is subject to various speculations. Some historians trace it back to the European Carnivals during the Roman times which travelled to the Caribbean shores with the coming of the British, while others associate it with the Africans' indigenous mas making and masquerading traditions (Liverpool 1998, 30). Despite these debates, the Carnival has flourished as a key symbol of Trinidadian culture.

The arrival of Indian community in Trinidad marked a new era for the Carnival festivities. A festival dominated by the Creole population now faced an influx of cultural elements from the immigrant Indian population. When two communities with their unique cultural backgrounds try and establish their identities in a defined space, conflicts and contestations are unavoidable. However, it also opens avenues of possibilities where each participates with the other in this shared cultural space leading to a communion of ideas and cultures (Sankeralli 1998, 206). So, by the 20th century, the Carnival had developed into this shared cultural space with a distinct Indian presence in several key elements of the festival like the steel band, mas, and the calypso. This paper is limited to exploring those cultural elements that are closely associated with, and enrich, the Carnival festivities and not the vast entirety of cultural additions from the Indian community that have shaped the Trinidadian cultural landscape.

Indian cultural traditions in the Trinidadian Carnival

Chutney music – origin and evolution

The Indians who migrated to Caribbean during the period of indentureship were mostly from the Bhojpuri-speaking North Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The then dominant Creole population and the newly introduced Indian immigrants in the Caribbean faced a common struggle against the Eurocentric hegemony of the West. Although vastly different in their cultural traditions, efforts to establish a sense of place and identity in the new land made both these groups turn to their native folk culture to assert their presence (Manuel 2006, 152). The African community gave birth to the Calypso music in the eighteenth century, largely derived from the West African satirical musical tradition of 'kaiso' which largely centred

around enslaved Africans mocking their white masters and deriding the inhuman system of slavery. Over the years, Calypso music has brought Trinidad & Tobago to prominence on the global cultural map and is a major constituent of the Carnival. On the other hand, the Indian community's significant and unique contribution to the dance and musical landscape of the Trinidadian Carnival festivities was the Chutney music:

In 1970, a young singer named Sundar Popo from Trinidad, catapulted to fame in the small Indian community of the Caribbean with a song called Nana and Nani. The droll and witty lyrics, a mix of Hindi and Trinidadian Creole, dwelt on the comical everyday affairs of a grandmother and grandfather living in a small town. Backed with the music of the dholak and dhantal (as well as the guitar and synthesizer), the song instantly became a chartbuster, giving birth to a new form of music known as 'Chutney' (Malhotra 2016).

The chutney music, as it developed in Trinidad and other neighbouring nations, was deeply rooted in Indian musical and dance culture comprising of variety of genres, such as wedding songs, birth songs (sohar), urdu/muslim qawwali and qasida, devotional Hindu bhajans, narrative birha, seasonal songs (chotwal, hori, chaiti) and idiosyncratic versions of Hindustani classical and light-classical genres. By the twentieth century, chutney music transformed itself into a fast-paced, single-refrain verse with Bhojpuri texts. Soon the Indian musical flavour blended with the local vernacular and culture giving birth to the 'chutney soca', with its distinct calypso influences. Originally sung to the sounds of dholak, dhantal and manjira, Indian percussion instruments, Chutney music has embraced harmonica, tassa and more over the years. 'Chutney', a name denoting a savoury condiment, truly defines the essence of this musical legacy.

"Chutney emerged from the rustic traditions of rural Caroni and Penal, rather than the bourgeois Indian community of Port of Spain" (Manuel 1998, 35). Its acceptance into the socially mainstream Carnival festivities, dominated by calypso and steelband, could be associated with the chutney musician Drupatee Ramgoonai. Her 1987 album, particularly the songs 'Roll up the Tassa' and 'Mr. Bissessar', were crucial in catapulting chutney music into the Carnival arena. This was followed by Rikki Jai and "the move of chutney into calypso space climaxed in 1996 when Sonny Mann's chutney 'Lotay La' was a major hit during the Carnival season" (Sankeralli 1998, 207). Indian participation in the Carnival which earlier took place within the

shadows of the Creole framework now had their own standing and space.

Chutney music in the 21st century

As a socio-cultural phenomenon, chutney and chutney soca music continues to represent the resilience of the Indian community and their ability to carve a unique presence within the larger national and international cultural landscape. Peppered with bhojpuri lyrics and, a fast tempo, the musical tradition is an enduring link for the community with their Indian roots. Ever since the popularity of the Chutney Soca on the Carnival stage, it has enabled the emergence of several fusion styles such as Chutney rap, Chutney jhumar, Chutney lambada and Chutney parang. While chutney jhumar is a mixture of chutney music with the famous folk dance of bhojpuri speaking regions, Chutney parang is an amalgamation of the music of the Caribbean and Latin American. "The present trend is the mix of the Indo-Caribbean theme with Indian film music and American popular music." (Kumar Sahu 2020) This versatility of chutney music enables the performers to entice the Indian and the non-Indian community alike, without losing the Indian flavour all the same.

It is worth noting the importance of chutney music and its later derivative son Indo-Trinidadian women's renegotiation of identity in a diasporic setting. A look into the origin of the art form reveals that its folk forerunners, the matikhor and musical nights at Hindu weddings, were rendered by middle-class and lower-class women (Sankeralli1 998, 207). Despite strains of conservatism, these spaces have provided women an opportunity to go beyond the boundaries of their home and express their selves. Now with the rising proliferation of chutney fame, women have carved their own niche, asserting independence and selfdetermination. "Singer Ramraji Prabhu proclaimed, 'Chutney is modern and it is a liberation for women. We no longer have to hide behind doors to dance as we want." (Manuel 1998, 35) "Certain themes like 'lack of control' in the music and dance style echoes the "lack of control" that men have over women's bodies as they are dancing chutney (Bergman 2008, 15). The year 2013 was unprecedented with four women artists proceeding to the Chutney Soca finals. The year 2023 marked eight-year old Katelin Sultan becoming the youngest artist to qualify for the semi-final round of the Chutney Soca Monarch (CSM) competition (Maraj 2023).

In close connection to the above matter, it is imperative to analyse the allegations of women activists who criticise chutney music with sexual stereotyping and a general disregard towards women. Many feminists discovered and believed that while culture was a powerful arena, it perpetuated and created sexist ideas and representations (Butler 1990; Doyle 2019). In the case of chutney music, women's sexuality has been a central concern since its origin. Traditional chutney music was sung by older married women during Hindu wedding preparations. While some songs were religious, some bore lyrics teasing the bride about her upcoming wedding night. A criticism often levelled against chutnev music is the projection of women as objects in the songs. A section believes it is the injunction of soca music that is to blame for this trend (Soca, Chutney, Dancehall Lyrics Denigrate Woman's Body 2020). Notwithstanding the blame game, it is however a growing perception that Chutney music and its newer versions are perpetuating a culture of misogyny in Trinidad. This is a perception largely associated with the Creole dominated Calypso music as well. Moreover, chutney musicians are facing flak from the larger cultural community for their excessive focus on debauchery in latest music, some even proclaiming the death of Chutney music. In fact, Chutney icons have come forward in lamenting this trend. Raymond Ramnarine, in a 2013 article in the Trinidad Guardian expressed regret at how chutney music "has become a deluge of rum songs." This is justified when we recognise that "hits inthe recent past have veered towards rum bottles. Hits like Ravi B's 'Ah Drinka', 'Rum is Meh Lover' and 'Rum in my Vein'; Ricki Jai's 'Barman', and Adesh Samaroo's 'Rum TillI Die', all support this theme" (On Chutney Controversy 2023).

Culture is ever evolving and is susceptible to changes some of which could be questionable in nature. However, it is also imperative to contextualise a particular cultural practice or element within the reality of its social landscape. A leaning towards excesses and hedonism has always been the reality for not just chutney or soca or calypso, but is a defining element of the Carnival festivities at large in Trinidad. Allegations and criticisms read in line with this reality would suggest that claims like: "chutney is dead" is far-fetched, and the need for a culturally rooted understanding of the musical tradition is the need of the hour. As some critics point out, "the genre just needs to be sanitized; and it will survive" (Ibidem).

A matter of great pride for the Indian community in Trinidad was the introduction of the annual Chutney Soca Monarch (CSM) competition during the Carnival season, which has grown from strength to strength in contemporary times. CSM is considered to be one of the greatest Indo-Caribbean concert of its kind in the world. With each passing year, the Chutney Soca events continue to flourish and garner fame across millions within and outside the Caribbean. Despite the booming presence of Chutney, the music fraternity have raised concerns of low state funding and support. However, as per records, the prize money for the winner of the Chutney Soca Monarch 2023 competition was the biggest in three years at \$500000 of a total of \$1 million in prizes (Dowrich-Phillips 2022). The hike in the reward is emblematic of the rising significance of this musical tradition and its acceptance by the larger community. The finals of CSM 2024, which took place on February 10, witnessed a packed venue and a host of top entertainers from the island nation competing for the coveted Chutney Soca Monarch and Queen of Chutney Soca titles.

An interesting development is the gradual expansion of this Indo-Caribbean musical and dance art form to international arenas. The 'Chutney Fest' organised by the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association is a case in point. An annual event, the chutney fest entered its 11th year in 2025 and attracts talents and tourists from across North America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia. It is a coming together of local and international artists who epitomize the culture of Indo-Caribbean community and showcase the instruments, music and dance forms attributed to the Chutney culture. The event even includes a competition for the local singers with the winner crowned the 'ChutneyFest Champion'. It is stated that the event witnessed a footfall of "more than 3500 visitors annually, and over 3,30.000 online in 2021" (ChutneyFest n.d). The festival is rearing to grow into a prestigious event celebrating Indo-Caribbean culture and heritage in the coming years. Chutney music's presence and reach in New York City is yet another example of its continued acceptance by the global community. It is true that "Chutney is evolving into a vehicle for Indian cultural aurality and visibility in Trinidad" (Mahabir n.d) and overseas.

A matter of concern however is the threat of commodification of this Indo-Caribbean popular cultural practice. There is fear that with recent developments, 'the popular' could lose its authenticity and become merely 'populist' in nature. The art form has already witnessed several modifications with the latest of it being addition, and sometimes replacement, of traditional musical instruments with electronic instruments. Some lament this for it could mean a break away from the traditional Indian roots and a widening of cultural gap between the modern Indo-Trinidadians with their ancestral home of India. We cannot claim an essentialist view of culture as it is an everchanging phenomenon, but if the ongoing changes continue to erode the very essence of a cultural practice and its constituent elements, then how laudable is this change is a question the community needs to grapple with.

Indian influence in Steelband – Tassa

Steelband is a Trinidadian music ensemble closely associated with the Carnival festivities. The Steelband is often spoken synonymously with the Steelpan. The Steelpan is a musical instrument akin to a drum and had its origin in the poverty-stricken Creole dominated Laventille hills where "a number of metal objects such as milk cans, garbage can covers and pots [were beaten] to produce musical sounds" (Steelpan History n.d.). Today the steelpans are mass produced from oil drums, played with a pair of straight sticks tipped with rubber, and are considered the national instrument of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

A significant contribution by the Indian community to this largely Creole dominated musical tradition is the introduction of 'Tassa'. "The tassa is a medium-sized kettledrum, about eighteen inches in diameter, suspended at waist level and played with a pair of flexible sticks" (Manuel 2015, 136). We can trace the roots of tassa to the North Indian drumming tradition of dhol-tasha. The tassa bands become a central attraction for the annual Hosay/Muharram celebration that was brought to the Trinidadian shores by the Indian indentured labourers. It also became a mainstay in Hindu wedding rituals, and other cultural and national celebrations. Though the tassa music is partly derived from Local Classical Singing, "a unique Indian Caribbean genre built upon fragments and elaborations of North Indian devotional, folk, and classical music" (Tantam 2018), but its presence in several celebratory events of national importance makes it crosscultural borders and carve a space in the larger Trinidadian cultural landscape. "In this way, tassa has become a music of national importance, one that is frequently evoked as a metaphor for Indian culture in Trinidad and Tobago" (Ibid.). It has reached a point where several cultural activists have raised demands of including tassa as the second national instrument of the country alongside steelpan (Boodan 2009).

While the first national steelpan competition premiered in the Trinidad and Tobago in the year 1963, it was in 2001 the Tassa Association of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) established an annual National Tassa Competition. This, along with the Tassa Taal, has become central sites of communion for tassa performers and fans. The competition is partially subsidized by the government. "Meanwhile, various smaller competitions are held on irregular base in different parts of the island at different times of year. Prominent among them is the "Junior Tassa Rama" held by Mere Desh, an organisation founded and led by Ajeet Praimsingh, an indefatigable and creative promoter of local Indian culture" (Manuel 2015, 164).

Tassa has been successful in bridging the cultural gap between the Indian and African communities. Several Afro-Trinidadians participate and join the tassa groups that play during Hosay festival. "Although overwhelmingly a product of the Indian community, tassa is commonly performed at racially mixed events, and Afro-Trinidadians do not hesitate to "wine" and "get on bad" to its thunderous rhythms" (Ibid, 233). The popularity of tassa is growing and has gained a unique international presence, with "nascent (or revivalist) tassa scenes" flourishing in Guyana and Suriname and even in New York, Toronto, and Florida "where it is widely played at Guyanese as well as Trinidadian functions" (Ibidem). With its neotraditional contemporary style, tassa has adapted itself to shine on Trinidadian and global platform.

Conclusion

Cultural theorists have for years researched the implications of culture and its associated art forms on identity creation in various scenarios. The importance of cultural art forms in negotiation and construction of identity for a diasporic community is an oft explored area and a significant name amongst those is that of the renowned cultural theorist, John W Berry (1992). His model of acculturation strategies could be drawn on to understand the enduring cultural influence of Indian diasporic community in Trinidad and Tobago. Acculturation refers to the process through which an individual negotiates their identity in new cultural contexts. From Berry's model, four paths of acculturation strategies emerge:

- Assimilation when an individual or group adopts the host or dominant cultural norms over their own.
- Separation when there is a rejection of the host or dominant culture in order to preserve their own culture.
- Integration when individuals or groups are able to adopt the host or dominant culture, while sustaining their culture of origin.
- Marginalization when there is a rejection of both the dominant culture and their own.

It can be argued that the Indian diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago have 'integrated' themselves into their adopted land through the cultural art forms of chutney and tassa. The Trinidadian Carnival has been crucial in bringing about this acculturation. The Carnival is not merely a celebration, but is the epitome of Trinidadian culture and unity. Chutney music and tassa, with their growing presence on the Carnival stage, has therefore upheld the Indian cultural traditions alongside their African counterparts, without complete assimilation or marginalisation of the other. The Indian diaspora has negotiated a presence in the national cultural landscape which was once a domain of Afro-Trinidadian contributions of Calypso, Steelband, and Soca and bridged the gap between the two dominant ethnicities in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Afterlife and activism: The confluence of spectrality and implication in Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*

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Abstract: Implicated subjects play a crucial role in activism by revealing hidden truths and reviving suppressed voices. This study investigates the potential of a 'complexly' implicated subject in narrativizing the experience of Sri Lankan Tamil and Sinhala communities during the Sri Lankan civil war and engaging in memory activism. The textual analysis of Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* (2022) through the lens of hauntology deliberates on memory, absence, truth and their intricate entanglement. Situated on the intersections of implication and spectrality, the protagonist Maali Almeida acts as a reminder and a remainder, continually underscoring the inextricable links between the past and the present. Firstly, this paper dwells on the construction of Maali Almeida as a subject of complex implication. Secondly, it examines how witnessing and spectrality influence the protagonist's functions of reminding and remaining. The paper thus illustrates the unconventional modes of memory activism initiated by a specter and its indispensability in charting absences.

Keywords: implication, memory activism, specter, absence

Introduction

Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* provides a counter narrative of the Sri Lankan civil war through the interplay between fact and fiction. With a protagonist who is a specter inhabiting the afterlife, the novel is a profound deliberation on the invisibility of truths and fissures in history. A hauntological approach to the text reveals the indomitable presence of unresolved pasts that demand acknowledgement and fuel memory activism. Employing the theories of implicated subjects and implicated memory activism, this paper examines the role of the 'complexly' implicated subject as a memory

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activist. Through the interrogation of the relationship between the protagonist's spectrality and implicated memory activism, the paper attempts to answer the question: How does spectrality and activism intersect to counter the hegemonic forces that erase rather than engage with absence?

Published in 2022, the novel revolves around the murdered queer photojournalist Maali Almeida, who crosses over to the afterlife. As a specter, the protagonist is given a period of seven moons or a week within which he must choose to remain continually in the afterlife referred to as the 'In Between' or travel to 'The Light,' a space that facilitates rebirth by offering a "fresh start" (Karunatilaka 2022, 286). Maali Almeida embarks on a mission to exhibit a collection of photographs that reveal various facets of the Sri Lankan civil war before travelling to 'The Light' on the seventh day. According to Avery Gordon (2008, 17), writing ghost stories is an exercise in writing about exclusions and invisibilities. Being a ghost story, The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida is a novel about exclusions based on ethnicity and sexuality, invisible people (both victims and implied subjects) and one specter's quest for creating a countermemory. Karunatilaka's novel transforms the dominant understanding of the civil war by eschewing the victim versus perpetrator binary, challenges the vilification of Tamil community and unearths, if not accuse, the state's role in the civil war. The paper borrows the idea of the implicated subject by Michael Rothberg to analyze Maali Almeida's positionality as a case of complex implication. It also relies on Jennifer Noji and Michael Rothberg's concept of implicated memory activism to understand how the specter functions as both a reminder of erased memories and a remainder or a ghostly trace.

A case of complex implication

The Sri Lankan civil war was a series of ethnic conflicts that culminated in the Tamil genocide in 2009. It was not only a conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but a violent attempt at consolidating a national identity that was Sinhala in its outlook by harbouring hostility towards the Sri Lankan Tamil community. The novel avoids siding with any faction in the civil war, portraying both the Sri Lankan government and LTTE as perpetrators while depicting Tamils and Sinhalas collectively as victims. Such a classification bears the risk of conflating specificities that may affect the identity of ethnic

communities. However, the recognition of collective trauma in this case allows memory activism from the civilian space to originate without the constraints of cultural particularities thereby aiding the combined fight against perpetrators.

Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* offers a commentary on the categorization of the perpetrators and victims, using fiction to corroborate the status and function of implicated subjects within this dynamic. In his work, *The Implicated Subject*, Michael Rothberg (2019, 91) introduces the concept of complex implication as the experience of "occupying positions that align one both to histories of victimization and to histories of perpetration." Inhabiting this liminal space, the implicated subject performs the role of an observer and a participant. Maali Almeida is not a perpetrator but a 'perpetuator' who is implicated in the production of injustice. His allegiance to the systems that allow, inflict, and sustain oppression and political persecutions makes him a perpetuator.

Born to a half-Burgher and half-Tamil mother and a Sinhala father, Malinda Almeida Kabalana's Sinhala sounding name exemplifies his undisputable belonging to a country that is antagonistic to Tamils. However in a situation where a Sinhala name can garner unwarranted suspicion from the LTTE and other allies, Maali Almeida asserts his Sri Lankan identity over his Sinhala and Tamil-Burgher roots. During a conversation with Elsa Mathangi from Canada Norway Third World Relief (CNTR), Maali claims that he no longer refers to himself as a Sinhala after 1983 and that Tamils and Sinhalas were all "Sri Lankans, children of Kuveni, bastards of Vijaya" (Karunatilaka 2022, 106). Maali Almeida's complex implication makes him an associate of the two warring ethnic communities despite his insistence on remaining neutral. In another instance when Stanley Dharmendran, the Tamil cabinet minister in the Sri Lankan government and the father of his love interest Dilan Dharmendran, asks Maali Almeida, "So what are you?" the latter replies, "A Sri Lankan" (Ibid, 232). The emphasis on Sri Lankan identity is a political act not devoid of ideological underpinnings on who constitutes the nation.

In the afterlife, Sena Pathirana, a JVP organizer rightly calls him, "Dinner party activist. Photographer of all sides" criticizing his neutrality (Ibid, 96). Maali Almeida's conscious choice of not leaning towards one or the other ethnic roots ultimately reinforces his implication, where he identifies with the histories of both the perpetrators and the victims. The refusal to take sides highlights the

"actions or inactions" of the implicated subjects that "help produce and reproduce the positions of victim and perpetrator" (Rothberg 2019, 1). However, when the awareness of the implication emerges, Maali Almeida begins to exploit his status as an implicated subject to expose the perpetrators. Elsa Mathangi, representing CNTR, enlists Maali Almeida's support for Tamil victims by highlighting the Sri Lankan government's unacknowledged atrocities in 1983. At the Arts Centre Club, she urges him, "Your photos will help change that. Tell me, kolla. Which side are you on?" (Karunatilaka 2022, 107) Initially neutral, Maali confronts his inaction but hesitates to fully commit to CNTR. When asked again at Hotel Leo, he responds, "I am on the side that wants to stop Sri Lankans from dying like this" (Ibid, 109). Later, when pressed a third time, he replies, "The side that pays me" (110). Ultimately, Maali agrees for three reasons: payment, his presence during the riots, and his belief that the government had "a lot of answering to do" (Ibid, 111). The change in his replies and the acceptance of the assignments signal his internal conflicts as he utilizes his implication albeit with caution. Although Maali Almeida is unaware of the "critical political intervention" that the embrace of implication can bring about, he recognizes the challenge implicated subjects can pose to the perpetrators (Rothberg 2019, 120). Hence, his mission to photograph becomes an act of bearing witness rather than a During his conversation means of sustenance. with Dilan Dharmendran, he accuses Dilan's father for his inability to condemn the government's shelling of civilians in Jaffna by asserting "You can use your privilege to help others or exclude them" (Karunatilaka 2022, 234). Not only does Maali Almeida recognize his role as an implicated subject but also cultivates the faculty to distinguish between the positions other people occupy as perpetuators, collaborators and bystanders. His identity as an implicated subject is not incontestable or permanent. As Rothberg (2019, 8) expounds, implicated subjects might become "victims, perpetrators or descendants of victims" in "other histories and other structures." Maali Almeida's murder exemplifies his transition from an implicated subject to a victim. Unlike Tamils and Sinhalas who are rendered victims due to their positions as civilians, his victimhood emerges from his homosexuality, transforming him into a specter.

Stanley Dharmendran murders Maali Almeida by forcing him to ingest cyanide from the capsule the latter wore as a chain around his neck. Maali Almeida's disappearance is linked to his political

associations, the groups and organizations that had contributed to his status as an implicated subject. It is the disappearance that begins the process of haunting, even before his death is ascertained. His disappearance is not an isolated event but one that brings with it, a history of well-orchestrated disappearances of unsuspecting civilians, Tamils and Sinhalas. Evaluating the crime dynamics in Sri Lanka, Anoma Pieris (2019, 53) writes that "Mobs, fires, loss, concealment, surveillance, disappearances and escalating degrees of social and physical dispossession" characterized the turbulent period after 1983. While Maali Almeida is murdered for his relationship with Dilan Dharmendran, his death is treated as an instance of disappearance due to political affiliations. It is the protagonist's implication in the civil war that compels this misconception to hold water. Despite his murder being tied to his sexuality, a concern that is seemingly distant from the societal conditions during the civil war in the 1980s, the narrative surrounding his death indicates how conveniently power can be used to misdirect investigations on disappearances and suppress threats to authority while evading legal consequences. Writing at length about the state's role in using disappearance as a method to control and inhibit opposition, Gordon (2008, 127) classifies those who disappeared into two categories. The first category encapsulates the disappeared who return while the second category of the disappeared reappears only as apparitions. Maali Almeida who disappears, dies and reappears as a specter, belongs to the second category. His return is neither coincidental nor phantasmagorical, but one that is necessary, expected and longed for. Implication, like spectrality, transcends mortality, facilitating the specter to embody the intertwined threads of past and present, perpetuation and victimization and complicity and morality. His distinct links to injustices as a perpetuator and a victim refashion his complex implication as a favourable position from which activism takes root.

'Complexly' implicated subjects are witnesses to the crimes of the perpetrators and the sufferings of the victims. This dual affiliation without absolute commitment to either of the contrasting positions, enables the implicated subject to expose the conflicted nature of history. Considering implicated subjects as "agents of memory activism," Jennifer Noji and Michael Rothberg (2023, 81) emphasize on how "historical and political responsibility" drives memory activism and the "particularly powerful impetus to change" that emerges when "memories of injustice combine with a sense of present-

day implication." Employed as a photographer, Maali Almeida is an implicated subject who witnesses the horrors that unfolded during the civil war. When Sena asks Maali Almeida what his purpose was in the physical realm or 'Down There', Maali replies, "I was there to witness. That is all. All those sunrises and all those massacres existed because I filmed them" (Karunatilaka 2022, 242). This exemplifies the protagonist's acknowledgment of his implication and the potential of documenting his witnesses as a tool to defy the repressive regime imposed on civilians. It entails considering the specter as a reminder and a remainder. As a reminder of obliterated memories and systemic erasures, the specter channelizes what it has witnessed to inspire action. The specter as the remainder, is a persistent presence utilizing its power to haunt for activistic pursuits. Maali Almeida's positionality built on the intersections of complex implication and spectrality, thus allows him to critique the interplay of history and memory through memory activism.

Witnessing and/as reminding

The act of witnessing fosters a profound understanding of contested pasts to streamline memory activism initiated by the implicated subject. Maali Almeida's experience of witnessing emerges from his position of implication rather than victimization. Relying on witnessed events to engage in implicated memory activism becomes an agentic process as the protagonist's past inactions are transformed into active efforts to reveal truths and (re)write history. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag (1977, 5) posits that photographs "furnish evidence" and asserts that the camera record either "incriminates" or "justifies." The photographs taken by Maali Almeida are instruments of evidence that on one hand, incriminate the state and other militant groups and on the other, justify the call for justice. The functions are linked causally as the incrimination of state actors inspires non-state actors like Maali Almeida to seek justice.

As a witness to the events that shaped the early stages of the civil war, Maali Almeida photographs the Sooriyakanda mass grave where the skeletons of young boys were strewn across. They had been killed for "taunting the son of a school principal," who had connections to a colonel in the Special Task Force (Karunatilaka 2022, 36). The photograph becomes essential for its forensic and legal significance. It also functions as a forensic mode which elicits "cultural remembering that is concerned with claim-making and contestation" (Bøndergaard

2017, 5). On the level of claim-making, the photograph of the mass graves suggests the culpability of the state in unleashing large-scale violence. It also contests the manipulation of history by the perpetrators who forced the young boys to write suicide notes before being executed (Karunatilaka 2022, 36). It thus reveals how outwardly disparate incidents are intrinsically tied to the dominant narratives that do not incorporate accountability as an essential element to address violence.

Maali Almeida photographs a woman being "dragged by the hair and doused in petrol" during the Pettah bomb blast in 1983 (Ibid, 60). Despite paying for the photograph, the protagonist notes that Newsweek failed to publish the same. In *Understanding a Photograph* John Berger (2013, 56) writes, "most photographs taken of people are about suffering, and most of that suffering is man-made." Berger's observation and Almeida's motives underscore how photographs are records of deliberate and intentional violence inflicted by the state and LTTE. The photographs also exemplify the partialness with which narratives, even those claiming to be factual like journalism, are crafted. Moreover, the photographs document the mechanisms used by both the government and LTTE to instill fear, disturb social harmony and create and intensify the discord between the Sinhala and Tamil population. Analyzing the warfare tactics employed during the civil war, Anoma Pieris (2019, 105) states that the government forces engaged in massacres, aerial bombings and shelling while attacks by LTTE included bombs, landmines, suicide bombings. The photographs of the sites of violence thus reveal the perpetrators as well as the mode of attack. This allows activism to condemn not only the victimizer but also the process of victimization that involves varying degrees of pain and humiliation based on the type of attack.

As a witness to the 1983 pogroms, Maali Almeida had pictures of "Sinhala men in sarong dancing" outside a burning shop, "naked Tamil boy being kicked to death" and "uniformed cops watching Tamil women being dragged out of buses" (Karunatilaka 2022, 108). In addition to being a truth-telling device, the viscerality of the suffering captured offers a commentary on the society in which those equipped with the task of upholding law and order, engage in activities contrary to their duties. It subtly condemns the complicity of such individuals who instead of stopping violence, create an environment conducive for it. Maali Almeida's neutrality enables him to document both the 1985 Trincomalee Massacre of Tamils by the Sri Lankan military and the

1990 Batticaloa police station massacre, where over 600 Sinhala policemen were executed by the LTTE. Major Udugampola assigns him to capture only "Tiger atrocities," despite state-perpetrated violence being equally rampant (Ibid, 251). The directive to photograph the activities of only one perpetrator while negating the other, indicates how personal biases and government tactics feed into the construction of history which is often understood as an objective and balanced documentation. Maali Almeida's remark on how "state-sponsored slaughter rarely required photography," hints at the diabolical use of state power to render sufferings of victims invisible and conveniently frame certain participating groups accountable for the brutality (Ibid). It also illuminates the risk of polarizing the ethnic communities and the mobilization of the discord to distort truth and thereby delay the possibility of justice and reparations for the victims.

At the Raja Gedara, also called "The King's House" and "Palace," Major Udugampola tells Maali Almeida, "Many who are discharged from the army, who have seen what you have, get emboldened into becoming activists. Into switching sides. Not a good idea" (Ibid, 255). Major Udugampola's warning underscores how witnessing invariably engenders activism and the military's draconian mechanisms to thwart any uprising against them. Maali Almeida sees masked men beating a boy, another strapped to a bed screaming, two boys hanging upside down, a shirtless man circling a naked girl, and a man in a surgical mask, whom the Major calls The Mask (Ibid, 256). These sights highlight the frailty of human lives in the hands of the perpetrator and the absolute disregard for dignity and ethics during interrogations. The body becomes the site of violence and the evidence of the pervasive control of the military. The Palace becomes an extreme space where all humanitarian laws are suspended. An extreme space can be defined as the space that entails, "unusual, bizarre and outrageous deeds and events - from torture to murder to cannibalism" (Nayar 2017, 11). The Palace is a spatial exemplification of the power of the state. It not only injects fear and terror into the social fabric but also serves as a stark reminder of the consequence of dissent. In 1987, Major Udugampola orders Maali Almeida to photograph JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera "alive and in custody" in the Palace, but three days after seeing him conversing with guards, Maali is asked to capture his "mutilated corpse" (Karunatilaka 2022, 304). The photograph, supplemented by Maali Almeida's memory of the Palace, highlights the perverse decision of the military to silence opposing voices masqueraded as a governmental necessity. As an implicated witness, he archives instances of state-sanctioned erasures that are instrumental in addressing the fissures in official historical records of the state.

When Maali Almeida crosses over to the afterlife, he enlists the help of other specters and his close confidante Jacqueline Vairavanathan to procure the collection of photographs that could expose the truth undeterred by the state's attempts at censoring history. According to Anna Reading (2023, 71), the embodied memory capital held within "the human or the more-than-human body" can be transformed into objectified memory capital through art, book or testimony. In the novel, the memory held by the implicated subject who transitions from the human to the more-than-human, is transformed into objectified memory through photographs. Through the memory labor of archivists, curators, and journalists, objectified memory is organized into institutional mnemonic capital (71). Clarantha Mel, curator at the Lionel Wendt Gallery, facilitates this transformation. Titled, "Law of the Jungle," the exhibition includes photographs of Minister Cyril at the 1983 riots and dead journalists whose arrests were denied by the government (Karunatilaka 2022, 308). Maali Almeida's witnessing of these events endows him with the power of resisting such erasures through reminding even when he loses his corporeality.

The photographs taken for Major Udugampola but never published are also displayed like "Captured Tiger grenades, rocket launchers, rifles, and boots," scared young soldiers huddled at the frontlines and mass cremation at Valvettithurai (Ibid, 303). The process of selection and omission that characterizes the narrativization of historical events, consolidates certain warring factions into positions of power and relegates others to positions of absolute powerlessness. Maali Almeida possessed highly confidential photographs like that of:

Father Jerome Balthazar, Anglican priest and human rights activist from Mannar, bound and gagged and dead in custody, though authorities claimed he had taken a boat to India. D.B. Pillai, Radio Ceylon journalist, shot in custody and dumped on the beach, for the crime of reporting accurate casualties in his weekly broadcast. The burning car filled with young Tamil corpses, taken for Raja Udugampola's private files, but kept for yours. (Karunatilaka 2022, 304)

To display that which was absent from the public gaze is an effort to reconstruct history. It is an act of resistance that allows the specter to transfer what has been witnessed into the public realm and thereby becomes a resource for "re-imagining national collectives" (Assmann 2023, 1). The exhibition functions as a visual testimony challenging erasure and highlighting the diverse forms of violence. The photographs are not mere signifiers of a climate of political and ethnic turmoil but haunting remnants of the past. The concept of witnessing which has long been attributed to human subjects can also be applicable for more-than-human subjects like Maali Almeida, as the novel demonstrates. The specter as a reminder of the invisible, the erased or the obliterated instances of injustice, performs the function of reminding by transforming his memory capital into institutional mnemonic capital. Instead of orchestrating the public display of truth from exile, Maali Almeida congratulates himself for accomplishing the same from "beyond the grave" (Karunatilaka 2022, 304). Engaging in implicated memory activism from beyond the grave is in itself a disruption of life, a challenge to the very use of murder as a weapon to eliminate people who do not conform to the dominant ideologies.

Subversive power of remainders

The specter symbolizes an interruption in the general course of life and death, a pause that is enunciated more by its presence than its absence. The lack of assimilation into the dominant structures that emphasize on conformity, forces him to exist as a remainder, a remnant that is nevertheless powerful despite being an 'other' to the human. Instead of a ghost that returns, Maali Almeida is one that remains, albeit for a stipulated time period. Jessica Auchter (2023, 117) refers to ghosts as "disruptive memory activists" who "alter traditional, state-centric mechanisms of memory and memorialization." The burden of witnessing compels the protagonist to use unconventional methods from beyond the limits of life to stage a protest against forgetting through photography. John Berger (2013, 121) states that the purpose of a photograph is to document social conditions and "move the conscientious public to action or protest." However, as one would expect, his photographs do not lead to a revolution that ultimately transforms the war-torn Sri Lanka into an inclusive space where Sinhalas and Tamils coexist harmoniously. Kugarajah steals "the 1983 photos, the IPKF killings and ten photos of dead Tamil villagers" (Karunatilaka 2022, 377). Jonny Gilhooley removes photos of the Major, the Colonel and Sudworth meeting, along with Maali's private nude collection (Ibid, 378). Minister Cyril Wijeratne seizes photos of "dead journalists, kidnapped activists and beaten priests" along with "exploded planes, dead villagers and rabid mobs" (Ibid, 379-380). The theft of the photos by those responsible for the attacks, implicated in the riots or associated with the perpetrators signals the threat memory activism poses to structures that hope to conceal the memory. Taking away the photos that hold certain individuals culpable does not diminish the power of memory activism. It only exemplifies the unease the confrontation with suppressed truth engenders. Moreover, it is a testament to the transformative potential of memory activism initiated by the specter.

The only photographs that remain are the ones that portray the country as a picturesque destination. The gaps in the Lionel Wendt Gallery, owing to the theft of the photographs, symbolize the notion of negative spaces. Writing in the context of memorial projects, James E. Young (2023, 156) states that one remembers absence by reproducing it. In the case of Maali Almeida's photo exhibition, the juxtaposition of the remaining photographs with the gaps where photographs of the civil war had been placed, preserves their absence from history. It also suggests the persistence of unresolved pasts that warrant resolution, made more palpable by the haunting presence of the specter. It is through the efforts of Maali Almeida that the violence inflicted upon the civilians is articulated. His spectral presence embodies the lingering consequences of unresolved and traumatic instances that haunt the collective memory. The specter inherently possesses the resilience to be present, persist and perturb the forces which seek to negate the redressal of historical injustices. Thus, its ability to remain allows the specter to function as a symbol of resistance against historical erasure.

Conclusion

The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida envisions the potential of memory to initiate reckoning and informed acknowledgement of historical injury. Eschewing the common stance of arguing for reparations in the aftermath of the war, the novel actively participates in the reconfiguration of narratives that refrain from providing an uncensored view of the past. It does not follow a didactic approach to remember the civil war. Rather, it opens up a space which celebrates absurdity and seeks pleasure in the unconventional methods of responding to atrocities. In addition to the protagonist's pursuit of implicated memory activism, the novel becomes a pioneer of literary activism by blending fact and fiction, and history and memory. A hauntological

reading of the novel has laid bare the possibility of an implicated memory activism from beyond the grave, adding to the existing discourse on implication. The research has thus revealed the potential of creative ways of remembering to resist and strategically subvert fragmented and partial versions of history.

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Evolving iconography of the Great Goddess in art: The social and cultural impact of the 20th-century Goddess movement on art

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Abstract: The Goddess movement that emerged in the 1960s at the intersection of third-wave feminism and neoliberal religious movements has left an indelible mark on the artistic and cultural representations of gender-spirituality associations of the time. Artists like Mary Beth Edelson, Judy Chicago, and Monica Sioo attempted to reclaim the ancient pre-patriarchal mother goddess iconography to signify the emergence of a 'divine feminine' counter-narrative, and many subsequent artists actively engaged with the images of the Great Goddess as a potent means of re-imagining and re-empowering women in contemporary society. This paper intends to explore the impact of the Goddess movement on artistic expressions of the time by analysing three aspects: (i) the role of the movement in contributing a corpus of imagery and symbolism of the Great Goddess to contemporary art; (ii) the evolution of the goddess iconography and its transference to contemporary artists; and (iii) how the artists used the goddess imagery to build parallel counter-narratives of feminist spirituality. Thus, this paper aims to understand the evolving iconography of the Great Goddess in art, foregrounding the social and cultural impact of the Goddess movement on feminist artistic practices.

Keywords: Goddess movement, iconography, Great Goddess, feminist art, reclamation, contemporary art

Introduction

The latter half of the twentieth century was a tumultuous era that witnessed profound political and social upheavals and a revolutionary wave in the literary, artistic, and popular culture spheres. This was a time that was marked by the evolution of avant-garde movements in art like abstract expressionism, the blooming of counter-cultural movements like punk and hippie movements, the deconstruction of traditional narrative

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structures in literature, and the popularisation of mass culture through the expansion of television and other media, all of which left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of the population. This time witnessed a remarkable blurring of boundaries between different art forms, which gave way to an interdisciplinary approach to creative expression. Artists and writers were swept by the experimentation and the urge to transcend boundaries by intentionally merging different art and literary forms and integrating multiple mediums into creating a multisensory experience, which is very much in the spirit of this era. This era was also characterised by a fundamental shift in the consciousness of the population. Inspired by the legacy of the previous social and political movements like the feminist movement, civil rights movement, and anti-war movements, people had a heightened sense of urgency to question and challenge the conventional norms that ruled society. These movements fueled radical transformations in collective thinking and paved the way for new paradigms that could address pressing societal issues.

The emergence of radical feminism and third wave feminist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century infused the spirit of feminist spirituality into art, literature, and popular culture that brought in a transformative re-envisioning of the 'divine feminine' in an attempt to provide a spiritual reservoir for the future generation of women to tap into. The period spanning from 1960 to 1990 was particularly significant in this context because this period witnessed a significant proliferation and radicalisation of counter-cultural and reconstructionist movements within the United States. This movement was identified as the Goddess Movement primarily because the followers used the image of the prepatriarchal pagan mother goddess to create a counter-narrative against the patriarchal narratives of religions and spirituality.

Feminist artists and writers, influenced by the radical principles to challenge existing power structures and empower women, actively engaged with the images of the Great Goddess to re-imagine and re-empower women in contemporary society. They explored the political implications of the Great Goddess, her representations in the past, and the socio-political dynamics surrounding power, gender and spirituality. Many artists and scholars drew inspiration from ancient mythologies and archetypes of the Great Goddess. In visual art, feminist artists such as Judy Chicago and Mary Beth Edelson created large-scale installations and paintings that centred on the image of the Great Goddess. Their works often incorporated symbols and imagery from a variety of cultures and

mythologies, creating a cross-cultural iconography. In literature, feminist authors such as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison explored similar themes, weaving in elements of spirituality and mythology. Their work continues to inspire and influence contemporary artists and writers and has left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of late twentieth-century America.

This paper intends to study the evolving iconography of the Goddess through the artworks of the pioneers of the Goddess movement, like Mary Beth Edelson, Judy Chicago, Monica Sioo, and Buffie Johnson. The social impact of the Goddess movement on the artistic landscape of the time can be assessed and understood through a visual and semiotic analysis of the representation of the Goddess. The scope of the article extends to understanding the transference of the Goddess iconography to the later feminist artists, thus leading to an understanding of how the iconography of the Goddess became a powerful image and is still evolving with time to being transferred from artist to artist. The aim of this paper is to understand the formulation of an evolving iconography of the 'divine feminine' in art narratives as a means to challenge patriarchal norms and promote spiritual liberation for women. The study will contribute to the fields of art history and gender studies by providing insights into the ways in which women artists and authors have reimagined the divine feminine and its significance in contemporary culture.

Contributions of the Goddess Movement to contemporary art

The Goddess movement and feminist spirituality primarily began as feminist movements, which envisioned a change in the religious roles of women framed by patriarchal societies. They began using goddess archetypes as a new metaphoric language to refer to their inner power and spirituality within, and also to explore and envision their roles outside the existing dominant and restrictive constructs. This growing interest in the use of goddess imagery and allusions to the prehistoric mother Goddess was heavily influenced by the archaeological excavations of Marija Gimbutas into the Neolithic sites in Southeastern Europe. She expanded the scope of archaeology beyond anthropology, combining linguistics, comparative religion, history. and mythology. and called 'archaeomythology' (Marler 1996, 45). Her first book, The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe, 7000 - 3500 BC, was published in 1974, followed by The Language of the Goddess and The Civilization of the Goddess (1991). These books extensively discuss the cultural elements in

the Neolithic worship systems and study the small figurines of the Goddess that Gimbutas excavated from the archaeological sites, thus laying a factual foundation for many artists and authors to situate their works on. As Jennie Klein writes.

Women's spirituality was very appealing to visual artists for several reasons. First, evidence for the existence of ancient matrifocal cultures existed in the form of small, anthropomorphic sculptures, cave paintings, and monumental stone structures from the prehistoric era that appeared to be female and that cultural feminists assumed were priestesses and Goddess figures, giving many artists an already existing bank of nonpatriarchal images to tap into. (Klein 2009, 580)

The pioneers of the Goddess movement in art, like Mary Beth Edelson, Judy Chicago, Monica Sjoo, and Lucy Stein, intended to reclaim and recontextualise the Goddess within the landscape of contemporary art, to create a corpus of goddess imagery in art. These efforts established a visual language that subsequent generations of artists could draw upon, making the goddess a recurring symbol of empowerment in contemporary art. If we look at the kind of imagery and symbols that these artists have used to refer to the goddess and her agency, it can be found that they rely heavily on historical and mythical representations of the goddess. The earth as mother goddess; the cycles of birth, regeneration and death; the resurrection of the body; ecological and environmental symbolism; and the feminine body as the temple of the goddess are the recurring motives that the early goddess artists relied on. However, it can be observed that the later goddess artists panned their symbolism and imagery to broader themes, thus widening the thematic and symbolic dimensions of Goddess imagery in art.

Judy Chicago's art, particularly her most celebrated *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) (Figure 1), shows how goddess images fit into feminist ideas. She made a symbolic dinner table with spots for women from myths and history, putting women at the center of human culture. The vulva and flower shapes that fill her work remind us of old goddesses like Ishtar and Inanna, showing the strength and holiness of women's bodies. This way, Chicago's art fights against the stories told by men that have shaped religious and cultural images for a long time. Mary Beth Edelson's art also uses goddess images, but in a more outspoken and political way. Edelson's well-known piece *Some Living American Women Artists / Last Supper* (1972) (Figure 2) puts the faces of women artists on Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, with Georgia O'Keeffe in Jesus' place. By taking one of the most famous pictures in Western Christian art and

swapping out the men for women, Edelson points out problems with both religious male power and how women have been left out of art history. It is the pre-patriarchal representations of female deities that Edelson often narrows her use of goddess imagery to. Her use of these figures thus proceeds beyond simple aestheticism: it represents a political gesture to subvert the patriarchal control over religious and cultural symbols. Her use of the iconography of ancient fertility goddesses in work such as her Goddess Head series lets Edelson tap into a continuity of female power which predates and goes far beyond the patriarchal religion.



Figure 1. Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party, ceramic, porcelain, textile, 1974-79. © Judy Chicago



Figure 2. Mary Beth Edelson, Some Living American Women Artists, collage, 1972. © Mary Beth Edelson

Monica Sjoo was highly influenced by ecofeminism and the wider feminist spiritual movement of the 1970s. These movements revived women's connection with ancient matriarchal traditions and reattached them to the earth. For Sjoo, the goddess was not only an archaic figure or a myth but something active, symbolising women's struggle against all the destructive forces of patriarchy, colonialism, and environmental exploitation. One of Sjoo's most widely known works is *God Giving Birth* (1968), where a cosmic mother gives birth to the universe in a primal, powerful image. The painting was revolutionary at the time, touching taboos about the body of the female, childbirth and the sacred. Such a goddess depiction was deliberately provoking in its intent to problematise the prevailing Western religious discourse of that time, that of the Christian patriarchy. Sjoo's goddess is shown as an independent force of creation, power, and autonomy, exemplifying the life-giving and life-sustaining powers of women. The painting was considered provocative- even blasphemous when it first came out, almost enough to make one wonder how society would be so irate with depictions of female deities and the savage, untamed properties of the feminine.

In the article "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s", Jennie Klein notes that the advent of cultural feminism in the 1970s, with its emphasis on feminist spirituality, made the Goddess movement prominent in literary and artistic circles (Klein 2009, 580). The reclamation of pre-patriarchal goddesses was directly expressed in the art and performances of artists like Betsy Damon and Cheri Gaulke. Betsy Damon's performance art, The 7,000 Year Old Woman (1977), marks a very crucial point in the influence of the Goddess movement in reinterpreting and rejuvenating old feminine archetypes contemporary artistic expression. This artistic performance, grounded in Damon's dream and her personal ties to the goddess tradition, was inspired by the many-breasted Diana of Ephesus—a deity linked to fertility and abundance, associated with a Neolithic goddess site located in Turkey. Damon's execution of the piece, staged in the financial heart of Wall Street, included her body being adorned with small pouches filled with coloured flour, which she ritualistically punctured throughout the public ceremony. Through the visual image of Diana of Ephesus and placing her performance within a modern, urban, and capitalist context, she challenged the erasure of the feminine from history and its position in current power structures.



Figure 3. Betsy Damon, The 7,000 Year Old Woman, Performance art, 1977. © Betsy Damon

The early goddess artists like Buffie Johnson, Betsy Damon, and Cheri Gaulke worked extensively with the representations of the divine feminine found in Palaeolithic depictions, which are characterised by self-referential images, such as those used in the Venus of Willendorf forms. Such imagery serves, for both spiritual feminists and goddess artists, as a historic touchstone as well as a visionary tool to contest the erasure of matriarchal traditions within patriarchal narratives. With such ancient forms, the early goddess artists created a dialogic space between the past and the present through which contemporary gender dynamics were critique,d while there was a renewal of a spiritual connection with the feminine. It reflects something of the much larger cultural initiative of which the Goddess movement has been a part: the imagination of the divine feminine both as an archetypal influence and as an instrument for visioning the future as more just and spiritually inclusive.

The latter goddess artists, who drew inspiration from the goddess movement and their predecessors, however, attempted and envisioned a more radical and diverse discourse through their art. Their representations were characterised by more intersectional and inclusive imageries, trying to bridge diverse cultural, racial and spiritual traditions. On one hand, it expanded the scope of the Goddess movement to a global level, promoting transnational dialogue, and on the other hand, it situated the Great Goddess as a universal symbol of resistance and regeneration.

Evolution and transference of Goddess iconography

The legacy of the Goddess movement from the 1960s has powerfully influenced a new generation of artists, many of whom today continue to engage with goddess imagery as a tool for feminist expression, spiritual exploration, and critiques of patriarchal structures. These artists have expanded and interpreted the god-goddess motifs into today's social, political, and cultural conflicts. Contemporary artist Kiki Smith draws upon themes of female embodiment and transformation that are central to goddess mythology for the female body as both sacred and subversive. Examples of this include her installation *Lilith* (1994), in which she takes ancient figures and gives them expression in line with contemporary feminist concerns over autonomy, resistance, and empowerment. This imagery also resonates with the goddess imagery in Ana Mendieta's Silueta series, where she merged her body into the earth to revitalise ancient fertility goddesses. Her work relates spiritualism to ecology and is an ecofeminist theme of the Goddess movement.



Figure 4. Kiki Smith, Lilith, silicon bronze and glass, 1994. © Kiki Smith

In the exploration of the divine feminine by Kara Walker through her work, there runs an intertwining so deep in that she becomes that person drawing race and gender and, so importantly, historical memory, especially as it relates to the African American experience. Walker reimagines the goddess motif in her iconic silhouettes and large-scale installations to address the questions of power, race and sexuality. In many of her works, women characters often serve as both victims and aggressors, recycling myth and history that describe black women as hyper-sexualised, yet again, negatively defined. A fine example is A

Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby (2014), where Walker utilises a monolithic sphinx, sugar-covered, as a rhetorical device to merge the mammy stereotype with once-revered fertility goddesses of old. Here, the iconography of the goddess is loaded with historical and social content, referring to the exploitative labour of black women in the sugar plantations through the sugar medium, while the excess features of the body of the sphinx refer to the commodification of black female bodies. Walker's conception of divine femininity thus critiques and reappropriates the old goddess imagery, which is that the goddess is not only an emblem of mystical power but also an emblem of both violence and subjugation. This iconography thus derails the idealised, Eurocentric vision of the goddess as a pure or nurturing figure and places the divine feminine in lines of struggle, power poles, and reclamation that live in and through the hopes and desperation of marginalised women.

British contemporary artist Lucy Stein continues in the tradition of feminist artists like Monica Sjoo but infuses the reclaiming of goddess imagery with a distinctive modern and critical sensibility. Some of her work centres on feminist, mythical or folkloric themes, but more generally explores the nexus of relationships between gender, power, and spirituality through the goddess. One of stein's most powerful critical uses of goddess imagery can be found in her art, *The Corn Goddess Goes Back on Instagram* (2021) (Figure 5). In this work, she employs the figure of the corn goddess, one who exemplifies fertility, agriculture, and cycles of life and death. The corn goddess Stein envisions is as far removed from serene, idealised figures commonly associated with goddess imagery as earthy and raw-tempered, perhaps even disruptive, the countercultural challenge to review quite safely, well-guaranteed assumptions about femininity, fertility, and nature.



Figure 5. Lucy Stein, The Corn Goddess Goes Back on Instagram, canvas, 2021 © Lucy Stein

Today, artists such as Bharti Kher continue to interpret goddess symbolism in the context of issues related to postcolonial and cultural iconography identity. In the offeminine power tradition/contemporary concerns, Kher imbues such traditional symbols as bindi into her work to show how goddess imagery remains a powerful tool to challenge patriarchal structures globally. Her sculpture, Ancestor (2023), exemplifies the Goddess as a universal figure of motherhood. About the sculpture, Kher says, "children are from everywhere, all countries, all religions, all genders, all peoples: she embodies multiculturalism, pluralism, and interconnectedness" (Gilliam 2022). These artists and their art are examples of the long-term influence of the Goddess movement because they extend and evolve its iconography to reflect contemporary feminist, political, and cultural concerns. Contemporary reinterpretations go well beyond the primarily Westcentric view of the 1960s by including diverse cultural and spiritual practices: for instance, Shirin Neshat's works combine Islamic spiritual themes and feminist interpretations of the feminine divine in analyses of anti-patriarchy in both Western and non-Western cultures. In doing so, these artists illustrate how the iconography of the goddess has developed into a representative of multiple identities, thus challenging notions of gender and spirituality as essentialist categories.



Figure 6. Bharti Kher, Ancestor, painted bronze, 2023. © Bharti Kher

The appropriation of goddess representations by modern artists such as Saya Woolfalk, Chitra Ganesh, and Lina Iris Viktor exemplifies the transformation and reconfiguration of the divine feminine in reaction to

changing cultural, political, and aesthetic frameworks. Saya Woolfalk's *Empathics* initiative reconceptualises the goddess as an emblem of hybridity and communal change, using speculative fiction and posthumanist theories to examine the confluence of race, gender, and identity. She translates the goddess into a trope for change and transformation, thereby working through modern issues of assimilation and coexistence.



Figure 7. Saya Woolfalk, *Plant Alchemy 4*, Excerpt from *Empathics*, gouache on paper, 2009. © Saya Woolfalk

Chitra Ganesh's work is based on South Asian mythological traditions but injects them with feminist and queer critiques. Lina Iris Viktor uses her powerful visual language of gold and deep black to evoke the goddess as a figure of both historical and cosmic importance. She works through West African spiritualities and Afrofuturism to construct the feminine as the epicentre of creation and power, simultaneously criticising the marginalisation of African participation in global art and culture. Together, these artists further the legacy of the Goddess movement by incorporating its fundamental themes- feminist spirituality, reclamation of marginalised identities, and deconstruction of hegemonic structures within contemporary contexts. Their methods pay tribute to the historical underpinnings of goddess iconography while at the same time stretching its boundaries, keeping it relevant in the face of 21st-century complexities.

Building counter-narratives of feminist spirituality

Across the works of Judy Chicago, Mary Beth Edelson, Monica Sjoo, Kara Walker, and many others, the reclaiming of the goddess imagery for female power is both a critical move against patriarchal and colonial structures and an attempt to rethink women's spiritual and social roles. From the reclaimed ancient goddess imagery, these artists create alternative narratives challenging the religious and cultural depictions of women, emphasising autonomy and creation in resisting oppressive systems.

For example, in Judy Chicago and Mary Beth Edelson, goddess symbolism was deeply connected with feminist spirituality in reconnecting with the pre-patriarchal histories and myths for women. Examples can be seen in Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*, while some works were formed and made by Mary Beth Edelson into Some Living American Women Artists; both of which demonstrate how the iconography of the goddess became an instrument in celebrating women's contributions and placing them within a very historic and large context. It was all about women's restoration of spiritual authority and also creating a visual language that links the past with contemporary feminist struggles. Monica Sjoo's works further illustrate the way the goddess can be a radical symbol of rebellion against both patriarchs and institutionalised religion. In God Giving Birth and other such works, Sjoo successfully extricates a goddess presentation from the liberal connotations which characterise most aspects of the spiritual and thus introduces a triumphant, creative, and integral part of life to the notion of divine feminine. Her art questions patriarchal connotations associated with a similar religious narration and affirms that the divine feminine is an origin and an essence of creation. The evolution of goddess iconography into the work of artists such as Kara Walker and Kiki Smith shows how the symbolism of the goddess became a vehicle to communicate issues that exceeded gender. Walker's use of goddess-like figures in works such as A Subtlety complicates the goddess narrative by merging it with the violent histories of race and colonialism. The goddess icon, especially in Walker's work, is at once a figure of strength and a reminder of the historical exploitation of black women's bodies, so it can be said that goddess iconography can sometimes be used as a critique of both racial and gender oppression.

The goddess iconography used by feminist artists such as Judy Chicago, Mary Beth Edelson, and Monica Sjoo, far from merely female spirituality, was part of a larger feminist revitalisation movement that

was defined by Anthony F. C. Wallace. This work belongs to the feminist theology critique of patriarchal religious institutions and supports the idea of Louise B. Silverstein that feminist theology is literature for survival, where the divine feminine is resistance in unison with the natural. The reclaiming of goddess images was the exaltation of a liberation symbol, like Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza's idea about feminist theology, that it is a radically transformative force. These artists, through art, did not work for the mere inclusion of the female gender within male art domination but rather for reinterpretation through placement and emphasis of the divine feminine as a source of strength to survive and fight for social change.

Conclusion

Women's liberation movements have encompassed all the realms of our society and aspects of life. The arguments for the cultural, racial and sexual liberation of women started in the early 19th century and progressed over the years through radically criticising the structure of society and the construction of myths and religious stereotypes. Feminist theology developed as a movement to reform the androcentric edifices of several religions, like Christianity and Judaism. It lays emphasis on the revival of the Mother Goddess cult that prevailed before the establishment of Abrahamic religions, stressing the feminine aspects of divinity, concepts of Mother Nature and feminist archaeology. The reclaiming of pre-patriarchal goddess iconography in the 1960s provided a starting point for feminist explorations of spirituality and divinity in art. Mary Beth Edelson and Judy Chicago, among others, reinvigorated ancient goddess iconography but also gave it a narrative that challenged patriarchal norms and celebrated feminine power. This visual language corpus has inspired contemporary artists to continue drawing on the symbolism of the Great Goddess. The principles of the movement have been expanded by artists such as Kiki Smith and Ana Mendieta, who have incorporated themes of ecology, bodily autonomy, and cultural identity into their work. These works exemplify how the 1960s Goddess movement remains a touchstone for exploring new dimensions of feminist spirituality.

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The cyclical nature of patriarchy in *Qala*: An exploration of mother-daughter relationships

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Abstract: This research article delves into the intricate mother-daughter relationship depicted in the Netflix film Oala directed by Avnita Dutt, through the lens of Adrienne Rich's seminal work, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution. Focusing on the characters Urmila and Oala Manjushree, the study explores the complex dynamics of their bond within a patriarchal context. By examining the psychological and emotional underpinnings of their relationship, the research highlights how cultural norms shape the experiences of motherhood and daughterhood. The analysis employs Adrienne Rich's and Andrea O'Reilly's feminist critique of motherhood and provides a framework for understanding how the film portrays the dual role of women as both enforcers and victims of patriarchal authority. The study reveals how the characters navigate their identities and relationships in a world dominated by paternal values, ultimately reflecting broader societal themes of power, control, and resistance within familial structures. This article aims to contribute to the discourse on gender, power, and familial relationships in contemporary cinema, offering insights into the nuanced portrayal of mother-daughter bonds in Qala.

Keywords: mother-daughter relationship, Adrienne Rich, motherhood, feminist theory, contemporary cinema, patriarchy

Introduction

In India and the world, gender norms and patriarchy have had a close relationship. Women's freedom and autonomy are frequently constrained since they were expected to conform to traditional responsibilities as wives and mothers. In the 1940s, India was deeply entrenched in patriarchal cultural and societal norms that reinforced

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gender roles, family structures, and social expectations. Men were regarded as the family leaders, primary earners, and decision-makers, whereas women were expected to be compliant, docile, and responsible for household tasks like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. (Davis 2012) Adriene Rich (1986) argues that motherhood, as an institution, is deeply embedded in patriarchal structures that seek to control and define women's roles. Society imposes strict norms and expectations on mothers, often limiting their freedom and autonomy.

Oala, a 2022 Indian psychological thriller directed by Anvitaa Dutt and produced by Anushka Sharma and Karnesh Sharma under Clean Slate Filmz, unfolds in 1940s India, Released on Netflix, the film revolves around Oala, a young woman grappling with past traumas that shape her present struggles. Qala is set in 1930s and 1940s India, exploring themes of gender, patriarchy, and mother-daughter relationships. The film follows Qala Manjushree, the only daughter of a musically inclined family, as she transforms from a timid girl to a celebrated singing sensation. However, when media inquiries trigger memories of her past, viewers witness Qala's struggle for approval and validation from her mother, Urmila, who embodies patriarchal values. Another pivotal character is Jagan Batwal, a talented singer and Qala's rival, whose presence intensifies her insecurities and desire for her mother's recognition. Through poignant flashbacks, the film delves into the complexities of female identity and agency within a patriarchal society, highlighting the enduring impacts of societal norms on individual lives. (Agarwal & Kumar 2023) Noteworthy for its exploration of trauma, mental health, patriarchy and motherhood, *Qala* delves into the harsh repercussions of patriarchal norms on women in 1940s India. (Kumar 2022) The film received generally positive reviews with 7.2 stars on IMDB rating for its compelling narrative and strong performances, particularly lauding its portrayal of psychological and emotional depth.

The film *Qala* depicts the ways in which patriarchal norms were reinforced in 1940s Indian society. For instance, in the movie, we see how the male characters hold power over the female characters and make important decisions on their behalf. The film also portrays the societal expectations placed on women, such as marriage and motherhood, which are seen as the ultimate goals in their lives. According to Rich (1986, 111), mothers do not establish rules; rather, they are responsible for enforcing them. She describes motherhood as a state of "powerless responsibility." Whether influenced by parenting

literature, medical guidance, or paternal regulations, mothers raise their children based on the prevailing societal norms and expectations. This is evident in Qala's mother, who pressures her to marry and conform to societal expectations. Additionally, we see how women are objectified and judged based on their physical appearance, as evidenced by the way her mother comments on Qala's beauty and criticises her for not being traditionally feminine. She rebukes Qala, "akal mein zero, shakal mein zero, talent mein zero." / "you have no brains, beauty or talent" (Dutt 2022, 18:115) Qala is left feeling utterly inadequate since she wants Urmila's approval more than anything else. (Vyavahare 2022)

The film *Qala* highlights the pervasive nature of patriarchy in 1940s India and how it shaped the lives of the female characters in the film. It demonstrates the ways in which gender roles, family structures, and social expectations were used to restrict women's autonomy and limit their opportunities, leading to a sense of helplessness and despair. By exploring these issues, the film offers a commentary on the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the need to challenge patriarchal norms in contemporary society as even in 2024 there is very little change in the social structure of our country.

Urmila's rejection of Qala in *Qala* serves as a stark illustration of society's entrenched norm of privileging sons as the sole bearers of family legacy. Throughout the film, Urmila's longing for a son is palpable, manifesting in her adoption of Jagan and her subsequent devastation upon his tragic death. These actions underscore Urmila's deep-seated desire for power and validation, which she perceives as contingent upon the presence of a male figure in her life. The loss of Jagan represents not only a personal tragedy but also a symbolic blow to Urmila's sense of identity and worth, as she grapples with the realization that her existence has been defined and justified by the presence of a male counterpart.

Urmila's narrative in *Qala* serves to challenge the societal glorification of men in women's lives, highlighting the detrimental consequences of perpetuating such patriarchal norms. Her belated recognition of her own folly comes at a heavy cost, as she finds herself estranged from her daughter, Qala. This poignant turn of events underscores the tragic consequences of prioritizing patriarchal ideals over the bonds of familial love and connection. Urmila's journey serves as a cautionary tale, prompting viewers to reflect on the ways in which gendered expectations can distort relationships and perpetuate cycles of oppression and alienation.

Qala's mother constantly reminds her that she is a woman and cannot have the prestigious title of Pandit (a wise or learned man in India —often used as an honorary title) in music, which reflects the internalized misogyny and patriarchal mindset that women can adopt, perpetuating the oppressive system. For example, even after an outstanding performance at the party she is not given a chance in the film industry. Mr Sumant Kumar who had visited her home later only offered Jagan to record with him after he recovers his voice. Here to take control of her future she mimics the tactics she had seen her mother adopt with Mr Sanyal and goes up to Mr Sumant in the night dressed like her mother and flirts with him. This in fact leads to Mr Sumant Kumar making her an offer to record for the film industry and later become her constant sexual predator. This unwitting perpetuation of oppressive norms by a maternal figure intensifies Oala's trauma, as her quest for self-expression clashes with ingrained expectations. Qala's mother instills guilt and fear in her, which becomes her entire world, causing her to act in extremes and leading to her distorted version of herself. The film depicts the male authority over art and how people show great importance to men over women, which contributes to the trauma experienced by Qala. At the end of the film, Qala dies by suicide, symbolizing the loss of women's battle against misogyny and the patriarchal system. (Figure 1)



Figure 1. Qala commits suicide (Dutt 2022, 1:52:16)

In its portrayal of Urmila's plight as a mother, *Qala* offers a compelling critique of patriarchal structures and the ways in which they shape individual lives and relationships. Urmila's realization of her misplaced priorities serves as a powerful reminder of the need to

challenge and dismantle gendered hierarchies that privilege sons over daughters. Lauri Umansky's researched on identifying two opposing feminist perspectives on motherhood. The first, referred to as the "negative" discourse, views motherhood as "a social mandate, an oppressive institution, a compromise of woman's independence." (Umansky 1996, 2) This is the type of motherhood that we see in *Qala*, as when Urmila ultimately return to Oala to share the mother-daughter bond Oala always pined for, it was too late. Oala had already ended her life by then waiting for her mother to accept her and love her. The second, the "positive" discourse, suggests that "motherhood minus 'patriarchy' [...] holds the truly spectacular potential to bond women to each other and to nature, to foster a liberating knowledge of self, to release the very creativity and generativity that the institution of motherhood denies to women."(Ibid, 3) Ultimately, Urmila's story serves as a reminder of the importance of forging authentic connections based on mutual respect and love, rather than adherence to societal norms dictated by gender.

In essence, the film delicately illustrates how the actions of female characters, whether unintentional perpetuation of norms or acts of rebellion, become integral elements in Qala's traumatic narrative. The cumulative effect of these actions not only reinforces the oppressive environment but also intensifies Qala's internal struggle as she grapples with the conflicting influences of societal expectations and personal desires. By intricately weaving these elements into the narrative, *Qala* provides a compelling exploration of the ways in which women, as both victims and contributors to patriarchy, shape and amplify the trauma experienced by its central character.

A pivotal element that connects the personal dynamics within *Qala* and the broader societal critique is the exploration of gender bias in the film industry. Urmila's mistreatment of Qala and preferential treatment of Jagan highlights the importance of sons over daughters, reflecting deeply rooted patriarchal values. This bias is mirrored in the professional realm by figures like Sumant Kumar, the musical director, whose discriminatory attitudes towards female artists reinforce societal stigmas. Through these interconnected layers of family and industry, *Qala* vividly portrays the systemic challenges women face, illustrating how patriarchal structures pervade both personal and public spheres, thereby shaping and amplifying the trauma experienced by its central characters.

Women's position in the film industry

Qala's mother ill-treats her as a child and constantly reminds her that she is a woman and cannot have the prestigious title of Pandit. Her mother's unequal treatment of her and her adopted son Jagan plays a significant role in showcasing the importance of daughters in a household and the male authority over art. The instances of discrimination faced by Qala extend beyond familial dynamics to societal perceptions perpetuated by figures such as Sumant Kumar, the musical director. Kumar's admonition for Qala to avoid associating with singers like Bai ji, whom he deems inferior, reflects deeply ingrained gender biases and class distinctions prevalent in society. His remark reinforces perpetuating the stigmatization of female artists, "Acche ghar ke ladkiyon ko gaane bajane waliyon ke saath milna nahi chahiye" / "Females from a respectable household should not mingle with females who sings as a profession. (Dutt 2022, 1:34:32)

Amanda Weidman (2007) in her research provides a nuanced analysis of the stigma surrounding female playback singers and performers within the context of South Indian music and cinema. It delves into the intricacies of the constructed nature of the female voice, illustrating how societal norms and class distinctions shape perceptions of morality and respectability. The dichotomy between the "respectable middle-class" woman and the lower-class "prostitute" influences the way female voices are perceived, overshadowing the artistic accomplishments of certain women, such as *devadasis*, with the stigma of prostitution. *Qala*, being a movie set in the Indian context, explores themes related to the stigma associated with female voices and performers. The film delves into the complexities of societal expectations regarding female voices, particularly in the realm of music and cinema, and how these expectations shape the experiences and trajectories of female characters.

Furthermore, Weidman discusses the emergence of the distinction between "natural" and "artificial" voices, with classical singing being hailed as "natural" and film songs as "artificial," reflecting societal biases towards different genres. Critics use language with sexual connotations to describe film singers, contrasting them unfavorably with the perceived purity of classical singers, reinforcing the association between respectability and classical music. The advent of playback singing allowed female singers to navigate societal conventions, but it also raises questions about agency, as many singers refrained from speaking in public, linking agency more with the

speaking voice than singing. (Weidman 2007) For instance, the protagonist of *Qala* is a talented playback singer grappling with societal prejudices and stereotypes surrounding her voice. She also faced challenges related to the dichotomy between "natural" and "artificial" voices, with her talent being questioned or devalued due to the genre of music she performs or the roles she takes on in films.

Moreover, the film explores the intersectionality of gender, class, and respectability, depicting how the protagonist's social status and background impact the way her voice is perceived by society. Playback singing serves as a thematic element in Qala, highlighting the ways in which female performers navigate societal expectations and negotiate their agency within the constraints of the industry. The protagonist's struggles and triumphs in asserting her voice and however failing to ever reclaim her agency to serve as a central narrative arc, offering insights into the broader issues of gender inequality and representation in Indian cinema.

The character of Urmila in Qala serves as an embodiment of the complexities of patriarchy and its impact on women's agency and autonomy. Her journey from a talented thumri (the song having attractive - rather sensuous, gait of melody and rhythm) singer constrained by societal norms to a figure that enforces those same norms on her own daughter highlights the cyclical nature of patriarchal oppression. It is important to note here that the cultures of patriarchy are doubly marginalizing for women. In her 2020 research, Priyam Sinha (2020) establishes that women in the film industry, particularly in Bombay cinema during the 1930s-1950s, were subject to significant stigmatization. The industry viewed women's participation as a threat to morality, respectability, and femininity. Despite offering higher salaries, acting was considered "dangerous" for women due to the objectification of their bodies and the stigma associated with being labeled as entertainment for the masses. Cultured women, especially from upper-class backgrounds, were discouraged from joining the film industry due to societal perceptions of immorality and sexuality linked to acting.

The concept of "cultured women" had a significant impact on female actors in the Bombay cinema industry during the 1930s-1950s. The film industry viewed acting as a profession that conflicted with traditional notions of femininity, respectability, and morality. Women from upper-class backgrounds, considered "cultured," were discouraged from joining the film industry due to societal perceptions

of immorality and objectification associated with acting. Despite offering higher salaries, acting was stigmatized as "dangerous" for women, leading to tensions and moral panic regarding female participation in the film business. The entry of women into filmmaking and the challenges they faced in navigating notions of stardom and cultural expectations have been subjects of scholarly attention within feminist film historiography.

The stigmatization of female artists in the film industry has been a persistent issue with long-term implications. Historically, from the 1930s to the 1950s in Bombay cinema, women were absent from the archives and rendered invisible within the film business due to changing urban landscapes and the emergence of talkies. The industry raised questions about female sexuality and respectability, primarily driven by a morality discourse closely associated with women acting in films. This led to tension, moral panic, and distress, creating a stigma around the film industry as a heterosexual and hybrid workspace that capitalized on voyeuristic pleasures by objectifying women's bodies. (Sinha 2020)

In confronting these themes, the film prompts viewers to reflect on the ways in which patriarchy operates within familial and societal structures, and the urgent need to challenge and dismantle these power dynamics in order to create a more equitable and just society for all. In examining these scenes, it becomes evident that *Qala* masterfully captures the intricate web of female characters navigating a society steeped in patriarchy. The film refrains from presenting a simplistic dichotomy of victims and oppressors, opting instead for a more nuanced portrayal that acknowledges the multifaceted roles women play within a system that constrains their agency. This approach enhances the film's thematic depth, inviting viewers to reflect on the complexities of patriarchy and its impact on individual choices and relationships.

"The power of the father"

Similarly, Urmila Devi's persistent efforts to associate Qala with her father's legacy, as depicted in the film, parallels Adrienne Rich's concept of "the power of the father." (Rich 1986, 57) This notion suggests that paternal influence extends beyond tangible actions to encompass language and cognitive processes, shaping societal standards and expectations for women. In *Qala*, Urmila's attempts to align Qala with her father's esteemed lineage exemplify this concept,

"Aaj pehli baar Dewan Manjushree ki beti ga rahi hai Ustad Ji" / "Today for the first time Devan Manjushree's daughter is going to Ustad ji¹". (Dutt 2022, 19:52) highlighting the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms in defining women's roles and aspirations within the family structure. The universality of this idea is underscored by its abstract and intangible nature, as well as its manifestation across diverse cultural contexts. Indeed, the power of the father operates both metaphorically and tangibly, permeating every sphere of social life and exerting control over women's actions and identities.

However, the complexity of "the power of the father" lies in its nuanced articulation within different cultural frameworks. While its overarching influence is undeniable, its expression may vary depending on cultural norms and values. Thus, while Urmila's actions in *Qala* exemplify the manifestation of paternal authority within a specific context, the broader implications of Rich's concept resonate across cultural boundaries, highlighting the enduring impact of patriarchal structures on women's lives worldwide.

It is important to understand how the overarching influence of patriarchal authority intersects with the specific dynamics of motherhood. While "the power of the father" manifests differently across cultural contexts, the concept of patriarchal motherhood, as discussed by feminist scholars like Adrienne Rich and Sara Ruddick, underscores a universal theme: the regulation and scrutiny of mothers within a patriarchal framework.

Patriarchal motherhood versus mothering - contestations in Qala

Many women engage in motherhood within a patriarchal framework where they adhere to the ideology of what feminist writer Sharon Hays (1996) has coined "intensive mothering". According to Adrienne Rich (1986, 111), women's roles as mothers are shaped and regulated by the broader patriarchal society they inhabit; they do not create but rather enforce societal norms. Rich characterises motherhood as a state of "powerless responsibility," where mothers raise their children in accordance with societal expectations, whether through parenting guides, medical advice, or paternal rules. Sara Ruddick describes how mothers are constantly scrutinised by others, including family members, and strangers, leading them to doubt their own judgement and conform to external standards. This external scrutiny can cause

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¹ An expert or highly skilled person, especially a musician.

mothers to compromise their authenticity and undermine their own values (Rich 1986; Ruddick 1989). "Fear of the gaze of others," she continues, "can be expressed intellectually as inauthenticity, a repudiation of one's own perceptions and values" (Ruddick 1989, 112).

Through poignant flashbacks, Qala peels back the layers of Qala's upbringing, revealing the roots of her mother Urmila's discontent. Psychoanalysts, particularly since the twentieth century, have placed significant emphasis on the role of the mother in a child's identity development (Rich 1986; Winnicott 1971; Kohut 1959; and others). Whether as the primary caregiver or through the lens of object relations theorists, the mother's influence on a child's formation and development is paramount. (Horney 1950; Erikson 1963) It is believed that from the outset, the mother intuitively understands the newborn's needs due to her identification with the infant, thus anticipating and meeting their demands (Winnicott 1971). Winnicott (1971) delves into the complexities of this process, noting that the mother's own experiences as a baby, and how she was cared for, can either aid or hinder her in her role as a mother. Rich, however, critiques the idealized image of the "selfless mother" and the cultural myths that perpetuate unrealistic standards for women. These myths often serve to oppress women by holding them to unattainable ideals. Motherhood, in Rich's (1986, 3) words, "has a history, it has an ideology".

In patriarchal motherhood, the assumption that mothering is inherent to women and that child rearing is exclusively the biological mother's responsibility leads to what feminist writer Sharon Hays (1996) terms "intensive mothering." Secondly, this practice assigns mothers the sole responsibility for motherwork but denies them the authority to dictate the circumstances under which they perform this role (O'Reilly 2012). Urmila in *Qala* defies this typical responsibility of "intensive mothering" by rejecting Qala as her beloved daughter from the start, consumed instead by grief over the death of her son, Qala's twin brother. In Urmila's perception, Qala is held responsible for the loss of her male child, leading her to resent and even attempt to harm Qala, as evidenced by her act of trying to strangle her with a pillow while she sleeps. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Urmila trying to strangle Qala (Dutt 2022, 00:07:41)

"Instead of acknowledging the institutional violence inherent in patriarchal motherhood, society tends to label women who finally erupt in violence as psychopathological" (Rich 1986, 263). According to Emily Jeremiah (2003), the institution of motherhood, is "violently oppressive [. . .] and give[s] rise to violent behavior on the part of mothers." And: "Motherhood without autonomy, without choice," Rich (1986, 264) explains, "is one of the quickest roads to a sense of having lost control". The powerless responsibility of patriarchal motherhood discussed earlier is what gives rise to mothers' suffering and often results in violence against children. Violence, whether it be manifested in child neglect and abuse, the murder of children or a mother's suicide, is caused by the patriarchal institution of motherhood, not the demands of mothering per se. "We have, in our long history," Rich continues, "accepted the stresses of the institution as if they were a law of nature" (Ibid, 276).

This poignant portrayal underscores the pervasive bias ingrained within Indian society, where the value of a female child is often eclipsed by patriarchal expectations and preferences. Within patriarchal societies, women grapple with an ongoing struggle for recognition and agency. In environments where rigid gender norms are deeply ingrained and male dominance is institutionalized, women often find themselves subjected to various forms of subjugation and discrimination. Sultana (2010) aptly highlights the myriad manifestations of this subjugation, including discrimination, disregard, control, exploitation, and violence, both within familial settings and broader societal contexts. In such oppressive landscapes, women are

forced to navigate complex power dynamics in their quest for visibility and autonomy. In *Qala*, this struggle is poignantly depicted through the lens of the titular character, who yearns for her mother's affection amidst Urmila's misplaced blame for the death of her twin brother. These heartbreaking dynamic underscores the profound impact of patriarchal conditioning, as Qala is forced to grapple with the consequences of societal expectations and familial resentments. As Urmila says, "Naam ke aage Pandit lagna chahiye, uske peeche Bai nahi" / "Your name should have the prefix of Pandit not the suffix of Bai" (Dutt 2022, 09:25).

Urmila emerges as a symbolic representation of patriarchal ideologies in *Oala*, perpetuating societal expectations and exhibiting sexist views towards women. Her preoccupation with societal norms and desire for conformity highlight her role as a guardian of traditional gender roles and expectations. This is evident in her derogatory reference to female singers in the music industry as 'bai,' a term historically associated with courtesans known for their singing talents. It is important to clarify that we do not endorse this pejorative view; rather, we acknowledge that it reflects deep-seated cultural prejudices. By expressing her preference for Qala to aspire to the prestigious title of 'pandit,' typically reserved for exceptional male singers, Urmila reinforces deeply entrenched gender biases and societal hierarchies. As highlighted by Rich (1986, 13), "between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction—and to children; and the institution—which aims at ensuring that that potential—and all women—shall remain under male control".

The historical context of the term 'bai' adds layers to Urmila's stance, revealing her adherence to antiquated gender norms and the perpetuation of patriarchal power dynamics. By rejecting the notion of Qala pursuing a career as a female singer, Urmila exemplifies her misogynistic attitudes and the ways in which she wields patriarchal authority to enforce societal expectations. This stance is particularly striking given Urmila's own esteemed position as a renowned Hindustani classical singer, underscoring the complexities of gender and class intersectionality within society.

Through Urmila's character, *Qala* offers a searing critique of the intersectionality of gender and class, shedding light on how entrenched patriarchal ideologies manifest within familial dynamics and broader societal structures. Urmila's insistence on adhering to traditional

gender roles and her dismissal of Qala's aspirations reflect the broader societal pressures faced by women to conform to rigid expectations, "motherhood, as an institution, is a male-defined site of oppression" (O'Reilly 2012, 2) Additionally, her strict adherence to traditional gender roles and expectations leads to her inability to support her daughter in her time of need. When Qala recognises that she isn't alright and needs help she reaches out to her mother via a lightning trunk call, "Something is wrong with me mamma. I think I need help." (Dutt 2022, 01:14:56) However, Urmila Manjushree is too drowned in her sadness over the loss of Jagan Batwal that she fails to recognise the call for help from her own child. In doing so, the film prompts viewers to interrogate the ways in which patriarchal power operates within different spheres of society and the profound impact it has on individual agency and aspirations.

Urmila thinks that because Qala is a female she can never take forward her father's legacy and hence she keeps searching for a male heir to her husband's legacy and stardom. Even after Qala has actually achieved the heights in her career as a singer she is still pining for her mother's approval and validation. In the movie, in her press conference after receiving the Golden Vinyl Award, a journalist asks her how is she feeling after receiving the award to which she answers, "Ayesa lag raha hai jaise, thak ke ghar pahuchi hu aur maa ne darwaza khola hai." / "It feels as if I have reached home, tired, and mother has opened the door". (Dutt 2022: 03:34) Unfortunately, her mother does not open the doors of her heart to her until it's too late. (Figure 3)



Figure 3. Qala during the press conference (Dutt 2022, 00:03:34)

Qala's journey in *Qala* is marked by relentless pressure to prove herself in the eyes of her mother, Urmila. Despite undergoing rigorous training, Qala finds herself constantly falling short of Urmila's expectations. The breaking point in their tumultuous relationship occurs when Urmila, instead of appreciating Qala's performance at a show, becomes enamored with a young boy named Jagan, who exhibits exceptional singing talent. Urmila's decision to adopt Jagan and prioritize his musical aspirations over Qala's marks a significant turning point, intensifying the divide between mother and daughter. Qala, once the focus of Urmila's ambitions, is relegated to a supporting role, tasked with assisting Jagan in his musical endeavors.

As Urmila goes to great lengths to further Jagan's career, including leveraging her connections in the film industry and even resorting to intimate relationships with music directors, Qala's sense of betrayal and abandonment deepens. The growing affection showered on Jagan exacerbates Qala's feelings of neglect, ultimately culminating in a desperate act of revenge. In a tragic turn of events, Qala poisons Jagan's milk with mercury, resulting in the loss of his voice and, ultimately, his suicide. This act of vengeance serves as a poignant manifestation of Qala's profound sense of isolation and betrayal, as she seeks retribution for the love and attention stolen from her by her own mother.

The tragic demise of Jagan and the subsequent estrangement between Urmila and Qala serve as the final blow to their fractured relationship. With nowhere else to turn, Qala is cast out of her home, left to navigate the harsh realities of the outside world alone. This heartbreaking conclusion underscores the devastating consequences of patriarchal pressures and the lengths to which individuals are willing to go in pursuit of validation and recognition.

Urmila willingly engages in an affair with Chandan Lal Sanyal to secure Jagan's entry into the film industry (Figure 4). In stark contrast, she refuses to allow Qala to sing even two lines in front of Mr. Sanyal (Figure 5). Additionally, she coerces Qala into meeting eligible bachelors to adhere to societal expectations of marriage, while she encourages Jagan to prioritize his career in the Kolkata Film Industry. This behavior underscores the deeply entrenched gender biases that favor male ambition over female talent and autonomy.



Figure 4. Urmila with Chandan Lal Sanyal (Dutt 2022, 00:42:04)



Figure 5. Urmila stops Qala from singing Dutt 2022, 00:39:13)

The film highlights the need to challenge patriarchal norms and expectations and to provide support and understanding for individuals impacted by these norms. The examination of trauma, and gender within the cinematic narrative contributes to an ongoing discourse, emphasising the need for a deeper understanding of these intricacies within the context of women's rights and societal progress.

Female characters in the film as both victims and enablers of patriarchy

In *Qala*, the nuanced portrayal of female characters as both victims and enablers of patriarchy adds layers to the exploration of gender dynamics in 1940s India. The film aptly captures the complex interplay of power,

societal expectations, and individual agency, presenting characters whose actions both reflect and resist the prevailing patriarchal norms.

One compelling example occurs in a pivotal scene where Qala, the lead character, interacts with her mother. Here, the mother, constrained by societal expectations and entrenched patriarchy, unwittingly becomes a perpetrator as she reinforces traditional gender roles. Despite experiencing the oppressive effects of patriarchy herself, the mother unintentionally perpetuates these norms by urging Qala to conform to societal expectations, emphasizing the importance of marriage and family reputation over personal well-being. Ruddick identifies this phenomenon as a relinquishment of maternal authority. Patriarchal motherhood is based on such relinquishment of maternal authority, resulting in a form of mothering that lacks authenticity.

On the evening when Urmila organized a party to introduce Jagan to the prominent figures of the film industry with the assistance of Mr. Sanyal, Qala requested permission from her mother to perform as well. In response, Urmila scoffed and chastised her for even considering performing in front of professionals from film industry, "Film industry walon ke samne pta hai kaisi ladkiya gaati hai." / "Do you know what type of females sing in front of people from the film industry?" To which Qala acknowledges and asks her, "So the rules are different?" (Dutt 2022, 00:46:13) and Urmila just smiles in affirmation. (Figure 6) This observation in *Oala* resonates with Simone de Beauvoir's seminal argument in The Second Sex, wherein she posits that males oppress women primarily by viewing them as the Other, defined solely in contrast to men. In patriarchal societies, men often perceive themselves as the standard against which women are judged, leading to the relegation of women to the status of the foreign or the Other. Consequently, men project themselves onto the external world and assert dominance, while women are confined to the narrow sphere of the family, expected to passively await male intervention. This dynamic perpetuates double standards of treatment for women within patriarchal setups. wherein they are subjected to unequal treatment and expectations dictated by societal norms and gender roles.



Figure 6. Urmila helping Qala get ready for the party (Dutt 2022, 00:46:13)

Adrienne Rich argues that women's mothering is entirely governed and judged by the patriarchal institution of motherhood. She asserts, "The institution of motherhood is not identical with bearing and caring for children, any more than the institution of heterosexuality is identical with intimacy and sexual love. Both create the prescriptions and the conditions in which choices are made or blocked; they are not 'reality' but they have shaped the circumstances of our lives." (Rich 1986, 42) The mother-daughter dynamic impacted the protagonist's sense of self, independence, and relationships with others. The movie explores themes of dependency, identity formation, and societal expectations within a patriarchal context, here the viewers witness how the protagonist's character evolves through her experiences with her mother. The influence of patriarchy on their relationship manifested in struggles for autonomy, emotional growth, and the perpetuation of certain female personality structures across generations.

Through the character of Urmila in *Qala*, the film offers a poignant portrayal of the complex dynamics of patriarchy, illustrating how women can simultaneously perpetuate and suffer under its authority. Drawing on the concept of the internalization of patriarchy by women, as discussed by Kandiyoti (1988) in the context of South Asia, Urmila exemplifies how individuals who experience subjugation and hardship may internalize patriarchal power structures, ultimately becoming agents of patriarchy themselves. In the film, Urmila's trajectory from a trained thumri singer to a dutiful wife who relinquishes her singing career upon marriage to a renowned pundit reflects the constraints imposed by societal norms on women of certain caste and class backgrounds. Despite her own experiences of marginalization and

restriction, Urmila becomes complicit in perpetuating patriarchal norms, exerting control and authority over younger women like Qala.

Urmila's decision to prioritize societal expectations over her own aspirations underscores the pervasive influence of patriarchy on women's lives and choices. By conforming to traditional gender roles and abandoning her singing career to fulfill her duties as a wife, Urmila exemplifies the internalization of patriarchal values and the ways in which women may inadvertently perpetuate these power structures. Her actions serve as a sobering reminder of the insidious nature of patriarchy, which not only marginalizes women but also fosters a system where women themselves become agents of oppression.

Conclusion

Despite the oppressive constraints of patriarchy, *Qala* introduces themes of resistance and empowerment. Female characters in the film challenge and resist patriarchal structures, showcasing a determination to overcome societal limitations. By focusing on the characters Urmila and Qala Manjushree, the film intricately explores the complex dynamics of their bond within a patriarchal context. This depiction sheds light on the cultural conventions that influenced women's lives, presenting a fresh and pertinent perspective.

Qala not only brings forth the historical context of 1940s India but also resonates with contemporary society, emphasizing the enduring relevance of its themes. The film's portrayal of Qala's traumatic experiences, rooted in the oppressive societal norms of the time, offers a universal commentary on the far-reaching consequences of patriarchy. Qala's internal struggle, portrayed with remarkable nuance, becomes a microcosm of the broader challenges women navigate both historically and in the present day.

The actions of the female antagonist, while seemingly betraying other women, provide evidence of the complex ways in which patriarchy shapes individuals. Her choices, driven by a need for survival within the patriarchal system, contribute to the layers of trauma experienced by Qala. This character serves as a microcosm of the broader societal impact on women, reinforcing the film's argument on the cyclical nature of trauma perpetuated by gendered oppression.

Qala emerges as a compelling narrative that intricately explores the complex dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship, delving into the profound impact of maternal influence on identity formation and emotional well-being. Through Qala's poignant journey, the film

confronts the enduring societal norms of patriarchy, gender bias, and the relentless pursuit of male validation, offering a nuanced commentary on the intersecting forces that shape women's lives in India. In the context of Hindi films, *Qala* provides an alternative portrayal of motherhood, challenging traditional depictions and illustrating the multifaceted nature of mothering. The film's representation of Qala's struggle against patriarchal expectations and Urmila's role as the upholder of the patriarchy and thereby struggling with her motherhood which is deeply informed by the patriarchal society offers a critical lens through which to view the evolving roles of mothers in Indian cinema, presenting motherhood as a site of both challenge and potential empowerment.

Adrienne Rich's seminal work, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, provides a critical framework for understanding the film. Rich distinguishes between the concept of motherhood and the act of mothering, highlighting that motherhood is an institutionalized concept in a patriarchal world, representing a powerless responsibility within the realm of the father. The film's depiction of Urmila as a mother who embodies patriarchal ideals and her resentment towards Qala underscores the societal pressure to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations.

The film adeptly navigates themes of trauma, mental health, and the quest for acceptance within the context of familial and societal constraints, prompting viewers to reflect on the enduring struggles faced by women in their pursuit of autonomy and self-realization. Qala's yearning for her mother's love and approval underscores the profound emotional impact of maternal rejection, highlighting the psychological toll exacted by societal norms and gendered expectations. Ultimately, Qala serves as a powerful indictment of the pervasive influence of patriarchy on women's lives, urging us to confront the entrenched inequalities that continue to shape gender dynamics in contemporary society. Through its poignant storytelling and nuanced character portrayals, the film calls upon us to challenge prevailing norms and strive towards a more equitable and just world where the enduring impacts of patriarchy on mental and emotional well-being are acknowledged and addressed. As such, Oala stands as a testament to the resilience and strength of women who navigate the complexities of life amidst societal constraints, offering a compelling vision for a future empathy, compassion, defined by and equality.

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The Egyptian Jewish-Muslim woman as seen in Ihsan Abdel-Quddous's *Don't Leave Me Here Alone*

Redhwan Qasem Ghaleb Rashed*

Abstract: Research on Jewish women converting to Islam, especially within the Egyptian context, remains a nascent field of study. This article aims to contribute to this under-explored area by examining the portraval of Lucy/Zainab in Ihsan Abdel-Quddous's Don't Leave Me Here Alone. Unlike the often-stereotypical representations found in European literature, Lucy/Zainab's characterization offers a nuanced exploration of the complexities surrounding religious conversion for Jewish women. In contrast to stereotypical portrayals in European literature, Lucy/Zainab embodies the concept of liminality faced by Jewish converts to Islam. This article argues that such converts often occupy a transitional space, unable to fully relinquish their Jewish heritage while simultaneously struggling to embrace a fully realized Muslim identity. Furthermore, the analysis delves into the possibility of a non-binary Jewish-Muslim identity, one that transcends the limitations of these singular classifications. Lucy/Zainab's characterization exemplifies this concept, existing between these religious identities and belonging fully to neither. Lucy/Zainab's dedication to Zionism underscores a unique interpretation of Jewish identity that extends beyond religious practice alone. This close reading investigates how her portrayal challenges or reinforces preconceived notions about Jewish identity and religious conversion. By analyzing the experiences of Egyptian Jewish-Muslim women like Lucy/Zainab, this essay contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between gender, identity, and religion within Egyptian society. Drawing on postcolonial feminist theory, the analysis explores Lucy/Zainab's relationship with her Jewish heritage and how her identity develops within a global context. The analysis also explores how Lucy/Zainab negotiates a patriarchal society, wielding calculated strategies to subvert traditional expectations.

Keywords: Egyptian Jewish-Muslim woman, identity, Ihsan Abdel-Quddous, religion

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Introduction

While scholarship on the multifaceted history of Egyptian Jews continues to flourish, a gap remains in our understanding of how individual Jewish experiences, particularly those of women, have shaped and enriched the broader Egyptian narrative. Fictional texts, although not strictly historical documents, offer a valuable window into the social and political climate of the era they depict. For centuries, Egypt boasted a thriving Jewish community, leading scholars to posit a high degree of integration between Egyptian Jews and the broader society. This integration is often evidenced by shared customs and daily life experiences. This dynamic underscores how Jewish experiences and narratives have frequently served as a wellspring of inspiration for Egyptian literature. Novels, encompassing both depictions of everyday life and explorations of historical and cultural complexities, demonstrate the multifaceted presence of Jews within the Egyptian literary landscape. Abdel-Quddous (1919-1990) stands out as the most prominent writer who had a strong interest in Jews in his literary works during the 20th century. He is the only Arab author—not simply an Egyptian—to specifically address Egyptian Jewish society in his creative works (Al-Shami 1992, 7). The representation of the Jewish character in Ihsan Abdel-Ouddous's novels reflects several dynamics and issues about social desire. identity, and the quest for material prosperity. Abdel-Ouddous's works revolve around exploring the role and impact of Jews in Egyptian society from the 1930s to the 1980s in the twentieth century. During this period, Egypt experienced significant social, political, and cultural changes, and the Jewish community played a notable part in shaping the country's history. Abdel-Quddous likely dedicated his efforts to studying and documenting this aspect of Egyptian-Jewish relations. By delving into the subject matter, Abdel-Quddous aims to shed light on the contributions, experiences, and challenges faced by Jews in Egypt during those decades. This could involve exploring their cultural, economic, and intellectual contributions, as well as examining the challenges and changes they encountered within Egyptian society. The focus on the Jewish community showcases a dedication to understanding and preserving the historical narrative of Jews in Egypt. Overall, Abdel-Quddous's emphasis on Jews and their significance in Egypt suggests a commitment to uncovering lesser-known aspects of Egyptian history and ensuring that the contributions and experiences of the Jewish community are not forgotten.

It is worth mentioning that Abdel-Quddous's work on Egyptian Jewry is the result of his first-hand experience and was influenced by the neighbourhood where he resided. He was raised among Jews, spent his formative years playing with them, spent his adolescent years studying with them, and spent his professional life working with them (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 7). He seeks in his works to explore the Egyptian Jewish community and to document moments he experienced. He aims to vividly capture these moments through characters that are not products of his imagination but rather real-life individuals who lived within the Egyptian Jewish society. During this period (the first half of the 20th century), the Egyptian Jewish community was one of the strongest communities in Egypt.

In Egypt, there were 26 Jewish synagogues or temples, and more than ten newspapers dedicated to the Jewish community were published, including the explicit newspaper "Al-Rasoul Al-Sahyouni" (The Zionist Messenger). Additionally, numerous fundraising associations appeared to be charitable organizations, such as the "Niqtat Al-Laban" Society and others, all working in service of the Zionist movement. (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 16)

From this, it becomes clear that the human experience in the works of Abdel-Ouddous is characterized by artistic sincerity based on careful observation, exploration, study, and authentic depiction. There are two main reasons for Abdel-Ouddous's interest in addressing the Jewish persona: his close interaction with them and his early concern with the Palestinian issue and the Arab Israeli conflict in its various aspects and stages from the 1948 war until the peace treaty in 1979 (Al-Shami 1992, 112). His close interaction with Jews taught him that the factor of religious difference between him and them was never a criterion for his perception of them, or even for the residents of the Abbasia neighborhood's view of them. This was not just a personal viewpoint of Abdel-Quddous but rather a predominant characteristic of Egyptian society, which is known throughout its long history for its tolerance towards people of different faiths. In his interactions with the Jewish community in Egypt, Abdel-Quddous, like many Egyptians, displayed this tolerance. One of the positive outcomes of this coexistence is that any sensitivity towards Jews dissipated within him. Therefore, dealing with them does not evoke any emotional reaction or aversion in him.

Thus, Abdel-Quddous, as it will be elaborated, does not present Jewish characters by that missing stereotype that prevailed in most European literature, as well as in many works of Jewish literature written by Jews in various languages. He does not depict the Jew in the way that English literature does, which relies on portraying the Jewish character as a greedy usurer. The Jew is not at all emitting filthy scents from his body, contrary to the stereotype that has made him an embodiment of the devil in the minds of Europeans. "The Europeans believed that Jewish men experienced menstruation just like women and that they lost a certain amount of blood during this process, which explained their need to shed the blood of Christian children and drink their blood to compensate for what they had lost" (Awad 1999, 35). The novelist does not present Jewish characters as devoid of human emotions, replaced by inhumane cruelty akin to Shakespeare's Shylock. Rather, he "presents a Jew motivated by the desire to benefit from the prevailing circumstances in which he lives and adapt to social, economic, historical, and psychological pressures. He tries to escape or alleviate traditional animosity towards Jews in Islamic societies through assimilation, even if that means converting from Judaism to Islam (Al-Shami 1992, 9). He presented Jewish patterns that blend with pure and completely non-prejudiced human treatment, far removed from any spirit of bigotry or hostility based on any heritage that Jews face animosity from. The society portrayed by Abdel-Ouddous in many of his stories is class-based, and this class distinction was not unfamiliar among the Jewish communities in Egypt in the past.

The cause of women's rights and emancipation is strongly supported by Abdel-Quddous due to the profound influence of his liberal mother. He believes that women are one of the symbols of sacrifice in Egyptian society, and this is the reason why women are the main subject in his works. To him, a woman is "a symbol of self-denial and sacrifice" (Marie 2019). In addition to being thought-provoking and providing an accurate representation of women's emotions, his writings significantly contributed to a shift in attitudes toward women in Egypt and the Arab world at large. His courageous tales gained him the moniker of "an adept interpreter of modern-day Arab women's aspirations and feelings" (Shakir, 2018). Despite his great contribution to the literary field (Abdul Razaq 2020, 133), critics have ignored him throughout his life. The journalistic style and the frequent usage of sex have been blamed by some authors for this neglect (Ezzat 2018, 55).

Political reasons also play a role, as most of his detractors rejected his liberal principles and instead placed greater emphasis on the ideology of the extreme socialists who disregarded or ignored his political writing (Ezzat 2019). Muhammad Alam expresses his belief that the literature of Ihsan Abdel-Quddous is constantly ignored and marginalized by researchers and critics, and that the number of times Ihsan Abdel-Quddous' works have been subjected to academic criticism does not equal one-tenth of what he has contributed in terms of books and writings. Therefore, there is a need to reconsider his works and evaluate them based on their deserving value.

This article delves into multifaceted experiences leading to religious conversion, drawing on insights from psychology and postcolonial theory. It examines the profound psychological shifts associated with particularly the "deconstruction" and "reconstruction" of identity. Moving beyond the concept of liminality, the article explores the motivations that compel individuals to abandon their established faith, traditions, and social networks to embrace a new belief system and social structure. Furthermore, it investigates the very essence of religious conversion - its meaning, historical and contemporary practices, and the ensuing consequences ramifications. A central focus of the analysis is the "in-between" or "luminal" state experienced by converts. This liminal space transcends binary religious categories and challenges traditional dichotomous thinking. The article poses a significant question: why can't convert fully shed their past and seamlessly transition between these seemingly incompatible states? Instead, why do these two states often merge, creating a unique "in-between" or "luminal" space? To explore this phenomenon, the article draws upon Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the "in-between" (1994) and Victor Turner's concept of "liminality" (1969, 1974).

Theoretical framework

Providing a brief overview of the theoretical framework on which the study will be based seems essential. Since the background of this paper will be formed by the terms' postcolonial feminism, conversion, identity, and liminality, it is crucial to define them and their usage in this study. We can investigate how Lucy/Zainab's experience is influenced by the intersection of her religious conversion and sense of national belonging via the perspective of postcolonial feminist theory. We can look at the constraints and expectations that the Jewish and

Muslim communities impose on women, as well as how Lucy/Zainab overcomes these obstacles to pursue her agency and identity. In addition, theories such as "liminality" and "hybridity" will be used to examine how Lucy/Zainab's distinct position challenges conventional categorization and establishes a new arena within Egyptian society.

Postcolonial feminism

Ashcroft (1995, 249) says, "Until recently, feminist and post-colonial discourses have followed a path of convergent evolution". This means the dismantling of colonial structures in the postcolonial era has propelled the exploration of women's roles and experiences to the forefront of literary and critical discourse. Writers and critics grapple the question of women's agency, representation, empowerment within societies grappling with identity and selfdetermination. Recognizing the intricate web of gender, race, and colonial history shaping women's lives, they advocate for a nuanced examination that transcends the limitations of Western feminist frameworks. Through literature and critical analysis, these voices illuminate the multifaceted realities of women in postcolonial societies. They shed light on the challenges women navigate, the resilience they demonstrate, and their potential for transformative change. By engaging with these issues, writers and critics foster dialogue and promote social change, contributing to a more comprehensive complexities surrounding gender understanding of the postcolonialism. Postcolonial and feminist studies arose in response to the historical marginalization of minority voices, silenced cultures, and the perspectives of women within political, social, and literary narratives.

Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonial criticism, was concerned with inverting the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions for a male-dominated canon (Ashcroft 1995, 249).

Discrimination against Arab women, particularly Arab Jewish women, remains a potent source of inequality and injustice in the Arab world. Feminist advocates and activists have challenged these entrenched patriarchal structures, meticulously examining the overt forms of disenfranchisement and ostracism that dominate malefemale relationships, aiming to restore women's usurped rights and dignity.

Conversion

Pioneering American thinker William James, a prominent figure in both philosophy and psychology, offered a unique perspective on religious conversion in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, published at the turn of the twentieth century. He described it as

to be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self-hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. (James 2002, 188)

The term "conversion" originates from both Latin and Greek. The Latin root, conversion, signifies a "turning from," while the Greek word metanoia translates to "transformation" (Connor 1994, 27). Building on this core concept, Rambo (1993, 2-3) defines conversion as a "change...from religious affiliation with one faith system to another" or more broadly, "turning from and to new religious groups, ways of life, systems of belief, and modes of relating to a deity or the nature of reality". Building upon the core concept of a "turning from" and "transformation," Gooren (2010, 3) emphasizes the identity dimension of religious change. He defines conversion as "a comprehensive personal change of religious worldview and identity, based on both self-report and attribution by others". Scholars like Connor (1994), Rambo (1993), and Gooren (2010) all concur that conversion fundamentally involves a change in religious affiliation. It is a process where an individual rejects their previous religious beliefs and embraces a new system of faith. Gooren (2010, 3) emphasizes the transformative nature of conversion, defining it as "a comprehensive personal change of religious worldview and identity, based on both self-report and attribution by others". Steigenga states, "Conversion involves a process of radical personal change in beliefs, values, and, to some degree, personal identity and worldview" (Ibid, 6). This perspective highlights that conversion goes beyond a mere shift in religious affiliation; it entails a fundamental change in a person's selfperception. Conversion often involves leaving behind a previous religious framework, along with its associated cultural and social environment. This necessitates a period of readjustment as the individual adapts to a new belief system and community. This process of adaptation underscores the multifaceted nature of conversion, encompassing not just the psychological but also the political, cultural,

ethnological, and anthropological dimensions of identity. Despite its seemingly straightforward nature, conversion is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. It entails a dynamic interplay of factors, including religious doctrines, social pressures, and personal experiences, that collectively lead to a significant transformation in an individual's beliefs, affiliations, and worldview. William James (2002, 195) says: "To say that a man is "converted "means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual center of his energy".

Conversion, understood as a movement from one religious, social, and cultural context to another, fundamentally impacts an individual's sense of self. This encounter with new religious doctrines, cultural narratives, historical interpretations, and social norms often triggers a process of destabilization, challenging the convert's previous identity. This destabilization can be understood as a twofold loss. Firstly, a personal identity loss occurs as the convert struggles to reconcile the previously held beliefs of their former faith with the contrasting ideas encountered in the new religion. Secondly, a social identity loss can occur as the convert attempts to integrate into the new religious community. This process can be fraught with challenges, as the convert may not fully assimilate and may still feel connected to their former social group. A central theme in conversion studies examines the intricate link between religious conversion and the transformation of self-identity. Emphasizing the transformative nature of conversion, Brandt (2022, 19) defines it as "a kind of identity transformation resulting from inner and/or outer factors". This transformation is particularly pronounced in religious conversion, which Brandt (Ibid, 23) views as "an identity transformation resulting in particular from a change in the way of being affiliated with a particular religious system or spiritual tradition". This emphasis on identity aligns with Brandt's notion of identity as "a lifelong process of construction" (Ibid, 22). Here, conversion becomes a significant event within this ongoing construction process, potentially leading to a fundamental shift in an individual's self-perception and place within a religious or spiritual framework. These insights collectively underscore the profound link between conversion and the transformation of self-identity, a central theme that this article delves into.

Identity

The concept of identity is complex and includes both our inner and outside selves. Our experiences, beliefs, cultural background, and even biology are woven together to form a complicated tapestry. Identity is complicatedly shaped by both external and internal factors. To quote Freadman:

in the process of weaving an identity, an individual must bring together the threads of both the internal self and the external self. To make the cloth of life, it is the fabric of memory that provides the fibres that hold the created identity together and provides the protective covering of experience that leads to new and anticipated events of the individual's future. (Freadman 2001, 17)

Identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture" (Hall 1990, 225). This emphasizes that identity is a process of being rather than something that is predetermined. It is always changing as we meet new problems and adopt fresh viewpoints. It undergoes "constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past", it is "subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power" (Ibidem). Brandt (2022, 19) considers "conversion as a kind of identity transformation resulting from inner and/or outer factors". Religious conversion, a movement from one set of beliefs and social norms to another, significantly impacts an individual's sense of self. This encounter with new religious doctrines, cultural practices, and historical narratives can destabilize the converts' previously held identity. This destabilization often involves a dual sense of loss. On a personal level, the convert may struggle to reconcile their former beliefs with the newly acquired ones, leading to a fragmented sense of self. Socially, they may face challenges integrating into the new community, experiencing a sense of dislocation from their former social circle. When managing societal expectations or discrimination, identity can be a cause of struggle as well as a source of strength and belonging. Identity is ultimately a lifelong process of self-discovery and an investigation of what makes each of us a distinct individual.

Liminality

The anthropological term "liminality" refers to the state of confusion or disorientation that characterizes a transitional stage. It alludes to the "in-between" space, the boundary that separates one state of existence from another. Turner (1974, 232) defines this in-between as

"ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification". It is essentially the state of being at the border or on the threshold between two distinct identities, states, or spots. Liminality, rather than a permanent state, is a transitory phase that emerges across diverse contexts. It manifests in personal growth, rites of passage, cultural or societal transformations, and even within specific rituals and ceremonies. This concept serves as a crucial lens for comprehending and navigating life's transformative periods. By acknowledging the inherent uncertainty that accompanies liminality, we can also recognize its potential to foster growth. Within the framework of conversion, liminality is important. A phase of liminality is frequently associated with the conversion process, during which people actively search for a new sense of purpose or belonging while feeling cut off from their former identities or beliefs. This transitional area offers a chance for introspection, self-examination, and the investigation of alternative viewpoints and modes of being.

Analysis

Ihsan Abdel-Quddous's captivating novel, Don't Leave Me Here Alone, throws us into the whirlwind life of Lucy, an Egyptian Jew caught in the currents of a changing society. Driven by both social ambition and a deeper yearning (perhaps for acceptance, security, or a sense of belonging), Lucy embarks on a transformative journey. She embraces Islam and takes the name Zainab, a decision that alters her world irrevocably. Thrust into the complex social landscapes of both Muslim and Jewish communities, Zainab, a woman of exceptional intellect and captivating beauty, must navigate a web of expectations. The narrative unfolds as she skilfully employs calculated strategies and adopts different personas to carve a path towards her aspirations, but the road to her desired future may not be without unforeseen challenges. However, Zainab's social ascent comes at a significant cost, potentially jeopardizing the well-being of her children. Through Lucy's/Zainab's narrative, Abdel-Quddous lays bare the stark class divisions that fractured the early 20th-century Egyptian Jewish community. His portrayal exposes a rigid social hierarchy, where wealthy Jewish families enjoyed a considerably more privileged position compared to their less fortunate coreligionists: "The classism and class-based arrogance within the Jewish community are uglier than those within any other community in Egypt" (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 18-19). Driven by a desire to break free from the social and religious

constraints of her Jewish community, particularly those imposed by her disadvantaged background, Zainab embarks on a rebellious path. This defiance finds its roots in a moment of self-reflection, fuelled by a deep regret over her marriage to Zaki Raoul, a union that fails to fulfil her ambitions. "Lucy blamed herself because she was the one who made the mistake and chose the impoverished level in which she and her son live" (Ibid, 11). A pivotal moment of self-reflection catalyzed Zainab's rebellion. To establish her own identity, control her future, and change the world she lives in, she defies the social forces that seek to control her. She doesn't sit around and wait to be given things. Instead, she takes advantage of the chance and employs the tools at her disposal to lessen socioeconomic problems like poverty. Zainab's defiance of the constraints placed on her by her socioeconomic background is consistent with postcolonial feminist ideas of tearing down social systems that limit the chances and choices available to women. These restrictions might be cultural, religious, or economic, and they frequently result from customs that were strengthened or altered throughout colonial times. Recognizing the dissonance between her inherent attributes – beauty and intelligence – and the limitations imposed by her modest social background, a stark realization ignited her desire for emancipation. "She is beautiful with a special kind of sexy beauty...and she is smart" (Ibid, 10). Blindsided by her ambitions, Lucy failed to recognize Zaki's limited aspirations within the Jewish community. In his eyes, their marriage represented the fulfilment of his modest goals. "All his ambition as a Jew was confined to obtaining and marrying her" (Ibid, 13). Lucy's ambition and Zaki's seemingly modest goals create disharmony in their aspirations. This foreshadows potential challenges as they navigate their relationship together.

Consumed by an ambition for social advancement, Lucy found limited opportunities for upward mobility within the established Jewish community. In a bold and calculated move, she embraced Islam, transforming herself into Zainab. This conversion served as a strategic gateway to infiltrate the upper echelons of Egyptian society. Driven by an unwavering desire for social status and financial security, Zainab adopted a ruthlessly pragmatic approach to navigating her new reality. Her conversion to Islam served as a calculated maneuver, severing ties with her Jewish family and opening doors to Egyptian high society. Skilfully navigating this new world, she leveraged her charm to secure opulent apartments, lucrative investments, and a life of privilege. Notably, her marriage to Shawkat, a wealthy landowner,

appears to be a strategic alliance rather than a love match, further solidifying her ascent within the Muslim elite. While Lucy paints her ambition as a path to family security, the narrative suggests a deeper desire for personal wealth and social elevation. Her conversion to Islam can be seen as a strategic adaptation to navigate her position as a minority in Egyptian society. By aligning with the dominant religion, she might have sought to establish a sense of belonging and potentially gain access to new opportunities unavailable to her within the Jewish community. The text portrays Lucy as a highly driven individual with a thirst for a life beyond her current circumstances. Undeterred by societal constraints, she embarks on a bold course of action – converting to Islam – to access a new social sphere. While the narrative remains silent on her ultimate goals, it reveals a keen understanding of the social landscape and a willingness to exploit available avenues for advancement.

Driven by a desire to transcend the limitations she perceived, such as limited professional opportunities for women, within the Jewish upper class, Lucy utilizes her beauty and intellect to forge a new identity and carve her path in life. "And she is intelligent... She believes in herself as a smart woman" (Ibid, 12). Lucy emerges as a resourceful and intelligent individual. Her reaction at the university donation drive (Niqtat Al-Laban) could be interpreted as a sign of discontent with social inequalities within the Jewish community. Perhaps these inequalities limited her opportunities, fuelling her ambition to forge a different path in life.

The doorbell rang, and it was the representative of the 'Niqtat Al-Laban' charitable association, which sends the donations collected from the Jews of Egypt to the Israeli agency in Palestine. Lucy shouted at the representative of the association, saying, "Stay away from us! You have taken enough from us without us knowing what you do with our money. Go to the Jews of Garden City and Zamalek!" (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 52)

While wealth undoubtedly held appeal for Lucy, the narrative suggests she recognized its limitations in securing social respect. This realization likely fuelled her pursuit of a strategic marriage to Shawkat Bey, a prominent figure within the Egyptian Muslim aristocracy. However, her ambition didn't stop there. Before securing this marriage, Lucy demonstrably negotiated an agreement with another influential figure, Abdul Rahman Bey, securing an apartment in one of his prestigious Garden City properties. Despite this accumulated

wealth and the fortune she inherited upon Shawkat Bey's passing, a sense of insecurity persists, motivating her desire for long-term security for both herself and her daughter, Hagar Showkat Bek. Lucy's relentless pursuit of security continued after Shawkat Bey's passing. She cultivated relationships with influential figures like Abdul Rahman Ibrahim, a free officer, and Mahmoud Rifat, a prosperous businessman. Ultimately, she married Brigadier General Fahmi Jarallah, another free officer. However, these relationships unfolded against the backdrop of escalating tensions between Egypt and Israel. As political tides shifted and war erupted, Lucy's carefully constructed world began to crumble. Her children, caught between their heritage and the changing political landscape, eventually immigrated to Paris and then Israel. With the passage of time and the fading of her youth, Lucy's marriage also dissolved, leaving her isolated.

Lucy's conversion to Islam and subsequent marriage to Shawkat Bey, a prominent figure within the Egyptian Muslim aristocracy, suggests a strategic move aimed at social mobility. The narrative doesn't delve into her personal faith journey, leaving her motivations for conversion unclear. However, it's possible that religious conversion offered a path to integrate into Egyptian high society and potentially secure inheritance rights, which some interpretations suggest were limited for non-Muslim spouses. This indicates that Lucy's conversion can be interpreted as a desire-driven act driven by economics "cast as expressions of desire, both sexually and economically driven" (Starr 2000, 15). Using Homi Bhabha's terminology, it also conveys "mimetic desire" (Bhabha 1994, 88), which has the unsettling potential to obfuscate ethnic group boundaries. By adopting the unethical route to achieve her aims, Lucy embodies the novel's underlying societal condemnation of Jewish families' prevalent capitalist mindset.

Her conversion results in social isolation rather than social accommodation in the two societies. She finds out that she is not welcomed (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 76). She remains a non-Muslim "Jewish-Muslim woman" (Ibid, 10) in the Muslim community. This means conversion might present a dilemma for those trying to advance in society. It can provide an escape from the confines of their native community, but it can also result in a feeling that they don't quite belong anywhere. Despite being rejected by both the Muslim and Jewish communities, to which she does not belong, she has managed to retain her strong individuality. "She focused all her efforts on

integrating into the elite Muslim community, which consists of upperclass families, royal families, and the families of government officials. She believed that this society offered the broadest opportunities for her ambitions" (Ibid, 76).

Following her divorce from Zaki Raul, a reserved and unassuming Jewish man with whom she shares children, the protagonist seeks a new marriage. Motivated by a desire to elevate her family's socioeconomic status, she sets her sights on a wealthy Muslim man. This decision to convert to Islam becomes a pivotal point in the narrative. It not only grants her access to a potential inheritance upon her new husband's passing but also signifies a profound shift in her self-perception or identity. By converting to Islam, she experiences a metamorphosis that makes it easier for her to manage socioeconomic and cultural issues and assimilate into Muslim society. Regarding social mobility, identity exploration, and the pursuit of material achievement, this portrayal of the Jewish character highlights issues and examines themes. It explores the intricacies of individual decisions made in the name of society's betterment as well as potential conflicts between the whims of the individual and their cultural or religious commitments.

Lucy's ambition transcends the constraints of her life, fuelled not by personal aspirations or career ambitions, but by a more fundamental yearning for exploration. This restless desire, which some might attribute to her Jewish heritage, nonetheless remains unfulfilled by traditional markers of happiness like love or marital companionship. She desires the fullest life possible (Ibid, 13). Every Jewish woman embarks on a courageous journey for the welfare of her people, and Lucy personifies this trip. Even though she abandoned her spouse, he respects her ability to make important deals. "He ought to recognize her brilliance and consider it a great deal" (Ibid, 73). She achieves her goal through perseverance and dedication, and the Jewish community eventually respects and admires her for carrying out the Jewish message. "The Jewish community was one among the groups who held her in high regard. Her intellect won over the men and women in this community. She carried out the lesson of unwavering aspiration that every Jew should have" (Ibid, 75). To fulfil her goal, she will not hesitate to sacrifice anything, even to sell herself and her identity. Abdel-Quddous describes Lucy's intelligence and sexuality as qualities typical of Jewish women, and she exploits them to satisfy her needs. Zaki remembers how Jewish women have used cleverness to gain the

respect of monarchs. Jewish women are resourceful and can set up traps for kings and other powerful persons to ensure the safety and well-being of the Jewish people. For instance, when her tribe lost a battle, the Jewish woman Safiyya married the Prophet Mohammed to preserve her people (Ibid, 72–73). Abdel-Quddous challenges the simplistic view of Lucy's actions as solely self-serving. He argues that the narrative portrays her as resorting to unconventional methods to achieve success, which some might interpret as aligning with a stereotype about Jewish women. This stereotype, unfortunately, was prevalent in Arab society then and, to a lesser extent, persists today.

Identity: Religion, self-interest, and the "Jewish nature"

Don't Leave Me Here Alone explores the complexities of identity through the character of Lucy. Lucy, who is Jewish, demonstrates that religious observance is not the sole definition of Jewish identity. What distinguishes a Jewish person is not only her/his narrow religious affiliation but her/his comprehensive connection to existential reality. Judaism becomes a mere religion within it, not a requirement for this affiliation to be religiously observant. Abdel-Quddous demonstrated the signs of non-religiosity in Lucy's life by her detachment from the narrow concept of the Jewish religion as a set of beliefs and rituals. Lucy's journey demonstrates a significant departure from traditional Jewish practices. This suggests a desire to forge her own identity, take control of her life's trajectory, and challenge the social norms of her community. Lucy is a proactive individual who appears to disregard traditional limitations. The text describes how Orthodox Judaism restricts activities on Saturdays, yet Lucy disregards these restrictions by turning on lights in her home. Similarly, she defies dietary customs by consuming forbidden foods. Furthermore, the narrative portrays her as critical of those who adhere strictly to religious rituals, suggesting she views them as man-made rather than divinely ordained (Ibid, 15). This ironic portrayal of rabbis reaffirming their religious belief and adherence to Jewish customs is set against a picture of a young woman who is striving to live her life as she pleases. She cannot surrender to all these extreme traditions and believes from within that God can't have commanded all these absurdities that are closer to forms of torture (Ibid, 12). Lucy prioritizes intellectual pursuits and personal agency in her life. This suggests a view where religious observance is not the sole determinant of success. Her faith seems to emphasize the power of the mind.

As she passed by the Jewish temple on her way back home, she turned towards the building with a smug smile, as if her tongue was sticking out at the rabbi. Her hand reached for the apartment key. Surely, God bestowed upon the Jews the ability to think and earn, and He did not bestow upon them these ridiculous obligations imposed by the rabbis. She was able to make a deal despite not praying or adhering to kosher bread... Indeed, God is reason itself. (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 29)

Though Lucy reveals her aversion to the Jewish temple, her Jewishness is deep-rooted. "Despite Lucy's rebellion against religious traditions, she was fully Jewish. She lived in a world surrounded by Jews, and the community she felt a part of was the Jewish community. Both the wealthy and the poor within that community were Jewish" (Ibid, 16). This is how Abdel-Quddous wanted to present the main character, emphasizing in advance that what distinguishes the Jew as a Jew is not his religion, but his comprehensive affiliation to an existential reality. Judaism, to him, represents only a part of what is encompassed by the term "Jewish identity." A Jew lives with the awareness that she/he is Jewish, regardless of whether she/he is religious or not.

Like her mother, Yasmin demonstrates a limited engagement with traditional Jewish practices. The narrative suggests she only visits a synagogue in exceptional circumstances, such as when seeking to convince French Jews of her heritage in Paris, likely for a specific advantage. This behaviour implies a pragmatic approach to her religious identity, suggesting it may be situational rather than deeply rooted in faith. "Yasmin would cover her head every morning and go to pray in the Jewish synagogue. However, she was not sincerely engaged in this prayer; rather, she aimed to convince the French Jews that she was Jewish like them" (Ibid, 132).

As already stated, Lucy's conversion is different from what happened when thousands of Spanish Jews converted to Christianity in the late fourteenth century and during the mid-fifteenth century to escape the harm caused by Christians to avoid the harm inflicted upon them (Awad 1999, 17). Lucy doesn't convert from Judaism to Islam out of fear or concern for anyone. Rather, her conversion is driven by ambition, specifically the ambition to escape the confines of the poor Jewish class, represented by the Jewish neighborhoods of Harat Al-Yahud, Al-Mouski, and Al-Dhahir, and move into another class, such as the affluent families like Shikouril, Adas, Sidnawi, Shmla, Qattawi, and others from wealthy Jewish families. The decision to convert to a new religion can stem from a complex interplay of factors. These

factors can be broadly categorized as individual, social, institutional, cultural, and political. An analysis of these factors reveals that religious belief may not be the sole motivator for conversion. Individuals may convert even if they don't hold a strong belief in or admiration for the tenets of the new religion. In other words, conversion can be driven by personal motivations, such as individual needs, aspirations, and personal orientations, rather than solely by religious conviction. Social considerations, political pressures, and ideological alignment can also play a significant role in influencing conversion. One potential explanation for Lucy's conversion could be her desire to transcend the limitations faced by the lower Jewish social class in her society. Gooren says: One of "The many factors influencing religious participation and change must be...A personal need to change one's life situation" (Ibid, 51-52). Abdel-Quddous paves the way for this conversion by denying Lucy's religious devotion, as she was not particularly religious.

She did not regularly attend the nearby Ashkenazi synagogue in her neighbourhood. She did not frequent the other nearby synagogue in the Abbasia neighbourhood either. Lucy was not convinced of the necessity of prayer. She once stole her father's prayer shawl, which he cherished and adorned with golden threads. The shawl is worn by Jews during prayer, and some might keep it tied around their chest throughout the day. She stole it and added it to the shirt she was knitting for herself. ... she remained convinced that this silk, embroidered shawl was more suitable for her shirt than for prayer. (Ibid, 13-14)

The symbol employed by Abdel-Quddous in the character of Lucy lies in her transition from one religion to another. However, this does not necessarily mean that she is convinced of the new religion or that she abandons her old religion. Despite her previous mockery of its rituals and traditions, the novelist intended for this character to express the achievement of personal interest through religious transformation. Lucy's religion is her self-interest, even if that self-interest lies in divorcing her husband. If Lucy wants to acquire Shawkat Pasha, she will transition through him from the Jewish neighbourhood to the aristocratic society, whether he is Jewish or Muslim. If Lucy wants to separate from her Jewish husband, Zaki, whom she loves, she justifies her request for divorce by citing the public interest. "How can divorce be in our favour? You're crazy..." And Lucy calmly responded, "I will marry a husband who honours you and honours our children" (Ibid, 54). However, this loving husband embraced Islam, along with his son

and daughter, to preserve his relationship and avoid divorce. However, when the lawyer offered him five thousand pounds, he immediately agreed to divorce, not out of affection for Lucy but for the sum of money. Despite his initial commitment, Lucy's husband ultimately agreed to a divorce upon receiving a significant financial settlement. The text suggests his conversion to Islam might have been motivated by a desire to preserve the marriage; however, the substantial financial offer ultimately swayed his decision.

changing religions becomes a matter unrelated to transitioning from one belief system to another. Instead, it becomes a means to achieve personal interests and gain social and class advantages by belonging to a socially and economically stronger community. The text highlights Lucy's evident joy following the divorce settlement. Interestingly, it doesn't explicitly link her happiness solely to the dissolution of the marriage. Perhaps the significant financial sum awarded to Zaki also played a role in her reaction. After all, he is the father of her children, and everything he obtains will eventually benefit them. It was a profitable deal: Lucy obtained Shawkat Pasha, and the father and children received a Garden City apartment and five thousand pounds. This situation confirms that despite Lucy's conversion to Islam, she has not deviated from her Jewish nature, just like other Jewish women mentioned throughout Jewish history. They always strive to ensure the safety and prosperity of their fellow believers from any location they reach. It reveals to us the underlying motives for a Jew's conversion to another religion, as it involves the desire to save the Jew within oneself and perhaps to save other Jews, who may be children or future generations at the very least (Al-Shami 1992, 270). Thus, her marriage, which was a successful deal, should be appreciated, and her genius should be recognized. This is the genius of Jewish women who, by their femininity, managed to subdue kings and other powerful individuals and ensure the safety and well-being of the Jewish people. The deal was accomplished, and Zaki received his share (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 72–73).

Lucy's conversion to Islam, along with her daughter's, appears to have been influenced by external circumstances. Following Shawkat's death, Lucy resumes using her birth name and alters her outward religious expression. This shift suggests a change in her situation and perhaps a re-evaluation of her adopted identity. This appearance has been lost, and the justification for her being Muslim has been lost with Shawkat's death, so she is no longer a Muslim. She feels that she is

drifting away from Islam (Ibid, 105). This means the death of Shaukat revealed Lucy's lack of deep-rooted affiliation with Islam after her conversion into the character of Zainab, the Muslim Jew.

Yet, to convince herself and others that she is a Muslim, Lucy begins to exaggerate as much as possible about the manifestations of Islam and to distance herself from the Jewish community. Yet, adherence to Islamic traditions does not necessarily reflect a sincere believer as much as it reflects a personality driven by self-interests. Abdel-Ouddous states here that self-interest, and nothing else, is what drives the behaviour of the Jewish individual. This self-interest manifests in that the more Zainab, the Jewish-Muslim, increases her diligence in adhering to the manifestations of Islam, the more she preserves the gains she has achieved. "Now that her husband is gone, to whom will she give her Islam?" (Ibid, 106) Despite all that, Lucy/ Zainab cannot do without her Islam. Her future and the future of her daughters, Hajar and Yasmin, are intertwined with this Islam. Furthermore, Shawkat's inheritance is based solely on Islam. If she were to return to Judaism, Muslims might hold her in contempt, and Jews might ridicule her. The ambiguity of Lucy's identity is portrayed as a third space, like Bhabha's concept of "in-between," as it neither points to the original identity nor the intended one. Lucy is therefore still not accepted in Muslim culture despite her conversion. She is Showkat's wife, which is why she mainly talks to ladies and goes to their events. Despite her embrace of Islam and her exaggeration in adhering to Islamic customs and obligations, she was not accepted by the Islamic community. Though she makes a concerted effort to overcome the boundaries of religion and social hierarchy, the absolute barriers are palpably present everywhere. Though "She focused all her efforts on living in her husband's society ... the high-class Muslim community ... the community of the royal families, the families of the pashas and the Beys... But she noticed that this society does not receive her except with her husband" (Ibid, 76). Lucy's conversion to Islam might not guarantee complete acceptance within the Muslim community. Certain deeply rooted beliefs, reflected in proverbs like "he who was born a Jew remains a Jew" (Ibid, 64), can create barriers for converts seeking full integration. It is also believed that a Jew cannot be a Muslim and must remain Jewish regardless of her/his dedication to Islam. Exaggerating adherence to Islamic traditions does not reflect a genuinely devout character. It would be more appropriate for her to have a deep faith in her religion, which she has grown up

with and been nurtured in, rather than embodying a character that moves towards self-interest. Despite her efforts (Ibid, 10), such views might label her as a "Jewish Muslim," highlighting a potential source of ongoing otherness. Lucy's experience underscores the enduring sense of "otherness" that can persist even after religious conversion. This resonates with the core tenets of postcolonial feminism, which challenge the concept of the 'Other' used to marginalize individuals.

Even if she was secular, the customs, behaviour, and traditions associated with the Jewish religion permeate its existence, whether consciously or unconsciously. This implies that the Jew retains some unchangeable, fundamental Jewishness in nature even if she/he has embraced another religion and do not follow Judaism. Lucy and Yasmin are portrayed as "malleable Jewish women" and "receptive by nature to suggestion and conversion" (Lackner 2016, 28). According to their interests, they are authorized to renounce their religion. Lucy arranges a potential marriage between her daughter Yasmin and Aziz Pasha Rady, a Muslim man in his thirties, significantly older than Yasmin and the son of a wealthy nobleman. Material security appears to be Lucy's primary concern, overshadowing the significant age difference. Interestingly, Yasmin seems to share some of her mother's values. Like her mother, she is ambitious and constantly fantasizes about achieving financial and social success by taking advantage of her sexuality. She is therefore seen to be excited about the marriage proposal, not because it will satisfy her sexual needs but rather because it will provide her with an opportunity to advance in society. Since she was a young child, she has understood that until she marries and poses as the wife of a wealthy man, she will never be able to have her own identity in this haughty society. After the 1952 revolution, the new government confiscates Yasmin's father-in-law's riches, putting an end to her happy existence with her husband. After her husband filed for bankruptcy, Yasmin used her sexuality to get financial advantage not from men, but from women. Yasmin develops a lesbian relationship with Khadija, her pal. After discreetly hoarding it for themselves since they first met, they sell women's enjoyment (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 167). Lucy makes an unsuccessful attempt to become involved in Yasmin's affairs by using both morality and social convention. Yasmin, who is presented as a lesbian, justifies her behaviour by arguing that, unlike the clear prohibition of relationships between men and women outside of marriage, Islam does not outright forbid women from having intimate relationships. Yasmin believes that female companionship is a natural position for women to be in. That kind of material doesn't have to be kept under wraps, and people need to feel free to disclose it. She thinks they are above the laws of Islamic sharia. Even if they did get together, it would be purer than relationships between people since, at the absolute least, nothing strange would taint her stomach and contaminate her (Ibid, 168).

Khadija and Yasmin have been successful in luring affluent women. With their wealthy clients, they indulge in sexual activity. The other customers, including Khadija, are Muslim women, proving that not only Jewish women can engage in such behaviour. Yasmin's partners are rich, which may be interpreted as evidence that her conventional Jewish traits—rather than a natural desire for sex with other women are the cause of her homosexuality. Her seductions of rich and privileged women serve as a means of making money. Abdel-Ouddous employs the pre-existing stereotype to describe Yasmin's character, claiming that her cravings for money and sexual fulfilment are due to her "Jewish nature". Yasmin's unbridled drive for financial achievement is shown in her desire to be as prosperous as legendary Jewish businessmen and "to establish a large business that would enable her to realize her dream of attaining the heyday of Cicurel" (Ibid, 171). Despite having a close relationship with her Muslim partner, Khadija, she betrays her by getting into a partnership with a Jewish Egyptian businessman named Elia Curiel in France behind Khadija's back. It is implied that the betrayal and duplicity conform to the long-standing caricature of Jews as people who will stop at nothing to further their interests. Yasmin's re-establishment with her people represents her adherence to her race and religion. What is crucial in this instance is that the Jew still possesses some unchangeable, fundamental Jewishness in character, even if she/ he has accepted another religion and adapted to a different culture and is not practising her/his Jewishness or Judaism.

Abdel-Quddous's personality conflicts

The Jewish characters in Ihsan Abdel-Quddousin's narrative differ greatly from the recurring image of Jews that is echoed in literary works. It is not the image of Shylock, the Jewish character who demands his right to a pound of flesh from Antonio, as stated in the document down to the last letter in *The Merchant of Venice*. No power on earth would make him compromise on what he demands. He prefers a pound of Antonio's flesh over three thousand dinars. Unlike a

character motivated by a mere grudge who seeks only their due, the Jewish protagonist in Ihsan Abdel-Quddous' novel faces a far deeper conflict. They grapple with the wrenching dilemma of dispersion: the choice between remaining in their homeland and seeking a new life elsewhere. This internal struggle stems from the fact that their Jewish identity transcends religion; it's an intrinsic part of who they are, deeply intertwined with their sense of belonging.

Judaism is a character that surpasses any other character that a Jew can associate with. The Jew is either Jewish or not Jewish, and after that, they can be anything. They can be a Jewish French, a Jewish American, or a Jewish Russian. No matter how they move from one nationality to another, they are still either Jewish or not Jewish. Similarly, if they convert from one religion to another (for example, if they embrace Christianity), they are Jewish Christians. (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 10)

This means Jewish heritage can persist even after conversion to another religion. A core aspect of Jewish identity is its persistence. Wagner (2015, 77) adds that Islamized Jews "became the lowest-status Muslims of all: Black 'dawāshīn', who lived in tents and could not intermarry with other tribesmen". It transcends personal belief and integrates deeply into an individual's sense of self. This remains true even for those who are not observant of the religion's tenets. Jewish law, for instance, recognizes a person as Jewish if their mother is Jewish, regardless of their personal religious beliefs. Furthermore, cultural elements like customs, behavior, and traditions often permeate the lives of individuals with Jewish heritage, even if they are secular. This awareness, conscious or subconscious, contributes to the ongoing nature of Jewish identity. Conversion to another religion doesn't necessarily sever ties with Judaism. Individuals who convert may still carry a sense of connection to their Jewish heritage, both psychologically and culturally. This can manifest in various ways, even if their adherence to the new religion is genuine. The complexity of Jewish identity makes complete separation a difficult proposition for anyone, regardless of their level of religious observance. The conversation between Lucy, a woman with a Jewish background who converted to Islam, and her daughter Yasmin exposes Lucy's ongoing connection to her Jewish identity. Ihsan Abdel-Ouddous utilizes subtle verbal cues, often referred to as "slips of the tongue," to portray the unconscious or subconscious influence of one's past. Through these instances, Abdel-Quddous explores the complexities of religious conversion, particularly the persistence of cultural identity despite a

change in faith. Zainab is heard saying, "You're right, my son. Who said we are not Jews? If we weren't Jews, why did I come to you today?" (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 87) Lucy's interactions within Islamic society reveal a potential tension between her outward adherence to Islamic traditions and her inner sense of self. While she may exhibit a heightened level of participation, it's important to consider if this stems from genuine conviction or an attempt to mask her unresolved feelings about her Jewish heritage. In contrast, her interactions with her son, Isaac, suggest a more open acknowledgement of her Jewish identity, despite her conversion to Islam.

The novel presents an intriguing irony. Zainab (formerly known as Lucy) and Jasmine, who converted to Islam and distanced themselves from Jewish religious traditions, now experience a peculiar yearning for the very symbols they once disregarded. Despite embracing Islam and severing ties with her husband's family, Lucy clings to her birth name, "Lucy," which holds a connection to her Jewish heritage. This seemingly contradictory behavior highlights the complexities of identity and the enduring influence of one's background, even after conversion. Lucy's insistence on retaining her birth name, "Lucy," even after converting to Islam and adopting the name "Zainab Hanidy," becomes a potent symbol. It suggests a desire to preserve a link to her Jewish heritage. This internal conflict manifests physically as a "tightness creeping upon her chest" and an emotional outpouring of tears (Ibid, 62). Conversion, intended as a new beginning, appears to have unearthed a wellspring of bittersweet emotions – a mix of distress and a yearning for past religious celebrations and family gatherings.

She felt distressed crawling on her chest after she finished recording her conversion to Islam. She did not want to see Showkat or see Sheikh Abdul Latif. She wanted to cry. She got into the car on her way back to the lodge, the one in which she was staying and cried. She could not stop crying. She had never cried as she did now. She might have been crying for her Jewishness. She had never felt that she was Jewish as she felt now. All the rituals of Judaism came to her mind. (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 61)

Despite abandoning Jewish religious practices, Lucy exhibits a continued attachment to Zionist ideals and the concept of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The novel highlights this through a statement where Lucy firmly believes "Palestine is the right of the Jews" (Ibid, 83). This unwavering support for Zionism resurfaces during the 1948 Arab Israeli War, as she finds herself sympathizing with the Jewish side in the conflict (Ibid, 59). Lucy's complex relationship with her

Jewish identity underscores the multifaceted nature of such an identity. It can encompass cultural heritage, religious observance, and a deep connection to one's ancestral homeland, even when aspects of that identity are seemingly abandoned. Though she realizes that the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine is intensifying, she does not want to know what the Arabs say or what the Jews say. "However, deep down, she believes that Palestine is the right of the Jews." She has lived her whole life waiting for the Promised Land. When she prayed, she would chant, "To meet you, O Jerusalem" (Ibid, 83). Her main objection and concerns stem from the fear that her Egyptian Eastern Jewish children (Sephardim) would suffer in Israel from what she experienced in Egypt, with the class distinction between the residents of the Jewish Quarter and the residents of Garden City and Zamalek. She fears that her children would be placed in the second-class status of Eastern Jews, much like the African Americans in America at that time. They would remain at the bottom, underfoot, and marginalized.

Although Lucy enjoyed a life of wealth, security, and social status in Egypt, the novel suggests her decision to leave may have stemmed from deeper motivations. These could be ideological, a yearning for a different way of life, a pursuit of personal fulfilment, or perhaps a longing for a connection to her ancestral homeland. Human decisions are rarely one-dimensional; a complex interplay of factors, beyond immediate material comfort or security, often influence our choices. A key difference emerges between Isaac and Zainab's perspectives. Isaac, influenced by Zionist ideology, adheres to the concept of the "eternal wanderer" - the notion that a Jew living outside Israel is somehow incomplete. This belief suggests a disconnect from their faith and a potential path to fulfilment through repatriation. He even holds onto the idea of a specific prayer, the "Prayer of Vows," that supposedly absolves Jews of past commitments. The significance of the "Prayer of Vows" lies in its historical context. Traditionally, it was used by Jews who had converted to another religion under duress, seeking a way to reclaim their Jewish identity. This concept resonates with Isaac, particularly considering his daughter Jasmine's recent conversion. While Isaac's past religious affiliation remains unclear, his interest in this prayer suggests a desire to potentially reconnect with his Jewish heritage. This instance exemplifies the complexities of individual beliefs and the multifaceted nature of religious and cultural identity.

She used to go to the Jewish Association, where they welcomed her as someone who had repented and returned to her roots. When the time came for the days of Yom Kippur, she could pray the "Kol Nidre" prayer, which absolves her from all her previous commitments, obligations, and ties. It frees her from Islam, from Egypt, and even from her husband Aziz. (Ibid, 188)

In contrast to Isaac, Zainab remains hesitant to embrace the "Prayer of Vows" as a path back to her former identity as Lucy Hanidy. This suggests a deeper resistance to fully reclaiming her Jewish heritage. Ultimately, Zainab chooses to leave Egypt and reunite with Jasmine in Paris. The novel leaves open the possibility that this movie represents a search for a sense of belonging, both religious and cultural. Whether in Paris or perhaps even in Israel, a journey Zainab contemplates, she yearns for a connection that has eluded her.

She cannot. She built every day of her life here, in Egypt. Every day, she built her daughter herself. Every day, she unleashed a spark of success, for success is life, it is homeland. Wherever she succeeded, she was in her homeland. She should not regret it merely because her children left her alone. What she has taken from her life will always be attached to her through her children. She will remain here, and she will die here, and she will be buried in the soil of her success. (Ibid, 198)

Zainab, the Muslim Jew, has decided to remain true to her original religion, which is a success. It is a new religion embraced by the Jews wherever they go, and it allows them to transition from Judaism to any other religion without losing their inherent identity because Judaism is a personal characteristic before being a religion. The cycle of life repeats itself with Zainab's daughter, Yasmin, who has also chosen to embrace a single religion, which is a success. Whether that religion is based on staying in Islam and abandoning Judaism or on renouncing Islam and returning to Judaism, it is a business transaction where interests determine the religion (Ibid, 101). The world of ambition shapes the steps and actions. This indicates that the Jewish character presented by Abdel-Quddous is a Jew who is thoroughly ingrained in the culture of Egypt as a whole and who desires to stay there if no external forces force him to leave. If circumstances force him to leave, he prefers to live in Paris or any European capital to fulfil his Jewish aspirations. Unlike some Jewish communities in Europe, which faced persecution and violence, this Egyptian Jew's experience of leaving Egypt appears less burdened by regret. The narrative suggests a possible absence of widespread anti-Semitism or large-scale violence against Jews in their departure.

Unbelonging and beyond: Lucy's struggle for identity

Lucy/Zainab went through several crises after she declared her conversion to Islam. One of these crises was her family's rejection of her decision to embrace Islam. As a result, she experienced an internal struggle that tore her apart, a conflict between her deep-rooted Jewish identity and her Islam. Following her conversion, Lucy grapples with the complexities of her evolving identity. This internal struggle is further intensified by the perceived rejection from both her Jewish and Muslim communities. Her wish to transcend religious bonds and cross-religious limits is realized to be unfulfilled because of being rejected by both communities, leaving her in a condition of turbulence and in-betweenness. Lucy's conversion to Islam, intended as a bridge to a new life, ironically led to a sense of isolation from both her Jewish community and the Muslim elite she aspired to join. To borrow Gooren's words, it causes a "sense of isolation from the outside world" (Ibid, 73).

The narrative explores Zainab's internal struggle as she grapples with reconciling her Jewish heritage and her adopted Muslim faith. This creates a sense of ambiguity for her. Ultimately, she embraces Islam and expresses a desire to integrate into a sophisticated Egyptian Muslim society. Notably, her sense of belonging seems tied to Egypt itself, transcending religious labels. This suggests identification with Egyptian culture. Similarly, Yasmin's choices, such as marrying Aziz Radi and raising their children within the Muslim community, further solidify their Egyptian identity. The narrative explores Zainab's (formerly Lucy) internal conflict as she reconciles her Jewish heritage with her adopted Muslim faith. Ultimately, she embraces Islam and seeks integration into a prominent Egyptian Muslim society. This choice underscores her strong identification with Egyptian culture, which transcends religious affiliation. Similarly, Yasmin's life choices, including marriage to Aziz Radi, solidify their Egyptian identity within the Muslim community. Despite her conversion, hints suggest a deeper connection to Egypt for Lucy, potentially raising questions about the motivations behind her initial conversion.

Through the character of Zainab, Abdel-Quddous depicts the picture of the Jews and the psychological crises they experienced during the war in Egypt. They were depicted as being worried and disturbed despite their conversion to Islam, as they were affected by

the political situation during the war between Egypt and Israel. "The officers' revolution began, and everyone who had another country started to flee from Egypt. Zainab was bewildered, and confusion led her to fear. She couldn't decide what to choose. Should Zainab stay or go back and become the other Lucy?" (Ibid, 111) In a state of mental and emotional degeneration, Lucy makes one final effort to incorporate both beliefs into herself and resolve her internal conflict. She tries to bridge her two identities by referring to her Muslim daughter Hajar. Her intention in naming her daughter was to give her a name that honored both her Muslim and Jewish origins. The name Hajar is used by Muslims, Jews, and Christians (Ibid, 80). According to Starr (2000, 75), Lucy's decision to give her daughter this name might be seen as a call back to an Egyptianness that existed before the split of religions from the early monotheism that Abraham/Ibrahim signifies. Another meaning of the name Hajar is a possible link between these two religions. In the end, it's possible to see Lucy's choice of name as an effort to resolve the internal struggle she faces and create a new, cohesive identity. The narrative of Lucy highlights two key elements of how Jews are portrayed in Arabic literature: first, she is portrayed as being victimized, sultry, materialistic, exploitative, and ungrateful, who uses her sexuality to control others. On the other hand, she possesses qualities that are typically assigned to all Jews, such as intelligence, maternal love, and pragmatism. Yasmin's journey highlights the nuanced relationship between faith and belonging. Though she converted to Islam alongside her mother, the Muslim community feels alienating, a stark contrast to the familiar world she left behind (Abdel-Quddous 2021, 98). This shift has left her adrift, a stranger in her neighborhood, yearning for a place that truly feels like home. Driven by a dual desire for financial security and a rekindled connection to her heritage, Yasmin seeks to establish a shop within Paris' Jewish community. This decision transcends mere business goals and bureaucratic hurdles. It appears to be a subconscious yearning to reconnect with the latent Jewish identity that has always been a part of her.

Don't Leave Me Here Alone delves into the complexities of identity through Lucy's experience. Her conversion to Islam severs the familiar ties of her Jewish heritage, thrusting her into a liminal space. This hybridity extends beyond faith, encompassing ethnicity, social class, and the tapestry of her cultural experiences. The novel poignantly portrays Lucy's yearning for acceptance, a yearning that remains

frustratingly out of reach within both Jewish and Muslim communities. Her conversion, initially envisioned as a bridge to a new life, becomes a source of internal conflict and social isolation.

In addition to the qualities listed above, Zainab is presented as having her own philosophy of war and not preferring conflict. She detests people warring among themselves and hates conflict. For her, both victories and setbacks leave fatalities in their wake. Neither victory nor failure is what she wishes for. She wishes for a world free from conflict (Ibid, 150–152).

Conclusion

Ihsan Abdel-Quddous's novel, *Don't Leave Me Here Alone*, offers a nuanced portrayal of Arab Jews, dismantling simplistic narratives of alienation. It presents a new image that contrasts with previously dominant stereotypes. Through the character's experiences, the novel critically examines the survival strategies employed by Arab Jews caught between conflicting religious doctrines and ideologies. These strategies enabled them to navigate the Islamic world, but not without consequences. Additionally, the novel challenges the traditional notion of conversion as a divine choice. Instead, it portrays conversion as a personal decision driven by individual needs and circumstances.

The narrative offers a complex portrait of the Egyptian Jewish-Muslim woman via Lucy. Her conversion to Islam, which she at first saw as a means of belonging, ends up being the starting point for a serious identity struggle. The intricate relationships between faith, tradition, and the need for acceptance in a society with clear social and religious boundaries are all poignantly explored in this narrative. Lucy's story transcends the specific context of Egyptian society, offering a universal exploration of the human desire to belong. Her liminal existence, caught between two cultures and faiths, resonates with the experiences of individuals navigating multifaceted identities. Through Lucy's journey, Abdel-Quddous compels readers to confront the limitations of societal constructs and celebrate the richness of hybrid identities.

Abdel-Quddous, through the character of Lucy, explores the concept of a persistent Jewish identity. The novel suggests that conversion to another religion may not fully erase one's inherent Jewishness. Judaism is portrayed as a complex web of social identity, rituals, and traditions that deeply influence a person's actions, self-perception, and worldview. This inherent Jewishness, according to the

novel, can persist even if an individual no longer actively practices the religion, assimilates into another culture, or adopts the practices of another faith. Zainab's story exemplifies this concept. Despite her conversion to Islam, she demonstrates a continued connection to her Jewish heritage. This connection is evident in her unwavering commitment to the safety and prosperity of her fellow Jews, regardless of her social standing. However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this portrayal. The notion of an unchangeable Jewish essence is a complex one, and the novel's representation may not reflect the full spectrum of experiences within the Jewish diaspora.

The novel's portraval of Lucy offers a complex exploration of Jewish women in Arabic literature. While the character exhibits ambition and resourcefulness, the narrative also employs potentially problematic tropes, such as portraying her as manipulative and using sexuality for control. However, Lucy also embodies traditionally positive traits associated with Jewish characters, such as pragmatism, maternal love, and intelligence. Beyond its unique portrayal of the Egyptian Jewish-Muslim woman, Don't Leave Me Here Alone delves into themes relevant to contemporary gender studies and postcolonial feminism. The novel offers a nuanced exploration of the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies as they strive for autonomy and equality. Abdel-Ouddous portrays the complex role women play within social structures, highlighting their struggle to balance the preservation of cultural traditions with their aspirations. Additionally, he examines how women's participation in various spheres of life, such as politics and culture, shapes their daily experiences. The novel's portrayal of Jewish women, particularly through the character of Lucy, presents a complex challenge. While it departs from stereotypical images of passivity and submissiveness, it assigns certain traits to Lucy - ambition, for instance - that can be misconstrued as negative within a patriarchal context. This underscores the need for a more critical examination of how female characters, particularly those who defy expectations, are represented. A nuanced analysis that considers the historical and cultural context would provide a richer understanding of these portrayals.

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SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

Cultural constraints and gender empowerment: Self-representation among young Balochi women on social media

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Abstract: This research investigates how young Balochi women, aged 18 to 24, utilize social media platforms to express their gender identities, challenge traditional gender expectations, and experience empowerment within their cultural context. Employing a mixed-methods approach, involving a quantitative survey on 110 university students and in-depth interviews with 15 participants, and utilizing Goffman's dramaturgical framework, the findings reveal Facebook as the favored social media platform. The results suggest that participants conscientiously project femininity online to align with cultural norms, yet they strategically manage their online personas, particularly in the presence of family members to avoid judgement and social backlash. However, utilizing the technical affordances of social media, participants gain control over their online presence and create a desired persona by striking a balance between their backstage and frontstage performance. While social media serves as a source of empowerment for these women, it does not completely liberate them from the offline patriarchy and traditional gender expectations.

Keywords: self-presentation, impression management, gender identity, traditional gender expectations, empowerment

Introduction

Social networking platforms provide young adults with a multitude of tools and opportunities to express various aspects of their identities and assign importance to their encounters related to identity (Bhandari and Bimo 2022). Through purposeful public displays, these individuals engage in the construction of their gendered identities, specifically focusing on how they can present themselves in their stories and profiles on these platforms (Yau and Reich 2019). Social media

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platforms provide a space for individuals to experiment with gendered identity construction. With the freedom to choose how they present themselves, they can explore and even challenge traditional gender norms (Leong et al. 2019).

In traditionally conservative societies, the appropriation of social media emerges as an avenue for individuals to construct empowered gender identities through the medium of discourse (Kurze 2020). Central to the concept of empowerment is the fundamental idea of power, and social media platforms, with their far-reaching influence, offer a dynamic arena for individuals to challenge and reshape prevailing gender norms (Ye and Yang 2020). Through online performative practices, such as sharing personal narratives, engaging in dialogues, individuals can actively exercise agency in shaping their gender identities. These digital spaces not only provide a platform for self-expression but also enable the marginalized individuals in raising their voice and opinion, that is unlikely or more challenging to do in the offline world (Jamatia 2022). Thus, social media has emerged as a transformative force, not only in facilitating personal empowerment but also in catalyzing broader societal shifts towards the recognition and acceptance of diverse gender identities.

This paper employs Goffman's dramaturgical theory (Kivisto 2012) to explore how young adults in Balochistan, Pakistan use online platforms to construct their gender identities. The primary objective of this analysis is to examine how young women in particular utilize social media to assert agency and empowerment within the backdrop of a traditionally conservative society.

Balochistan, a region in Pakistan, is known for its traditional values and societal norms that often place restrictions on women's freedom and opportunities (Nawaz et al. 2022). In this context, the study investigates how young Balochi women, aged between 18 to 24 studying at a public sector university in Balochistan manage these societal expectations and constraints through their online actions. The research will investigate the ways in which these young women, perform and present their gender identities on the internet. By doing so, it aims to shed light on the role of social media in enabling them to express themselves, challenge traditional gender expectations, and utilize the online platform for personal empowerment and agency.

Empowerment, as central to the research objective, refers to the process by which young women in Balochistan, Pakistan, develop the capacity and confidence to actively shape their gendered identities

through their online presence, especially on social media platforms (Mosedale 2005). In a traditionally conservative society where gender norms and expectations can be quite restrictive, empowerment in this context refers to several key aspects. Firstly, it involves these young women gaining the ability to authentically express their true selves online, including their gender identities, without fear of societal judgment or backlash. This means they have the freedom to represent themselves in ways that resonate with their personal understanding of gender.

Secondly, empowerment implies challenging and potentially reshaping the established gender norms and expectations within their society (Wilf et al. 2022). By using online platforms, these women may advocate for gender equality, challenge stereotypes, or redefine traditional roles and behaviors associated with their gender. Additionally, empowerment involves having a sense of control over their online narratives and representations. This control allows them to influence how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves, enabling a more assertive and self-directed role in shaping their gendered identities (Sobande, Fearfull, and Brownlie 2020). Lastly, empowerment may facilitate the building of supportive networks online, which can further influence their self-perception and challenge societal norms (Li et al. 2023). These networks can provide emotional support, help them raise their voices, and offer a platform for collective action or dialogue about gender-related issues.

The research on online identity construction in the Pakistani context has become quite common in the recent years. Studies have examined various aspects of how individuals, including young adults, present themselves on social media platforms (Mahmood, Jafree, and Sohail 2022), and how this intersects with their cultural and societal backgrounds. Researchers have explored how cultural and religious values influence online self-presentation among Pakistani users (Asif et al. 2020). They have found that many individuals struggle between maintaining a balance between expressing their personal identities and adhering to cultural and religious norms, particularly in conservative regions (Aksar, Firdaus, and Pasha 2023). Studies have also investigated the role of social media platforms in shaping political identities and facilitating political activism (Ida, Saud, and Mashud 2020).

Moreover, researchers have examined how gender identity is constructed and performed online, as well as the challenges and opportunities this presents, especially for women in Pakistan who may face gender-specific online harassment and societal expectations (Salam 2021). There has been research into online privacy and security issues, with a focus on how users in Pakistan deal with concerns related to data privacy, cybersecurity, and online harassment, particularly in the context of increasing digital connectivity (Naseem, Younas, and Mustafa 2020). Moreover, researchers have explored how Pakistani youth utilize social media to construct their identities, form connections, and negotiate their social roles (Alam 2021).

However, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific experiences of young women in Balochistan, Pakistan, and their online self-representation within the framework of gender identity. Most of the existing research tends to focus on broader national or urban contexts, often overlooking the unique dynamics at play in regions like Balochistan, which have distinct cultural and societal norms. Balochistan is known for its conservative values and traditional gender roles, which can significantly impact how young women navigate and express their gender identities online (Kamran 2023).

This research paper aims to bridge this gap by examining the online identity construction practices of young women in Balochistan, by specifically focusing on how they negotiate their gender identities within the context of a traditionally conservative society. Recent studies have largely overlooked the crucial element of empowerment through online identity construction in this context. By using Goffman's dramaturgical theory as a lens, the study seeks to shed light on the performative aspects of young Balochi women's online self-presentation by examining how these practices may empower them despite the societal constraints they experience in the offline world.

This study specifically involves participants within the age range of 18 to 24 also known as emerging adulthood, concentrating on young adult women residing in Balochistan. Emerging adulthood represents a crucial phase of life where individuals are in the process of transitioning from teenage to early adulthood (Hochberg and Konner 2020). It's a period characterized by significant life decisions, including educational pursuits, career choices, and marriage. By focusing on this age group, the study can offer valuable insights into how online identity construction and empowerment intersect during this pivotal stage of personal development. Secondly, young adults between 18 to 24 age range are often considered "digital natives" (Smith 2019). They have grown up in an era where the internet and

social media have become integral parts of daily life. Their familiarity with digital platforms may influence how they construct and express their online identities.

This demographics' unique relationship with technology makes them particularly interesting subjects for study in the context of empowerment through online self-presentation. Balochistan, with its distinct cultural and societal norms, presents a unique backdrop for this research. Young women in this region often face traditional expectations and gender roles that can significantly impact their lives (Mohammadi et al. 2022).

Online self-representation is a complex interplay between technological affordances, social interactions, and the socio-cultural environment (Ghaffari 2022). Recent research indicates that social media platforms offer different affordances, meaning they provide various functionalities that enable or restrict user actions (Sæbø, Federici, and Braccini 2020). Notably, these social media affordances can be influenced by gender (Comunello, Parisi, and Ieracitano 2021). Gendered affordances refer to the ways in which technology and the cultural context offer different possibilities for action based on gender (Sullivan and Bendell 2020). In essence, these platform features influence how individuals present themselves online and shape the dynamics of online interactions within the context of their society and culture.

The current paper establishes the relevance of Erving Goffman's theoretical framework, which centers on the concept of self-presentation, as a foundation for understanding how young Balochi women craft their online identities to gain empowerment. It also explores the concepts of the "real" self and the virtual self within the framework of Goffman's theory (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013).

Literature review

An early exploration of self-representation can be found in Erving Goffman's influential work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In this work from 1959, Goffman employed the metaphor of a theater to elucidate how individuals strategically "act" to project a favorable image. Goffman defines this as "impression management," which essentially means skillfully portraying a particular persona (Riggins 1990).

Much like actors on a stage, people engage in both public-facing ("front-stage") and more private ("back-stage") behaviors to influence

the perceptions others have of them. As soon as an individual finds themselves in the presence of others, they become aware of being watched and consequently adhere to certain social rules and conventions (Price 2018). This front-stage conduct can be either habitual and instinctual or quite deliberate and purposeful. In these situations, individuals tend to follow a well-established and learned social script. This script is composed of internalized norms and societal expectations regarding how one should behave. These expectations are influenced by the specific context, the role one occupies within it, and one's physical appearance.

Failing to manage this impression effectively can result in an inability to convey the desired image or persona one wishes to project, potentially leading to a loss of one's social standing (DeGroot and Vik 2021). The "backstage" represents a private realm where there is no audience; it's a place where individuals can step out of their performative roles and make preparations for their public appearance on the "front stage" (Roderick and Collinson 2020).

Drawing a parallel to the theater, individuals, including women in the context of Balochistan's culture, often engage in both public-facing ("front-stage") and more private ("back-stage") behaviors to shape how they are perceived by others. In Balochistan's cultural milieu, particularly for women, social norms and expectations often play a significant role in influencing their behavior in public and private settings. When women in Balochistan find themselves in the company of others, they are acutely aware of being under observation, and this awareness leads them to adhere closely to specific social rules and conventions dictated by their cultural environment. These rules may encompass modesty in attire, respectful communication, and adherence to traditional customs. In the front-stage scenario, whether it's in family gatherings, community events, or public spaces, Balochi women are mindful of projecting an image that aligns with these cultural norms.

Conversely, the "back-stage" in Balochistan's cultural context represents the more private sphere, such as the family home. Here, away from the scrutiny of outsiders, women may have more flexibility to express their true selves, engage in personal conversations, and relax from the constraints imposed by the front stage. Online platforms may offer Balochi women a valuable space to represent their authentic selves in a manner similar to how they might behave in the backstage of their offline lives. These digital spaces provide a range of

opportunities that empower women to express themselves freely and without the constraints of societal norms and expectations.

In the online world, anonymity and pseudonymity can be powerful tools (Mondal, Correa, and Benevenuto 2020). Baloch women often face social pressures and expectations in their offline lives, which can limit their self-expression. However, online platforms allow them to adopt pseudonyms or remain anonymous, offering a shield behind which they can speak their minds and share their authentic thoughts and feelings. This freedom encourages open and honest self-representation. Moreover, online communities and social media groups may provide a supportive environment for Balochi women to connect with like-minded individuals who share their interests, beliefs, and experiences. These virtual spaces serve as a backstage of sorts, where they can engage in discussions, debates, and dialogues without the fear of judgment or societal repercussions. Here, they can embrace their true selves and explore their identities more openly.

A central idea in Goffman's theory is the distinction between expressions that individuals consciously present ("give") and those expressions they unintentionally emit or "give off" (Aspling 2011). Goffman emphasizes that the role of expression is to convey impressions of oneself. Impressions consciously given are purposefully intended and communicated, while those given off are the unintended impressions perceived by the audience (Leary 2019). Another important concept is the notion of a "mask" that individuals use to manage face-to-face interactions. This mask allows individuals to emphasize certain aspects of themselves while concealing others. Importantly, the mask doesn't transform a person into someone they are not; it merely highlights different facets of their personality (Goffman 1959).

In the context of online interactions, which can be thought of as a virtual social environment, these concepts of impression management, masks, and expressions given and given off remain relevant. Online interactions involve the communication of these concepts through visual elements and text. They are still crucial for understanding how people present themselves online. Suler (2004) argues that online communication has a unique effect on people, encouraging them to disclose personal information and express themselves more openly and intensely than they typically would in face-to-face interactions. He terms this phenomenon the "disinhibition effect," where individuals feel less restrained when communicating online. This effect can have

both positive and negative outcomes. In some cases, it enables individuals to express deep emotions and thoughts candidly, while in other instances, it can lead to the toxic expression of anger or rage.

Several factors contribute to the disinhibition effect. Anonymity plays a significant role in online interactions (J. Yang et al. 2021). When individuals can remain anonymous, they often feel like they are operating in a backstage setting, allowing them to take risks and engage in intimate self-disclosures even with people they don't know personally. In such instances, the front stage, where individuals typically project a specific persona and aim to avoid embarrassment, becomes less important. However, when social media users choose to reveal their real names and identities, their online performances more closely resemble face-to-face interactions, with the need to maintain a preferred image and avoid unnecessary embarrassment coming to the forefront.

Asynchronous communication, characterized by a lack of real-time interaction, has fundamentally altered the concept of being in the presence of others. In the context of social media, this change has also transformed our understanding of who these "others" are. According to Goffman, the audience plays a central role in any social situation, and an individual's ability to perform effectively hinges on their capacity to gather information about this audience (Ross 2014). However, on social media platforms, there's a notable difference. Social media users don't receive immediate feedback as they would in face-to-face interactions, including non-verbal cues and signals. Conversely, social media users enjoy the advantage of having more time to craft their online personas, and these platforms offer advanced tools for refining how they present themselves (Zani, Norman, and Ghani 2022). They can meticulously choose from a range of features like filters, emojis, stickers, photos, videos, and even edit or completely remove posts and comments if they don't achieve the desired impression.

B. Bharathi (2023) examines the concept of "presentation of self" in online social media environments. He argues that individuals engage in strategic self-presentation to manage their online personas, which involves sharing specific aspects of their lives while omitting others. This curated self-presentation allows users to maintain control over their digital identities and manage the impressions they make on their online audiences. This control over one's self-representation can contribute to a sense of empowerment, as individuals actively shape how they are perceived.

Roulin and Levashina (2016) highlight how individuals in these digital spaces can create multi-faceted personas that transcend traditional identity boundaries. The ability to adopt different roles and explore various aspects of one's personality can lead to a more empowered sense of self. Their work suggests that online environments enable individuals to move beyond fixed offline identities, fostering a greater sense of agency in constructing their online personas. Moreno and Uhls (2019) focus on the role of social networking sites in identity development among adolescents. They argue that online platforms offer adolescents a space to explore and experiment with different aspects of their identity, contributing to the development of a more empowered and multifaceted sense of self.

In light of the existing literature, the present study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse by focusing on the intersection of online identity construction and empowerment, particularly within. While prior research has explored various aspects of online self-presentation, gender identity negotiation, and digital empowerment, there remains a critical gap in understanding how these dynamics unfold within the specific socio-cultural environment of Balochistan.

Methodology

In this study, we aim to address two primary research problems:

- 1. How do young women (aged between 18 to 24) use social media platforms to express their gender identities?
- 2. In what ways do these women utilize social media as a means to challenge and confront traditional gender expectations and practices?

To achieve these objectives, we have adopted an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method Design (ESMMD) as our research framework, as outlined by Creswell ("Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research" 2023). Our study unfolds in two distinct phases. Initially, we conducted a quantitative survey involving 110 university students. This quantitative phase provided us with a general understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Subsequently, we proceeded to the qualitative phase, involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with a subgroup of 15 students. Through this qualitative phase, we aimed to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the participants' perspectives (Fetters, Curry, and Creswell 2013).

In mixed-methods research, it is imperative to establish clarity regarding the prioritization and integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Draucker et al. 2020). In our study, while the quantitative research was conducted in the initial phase, we assign priority to the findings derived from the qualitative research. This choice aligns with the central purpose of our study, which is to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender self-representation on social media, a dimension that is best examined through personal narratives and qualitative insights.

The mixed-method approach is adopted for this study as it combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively investigate how young Balochi women utilize social media for self-representation and empowerment. Quantitative data offers a broad understanding of the phenomenon, while qualitative insights provide a deeper exploration of participants' experiences (Merriam and Grenier 2019).

Firstly, we formulated qualitative data collection protocols based on the insights gathered from the quantitative phase. This included the development of interview questions and the selection of interviewees, all of which were finalized based on the results of the quantitative phase. Subsequently, in the interpretation phase, we synthesized the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes.

The study utilizes a non-probability sampling approach (Wolf et al. 2016). The primary objective was not to draw broad generalizations but rather to dig deep into online self-representation among young women at a public sector university. Our research revealed that all participants engage in some form of self-representation through social media. To reflect the characteristics of the actual university population, we employed quota sampling (K. Yang and Banamah 2014), taking into account age, gender and department. Our data collection efforts were centered on a single public sector university in Balochistan, from which we gathered responses from 110 students.

The survey focused on demographic, which gathered information related to the participants' age and department. The second element focused upon was social media usage, where the researcher mainly investigated the time the participants spent on social media, their preferred social media platforms, and their reason for using that specific social media platform. The third section investigated how respondents utilized the affordances of social media to manage their

impressions. It examined their tendencies to curate an online persona, manage their self-presentation, and project unique facets of their identity through social media. The final section of the survey focused on the theme of gender empowerment. It explored how social media served as a space for young women to challenge conventional gender roles within a traditionally conservative society through online performative practices.

A total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted from young female students enrolled in a public sector university in Balochistan. These interviews dig deep into participants' online self-representations. The interview themes were drawn from the quantitative data analysis and mainly focused upon impression management, the adoption of online personas through self-editing, and the exploration of gender empowerment. The selection of participants was purposive, where the researcher specifically selected the social media users who utilize their real names in their online profiles.

Discussion

The key findings from the survey questions focusing on social media use among young Balochi women reveal some intriguing insights into the participants' platform preferences and how these choices might be connected to the expression of their gender identities and the challenge of traditional gender expectations.

The results suggest Facebook as the most preferred social media platform among young Balochi women, with a substantial 65.2% of our participants choosing Facebook as their primary platform. This finding aligns with the global trend of Facebook being a widely utilized platform, especially among younger demographics. Instagram emerged as the second most favored platform, with 23.6% of respondents opting for it. Instagram's visual nature and focus on imagery and storytelling could be seen as an appealing factor for young women looking to express their gender identities. Its emphasis on visual content allows users to curate and share images that reflect their desired self-representation. Twitter emerged as the least preferred platform among the surveyed participants. This preference was primarily due to Twitter's distinct communication style, characterized by brevity and rapid information dissemination. Young Balochi women may find other platforms more conducive to expressing their gender identities in a more visual and narrative manner.

These platform preferences also influence the ways in which these women challenge traditional gender expectations and practices. Facebook's broad reach offer opportunities for these young women to share perspectives and engage in conversations with a more diverse audience, Instagram's focus on visual representation also empower them to challenge stereotypes through posting their images. This act of self-expression can be considered a departure from the traditional Balochi culture, where women typically adhere to modesty and are not expected to publicly display their appearances.

Impression management

The survey findings indicate that female respondents prioritize projecting a sense of femininity to adhere to the Balochi cultural norms in order to avoid judgement and backlash from their families, especially when sharing something with a larger audience, for example, while sharing a Facebook post. Whether their intention is to come across as fun, intelligent, or imaginative, women tend to center their social media presence on the portrayal of femininity. This portrayal revolves around conventional gender markers like clothing choices, behavior and overall impression.

Some of the female participants in our study mentioned that when they express their femininity on social media, they feel like they are conforming to what society expects from them in terms of traditional gender roles. For example, one of the participants aged 20 explained that despite social media giving them a platform to showcase themselves, it hasn't really changed the deep-rooted cultural norms in their conservative society. In her view, women are still expected to behave in ways that align with these traditional expectations as per the Balochi culture, and social media hasn't altered that aspect of their lives.

One participant, aged 22, shared her experience of managing the privacy settings on her Facebook account due to a past incident. She explained that she had encountered a negative reaction from a family member, her uncle, when she posted about women's issues openly on her profile. In her post, she discussed the challenges faced by women burdened with household responsibilities, particularly those married at an early age, and shared her opinion on delaying marriage until after achieving a certain age or completing education. This situation took an unexpected turn when her uncle read her post and subsequently visited her home to express his discontent. He conveyed to her father his

concerns about her increasingly vocal and modern stance, which included questioning traditional norms. During this encounter, her uncle even labeled her as a "rebel" for openly addressing such issues on Facebook. As a result of this incident, she now takes precautions to restrict the visibility of her posts by removing family members and extended family when she intends to share her opinions on similar topics. This adjustment in her privacy settings serves as a protective measure to maintain a balance between her desire to express her views and the potential repercussions within her familial and cultural context.

The survey findings reveal that an overwhelming majority, 96.4% of respondents, maintain private accounts on social media, accessible only to people they consider as "friends." This "friends" category encompasses a wide range of individuals, including close friends, acquaintances, colleagues, influencers, family members, and even parents.

One participant aged 25 shared that the way she presents herself online is influenced by who she allows into her social media circle. She explained, "When I have my close friends on a specific profile, I feel comfortable being my true self. However, when my parents or other family members are part of that group, I find myself needing to adjust how I communicate." In simpler terms, her online behavior varies based on who is in her social media circle, with her being more authentic when it's just her close friends and making certain adjustments when her family members are part of her online audience.

Another participant, aged, 19, shared that she restricts access to her Instagram profile, allowing only her close friends to view it. She finds a sense of freedom in expressing herself on this platform, in ways that might not be possible in the offline world. She explained, "I can be totally myself online, just like boys are in the offline world. I can talk about things that matter to me and the way I want to and it's considered acceptable. I can't do these things offline because I can't control who might see me."

Many interviewees shared a similar sentiment about the power to block or unfriend people who they find disagreeable. A participant aged 21 expressed, "I have the ability to block people who bother me, and that's truly liberating. It's something you can't easily do in the real world." In simpler terms, these individuals feel empowered online because they can be themselves without worrying about judgment or harassment, and they have the control to remove negative connections from their online spaces. Just like the technical affordance on social

networking sites (SNSs) empower individuals, the cultural context from which an individual belongs to also play a crucial role in doing so.

When it comes to expressing gender identity on SNSs, people benefit from various technical features, like choosing who gets to see their content, improving how they present themselves online, and connecting with like-minded communities. However, it's crucial to recognize that these gender-based self-representations still take place within societies where male-dominated structures exist. In simpler terms, even though SNSs provide tools for self-expression and connection, they don't change the underlying influence of traditional gender roles and power dynamics. As highlighted by (Trepte 2021), the influence and authority granted by social media are neither entirely controlled by traditional gender expectations or patriarchal mindset nor completely independent of it. This phenomenon, known as the disinhibition effect, has liberated the way gender is represented and expressed online by allowing individuals to be more open and expressive about their gender identities. However, it has also liberated social judgment as people are subject to increased scrutiny and criticism in the online sphere. However, the judgement and criticism that individuals face online are not of the same intensity or doesn't have the same impact as the criticism and backlash that they experience in the offline world.

Despite the less intensity of judgement, the female participant utilize impression management technique as highlighted by Goffman, by keeping their backstage (limited/restricted audience) and frontstage (public or profile shared with the entire friend list). So while the technical affordances were found to be empowering for these young women restricted by traditions and culture, it doesn't completely liberate them from the challenges and limitations they experience in their offline world, primarily due to their gender.

Self-presentation

The survey results show that almost 78% young women tend to alter or edit their self while posting online, especially on Facebook, which has more familial audience as compared to Instagram where they limit their followers. About 40% of the participants confessed being a passive member on Facebook due to its more public nature and having familiar audience. The remaining participants shared that they review their posts before and even after posting and even delete their posts if

they realize that their posts gave an impression they don't want to give off.

A 23-year-old participant shares that it's because of the tools of social media that she started expressing her opinions on injustices done to women in general and specifically the limitations that Balochi women go through in their real lives. She elaborated that since the social media features allow her to change, delete or edit her posts, she finds it liberating and safe that she can always go back and fix things as per the impressions she wants to give off. Another 18-year participant reported utilizing the feature of restricting the audience quite frequently as she started writing about forced marriages of women in her culture, especially after three of her cousins were married off after school and were not allowed to pursue higher education. Moreover, she also shared that she edits the self and utilize self-presentation tactics to portray the self that she wants, so if she receives negative comments, she tends to delete her post later on.

In contrast to in-person interactions where one's public persona is immediately on display upon entering a social setting, online interactions predominantly involve backstage or behind-the-scenes preparations. The physical separation between individuals on the online platforms provide social media users the time to carefully construct and refine their self-presentation. Along with that, social media platforms consist of tools such as filters, emoji's, and stickers that participants can utilize for creating a desired persona, but most importantly, these platforms offer users the luxury of time and distance to curate the image they wish to project. In situations where the initial impression they convey falls short of their desired image, they can easily rectify it. A 21-year old participant shared her perspective about the freedom she enjoys on social media: As aptly "Social media empowers me to express myself freely because, even if the worse happens, I can always edit or delete my post."

Social media platforms, like Facebook, allow users to temporarily pause their accounts, giving them the freedom to take a break and come back when they want. One person who started making videos about a year ago shared her experience when she began sharing her videos on Facebook. She said, "I felt really sad and tired because I got a lot of mean comments on my posts. People called me names like 'behaya (shameless),' 'beizzati (dishonored),' and 'baghi (rebel)' when I shared the links to my videos on Facebook. These hurtful comments really demotivated and disheartened me, so I decided to take a break

from Facebook for two months. During that time, I also stopped making videos for a while. But something important happened. I started getting positive comments on my YouTube videos, especially from women who liked and felt inspired by my content. They asked me to make more videos, especially about lifestyle stuff. This motivated me, so I went back to making YouTube videos. I still stayed away from Facebook and focused all my energy on creating videos that my viewers loved. After some time, I started feeling better about myself. I had taken a break from all the negativity and was really focused on what I wanted to do. When I came back to Facebook, I didn't let mean comments bother me as much. I had become stronger and less affected by them."

In Balochistan, women often face serious challenges when they do things that go against what's expected of them because of their gender. In the example mentioned above, it's not common for Balochi women to vlog or share their life with public through vlogging or making videos for public. Balochistan has strict rules about what women can and cannot do. When women break these rules, they can face a lot of criticism and resistance. This part of the story shows how women in Balochistan deal with these additional challenges when they pursue things that challenge traditional gender expectations. The technical affordance of social media platforms, such as the option to temporarily deactivate one's account on Facebook, plays a significant role in empowering women, particularly in socio-cultural contexts like Balochistan. This feature offers women a valuable sense of control over their online presence and interactions. In many societies with traditional gender norms and restrictions, women experience heightened scrutiny and backlash for their online activities. The ability to pause their accounts grants them the power to step back from potentially harmful interactions and protect their mental and emotional well-being.

Moreover, this deactivation feature provides women with a muchneeded break from the negativity they may encounter online. When women challenge established gender expectations, they are sometimes met with hurtful comments and criticism. Taking a break allows them to distance themselves from these hurtful remarks, and offer them the space and time to heal, regroup, and rebuild their confidence.

Empowerment

In the context of Balochistan, where cultural expectations often restrict women's interactions and expressions, social media serves as a powerful tool for empowerment. Most participants shared that social media offers a unique space to highlight aspects of their identity that usually they don't express during face-to-face encounters. For instance, a 24-year old shared her experience of growing up in a conservative environment characterized by strict gender segregation. In her words, "I was raised in a conservative family, where gender segregation was the norm. There were limited opportunities to interact with boys outside of my immediate family circle. Social media opened up the world for me by allowing me to connect with boys and form new friendships, even with people from different countries which changed my perspective and allow me to grow as an individual by learning from about the world and different people that exist outside my own culture."

However, despite the freedom they experience on the social media platform, most participants were of the opinion that patriarchy exist even within the online world, and social judgment is prevalent both online and offline. A 19-year old participant pointed out that "due to 24/7 access and ease of connectivity social media can often exacerbate social judgement. I have noticed that in the offline/real world, sometimes people hesitate in passing negative comments especially when you show your contempt through your body language, they may even stop giving their opinion; however, people do not hesitate to write whatever they want on social media, because of which negative comments and judgement becomes unavoidable at times."

However, a few participants shared their perspective that for them judgement on social media is less damaging and significant as anyone can write whatever they want to, even if they don't know them personally; however, criticism in the real world mostly comes from people they know and that's more demotivating.

Moreover, the participants also highlight the importance of online community support. In situations where they face hostility or cyberbullying, they find solace in the collective support of their online communities. A participant shared: "when someone posts negative comments on her posts, she feels extremely liberated when her friends step in to defend her, which is unlikely in the real world. She also shared that since everything is on record on social media, it empowers her to think that in case of bullying, she can easily report someone's

profile, and would not have to face the repercussions that she usually would in the offline world."

Conclusion

This study examined how young Balochi women between the ages of 18 to 24 utilize social media platforms to express their gender identities and challenge traditional gender expectations. The findings shed light on several key aspects of this phenomenon. The results indicate impression management constituting a major part in the self-presentation of the participants. Balochi women consciously curate their online personas, primarily focusing on projecting a sense of femininity to conform to cultural norms and avoid judgment from their families and society.

Despite the empowerment that social media offers, participants still find themselves bound by traditional gender roles and power dynamics within their offline world. The strategic division of their online selves, between restricted and public audiences, allow them to deal with these challenges and maintain a balance between self-expression and cultural expectations.

Self-presentation on social media platforms, characterized by the freedom to edit, delete, and refine one's online presence, empowers young Balochi women to express their views on issues like gender inequality and societal limitations. The technical affordances of social media provide them with a sense of control over their online interactions and protect their mental and emotional well-being, especially when faced with negative comments and criticism. However, it is essential to recognize that these online expressions coexist with the influence of offline gender dynamics. Social media empowers these women, but it does not entirely liberate them from the challenges and limitations imposed by their conservative culture.

Considering the widespread adoption and extensive use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) among young Balochi women, future research must focus on investigating the impact of these social media platforms on overall wellbeing and real lives of Balochi women. SNSs play a significant role in facilitating social interactions and shaping gender identities. By examining the activities of youth on SNSs, particularly in spaces that allow for expressions beyond the constraints of their cultural norms, researchers can uncover alternative narratives that challenge the prevailing stereotypes associated with young women in Balochistan.

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The role of public service announcements in creating media literacy

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Abstract: Media literacy is an essential communication tool that helps develop individuals' ability to evaluate and interpret media content consciously and analyze it critically. In today's digital age, the dissemination of media literacy education not only protects individuals from misleading or manipulative content but also improves their ability to access correct information. Public service announcements (PSAs) are considered a vital tool for creating media literacy by enhancing social awareness, raising consciousness, and educating the public, thanks to their potential to reach large masses. This study was conducted to examine the importance of PSAs in creating media literacy. The study sample comprised a PSA series titled 'Nuclear Family' prepared by the Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council. The study was conducted using content analysis, which is a qualitative research method. The data were analyzed using the MAXQDA 2024 qualitative data analysis program. The results of the study highlighted the use of PSAs as an effective tool in raising media literacy awareness. Especially, the issue of information reliability was at the forefront in terms of combating disinformation. The results conformed to the international and national findings on media literacy and PSAs, revealing that they play an important role in media literacy. The study systematically examined the relationship between media literacy and PSAs, thus contributing to the available findings and offering suggestions for increasing social awareness.

Keywords: media literacy, public service announcements, communication, media, awareness, information

Introduction

Rapid developments in communication technologies digitalization process have radically transformed individuals'

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interactions with the media. The increase in information pollution and disinformation emphasizes the importance of the concept of media literacy. Media plays a vital role in shaping how individuals access information and influence cultural production processes in today's societies. Media literacy includes the skills of analyzing, interpreting, and critically evaluating information as well as accessing information. Public service announcements (PSAs) are considered essential for acquiring communication tools these skills. **PSAs** communication tools that enhance social awareness. consciousness, and include messages for the public welfare. This study was conducted to examine the importance of public PSAs in creating media literacy. The main aim was to systematically analyze the relationship between media literacy and PSAs through a series of PSAs titled 'Nuclear Family' produced by the Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK). The unique value of the study lies in its holistic and interdisciplinary approach to the relationship between media literacy and PSAs. The findings may contribute to the available findings by examining the role of PSAs in media literacy education, especially within the Turkish context. It was conducted using content analysis, a qualitative research method, aiming to contribute to the theoretical and practical knowledge of media literacy and PSAs.

Literature review

Public service announcements

In the most general terms, PSAs can be defined as messages that aim to raise public awareness. PSAs are considered an effective communication tool in today's world of rapid technological development and increasing media consumption for promoting social goals to large masses (Martins 2024). PSAs are essential in acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies related to media literacy. They contain advice, recommendations, and warning messages, contributing to increasing the level of knowledge and awareness of society (Gürel et al. 2024).

PSAs are essentially commercials with messages for public welfare (Bator & Cialdini 2000). Their contents are prepared by public institutions, nongovernmental organizations, foundations, and associations, reach large masses, and are effective in creating social awareness thanks to their structures that appeal to visual and auditory senses (Walther et al. 2010; Akova 2017). Hence, they serve as an

informative and educational tool while raising the awareness of individuals about a particular issue (Gazi & Çakı 2019).

PSAs are designed as short and concise messages; they are broadcast through various communication channels and include specific strategic objectives (Bigsby et al. 2013; Corrigan et al. 2015). They address the current problems of society and thus help individuals avoid certain behaviors and habits that are likely to harm themselves, their environment, and others. PSAs can be delivered to the target audience through channels such as television, radio, print media, billboards, Internet, and digital platforms (Fishbein et al. 2002; Fuhrel-Forbis et al. 2009; Werb et al. 2011).

Bilgiç (2016) argues that PSAs are short-term educational, informative films, audio messages, and sub-tapes created by public institutions and nongovernmental organizations. Their purpose was to foster positive changes in thoughts and behaviors or to promote a new law. In other words, they are visual, audio, and textual messages on issues of interest to society prepared for broadcasting in mass media and approved by passing through control mechanisms (Akova 2017; Gazi & Çakı 2019). In this sense, PSAs aim to increase awareness among individuals and raise the general level of consciousness in society (Çiftçi & Agocuk 2021).

PSAs have been created over time to ensure that individuals exhibit desired behavioral changes or increase their level of social awareness (Werb et al. 2011). They can attract the attention of the target audience, shape their attitudes, and create positive social change owing to their characteristics such as not having a commercial purpose, being short-term, and having an emotional impact (Martins 2024). PSAs are usually prepared for a short period. They focus on raising awareness of a certain issue, influencing individuals' attitudes, and creating long-term behavioral changes. Therefore, it can be argued that PSAs are prepared per the established principles based on public interest (Pernisco 2020; Zaitseva et al. 2020).

Media literacy

Media literacy is one of the types of contemporary literacy that includes individuals' skills to use the media (Alvermann & Hagood 2000). Media literacy is an interdisciplinary study that extensively uses methods and tools from various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, politics, culture, sex, art, and aesthetics (Koltay 2011).

This concept refers to the process of analyzing and interpreting the messages produced by the media in the context of the current conditions (Chauvin 2003; Livingstone 2004). In other words, it is a multidimensional process involving the coding, interpretation, analysis, and interpretation and conveyance of symbols through the media (Brown 1998; Messaris 1998).

Potter (2016) points out that media literacy comprises a set of skills that allow individuals to evaluate media content consciously and is used as a tool to manage media influences. Therefore, media literacy should not be considered solely as a concept related to media. It is directly related to the development of democracy, cultural participation, and effective citizenship (Christ & Potter 1998).

Consequent to all the changes and transformations, the media has shifted from being an element impacting culture to being directly at the center of cultural production processes and has become culture itself (Jols & Thoman 2008). In this context, media literacy should be considered not as a mechanism that protects individuals from the impacts of media but as the ability to adapt to the changing and developing media environment, make critical analyses, and consume the media consciously (Potter 2021).

Media literacy helps individuals establish a critical and autonomous relationship with the media. Within this scope, it enables them to develop the competence to decode, evaluate, analyze, and reproduce content from printed and electronic media (Aufderheide 1992).

As a comprehensive discipline not limited to the analysis of traditional media, popular culture, and digital media, the main objectives of media literacy are to allow individuals to acquire the habit of questioning, improve their forms of expression, acquire critical thinking skills, communicate effectively, and act as active citizens (Sezer 2019). Media literacy helps create and develop a critical awareness of the form, content, and context of media messages, encourages them to access accurate information, and critically evaluates media content (Koltay 2011; Hobbs 2016).

Methodology

Aim, subject, and questions of the study

Despite the widespread use of PSAs, academic studies in this field are scarce, and the sources examining the relationship between media literacy and PSAs are limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the role and importance of PSAs in creating media literacy.

The transformation in information and communication technologies has made media literacy one of the basic requirements of the contemporary world (Mutlu 2004; Hobbs 2016). On the contrary, PSAs gain importance as informative content designed for social issues and prioritizing social benefit (Kamerer 2012; Potter 2021).

The study sought to address the following questions:

- Which media literacy themes do the PSAs include?
- What are the most emphasized concepts regarding media literacy in PSAs?

Research design and sample

The study was conducted using a qualitative research method that allowed in-depth analysis of events and situations. Case analysis, which enables detailed analysis of the subject under study within its own boundaries, was preferred as the research design (Mitchell 2008; Punch 2020).

The samples were selected using the purposive sampling method, which enables the identification and selection of cases with a diversity of information. Accordingly, the five-episode PSA/cartoon series titled 'Nuclear Family' on RTÜK's website 'medyaokuryazarligi.gov.tr' was selected as the study sample.

Data collection and analysis

The research data were collected in February 2025 and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This analysis was conducted by identifying appropriate categories and units of analysis that reflected the nature of the analyzed data and the purpose of the study (Cohen et al. 2020). MAXQDA 2024 qualitative data analysis program was used for analyzing the data coded according to the themes and categories created by using various scales developed by Erişti and Erdem (2017), Güdekli et al. (2022), and Ulu Aslan and Baş (2022). In this context, the data were coded and modeled under the media literacy theme.

Results

The media literacy theme was developed by analyzing the data obtained from PSAs based on the research questions with the aim of understanding the media literacy themes of the study. The model for the categories and codes forming the media literacy theme is presented in Figure 1.

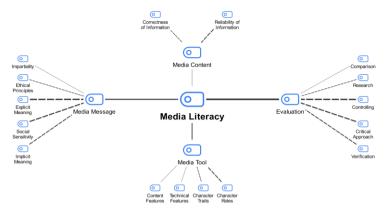


Figure 1: Media Literacy Theme

As shown in Figure 1, the theme of media literacy was divided into four different categories: media content, media message, media tool, and evaluation.

Based on the PSAs analyzed, both the information itself and its source were scrutinized within the media content category. The code reliability of information within this category was relatively more prominent. Messages related to social sensitivity, mostly with explicit meaning, were frequently repeated in the media message category. In another category, media tool, the prominence of character roles was more noticeable. This was especially associated with the fact that PSAs were shaped around the family theme. Evaluation was the most intensively used category, referring to the processing, reviewing, and comprehending the available data. The controlling and critical approach codes were used more frequently than others.

The frequency density of the four different categories that formed the media literacy theme as a result of the coding is presented in Figure 2.

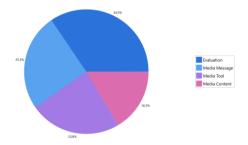


Figure 2: Intensity of the Categories Forming the Media Literacy Theme

Media content had the lowest rate (16.5%) among the categories. This was followed by media tool (23.8%) and media messages (25.3%). The evaluation was the category with the highest rate (34.5%). The results showed that all four categories were important. However, an evaluation was made based on the messages given more intensively in PSAs. The issues aimed at raising societal awareness focused more on problem-solving and answering the question 'How?'

The coding frequencies of the media content category with the lowest intensity of the media literacy theme are presented as follows:

Code	Coding Frequency (f)	Coding (%)	
Reliability of Information	24	55.81	
Correctness of			
Information	19	44.19	
Total	43	100	

Media Content Category

The coding ratio of the correctness of information code (f = 19) in the media content category was 44.19%. The reliability of information (f = 24) had a higher coding ratio (55.81%). Attention was also drawn to the accuracy of information in PSAs, but the reliability of information was emphasized more.

The coding densities of the media tool category generated based on the data obtained from PSAs are presented in Figure 3.

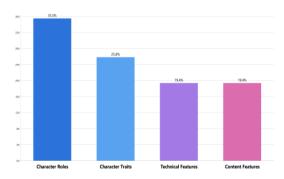


Figure 3: Media Tool Category

In the media tool category, the character roles code was used more frequently than the others (35.5%). The code character traits ranked second (25.8%). The technical features and content features codes with

the lowest ratios had the same ratio of 19.4%. It was clear that the character roles were displayed more dominantly. The role distributions, such as mother, father, sister, and brother, were made clear, especially in the sample in which the family theme was emphasized. The coding densities of the media message category, which had the second-highest coding frequency, are shown in Figure 4.

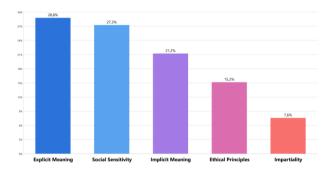


Figure 4: Media Message Category

The most frequently used code in the media message category was explicit meaning with a ratio of 28.8%. Social sensitivity ranked second (27.3%) with a small difference, followed by implicit meaning (21.2%), ethical principles (15.2%), and impartiality (7.6%). Explicit meaning and social sensitivity codes were frequently emphasized with close ratios. The results from the sample revealed that the conveyed message was clearly emphasized and addressed socially essential issues.

The coding data of the evaluation category, which had the highest coding frequency in the media literacy theme, are presented in Figure 5.

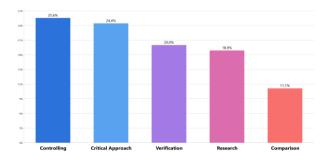


Figure 5: Evaluation Category

The most frequently used code was controlling (25.6%) in the evaluation category. Other codes were critical approach (24.4%), verification (20.0%), and research (18.9%). The comparison code (16.1%) had the lowest distribution ratio. An extremely small difference was observed between the controlling and critical approach codes and the verification and research codes. Accordingly, the controlling code was most intensely emphasized in the PSAs identified within the sample. However, it was understood that a critical approach was displayed with a questioning attitude.

Discussion

Media literacy has gained importance as a basic skill that allows individuals to critically evaluate media content in the digital age. Nowadays, disinformation is widespread, and PSAs stand out as effective tools in developing media literacy thanks to their ability to access large audiences.

PSAs are communication tools used to enhance social awareness and create behavioral change. They range from traditional media to digital platforms, contribute to raising public awareness in areas such as health, environment, education, and social justice, and encourage a more conscious evaluation of media content.

This study revealed the multidimensional structure of the relationship between media literacy and PSAs through qualitative content analysis of RTÜK's 'Nuclear Family' PSA series. The data analysis was conducted using the MAXQDA 2024 program.

Based on the analyses of the results, the role and importance of PSAs in the development of media literacy under the media literacy theme have emerged. The study provided important clues on how the media literacy needs of the digital age can be addressed through PSAs. In addition, the two research questions, which were the starting point of the study, were answered. Hence, the study results aligned with those in the literature.

The findings related to the first question of the study, 'Which themes do PSAs contain about media literacy?' revealed that media literacy in PSAs was structured around four main categories: evaluation (34.5%), media message (25.3%), media tool (23.8%), and media content (16.5%). This distribution indicated that PSAs particularly emphasized the evaluation and media message dimensions of media literacy. The emphasis on the reliability and accuracy of information in PSAs was vital in conveying the basic components of

media literacy. In particular, the evaluation category had the highest intensity with a rate of 34.5%, indicating that PSAs adopted an approach to develop critical thinking and analytical evaluation skills.

For the other question of the study, 'What are the most emphasized concepts regarding media literacy in PSAs?', the codes of controlling (25.6%) and critical approach (24.4%) in the evaluation category and clear meaning (28.8%) in the media message category were found to have the highest ratios. The analysis results for this question also indicated that the concepts of information reliability, clear meaning, character roles, and controlling came to the fore. In particular, the fact that 55.81% emphasized the reliability of information was considered a significant finding in terms of combating disinformation in today's digital age. PSAs particularly focused on the developing critical thinking and control mechanisms in raising media literacy awareness. The results within the media literacy theme indicated that PSAs were concentrated in the categories of evaluation and media message. Especially, controlling, critical approach, and clear meaning codes were prominent, highlighting the importance of PSAs as an effective tool in creating media literacy awareness. The emphasis on the reliability and accuracy of information in PSAs was significant in conveying the basic components of media literacy.

Conclusion

This study revealed that PSAs could be used as an essential tool for developing media literacy. It showed that using PSAs effectively in media literacy education might help increase social awareness and develop media literacy skills. In addition, the study revealed that PSAs adopted an approach supporting critical thinking skills and emphasizing information reliability in media literacy development. The results highlighted that PSAs could be used as an essential tool in media literacy education.

The study results indicated the role of PSAs in developing media literacy. Also, the impact of PSAs in raising social awareness was analyzed in detail.

Future studies should examine the relationship between media literacy and PSAs through various target audiences and media channels. In particular, investigating the effect of PSAs broadcasted on digital media platforms on media literacy may be of significance. In addition, the role of PSAs in developing media literacy skills should be explored through experimental studies, and their long-term effects

should be examined. Finally, a comparative analysis of the relationship between media literacy and PSAs across varying cultural contexts can offer valuable theoretical and practical contributions to the field.

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Predicting the impact of social media addiction on organizational alienation

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to determine the impact of social media addiction on organizational alienation. The study utilizes primary data sources within the scope of quantitative research analysis methods. The data collection technique involved using online survey forms sent to participants. A snowball sampling method was preferred for distributing the survey forms. The survey included two scales for measurement purposes. This study is quantitative and empirical in nature. The research findings indicate that social media usage has a significant effect on employees' feelings of alienation in the workplace. Limitations of the study include the inclusion of participants from only one sector, which may restrict the generalizability of the relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a specific time frame and within a specific city's healthcare institution; different results may be obtained in studies conducted in different time frames or geographical regions. By examining the relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation, the study aims to contribute to the enhancement of management strategies for businesses. Therefore, the findings of the research will be valuable and pioneering both academically and practically.

Keywords: social media addiction, organizational alienation, healthcare institutions

Introduction

Advancements in computer and internet technologies have provided people with an interactive new media platform. On this platform,

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called social media, people spend more and more time each day to meet their daily needs (Vural & Bat 2010). In recent years, social media has been recognized as one of the primary means of communication. These platforms have become one of the most significant applications of the internet by transferring the impact of face-to-face communication into the virtual environment (Tekin 2019). For some people, social media serves as an escape from social life and a place to be alone, while for others, it is a refuge where they seek to meet more people and gain approval (Tektaş 2014).

As with any emerging technology, social media spreads throughout society with both its positive and negative aspects. Although social media has many positive effects on individuals, various negative issues have also emerged over time. One of these negative issues is social media addiction, which continues to increase daily (Ünlü 2018).

The concept of "alienation," which became significant in the literature with the Industrial Revolution, refers to individuals distancing themselves from society and experiencing isolation. This situation can lead individuals to harm both themselves and society. In organizations. individuals lonely, powerless, who feel meaningless, experience organizational alienation. This can result in negative consequences both in their personal and professional lives. Individuals who feel unhappy, isolated, and perceive life as meaningless may struggle to achieve their professional goals, leading to decreased productivity (Tüfekçi 2022). Employees feeling alienated in the workplace can be a significant cost for both themselves and their employers. Therefore, understanding the causes and consequences of organizational alienation and developing various strategies to address this issue is crucial.

The healthcare sector has a unique working environment characterized by high responsibility, intense stress, and long working hours. This situation may make employees more susceptible to feelings of alienation. Additionally, healthcare professionals interact directly with patients and their families, which means that social media use may have a greater impact on workplace performance.

This study aims to determine the effect of social media addiction on organizational alienation among employees in a healthcare institution in Turkey using a survey method.

Literature review

Social media addiction

The term social media, combined with the word "social," refers to a concept where people interact and form communities. There are various definitions of social media. According to Sayımer, social networks, where users share information, experiences, and various types of data, are considered within the scope of social media (Sayımer 2008, 123). Social media is a widespread platform where individuals come together to share thoughts, ideas, and information. The concept of social media allows people to reach others, establish connections, build relationships and trust, and maintain a presence when promoting products on this platform (Safko 2012, 41). Ryan (2014, 201) defines social media as a broad term encompassing web-based software and services that enable people to exchange ideas, engage in discussions, communicate, and socially interact on online platforms. This interaction can occur in the form of text, audio, images, video, and other formats.

Social media is described as a virtual network where individuals share their personal opinions, thoughts, photos, and videos on multiple platforms, making their shared data accessible to other users while enabling fast interpersonal communication and interaction (Söner & Yılmaz 2018, 63). Erkayhan (2013, 17) defines social media as a platform that allows users to follow content created by other users. This structure encourages users to create public or partially public profiles visible to others. Although definitions of social media may vary, it is generally regarded as a user-centered and interactive structure that has brought fundamental changes to communication processes.

Additionally, the social media network is defined as a powerful platform that enables people to stay informed about each other more quickly, interact faster, and share content through the internet. Social media networks provide an environment where users can share, comment on, and like photos, videos, texts, and other content. Examples of popular social media networks include Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These platforms allow users to establish personal and professional communication, share information and ideas, and interact with other users (Yıldız 2019).

The concept of addiction was first defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1964. In the literature, addiction generally appears in two forms: substance addiction, which involves dependence

on a particular substance, and behavioral addiction, which is based on certain habits or behaviors (Turan 2015). According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK), the term "dependent" refers to someone or something that is subject to the will, power, or assistance of another, lacking freedom or autonomy, and being excessively attached to a person or thing in a material or spiritual sense. "Addiction" is described as "the state of being dependent or subordinate." Ögel (2001, 78) defines addiction as an individual's excessive craving for a harmful substance, the inability to separate from it by their own will, and the excessive amount of time spent obtaining it.

Social media addiction is a condition in which an individual continuously uses or checks social media channels or applications excessively. This addiction can negatively impact a person's daily life or lead to a loss of control over their social media usage. If a social media user spends more time on social media platforms than intended, struggles to fulfill their daily responsibilities, becomes fixated on it, and experiences an increasing loss of time daily, this behavior is referred to as social media addiction (Otu 2015). Social media addiction is a psychological issue that affects an individual's sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical well-being, takes up a significant portion of their daily life, and causes repetitive problems (Tutgun Ünal 2015).

Andreassen and colleagues (2016) define social media addiction based on characteristics such as an excessive desire to remain constantly connected, spending so much time on social networks that it negatively affects social relationships and activities, and causing interpersonal communication and mood disruptions due to excessive usage. Additionally, within the concept of media addiction, it is essential to consider whether individuals are primarily addicted to social media itself or to the content provided on social media platforms (Tutgun Ünal 2015, 77-85).

Organizational alienation

The concept of alienation is derived from the Latin word "alienatio" (Schacht 1970, 2). The term alienation was transferred into Turkish from the Persian word "yaban," meaning "desolate place, empty" (Kiraz 2011, 148). The Turkish Language Association defines this term as "the perception of human and societal activities as independent and dominant elements over these activities under certain historical conditions." The concept of alienation refers to a situation in which a

person feels excluded by others socially and culturally or perceives themselves as alienated. This condition causes discomfort and is often associated with a sense of not belonging. The individual is aware that they are not in harmony with those around them, which creates uneasiness (Hajda 1961, 758-759).

Regarding organizational alienation, various definitions can be found in the literature. These definitions may show slight variations over time due to the increase in empirical studies and the influence of contemporary developments. Gever & Schweitzer (1976) define organizational alienation as a form or element created by members or structures within organizations. Additionally, organizational alienation is explained as the presence of class divisions and bureaucracy within the organization, similar to those in society (Özler & Dirican 2014, 292). According to Blauner (1964), organizational alienation is the feeling experienced by employees when they fail to develop a sense of purpose aligned with the organization's overall objectives and operations, cannot follow existing work processes, do not feel a sense of belonging to their sector, and struggle to adapt to their jobs through personal expression (Blauner 1964, 15). Organizational alienation is described as an individual's detachment from their work, their organizational environment, and their own self (Tastan et al. 2014, 124).

Alienation is a crucial issue for organizations and their efficiency. In work environments, employees may exhibit alienation or aggression responses when they feel unable to achieve their dreams, face strict managerial attitudes, or are perceived merely as machines performing tasks. Issues such as the inability to maintain workplace order and differences in expectations between employers and employees can lead to workplace dissatisfaction. Additionally, unresolved workplace complaints, arbitrary behaviors, and feelings of hostility can further increase unrest within the organization. Such an environment can lead to stress among employees and heighten alienation between workers and the organization (Bingöl 1990, 176).

An individual continues their work within an organization based on the rules set by the workplace rather than their own desires. When they begin to perceive themselves merely as a production machine, face negative attitudes from colleagues and managers, and fail to achieve their career aspirations, they may experience organizational alienation (Şimşek et al. 2006, 575). An employee who becomes alienated from their job tends to devalue their work, exert minimal effort, and adopt

an attitude focused solely on earning financial compensation (Agarwal 1993, 723).

Research methodology

Aims and importance

This research aims to determine the impact of social media addiction on organizational alienation. By examining the relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation, the study seeks to contribute to the development of management strategies for businesses. Understanding the relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation will provide managers with the opportunity to develop new strategies to enhance employee productivity and increase job satisfaction.

Additionally, this study will help identify the negative effects that social media addiction may cause in the organizational environment and assist in taking necessary measures to mitigate or prevent these effects. Therefore, the findings of this research will be valuable and pioneering both academically and practically.

From an academic perspective, this study will contribute to the literature on social media addiction and organizational alienation, serving as a guide for future research. From a practical perspective, it will provide essential insights for improving management policies and employee relations within businesses. These insights will serve as a guide for regulating social media use in workplaces, reducing employees' social media addiction, and preventing organizational alienation.

Method

In the research, primary data sources are used within the scope of the quantitative research analysis method. The data collection technique involved utilizing an online survey form sent to participants. A snowball sampling method was preferred for the distribution of the survey forms.

For the social media addiction scale, the Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form, developed and validated by Şahin & Yağcı (2017), was used. For the organizational alienation scale, the Organizational Alienation Scale, developed and validated by Kurtulmuş et al. (2015), was utilized.

Population and sample of the study

The population of the study consists of employees working in healthcare institutions in Turkey. The sample of the study includes a total of 150 employees who work at a healthcare institution operating in Ankara and voluntarily provided data for the research.

Assumptions and limitations of the study

In the study, it is assumed that the levels of social media addiction and organizational alienation among participants may vary based on their age, gender, position, and educational background. It is also assumed that participants correctly and consistently understand the concepts of social media addiction and organizational alienation and provide sincere and genuine responses to the scale items applied in the study.

A limitation of the study is that the relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation is examined within a single sector, including only employees from one industry. Additionally, the research was conducted within a specific time frame and in a healthcare institution located in a particular city. Therefore, studies conducted in different time periods or geographical regions may yield different results.

Data collection

In the study, primary data sources are used within the scope of the quantitative research analysis method. As a primary data collection method, a survey was adopted to reach the minimum sample size among personnel units working in a healthcare institution in a specific city. In this context, employees were identified using the snowball sampling method, and survey forms were completed.

The survey consists of two sections with a total of 37 questions. The first part of the survey includes six questions aimed at identifying the demographic and status-related information of employees in the relevant units. The second part of the survey is divided into two sections, comprising a total of 31 questions related to social media addiction and organizational alienation.

The survey is structured using a 5-point Likert scale, with the response options as follows: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree. These statements were presented to participants in accordance with the 5-point Likert scale.

Scales used in the survey

In the study, the Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form, developed and validated for reliability by Şahin & Yağcı (2017), was used to measure social media addiction. During the scale development process, a literature review was conducted, and expert opinions were gathered to create an item pool. The draft form was reviewed and revised by field and language experts. As a result, a 20-item, 5-point Likert-type scale was developed. The scale includes two reverse-coded items and does not have sub-dimensions. The scale items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale as follows: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

For organizational alienation, the Organizational Alienation Scale, developed and validated for reliability by Kurtulmuş et al. (2015), was used. During the scale development process, research on student alienation and organizational alienation was examined, and expert opinions were collected to create an item pool. The items were revised based on expert feedback, and the scale was applied using a 5-point Likert-type rating system. The scale consists of a total of 11 items and does not include reverse-coded items or sub-dimensions. The scale items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, similar to the social media addiction scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

Research hypotheses

Turan (2002) emphasized in his study that excessive use of technology leads to negative consequences such as alienation, loneliness, and individualization (Turan 2002:271–281). In the study conducted by Balcı & Gölcü (2013), it was stated that spending long hours on social media could result in individuals going out less, spending less time with their friends, and experiencing social escape and alienation from society. Additionally, it was emphasized that individuals might become indifferent to events and developments occurring around them while using social media (Balcı & Gölcü 2013, 274-275).

In the research conducted by Demirel & Ünal (2011), when examining the factors that cause employees to feel alienated from their organizations, technological developments and mass media were found to play a significant role as external factors influencing organizational alienation (Ibid.). The primary objective of the study conducted by Çakırlar (2020) was to examine the impact of the frequency of cyberloafing behaviors in the healthcare sector on organizational

alienation. The findings of the study revealed that the "serious cyberloafing" sub-dimension positively influenced the levels of organizational alienation among participants (Ibid.).

In the study conducted by Karagülle & Çaycı (2014), it was stated that performing all transactions on the internet individually could negatively affect the socialization processes of individuals. Furthermore, it was emphasized that social networking sites virtually enslave individuals, turning them into asocial and alienated persons in their social circles (Ibid.). Based on these explanations;

H1: There is a significant relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation.

To test whether there is a significant difference in employees' social media addiction levels based on their demographic characteristics, hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d, H2e, and H2f have been established. Similarly, to examine whether there is a significant difference in employees' organizational alienation levels based on their demographic characteristics, hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c, H3d, H3e, and H3f have been formulated.

H2: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to demographic variables.

H2a: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to gender.

H2b: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to marital status.

H2c: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to age.

H2d: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to educational background.

H2e: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to total years of service in the profession.

H2f: Social media addiction differs statistically significantly according to employees' positions.

H3: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to demographic variables.

H3a: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to gender.

H3b: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to marital status.

H3c: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to age.

H3d: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to educational background.

*H3*e: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to total years of service in the profession.

H3f: Organizational alienation differs statistically significantly according to employees' positions.

Measurement tool

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency and reliability levels of the Social Media Addiction Scale and the Organizational Alienation Scale. The Cronbach's Alpha value ranges between 0 and 1. According to Salvucci et al. (1997, 115), if the alpha value is below 0.50, the scale is considered unreliable; if it is between 0.50 and 0.80, the scale has moderate reliability; and if it is above 0.80, the scale is considered highly reliable.

As a result of the analyses conducted on the Social Media Addiction Scale and the Organizational Alienation Scale, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient calculated for the Social Media Addiction Scale was 0.84, and for the Organizational Alienation Scale, it was 0.91. These values indicate that both scales have a high level of reliability based on internal consistency.

Analysis of data

After the successful completion of the scale implementation on the sample, the collected data were reviewed to ensure that the scale forms were correctly completed before being analyzed electronically. To scientifically interpret the data collected through the Social Media Addiction Scale and the Organizational Alienation Scale, the quantitative data were entered into the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) statistical program. The data collected in the study were analyzed using SPSS for Windows 22.0.

The normal distribution of the data was assessed using skewness, kurtosis, and standard error values. To determine whether the scores obtained from the Social Media Addiction Scale and the Organizational Alienation Scale followed a normal distribution, their skewness and kurtosis values were calculated. According to George & Mallery (2010), values within the range of ±2 are considered acceptable for normal distribution. The calculated values for both scales fell within this range, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution.

Accordingly, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships relevant to the study's objectives. To determine differences between groups in categorical variables such as gender, marital status, and position, t-tests were applied as a parametric test. Meanwhile, ANOVA tests were used to compare differences between groups for continuous variables such as age, education level, and total years of professional experience. After conducting the ANOVA test, Tukey's Post-Hoc test was performed to identify which specific groups differed significantly from each other.

Demographic characteristics of the sample

When examining the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study, it was found that 33.3% were female, while 66.7% were male. Regarding marital status, 64.7% of the participants were married, and 35.3% were single. In terms of age distribution, 16.0% of the participants were aged 18-25, 25.3% were 26-33, 29.3% were 34-41, and 29.3% were 42 years or older. Regarding educational background, 22.0% had completed primary or secondary education, 16.0% held an associate degree, 54.7% had a bachelor's degree, and 7.3% had a master's degree. Considering work experience, 32.0% had 1-5 years, 18.0% had 6-10 years, 15.3% had 11-15 years, 17.3% had 16-20 years, and 17.3% had 21 years or more of professional experience. Finally, regarding occupational position, 33.3% of the participants were managers, while 66.7% were employees.

Results

When examining the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values of the responses given to the Social Media Addiction Scale and the Organizational Alienation Scale, it is observed that the scores given to the Social Media Addiction Scale have a minimum of 1.40, a maximum of 3.75, a mean of 2.49, and a standard deviation of 0.56. Considering the obtained averages, it is understood that the participants' levels of social media addiction are low. The scores given to the Organizational Alienation Scale have a minimum of 1.00, a maximum of 4.64, a mean of 2.69, and a standard deviation of 0.80. Considering the obtained averages, it is understood that the participants' levels of organizational alienation are at a moderate level. When examining the correlation analysis results of the participants' Social Media Addiction Scale and Organizational Alienation Scale, a positive correlation (r=0.329) at the significance level of p<0.01 is

observed between social media addiction and organizational alienation. Correlation is a statistical technique used to determine the relationship between two variables, and the correlation coefficient takes values between +1 and -1. If the correlation value is positive, the variables change together in the same direction; if it is negative, they change together in opposite directions. As the correlation value approaches 1, the strength of the relationship increases (Kan 2008, 203).

When examining the significance difference results between social media addiction and organizational alienation based on the gender variable of the participants, it is observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Social Media Addiction Scale according to the gender variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores of female employees for social media addiction (2.53±0.52) and the mean scores of male employees for social media addiction (2.47±0.58) are close to each other, indicating that the social media addiction levels of female and male employees are similar. It is also observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Organizational Alienation Scale according to the gender variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores of female employees for organizational alienation (2.73±0.79) and the mean scores of male employees for organizational alienation (2.67±0.80) are close to each other, indicating that the organizational alienation levels of female and male employees are similar.

When examining the significance difference results between social media addiction and organizational alienation based on the marital status variable of the participants, it is observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Social Media Addiction Scale according to the marital status variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores of married employees for social media addiction (2.45±0.58) and the mean scores of single employees for social media addiction (2.57±0.51) are close to each other, indicating that the social media addiction levels of married and single employees are similar. It is also observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Organizational Alienation Scale according to the marital status variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores of married employees for organizational alienation (2.67±0.84) and the mean scores of single employees for organizational alienation (2.72±0.71) are close to each other, indicating that the organizational alienation levels of married and single employees are similar.

When examining the significance difference results between social media addiction and organizational alienation based on the age variable of the participants, it is observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Social Media Addiction Scale according to the age variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for social media addiction of employees aged 18-25 (2.52±0.53), employees aged 26-33 (2.60±0.60), employees aged 34-41 (2.41 \pm 0.53), and employees aged 42 and older (2.46 \pm 0.55) are close to each other, indicating that the social media addiction levels of employees in different age groups are similar. It is also observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Organizational Alienation Scale according to the age variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for organizational alienation of aged 18-25 (2.55±0.79), employees aged (2.89±0.82), employees aged 34-41 (2.60±0.79), and employees aged 42 and older (2.67 ± 0.78) are close to each other, indicating that the organizational alienation levels of employees in different age groups are similar.

When examining the significance difference results between social media addiction and organizational alienation based on the education level variable of the participants, it is observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Social Media Addiction Scale according to the education level variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for social media addiction of primary-high school graduates (2.37±0.57), associate degree graduates (2.52±0.51), bachelor's degree graduates (2.50±0.55), and postgraduate degree graduates (2.70±0.51) are close to each other, indicating that the social media addiction levels of employees with different education levels are similar. It is also observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Organizational Alienation Scale according to the education level variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for organizational alienation of primary-high school graduates (2.77±0.94), associate degree graduates (2.66±0.67), bachelor's degree graduates (2.70±0.77), and postgraduate degree graduates (2.41±0.83) are close to each other, indicating that the organizational alienation levels of employees with different education levels are similar.

When examining the significance difference results between social media addiction and organizational alienation based on the years of service variable of the participants, it is observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Social Media Addiction Scale according to the years of service variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for social media addiction of employees with 1-5 years of service (2.58±0.59), 6-10 years (2.55±0.56), 11-15 years (2.22±0.44), 16-20 years (2.41±0.40), and 21 years and above (2.58±0.65) are close to each other, indicating that the social media addiction levels of employees with different years of service are similar. It is also observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Organizational Alienation Scale according to the years of service variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for organizational alienation of employees with 1-5 years of service (2.69±0.86), 6-10 years (2.78±0.85), 11-15 years (2.47±0.74), 16-20 years (2.81±0.71), and 21 years and above (2.66±0.75) are close to each other, indicating that the organizational alienation levels of employees with different years of service are similar.

When examining the significance difference results between social media addiction and organizational alienation based on the position variable of the participants, it is observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Social Media Addiction Scale according to the position variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for social media addiction of employees in managerial positions (2.44±0.55) and employees in non-managerial positions (2.52±0.54) are close to each other, indicating that their social media addiction levels are similar. It is also observed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Organizational Alienation Scale according to the position variable of the participants (p>0.05). The mean scores for organizational alienation of employees in managerial positions (2.63±0.84) and employees in non-managerial positions (2.72±0.78) are close to each other, indicating that their organizational alienation levels are similar.

Conclusions and recommendations

Social media is an important communication tool for individuals and businesses today. Businesses can use social media to strengthen customer relationships, increase brand awareness, and closely follow market trends. However, excessive use of social media can have various negative effects on employees. Organizational alienation is one of these negative consequences.

This study aims to examine the effects of social media addiction on organizational alienation among employees working in a healthcare institution in Turkey. The research findings reveal that social media use significantly impacts employees' feelings of alienation in the workplace. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 has been accepted. It is particularly observed that social media addiction leads employees to feel alienated at work and uninterested in their jobs. Spending long hours on social media reduces face-to-face interactions among employees and weakens their commitment to the workplace. This situation negatively affects overall job satisfaction and performance. Indeed, the results align with the findings of many previous studies (Turan 2002; Balcı & Gölcü 2013; Demirel & Ünal 2011; Çakırlar 2020; Karagülle & Çaycı 2014).

Another important finding of the study is that social media addiction and organizational alienation levels do not significantly differ according to demographic factors. Variables such as gender, marital status, age, education level, total years of service in the profession, and job position do not play a determining role in employees' levels of social media addiction and organizational alienation. Therefore, H2 (H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d, H2e, H2f) and H3 (H3a, H3b, H3c, H3d, H3e, H3f) have been rejected. This finding suggests that social media addiction and organizational alienation are not limited to specific demographic groups.

The research findings indicate that businesses and employees need to manage social media use in a healthier and more responsible manner. Businesses should develop strategies regarding how social media use affects workplace performance and employee engagement. In this regard, it is important for businesses to establish comprehensive social media policies to regulate employees' social media use. These policies should limit social media use during working hours and ensure that employees remain focused on their tasks. Training and awareness programs can help employees understand the negative impacts of social media addiction on job performance and organizational alienation. These programs can encourage employees to manage their social media use more consciously and responsibly. Creating a positive work environment can also encourage employees to engage in more face-to-face interactions with their colleagues and help prevent organizational alienation.

From the employees' perspective, those experiencing issues related to social media addiction should consider seeking professional help. Social media addiction can negatively impact individuals' work lives, and receiving support can help them establish a balance in both their personal and professional lives.

In conclusion, this study provides significant findings in understanding the effects of social media addiction on organizational alienation. Social media addiction increases employees' feelings of alienation in the workplace, negatively affecting job performance. Therefore, businesses and employees must carefully manage social media use. By developing necessary strategies to reduce social media addiction and prevent organizational alienation, businesses can enhance employees' workplace engagement and satisfaction. In this context, businesses need to take an active role in understanding and minimizing the effects of social media addiction on organizational alienation.

For future research, evaluating the hypotheses examined in this study within the private sector could enhance the generalizability of the findings and contribute to understanding the effects of social media addiction on organizational alienation in different industries. Additionally, investigating other variables that may influence the relationship between social media addiction and organizational alienation could further expand and deepen the relevant literature.

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Transformative struggles: The lived experiences of probationers in the Philippines

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Abstract: Probation is a form of community-based correction; after probationers are released from jail, they face various obstacles to their personal and social lives. This study investigated the lived experiences of probationers. A qualitative-descriptive phenomenological research design was used in this study to explore the experiences, challenges, and impact of the probation programs on the quality of life of probationers. The responses were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic code analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006). Purposive sampling was used in this study as the researcher's sampling method. The study identified 10 probationers from the Province of Zamboanga del Norte who participated in an in-depth interview and focus group discussion using a researcher-made interview guide. Three themes emerged from the experiences of informants as recipients of probation: Happiness Despite Difficulties, Striving for fulfillment, Unfathomable Misery of Probationers, Besmirched Reputation, Economic Distress; All-Around Crisis, Life-Changing Techniques, and Probationer's Dedicated Heart were the three themes from addressing the challenges encountered and three from the impact of the programs to the quality of life of the informants which were the *Probationer's Extraordinary Development, Absolute Life Transformation*, and A Change Person. The findings asserted that they were victims of circumstances and needed to be part of a community-based correction by the probation program. They all have the potential to change and renew their lives. They deserve to be on probation rather than in jail, where they may be tainted by incorrigible persons deprived of liberty. Their happy stories are signs and the road to their stable recovery. The miseries of probationers however are the repercussions of their past deviant actions. The recognition of this detrimental effect can be viewed as a positive indication of recovery.

Keywords: probationer, therapeutic modality, lived experiences, quality of life

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Introduction

Probation has long been acknowledged as a crucial component of the criminal justice system, allowing individuals the opportunity to reintegrate into society while under supervised rehabilitation (Smith et al. 2021). This alternative to jail lessens prison overpopulation and offers criminals the chance to better their lives. However, the path of probationers is riddled with problems, ranging from societal shame and personal guilt to economic instability and mental misery (Jones & Taylor 2022). Despite these limitations, probation programs retain enormous potential to generate enduring good outcomes, particularly when tailored to suit probationers' individual needs and circumstances (Clark et al. 2023).

This study digs into the lived experiences of probationers to understand the nuances of their recovery journeys. By identifying the good and negative experiences, the techniques people take to manage problems, and the transforming benefits of probation programs, this research intends to create a complete picture of probation as a rehabilitative process (Garcia & Wilson 2024). The insights gathered from this study not only emphasize the personal hardships and achievements of probationers but also give useful recommendations for enhancing probation systems to enable meaningful reintegration and social acceptability (Thompson & Lee 2020). Ultimately, this research hopes to contribute to the increasing body of information on rehabilitation, underlining the role of empathy, support, and opportunity in altering the lives of probationers.

In the Philippines, community-based corrections based on RA.no.10707, an act amending presidential decree no. 968, otherwise known as the Probation Law of 1976, is one where the major goal of the government is to establish more enlightened and humane correctional systems that will promote the reformation of offenders and thereby reduce the incidence of recidivism. The confinement of all offenders in prisons and other institutions with rehabilitation programs constitutes an onerous drain on the financial resources of the country. There is a need to provide a less costly alternative to the imprisonment of offenders who are likely to respond to individualized, community-based treatment programs. Furthermore, the mission and goals of the Philippine Parole and Probation Administration include rehabilitation of probationers, parolees, and pardonees promoting criminal offender reform and minimizing recidivism, as well as give a less expensive

alternative to incarceration for first-time offenders who are likely to respond to tailored community-based treatment programs.

Moreover, the PPA sustained its mission of providing community-based treatment to all probationers but a lot of them in the southern part of Mindanao are suffering from financial problems, degradation at work, public humiliation, family and community discrimination, and others.

With this prevailing information, the researcher aimed to conduct this study to explore the life stories of probationers in Zamboanga del Norte. The goal of the study was not just limited to exploring the experiences and addressing the challenges being faced by probationers but it also included the impact of the probation programs on the quality of life of the informants.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative-descriptive phenomenological research approach to examine the experiences, obstacles, and effects of probation programs on the quality of life of probationers in Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. The phenomenological method corresponds with Alipoyo's (2022) work, highlighting the significance of documenting actual lived experiences. Cresswell (quoted in Bulatao 2023) emphasizes that this design centers on the collective experiences of a certain community.

The study employed purposive sampling, identifying ten probationers as key informants—six engaged in a focus group discussion (FGD) with the Zamboanga del Norte Parole and Probation Administration, while four were individually interviewed from the Dipolog City PPO. This approach guaranteed data reliability and the selection of qualified participants.

For data collection, a semi-structured, researcher-made questionnaire was tested before use. The interviews addressed (1) probationers' experiences, (2) problems encountered during reintegration, and (3) coping strategies within a community-based correctional environment. Ethical guidelines were adhered to, encompassing the acquisition of informed permission and the assurance of data confidentiality. Following Bailey's (2008) advice, audio recordings were transcribed to preserve accuracy.

Thematic Content Analysis, as delineated by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to evaluate data, finding principal themes through six stages: (1) familiarization, (2) initial coding, (3) theme

identification, (4) theme review, (5) theme definition, and (6) reporting. The trustworthiness of the study follows Lincoln et al.'s (2011, referenced in Alipoyo 2022) approach, assuring credibility, dependability, generalizability, and confirmability. Bracketing was utilized to reduce biases, and unclear data was elucidated with informants.

Ultimately, ethical issues encompassed secrecy, anonymity, and informed permission. Participants were provided code names, and their personal data was securely saved and eventually erased after research completion. The research adheres to the ideals of fairness and non-maleficence in handling sensitive material.

There were 364 significant statements extracted from the informants' transcripts referring directly to the research phenomena. Formulated meanings were constructed from the significant statements and were arranged into 36 cluster themes which resulted in the form of three with nine subthemes. The emergent themes and subthemes are presented as follows:

I. Positive experiences: happiness despite difficulties; striving for fulfilment

II.Negative experiences: unfathomable misery of probationers; besmirched reputation; economic distress

III.Addressing the challenges: all around crisis; life changing techniques; probationer's dedicated hearts

IV.Impact of the probation programs to the quality of life: probationer's extraordinary development; absolute life transformation; a changed person

Experiences of the informants as recipients of probation

Positive experience of the informant

Exploring the lived experiences of probationers based on interviews was my great honor to hear such an account. The informants had not previously told anyone of their incredible experience until I conducted an interview when they knew my study and were interested in narrating their experiences that remain at the bottom of their memory. I have generated two emergent themes that focused on the positive experiences of the informants:

1. Happiness despite difficulties. The first theme reflected the happiness in all aspects of a probationer. Probation was the source of joy of a probationer for which they were free to live in the society and even find a living to help the family. Informant 5 said that:

I am more comfortable when I was released, for I can handle our living and help my parents as well, so I am happier that I am released. (FGD5:SS1)

Probationers were happy spending time in the mainstream of society. While under probation, fellow probationers make them experience happiness for expressing their sincere feelings and sharing their thoughts. Informant 3 said:

I'm delighted that we have a monthly meeting for there I can express who really I am. (IDI3:SS3).

Co-probationer makes them comfy and happy, so with the family, that gives them long-lasting happiness. Happiness from a family provides the probationer with a sense of contentment and satisfaction, especially if you prioritize your family while delivering their needs. Informant 6 stated that:

For now, that I am out, I'm happy it's because I am out from jail, I help my family and other essential matters right here. (IDI4:SS16)

Unfathomable joys were the result of prioritizing a family and eventually make them a center of your life. Self-motivational happiness is when you consider your satisfaction and freed yourself from the shell where you stayed for a long time. Informant 3 said:

So, there I am feeling free to share then I can think that I'm happy every time we have a meeting. (IDI3:SS4)

Despite the struggles endured by probationers, many find moments of enjoyment and thankfulness along their path of transformation. According to Smith et al. (2021), probation programs typically give individuals with organized environments that stimulate self-reflection and personal growth, helping them to embrace life despite adversity. This is especially true for people who obtain support from their families and communities, since family connections serve as a key anchor during hard times (Johnson & Lee 2022). Furthermore, study by Brown (2023) indicates that probationers frequently rediscover basic delights via acts of service or community participation, which assist restore their feeling of purpose. For instance, involvement in vocational training or education programs gives probationers with a revitalized sense of success (Williams & Carter 2020). As underlined by Green and Taylor (2024), finding enjoyment among obstacles can

accelerate long-term behavioral improvements, allowing probationers imagine a happier future.

2. Striving for fulfilment. The second theme delves into the positive experiences of the informants in their stay as a probationer. Probation provides a comfortable life for a probationer that leads them to established and experience a better life in the community where they lived in. Informant 8 of the focused group with a smile in his face said:

So, I am grateful for the terrific programs they give to us for the benefits of the probationers so that we can't commit a crime after fully serve our probation. (FGD8:SS12)

Moreover, probation manifests an excellent opportunity for the probationer to create the best of them by wholeheartedly participating in the program. Thus, better activities produced a positive outcome. Informant 3 confidently state that:

We have our activities like drawing, and we also have a journal of what we have learned. They lecture us about life, about what's right and wrong, and showing those negative examples that we need to change. (IDI3:SS16)

With a good program, the probationer will find new hope and restore their life to where they belong when Informant 5 comfortably said:

It helped us a lot because it restores our life, so by that we notice that we already know to be patient with our co-probationer. (FGD5:SS12)

The urge to attain personal fulfilment becomes a cornerstone for many probationers, as they attempt to repair their life post-offense. Patel et al. (2022) say that this journey is generally marked by a strong desire to show their worth to society and themselves. This intrinsic drive can considerably boost the success of probation programs, as shown by Turner and Harris (2023). Furthermore, probationers actively engage in community service or restorative justice projects, finding consolation in contributing constructively to their surroundings (Lopez & Taylor 2021). According to Baker et al. (2025), such efforts not only create personal growth but also assist probationers regain trust within their communities.

Negative experience of the informant

It was with tremendous respect that I heard this narrative of probationers' life experiences, as they were based on interviews. Before I did an interview, the informants had not shared their amazing

experiences with anyone. At that point, they were aware of my study and willing to share the events that were buried deep in their memories. Three emergent themes that center on the informants' negative experiences have been produced:

1. Unfathomable Misery of Probationers. The third theme reflects the hostile experience of informants. Despite all the positive dealings experienced by them, there were unfavorable events where they encountered discrimination and mistreatment while under probation. The probationers unenthusiastically experience community rejection, wherein they are worried about their community status. Informant 1 stressed that:

The place where we are, maybe we are not fit because someone already knows you for you can't escape the fact that someone knows you especially since you are still in your area since you are not allowed to travel. You are under probation, and you can only travel if you ask permission. (IDI1:SS5)

Every ex-convict has a fear of finding a job and ends up being rejected from it. Job discrimination is the greatest fear of a probationer for which they are labeled as criminals and can't be trusted because of what they've been through, and they can no longer survive without a source of income. Informant 4 sadly stated:

Starting when I was arrested and released, things have changed. If you apply for a job, and they conduct the interview and learn that you are an ex-convict, they will place you in the storage area (IDI4:SS8)

Probationer's life was harsh because they experienced an inevitable feeling of being hurt for what the community acted towards them. It's a well-being turmoil that they poorly did and spoke horrible things. Informant 6 was scared to say:

Ah! It is inevitable to say that you are already a rapist, ah, I will keep quiet, but I'm hurt. (FGD6:SS5)

For many probationers, the experience is marked by great emotional and psychological hardship. As observed by Wilson and Green (2023), sentiments of shame, remorse, and self-blame typically dominate their narratives, increasing their challenges throughout rehabilitation. The societal stigma linked to being a probationer intensifies these sentiments, separating individuals from supporting networks that are necessary for recovery (Johnson & Carter 2021). Research by Taylor et al. (2024) also underlines the influence of structural hurdles, such as

restricted access to counseling and mental health services, which affect probationers' capacity to cope with their issues.

2. Besmirched reputation. Because they are under probation and once committed crimes, the community lost trust in them, making it difficult for them to rebuild their lives. They somehow experience unexpected dilemmas that almost revoke their probation and personal shortcomings that almost paralyze the informant and cause them to lose their identity. These informants constantly face the consequences of their past actions, as their besmirched reputation follows them like a dark cloud. These unexpected dilemmas and personal shortcomings become constant reminders of the challenges they must overcome to regain their lost identity and rebuild their lives. Informant41 stressed that:

Another thing is that I lost their trust. (IDI4:SS7)

Somehow lose the informant's honor and identity in society's eyes, and they find it difficult to regain the respect and trust of others. It is a long and arduous process, but one that they are determined to undertake in order to regain their lost honor and identity. Informant 5 expressed that:

It has a great loss, it looks like I don't have any face-to-face them because that's how it is. (IDI5:SS9)

An unexpected dilemma that almost revoked the probation of the informant because of the community's lack of trust was when they were falsely accused of something. Despite having turned their life around and abiding by the terms of their probation, the tarnished reputation from their past made it easy for others to believe the accusations. This incident served as a stark reminder of how their past actions continue to haunt them and the constant battle they face to regain the community's trust. Informant 6 stressed out that:

So it shows off when I am out, I feel shocked about what transpired in my life and somewhat paralyzed, I don't understand. (FGD6:SS5)

The ruined reputation of probationers sometimes becomes a substantial impediment in their effort to reintegrate into society. According to Baker and Harris (2022), public conceptions of criminality usually overshadow probationers' efforts to reconstruct their life, resulting to prejudice in job, housing, and social relationships. Moreover, the media's portrayal of criminals and probationers further entrenches

unfavorable preconceptions, as underlined by Smith et al. (2020). This phenomenon not only impacts the probationers but also their families, who face the weight of society censure. Research by Lopez and Green (2023) reveals that community education and awareness initiatives might play a significant role in modifying public opinions, thereby benefiting probationers in their reintegration efforts.

3. Economic distress. The third theme reflects the negative experience of informants. Financial problems are considered to be the greatest problems faced by the probationers, wherein it is difficult for them to apply for jobs because of their mistakes, and difficult to money, money as they consider as the greatest problem they have ever experienced. The probationers often find themselves caught in a vicious cycle of economic distress. Their previous mistakes make it challenging for them to secure employment, leaving them with limited opportunities to earn money. As a result, financial problems become a constant burden for them, further exacerbating their negative experience as they struggle to overcome the barriers imposed by their past actions. Informant 1 stressed that:

That money, how to earn money, when I'm release, my family still depends on me even I was imprisoned before, then I meant it because of course it seem that I need to recover from them. So second time around was just the same, so that's why when I was release I am very thankful because it seems that they are able to stand up. (IDI1:SS8)

In addition to the financial challenges, probationers also face numerous barriers to finding stable employment. The stigma associated with having a criminal record can make it incredibly difficult for them to secure a job, as many employers are hesitant to hire individuals with a criminal background. Informant 4 emphasized that:

My life was affected then my age, I'm already thirty nine (39) who will accept me, I am able to work but I have a case, then I need to seek permission as where I should travel. (IDI2:SS8)

Additionally, the financial strain can also impact their personal relationships and overall well-being. Many probationers may struggle to provide for their families or meet their basic needs, leading to feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy. Informant 2 stated that:

If there are small problem, it never matter to us, it's just easy, can even overcome the problem behind bars, that's it, just to earn money. (IDI2:SS13)

Probationers typically encounter prejudice in recruiting practices, with companies hesitating to provide positions to those with a criminal past (Smith et al. 2021). This economic isolation not only exacerbates poverty but also leads to emotions of despair and hopelessness, as probationers struggle to satisfy basic necessities and fulfil probation conditions, such as paying fees or attending compulsory programs (Garcia & Wilson 2024). Research indicates that this protracted financial instability is a crucial component in recidivism, as individuals may resort to unlawful activities to live (Jones & Taylor 2022). Limited access to resources, such as housing and schooling, exacerbates their financial troubles (Thompson & Lee 2020). Additionally, the cost of attending rehabilitation programs or meeting probation responsibilities adds significant financial hardship on individuals (Clark et al. 2023). Scholars suggest that effective should incorporate financial counseling. probation programs community support networks, and coordination with businesses to develop routes for economic reintegration (Garcia & Wilson 2024).

Addressing the challenges they encountered

Three themes depict in addressing the challenges encountered by the informants:

1. All-around crisis. It is a fight that hundreds of probationers face each year when they are released from correctional facilities. They find that they may be free from jail, but they are not free from the struggles that come with building a new life in the community while trying not to re-offend and enduring the all-around crisis of being formerly incarcerated. The probationer's family was financially unstable as earning money was their main problem. Informant 1 was emotional when he shared that:

How to earn money, when I'm released, my family still depends on me even I was in prison before. When I was released, I am very thankful because it seems that they can stand up. (IDI1:SS8)

Most of the probationers were affected by unemployment and as revealed by Informant 2 of the in-depth interview, she explicates how devastated her life on having a tough job opportunity, she said that:

I have no other problems, and it's just when applying for a job; in our barangay, I asked for my certificate of tree planting, but before that, they looked at my barangay record first. I don't have any problem with my

barangay, we are many, I am not ashamed because I also have a companion. (IDI2:SS11)

Emotional distress has been pointed out as a major threat to self-regulation and being negative mood increases the likelihood of this failure. Thus, the probationer ironically felt emotional distress when she wanted to discipline her daughter. Informant 2 stated that:

I have a hard time disciplining my daughter, and then if she hangs out, I don't know what to do. Do I need to scold her or talk to her, if I will stop her, maybe she will back fight. (IDI2:SS15)

They encountered lost trust when they were greatly affected by what people say and think about them. Informant 4 stated that:

I lost their trust and confidence in me. (IDI4:SS12)

Probationers may suffer complex difficulties comprising financial instability, social marginalization, and mental distress. Williams and Johnson (2021) suggest that these linked issues necessitate a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation. Probationers usually have challenges in getting steady job owing to criminal histories, which exacerbates their economic struggles and limits their capacity to support themselves or their family (Green & Lopez 2023).

Intervention measures, such as giving access to vocational training and financial literacy programs, have shown potential in alleviating these issues (Taylor et al. 2024). Additionally, community-based support networks can create a safety net for probationers, helping them handle crises efficiently. By addressing the fundamental reasons of their challenges, probation programs can considerably improve results for participants.

2. Life-changing techniques. This theme describes the determined efforts made by the probationer to address the challenges being encountered. Meliora was what they did to overcome all the problems they've been through. Informant 1 during the interview mentioned:

Fighting, there's no way to step back but step forward then forget all negativities purely positivities are in my mind. (IDI1:SS9)

One way to ease pain in the heart and the suffering caused by human nature was to communicate to God. Informant 4 of the in-depth interview said:

Before ma'am, I communicate with God through prayers. (IDI4:SS10)

Informant 6 of the focus group discussion mentioned circumventing discord in which he disregards the harsh statement of other people and avoids it; he cited:

I don't mind them because we can't go back to the time when we commit mistakes, I ignore them because I am under probation; even one mistake or only a few will return you inside the cell, so act deaf, whatever critic they said I only ignore them. (FGD6:SS2)

The family remains firm even things become worse, the fight as one and bonding with them to overcome the challenges. Informant 3 of the in-depth interview said:

That's a solution, bonding with the family, the probation officer is aware if I have personal travel. (IDI3:SS13)

The implementation of life-changing approaches during probation has proven crucial in encouraging personal growth and lowering recidivism rates. According to Patel et al. (2020), cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one such strategy that helps probationers build healthier coping strategies and decision-making abilities. These approaches help individuals to break out from detrimental tendencies and embrace more constructive actions. Furthermore, mentorship programs have arisen as a significant resource for probationers, giving direction and inspiration via the lived experiences of individuals who have successfully reintegrated into society (Baker & Johnson 2022).

3. Probationer's dedicated heart. The third theme dealt with the details on how the probationer solves their problem. Doing merciful acts touches the soft spot of a forgiving heart. Informant 4 said that:

They avoid me, I just slowed down and show to them that even though I am just like this I don't have grudges to them, I won't care what they are saying, it's okay, they will tease me and will just laugh at me, so I don't care. (IDI4:SS13)

Informant 4 proudly delivered his statement with a smile on his face feeling special about how he solved his problem on earning a living. He said that:

Then when I work at lee plaza, my life is a bit difficult that I always run out of money that's why I decided to find another sideline, so I drive tricycle. (IDI4:SS14)

Informant 6 of the focus group reiterated how probation made things better, he stated:

I really understand that I need to avoid, what I have done before, what I've been through should be gone and must change myself; helping my family that completely change me, with fellowship and peace. (FGD6:SS9)

Studies show that probationers who display intrinsic motivation and a genuine desire to change their life are more likely to succeed in their rehabilitation efforts (Jones & Smith 2021). For many, this devotion arises from their realization of the need to repair connections with their family and communities, which acts as a driving force for change (Thompson et al. 2022). Probationers typically engage in education, skill development, and therapy programs with a feeling of purpose, seeing these activities as critical steps toward attaining personal and professional improvement (Garcia & Wilson 2024). However, sustaining this focus typically requires external help from probation programs, mentors, and community networks. Research reveals that organized coaching and positive reinforcement play a significant role in preserving the probationers' motivation and attention (Lee et al. 2023). Support systems that give encouragement and resolve challenges, such as financial instability or mental suffering, further help probationers to remain engaged to their recovery path (Clark et al. 2023). Community-based treatments, such as peer support groups and mentoring programs, assist probationers manage problems and reaffirm their devotion to self-improvement (Brown & Taylor 2025).

Impact of the probation programs to the quality of life of the informants

1. Probationer's extraordinary development. This theme outlines the impact of the probation programs on the quality of life of probationers. The Therapeutic Community Modality is a self-help social learning treatment model used for clients with drug abuse problems and other behavioral problems such as alcoholism, stealing, and other anti-social tendencies. Under the said program, interventions relative to the informants' growth and development are done to become productive, law-abiding, and influential individuals. Informant 1 mentioned the Therapeutic Community as the program implemented under probation; he said:

I experienced TCLP when I was in jail. We are the first batch of PDL (Person Deprived of Liberty) who underwent therapeutic community modality training which started in 2010. (IDI 1: SS15)

Informant 5 of the focused group supported the idea of Informant 1 about TC that helped them transformed, his response:

This TC helps me, my family, the community as well as the environment. (FGD5:SS17)

The behavioral shaping tool supports the therapeutic community in shaping the personality of the informants. Informant 1 said:

That behavioral shaping tool will shape your behavior. If you keep on making mistakes, they will pull you. Example, you were absent thrice, so your probation program will be revoked. (IDI1:SS24)

Informant 8 of the focus group discussion reiterated the activities in their monthly meeting, he stated:

We also have news reporting, about sports at national & local levels and even on weather, there is someone who is assigned in those areas. (FGD8:SS9)

Probation programs frequently act as a turning point for individuals, promoting tremendous personal development. According to Carter et al. (2023), systematic rehabilitation efforts give probationers with the tools and resources required to reconstruct their life. The good benefits of probation programs extend beyond individual participants, as shown by Green and Wilson (2021).

2. Absolute life transformation. This theme elucidates the willingness of the informants to transform into a law-abiding citizen. Informant 6 of the focused group stated that probation changes them to be a better person; he mentioned:

All aspects have changed, never stay with the bystander, drink less, and never fight back with parents. (FGD 6:SS9)

Informant 1, in the in-depth interview, cited evidence of change that they were chosen for the gardening project of provincial parole and probation administration of Zamboanga del Norte as proof that they change for the better; he mentioned:

So far, our group, team achievers, and another team, team progressive, are in phase two, we are achievers, and we are also in charge of the Zamboanga del Norte gardening project. (IDI1:SS22)

The personality transformation of the informants was realizable due to the implemented probation program. Informant 6 in the focus group discussion bravely stated that there was a tremendous change brought by the program of probation; he said:

It's a significant change because before, I am hard-headed, very hard headed. It's hard, I joined every kind of problem, but because of this program, I changed. (FGD6:SS7)

The ultimate purpose of probation programs is to achieve absolute life change, enabling persons to become productive and responsible members of society. Lopez and Taylor (2024) suggest that effective reintegration rests on the provision of sustained assistance, even after the probation period expires. This support includes access to steady job, affordable housing, and continuing counseling services. By addressing the structural and institutional constraints faced by probationers, policymakers and stakeholders may guarantee that probation programs accomplish their intended goals (Baker et al. 2025). The stories of altered lives offer as strong testimony to the possibilities of rehabilitation, highlighting the necessity for continued commitment to these activities.

3. A changed person. This theme was created to give importance to the impact of probation on the informants' quality of life. With probation, great things that happen like gaining an additional family and total transformation from bringing your personality back to the community and doing good deeds for the others' betterment. Informant 3 stressed that:

As usual, it has a significant impact on me, I gained another family. (IDI3:SS20) $\,$

Informant 4 added that constant monitoring plays a vital role in anticipating the changes of the informant. Informant 4 stated:

One of them is that they constantly conduct monitoring, in order for us to change, so we don't want to hear from the probation officer that we are only good during reporting, but opposite behavior in the community. (IDI4:SS22)

Imparting to the family the learning earned from the program of probation, informant 7 of the focus group discussion said:

We can apply in our homes, discipline and proper manners. TC program is outstanding. (FGD7:SS8)

Probation has a significant impact on the informants as they knew the responsibility towards the community. Informant 5 of the focus group discussion mentioned:

Cleaning the town has helped the community a lot. (FGD5:SS160)

Probation has a great impact on the informants' performance and ability as they knew their community's responsibility.

Probation programs have the transforming power to turn individuals into "A changed person," since they allow probationers time to review their life and make real improvements. Through involvement in these programs, probationers frequently acquire a deeper feeling of selfawareness, accountability, and purpose, which are necessary for longterm recovery (Smith & Harris 2020). Probation programs that include cognitive-behavioral treatment, vocational training, and educational opportunities provide probationers with the skills and mentality essential to lead productive lives (Garcia et al. 2022). These therapies not only address the core reasons of criminal conduct but also give strategies to handle future issues. Studies have indicated that probationers who actively engage in these programs have considerable increases in their self-esteem and interpersonal interactions, eventually developing a good view on life (Thompson & Lee 2023). By sharing their experiences and triumphs, they challenge prejudices and urge others to pursue recovery (Brown et al. 2025). For instance, tailored approaches that address particular conditions, such as mental health concerns or substance misuse, are more effective in fostering enduring transformation (Clark & Reynolds 2024).

Conclusion

The study emphasized the difficult journey of the probationers. Positive experiences demonstrate their quest for pleasure despite adversity and a continuing drive for self-fulfilment. Conversely, negative experiences underline the enormous obstacles probationers confront, including immense emotional suffering, cultural humiliation, and economic hardships. In response to these adversities, probationers adapt through life-changing tactics and display perseverance and determination. The probation program's transformative influence is evident, encouraging amazing personal growth, radical life transformations, and the emergence of healed, reformed persons with enhanced quality of life. This emphasizes the potential of probation

programs in facilitating deep personal metamorphoses, notwithstanding the challenges endured.

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Peace through McDonaldization? Exploring the theory of Golden Arches in Pakistan-India relations through a complex interdependence lens

Muhammad Rafi Khan, Zoonia Naseeb, Sajjad Ali and Saadia Tariq

Abstract: This study elaborates characteristics of the theory of Golden Arches (GA) to assess whether the military ambitions concerning Pakistan-India relations were affected in the wake of McDonaldization or not, while establishing connections with the theory of Complex Interdependence (CI) for a more critical inquiry. McDonald's and other multinational corporations create economic interdependence between countries and increase the costs of the conflict, which can contribute to more peaceful relationships. However, the relationship between India and Pakistan is tensed with historical distrust. Although economic interdependence may limit the freedom of maneuver in the security sphere, the competition in the security and military fields, along with the conflicting claims to the territory of the disputed region of Kashmir, still has a significant impact on Islamabad and New Delhi's policies. Larger volumes of trade and investment do not erase periodic crises and militarized disputes in the region. Consumer brands can only partially erase geostrategic dynamics from the calculations of States. Security based nationalist approaches continue to play a significant role in decision making while globalization influences economic policies. Still fast-food diplomacy that could comprehensively be called McDonaldization between India and Pakistan could be seen, yet the impact it could bring on changing the bitter rivalry between the two countries is questionable without addressing the core issues as emphasized by CI.

Keywords: Golden Arches, complex interdependence, McDonaldization, Pakistan, India

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Introduction: Pakistan-India relations

The relations between Pakistan and India have always been tense since the formation of two countries from the subcontinent of India in 1947 (Ahmad 2016). Some key events and tensions that have shaped Pakistan-India relations include Partition of British India, Kashmir conflict, several wars, Nuclearization, water disputes etc. (Mitra 2001).

The partition of British India into Pakistan and India in 1947 provided the basis for future conflicts (Chaudhri 2016; Khan 2007). During this period, there was a massive displacement of populations along religious lines and horrific violence (Dixit 2002) and loss of life, which determined future relations.

In this regard, the first conflict between Pakistan and India was shortly after the partition in 1947 over the issues of the disputed territory of Kashmir. Pakistan argued that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan since it was Muslim, while India said the territory belonged to India because of the instrument of accession (Chaudhri 2016; Thomas 1992; Wint 1967). Kashmir is still the central unresolved matter between the two nations. The dispute has led to several wars and there has been militancy over the territory of Kashmir ever since (Prasad & Pal 1987; Schofield & Victoria 2003).

After this, the two countries have gone to war and engaged in armed conflicts many times since the partition (Christophe Jaffrelot 2004). Some of these are the first war over the disputed territory of Kashmir in 1947 and other wars in 1965 and 1971 (Dixit 2002; Lyon 2008). The wars led to the deaths of people, drains of resources to the military at the expense of their development, and animosity. The greatest source of tension is still the unresolved Kashmir issue.

Both India and Pakistan have conducted nuclear tests in 1998, although India had already achieved success in nuclear weapon testing in 1974. Both are officially nuclear weapon states (Sublette 2001). This nuclearization raised concerns that any future conflict between the two historical foes could trigger nuclear warfare. The nuclear arms race is still a destabilizing factor in the region as well as the deterrent.

Tensions and conflicts have sometimes been fueled by growths of religious nationalism and extremism on both sides. Religion is still a contentious factor and increases threat perceptions. Between the two nations, religious fundamentalism is also among the triggers of security dilemma.

There are disputes on the water sharing of rivers in the Indus River system, construction of new dams and the unfulfilled water allocation agreements (Alam 2002; Haider 2010). The contested water resource is the Indus Water system, which comprises the Indus River, a main river Basin and several others. Usages of these waters were in dispute between Britain and the newly born two nation-states of India and Pakistan after the partition of British India in 1947 (Haider 2010). Nevertheless, there remains much controversy regarding the hydroelectric structures, which India intends to construct on the rivers. Pakistan has expressed its concern with reference to the Indian power projects to regulate and reallocate the rivers flowing to Pakistan (Haines 2023).

Theory of the Golden Arches (GA)

This term was invented by Thomas L. Friedman, an American journalist, author of the book "The Lexus and the Olive Tree" published in 1999. Friedman claims that "no two countries that have a *McDonald's* have ever gone to war with each other since the two nations got their McDonalds" (Friedman 1999). The theory stems from the existence of *McDonald's* restaurants all over the world signifying economic integration between the countries. The existence of these outlets signifies that the two countries have some degree of economic interconnectivity, and they share some form of culture and social relations that may make it difficult for them to go to war (Altinors 2016). The theory explains that as more countries move up the development ladder, embrace consumerist values, and get Western franchises, their interests and values become aligned, thus decreasing the likelihood of warfare.

GA implies that globalization leads to increased economic entwinement of countries and thus fosters peace and discourages war. Nations can have similar economic and social affinities. However, the theory is deterministic in the sense of arguing that war is averted in all circumstances by the fact of common economic interests, especially when clear examples of conflict between the economically globalized nations are also present (Petach 2013).

On the same note, it is the economic interconnectivity that makes nations stick together through companies like *McDonald's*. Franchises create mutual dependence and personal stake. But skeptics claim that globalization and economic bonds do not guarantee people's interconnection and peaceful relations between countries (Friedman 1996). Politics and nationalism can still bring rivalry. However, the GA theory is at best an interesting and provocative idea that offers a

more positive vision of the world today, but which relies on several key assumptions about globalization and the nature of culture and the sources of conflict. Its determinism concerning commerce being a driving force towards peace is especially problematic (Li 2008). But it does offer fresh insights into the process of economic integration, and it reflects wider discussions on globalization and geo-political realities in a globalized world.

Through GA, the fact that there is a *McDonald's*, in Friedman's view, means that there is a measure of globalization and of economic integration that makes warfare impossible. GA assumes that the people with the middle class, who have access to some of the luxuries of globalization such as fast foods, are less likely to get involved in deadly conflicts (Li 2008; Ritzer 2013). The theory presumes that nations which develop economic relationships through global business and MNCs have a higher motivating force to settle conflicts without violence to improve their economy. *McDonalds* outlet is thus symbolically used to be a society with extended economic relations (Ritzer 2013).

The GA theory rests on several key assumptions about economic development and globalization (Figure 1):

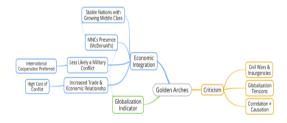


Figure 1. Essentials of Golden Arches Theory

- International firms such as *McDonald's* enter stable nations with growing middle-income groups and disposable income for food products such as burgers. Thus, *McDonald's* is an indicator of health or otherwise of the economy.
- Globalization of business brings about the integration of the world economy where countries become entangled in economic relations making high the costs of conflicts that may disrupt trade.
- Fast foods are said to be associated with middle class societies which are less likely to embrace nationalist militarism and are more concerned with international cooperation.

While novel, political scientists and economists (Figure 1) have critiqued the GA:

- This is important to note that while *McDonald's* can be associated with peace, correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Some might argue that such countries as those in the EU will not go to war anyway as they have similar interests.
- It also has the effect that fast globalization can lead to tensions between societies and thus to conflicts, so more globalizations do not necessarily mean more peace.
- Most of the recent wars have been civil wars or insurgencies in countries that are already interconnected through commerce and investments such as through infrastructures like *McDonald's*. International relations in the world do not have to mean that there would be no civil unrest resulting in violence.

A few exceptions to GA conflict prevention claims

A few exceptions, in the Golden Arches Theory, have been found over time. Two wars have broken out between *McDonald's* countries since the hypothesis was initially put forward. NATO bombarded Yugoslavia (*McDonald's* in1988) in 1999 during the Kosovo War, but the conflict was over in 78 days (Knutsson 2007). Another instance was the Kargil War between India (*McDonald's* in 1996) and Pakistan (*McDonald's* in 1998). The other instance occurred in 2006 when Israel (*McDonald's* in 1993) and Lebanon (*McDonald's* in 1999) fought a war (Knutsson 2007). The conflict between Russia (*McDonald's*, 1990) and Ukraine (*McDonald's*, 1997) is also termed as an exception to GA claims of conflict prevention. Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan (*McDonald's* in 1999) has been a conflict zone due to Armenian aggression, but since Armenia does not have a *McDonald's*, the Azerbaijan—Armenia issue does not become an exception.

Theory of Complex Interdependence (CI)

CI was established in the 1970s by Keohane and Nye. It challenges the realist approaches of international politics and is supposed to provide an understanding of the part played by non-state actors in world politics as well as how states interact in the international system without wars (Keohane & Nye 2000).

Stakeholders of companies operating in the global village share many similarities and dependencies with each other, which

intrinsically become main features of CI: The theory suggests that multiple channels connect societies and the state to civil society interactions do not only take place through diplomatic process, but also through other forms including business networks, migration and international organizations (Ibid). Unlike realism where issues are layered with military security on top, CI does not categorize issues as hierarchical (Cohen 2008). There are various subject matters that one side may consider of more significance than the other, including human rights, climate change, and economic plans.

CI minimizes the role of military force. When there are several problems in the world and economic factors are dominant, military force and threats are not especially important in the system of CI. Sanctions and other measures are far more impactful in terms of gaining leverage and pursuing certain programs and agendas than force (Oatley 2019). Since states, regimes, and international organizations are interdependent, the latter can perform the functions of coordination and control. For instance, the UN, the WTO, and other international organizations have become more significant.

There are far reaching implications for the rise of globalization and transnational forces for International Relations: internationalization of capital, migration, trade, and communication results in societies becoming more entwined and decreasing the ability of states to act independently (Oatley 2019; Farrell & Newman 2019). The prominence of non-state actors with multiple intertwined connectivity paradigms is a crucial factor studied under IR: Topping the list are the non-governmental organizations, corporations, and interest groups who play a significant role in influencing politics at the global level and determining state preferences on various matters.

There are instances of cooperation despite tensions between hostile nations, i.e., between India and Pakistan were buying onions despite military conflicts by Pakistan is a suited example. Thus, even if two states are opposing ideological camps or are rivals, they can always identify areas of shared interest that can lead to cooperation. It can be noted that there are also some reasons to cooperate at least on some aspects despite having shared conflicts of interest. Thus, realizing globalization and transnational problems means thinking beyond states and beyond military force.

This theory is conflicting with the realist's view of world politics since it examines interconnection of modern states and societies through multiple and diverse ways. Some key components (Figure 2) and propositions of the theory include:

Multiple channels

There are many forms of interaction between societies, such as the exchange of information, people, goods, money, and social movements, in addition to diplomacy between countries (Oatle 2019). This results in the development of intricate systems of integration that establish political, economic, social and technological interfaces at the international, regional and local levels.

Absence of hierarchy

It questions the realist perception that security concerns are the primary concern of international politics. Instead, there is no clear priority between issues and military security ends up having to negotiate with other issues that are not inherently conflict oriented such as finance, trade, disease prevention, etc. (Braddon 2012). Traditional security threats are complemented by economic, social, environmental, health, and political concerns.

Reduced role of military force

Since there are no security related matters and economic interdependence between societies, they can also be addressed jointly, intricate interdependence reduces the likelihood of employing severe force (Farrell & Newman 2019). Thus, although states still have military capabilities, they learn the cost of using hard power. Therefore, the decrease in the probability of a threat or actual application of force in interstate relations is now characterized by dense webs of economic and social ties.

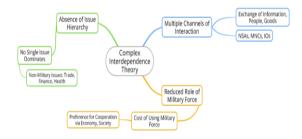


Figure 2. Essentials of Complex Interdependence Theory

Explanation of the main concepts

GA: MNCs like McDonald's reduce the likelihood of military conflict "McDonald's countries are thought to be different to other countries in two major ways that Friedman emphasizes; (1) they are more open to

international trade and investment and (2) have a large enough middleclass to support and justify a *McDonald's* franchise" (Knutsson 2007, 3). The rationale for this theory is that the occupancy of a *McDonald's* franchise is symptomatic of globalization and integration into the world economy. It is likely that countries with McDonald's have open economies that are integrated in international production networks, cross-border investments, capital flows, and aligned with the global standards and regulations (Li 2008; Ritzer 2013).

Therefore, if two countries have *McDonald's* stores, it means those countries have harmonious economic relations and common effects. War-making would result in a colossal social disruption; it would reverse the process of economic integration and cause the loss of prosperity that has stemmed from trade liberalization and FDI (Petach 2013). Therefore, the economic losses in military conflicts help to prevent countries that have *McDonald's* franchises from engaging in the conflict.

The global interconnectedness brought about by globalization through economic interdependence, rise of multinational companies and globalization of supply chains symbolized by the growing reach of the GA suggests that business cooperation is always more rewarding than armed conflict (Altinors 2016). However, the theory is not absolute because it covers only one aspect of globalization and there should be counter examples. Yet, it sets up a positive relationship between globalization and decreasing conflict.

CI: Through multiple channels states and societies are interconnected, reducing the priority of using military force

CI's fundamental assumption is that states and societies are embedded in a complex network of channels and connections which are not restricted to military and political ones. This results in an intricate entanglement or dependence of nations that minimizes the relevance or superiority of power and security issues in international relations. Nations engage in transnational relationships in the form of trade, communication, cultural relations. tourism. investments. diplomatic and military alliances (Oatley 2019). These numerous relations lead to the formation of complicated dependencies. Because there are several linkages between states, power and security issues are less dominant in the determination of foreign policy and international relations since there is so much interdependence if not interconnection. This interdependence results in the involvement of other non-state actors – MNCs, NGOs, activist groups among them which reduces state hegemony in international relations (Keohane & Nye 2000).

Multiple linkages also make states exposed to failure in one segment (trade, finance, etc.) affect the others via the web of interconnections. This makes them equally vulnerable in a way that influences the behavior of states. Thus, CI implies that military power is not important due to numerous connections which make states adaptive to one another's needs and to non-state international forces.

Objectives of the study

It has been identified that since the time of partition, the main issues that have characterized Pakistan and India relations are historical conflicts, unsettled issues of territory, terrorism, nationalism, religious radicalism, and disputes over the resources that have culminated in the relationship of hostility, mistrust and suspicion between the two nuclear powers (Panda 2013). Efforts made towards the achievement of peace and the return to normalcy in relations have not been completely effective so far.

Therefore, the objectives of the study that authors have come up include; (a) to investigate the idea of 'Golden Arches Effect', or perceived peace between countries that do not go to war with each other if they both have *McDonald's* outlets, as far as Pakistan and India link is concerned; (b) as the first step, authors propose to examine whether the *McDonaldization* process of Pakistan and Indian economies has deepened to contribute to or even complicate the two countries' economic entanglement; (c) to find the drawbacks and criticism to the use of the GA theory to describe and understand roles that economic interdependence plays in IR and conflict; and (d) to bring fresh facts, arguments, studies to the development of the GA theory and the CI theory for the tendencies and potential of Pakistan-India relations and their peace.

Results and discussion

McDonaldization is the notion that distinctive characteristics of fast-food restaurants such as efficiency, a calculable approach, and predictability and control, form the basis for the increased rationalization of more sides of society. About consequences on economies, we have possibilities, i.e. more tendencies to oligopolist, globalization, and a shift of emphasis from qualitative diversification to such values as the financial result.

Both India and Pakistan have seen the emergence of increased 'westernization' in terms of fast-food restaurant such as *Burger King*, *KFC*, *MacDonald's* and so on and shopping malls. To the extent this means the principles underpinning McDonaldization are being applied to certain sectors of the retail and service industries in the developing world, there is evidence that this acts to plug the economies of these nations into the globalization processes. However, the exact meaning and extent of this varies from country to country and from sector to sector.

The economic relations between the countries are diversified and concern competition as well as cooperation. For example, they are having conflicting stands and past towards Kashmir but increasing annual business barriers crossing billions of dollars every year. In this respect, McDonaldization is likely to strengthen links to world networks but may not help and settle conflicts between the countries in question. Therefore, the findings include the following critical propositions:

- 1. GA seems an over-simplified fashion for understanding the various causes that can make or break war or peace between nations. The conflict between Pakistan and India is historical, territorial, religious and nationalistic however the existence or absence of *McDonald's* does not explain.
- 2. GA theory is overly preoccupied with *McDonald's* style formal corporate economic relations. It omits structureless business relations and common linkages of countries like Pakistan and India even during the worst times. Therefore, the existence of something like *McDonald's* may tell us extraordinarily little about interdependence uniformly.
- 3. GA theory pays scant attention to the effects that politics have on international relations and the numerous signs of insecurity that often overrule economic rationality and give rise to conflict. For instance, Pakistan-India economic cooperation has improved in the last twenty years with trade and investment, common regional interests or prospects for peace and cooperation yet find themselves struggling with issues of Kashmir, terrorism, security, domestic politics, nationalism, competitions and rivalry.
- 4. GA theory has conceptual problems, such as (a) it has a limited economic focus, (b) it underestimates the political element, and (c) it provides no straightforward linkage between economic integration and warfare. GA has lesser ability to explain the more than existential

political animosity between two South Asian giants Pakistan and India despite increasing economic interaction in the last decade.

CI applications to international relations

CI is a realization of the multifaceted global interconnection of societies from diplomatic diplomacy to social and illicit activities. It stresses non-state actors, international institutions, and multinational corporations as the major forms of interaction. However, it also postulates how exchanges between different societies lead to increased interaction and appreciation of the cultures across different territories despite the occasional conflict resulting from nationalists (Braddon 2012; Farrell & Newman 2019; Oatley 2019). In general, it highlights how the current trends of increased globalization through multilateral trade and social interconnectedness may lead to improved international cooperation.

CI connection to Golden Arches Theory

The GA theory incorporates some aspects of CI (Table1) in explaining how the spread of MNCs and their economic interactions bring societies together for mutual benefits and hence enhances stability and cultural interchange to become Economic-Peace Nexus (Pathak & Baibourtian 2024), on the condition that the political underpinnings include liberal democracies.

Feature Theory of Golden Theory of Complex **Economic Peace Nexus** Arches (GA) Interdependence (CI) (Interactions) Focus Economic ties via Multiple channels: Both stress global multinational diplomatic, economic, economic ties as essential corporations (MNCs) social, cultural, etc. to stability. like McDonald's Scope Primarily economic, Broad scope: includes CI has a broader focus focused on middle-class political, economic, cultural while GA focuses narrowly societies dimensions on MNCs. Main Actors States, MNCs (like States, non-state actors Both consider the role of McDonald's) (NGOs, international economic entities in global organizations) stability. Role of Military force becomes Interdependence reduces Both argue that economic the use of force due to interdependence lessens Military Force less relevant in countries with economic cooperation conflict risks. ties Assumptions Middle-class societies Interdependence across Both see economic with access to multiple levels reduces integration as a deterrent to globalization resist security risks conflict. conflict Criticism Overfocus on Overestimates the degree to Both theories may overlook correlation between which interdependence the persistence of noneconomic conflicts. McDonald's and peace prevents conflicts

Table 1. GA-CI interactions and differences

Globalization	Symbolized by McDonald's presence in various countries	Defined as complex economic, political, and social integration	Both see globalization as a key factor in international stability.
Limitations	Does not account for civil wars or conflicts in MNC-hosting nations	Focuses less on national security threats, more on interdependence	GA focuses on consumerism; CI on multidimensional interdependence.

However, CI gives a more correct and detailed picture of globalization, which states that globalization entails conflict over a single point, instead of conflict and cooperation through many points. It offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of globalization in its many-faceted form.

The Case of Pakistan-India relations

The Symbolism of McDonald's

McDonaldization in Pakistan and India was achieved in the 1990s with the establishment of the first *McDonald's* restaurant which was considered as the proof that the country opened its doors to foreign investment and globalization after a long time of isolation.

In Pakistan, *McDonald's* opened first restaurant in Lahore, and it was established on 19 September 1998 (Knutsson 2007; Mcdonalds 2024). For many middle-class Pakistanis particularly the youth *McDonalds* was, and still is, a symbol of status going with the western lifestyle depicted in the movies and television series. Consuming food at that place was a sign that you were a refined elite, cosmopolitan, and a global citizen. The homogenization of *McDonald's* experiences also gave one the feeling of being linked to individuals in other countries consuming the same foods.

In the same way, the opening of *McDonald's* on 13 October 1996 in New Delhi after waiting a long time to enter in India (Knutsson 2007; Shilkar 2015), indicates that the government of India was now ready to allow foreign brands and companies to invest in the country. *McDonald's* became a symbol of status for the emerging middle class through consumption of fast foods although it faced a lot of difficulties and resistance from fundamentalist Hindus (McDonald's in India 2015). The brand emerged as a metaphor for India's globalization.

Other fast foods originating from USA such as *Pizza Hut*, *KFC* and *Subway* have also opened branches in major Indian and Pakistani cities over the past two decades. These global brands have been adopted by the rising middle classes as emissaries of modernity and affluence.

Aspirational consumers have also been targeted by western fashion brands. *Nike*, *Levi's* and *Zara* are perceived as modern and trendy than the local brands. Stores of these international fashion brands have appeared for the consumers to openly consume the brands' iconography and aesthetic. These multinational companies have also had to make corresponding changes and start aligning their products to the local culture. For instance, *McDonald's* in India neither sells beef (as Hindus do not consume beef) nor pork (as of Muslims do not consume pork) because of cultural constraints and offers more vegetarian products. Brand menus also contain spicier, and chili flavors than global flavors.

The use of brands such as *McDonald's* shows how Pakistani and Indians have ambivalent feelings toward globalization and westernization. From the perspective of policymakers, letting major foreign brands in operation gives confidence in integration and competitively competing in the international market. It widens emerging consumer markets for managers, executives, and other relevant professionals. And for the emerging middle classes, it answers the call for the global, cosmopolitan, and international lifestyle and belonging to international and global communities while being culturally localized (Knutsson 2007). They thus have considerable symbolic importance in these countries during social and economic upheavals.

State of economic relations

Official trade relations have been weak owing to political differences, and there has been little actual trade. However, trade has also been done indirectly through third parties. Major traded products include cotton, chemicals, spices etc.

Investment relations are also restricted though few Indian giants like *Tata*, *Reliance*, *Dabur India*, etc. are having their business ventures in Pakistan (Mahanta & Kumar 2003). Likewise, there are a few Pakistani companies that exist in India. "Top brand *Bareeze*, known for its famous embroidery and cotton fabric, already has two stores in New Delhi. But other leading brands like *Junaid Jamshed*, a famous singer-turned-religious activist's store for men and women, *Leisure Club*, *Man*, *Urban Culture*, *Sefam*, *The Working Women*, *Chinyere* and *Shahnameh* are new to the Indian shores" (Ashiq 2012) and some pharmaceutical companies (BR Web Desk 2024).

Globalization has led to increased economic integration between the two economies. Despite the barriers that exist within the two economies, bilateral trade has gradually increased over the years to about \$2 billion (Shaheen et al. 2023). The figure for indirect trade, on the other hand, is likely to be significantly higher. This is evidence of increasing economic integration. MCB Bank and United Bank Ltd. from Pakistan have received help from the liberalization of FDI policies in India. Investment interest remains intact despite political rivalry between the two nations.

The expansion of IT has allowed for a free flow of information and ideas that has promoted better people to people contacts, especially among the young generations. This could help build constituencies that would support peace, cooperation, and economic development. Moreover, business activities of multinationals (BR Web Desk 2024) such as *Unilever*, *Nestle*, etc., have their operations across the border of India and Pakistan making them the key initiators of economic integration among the two nations in aspects such as production, trade, and exchange of ideas among other factors.

Trade climate can however improve access through land, sea and air transport facilitated by globalization if relations between the two countries are friendly and relations are normalized. Although political rivalry is still a barrier, but economic interdependence has interconnected the economies of India and Pakistan through trade, investment and business relations (Ali et al. 2015; Shaheen et al. 2023). Such interdependence can potentially help to drop political constraints and contribute to the process of stabilizing the situation in the region.

India and Pakistan have upgraded their economic relations and have started encouraging more trade and commerce between them although economic interdependence has not precipitated any major changes in the military sphere (Ali et al. 2015; Shaheen et al. 2023). Political rivalry and unresolved issues like security remain the major components of strategic thinking in both countries. Military establishments therefore differentiate economic priorities from defense and security priorities.

Political and military ties

Pakistan and India, both South Asian neighbors, share a history of enmity, wars and conflicts mainly because of disputed borders and socio-political rivalry (Khan 2007). The historical conflicts between

the two show challenging interstate relations and remain to be one of the most challenging geostrategic issues in South Asia that must be addressed to achieve greater regional stability (Ahmad 2016; Chaudhri 2016; Lyon 2008; Mitra 2001). Although the manifest wars have been halted due to the application of deterrents, the search for peace in the region is still a delicate process in conflict resolution (Dixit 2002; Hagerty 2005). Both countries have fought several wars starting from the very day of their inception.

1947 War (pre-McDonaldization)

Began in October 1947, following the partition and the attainment of independence from British subjection with a dispute on the territory of Jammu & Kashmir as both countries claimed their authority over the state (Wirsing 1998; Wint 1967). The war led to India possessing most of the region of Kashmir, while Pakistan possessing a rather small part, and the division was followed by the ceasefire facilitated by the United Nations with no final decision on the status of the territory made (Barua 2011; Schofield & Victoria 2003).

1965 War (pre-McDonaldization)

It begun in August 1965 because of the tensions and border problems after the 1947 war, lasted for five weeks with some operations including use of artillery, armor and infantry (Barua 2011). It reached a standstill and was followed by a ceasefire brokered by the Soviet Union at the end of September 1965 (Pike 2000).

1971 War (pre-McDonaldization)

It began in November 1971 with Pakistan first attacking Indian airfields. The war accelerated with India on the better side because of the struggle for independence in East Pakistan now Bangladesh. The war lasted thirteen days and ended with the surrender of Pakistan forces in the east which led to the formation of Bangladesh (Barua 2011; Conboy 2012; Pike 2000).

Kargil War 1999 (post-McDonaldization)

Kargil War started in May 1999, in the post-McDonaldization era, in which Pakistani troops captured vital heights on the Indian side of Kargil (Lavoy 2009; Lyon 2008). It spanned close to three months with heavy fighting along the mountain terrains at high altitudes. Geographically, Pakistan was at a tactical disadvantage because the nature of terrain in Kargil was difficult to predict. The outcome of Kargil War was a return of the status quo (Nanda 1999).

However, Kargil War presents a clear case of two countries, which have McDonald's outlets, involved in violent conflict contrary to GA theory. After the Kargil War, some political scientists claimed that GA was a minimalistic way of looking at geo-politics and the effects of economic integration while elements such as nationalism, the issue of territory, and political concerns can supersede economic gains for nations

Several factors make the Kargil War an example of the theory's inapplicability. First, Pakistan and India's long-standing animosity has a historical, territorial and political foundations, having to do with the disputed territory of Kashmir. Such problems are not strictly within the sphere of economic cooperation, as national security and state borders are many a time valued more than economic relations. Second, GA takes for granted the capability of middle-class consumerism while South Asia is a geostrategic region where political and military factors overshadow the economic ones.

Shifts in military strategies

In all these wars conventional tactics involving the use of large numbers of infantry and armored formations with support from artillery and aerial bombardments were often used. But this fact was overshadowed during the Kargil War, when the challenges of mountain warfare came into the light.

The conflicts led to the loss of many lives and the misuse and wastage of economic capital. They showed fear and enmity but concurrently brought the countries to the brink of understanding the risks of shifting to the nuclear level. This helped occasionally to lower tensions and promote the holding of dialogues between the two parties (Shaheen et al. 2023).

Nevertheless, the territorial issues and disagreement have still been alive in destabilizing the region further. Small-scale fighting has persisted along borders, along with provocative government statements and nationalist sentiments. The buildup of conventional and nuclear deterrence also is still in place on both sides (Kampani 2002).

Nuclear deterrence

Nuclear weapons brought nuclear deterrence and restraint between Pakistan and India. The possibility of an uncontrollable transition to a conventional conflict is now recognized by both parties and influences crisis regulation (Kapur 2007; Shaheen et al. 2023). Yet, neither has

ceased to develop new generation nuclear warheads and means of their delivery.

Conventional military capabilities

Biased force ratios had led Pakistan to focus on coercive measures due to the asymmetrical distribution of forces (Lavoy 2009). As the conventional balance changed in Pakistan's favor it has shifted its military strategy to focus on calibrated offense, under the nuclear umbrella. India is gradually shifting toward a two-front war construct that involves China and Pakistan. Strategic reach, long range precision munitions, space, and cyberspace are other domains of conventional capability development for India along with modernization of forces. The 2016 (Correspondent 2016; Miglani & Hashim 2016; Masood 2016) and 2019 cross-border surgical airstrikes in Pakistani territory marked the initiation of India's pre-emptive strategy against Pakistan (Desk 2019).

Thus, although economic concerns have increased for both countries, security competition and a lack of resolution to conflicts continue the strategic rivalry (Kampani 2002) (Figure 4 & Figure 5). This is also evident through the defense budgets of both countries (Figure 2 & Figure 3).

Figure 3. Conceptual framework

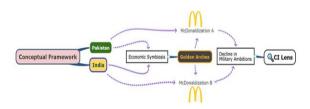


Figure 4. Pakistan military spending / Defense budget 1960-2024 (Macrotrends n.d.)

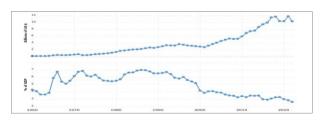
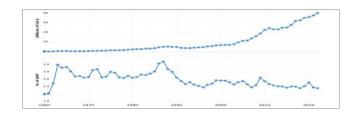


Figure 57. Indian military spending /Defense budget 1960-2024(Macrotrends, n.d.)



Nuclear capabilities affect conventional military choices but there is ongoing modernization of conventional forces following novel approaches to war.

Conclusions

The GA theory shows the connection between the expansion of globalization, capitalism and democracy with the peace between countries. However, its application has been criticized in the context of relationship between South Asian states particularly India and Pakistan. Thus, the authors have produced the following observations:

- The GA theory is tackling difficulties in the context of the relations between India and Pakistan.
- The economic integration between the two countries has been gradually deepening, but hostile relations have not stopped.
- It is seen that cultural, historical, and religious differences have reduced economic relations.
- Some of the unresolved problems are still the cause of disagreement, i.e., the Kashmir dispute, cross-border terrorism.
- Military escalations have continued despite the existence of *McDonald's*, which according to the theory should not be the case.
- This Kargil conflict showed that *McDonald's* did not become a barrier to the War.
- During 2001-2002 India-Pakistan standoff period there was mobilization despite commercial activities.
- The 2008 Mumbai terror attacks affected state-level business relationships and contracts when India blamed Pakistan.
- Cross-border airstrikes in 2016 and 2019 only worsened hostility while providing no aid to economic cooperation.
- Moreover, minimized entertainment ties between India and Pakistan indicate that there are still strategic and political barriers to bilateral relations.

Despite such an evolution of economic cooperation, which may slightly contribute to the improvement of relations, the acute issues remain. Thus, GA may have limited generalizability in view of the history of warfare as political preparedness to address strategic conflicts, remains essential in addition to economic exchange. Interdependencies have not been fully accompanied by a decrease in security threats in South Asia. Political factors are a dominant force over and above simple economic considerations, thus restricting the validity of the GA theory. Addressing of core issues is needed to support any peace benefits from business relations as stated and emphasized by the notions of CI.

Thus, although it is a new theory, GA has its weaknesses in altering the political, ethnic, historical, and economic factors of inter and intrastate modern conflicts. The message conveyed by it is that the power of the 'Big Mac' cannot bar all the sources of violence and warfare in the world.

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Perceived impact of marketing influencers on purchasing decisions Gen Xers vs. Millennials in digital era

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Abstract: Influencer marketing has become a powerful tool in a digitally driven world, particularly for millennials. This study compares the impact of influencer marketing on Gen Xers (ages 45-60) and millennials (ages 29-44), focusing on key factors such as authenticity, credibility, and content style. A survey of 300 respondents (150 from each group) reveals that platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok significantly influence purchasing decisions, with transparency and authenticity critical for building trust. Millennials value influencers who openly disclose sponsorships and share personal stories, while relatability strengthens brand loyalty. The studyts outcome supports the hypothesis that Gen Xers are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on the credibility of influencers and practical, straightforward content. The results also support the second hypothesis, millennials are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on creative, visually engaging content, while Gen Xers may respond better to more conventional strategies that acknowledge their skepticism and preference for less frequent influencer interaction. Millennials prefer dynamic, interactive content, such as short-form videos and live sessions, which drive engagement and purchasing decisions. At the same time, the results in the case of Gen Xers are different to some extent.

Keywords: marketing influencers, millennials, Gen X, purchase decision, social media platforms

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Introduction

In the constantly evolving digital society, penetration of influencer marketing has become a necessity for businesses aiming at their customers, particularly millennials. A new method of communicating with customers has emerged due to social media's growing popularity (Lin et al. 2019). The viewer will perceive influencer marketing as a natural aspect of their life rather than an advertisement when it is done well. Influencer marketing, which can also be referred to as purchasing a large number of followers on social media for the marketing of certain goods or services, has evolved from pure marketing because of the patronage that influencers obtain from their audience. As the daily life of a millennial centres on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, among others, influencers have become relevant in shaping perceptions and trends. They can impact a consumer's choice since their advertisements are almost always disguised as genuine recommendations.

Millennials' onset of birth range from the early 1980s up to the mid-1990s, which is a demographic known to be influenced by peer evaluations and seeks to have their shopping journeys be more unique and personalized. Unlike older generations, millennials are not as responsive towards marketing techniques such as advertisements in print or on television. What they seek instead is empathetic and credible voices that match their beliefs and lifestyle. Influencers. because of their sharing nature, promote a more organic form of marketing which is appealing to this generation so much. According to research, millennials purchase a lot of things such as technology, travel, fashion, cosmetics, and many others based on the word of an influencer quite which is a clear indication of the marketer's approach for this generation. This thesis proposal aims to assess the different impacts created by influencer marketing on millennials and Generation X, with particular attention to the key elements of success for influencer campaigns. The study has examined the social and psychological issues that determine how millennials and Generation Xers, perceive influencer advertising with regard to credibility and trustworthiness.

It has also considered the influence of other types of influencers, including macro and micro influencers, on consumers' buying behaviour. By analyzing these interactions, this thesis will help to understand the lacquer of how influencer marketing enhances engagement and loyalty and increases consumption. Like any other

tool, influencer marketing has its share of benefits and drawbacks to the brands that embrace it. When it comes to marketing campaigns, engaging with a target audience that includes influencers adds to the trust factor. However, this can have the downside of leading to consumer mistrust, especially in cases where the influencer promotions come off as too commercialized or exaggerated. How can companies avoid these flaws while concentrating on influencer promotions? This particular analysis. Additionally, this paper will explain the potential scenarios in which conviction strategies may not be effective, as well as define the possible intersection of limited paid text content.

Problem statement

This study seeks to investigate how different factors influence purchasing decisions in response to influencer marketing across two distinct generations—Gen Xers and Millennials. Specifically, it examines the role of credibility and content style, hypothesizing that Gen Xers are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on the credibility of influencers and practical, straightforward content, while Millennials are more influenced by the creative, visually engaging content. By understanding these generational differences, the study aims to provide insights for marketers looking to tailor their influencer strategies to better resonate with each demographic.

Hypothesis

H1. Generation X is more likely to make purchasing decisions based on the credibility of influencers and practical, straightforward content. H2. Millennials are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on creative, credible, visually engaging content.

Literature review

Conceptualization of the term influencer

An influencer is an individual who, due to their status, expertise, credibility, or connection with their followers, can affect others' buying choices. Influencers are defined as "third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media" (Freberg et al. 2011). Through sharing their own experiences, thoughts, and reviews, influencers—whether micro (having smaller, niche audiences) or macro (having a wider reach)—have an impact on their followers and help them make decisions. Furthermore, influencers are "mediators of attention" who

purposefully uphold authenticity while endorsing branded material (Abidin 2016).

Murphy, known for establishing the influencer marketing industry, in 2019 first introduced the concept of sponsored blogging (Murphy 2019). Many businesses began to recognize the benefits of this new marketing approach after he opened up a whole new market and provided sponsored blog articles and chats. That cleared the path for the Associated Press to post the first sponsored tweet in 2013 during the Consumer Electronics Show (Coldford 2013).

Millennials

According to the Pew Research Centre, it was concluded that everyone born between 1981 and 1996 ought to be officially identified as millennials to maintain the analytical relevance of this generation. This classification pertains to individuals who will be between 29 and 44 years old in 2025 (Dimock 2019). Due to the ability to track and follow their friends and influencers on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, millennials have a propensity to spend a lot of time on these sites. Additionally, they frequently use these forums to brag about their accomplishments (Pandey et al. 2020).

Millennials are thought to have grown up in a time of economic prosperity, and they are better protected than previous generations when it comes to consumer safety. They also frequently seek their parents' advice while making decisions (McGlynn 2005). Since they are maturing within a well-established society instead of trying to dismantle it, they represent the most exciting and perilous generation since the baby boomers instigated the social revolution (Stein 2013). Thanks to the extensive reach of the Internet, various social networks, and engaging technologies, millennials are increasingly participating in the creation and development of brands and products.

Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a brand-new, all-around marketing strategy that can help overcome sales obstacles between prospective clients and draw attention to people who can counsel decision-makers. A key component of the entire sales strategy, these individuals are referred to as influencers (Brown & Hayes 2008).

Surprisingly, there isn't a lot of strategic information about influencers at the moment (Campbell & Farrell 2020). Brown and Hayes (2008) defined influencer marketing as "increasing selectivity

in targeting segments, increasing understanding of each sector, demanding more thought when deciding how and what to communicate, and massively reducing the waste and white noise level of badly thought-out blanket saturation onslaughts."

The influence of social media influencers

Social media influencers can effectively promote four essential aspects for online marketers: attitudes, opinions, actions, and purchasing choices. Forbes also emphasizes the importance of understanding the social learning theory, which illustrates how individuals can adopt new behaviours simply by observing others, to grasp the significant influence that these influencers possess. When brands and products are showcased in practical settings and contexts, influencers have a greater likelihood of encouraging their followers to imitate them and buy the associated items. Additionally, Forbes notes that a high level of engagement between followers and influencers contributes to building trust over time (Forbes 2016). Social media influencers can persuade their followers to purchase a brand or product they promote because they can build their credibility and personal brand, effectively presenting themselves as authorities in specific areas (Gould2018).

Currently, one of the main ways businesses communicate with their target audience is through social media. Instagram has always held significant economic potential, and its importance continues to increase. It ranks among the top platforms for online marketing expansion, boasting over one billion daily users (Bellavista et al. 2019). As social media platforms continue to evolve technologically, businesses must adapt to the ever-changing needs and preferences of their audience. Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a fundamental notion in social media that facilitates the dissemination of information from one user to another. Consequently, nearly all companies use their official accounts to promote their products on the internet, while also partnering with popular social media personalities or influencers. Research indicates that a majority of consumers tend to favour a product more when it is endorsed by a third party, like influencers or celebrities, rather than when it is promoted directly by the brand itself (Nadany Iova et al. 2020).

Millennials' consumer behaviour

Millennials have grown up in a digital age. Additionally, they have been controlling the market with their purchasing power. This study will make use of the US concept of Millennials (Nadanylova et al. 2020). There are four main cohorts, as can be seen above, based on generation segmentation (Ordun2015). The generational classifications include Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964. Builders from 1920 to 1945, Generation X from 1965 to 1980, and Generation Y (or Millennials) spanning 1981 to 2000. Although technological advancements have significantly impacted their buying behaviours due to the vast information available on social media, millennials still tend to favor shopping at convenience stores (Nichols et al. 2014). They combine online research with in-person shopping to create a more comprehensive buying experience (Valentine & Powers, 2013).

Gen Xers' consumer behaviour

Although Gen Xers appreciate digital media, they still interact with traditional media, which includes print, radio, and television, because they grew up in this era. For instance, television commercials continue to have an impact. Gen Xers use sites like Facebook and YouTube for entertainment, news, and social connections. Even while they might not use social media as often as younger generations do, they still appreciate useful, educational, and unobtrusive information (Harris 2016). He further says that 'the realistic, value-conscious worldview of Gen Xers consumers is characterized by their quest for independence and authenticity. Although they have a very low opinion of traditional advertising, they might be devoted to companies that share their ideals and provide genuine benefits.

Brand engagement and brand attitude

The primary metric that shows how successfully the audience interacts with the content—whether they save the image, comment, or repost images or videos—is the engagement rate. In addition to lowering expenses, brand engagement can boost sales. Long-time brand loyalists are more inclined to make purchases from the company than new ones. A plan for customer involvement can also aid firms in expanding their product lines (Risitano et al. 2017). Every business faces danger since the Internet has made it easier to enter new markets and decreased barriers to entry. Instead of forming a new relationship

with a brand they are unfamiliar with, a loyal customer of a particular firm is more inclined to continue doing business with that company. Consequently, in the cutthroat sector, brand involvement can be important (Hollebeek et al. 2017). Customers can promote the brand as well. The likelihood of a customer influencing another customer is higher than that of the brand. Positive word-of-mouth and peer sharing of product posts and promotions will result from brand interaction.

Purchase decision process

To have a better understanding of how influencers impact consumers in both offline and online transactions, the process is described using the five traditional and essential phases for making a purchase, which are shown below. In 1910, John Dewey initially proposed this paradigm. Functional psychology was pioneered by the American philosopher John Dewey (Gouinloc et al. 2019). His hypothesis of the buyer decision process, which is widely referred to as the purchase decision process, served as the basis for the consumer behaviour model. Need Recognition \rightarrow Information Search \rightarrow Evaluation of Alternatives \rightarrow Purchase Decision \rightarrow Post-Purchase Behaviour.

Need recognition

In the initial phase of need recognition, the consumer assesses their requirements to determine which type of product they wish to try to satisfy those needs (Park & Cho 2012). There are both physiological and psychological needs present. Physiological needs, which include essentials like food and water required for human survival, are often triggered by certain incentives. Conversely, psychological desires are shaped by social environments and personal interactions among individuals (Comegys et al. 2006). Nowadays, social media platforms can also spark these desires. Having a positive outlook on products that social media influencers advocate could increase the likelihood that someone will make a purchase (Wong et al. 2017). For consumers seeking inspiration on what things to purchase, influencers are a great resource. It is noteworthy that according to a Rakuten poll, 87% of consumers were motivated to buy something after seeing it from an influencer (Rakuten 2019).

Information search

Information search is the next step in the decision to buy, and it entails searching various sources for information about the intended product. It mostly entails the subsequent sub-steps:

- a) The consumer begins by conducting research and choosing items that meet their needs while seeking out as much information and marketing as they can.
- b) They then delve deeper into their search by actively engaging in product-related discussions, which gives them a better understanding of the product's specs as well as those of various brands and models (Comegys et al. 2006).

Evaluation of alternatives

The evaluation phase is crucial right after the consumer recognizes the products that can fulfil their wants and needs (Park & Cho 2012). At this stage, the buyer assesses similar items along with their characteristics, pricing, brand, and warranty, among other aspects, to reach a decision. Typically, consumers are more inclined to trust a product with a reputable origin (Kembau 2014). According to Nielsen's "Global Trust in Advertising," more than two-thirds of consumers value the views of experts and other online shoppers from various internet sources (The Nielsen Company 2015).

Purchase decision

At this moment, the customer is ready to make a genuine purchase after gathering all the necessary information. He has chosen the product he wants to buy and is set to move forward with the transaction. Comegys et al. (2006) emphasize the need to differentiate between purchasing intention and the actual purchase decision at this point. The authors highlight that various factors might alter the final purchase decision after the customer has established his intention to buy. These factors could involve a different perspective from another individual or even an impulsive action triggered by external influences.

Post-purchase behaviour

Customers hold specific expectations regarding how a product will satisfy their needs before making a purchase (Park & Cho 2012). The likelihood of individuals returning to buy more from a company in the future is influenced by their perceptions and emotions after the transaction is completed. This phenomenon is known as post-purchase behaviour. It encompasses a customer's emotions, thoughts, and actions following their purchase. In this phase, customers assess their satisfaction level with the product they acquired. It's common for customers to feel a sense of anxiety after making a purchase.

Increased skepticism about the purchase may arise if a competitor's product comes to the customer's attention. This situation occurs when consumers encounter an alternative product and regret their choice, either because of the competitor's lower price, superior reviews, or other elements that create doubt about their decision. This feeling is known as buyer's remorse. It is crucial for a company that the customer is satisfied to encourage repeat purchases of the same product and brand, fostering loyalty to it (Comegys et al. 2006).

Research methodology

A quantitative research methodology was used in this study to evaluate the impact of influencer marketing on millennials and Gen Xers' purchase decisions. Because they made it possible to quantify factors like influencer type, content format, and purchase behaviour. The respondents from the two groups Millennials and Gen Xers were approached.

Population and sampling

For population purposes, the students of Management, Psychology, and Media Studies enrolled in BS and MS programs at three known universities based in Karachi were chosen for the millennial group. The professional and working people were chosen as a second group of Gen Xers working in different organizations as a second population.

A survey of 150 respondents for each group was conducted for the study. This sample size guaranteed sufficient response variability and was sufficient for conducting meaningful statistical analysis. The sample consisted of millennials aged 28 to 44 and Gen Xers aged 45 to 60, with an emphasis on those who were engaged on social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, where influencer marketing is common.

The study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique to choose participants. The study's concentration on millennials and Gen Xers who were exposed to influencer marketing made this strategy successful. The study selected participants who were frequent social media users and had engaged with influencer content to collect pertinent data where influencer marketing was frequently discussed, participants were chosen to make sure the sample matched the study's goals. The Cronbach Alpha has been calculated as .89 for the internal validity of the survey instrument.

Findings and analysis

Table 1. Differences by generation in influencer engage

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Trust in influencers'	Millennials	7	15	28	35	15
transparency	Gen Xers	25	37	15	16	7
Millennials' Perception of Relatable	Millennials	2	8	4	51	35
Influences	Gen Xers	49	13	11	18	8
Authenticity Over Followers	Millennials		12	26	37	19
	Gen Xers	29	40	7	14	10
Influencer Credibility	Millennials	2	13	26	40	19
Through Interaction	Gen Xers	49	13	18	11	9
Trustworthiness of Influencers	Millennials	2	5	7	59	27
Using Personal Stories	Gen Xers	32	28	5	21	15
TikTok influence	Millennials	8	9	7	41	19
	Gen Xers	27	25	12	22	15
Relatability of Micro-Macro	Millennials	8	10	18	41	23
Influencers	Gen Xers	33	27	10	19	11
Discovery of New Brands	Millennials	7	7	5	57	24
Through Macro- Influencers	Gen Xers	16	37	8	25	13

Loyalty to endorse brands	Millennials	2	5	8	55	30	
	Gen Xers	19	31	17	18	16	
Video content engagement	Millennials	4	4	5	54	33	
	Gen Xers	15	33	7	37	8	
Skepticism toward Advertising	Millennials	25	44	7	17	7	
	Gen Xers	15	19	5	39	21	

Millennials typically place greater faith in the transparency, relatability, and authenticity of influencers, showing a notable preference for personal stories and interactions with them. They are also more inclined to engage with video content and platforms like TikTok, favoring micro-influencers over larger ones. On the other hand, Gen Xers exhibit more skepticism regarding the credibility of influencers, displaying higher levels of distrust and lesser interaction with newer platforms such as TikTok. Additionally, they are more likely to be wary of advertising as a whole.

Table 2. Difference between millennial's and Gen Xers trust in influencers' transparency

One-Sample Test							
		Test Value = 0					
			Sig. (2-	Mean	95% Confiden	ce Interval	
	t	Df	tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper	
Millennial	36.975	149	.000	3.360	3.18	3.54	
Transparency Trust							
Gen Xers	24.381	149	.000	2.447	2.25	2.64	
Transparency Trust							

Table 2 shows that p-values are 0.000, and the mean Transparency Trust for both groups is significantly higher than 0. The mean of the Millennial group is higher (3.36) than that of the Gen Xers group (2.45).

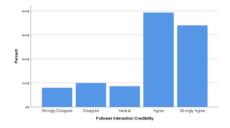
Table 3. Authenticity over followers

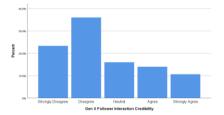
One-Sample Test						
Test Value $= 0$						
	Sig. (2-	Mean	95% Confidence			
t df	tailed)	Difference	Interval			

					Lower	Upper
Authenticity Over	39.445	149	.000	3.533	3.36	3.71
Followers						
(Millennials)						
Authenticity Over	22.063	149	.000	2.353	2.14	2.56
Followers (Gen Xers)						

Both Overall and Gen Xers statistically concur that sincerity holds more value than follower count; however, millennials show a greater mean difference (3.533) compared to Gen Xers (2.353), indicating that millennials place higher importance on authenticity than on followers. The results in both cases are extremely significant (p-value = .000), suggesting that these differences are not due to random chance.

Figures 1 & 2. Agreement on influencer' credibility through interaction





Figures 1 and 2 show the significant difference in the agreement on influencers' credibility through interaction. The majority 43% of the millennials believe that influencers' regular interaction with consumers enhances the credibility of influencers. On the other hand, the majority, 59% of Gen Xers think against it.

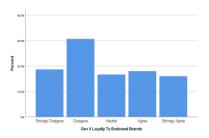
Table 4. Trustworthiness of influencers using personal stories

One-Sample Test						
	Test Val	ue =	0			
					95% C	Confidence
			Sig. (2-	Mean	In	terval
	t	Df	tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper
Personal Stories	58.574	14	.000	4.047	3.91	4.18
Trust (Millennials)		9				
Personal Stories	21.345	14	.000	2.580	2.34	2.82
Trust (Gen Xers)		9				

As indicated in Table 4, millennials tend to have a greater trust in personal stories compared to Gen Xers, as shown by their significantly higher agreement (mean difference of 4.047) compared to Gen Xers (mean difference of 2.580). While Millennials exhibit a markedly higher level of trust than Gen Xers, both demographics show considerable and statistically significant support for the truthfulness of personal narratives.

60/A 60/A 60/A 20/A

Figures 3 & 4. Agreement on loyalty to endorse brands



Figures 3 and 4 show significant differences in the agreement on loyalty to endorse brands. The majority 85% of the millennials endorse loyalty to brands while the majority 60% of Gen Xers think against it.

Table 5. Relationship between video Content Engagement by Millennials Gen Xers

Correlations			
		Millennials	Gen Xers
Millennials' Video	Pearson Correlation	1	017
Content Engagemer	Sig. (2-tailed)		.835
_	N	150	150
Gen Xers Video Co	Pearson Correlation	017	1
Engagement	Sig. (2-tailed)	.835	
	N	150	150

The Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.017, indicating a very weak, negative relationship between Gen Xers' Video Content Engagement and Millennials' Video Content Engagement. The p-value for this correlation is 0.835, which is well above the significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, this indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship (Table 5).

Table 6. Skepticism Toward Advertising

Correlations		Millennials	Gen Xers
Millennials' Scepticism Toward	Pearson Correlation	1	.328**
Advertising	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
Gen Xers' Scepticism Toward	Pearson Correlation	.328**	1
Advertising	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows a moderate positive correlation .32 between Millennials' skepticism toward advertising and that of Gen Xers. As Millennials' skepticism rises, Gen Xers's skepticism also appears to increase.

However, the correlation is not particularly robust (around 0.5, which denotes a moderate to strong association), but it remains statistically significant.

Discussion

The data reveals notable generational disparities between Millennials and Gen Xers, especially regarding trust, engagement with influencers, and commitment to brands. Let's analyze the findings critically.

Millennials exhibit a significantly higher average Transparency Trust score (3.36) compared to Gen Xers (2.45), with this difference being statistically significant (Tables 1 & 2). This indicates that Millennials are more inclined to trust authentic and transparent communications, likely due to their immersion in digital media and the continuous stream of information that influences their views (Freberg et al. 2011; Djafarova & Rushworth 2017). Conversely, Gen Xers may adopt a more cautious or traditional stance towards online transparency. The elevated trust in transparency among Millennials may reflect their craving for authenticity, which is increasingly recognized as a crucial aspect of establishing online relationships (De Veirman et al. 2017).

The tendency to prioritize sincerity over follower count is another domain where Millennials demonstrate a stronger preference. The mean difference of 3.533 for Millennials versus 2.353 for Gen Xers illustrates that Millennials attach greater importance to authenticity and personal relationships rather than to the size of a social media audience (Table 3). This might stem from the fact that Millennials matured during the rise of influencer marketing, leading them to be more critical regarding the significance of genuine content over shallow metrics. While Gen Xers also appreciate sincerity, they may not regard it as highly, perhaps due to their more conventional media consumption habits and lesser focus on social media during their formative years (Marwick 2015; Smith 2019). Figure 1 illustrates a significant difference in how Millennials and Gen Xers perceive the impact of interaction on influencer credibility. A notable 43% of Millennials believe that regular interaction enhances credibility, whereas a considerably larger percentage (59%) of Gen Xers disagree (Figures 1 & 2). This suggests that Millennials are more likely to resonate with influencers who maintain regular communication with their audience (Lou & Yuan 2019). Millennials may be more accustomed to engaging, user-generated content and therefore link credibility to a more personalized style. In contrast, Gen Xers may still adhere to more traditional perspectives, favoring a more professional or distant approach to influencer-brand dynamics, which might explain their skepticism toward the value of interaction.

Millennials display a stronger tendency to trust personal narratives compared to Gen Xers, as evidenced by a significant agreement difference (mean difference of 4.047 for Millennials vs. 2.580 for Gen Xers (Table 4). Having grown up in a digital space where personal experiences are frequently shared online, Millennials might be more sensitive to the emotional and personal dimensions of storytelling. On the other hand, Gen Xers may still be influenced by traditional advertising methods or information distribution that do not emphasize personal narratives as heavily. This generational divide suggests that Millennials could form a deeper emotional connection to personal stories, particularly when conveyed by influencers.

The significant variation in brand loyalty between the two generations is also instructive. While 85% of Millennials affirm brand loyalty, only 60% of Gen Xers support this concept (Figures 3 & 4). Millennials are likely to perceive brand loyalty as a reflection of their values and identity, particularly when aligned with brands that champion transparency, authenticity, and social responsibility. In contrast, Gen Xers may approach brand loyalty with a more pragmatic mindset, emphasizing functionality and price over emotional ties or long-term devotion to a brand (Lynch 2017). This difference in viewpoint could stem from the contrasting relationships both generations have with advertising and consumer behavior—Millennials, being more familiar with digital platforms, might feel more empowered to connect with brands that resonate with them, whereas Gen Xers might still view brand loyalty through a more traditional lens.

The absence of a statistically significant correlation between the video content engagement of Gen Xers and Millennials (correlation coefficient of -0.017) indicates that their video engagement behaviors are quite different. While there is a moderate positive correlation (.32) in their skepticism toward advertising, this link is not especially strong or robust, suggesting that both generations are skeptical of advertising but may experience it in varying degrees (Tables 5 & 6). The lack of a significant correlation in video content engagement implies that different elements—such as platform choice, content type, or marketing tactics—are affecting how each generation engages with video content. The results are supported by the study (Cunningham 2017).

In summary, the study's results do not support either hypothesis, yet some shared values and preferences exist between the two groups when it comes to consumer marketing preferences.

Conclusion

In general, Millennials demonstrate a greater preference for authenticity, interaction, and personal stories compared to Gen Xers, who may still prioritize more traditional, professional, or functional connections with influencers and brands. These distinctions highlight how each generation's unique interactions with technology, media, and marketing have influenced their perspectives and actions. Recognizing these generational preferences is essential for marketers aiming to customize their strategies effectively, as what appeals to one generation may not resonate with the other. To summarize, the findings of the study do not entirely uphold the initial hypotheses, as significant differences between Millennials and Gen Xers were identified in various aspects. However, both groups share some common values and preferences concerning consumer marketing. While the research underscores clear generational differences—particularly in trust, brand loyalty, and influencer credibility—it also uncovers areas of commonality, such as the appreciation for sincerity and authenticity in marketing, along with a shared skepticism toward advertising. This indicates that, although their preferences are influenced by different experiences and media environments, there are core values that marketers can use to engage both generations. These shared values serve as a valuable foundation for developing more inclusive and successful marketing strategies that resonate across generational boundaries.

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The effects of corruption and inflation on women's labor force participation: A quantile regression approach

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the effects of inflation and corruption on women's labor force participation using data from 67 countries in 2022. While conducting this research, GDP and Gross Capital Formation, which is an indicator of investments, were also analysed, but since they were found to be statistically insignificant, the model was constructed by excluding these variables and the analysis continued. Findings reveal a negative impact of inflation and a positive impact of reduced corruption on female labor force participation. Moreover, the test of reverse causality reveals the effect of female labor force participation on corruption. Another important finding of the analysis is that the corruption index parameter is statistically significant, while inflation is insignificant. This shows that in countries with low female labor force participation, inflation is not the reason for the low rate. In addition to this finding, one of the important findings of the analysis is that the severity of the effect of corruption on women's labor force participation rate increases as the quantile decreases. These results underscore the importance of anti-inflation and anti-corruption policies to promote gender equality in the workforce. Understanding the effects of economic variables like inflation and corruption on female labor force participation is crucial for implementing effective policy measures. This study distinguishes itself from the limited existing literature through some of its findings, making a significant contribution to the field.

Keywords: corruption, inflation, women's labor force participation rate, quantile regression

Introduction

Gender-based inequalities are one of the most serious challenges in labor market dynamics; hence, clear disparities in employment rates,

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job mobility, and wage structures persist between men and women. Despite active policy initiatives towards gender-inclusive economic participation, structural barriers still prevail in guaranteeing women access to stable, well-paying employment. Among the major macroeconomic determinants influencing FLFP, the most important are inflation and corruption. These economic distortions have multifaceted and often interdependent effects on labor market competition, employment accessibility, and general economic stability. Given that women are overrepresented in informal, low-wage, and precarious jobs, inflationary pressures and corrupt practices sharpen the already existing labor market inequalities, further deepening systemic disadvantages. One of the major indicators of macroeconomic instability is inflation, which changes the real sector by altering the labor market conditions, household incomes, and employment prospects. Allowing inflation to rise could be associated with increased production costs and wage stagnation, aggravating competition in the labor market and disproportionately hitting female-dominated sectors such as retail, services, and informal employment.

The empirical literature argues that inflationary pressures are more likely to induce household-driven labor supply responses among females, where women are pushed into the labor force as secondary earners to compensate for the loss in household purchasing power (Doğaner 2022; Wang 2019). However, this response is highly context-dependent. In economies with rigid labor markets or high unemployment rates, inflation may instead act as a deterrent to female employment, as firms respond to increased production costs by reducing labor demand or shifting toward more capital-intensive production. Moreover, inflation erodes real wages, and this has a particularly strong effect on low-income and female workers, who are often concentrated in sectors with weak wage bargaining power. In fact, women who work in unstable jobs may feel the brunt of employment instability more because economic downturns spurred by inflation might increase the potential rate of displacement for female employees compared to men. In addition, inflation would also restrain fiscal capacity in the governments, potentially reducing the number of public sector employees, social protection programs, and childcare support services that could facilitate women's participation in the labor force. Thus, the impact of inflation on FLFP is nonlinear and heterogeneous, conditional on institutional labor market structures, social protection mechanisms, and economic resilience factors.

Just as corruption is a structural inefficiency, so does it undermine the integrity of the labor market, creating a scenario that permits nepotism, clientelism, and unequal access to economic opportunities. Often, corruption in highly corrupt labor markets compromises the meritocratic system of hiring and promotion, disproportionately affecting women, young workers, and other marginalised groups (Hagglund & Khan 2023; Afzal & Asif 2021). Corruption also deepens gender gaps by denying access to capital, credit, and entrepreneurial opportunities, making it harder for women to move into formal employment or business ownership. Evidence also demonstrates that corruption distorts labor market competition, thus reinforcing maledominated employment networks, decreasing the likelihood of women finding high-skilled, leadership, and decision-making jobs (Cvetanoska & Kubbe, 2022).

The negative impact of corruption does not stop at labor markets but seeps into the very fabric of institutional frameworks required to implement gender equality policies. Economies with pervasive corruption tend to have a weaker mechanism for enforcing the implementation of gender-responsive policies, such as equal pay legislation, parental leave benefits, and anti-discrimination measures. This also led to the misallocation of resources and diversion of public funds from key social services, such as education, health, and childcare infrastructure, crucial for women's participation in the economy. In so doing, corruption only serves to perpetuate the existing structural gender biases, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of economic exclusion and institutionalised disadvantage.

Empirically, the study will find out to what extent inflation and corruption really affect women's integration into the labor force in considering both direct economic constraints and institutional distortions. To that end, the research will first undertake a major literature review to synthesise existing findings and come up with a theoretical framework through which these relationships can be understood. The paper will then proceed to conduct a quantitative econometric analysis using cross-country panel data on female labor force participation rates, inflation, corruption, GDP, and gross capital formation from the World Bank and Transparency International. Given the heterogeneity in economic environments, quantile regression methods will be employed to capture the differential impacts across varying labor market structures and institutional contexts.

The findings of this study will provide critical insights for policymakers, particularly in developing economies where gender disparities in employment remain stark. The study will also provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to mitigate these constraints by estimating the inflationary thresholds beyond which labor market distortions become more pronounced. Moreover, it will assess the marginal impact of corruption on FLFP. Specifically, policy interventions aimed at increasing transparency in the labor market, enhancing the mechanisms for social protection, promoting financial inclusion in a gender-inclusive manner, and implementing structural reforms that will reduce inflationary volatility. Such steps by the government will eventually enable it to develop a labor market in which women are more equitably, resiliently, and inclusively involved in economic development.

The complex interplay among inflation, corruption, and female labor force participation is central to the design of labor market policies that will further not just gender equity but also economic stability. Inflation has both push and pull effects on women's employment depending on the labor market conditions. Corruption systematically disadvantages women, reinforcing institutionalised barriers and economic exclusion. The present article contributes to the existing literature by providing an all-encompassing empirical analysis of such dynamics and by offering policy-driven solutions that build gender-responsive economic environments. Future research should continue to explore these intersectional factors, including education, digitalisation, and labor market flexibility, to understand the complex determinants women's economic empowerment facing ofmacroeconomic and institutional challenges.

Literature

The primary focus of this study revolves around understanding and dissecting the intricate interplay between female labor force participation, corruption, and inflation. To achieve this, we conducted a thorough review of existing literature, aiming to provide an analysis of how these factors impact female labor force participation within the context of current scholarly works. Women's labor force participation stands out as an important issue that not only contributes to economic growth but also has the potential to reduce gender inequality. On the other hand, corruption and inflation serve as reflections of the intricacies within economic systems and policies. Hence, our literature

review sought to amalgamate these three fundamental components, allowing for a deeper comprehension of how female labor force participation interacts with corruption and inflation, while also pinpointing existing gaps in these domains.

The impact of inflation on female labor force participation

Empirical research has extensively explored the relationship between inflation and female labor force participation (FLFP), but the findings regarding the nature and direction of this relationship are mixed. An increasing body of literature identifies inflation as an important macroeconomic determinant of women's labor market engagement (Mehmood et al. 2015). Studies do reveal that inflationary pressures bear on labour supply decisions, notably for women, by altering household income dynamics and employment incentives (Bibi & Afzal, 2012). A long-run relationship between inflation and FLFP was confirmed in all the contexts under study, although the strength of this relationship varies across time.

Some studies have found a positive relationship between inflation and FLFP, especially in emerging economies such as Türkiye (Doğaner 2022; Koyuncu & Okşak 2021; Özkök & Polat 2020; Wang 2019; Mujahid 2013; Niemi & Lloyd 1981). The income effect is the mechanism underlying this relationship: increasing consumer prices imply that the household needs more income, so women must work (Awan & Sadia 2018). Niemi & Lloyd (1981), and Wang (2019) argue that an increased rate in inflation results in higher levels of females seeking entry to the labor force due to eroding purchasing power, whereas this real wage erosion is argued by others to also act as an important driver in explaining female participation for maintaining levels of living by the household members (Eastin and Prakash 2013, and Augustine & Augustine 2013). Empirical evidence suggests that a unit increase in the rate of inflation increases FLFP by 0.06% (Sertçelik 2021), though Özkök & Polat (2020) estimate this effect to be 0.047%, providing support for the hypothesis that inflationary environments lead to increased participation of females in the labor market.

Not all literature agrees with this relationship since some studies found no statistically significant effect of inflation on FLFP. Similarly, the studies by Demirtaş & Yayla (2017) and Korkmaz & Alacahan (2013) indicate no meaningful relation between inflation and female labor force participation, while Özer & Biçerli (2004) report an absence of

direct linkage between these variables. These divergent results point out that the nexus between inflation and FLFP is likely to be context-dependent, depending on structural characteristics of the labor market as well as household income elasticity and broader economic conditions. The impact of inflation on FLFP can also be modified by labor market rigidity, wage-setting mechanisms, and social norms with respect to female employment.

Although inflation can act as a push factor for FLFP in economies where declining real wages require households to generate extra income, the presence of institutional constraints, labor market segmentation, and social barriers may reduce this effect in some contexts. Future research should further investigate the heterogeneous effects of inflation on FLFP, considering sectoral employment shifts, income inequality, and policy responses to inflationary pressures to develop a more nuanced understanding of this macroeconomic relationship.

Table 1. Results of the impact of inflation on female labor force participation

Researcher	Period, Country	Method	Findings
Niemi and Lloyd, 1981	1956-77, USA	OLS	It is evident that the impact of inflation on labor force participa tion rates extends beyond its reduction of the real pay.
Özer and Biçerli, 2004	1988-2001, Türkiye	Panel Data Regression, Fixed Effects Model, Random Effects Model	Macroeconomic variables such as unemployment rate, inflation rate, wages in manufacturing industry and variables such as crude divorce rate were not found to be significant.
Bibi and Afzal, 2012	146 married women aging from 20 to 70, Wah Cantt (Pakistan)	Quantitative and qualitative data	The rate of inflation that prevails in a nation's economy has a significant impact on married women 's participa tion in the labor force.
Anyanwu and Augustine, 2013	1991-2009, Africa	Cross-sectional data	Greater pricing promotes gender parity in the workforce
Eastin and Prakash, 2013	1980-2005, 146 countries	Linear mixed- effects models (with polynomials)	The impact of economic development on gender equality depends on the level of development.
Mujahid, 2013	1980-2010, Pakistan	ARDL, ECM approach and Granger Causality Test	Inflation increases women's labor force participation.
Korkmaz and Alacahan, 2013	2008-2012, Türkiye	Correlation analysis and regression models	A 1-unit increase in female employment leads to a 1,583-unit increase in GDP.
Mehmood et al., 2015	2003-2013, 41	Generalised Method of	There is a positive relationship between rising inflation and the female labour force participation rate. Inflation

	Muslim countries	Moments (GMM)	creates financial pressure for their families and children to have a better future.
Demirtaş and Yayla, 2017	1995-2012, 113 countries	Panel data analysis	The inflation rate has no significant effect on women's employment
Wang, 2019	2000-2018, USA	The Random Forest Model	Religion is an important factor affecting a country's female labour force participation. Housework, gross domestic product, and women's higher education enrollment rate are also influential.

The impact of corruption on female labor force participation

More recent research has sought to address the convoluted link between corruption and the participation of women in the labor market, bringing attention to the barriers erected by corruption and the way greater inclusion of women in the workforce can reduce corruption. Studies show that women, being less involved in illegitimate activities and more likely to be ethically inclined, may contribute to a decrease in corruption both in political and economic circles (Jha & Sarangi, 2018). In contrast, systemic corruption disproportionately affects women by limiting their access to employment, education, and financial resources, which reinforces the structural barriers to economic participation (Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer 2019). These results underline the two-way nature of the corruption-gender nexus, where corruption, while placing a limit on female economic agency, is also held in check by increased female representation in both the labor market and governance structures.

Moreover, corruption affects labor force participation through institutional inefficiencies that hit women disproportionally. Practices like bribery, nepotism, and clientelism are obstacles to fair job opportunities, and at times, only reward those male-dominant networks while shutting off access for women seeking promotion (Bauhr & Charron 2020). In developing economies, where informal employment constitutes a significant portion of labor markets, women are particularly vulnerable to exploitative work conditions, often exacerbated by corruption that weakens labor protections and regulatory enforcement (Swamy et al. 2001). As a result, corruption functions as an indirect form of labor market discrimination, deterring women's entry into formal employment sectors and limiting their economic empowerment. In addition, corruption impacts female entrepreneurship more because women entrepreneurs must bear larger bureaucratic barriers, insufficient access to credit, and greater exposure

to bribery and extortion (Khan 2022). Because corrupt business environments tend to favour entrenched elites, market competition drops, making it hard for female-owned businesses to get through. With female entrepreneurship being a critical driver for economic growth and poverty alleviation, addressing corruption becomes a sine qua non to fostering an inclusive business environment (Gokcekus & Mukherjee 2021). Policy interventions aimed at increasing women's participation in the labor force, therefore, must include anti-corruption reforms, better financial accessibility, and regulatory frameworks that ensure transparency and equity in labor markets.

Such findings call for a gender-sensitive approach toward anticorruption policies to make sure that governance and economic structures facilitate the full economic participation of women. Future research must go further into examining the intersectionality of gender, corruption, and labor market dynamics, mostly within the framework of regional variations, sectoral differences, and institutional reforms. This can be affected through policy transparency, gender quotas, and inclusive financial mechanisms that will help reduce systemic barriers and build a much more level playing field for women.

Researcher	Period, Country	Method	Findings
Samimi et al., 2013	2003-2010, selected Isl	Panel data	With the increase in women's participation in the labor market, corruption has been decreasing over time.
Afzal and Asif, 2021	1995-2018, 167 countries	Panel data	Women working in an economy had a significant impact on reducing the perceived level of corruption from 2007 to 2018.
Yerrebati ,2022	2013-2018, 79 Developing countries	The two-step system GMM estimation technique.	Women's empowerment and increased labor force participation have been shown to reduce perceived levels of corruption, particularly in developing countries.

Table 2. Results of the impact of corruption on female labor force participation

Other factors

A review of the literature on women's labor force participation rate reveals that economic growth, national income per capita, unemployment and inflation are the most studied topics. In addition, fertility rate, age, education level, caregiver costs, pensioner rate, unpaid family workers, number of children, social prejudices,

ownership of residence, religion and urbanisation rate are also found to be factors affecting women's labor force participation (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of the impact of the other factors on female labor force participation

Researcher	Period, Country	Method	Findings
Barrow, 1996	The last 20 years, USA	Instrumental variable estimation	Childcare costs have a significant impact on women's decision to join the labor market within
Özer and Biçerli, 2003	1988-2001, Türkiye	Panel data, least squares regression, fixed effects and random effects models	The proportion of unpaid family workers in the employed female labor force and micro variables
Doğrul, 2008	2003, Türkiye	Logistic regression model	Education level, economic status, number of children and
Ince, 2010	1990-2009, Türkiye	Panel Data Analysis	Wage differential s, the
Mishra et al., 2010	G-7 countries	Panel Unit root, Panel Cointegration Panel Granger causality test	Labor force participation rate and total fertility rate is cointegrated. Total fertility %1↑ →female labor force participation rate ↓
Tam, 2010	1950-1980, 130 countries	Dynamic Panel	Long-run U relationship with Gross Domestic Product per capita and GDP squared
Davaslıgil, 2011	2009, Türkiye	Multinominal logit model	The age variable was found to be statistically significant for rural women, but the most important factor affecting female labor force participation was
Için, 2012	2012, Türki ye, Yalova	Survey method	Social prejudices they endure when deciding to participate in education and business life is at the forefront of the problems women face.

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Kızılgöl, 2012	2002-2008, Türkiye	Logit Model	Education level, household income, dependency ratio, ownership of the dwelling and age of women are found to be important factors on women's labor force
			participation potential.
Acar and	2014, Türkiye	Multiple regression	Religion element, its
Fraker, 2016		model	impact on women's participation in economic life, similar
Korkmaz, 2016	2014-2019, Türkiye	Panel regression	Women's full monthly income positive effect on the probability of working full-time.
Khanet al., 2017	1990-2014,	Augmented-Dickey	A long-run and U-shaped
	Pakistan	Fuller (ADF) test, Johansen co-integration test, Error correction model (ECM)	link was found between economic growth and women's labor force participation rate.
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Zeren and Savrul, 2017	1991-2014, Türkiye	Hidden Cointegration	There is an asymmetric long-run relationship with economic growth, unemployment and
Appiah, 2018	1975-2015, Sub- Saharan Africa	Generalised Method of Moments	Increase in female labor force participation rate, GDP per capita has a
Awan and Sadia, 2018	2005-2015, Pakistan	Regression Analysis	The decrease in the fertility rate increases in Women's contribution
Türlüoğlu, 2018	1999-2017, Türkiye	VAR, Granger Causality Analysis	Women's Employment ↔ Growth
Düzyol Tıh, 2019	2006-2018, Türkiye	VAR, ECM, Granger causality test	Economic growth harms women's labor force participation in the short run and has a positive effect in the long run,
Karlılar, 2019	1996-2017, 48 advanced, 46 developing country	Static data analysis, dynamic data analysis	Economic growth is found to have an effect on women's employment that first decreases and then
Aldan and Öztürk, 2020	2004-2016, Türkiye	Logit	Improvement in educational attainment, rising retirement age and declining fertility are other important factors

Özkök and Polat, 2020	2018, Türkiye	Time series, DOLS, FMOLS	GDP, Inflation Rate, Urbanisation Rate increase the female	
Sertçelik, 2021	1994-2019, Türkiye	Narayan-Popp (2010) unit root test, Maki (2012) cointegration test Marayan-Popp A 1% increase female population and growth rate in the labor for participation rate women by 40.18 0.23%, respect		

Data and methodology

In this research, information about the participation rate of women in the labor force, corruption perceptions index, and inflation across 67 nations constituted the dataset. Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15-64) (modelled ILO estimate) from the World Bank for "the participation rate of women in the labor force" is included in the analysis. The Corruption Perceptions Index is taken (transparency.org). Transparency International from consumer prices (annual %), also from the World Bank, is used as inflation data. In addition, GDP growth (annual %) and Gross Capital Formation (GCF), which is an indicator of investments, are also taken from the World Bank and subjected to the test. The women's labor force participation rate was designated as the dependent variable, while the remaining variables were regarded as independent. The dataset comprised horizontal cross-sectional data specific to the year 2022.

All variables underwent logarithmic transformation. The method of the study is quantile regression analysis. Regression analysis is based on determining the effects of independent variable or variables on the dependent variable (Hill et al. 2011, 40). The most used regression model in the literature is linear regression. The linear regression model can be expressed as follows (Gujarati and Porter 2010, 33).

$$y_{-}i=\beta_{-}1+\beta_{-}2 x_{-}2i+\beta_{-}3 x_{-}3i+\cdots+\beta_{-}k x_{-}ki+\varepsilon_{-}i$$
 (1) In the above model, $y_{-}i$ is defined as the independent variable. $x_{-}2i$, $x_{-}3i$, and $x_{-}ki$ are the independent variables of the model. The coefficients β are the parameters of the model. Finally, $\varepsilon_{-}i$ is the normally distributed error term with zero mean and constant variance. In this context, there are k - l independent variables and k parameters in the model (Çil 2018, 119). Parameter estimation in regression analysis is important in measuring the effects of independent variables on the

dependent variable. The method used in parameter estimation is the Least Squares (LS) method. According to the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method, the (y_i) values estimated from the sample regression model should be closest to the observed y_i values. This is based on finding the parameter values that minimise the sum of squares of the error terms (Çil 2018, 114). The parameters obtained at the point where the sum of squares of the error term is minimum are linear, biasfree and the best estimators (Wooldridge 2009, 102). These properties of the parameters are referred to in the literature as the Gauss-Markov theorem (Stock and Watson 2012, 755).

To apply the linear regression model, some assumptions must be met. Firstly, it is assumed that the expected value of the population error term is zero. Secondly, the variance of the error term is constant for each value of the independent variable. Another assumption is that there is no autocorrelation between the error terms. It is also important that the error term and the independent variables are independent of each other. Another assumption is that the values of the independent variables are constant across replicate samples. In addition, the independent variable should take at least two different values. Apart from these, the number of observations should be greater than the number of parameters. Finally, there should be no complete multicollinearity between the independent variables. In case of full multicollinearity, it is not possible to estimate the parameters of the model (Hill et al. 2011, 45).

If the above assumptions are not met, the parameter estimates obtained from the linear regression model may not be valid. On the other hand, the problem of autocorrelation in time series analyses and the problem of changing variance in cross-sectional data are frequently encountered. It is important to use alternative models when the assumptions are not valid. The assumption of constant variance in the horizontal cross-section data used in this study is sometimes not met. In this case, one of the suggested models is quantile regression analysis. In this study, quantile regression analysis is used as a method. In addition, quantile regression analysis is less sensitive to outliers than the ECT method used in linear regression analysis. Although there is no normal distribution assumption in the OLS method, quantile regression can produce more efficient estimators than the OLS method when the error terms do not conform to the normal distribution (Saçaklı 2005, 84). Quantile regression analysis, developed by Koenker and Bassett (1978), is an alternative to the OLS method.

In the quantile regression method, parameter estimates are made based on various quantiles. In this context, separate parameters that minimise the sum of error squares can be estimated for each quantile value. Quantile regression analysis is less sensitive to outliers than the ECM method (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 85). The reason why the quantile regression method is less sensitive to outliers is that it can divide the distribution of the dependent variable into quartiles. The quantile regression method is more useful, especially when the conditional quantiles vary. One of the assumptions of the ECM method is that the variance of the error terms is constant for each value of the independent variable. The assumption of constant variance is equivalent to the same parameter estimates for all quantiles (Koenker 2005, 75). The case of varying variance causes different parameters to be estimated in different quantiles. If the difference is statistically significant, it indicates that the parameters vary across quantiles (Güler et al. 2018, 224). The quantile regression model is expressed as follows:

$$Y i=x i \beta \theta+e i \tag{2}$$

In the regression equation above, Y_i is the dependent variable and x_i is the vector of independent variables. The vector β_i is the vector of estimated parameters for the θ th quantile regression. Parameter estimation can be achieved by calculating the parameter β that minimises the following equation (Judge et al. 1991, 834).

$$\min_{\boldsymbol{\top}} \beta_{\underline{i}}^{\underline{i}} / / n \left\{ \sum_{i} (i: y_{\underline{i}} \ge x_{\underline{i}} \beta) / \|\theta| y_{\underline{i}} - x_{\underline{i}} \beta| + \sum_{i} (i: y_{\underline{i}} < x_{\underline{i}} \beta) / \|(1 - \theta)| y_{\underline{i}} - x_{\underline{i}} \beta| / \|\|\beta\| / \|$$

$$(3)$$

The following parameter estimator is obtained by minimising equation (3).

$$\beta \hat{\gamma}(\theta) = [argmin](\beta \in R^p) \{ \sum_{i=1}^n [p_\theta (y_i - x_i \beta)] \}$$

$$(4)$$

For $0 < \theta < 1$, the θ th quantile of the dependent variable Y_i is expressed as follows.

$$\varphi_y(\theta) = \inf[rIF(r) \ge \theta]$$
(5)

Within the cumulative distribution function of each unit i, F(i) (y) depends on covariates. Thus, the θ th conditional quantile of Y_i with respect to x_i is shown as follows (Uribe and Guillen 2020, 14).

$$\varphi_{-}(Y_{-}i\backslash X \ i \ (\theta) = \inf\{rIF_{-}i \ (r\backslash X \ i) \ge \theta\})$$
(6)

The process after this stage is like the classical linear regression analysis. In this context, the parameter vector is estimated in a way to minimise the sum of residual squares. In other words, the main objective of quantile regression analysis can be expressed as estimating the parameter vector $(\beta_-\theta)$. The index in the parameter vector indicates that the parameter changes at each quantile level θ .

Results

The dependent variable of the study is the women's labour force participation rate. Corruption index and inflation are independent variables. Firstly, parameter estimates were made by the Ordinary Least Squares Method, and the estimation results are presented in Table 4

Table 4. Results of OLS Method (Dependent variable: women's labour force participation rate)

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t Statistic	Probability
Inflation	-0,112742	0,121062	-0,931277	0,3550
Corruption Index	0,118902	0,058295	2,039643	0,0452
Constant	49,46568	3,865931	12,79528	0,0000
F Statistic	3,141007			
Probability (F)	0,049482			
R^2	0,083446			

As seen in Table 4, the parameter related to the corruption index is found to be statistically significant. However, the inflation variable is statistically insignificant, with a low coefficient of significance. The coefficient of significance was also found to be low. According to the F-statistic value indicating the overall significance of the model, the model appears to be significant. However, for the regression analysis to be valid, it is necessary to meet the underlying assumptions. Since the most common issue in cross-sectional data is the problem of heteroskedasticity, the Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey test was applied first, and the test result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey Test Results

F Statistics	Probability
5,955493	0,0041

As seen in Table 5, the probability value is less than 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis of homoskedasticity, which posits that the variance of the error term is the same at every point, has been rejected. This indicates the presence of heteroscedasticity in the model. The presence of heteroscedasticity suggests that the parameter estimates obtained by the Ordinary Least Squares Method are not efficient. Therefore, quantile regression analysis was conducted in this context. Quantile regression analysis allows for modelling the heteroskedasticity situation, where the dependent variable responds differently to the independent variables at different points. In this study, quantile regression analysis was applied considering 10 groups. In Table 6, women's labour force participation rate values are evaluated in 10 groups.

Table 6. Women's labour force participation rate quantile values				
Minimum	28,26			
%10	42,07			
%20	48,79			
%30	51,02			
%40	53,69			
%50	55,61			
%60	57,75			
%70	59,77			
%80	61,80			
%90	65,98			
Maksimum	71,84			

The values in Table 6 show each 10 per cent group. In other words, it is aimed to make different parameter estimates for each 10 per cent group. In this context, it is aimed to eliminate the effect of heteroskedasticity. The results of the quantile regression analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table7. Quantile regression analysis results

	Quantile	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
INFLATION	0.100	-0.008530	0.120266	-0.070926	0.9437
	0.200	-0.085085	0.112370	-0.757187	0.4518
	0.300	-0.135565	0.114822	-1.180659	0.2422
	0.400	-0.220374	0.121538	-1.813207	0.0746
	0.500	-0.282309	0.139840	-2.018799	0.0478
	0.600	-0.307431	0.123653	-2.486244	0.0156
	0.700	-0.365970	0.117185	-3.123020	0.0027
	0.800	-0.357321	0.112041	-3.189189	0.0022
	0.900	-0.130179	0.445914	-0.291937	0.7713
CORRUPTION	0.100	0.313176	0.217309	1.441160	0.1546

	0.200	0.271297	0.200456	1.353404	0.1808
	0.300	0.170982	0.193130	0.885320	0.3794
	0.400	0.124034	0.189012	0.656222	0.5141
	0.500	0.115067	0.126275	0.911244	0.3657
	0.600	0.231994	0.103863	2.233646	0.0291
	0.700	0.187600	0.117035	1.602936	0.1140
	0.800	0.248209	0.185194	1.340265	0.1851
	0.900	0.098705	0.152288	0.648147	0.5193
GCF	0.100	-0.153156	0.362346	-0.422678	0.6740
	0.200	-0.255022	0.298134	-0.855392	0.3956
	0.300	-0.152770	0.299732	-0.509689	0.6121
	0.400	-0.056541	0.324223	-0.174390	0.8621
	0.500	0.136620	0.361318	0.378114	0.7066
	0.600	0.232536	0.355925	0.653330	0.5160
	0.700	0.262798	0.368812	0.712554	0.4788
	0.800	-0.183202	0.323757	-0.565862	0.5735
	0.900	-0.115525	0.308604	-0.374346	0.7094
LOGGDP	0.100	6.425818	8.199981	0.783638	0.4362
	0.200	1.685770	9.650945	0.174674	0.8619
	0.300	6.235739	9.495041	0.656736	0.5138
	0.400	3.422874	9.399161	0.364168	0.7170
	0.500	1.752917	5.420264	0.323401	0.7475
	0.600	-1.402177	3.702440	-0.378717	0.7062
	0.700	-2.509670	4.006718	-0.626366	0.5334
	0.800	-12.02966	8.659295	-1.389220	0.1697
	0.900	-7.785025	6.999402	-1.112241	0.2703
С	0.100	3.931345	31.30893	0.125566	0.9005
	0.200	33.63468	32.06966	1.048801	0.2983
	0.300	18.98850	31.33850	0.605916	0.5468
	0.400	34.77435	29.39980	1.182809	0.2414
	0.500	39.54226	17.97189	2.200228	0.0315
	0.600	46.50228	13.00350	3.576135	0.0007
	0.700	55.73566	15.92259	3.500415	0.0009
	0.800	108.3546	32.05875	3.379876	0.0013
	0.900	96.79907	28.30141	3.420291	0.0011

The estimated parameter for the inflation variable was found to be statistically significant at the 0.50, 0.60, 0.70, and 0.80 quantile levels. According to the findings:

- In countries at the 0.50 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 48.79% to 51.02% (Table 6); Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Poland, Serbia, and South Africa (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation reduces the participation rate by 0.28% (Table 7).
- In countries at the 0.60 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 51.02% to 53.69% (Table 6); China, Colombia, Czechia, Ecuador, France, Hong Kong SAR, Hungary, and Spain (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation decreases the participation rate by 0.31% (Table 7).
- In countries at the 0.50 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 53.69% to 55.61% (Table 6); Brazil, Japan, Korea,

Rep., Latvia, Portugal, Rwanda, Slovenia (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation lowers the participation rate by 0.37% (Table 7).

In countries at the 0.70 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 57.75% to 59.77% (Table 6); The Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Paraguay, United States (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation reduces the participation rate by 0.36% (Table 7).

Corruption was found to be significant at the 0.6 quantile level. The relationship between the corruption index and women's labor force participation rate is positive because a higher corruption index signifies less corruption.

- In countries at the 0.60 quantile (countries with participation rates ranging from 28.26% to 42.07% (Table 6); Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Hungary, India, Macedonia, Moldova, North, Peru, Serbia, Thailand, Türkiye, Viet Nam (Table 10)), a 1% increase in the corruption index increases the participation rate by 0.23% (Table 7).
- GDP and GCF variables were found to be statistically insignificant at all quantile levels. In this context, the model was reconstructed by excluding these variables and the results of the analysis are presented in Table 8.

	Tubic 6. Quantitie regression unarysis results					
	Quantile	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.	
Inflation	0.100	-0.057818	0.095548	-0.605122	0.5472	
	0.200	-0.113451	0.080226	-1.414143	0.1622	
	0.300	-0.172768	0.083981	-2.057215	0.0437	
	0.400	-0.218488	0.095840	-2.279716	0.0260	
	0.500	-0.250574	0.109644	-2.285331	0.0256	
	0.600	-0.158181	0.300480	-0.526429	0.6004	
	0.700	-0.341724	0.103460	-3.302969	0.0016	
	0.800	-0.126492	0.627838	-0.201473	0.8410	
	0.900	-0.209687	0.497483	-0.421497	0.6748	
Corruption	0.100	0.371071	0.110963	3.344084	0.0014	
	0.200	0.307041	0.078549	3.908932	0.0002	
	0.300	0.243397	0.070327	3.460942	0.0010	
	0.400	0.206325	0.073333	2.813533	0.0065	
	0.500	0.168473	0.085466	1.971218	0.0530	
	0.600	0.155788	0.088785	1.754666	0.0841	
	0.700	0.104596	0.088671	1.179599	0.2425	
	0.800	0.060633	0.082322	0.736535	0.4641	
	0.900	-0.080597	0.074069	-1.088129	0.2806	
С	0.100	25.93628	8.530507	3.040414	0.0034	
	0.200	32.26419	5.818762	5.544854	0.0000	
	0.300	38.84455	5.095638	7.623098	0.0000	

Table 8. Quantile regression analysis results

0.400	43.48517	5.324207	8.167445	0.0000
0.500	47.16796	6.234808	7.565263	0.0000
0.600	49.16064	7.264927	6.766845	0.0000
0.700	56.05862	6.676479	8.396435	0.0000
0.800	58.59910	9.414685	6.224223	0.0000
0.900	72.12163	7.361148	9.797605	0.0000

The estimated parameter for the inflation variable was found to be statistically significant at the 0.30, 0.40, 0.50, and 0.70 quantile levels. According to the findings:

- In countries at the 0.30 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 48.79% to 51.02% (Table 6); Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Poland, Serbia, and South Africa (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation reduces the participation rate by 0.17% (Table 8).
- In countries at the 0.40 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 51.02% to 53.69% (Table 6); China, Colombia, Czechia, Ecuador, France, Hong Kong SAR, Hungary, and Spain (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation decreases the participation rate by 0.22% (Table 8).
- In countries at the 0.50 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 53.69% to 55.61% (Table 6); Brazil, Japan, Korea, Rep., Latvia, Portugal, Rwanda, Slovenia (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation lowers the participation rate by 0.25% (Table 8).
- In countries at the 0.70 quantile [countries with participation rates ranging from 57.75% to 59.77% (Table 6); Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Paraguay, United States (Table 10)], a 1% increase in inflation reduces the participation rate by 0.34% (Table 8).

Corruption was found to be insignificant at the 0.70, 0.80, and 0.90 quantiles, but significant for other quantiles. The relationship between the corruption index and women's labor force participation rate is positive because a higher corruption index signifies less corruption.

- In countries at the 0.10 quantile (countries with participation rates ranging from 28.26% to 42.07% (Table 6); Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Hungary, India, Macedonia, Moldova, North, Peru, Serbia, Thailand, Türkiye, Viet Nam (Table 10)), a 1% increase in the corruption index increases the participation rate by 0.37% (Table 8).
- In countries at the 0.20 quantile (countries with participation rates ranging from 42.0724% to 48.7866% (Table 6); Bulgaria, Romania, and South Africa (Table 10)), a 1% increase in the 578

corruption index increases the participation rate by 0.31% (Table 8).

- In countries at the 0.30 quantile (countries with participation rates ranging from 48.79% to 51.02% (Table 6); Croatia, Malta, Mauritius, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia (Table 10)), a 1% increase in the corruption index increases the participation rate by 0.24% (Table 8).
- In countries at the 0.40 quantile (countries with participation rates ranging from 51.02% to 53.69% (Table 6); Cyprus, Greece, Slovak Republic (Table 10)), a 1% increase in the corruption index increases the participation rate by 0.21% (Table 8).

Tests were conducted considering the possibility of reverse causality. When corruption is the dependent variable, the effect of female labor force participation on corruption becomes significant after 0.5 quantiles (Table 9).

	Quantile	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
Labor Force					
Participation	0.100	0.143442	0.236399	0.606777	0.5461
	0.200	0.035597	0.264012	0.134831	0.8932
	0.300	0.382018	0.487413	0.783768	0.4361
	0.400	0.660764	0.415005	1.592184	0.1163
	0.500	0.817111	0.362413	2.254637	0.0276
	0.600	1.072565	0.347079	3.090259	0.0030
	0.700	1.158332	0.324345	3.571292	0.0007
	0.800	1.140674	0.295496	3.860204	0.0003
	0.900	1.197011	0.245059	4.884573	0.0000
Inflation	0.100	0.070887	0.162586	0.435995	0.6643
	0.200	-0.039124	0.186777	-0.209468	0.8347
	0.300	-0.640001	1.304820	-0.490490	0.6255
	0.400	-0.549268	1.382271	-0.397366	0.6924
	0.500	-0.420209	0.552393	-0.760707	0.4496
	0.600	-0.822284	1.353234	-0.607644	0.5456
	0.700	-0.275395	0.238818	-1.153157	0.2531
	0.800	-0.225507	0.193525	-1.165260	0.2482
	0.900	-0.226037	0.161963	-1.395609	0.1677
C	0.100	25.83737	12.99342	1.988497	0.0510
	0.200	37.57910	13.79903	2.723315	0.0083
	0.300	33.49217	17.73919	1.888033	0.0636
	0.400	25.00692	21.07663	1.186476	0.2398
	0.500	19.72386	20.59554	0.957676	0.3418
	0.600	13.58409	22.17823	0.612497	0.5424
	0.700	9.110690	18.38658	0.495508	0.6219
	0.800	12.25280	16.71319	0.733122	0.4662

10.31292

13.84515

0.744876

0.900

Table 9. Quantile regression analysis results

0.4591

Ramsey's RESET test was applied to determine whether there is a specification error in the model, and the test results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Results of RESET test

	Value	Probablity
QLR L Statistic	0,838371	0,3599
QLR Lamda Statistic	0,834233	0,3611

The following table presents the Quandt Likelihood Ratio (QLR) test statistics: QLR L Statistic and QLR Lambda Statistic, and their associated probability values. The QLR test is often used in detecting structural breaks in regression models by testing whether the relationship between the independent and dependent variables changes at different points in the sample. The QLR L Statistic results in 0.838, and the QLR Lambda Statistic results in 0.834; their respective p-values are 0.3599 and 0.3611, which are much higher than conventional threshold levels of, say, 0.05 or 0.10. These results provide no statistical evidence of a structural break in the model at the tested breakpoints. Said differently, the regression coefficients are stable across the sample under consideration, which implies that the relationships among the variables are relatively invariant to the choice of sub-period or segment.

The absence of a structural break in this sample would, therefore, imply that an estimated model could be stable over time or across different groups included in the dataset. However, these results need to be interpreted together with other diagnostic tests and robustness checks. If, based on prior theoretical expectations or visual inspections—like plots of residuals or rolling regressions—one suspects structural instability, then one might want to consider alternative break tests—for example, Bai-Perron multiple breakpoint test—or interaction terms to further investigate. Taken together, these results provide no evidence for statistically significant structural changes in the model, thereby possibly increasing the reliability of the estimated relationships over the dataset.

Table1presents the coefficient of determination values for the models established for each quantile.

Table 11. Coefficients of determination by Cantiles

Cantiles	Pseudo R ²
0,10	0,234769
0,20	0,240265

0,30	0,185207
0,40	0,146898
0,50	0,119414
0,60	0,094247
0,70	0,045201
0,80	0,023197
0,90	0,029996

Table 11 lists the values for Pseudo R² at quantiles to understand the model in terms of explanatory power along different parts of the distribution. The findings point out that for all estimated specifications and, especially so, the lower ones—that is, q = 0.10-0.30—model explanatory power with a pseudo-R² in the 0.18 to 0.24 range gets stronger. This would indicate that the independent variables in the model have relatively greater explanatory power to explain variation in the dependent variable at the lower end of the distribution. As one moves towards the median quantile (0.50) and further towards higher quantiles (0.60–0.90), there is a gradual decline in the values of Pseudo R², reaching the lowest levels at 0.80 (0.023) and 0.90 (0.029). It would then suggest that at higher quantiles, the model has less ability to explain the variation in the dependent variable. It may be a sign that relationships between independent and dependent variables are not uniform along the distribution, with stronger associations in lower quantiles and weaker at higher levels.

This would simply mean the determinants analysed in the study have a stronger influence on the lower end of the distribution of the dependent variable, which might further imply that economic or structural factors have more influence on the lower-performing or underrepresented groups. On the other hand, low values of Pseudo R² for higher quantiles could be indicative of unobserved heterogeneity, meaning inclusion of other explanatory variables, nonlinear effects, or interaction terms could make the model much more robust at capturing variations in higher quantiles.

Table 12. Details of countries

Country	Women's Labour Force Participation Rate	Quantiles	Corruption	Inflation
India	28.26	1.00	40.00	6.70
Saudi Arabia	34.46	1.00	51.00	2.47
Türkiye	35.11	1.00	36.00	72.31
Italy	40.69	1.00	56.00	8.20
Bosnia and	41.11	1.00	34.00	14.02

Herzegovina				
Guatemala	41.53	1.00	24.00	6.89
Mauritius	42.21	2.00	50.00	10.77
North Macedonia	42.22	2.00	40.00	14.20
Romania	42.29	2.00	46.00	13.80
Greece	44.67	2.00	52.00	9.65
Mexico	45.03	2.00	31.00	7.90
El Salvador	46.38	2.00	33.00	7.20
Croatia	46.85	2.00	50.00	10.78
Costa Rica	50.08	3.00	54.00	8.27
Poland	50.09	3.00	55.00	14.43
Chile	50.13	3.00	67.00	11.64
Bulgaria	50.57	3.00	43.00	15.33
Belgium	50.80	3.00	73.00	9.60
South Africa	50.82	3.00	43.00	7.04
Serbia	50.97	3.00	36.00	11.98
Colombia	51.11	4.00	39.00	10.18
Czechia	52.16	4.00	56.00	15.10
France	52.52	4.00	72.00	5.22
Hong Kong SAR, China	52.91	4.00	76.00	1.88
Spain	53.19	4.00	60.00	8.39
Ecuador	53.57	4.00	36.00	3.47
Hungary	53.68	4.00	42.00	14.61
Brazil	53.75	5.00	38.00	9.28
Japan	54.20	5.00	73.00	2.50
Slovenia	54.25	5.00	56.00	8.83
Portugal	54.70	5.00	62.00	7.83
Rwanda	54.76	5.00	51.00	17.69
Korea, Rep.	55.04	5.00	63.00	5.09
Latvia	55.61	5.00	59.00	17.31
Uruguay	55.65	6.00	74.00	9.10
Germany	56.13	6.00	79.00	6.87
Malta Slovak	56.13	6.00	51.00	6.15
Republic	56.18	6.00	53.00	12.77
Austria	56.55	6.00	71.00	8.55
United States	56.79	6.00	69.00	8.00
Luxembourg	57.99	7.00	77.00	6.34

Finland	58.17	7.00	87.00	7.12
Lithuania	58.84	7.00	62.00	19.71
Paraguay	59.06	7.00	28.00	9.77
Ireland	59.40	7.00	77.00	7.81
Denmark The Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern	59.42	7.00	90.00	7.70
Cyprus	59.63	7.00	52.00	8.40
Thailand	59.86	8.00	36.00	6.08
Botswana	60.06	8.00	60.00	11.67
Estonia	60.63	8.00	74.00	19.40
Israel	61.15	8.00	63.00	4.39
Canada	61.48	8.00	74.00	6.80
Switzerland	61.49	8.00	82.00	2.84
Qatar	61.73	8.00	58.00	5.00
Azerbaijan	61.90	9.00	23.00	13.85
Australia	62.31	9.00	75.00	6.59
Norway	62.53	9.00	84.00	5.76
Singapore	63.37	9.00	83.00	6.12
Netherlands	63.58	9.00	80.00	10.00
Sweden	63.68	9.00	83.00	8.37
Belarus	65.79	9.00	39.00	15.21
Peru	66.73	10.00	36.00	8.33
New Zealand	66.90	10.00	87.00	7.17
Viet Nam	68.54	10.00	42.00	3.16
Iceland	70.70	10.00	74.00	8.31
Moldova	71.50	10.00	39.00	28.74
Bolivia	71.84	10.00	31.00	1.75

Among the 67 countries nations in the investigation, the beat 10 nations in corruption are Azerbaijan (23%), Guatemala (24%), Paraguay (28%), Mexico (31%), Bolivia (31%), El Salvador (33%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (34%), Türkiye (36%), Thailand (36%) and Serbia (36%). The top 10 countries in inflation are Türkiye (72.31%), Moldova (28.74%), Lithuania (19.71%), Estonia (19.40%), Rwanda (17.69%), Latvia (17.31%), Bulgaria (15.33%), Belarus (15.21%), Czechia (15.10%) and Hungary (14.61%).

Conclusion

This paper empirically investigates the impact of inflation and corruption on women's labor force participation, hence serving critical insights into the macroeconomic determinants of gender dynamics in labor markets. Understanding how these economic variables interplay with FLFP will provide the necessary insights to design effective policy interventions toward gender equality and inclusive economic growth. By identifying the impacts of inflation and corruption, this study tries to provide a basis for evidence-based policymaking where economic structures create more opportunities for greater female participation in the labor market. In doing so, the present study started with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Capital Formation (GCF) as one major indicator of investment activity. However, since these variables were found to be statistically insignificant at all quantile levels, the final model was respecified, focusing on inflation and corruption only. This dataset contains data for 67 countries in relation to FLFP, CPI, inflation, GDP, and GCF obtained from the World Bank and Transparency International. Specifically, to account for these heterogeneous effects, the analysis will follow the Quantile Regression approach and hence provide a detailed insight compared to traditional mean-based regression techniques. Results showed a negative impact of inflation on FLFP, meaning increased participation of women in the workforce drops with the rise in inflationary pressures. This finding deviates from previous empirical studies (Niemi & Lloyd 1981; Mujahid 2013; Wang 2019; Özkök & Polat 2020; Koyuncu & Oksak 2021; Sertçelik 2021; Doğaner 2022; İnce Yenilmez 2024), which presented the result that inflationary pressures might push women into the labor force as real wages decrease. The difference observed in this study is likely to be due to increased economic uncertainty under inflation. Inflation postpones investment and production and consequently diminishes the demand for labor. This insight adds a new perspective to the existing literature by underlining the adverse labor market effects of inflation on female employment, particularly in developing economies.

The research also ascertains that lower corruption is associated positively with FLFP, suggesting that reduced levels of corruption lead to more females engaging in economic activities. This is explained by the creation of a more transparent, fairer, and inclusive working environment that eases the entry of women into the formal labor force. While there are some studies by Samimi et al. (2013), Jin (2016), and

Afzal & Asif (2021) that investigated the general impacts of corruption on the economy, the number of studies directly investigating its impacts on FLFP is relatively small.

This paper closes this gap by empirically establishing that the reduction in corruption is a major determinant of gender-inclusive labor markets. The test for reverse causality indicated that FLFP influences corruption after the 0.5 quantile, meaning that greater participation by women in the work force would, in the long term, be associated with lower levels of corruption. Especially for countries with a low FLFP rate, this translates into corruption—a stronger predictor of women's participation in the labor force, compared to inflation. Especially for the lowestquantile—10%—a 1% reduction in corruption is associated with a higher increase in FLFP by approximately 0.37%, strongly indicating that there is a highly increased importance in institutional quality related to settings characterised by persistently depressed labor market participation rates among women.

These are findings with deep policy implications. The best policies for increasing FLFP will be those encouraging structural reforms, increasing transparency, fighting corruption, and promoting economic stability. Another important aspect is social support, educational initiatives, and focused employment policies that will help often the impact of economic instability on the participation of women in the workforce. There is, therefore, an urgent need to incorporate gendersensitive economic reforms into national development agendas by policymakers, based on the empirical evidence provided in Cigdem et al. (2022) concerning the positive relationship between FLFP and economic growth.

Future research should further explore the causal mechanisms that link corruption to inflation and to FLFP in different economic contexts. Since the issues of gender equality, labor market dynamics, and macroeconomic stability are tightly linked, consistent empirical investigation of these relationships will be important in fostering social progress, economic resilience, and inclusive development.

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Tolerance and coercion: The political scenes of European modern design movement

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Abstract: The social origins of European modern design was not only associated with technological change but also had a strong relationship with other factors such as social system. With the assistance of the method characterised as historical sociology, this article makes a comparative analysis on the rise of European modern design. It tries to clarify how European political systems were diversely modernised and how they had the distinctive effects on the modern movements of different European countries. Particularly, the constitutional system and liberalism of Western Europe did not develop recognised pattern of modern design but contributed to the democratic idea of modernism through benign inactivity. The centralised bureaucratic system and nationalism of Central and Eastern Europe did directly stimulate the birth of modern design but then repressed its later development. In addition, this study illustrates why Germany became conspicuous in the diverse political situations during that period.

Keywords: European modern design, social origins, politics, tolerance, coercion

Introduction

For social change, although the transformation of technology and the social system are both the strong factors, the discovered effect of a social system is more ambiguous than that of technology. It has also been admitted that the causal link between the social system and the origins of European modern design cannot be interpreted as clearly as the one between technology and its origins. The difficulties mainly stem from two aspects. First, the intrinsic logical relationships between the social system and design activities are not always convincing. The explicit and direct force of the social system on the military or economic affairs such as the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894 or the

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wartime communist policy of Russia can easily be demonstrated. Yet, observers cannot expect similar connections will be readily found in the field of modern design. Technologies or aesthetics have obviously affected the appearance of modern design, whereas the same force of the social system on the design activities cannot directly be detected because a specific pattern of design, which has been under the impact of technological change or aesthetic trends, can probably appear in any kind of social system. Moreover, the toughness still comes from another fact. That is, the investigation of this kind of link has hardly become the central theme of modern design history and the main concerns in this field are related to the issue of aesthetics since the origins of modern design has a close relationship with modern art, on which technological change directly produced an effect, for instance, machine aesthetics and abstract art. Despite the obstacles caused by the difficulties aforesaid, the social system indicates a potential but forceful action on the birth of European modern design and a historical analysis of it will display its historical significance. As for the social system, beyond the briefly chronicled political or economic backgrounds, more attention should be paid to the connection between design activities and political conditions, and intensive analysis at the macro level should be conducted to strengthen the understanding of this connection¹. This is exactly as Douglass Cecil North states in Structure and Change in Economic History in which the investigation into the industrial revolution was not only a review on the elapsed

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¹ I can hardly deny the efforts which have been made to inspect the relationship between politics and modern design activities within the narrowed confines, for instance, based on several studies of German modern design, John Heskett 'has shattered the myth of a symbiotic relationship between good design and democratic social formations' and 'implies the need for a fundamental re-assessment of the relationship of societies to types of design practice', see Dilnot, 'The state of design history, part I: mapping the field'. Other studies also made an attempt to investigate this kind of link, see, for instance, Lane, National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries; Betts, The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design; Maciuika, Before the Bauhaus: Architecture, Politics and the German State, 1890-1920; Jaskot and Rosenfeld. Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past. However, I do argue that the investigation of this kind of link from a macroscopic view, by which attempts such as comparative study can be made to investigate the causal link on a larger scale, for instance, Europe instead of Germany, and in the long term, for instance, more than a century instead of around ten or twenty years, has hitherto hardly become the central theme of modern design history.

brilliance in England, but also a serious examination on the 'property rights system' and 'private rates of return' (North 1981). With the assistance of historical sociology as a research method and through a comparative analysis of England, Germany, and Russia, this article takes measures to achieve the following aims: (1) It clarifies the diverse effects of political conditions on the historical process of the European modern design movement at the macro level. (2) It confirms the causal link between the social system (an influential social factor) and the emergence of European modern design (a modern cultural phenomenon). In addition, (3) as an introspection, it makes an attempt to encourage readers to reflect on the situations of contemporary cultural activities, art and design for instance, against the background of varied state politics.

Background

Although many art history researchers had already given continuous attention to modern design before this time, the 1930s can be considered as the starting point of academic research on modern design history. Nikolaus Pevsner, as a British historian, wrote the earliest work on modern design history in 1936. His book, *Pioneers of Modern Design: from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, declared the real beginning of modern design history study.

Since the 1940s, based on Pevsner's classical study as a narrative chronicle, some researchers have provided new studies on this issue. The remarkable works include *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* by Siegfried Gideon and *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* by Reyner Banham. Against Pevsner's 'heroic approach', Gideon presented 'anonymous history' the focus of which moved from the historic force of heroes to a much broader view of the impact of impersonal industrial technology. Banham directed his academic insight towards those design activities that had not classically been included into modernism's main trends such as Italian Futurism in the 1910s.

From the 1970s up to the 1990s, Penny Sparke, Adrian Forty, and Jonathan Woodham, as the later researchers, stepped into the same field. Their wide-ranging works included *A Century of Design: Design Pioneers of the 20th Century*, by Sparke; *Objects of Desire: Design and Society since 1750* by Forty, and *Twentieth-Century Design* by Woodham. Along with other up-and-coming researchers, they adopted

a more comprehensive theoretical view in order to examine modern design history and discussed it using diversified methods. This change strengthened the trend which indicated a significant shifting from narration of modern design under chronicle to analysis and interpretation on modern design from the sociological and cultural views (Banham 1960, Sparke 1986, Woodham1997, Forty 1992). This new trend thus had an impact that continued into the twenty-first century.

This study, as an intensified exploration into European modern design history from a political perspective, follows this main trend as well. Although political history has traditionally been isolated from social or cultural history, it will inspect the potential action of political and economic policies on the social origins of European modern design. The expected result will improve the understanding of the relationship between politics and modern design activities.

Methodology

Historical sociology

Historical sociology had been accepted as a sub-field of sociology since its rise in the 1960s. Researchers who have made general contributions into historical sociology, however, regard it as a specific sociological method, which is characterised by historical and diachronic standpoint (Skocpol 1984). In brief, as a research method, historical sociology places a heavy emphasis on the unique and diverse historical evidence from a macroscopic view. It possesses the advantage of comparatively clarifying the reasons and results of social change in the long term, during which the evidence can hardly be obtained by the controlled experiments, interviews, or questionnaires. Several classical sociologists and historians have laid the groundwork for historical sociology. The masterpieces from Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber, and Marc Bloch take on the main characteristics of historical sociology (Tocqueville 1955; Bloch 1953; Weber 1930, 1978; Elias 2000). A few researchers, including Perry Anderson, Barrington Moore, and Theda Skocpol, subsequently made further achievements, and their works have reflected the glory of historical sociology in tracing the diversified historical evidence and providing comparative interpretations of social change, particularly in the studies of political system and economic policies (Anderson 1974a, 1974b; Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979). For modern design history, some historical sociologists have also presented their own understandings, which are infrequently found in the studies of modern architecture and urban planning (Delanty and Isin 2003).

The sociological exploration into modern design history has been greatly enlightened by the above-mentioned works. The successful comparative studies on social change in terms of political and economic issues will encourage the same effort towards modern design (as a manifestation of social change too) and will correspondingly display the dynamic interaction between social system and modern design activities. The empirical studies of modern design history make contributions to the historical narratives, yet the studies of historical sociology target the achievement of reflection on the sociologically valued questions within modern design history.

Evidence and understanding

On account of the invalidity of scientific experiments, interviews, or questionnaires for data collection, this study, like many other studies of historical sociology, will depend on the historical evidence, the meanings of which should be evaluated in terms of subjective understanding instead of objective statistics illustration (Weber 1949, 1978; Tullock 1965). This kind of evidence belongs to the past but maintains strong relevance for sociological evaluation. Hence, all kinds of original documents, records, and other items laid out in narratives will provide significant clues for the study. In this article, particularly, the evidence have left two ways through which the author can access.

First, this study takes historical narratives into account. This is not a way that has never been greeted with serious critics. Under the contemptuous title 'second-hand', it often draws devaluations of importance. As the applications of first-hand evidence do have to reach the fact by evading prejudice and misunderstanding, the second-hand proof can achieve the same. The second-hand evidence may help the historical sociology researchers conduct a better study, provided they perform an adequate literature review and took the full significance of the evidence into consideration from a comparative and analytic perspective (Skocpol 1979). Second, as a specific field of research, the study of historical sociology on modern design does possess another type of evidence. Researchers can take advantage of the works of modern design, for instance, industrial products or architecture. They

have been viewed as 'solidified history' and have articulated the momentous historical significance both in appearance and sociological indication. Hence, as for the term 'modern design' employed in this article, it refers to the areas mainly connected to the activities or the works of architecture, product design, and graphic design in modern times, namely, from the age of the industrial revolution to the second half of the twentieth century.

As illustrated, this study looks upon understanding as a preferential approach for investigation. It supposes that the significance of social action can only be accessed through the 'inside' comprehension, rather than through the 'outside' statistical figures (Weber 1949, 1978; Tullock 1965). Otherwise, the sociologically valued hints would be missing. In general, under an efficient and macroscopic literature review with an interdisciplinary principle, this study endeavours to take a diachronic view that serves the comparative analysis of longterm social change by the subjective understanding, in order to obtain the historical evidence-based conclusions. It also indicates that this study will be part of theoretical work based on historical sociology interpretation instead of a historical narrative of empirical study. Specifically, the procedure of research is as follows: a spectrum of political systems in European modernisation will be formed in the first place, by which a few cases will be illustrated from an ideal type perspective. Then, based on these illustrated cases, an inspection will be carried out in order to demonstrate how the distinctive political processes of West Europe, as well as Central and East Europe, took effect on modern design activities at the time. It will highlight the intricate connection between the diverse political systems and the rise of European modern design at the macro level.

Typology spectrum of political systems in Europe's modernisation

Prior to any analysis of the interactive relationship between social system factors and the modern movement in Europe, it is necessary to make sense of the political spectrum in those countries involved in the social origins of European modern design. A coordinate is constructed to take a better look at the diverse European political situations. Although there has been no authoritative classification of political patterns during Europe's modernisation, Barrington Moore's opinion has provided a reference for the investigation. His theory has then been applied, as a suggestive guide rather than a rigorous criterion, to

identify the classification of the social system in this article. In Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, Moore argued three major types of political turning towards modernisation, which has regarded 'capitalistic democracy' as the first type, 'militarism' the second type, and 'communism' the third type, with each of these prototypes found in modern European history. According to this established coordinate, typology differentiation has been produced in terms of social system. It has been revealed that England, France, and the Netherlands took the way of 'constitutional democracy' as their political modernisation method (Moore 1966). Although considering the diversity presented in time line, evolutionary path, and administration pattern, they all took a similar form that in retrospect turned into a mainstream political trend in which social contract and liberalism were the dominant ideologies. This political form then became the advanced one in modern times. Italy and Germany, however, with their successive experiences of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary republic, later went down the road of the militarism. This became a dramatic form of social domination. Although conservative political powers were represented, particularly in Germany, this did reflect an effort towards constitutionalism and parliamentary politics (Anderson 1974a; Skocpol 1979: Moore 1966). It was still an ambition of those countries with the extreme limitations, running after the advanced countries in the modern political progress. Russia, after failed to establish a constitutional government, finally developed an astonishing but suitable system that featured one-party bureaucratic domination, which was far from constitutionalism or parliamentary democracy. The detailed elaboration on the Russian political road is beyond the scope of this study, although it can indicate at least a severe political situation that led to this political way at the time (Skocpol 1979; Moore 1966). As for ideology, Germany and Russia were both dyed with the colour of nationalism that confronted liberalism prevailing in Western European countries, for instance, England and France. A further inspection will be made on the diverse ways of European politics. In terms of industrialisation, those European countries aforesaid had received a ticket to enter through the same gate disregarding the time sequence and degree. Once political process had been reviewed, it showed the variety instead. Regarding the established constitutional governments and parliamentary democracies of England, France, and the Netherlands, their political systems revealed modernity that is

different from what is found in the aged agrarian societies, although they implied a degree of relations, for instance, the constitutional monarchy of England. Germany, however, had to set its primary target to keep up with the advanced countries by the political reform or revolution but failed to reach it for the hindrance of strong conservative political power (Skocpol 1979; Moore 1966). Fortunately, in fact, the countries lagging behind, like Germany, did achieve political modernisation partly. Germany shared an affinity with Western Europe and afterward the modern movement was going to be a beneficiary of this political resonance between Germany and the West, Again, Russian political modernisation performed an amazing task. Russia radically started a social revolution and abolished its traditional social hierarchy but maintained a similar element of the old monarchy, which is known as absolutism. The Russian emperor was replaced by a political party, which was then followed by a large-scale bureaucratic group. Consequently, its dramatic influence was displayed during the historical process of modern design in Russia.

West Europe: Tolerance and indifference

With a brief review of political modernisation of Europe, the intricate connections between the diverse political forces and European modern design movement are going to be examined. Compared with the action of technological change on modern design, a new mechanism is then introduced. As for technological change or industrialisation, an inquiry into whether it directly improved the rise of modern design should be made first. Regarding political force, however, the inquiry is reversed to whether it impeded the emergence of modern design, for the lack of technological support always suggests a delayed social progress, whereas the absence of political force probably leads to a beneficial effect and a radical policy even causes the irrevocable social harm.

The constitutional system of Western Europe has been chosen as the starting point for analysis. With this setting, it is found that the absence of political control has presented benign inactivity in this region, for the system had seldom laid any organised social impediment on the road on which the design activities were undertaken. The following illustration is made to interpret how it brought this benign inactivity into effect.

In terms of Art Nouveau in France and De Stijl in the Netherlands, little effect of benign inactivity has been discovered for their aesthetic reformation essence. Influenced by the Aesthetic Movement and the idea of 'art for art's sake', Art Nouveau preferred the issue of decoration and was deficient in social responsibility (Pevsner 1960; 1968). The attitude of the De Stijl movement towards industrialisation or machine aesthetics was opposite to that of Art Nouveau, yet it kept the same quality of visual reform. J.J.P. Oud considered De Stijl as a movement regardless of social problems and Piet Mondrian's opinions merely reflected an artistic trend (Raizman 2010).

The evidence is obscure in France and the Netherlands, whereas England provides some vital clues. The Arts and Crafts movement was not only a trend that embodied the visual reformation, but also one with a strong awareness of social responsibility, which was dved with the rich colour of political ideology. It is repeatedly remarked in modern design history that John Ruskin and William Morris insisted on naturalism aesthetics, acclaimed the spirit of the Middle Ages, radically objected to the industrial manufacturing process and division of labour, and strongly expressed their dissatisfaction with capitalism. A distinctive contrast between Ruskin's family background and his social awareness strengthened moral values of his political opinion (Raizman 2010). The similar discontentment disturbed Morris as well, for he contended that capitalism had enslaved people and bluntly criticised the British government's foreign policies (Kruft 1985; Raizman 2010). Consequently, Morris wrote News from Nowhere. and Ruskin conceived a communist society in his head.

Based on the clarified facts, the historical action of benign inactivity is emerging. Provided a given society with the severe restrictions on social critics, what kind of end would a political dissident like Ruskin or Morris face? Nevertheless, England did not belong to this fabricated society during that time ². On the contrary, it was the earliest established constitutional government (in terms of common law) in Europe, where the individual rights that were written into law were deeply embedded in the brains of its people. This system provided an

² In terms of tolerance and coercion, I do neither suggest that the British government never played the coercive role internally and externally nor indicate that England was a liberal paradise. Rather, in so far as I illustrated on typology, the social system of England was significantly different from that of other countries in comparison, for instance, Germany or Russia, and this system, as an ideal type, did exert a force on the rise of European modern design in a way that was not in line with that of Germany or Russia.

atmosphere where people could express their own thoughts and tolerance became a core social value. In this circumstance, the dissident found an opportunity to make their voice heard and then for it to take effect. England, therefore, became the origins of modern design for the democratic ideal that targeted at serving all the people in a modern civil society, instead of the vested interests in a hierarchical society. Ruskin and Morris, each playing the role of the dissident, presented 'design for the public' for the first time in history.

For the sake of comparison, the history of Bauhaus is presented as another case to testify to the effect of benign inactivity. Having briefly reviewed the early stages of Bauhaus, social tolerance will touch the readers again. Bauhaus was founded during the Weimar Republic and its life kept in step with that of the Weimar Republic (Fiedler and Feierabend 2000). In terms of politics, the Weimar Republic closely resembled Western Europe before the Second World War. In fact, due to the founder's ambition, Bauhaus had a strong tendency of utopialike religious mysticism in the beginning, which subsequently raised serious doubts and drawn reproaches from the public. However, the local government had a very tolerant attitude towards this school (Ibidem). As for the historical process of Bauhaus, political tolerance did provide a buffer for its reform towards rationalism in the middle period. It cannot be imagined that a system with tough control would allow any social organisation to have an ideological deviation. This did not befall the early Weimar Bauhaus, for social tolerance kept it from happening. Comparatively speaking, the political environment became strange in the late period of Bauhaus.

This leads to a confusing question: why did the political advantage characterised by benign inactivity did not make England the birthplace of modernism? Instead, it finally arose in those countries with a different social system and ideology, for instance, Germany and Russia. Specifically, why did the modern movement of the early twentieth century did not take place in England in the late nineteenth century? As for this question, besides the historical effect of the industrial revolution, political action also played a part. The performance of the social system was indeed double-edged. Even though benign inactivity did confirm free expression in England, the tradition of liberalism had individuals, rather than the government, play a key role in the movement. The British government did endeavour to encourage the industrialisation of design (Sparke 1986;

Forty 1992), but their actions were not strong enough to have a conclusive influence over the period of the Arts and Crafts movement. While the critical persons uncompromisingly refused the potential functions of industrial technology, the government exerted little corrective effect on this trend and was not ready to play an active role at key moments (tolerance indicates indifference), although there were a few designers who had already made a prophetic judgement on the significance of industrialisation.

Central and East Europe: Encouragement and coercion

This investigation then led to those European countries whose social systems were different from that of England in order to see what kind of effect they had on the rise of modern design.

In Italy, although the futurists almost acted out their roles individually and the unexpected end of Futurism was caused by the international war rather than the internal political turbulence, this movement did deliver a vague awareness of nationalism in pursuing the advanced countries. Germany and Russia, however, have left the deepest political mark on the birth of European modern design. Germany had experienced constitutional monarchy during Prussia and then the Weimar Republic after the First World War until turning into Nazi in the 1930s. Russia experienced the fall of Tsarist Empire (traditional absolute monarchy) and the rise of the communist regime (modern centralised bureaucratic domination). Despite the different types of social system, Germany and Russia have shared the same ideology, namely nationalism. Although the Weimar Republic tended to be a liberal country, Germany, as the country lagging behind, consistently depended on national power since the first unification. The powerful form of German governmental bureaucracy was far from the British vision. It created a deep-seated ground for a nationalised political force with Nazi Germany as the pinnacle. Russia was suffering from an even crueller political situation. It had lagged more behind, and there was much unrest in the political power transition. If the Russian communists had failed to take nationwide control, they would have missed the fundamental requirements for survival. This situation also constructed a framework upon which the formidable national power arose.

If constitutionalism and liberalism in the West double-edged, what kind of effects would totalitarianism and nationalism in the Central and

East Europe have? Opposite of tolerance and indifference, they are to be extremely active. On the historical process of European modern design, the active political action led to two contrasting outcomes, between which the change was alarming. In those countries with a bureaucratic totalitarian and nationalist background, once the national policies were activated to support modern design, political force would play a positive role. This action can hardly be found in England or the Netherlands, where constitutionalism and liberalism have firmly taken root. Thanks to support at the government level, a strong bureaucratic system was competent enough to mobilise the social resources, particularly in the short term, which cannot be easily achieved by any kind of society with tolerance and indifference (namely, the small government). Nevertheless, political power could play a negative role as well, from which modern design had suffered. In this situation, modern design would experience the merciless constriction, under which not only design activities but also thinking must be suppressed. All these factors are dependent on national politics or the motivations of policymakers.

This mechanism will be disclosed whenever German or Russian modern design history is taken into consideration. As a result of social modernisation, modern design was once regarded as an effective approach to obtaining an industrial advantage and the German government offered full support for the modern design movement in conjunction with official guidance for the industrial and economic activities (Riseboro 1982). The Deutscher Werkbund was founded on industrial economy and backed by the industrial world, with the summarised target of an advantageous combination of national economy and applied art (Kruft 1985). Even Hermann Muthesius was a governmental officer, whose social role suggests a distinct comparison with that of Ruskin or Morris in England. The concern of Muthesius and other politicians, such as Friedrich Naumann, for the design activities revealed the economic and cultural interest of the German government (Frampton 2020). It indicated the strong ambition of Germany, which was trying hard to integrate economy, industry, and design into the national expectation. Namely, entrepreneurs and designers should be encouraged to keep nationalism in mind, which can improve the link of management, design, manufacture, and market (Riseboro1982). For this historic mission, Muthesius had confidence and every detail in his speech had revealed nationalism (Banham1960). It was an encouraging force exerted by a government under the influence of nationalism. In the second Deutsches Reich, the German national policies and ideology realised the success of the Deutscher Werkbund and then had standardised modern design arise in Germany. Since European modern design history had witnessed the inseparable connection between the two forces, the negative role of German political action, however, should also be taken into consideration. The German modern movement in fact came to an end and the demise did occur. When the modernists voiced extreme thoughts during the later stages and the Nazi power ended the Weimar Republic at the same time. Bauhaus was then seen as a political threat and the modern movement was suddenly terminated by the new government. Although the obscure connection between the Nazi government and Bauhaus has been revealed during the Third Reich, numerous facts have illustrated the unfortunate end (Cruickshank 1996; Fiedler and Feierabend 2000; Frampton 2020; Raizman 2010).

As for the influence of national policies and political ideology on the European modern design movement, a more dramatic U-turn occurred in Russia. Russian Constructivism was closely stuck to the political system by which this movement was once surrounded. Accordingly, the delivery of Constructivism was warmly assisted by the organised national power and the end was caused by the national policy as well. After the October Revolution, Russian communist power did stimulate the cultural activities and social liberation inspired the enthusiasm of Russian designers (Riseboro1982). There was once an ensured interaction between the communist regime and Russian designers or artists. The Soviet government supported modern design activities and numbers of institutes, whose target was to encourage the combination of applied art and manufacturing, had been founded under the governmental direction (Raizman 2010). Correspondingly, Russian designers began to act. El Lissitzky, as a constructivist enjoyed a great reputation, created his abstract graphics for political propaganda and Vladimir Tatlin pursued the visual association between art and socialism (Frampton 2020; Raizman 2010). These activities were regarded as a romantic return to the new society. In this way, it was understood that modernism inspired an uplifting expectation in Russia, as had been happening in Germany. Nationalism again claimed its ideological encouragement and the historical facts continuously testified to this situation. The exploration of modern design in Russia was beginning to overtake the West, whereas Russian politics did not allow it to go any further. The Russian modern movement arose during the reign of Vladimir Lenin, when the design activities received the political support and political tolerance - an analogue of German modernism in the Weimar Republic (Riseboro 1982). This infrequent background provided a space for Russian modern design and then left a remarkable heritage for Western European modern movement. Meanwhile, it was destined that the contributions of Russia would not be as significant as Germany's. The later stages of Constructivism testified that Russian modern design was absolutely dominated by the Communist regime instead of the constructivists. With Joseph Stalin. the successor to Lenin, the Russian government made different requests to Russian designers and artists. These new claims permitted no free experiments but the pragmatic activities, for instance, the residential housing programmes, or the realistic art which was restrained by a subtly changed ideology. The dissidents chose to either go away or keep silent, otherwise a severe punishment would fall upon them. The Russian turning became more inconceivable than that of Germany. The demise of Bauhaus was caused by the change of political system, whereas Russian modern design ended with the alternation of political leaders. It thus revealed another action of the social system, which was significantly different from the one of England, on the historical process of modern design in Europe.

In terms of the discussion on the relationship between political force and European modern design, another intricate question will be revealed as well: what kind of trace would the division of European social systems leave on modern design in the long term? European society has been reconstructed, and militarism was eliminated after the Second World War, yet the Continent is divided into two parts. Since the end of the war, Western European countries, whose ideologists and designers had refused the industrialisation of design in the early days, gradually accepted modernism developed by Germany, Russia, and the Netherlands, and then made significant progress in their modern design activities. This trend was marked in architectural design with the title 'international style', which prevailed from the 1950s to the 1960s (Cruickshank 1996). Belgium, France, and England, for instance, broadly imported the industrialised design process and methods in architecture despite varied cultural attitudes towards modernism (Ibidem). However, what had happened in the East? After the war, the low quality of Eastern European industrial design was a fact beyond all doubt and it was not exclusively ascribed to the underdeveloped technological system. The Soviet Union also constrained the significant progress of architectural design. In Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture, a note on this issue is as follows: the inferior and anaemic architecture indicated the lack of freedom and the financial and technological support in the Soviet Union (Ibidem). Eastern European countries always contained ideological determinism, which was once exhibited through the paradoxical attitudes of East Germany and the Soviet Union alliance towards Bauhaus. At first, they looked upon Bauhaus as a great symbol of socialism, then criticised it as an icon of decayed capitalism and anti-socialism (Fiedler and Feierabend 2000). Nevertheless, it indicates a different reflection: is this comparative analysis an all-purpose model, and can the readers assert that different social systems did have the predictable consequence of modern design? In a diachronic sense, it is more differentiate sociological studies from chemical experiments. Modern design is referred to as an activity with diverse creativity and innovations, whose progress needs freedom and tolerance. A certain social system can most likely encourage it, while another one cannot. As for Russia, the course of social modernisation should be taken into consideration. This extreme situation led to a distinctive social system, which brought surprise and disappointment into Russian modern design. If an idealised Russia had not been conceived in history, a better picture of Russian modern design cannot be woven into history either.

Influence of economic policy

According to the different political actions on the rise of European modern design, a homologous but more indirect force has been discovered in terms of economic policy. Europe's modernisation displayed not only the diversity in politics but also in economy with which the political force was strongly connected.

As industrialisation has been a prerequisite for the birth of modern design in Europe and history has illustrated the industrial revolution in the manufacturing system was conditioned by a free market economy, a boost from the market economy for modern design is confirmed. Like political tolerance, the market economy ensured the freedom and equal rights of individuals. Western European designers usually

communicated and realised their values in the free market. Morris in England and Siegfried Bing in France, for instance, were actively involved in the design business and many other works of West European designers were commercialised. In comparison, Russian modernists had little to do with commercial work.

Nevertheless, the free market did not become an overall economic arena for European modern design. The power of monopoly and planning was also kept in focus. Combined with political force, it influenced the progress of modern design in Europe. Encouragement from the monopoly towards German modern design has been discovered and even the planned economy manipulated by the Soviet government had stimulated a rapid development of design activities in urban planning and construction in the short term (Riseboro1982, Frampton 2020). Economic factors, hence, have made an impact on European modern design, although a more indirect and diverse effect is characterised when compared with political force.

Conclusion

As interpreted in this investigation, there is little doubt that the political factor had played an important part in the historical process of European modern design at the macro level. Western Europe did not develop a recognised pattern of modern design, but the constitutional system along with liberalism raised tolerance, which ensured an intellectual contribution to European modern design. This trend was prominent in England, for the Arts and Crafts movement laid a strong ideological basis for the democratic awareness of modern design. Totalitarian systems and nationalism were the key performance indicators for the rise of European modern design as well. Their actions have been unfolded in a dual nature. Under the domination of national policy, those countries under the influence of nationalism either energetically supported or constrained the modern movement on the Continent. Standardised modern design was largely developed in Germany and Russia, and subsequently the decline of the European modern design movement was attributed to these two countries as well. It is never forgotten that both Russia, ruled by Stalin, and Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, unhesitatingly strangled the Constructivism movement and Bauhaus for the changed ideology and national policy. Nevertheless, it also confirms the encouragement nationalism had on the successful combination of industrialisation and

design activities. German and Russian modern designers were strongly stimulated by nationalism during the second Deutsches Reich or by the political support of the communist regime with the ambition to construct a powerful industrialised nation in Russia. Such ideological support hardly appeared in countries with laissez-faire system such as the Netherlands. Therefore, the historical picture of the modern movement in the Netherlands was far removed from those in Germany and Russia. The former a kind of free and easy artistic type and the latter a type dominated by the powerful bureaucratic system and ideology.

Incidentally, a comparative view has been obtained regarding the reason why Germany appeared to be conspicuous in the European modern design movement. All the positive factors were gathered in this nation. In terms of politics, German modern design received the approval of nationalism (the Deutscher Werkbund in the second Deutsches Reich), and then it experienced a tolerant and liberal atmosphere (Bauhaus during the Weimar Republic). Therefore, although the Nazi government shook the modern movement, the historical heritage would not be substantially weakened by such a political catastrophe because of its full development. Russian designers were making their own way towards modernism and had experienced a warm beginning, but they were marked with a strange epilogue. The Russian modern movement could have played a more important part in European modern design history if political tolerance had not ended with Stalin's national policy. Unfortunately, once coercion was encountered, all these imaginations faded away.

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Medieval Islamic science in Western studies: A historical overview

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Abstract: The problem of studying the roots of modern science has always been one of the most debated issues, and there are various opinions on this. Some researchers seek the roots of science in the Greco-Roman civilization, some in the Islamic world, and some in the Indian and Chinese civilizations. Modern science is often presented under the name of Western science. It was not by chance that the West began to study the history of science in the Muslim East. Although the beginning of the study and analysis of scientific research in the Islamic world by the West is considered to be the 19th century, there were important stages that shaped this history. The study reflects important historical events that led to the study of Medieval Islamic science by the West, which as a result of these events began Islamic scientific research in Western historiography.

Keywords: Islam, science, west, historiography, study

Introduction

Each finding owes its existence to the idea that preceded it. When examining world history, it can be seen that no culture has developed independently of other cultures. Today's scientific level does not belong to any one area, but rather is the common heritage of humanity that creates scientific paradigms. Studying the history of science is, first of all, investigating human development. In the modern scientific paradigm, it is emphasized that the historical development of scientific knowledge began with the ancient Greeks, and to a lesser extent with ancient Egypt, and the contributions of other civilizations, especially Islamic civilization, to scientific knowledge were largely ignored. However, a number of historians of science have proven that this idea is not true and this process has laid the foundation for a new field.

Prominent historian of science Otto Neugebauer argues that the Greeks were not the first or foremost in the history of science, as

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modern scientific understanding claims, and that the Greeks also inherited scientific knowledge from earlier communities such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. A similar objection to Neugebauer is raised by his colleague and friend, the historian of science Edward Kennedy. Kennedy believes that the miraculous attribution of scientific knowledge to the Greeks and then to the Renaissance contradicts the published documents in history. Both historians of science compare the models of the physical-universe theory of Copernicus and Ibn Shatir to substantiate their claims. The reason for this is that the "drawings of the lunar model" and the calculated figures given in Copernicus' work on astronomical mathematics and in the "Last Survey for the Correction of the Principles of Astronomy" by the Islamic astronomer Ibn Shatir, which is determined to have been published in 1375, are completely identical. Thus, it is determined that Ibn Shatir's model may be a facsimile of the figures used by Copernicus in his 1543 work. This discovery was later published in the journal Isis by Kennedy's student Victor Roberts and stunned the Western scientific community. (Ozcoshar 2019, 579)

Methodology

The research is multidisciplinary in nature, as two approaches are used here: the Eastern and the Western approach. This article uses the method of historical excursion and phenomenological approach. In accordance with the case method, in the first stage, fundamental data on the Western study of the history of science in the Islamic world are collected. In the second step, the data are summarized using a systematic method and historical stages are classified. In the third stage, the final results are analyzed using a comparative research method. The aim of the work is to systematically explain the important stage in Western historiography that led to the study of science in medieval Islamic civilization. The systematization of positive knowledge can be both cumulative and progressive. At the same time, if we want to understand intellectual development, we must first explain the progress of scientific thought, the gradual development of human consciousness, and determine the role of orientalists and historians of science who played an important role in the scientific transition.

Historical causes in studying Medieval Islamic science

In the Middle Ages, Islamic civilization expanded the boundaries of human knowledge, making science in the Muslim East a phenomenon worthy of study by researchers all over the world, especially in the West. From the presentation of Islamic studies in the academic world in the West, it can be concluded that the history of Islamic studies in English-speaking sources has long existed. This long historical stage divides Islamic studies into three parts according to their content: the theological stage, the political stage, and the scientific stage. Studies conducted in the theological stage began in the 8th century, where the main object of study was the religion of Islam, the Ouran, and the life of the Prophet Muhammad (the peace be upon him). The political stage began in the 12th century, where the goal was to oppose Islamic civilization by translating the Ouran and other Muslim texts. The scientific stage of Islamic studies began in the 19th century. The main necessity for conducting these studies was historical and ideological motives. Two motives play an important role in the history of the study of Islamic science in Europe:

- 1) Historical-ideological motives
- 2) Scientific motives

Historical-ideological motives include the *spreading of missionary* activity and the *beginning of the Crusades*. Scientific motives include the establishment of centers for studying the *Muslim East and the emergence of Oriental studies as a separate field*.

Medieval Islamic science studies: Historical-ideological motives

Missionaries studied Islam as a cultural reality in the context of Muslim societies, thereby providing the West with the first glimpses of Muslim culture. British orientalist David Kerr also divided missionary activity into two parts:

- 1) Eastern Christian missionary activity
- 2) Western Christian missionary activity

Eastern Christian missionary activity

The beginnings of the study of Medieval Islamic science in Western historiography date back to the place where some Christians and Muslims first met - Palestine in the 7th century AD. The conquest of Jerusalem by the Rashidun Caliphate in 638 AD made Islamic culture accessible to Western lands. The first time that these studies were undertaken was at the Monastery of Mar Saba, where Arabic was

replaced by Greek as the language of Palestinian Christian theology can be taken as the starting date. (Kerr 1999, 4) The Monastery of Mar Saba was then a multilingual monastic community, with monks who knew Greek, Syriac, and Arabic. Thus, by the mid-9th century, apologetics, the justification of religious doctrines in accordance with rational thought, gave way to a more systematic Arab-Christian theology. (Casiday 2012, 95-96)

Western Christian missionary activity

If we look at Western historiography, we find the earliest Christian interest in the study of science in the Islamic world again in the monasteries. The Cluniac monks from France were the first Latin Christians to go as missionaries to Andalusia. It is no coincidence that what Montgomery Watt called "a synthesis between the indigenous and the accidental elements of the population" were Jews and Christians who had been in Andalusia since the second century, and the Muslims who conquered the Visigoths in the seventh century. By the eleventh century, the Monastery of Cluny already had a library of Islamic literature, and the twelfth Abbot, Peter the Venerable (1094-1156), employed a group of Cluniac scholar-monks in Toledo and commissioned them to translate Islamic religious texts, including the Quran from Arabic into Latin. The Toledo collection constituted the main source of textual knowledge about Islam in the medieval Christian world. (Kerr 1999, 7)

Another important event that brought the study of Islamic science into Western scientific literature was the Crusades. The Crusades introduced the Frankish people of Western Europe, during the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages, to the superior culture of Islam. Contact with Muslims in Spain and Sicily allowed the scientific heritage of the ancient world to continue in Europe after it had been translated into Arabic.

As the French Islamic scholar Maxime Rodinson said that the Western image of the Muslim world came into sharper focus in the eleventh century in his study of "Islamic European Perspectives". It was a period in which the papacy, despite the political fragmentation of Western Europe, succeeded in asserting its spiritual and even, to some extent, political supremacy. The period of the ninth and tenth centuries was characterized by the conversion of pagan peoples who had repeatedly invaded Western and Central Europe to Christianity, and their political and cultural integration. The population of Western

Europe began to grow, and economic life accelerated and local, regional and transregional trade expanded. In Spain, the kings of the small Christian states in the north took advantage of the fragmentation of Muslim-ruled Spain into numerous principalities to launch the Reconquista, the gradual "reconquest" of Spain for Christianity. The Byzantines suffered a disastrous defeat in 1071 by the Muslim Seljuk Turks, who had established their empire in Western Asia, and lost almost all of Anatolia. The Muslims now seemed poised to capture Constantinople, perhaps even to advance into southeastern Europe. These events led the Byzantine emperor to appeal to Western Christians for help. Pope Urban II in 1095 called on Christians everywhere to unite, mobilize, and attack the "enemies of God." Thus began the Crusades. (Lockman 2010, 28)

After the capture of Edessa in 1144 and Jerusalem in 1187 from the three Crusader states that emerged in the East after the Minor Crusade in 1101 (the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Hierarchy of Antioch, and the Province of Edessa), the idea arose to gain accurate knowledge about the Islamic religion and Islamic lands in order to fight the *Saracens* (Moors and Arabs who opposed the Crusaders).

European scientists began to recognize the great intellectual wealth of the Muslim world (including its Jewish communities) that their relatively poor cultures could benefit from. In Muslim Spain, and in Toledo, a major center of learning in Christian hands from 1085, as well as elsewhere in Spain, Christian scholars, with the help of Spanish Muslims, Christians, and Jews, began to translate, study, and disseminate texts on medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, as well as the many Arabic-language writings they found in Spanish mosques and palaces of philosophy. This was the first treasure trove of knowledge available in Europe at that time. Through this way Western Europeans first gained access to many works of Greek antiquity that had been lost in the West but had been preserved in Arabic translations. (Mirzabayova 2021, 60-61) In the process, they also encountered the Arabic-language writings of Muslim and Jewish thinkers who had assimilated the work of the Greeks but who were far more comprehensive than they were in opening up new avenues in medicine, philosophy, science, mathematics, and literature. Engagement with these texts had a profound impact on many arenas of Western European intellectual life. Translated Arabic texts on medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences were used as textbooks in medieval Europe for centuries. The writings of Muslim philosophers

such as Avicenna and Averroes influenced several generations of medieval Christian philosophers and theologians. As Southern noted, the half-century after 1230 was a time when these developments transformed European worldviews. (Lockman 2010, 31) Thus, the late 11th and early 12th centuries were a period of Western scholars' first efforts to understand Islam more clearly, as well as Western Europe's first encounter with the vast cultural and intellectual wealth of the Muslim world. (Ibid, 34)

By the end of the 13th century, the Crusades had essentially ended. There was little interest or energy among Western European Christians for further alliances to reclaim the Holy Land. In Spain, the Reconquista continued only until Granada, in the far south, fell under Muslim rule. Nevertheless, many Muslims (and Jews) continued to live in the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon.

Medieval Islamic science studies: Scientific motives

The other reason that brought Islamic science to the English-language scientific literature was the establishment of centers for studying the Muslim East and the introduction of manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish to these centers. The first systematic study of Islam and its history in Western Europe dates back to the end of the 16th century. The most important events of this stage were the establishment of the Bodleian Library in 1602, the establishment of the Arabic department at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands in 1613 and the famous scholar Thomas Erpenius as its first head, and the establishment of Arabic departments in Cambridge in 1632 and Oxford in 1634. From this time on, serious and continuous study of the Arabic language began.

The fact that Islamic lands had been a major point of contact for European trade from ancient times on the route to India and the Far East was also a major factor in the development of Muslim science and culture. Under Selim I (1512–20), the Ottomans emerged as a new power in the Middle East, and under his successor Suleiman the Magnificent, they became a major threat to the Balkans. In 1529, the Turks first came into conflict with Vienna. In that year, Charles V sent a diplomatic mission to Iran, hoping to gain the Safavid Shah of Isfahan as an ally against the Ottomans. His rival, King Francis I of France, had more successful negotiations with the Turks. Their meeting bore fruit in both political and scientific fields. (Endress 2002, 8)

The Arabic department was established in 1539 at the Collège de France in Paris for the orientalist Guillaume Postel following these events. Postel, who came to Istanbul with the first French ambassador, Jean de la Forest, studied Ottoman Turkish and Arabic language. After that, Postel prepared the first grammar of classical Arabic and published it in an idealized form. In 1543, the king sent the orientalist Postel, who had acquired Arabic manuscripts in the East, to the Istanbul embassy. His student Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) prepared a comprehensive chronology of history in his work "The Development of the Era" (1583) based on all the sources available at that time, even Eastern sources. (Bulut 2006, 60-61) In 1587, regular Arabic language teaching began at the Collège de France in Paris. (Saliba 2007, 22)

Morever, the Postel manuscripts that came to the Heidelberg library reached Germany and the Netherlands, enriching Islamic studies. The Dutch orientalist Thomas Erpenius had studied the geography of Abu'l-Fida and the Persian chronicle of Merkhvand. He had a manuscript of al-Tabari's work in Turkic and with it had access to a major source for early Islamic history. The *Arabic-Latin Dictionary* (1653) of Jacobus Golius (1596-1667), Erpenius' successor and student in the Arabic department at Leiden, remained the standard work for Arabic studies for about 200 years. Moreover, he returned valuable manuscripts from the East to Leiden. Around 1609, Golius's student, the German orientalist Levinus Warner, who represented the Embassy in Constantinople, bequeathed about a thousand manuscripts to the Leiden library, and from then on Leiden became the Mecca of European Arabic studies. (Endress 2002, 8)

The Reformation had brought attention to the text of the Bible and its Eastern versions, and people had also come to appreciate the value of Arabic linguistic studies in explaining the cognate Semitic roots of the Hebrew Bible. Among them were William Bedwell (1563–1632), the first modern Arab scholar to bring the study of Arabic to England at Cambridge; Abraham Wheelock (1593–1654), who corresponded with Bedwell from Cambridge; and Edward Pocock (1604–91), the first Arabic professor at Oxford, who was himself a theologian and wrote extensively on the history of Islam. Their works contributed to a better understanding of the pre-Islamic history of Arabia and the dogmatic theology of Islam. He also studied the works of prominent Arab historians, providing much information on literature and science. (Holt 1957, 445)

The import of manuscripts from the Islamic world to Europe and their study were the most important demands of that time. At that time, European libraries took great initiative to bring Arabic, Persian, and Turkish manuscripts to their libraries. They knew that these manuscripts, which belonged to various sciences, contained valuable scientific information, which would lead to the renaissance and prosperity of European science in the future. One of the first initiators of bringing such manuscripts to European libraries was the English diplomat and scientist Thomas Bodley. The Bodleian Library was founded by Thomas Bodley in 1602.

The Bodleian Library's bookshelves were largely enriched by contributions from private collectors. The English historian and orientalist Peter Malcolm Holt identified three main collections as the main pillars of the oriental manuscripts that came to Oxford in the 17th century. These were the large holdings of William Laud, a priest of the Church of England and Chancellor of Oxford University, containing hundreds of Arabic manuscripts; Pocock's private collection; and the third important source of Arabic manuscripts, the manuscripts presented by Robert Huntington. (Holt 1957, 450)

The last stage is the beginning of the historical study of science in the Islamic world in the West with the development of Orientalism as a separate field of science from the 18th century. In general, the 18th century entered the history of mankind as a period of rapid development of intellectual thought and changes in the scientific landscape of the world, which was associated with the expansion of cultural, trade and economic relations between Europe and other parts of the world, especially with the countries of the Muslim East. To strengthen these relations, it was necessary to know the ethnoconfessional and scientific-cultural characteristics of these states. The leading center of Islamic and Oriental studies in Europe at this time was Great Britain. This was facilitated by the successful economic development of the country, the presence of trade in Muslim lands, as well as the beginning of colonial expansion in these territories and the desire to engage in missionary activities there. The East India and Levant companies sought to strengthen themselves in India and obtain as many privileges as possible. (Sergeevna 2015, 45)

The word "Orientalism" has been used in many senses, both in terms of the description of a geographical area and in terms of the comparison of civilizations. The main motivation in Orientalism during this period was the desire to know another culture, even a culture that dominated itself. Pierro Martino, in his book on the rise of Orientalism written in 1906, points to the year 1453 as the birth of classical Orientalism. The conquest of Istanbul and the arrival of people of Greek origin to Europe accelerated the study of Orientalism. The efforts to recognize culture in the period from 1453 to 1780 can be cited as another factor. The second period is the period from 1780 to World War II. This century is also the period of formation of modern historical thought, Eurocentric history, Eurocentric philosophy, and the history of Eurocentric thought related to the Enlightenment. The third period began after World War II. (Davutoglu 2002, 41-43)

The first comprehensive studies in the research centers of European Orientalism were published in the first quarter of the 19th century. As the 19th century progressed, the works of scattered and isolated individual scholars were facilitated by the establishment of an international system for the exchange of ideas and information. The main impetus for this was the establishment of scientific societies. In 1784, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain was established in Bengal. In 1822, the Paris Asiatic Society was established in France, and in 1823, the Royal Asiatic Society in London. France, the most important rival of England in the struggle for world hegemony, also tried to get to know the East, especially the Middle East, in the same years. In 1833, the Sanskrit Department and the "Oriental Studies Translation Agency" were established in Oxford, and more than fifty translated works were published in Hindi, especially between 1829 and 1834. (Tombul 2021, 929)

It should be noted that these societies also had scientific journals operating in connection with the study of the listed goals. It was through these journals that scientific knowledge and discoveries in the medieval Islamic world began to appear in Western scientific literature. This meant the formation of a new scientific direction - Orientalism. For example, since 1834, the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, which studied the science, history, literature, art and culture of the East, began to be published and quickly gained popularity. In 1842, the American Oriental Society was founded and its journal began to be published from that year. In 1845, the German Oriental Society was founded and in 1847 the society published its Journal. Science in the Islamic world was one of the main topics in the research of all these societies.

The 19th century was a period of widespread research on Islamic science and culture in the West. From this period, Western researchers

began to understand that many of the discoveries and inventions of the Renaissance were made by Muslims in the Middle Ages. Western research conducted in the 19th century on the study of science and culture in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages still has significant intellectual value today. While the aim of some of these studies was to understand the Eastern societies colonized by European powers and to assimilate them with a method of governance suitable to their own structures, another part aimed to study the history of the development of science and culture in the Islamic world in the Middle Ages, to highlight the contributions made by Muslim scholars to science during this period in Western scientific literature, and to familiarize Western readers with this science and culture, and to give Eastern languages and literature the prestige they deserve. It is the responsibility of Orientalists and historians of science to study the history of science in the Golden Age of Islam. If someone who studies the history of science is a historian of science, then someone who studies Islamic science in the West can be considered both an orientalist and a historian of science. There were prominent orientalists-historians of science who studied the above-mentioned field. These orientalists and historians of science worked in various research centers and universities. Elias John Wilkinson Gibb (1857-1901) was one of the most important and early pioneers of these figures. He translated many works from the world of Islam into English. With Sir Hamilton Gibb (1895-1971), a British historian and the most prominent Englishspeaking orientalist of his time, Oxford entered the mainstream and Islamic studies began to gain a firm institutional footing in Great Britain. (Hourani 1992, 33) The founder of the history of science as a modern academic discipline, and one of the geniuses who systematically studied the history of science, including the history of science in the Islamic world, was George Sarton (1884-1956). George Sarton made the world aware of the achievements of Muslim scientists and presented the initial chronology of science in the Islamic world.

The study of science in the Islamic world was conducted by orientalists and historians of science at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, the Middle East Center at Harvard University, the School of Oriental Studies at the University of London, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, the University of Michigan, the Near East Institute in Washington, and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. (Lichtenstadter 2009, 58)

Conclusion

Thus, there were a number of factors that led to the study of the history of science in the medieval Islamic world in the West. These factors include the rise of missionary activity, the beginning of the Crusades, the establishment of centers for the study of the Muslim East, and the emergence of Orientalism as a separate field. All of these events marked an important stage in the historiography of Islamic science in the West.

As noted, the trade relations between the Ottoman Empire and the English further accelerated the development of scientific research in the Islamic world. Factories were established in Constantinople for English merchants. Merchants were the main intermediaries in the acquisition of manuscripts. In 1624, the Irish priest Robert Ussher wrote to the merchant Thomas Davies in Aleppo, asking him to bring manuscripts from there when he arrived. Davies said that the manuscript business was time-consuming and that travel in these countries was difficult. (Holt 1957, 448) One of the interesting facts is that Western researchers have been aware since the late 1950s of the rather intriguing connections between the details of Copernicus's "revolutionary" planetary theory and the work of Muslim astronomers of two or three hundred years earlier. In fact, it is clear that the only mathematical evidence used by Copernicus to support his claim that the universe revolves around the sun, even down to the use of identical symbols at its geometric points, is taken directly from Arabic manuscripts. This problem has never been satisfactorily studied and investigated, as is the case with the contents of hundreds of forgotten scientific manuscripts written over the centuries in the major Muslim languages - Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Turkish. Other orientalists and historians of science who brought science to Western readers in the Islamic world include Philip Hitti, Sir Thomas Arnold, William Montgomery Watt, Donald Hill, Franz Rosenthal, Seyyid Hossein Nasr, Abdulhamid Ibrahim Sabra, Marshall Hodgson, Dmitry Gutas, Linda George, Reynolds Nicholson, and Dorothee Metlitzky. Among the scientists who studied different fields of science in the Islamic world, those who studied chemistry include Eric Holmyard, John Eberly, Joseph Needham, Henry Stapleton, William Newman; those who studied physics include David Lindbergh, Mark Smith, and Roshdi Rashed; in mathematics, Richard Lorch, George Molland, Carl Boyer, and Gerald Toomer; in astronomy, George Saliba, Edward Kennedy, Francis Carmody, Marion Dolan, and Noel Swerdlow; in medicine, Donald Campbell, Melville Hilton-Simpson, Peter Pormann, Cyril Elgood; and in geography, Ralph Brower, David King, and others.

Therefore, as a result of the scientific research of orientalists in the Islamic world, it became clear that the true Renaissance did not originate in Europe, but in Islamic civilization. And the Middle Ages, which Westerners called dark ages, turned out to be a brilliant era in the Islamic civilization.

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A study of leadership factor in the select characters of Sharankumar Limbale's *Bahujan*

Livea Thekkekara Paul *

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the leadership factor in the select characters of Sharankumar Limbale's *Bahujan* novel. The method employed is Textual Analysis. The methodology used is The Leadership Framework propounded by the NHS Institute of Innovation and Improvement, University of Warwick. This is executed by analysing the character sketch of all the characters that are leaders in the novel and evaluation of these characters with the help of the framework. My primary text is the fictional Marathi novel, *Bahujan* by Sharankumar Limbale. This research will assist in understanding the different leaders from various strata of the society.

Keywords: Marathi Dalit literature, Sharankumar Limbale, *Bahujan*, leadership factor & Marathi fictional novel

The novel Bahujan

The novel on which the research is done is *Bahujan*, a Marathi novel scripted by Sharankumar Limbale, the famous Marathi Dalit writer. This novel was first published in 2006. It deals with the Contemporary Dalit issues. The setting of this novel is a slum termed as 'Garibi Hatao Jhopatpatti' that is alongside the link road of two villages, Acchalpur and Dharangao. There are two gangs in this slum; they are 'Bhaichi Gang' and 'Mamachi Gang'. They are led by Ananth Kalshetty and Nagnath Balshetwar respectively. They compete with each other to be the best in the slum by exploiting the people living there. There are also religious tensions involved in this. Hindus, Muslims and Dalits are always pitted against each other.

The novel takes an interesting turn when the 'Garibi Hatao Jhopatpatti' is declared as an electoral constituency. Kalshetty, Balshetwar (leaders of the gangs), Swami Ragvendra (Acchalpur's religious leader), Sathanand Kamble (political leader) and many others fight against each other to be

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the Supreme leader by winning the constituency. The most interesting factor is the Leadership one. Everyone wants to be the "leader". There is a mad race for this. Religious, social, personal, caste matters are made as platforms for success, betrayal and most importantly weapons for votes.

The Leadership Framework

The Leadership Framework is developed by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement of the University of Warwick Campus. This framework assists in critically analysing the role of the leaders in depth. Effective leadership requires individuals to work with others in teams and networks to deliver and improve services. The framework elucidates multiple parameters that aid understanding the different facets of leadership.

Character sketch of the leaders in the novel in a nutshell

Ananth Kalshetty –

Ananth Kalshetty is the leader of the *Bhaichi Gang*. The members of his gang are Usman, Aaglaway, Raghu and Bhavdya. He was a great propagator of the Hindu religion. To be able to maintain his clout in the slum he used to employ religious tactics. He was the senior in age. Even Balshetwar used to listen sometimes to his advice. Three riots occurred in the slum which was spearheaded by Ananth. Muslims, Hindus and Dalits were pitted against each other because of these riots. In the end however, Ananth is murdered by his aide, Usman in a court.

2. Nagnath Balshetwar –

Nagnath Balshetwar is the leader of the *Mamachi Gang*. The members of his gang are Saavlya, Bunty and Pintya. Though he was of Hindu religion, he did not differentiate between the different religions. Instead, he tried his best to promote harmony between the various religious groups. But when he saw that Ananth was gaining a foothold in the slum, he tried to keep close to the Dalit and the Muslim community. His love interest was Zahira who was a prostitute in Mumbai and was bought by Nagnath. She was Muslim and Nagnath loved her a lot. Nagnath was incapable of bringing both the Muslims and the Dalits on the same page. Even his fate was the same as that of Ananth. He was murdered in police custody.

3. Swami Raghvendra –

Swami Raghvendra is the Swami of a temple in the Acchalpur village. He was earlier a Sanskrit teacher in a primary government school. He used to teach the Sanskrit Vedic texts in the temple premises for the people. Slowly, his teachings attracted a lot of people towards the temple.

Thereby, the temple authorities converted him into a Swami which helped in increasing the flow of the devotees in the temple. This then aided in the growth of the temple revenue. Gradually, he made his presence felt in the political arena well. Corruption was rampant in the temple earnings. He was the Godman. But in the end he is arrested from a hotel in Delhi as he leaves the village in disguise.

4. Sathanand Kamble –

Sathanand Kamble was the head of the *Shiv Shakti* party. He was a Dalit. Though the majority of the party members were disinterested in making him the party President but they had to do so as the population of the village mainly comprised the Dalit people and they wanted the Dalit vote bank. Even though Kamble was the party Head, he was just an acting President, the face of the party and a dummy leader. In the end, he is killed by his own party members.

5. Ranjana Kadam –

Ranjan Kadam is the Head of the *Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat*, i.e. Women's Savings' Group. She used to work in the Mill and the group that was formed was in this mill. She is from the Dalit community. She is instrumental in spearheading the women in the slum to start bank accounts savings. The children of the women working in the mill were given special attention as their savings led to the start of a school for the slum children. Ranjana was heavily influenced by the Ambedkarite thoughts and all her protests were the impact of this. She along with the other women in the mill used to fight against the caste oppression in the slums. Men also supported this cause. In the end we can see that she is elected unanimously in the election by getting votes even from the Hindu and the Muslim communities apart from the Dalit community.

Application of the Framework on the leaders of the novel

1. Ananth Kalshetty –

Ananth was better at demonstrating personal qualities. He was well aware of his strength and weakness. He was better than Nagnath in this manner. He recognized and articulated his values and viewpoint clearly. He had an interest in women. Therefore, any women either in the slum or village that he liked, he used to abduct them with the help of his gang, had sexual relations with them and sold them in the Mumbai Red Light area. He even started his own Brothel adjacent to Usman's hotel.

He was capable of managing himself. He never relied on his gang members. He could take up any task alone and would be most of the time successful. He strived in developing himself; he used to seek the advice of Swami Raghvendra. He always analysed the faults in his expeditions and corrected them. He even let his team members follow his pattern. He used to walk the talk. He was of bad character therefore his ethics and values are doubtful.

He worked well with others. He used to create opportunities for his gang members to develop themselves. The hotel of Usman was started because of the capital given to him by Ananth. He did not seek the views of others except that of Swami Raghvendra who was a failure. Trust issues were always there in his gang. He never employed any strategies to manage the conflict that aroused among his gang members.

He had to struggle hard to manage services. Ananth's planning hardly supported him in his execution. Whatever he planned would become a mess most of the time. When he planned to kidnap the famous dancer of the slum with the help of his gang members, the dancer fled the slum with her family to a different city by her careful execution of the plan. Ananth could not manage his team members. He was murdered by his most trustworthy member, Usman.

He did not improve the services of his gang members. Instead, he used to extort money from them. He did help in setting up the hotel for Usman. But he grabbed the profits; thereby, instigating Usman to murder him. He could not demonstrate political and social awareness. He was unable to gauge the electoral tendencies of the slum people because of which he lost the election. He was a total failure in evaluating the impact of his actions.

He had no vision. Whatever came his way, he grabbed it and tried his best to win. But here too he was unsuccessful. In the later stage of his life he could not wield his power and shunned even by the public in general. Delivering the strategy was a problem for him, as his plans failed him. He hardly collected the entire information that is to gauge the war field and then strategize. He never established a climate of trust and transparency which would have led to the discussion of the plans openly.

2. Nagnath Balshetwar –

Nagnath could not demonstrate personal qualities well. His base was very firmly rooted in ethics and values but was not able to convert the strength and abilities into productive results. He was definitely aware of his values and principles. Many of his own qualities went against him. He respected other religions. Though he was a Hindu he listened to the viewpoints of Muslims and Dalits and tried to solve their problems. He was unsuccessful in this because neither his gang members thoroughly supported him nor his biggest rival, Ananth Kalshetty led his plans to fructify.

Even Nagnath was not able to gauge his own strengths and limitations. He tried his level best to understand how these things were different from those of other individuals and groups. But, he cannot do it by himself. Instead, his love interest, Zahira helped him to fully realise his potential; though it was rare to find him heeding to her words. He was unclear with his emotions. His emotions would come in between his decisions and he would go on acting stupidly in many cases. He was not at all prejudiced.

Whenever there was any discord between any religious or caste communities then it would be Nagnath who would attempt to uncurl it. When there was a hue and cry for the erection of a Masjid in the slum, it was Nagnath who tried to pacify the Hindu crowd. This was taken as an opportunity by Ananth who then went on instigating the Hindus which resulted in riots. This also paved the way for the construction of a temple in the slum.

He tried to obtain feedback from his gang members. Not all of them supported this. They were doubtful of his intentions and therefore would divulge only necessary details. Nagnath then had to himself obtain the entire information which then assisted him in his plans of taking hafta or monthly fees from the slum dwellers. He would erect a shabby tinned roof for the people and then exhort money from them. Hence both of them would be pitted against each other most of the time. The police took advantage of the situation.

Nagnath could never manage himself. He was an emotional fool. Many people took advantage of this. He would render loans to people and would hardly take it back. People of the slum liked this factor in him so were able to trick him into getting money. This turmoil of emotions in him had a very meaningful impact on the people of the slum. He could not be relied on for the completion of any commitment. This was because of his incapability to fulfil his target. Even if he reached to complete his goal then the police would catch him.

His health always went for a toss. As he used to exhort hafta from the slum dwellers and face the rival Mamachi gang, there would be guaranteed fights. In this, he would be injured constantly. If he was arrested by the police then he would face torture in the jail. The police would resort to third degree violence on him to extract information from him. If his team members would get caught then he would be definitely caught red — handed as his members were never able to hide his whereabouts.

He would seek opportunities for personal development. He would organise events that led to harmony between rival communities. Even if these events were unfruitful, still he would go ahead with the plan. When elections were around the corner, he increased these activities so as to get votes from various communities, vote - banks and channelize it for his victory. He was reluctant to change his mistakes. It was felt as if rectifying his mistakes was against his manhood. Therefore, whenever Zahira would correct him, he would shout at her.

He would do his best in taking his gang members on the same page and move forward. But this was mostly not possible as his team members were unsure of their own abilities. He treated each of them equally. Even after this his team members were unhappy as he would reprimand them if they were wrong and this was not acceptable for them. His communication with the people of the slum was good as he appreciated their religious and cultural backgrounds.

He promoted equality and diversity by contributing to the funds of temple and Masjid development. His working with others was always a problem. If you want the desired results then you have to bring your members on the same page. This was done by Nagnath but then your team members must also trust you for this which was absent in the case of Nagnath. He would build his relationship with others, but in vain. So, questions of maintaining the relationship are out of debate.

He would empathise with others. This quality in him assisted in letting people trust him. This factor in him also made him not differentiate between people of other religions. He would take into account the needs and feelings of others; but would reciprocate according to his wishes which were disliked by many. He attempted to be a good role model for others. But for this people should heed him and take him seriously. This hardly happened. He was, after all, the leader of the gang. Why should he act according to the whims of others?

He gave encouragement to others. He created opportunities for his gang members to engage in decision – making but his members would not be interested. Therefore, they could never challenge him constructively. He acknowledged the roles, contributions and expertise of others. For election campaigning he fully trusted his members who did their level best in putting him in good light. But he was murdered in the police station and all the efforts by his members to win him the elections went in vain.

Managing services was a great obstacle for Nagnath. His plans were not properly heeded. Therefore, even though he set direction. It never materialised. He was incapable of evaluating the impact of his actions. So, his vision was never ever communicated effectively. He never

influenced others. His strategizing was very weak as it did not produce the desired results.

3. Swami Raghvendra –

Swami was overconfident about demonstrating his personal qualities. He assumed to be the best and would do the actions of others. He was well aware of his strengths and effectively channelized them to his benefit. He was a Sanskrit teacher in a government primary school. He used his talents to get entry into the temple premises as a teacher of Vedic texts. As the Vedic texts were in Sanskrit, he was in a better position to interpret them. As he was a Sanskrit teacher, the people did not question his teachings. Thereby, he went on to win the trust of the people of the village of Achalpur.

He analysed his merits and demerits and went on to become the Pujari of the temple. Because of his influential teachings, the people would perform pujas or spiritual activities only from him and were gradually stopped from going to other pujaris. Thereby, he became the chief Priest of the temple and the other pujaris were sidelined. He was not emotional and was a very practical man. His activities in the temple brought more people to the temple. He encouraged them to make heavy monetary contributions to the temple as doing so would help them to rise in the eyes of God. People would heed him.

This brought heavy revenue to the temple fund. He then later even went on to take charge of the temple finance. The chief Financier of the temple fund was not given any importance as he had influence over the people. Therefore, if the devotees came to know that he had disappointed Swami Raghvendra then he would not be able to live peacefully in the village. The other pujaris were helpless in this matter.

Swami would obtain feedback from the people and analyse it carefully. He would see to it that if there is any opportunity to make money then he would not hesitate to do so. People from outside the village would come to listen to his preaching on the Vedic texts. By this his clout extended to the people of far off areas as well. He helped himself a lot. He would distribute his workload among the people working for the temple effectively. Therefore, his temple activities went on smoothly. Nobody dared question its functioning.

He was invited by many organisations both inside and outside the village. He was called to inaugurate, to give lectures and even give advice. He promptly acted on all of these. He became a well – known figure. People were so mad at him that they would take the decisions only after consulting him. Swami charged for all of these and people did pay

him. With all the earnings he got he bought a car and would travel only in that. He made a comfortable house near the temple and it consisted of all the amenities.

His ethics were questionable. He would order his men to harm those who did not listen to him or not follow his plans. He ordered Ananth Kalshetty to murder the brother of Sathanand Kamble as the latter was a Dalit and Swami was fearful of his rise in the political arena. He never valued nor respected the diversity of religion or caste. He instigated his devotees to go against the Muslims and also the Dalits. He interpreted the Vedic texts accordingly. The people who were his devotees did not see the logic behind this and would blindly follow whatever he said.

He was the dominator and would ensure that people were under him. Therefore he was the centre of his actions. He never let anyone control him. Instead he controlled others according to his whims and fancies. He had interest in women and would utilise the temple funds in them. This angered the chief Financier of the temple. The latter would warn him but Swami would not listen. He even plotted to kill Swami. But he fell into his trap and was murdered eventually by the men of the Swami.

His management of the services was brilliant. He did this by employing the appropriate person for the job. Swami always ensured that he had trusted people on his side. He amassed a lot of wealth through temple work and maintained his clout by killing people. He directed people effectively but in the end we can see that he was caught for his illegal work of killing people, having illicit affairs with women and also amassing wealth which was unaccounted for.

He was effective at maintaining himself in the beginning but was not able to sustain himself in the end. His own devotees deserted him after knowing his dirty work. He lacked proper vision and therefore was not able to succeed in the longer run. Therefore, even though he was great in strategizing in the beginning, he failed in the end.

4. Sathanand Kamble –

Kamble was a total failure in demonstrating his personal qualities. It would be better to say that he was a dummy leader. He was elected to the post of the chief of the Shiv Shakti party not because of his abilities, but because of his caste. His party was only interested in the Dalit vote bank. Since the Dalit comprised a major population of the slum and the village combined.

All the decisions of the party were done by the members of the higher caste. He was not even aware of the same. He realised his party's decisions only after the execution of the same. He was called to

inauguration programmes. Therefore, people thought that he was an influential person. But only his party members and he himself knew the truth. He was not able to do anything because of his caste. Still, he never stepped down as he was happy with the post he was in and always lived a life of the rich through the money of the party.

He was neither emotional nor prejudiced; as he knew that his ideas were paid heed to, he never attempted to interfere in the affairs of the party. The party members made plans. The other heads of the party ordered their followers for the execution of the same. Therefore, Kamble never had any workload. All the workload was on the rest of the party members. He never challenged himself. He never went in search of opportunities to better himself.

Because of his position he was held responsible for the mistakes of the party. Being the face of the party he could not escape the wrongdoings of his party members. He was made the scapegoat. He did not possess the qualities of a leader. Therefore, people did not follow him, instead he followed them.

He was indeed concerned about the problems that the Dalits faced but since he was just an acting leader he could not do anything for them. When there were riots in the slum and the villages, he could not direct his party members to stop them. His party members themselves were responsible for the death of the Dalits in the slum and also the villages. Therefore, the Dalit community in the slum and the villages looked at him with contempt.

He could never work in the team. He never tried to develop contacts. He was a failure in making and maintaining the relationships. So he was trapped in a false bribery charge that was initiated by some members of the party. He was later arrested. Though he was released on bail, he was murdered by his own party members for want of a new leader and also gathered votes from the Dalit community on sympathy by fooling them that Kamble was murdered by the rival groups.

Kamble never managed services as his works were done by the people of his party. He never had to look after the affairs of the party. He never got feedback for his actions since people did not care about him. He could not set directions nor create a vision. He was an utter failure in the name of a leader.

5. Ranjana Kadam -

Ranjana demonstrated her personal qualities very well. Ranjana was very firm on her values. People trusted her for her values which they knew would never change under any circumstance. Her principles were rock

solid. She strived to learn from her experiences. She was well efficient in managing herself. As she was the head of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group, she organised and managed her team very well

She continued in her personal development. She always saw to it that she was professional in her work and left no stone unturned. She always took feedback from both her team members and also the slum people from where she hailed. She acted with integrity. Everyone loved her for her honesty, except, obviously, her rivals. She was able to understand the problems in the mill and also the slum.

She analysed the problems and tried to bring about change in the slum with the help of her team members. Seeing the work done by her and the team is going to be beneficial for the entire slum, the men folk of the slum too helped her in her endeavour. The women group saw to it that there was no school in the slum. Therefore, the children would waste their time and loiter here and there. There were chances of them developing bad habits and ruining their health. Moreover, they feared that the male children would grow up and become ruffians whereas the girl children would grow up and become prostitutes. Hence, sensing the problem they came together to create a school for the development of the children.

Ranjana knew her strengths and weaknesses. She did her best in limiting her faults and working towards the growth of her merits. She was not an emotional fool. She never did her work with prejudices. She is able to garner feedback and analyse and act accordingly. She listened to people from various castes, religions and work backgrounds. Differentiation was never done by her. All this work produced a lot of workload which she was able to distribute among her colleagues and work together.

Her plans were flexible enough to change according to the situations and also the patterns of others. she was committed enough to see that the responsibilities that she undertook with the help of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group, were brought to conclusion. Seeking opportunities for the welfare of the people was always in her mind. It was tough but she was able to change the behaviours of the people working under her.

Ranjana took appropriate actions if any time there was a danger or compromise on the work ethics and values. Her rapport with others was always looked on with envy by her rivals. She developed networks by partnering with the educated people, social workers and also different party people; though she was looked at with suspicion when she stood up for election. She built her relationships with others and maintained it. She

encouraged contribution wherein an environment was created for others to contribute their part for the progress of the slum.

She actively sought the views of others. She empathised and was very well aware of the needs and feelings of others. Her effective communication with others helped her to gain trust. She instantly became a role model for others to emulate. Acknowledgement of the work done by others, were never missed by her. She recognized the common purpose of the team, was willing to lead the team and involved the right people at the right time.

Service management became a bit tedious for her when some of her team members especially, Surekha Mane, betrayed her for the growth of Mamachi gang. She held people responsible for their work; even if it was a good work or a bad work. Calculation of benefits and risks were done meticulously by Ranjana. She provided guidance. Performance of the work of Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group was done periodically and actions were taken accordingly.

She improved the services of the people. Superstitions were rampant in the slum. People followed stupid practices. They even did not consult the doctor for treatment of diseases. Instead, they would follow the rituals and customs of the villages they come from. Ranjana and other members of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group came forward and conducted various activities for the same in the slum. They went door to door to spread awareness among the people.

Ranjana was assaulted by the members of the Mamachi gang. Her right hand was amputated because of the assault by Bunty from the gang of Nagnath Balshetwar. This actually propelled the people to heed the work of Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group more actively than before. Thereby, Ranjana was always a headache for the rival groups. When she stood up for election, other leaders were afraid of her winning the election.

She set direction for the women of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group effectively. She identified the contexts for change by being aware of the range of factors which were to be taken into account. She applied knowledge and evidence gathered for the improvement of the people. Therefore, people from various religions and castes supported her even though she was a Dalit.

Ranjana made decisions using her values and was therefore able to make good decisions. She was influenced by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. His vision was also her vision. His philosophy of Buddhism was religiously followed by her. So, she was able to formulate a vision for her

slum people. She demonstrated confidence, self – belief, tenacity and integrity in pursuing the vision. She was able to frame, develop, implement and embed the strategies of the Mahila Alp Bachat Ghat, i.e. Women's Savings' Group meritoriously. No wonder she won the election with a clear majority.

Conclusion

Some of us possess better qualities than others to be a leader. The leadership qualities in human beings must be properly channelized so that effective results are produced. A proper check and balance between different layers must exist otherwise there would be disruptions as seen in the novel *Bahujan* by Sharankumar Limbale. Take off the brakes of enforced control and people will choose chaos rather than order. The good intentions of the few are overborne by the innate evil of the many.

There has always been a mad race for being the Leader. People do many things to be a leader. To know who is the proper leader - a person who has genuinely worked for the welfare of the people -, it is necessary to analyze many factors for the same. The NHS Leadership Factor helps in doing exactly this. This framework has actually helped in analyzing the leaders of the novel sans their social, cultural and religious factors.

By applying the frameworks on the leaders - Ananth Kalshetty, Nagnath Balshetwar, Swami Raghvendra, Sathanand Kamble and Ranjana Kadam, I come to the conclusion that only Ranjana Kadam has proved to be the effective leader.

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Representations of motherhood on social media: The stress of unrealistic perfectionism

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Abstract: This article examines the ways in which motherhood identities are constructed on social media. With the increasing digitalization, individuals present their selves and social roles on social media platforms. In this process, which can be analyzed within the framework of Goffman's dramaturgical approach, individuals construct identities by performing idealized roles on a specific "stage" in accordance with the expectations of their audience. Motherhood is also influenced by this process and is represented in various forms on social media, bringing different motherhood typologies to the forefront. The article defines the motherhood identities such as tiger mom, alpha mom and wine mom in the literature, in additional to them beige mom identity, which is increasingly widespread in social media. The tiger mom prioritizes childrents academic success with a strict and demanding parenting style. The alpha mom strives for success in both her child's and her own life, often pursuing unattainable perfection. The wine mom adopts a humorous, sarcastic approach to the struggles of motherhood but risks normalizing alcohol consumption. The beige mom, characterized by minimalism, natural living, and neutral-toned aesthetics, promotes a specific parenting ideal but may impose rigid lifestyle expectations. Each model presents unique challenges for mothers, children, and families. This study has established a theoretical framework by reviewing academic sources indexed in the Web of Science database between 2020-2025, while also incorporating an analysis of the beige mom identity, which has not yet been academically examined in the context of social media. The aim of this article is to analyze how motherhood identities are constructed on social media, how they are shaped by societal expectations, and the impact these representations have on women. The findings highlight that the romanticization of motherhood and its portrayal within rigid frameworks on social media may create pressure on mothers and reinforce traditional gender norms.

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Introduction

The era we are currently experiencing has transitioned through numerous socio-economic and cultural transformations, leading to a period where technology and its associated components -such as artificial intelligence, big data, the internet of things, and smart citieshave gained significant prominence and speed. According to the World Bank's 2023 data, the global population stands at 8.06 billion people (World Bank 2023). A more recent update from the Digital 2025 Global Overview Report, published in collaboration between We Are Social and Meltwater, indicates that the world's population has risen to 8.20 billion. What is particularly striking, yet unsurprising in today's increasingly digitalized world, is that approximately 70.5% of this population owns a mobile phone, with around 87% of these being smartphones (We Are Social 2025). The same report provides data on internet usage rates, stating that as of early 2025, a total of 5.56 billion people -approximately 67.9% of the global population- use the internet. Although it remains unclear whether user identities are duplicated, the number of global social media user accounts corresponds to approximately 63.9% of the world's population (Ibid). These figures alone offer critical insights into the expanding role of digitalization and social media in our daily lives, the increasing level of human interaction and connectivity, as well as the evolving habits and routines shaped by these changes.

Individuals who present themselves and their lives -within the scope and format they choose- on digital platforms also bear witness to the lives of others, albeit to the extent that they are presented. This can be interpreted as both a self-presentation and an identity construction process in social media. Rather than individual identities, the process appears to be more prominently shaped by how social roles -such as motherhood, fatherhood, or professional careers- are presented. At this point, the topic can be examined through Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. This approach, which seeks to explain how individuals present their idealized rather than their actual selves, offers a sociological framework for understanding "how individuals present themselves and their actions, how they guide and control the impressions others form about them, and what they can or cannot do in front of others" (Goffman 2009). In Goffman's terms, if social media

is regarded as a "stage" and the environments, furnishings, décor, or backgrounds used in these presentations as a "set" (Ibid, 33), then individuals engage in "performances" (Ibid, 29-30) through the activities they carry out before specific audiences (followers) that leave an impression on them. The consistency between these performances provides information about the "actor" through what Goffman terms a "personal front" (Ibid, 34-35), which reflects the individual's general appearance and manner (Ibid, 36). Social media users, who aim to present themselves in a desirable manner to their followers, tend to stage performances that align with socially approved values. In this sense, roles such as the caring mother, the strong and wealthy husband, or the diligent student serve as idealized performance presentations sanctioned by society. This phenomenon not only facilitates self-presentation but also contributes to identity construction, fostering both a desire and, an expectation among observers to adopt similar roles.

Also, motherhood emerges as a constructed and performed social role and identity within the realm of social media. Patriarchal structures, with their deep-rooted ties to traditional gender roles, seek to reinforce male dominance by emphasizing women's domestic roles even more strongly in the face of societal changes and transformations. In this regard, motherhood can serve as a critical point of analysis in defining the nature and content of the relationship's women establish with their children, particularly as women transition into the public sphere and advocate for gender equality. This article seeks to define the typologies of motherhood that are predominantly presented on contemporary social media platforms, where they are often portrayed as idealized identities.

The study follows these methodological steps: first, a search was conducted in the Web of Science database using the keywords "social media" AND "mom" OR "mother." The search results were then filtered to include articles published between 2020 and 2025, after which those specifically addressing motherhood identities were selected. The most frequently cited works were used to establish a theoretical framework. However, the review of the literature revealed that certain motherhood typologies frequently emphasized in social media have not yet been thoroughly examined. To maintain the study's relevance, identity definitions related to the beige mom phenomenon were incorporated by analyzing representations in online sources and social media platforms.

Representations of motherhood on social media

As Goffman's explanations of self-presentation in daily life suggest, social media users stage their online presence to present themselves and their lives in a way that allows their audience to gain insight into them and offer approval. These performances are shaped by social norms and the ways in which motherhood is romanticized on digital platforms. A review of the literature reveals that studies have been conducted on the concepts of the tiger mom, wine mom, and alpha mom. In addition to these, the beige mom identity -frequently observed on social media but not yet addressed in the literature- is also defined in this study.

Tiger mom

The term "tiger mom", which describes a mother who approaches her children with high academic expectations, strictness, and demands, first appeared in Amy Chua's 2011 book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, sparking various debates (Xie & Li 2017). These debates largely centred on Chua's claim that Chinese mothers are superior to Western mothers. It is likely that this controversy contributed to the popularization of the "tiger mom" model on social media and accelerated the shift of parenting competition to digital platforms.

Like other forms of hyper-parenting, this representation of motherhood has increasingly been highlighted on social media in recent years. "Tiger moms", who expect extraordinary achievements from their children and push them toward success (Chua 2011), can be seen as a contemporary version of the "hyper-parenting" styles summarized by Janssen (2025, 55):

Helicopter parents who try to solve all of their children's problems and protect them from all dangers; little emperor parents who strive to give their children all the material goods they crave and parents who practice concerted cultivation by scheduling their children into several extracurricular activities to provide them with an advantage.

It is possible to find numerous posts on digital platforms under the hashtag #TigerMom, where mothers showcase their children's academic and athletic achievements. On TikTok, trends such as the tiger mom challenge occasionally emerge, featuring both content that glorifies strict parenting and posts that critique this concept through humour.

Prioritizing a child's academic success and providing the necessary resources for it is an important and expected parental attitude.

Especially in today's increasingly competitive environment, individuals who are disciplined and hardworking from a young age gain significant advantages in their professional lives, particularly in terms of resilience, self-confidence, and goal-oriented work. However, other factors related to childhood development must not be overlooked. Excessive discipline and pressure for academic success may lead to various issues, including stress, disruption of age-specific developmental tasks (e.g., needing to study instead of playing and socializing), intense fear of failure, and the development of a personality overly dependent on a strong authority figure.

While these are the potential consequences for children, such an approach to motherhood can also have detrimental effects on a woman's mental well-being. A mother who is constantly preoccupied with raising a successful child may subordinate her own personal desires and needs. Over time, this can lead to burnout, anxiety disorders, and tensions within the family. Ultimately, both dimensions of this issue can contribute to the deterioration of family relationships and, in extreme cases, even lead to family breakdown. In this regard, it is crucial to analyze the tiger mom typology -often presented on social media as an idealized and aspirational form of motherhood- by considering all of these elements.

Wine mom

As stated at the beginning of the text, the patriarchal structure of society imposes specific roles based on gender, thereby attempting to maintain a certain control mechanism. In the context of motherhood, this control manifests in the perception that the mother is the primary caregiver responsible for the child's well-being. Positioned as the primary figure who must meet all of the child's needs in the best possible way, the mother often struggles under the heavy burden of childcare as well as the ever-increasing societal expectations. The pressure and expectation to be a "good mother" can sometimes place mothers in a state of uncertainty. Defining and delineating what is considered "good" is inherently difficult and highly variable. The mother's burden is not limited to these challenges alone; when additional responsibilities such as work, spousal duties, and household responsibilities are factored in, the process can become even more overwhelming for her.

The "wine mom" discourse, as Newman and Nelson (2021) state, "encourages women to self-soothe through alcohol consumption,

accepting the inevitable feelings of failure imposed by intensive motherhood standards and the lack of structural support within society." This discourse has gained popularity on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook under the hashtag, #WineMom. It portrays mothers sharing photos or videos of themselves with a glass of wine at the end of the day as a means of coping with the exhaustion and stress of bearing full responsibility for their children.

Harding et al. (2021) state that the use of the wine mom identity as a cultural term is intriguing; although the concept has been discussed in media formats such as online parenting magazines and personal blogs, it has received limited academic attention. However, the discourse and related social media posts "provide increasing evidence that alcohol consumption among women -particularly in North America- has been rising and is becoming normalized as a form of stress relief and empowerment among women" (Harding et al. 2021). The romanticization and widespread promotion of alcohol consumption, despite its potential to lead to serious health problems, has faced significant criticism (Cefaretti-Berlin and Barrett 2024; Harding et al. 2021; Hill and Mazurek 2023; Newman and Nelson 2021; Romo et al. 2024).

Furthermore, Harding et al. (2021) reference Gill's (2007) analysis of post feminism's role in media culture, stating that postfeminist cultural representations tend to focus on themes such as the female body, individualism, choice, empowerment, self-surveillance, and discipline. They argue that the #WineMom culture on Instagram embodies many of these postfeminist themes, portraying women's decisions as freely made while symbolizing empowerment and overcoming issues traditionally associated with social movements (Harding et al. 2021). Newman and Nelson (2021, 4) summarize the significance of this issue as follows:

"Wine mom" discourse results from the patriarchal patterns of intensive motherhood. Social forces pressure mothers to conform to hegemonic mothering while denying them the structural support necessary to successfully perform those standards. The inability to achieve these expectations results in mothers wrestling with feelings of failure and strain.

The normalization of excessive alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism for the stress caused by unsupported motherhood responsibilities can have significant consequences, particularly for mothers' mental health. While the "wine mom" identity may sometimes be adopted humorously -or even as a way to appear more "cool" and socially relatable- it also reflects a deeper reality: the struggle of mothers who feel overwhelmed by the unattainable standards of intensive mothering. Rather than serving as a feminist reclaiming of personal identity, this model of motherhood has the potential to create challenges not only in the mother-child relationship and within the family but also in broader societal dynamics as the issue escalates.

Alpha mom

Within the scope of this study's thematic limitations, a literature review revealed that, unlike other motherhood typologies, there is only one academic study specifically addressing the alpha mom concept. This is likely due to the fact that discussions surrounding this concept took place primarily in the early 2000s.

"Alpha moms" are educated, tech-savvy, Type A moms with a common goal: mommy excellence (...) The term, coined by a cable television channel, refers to the ideal mother in contemporary society (...) One characteristic of the alpha mom is that she is online 87 minutes a day on average. (Chae 2014, 504)

The "alpha mom" strives for excellence not only in motherhood but in all aspects of her life (Germic et al. 2021). As evident from these definitions, the alpha mom is driven by an unachievable ideal of perfect motherhood while simultaneously prioritizing her own individual success. In this sense, rather than embodying a solely childcentred model of motherhood, the alpha mom integrates career and personal achievements into her identity, positioning them as key aspects of self-fulfillment. Although the alpha mom model may appear to have been replaced by the tiger mom model in recent years, notable differences exist between the two. While the tiger mom represents an authoritarian and highly disciplined parenting style focused primarily on the child's success, the alpha mom portrays a modernized, technology-driven, perfectionist motherhood model that is not exclusively child-centered. Both models emphasize competitiveness; however, while the tiger mom model builds competition through the child's academic and extracurricular achievements, the alpha mom model extends this competitive drive across all aspects of the mother's life -ranging from child-rearing and academic accomplishments to professional success and technological competence.

Chae (2014, 518) found that celebrity mothers on social media serve as powerful tools in promoting intensive mothering and that, even when these public figures present unrealistic depictions of motherhood, working mothers still feel compelled to compete with them in shaping their own motherhood ideologies. The "alpha mom"'s relentless pursuit of perfection and competitiveness in all areas of life particularly in relation to the ideal motherhood myth- has led to significant criticism of this model.

Beige mom

In the literature review, various motherhood models conceptualized as "good mothering" or/and "intensive mothering" were discussed. Unlike the other parenting types mentioned, the term "beige mom" is used to describe mothers who adopt a visually oriented lifestyle structured around colours such as bone, ash, stone, cream, and beige referred to in the literature as muted tones- and who strive to align their homes and, more specifically, their children with this aesthetic.

The discourse of "beige" motherhood (referred to in very few sources as "beige" parenting), which began to be widely used as of January 2024, is considered a by-product of the beige aesthetic that dominates social media and the baby product market. This motherhood model, which finds its space through seemingly harmless or even acceptable discourses (such as minimalism and a calming approach), can, like almost any phenomenon, reach excessive levels and have various impacts on both women and children. Mothers who identify as "beige moms" act based on arguments such as preferring genderneutral clothing and nursery decor, choosing natural and organic products like unpainted wooden toys and unbleached, dye-free cotton garments, sustaining a minimalist lifestyle, and viewing neutral colours as soothing for parents navigating the chaos of childhood (*The Guardian* 2022; Willets 2024).

Comedian Hayley DeRoche brought attention to this issue through humour by popularizing the terms sad "beige mom" and sad "beige baby", offering a perspective on both the disappointment caused by the unattainability of aesthetic obligations imposed on women and idealized motherhood roles, as well as the potential negative effects of these pressures on children (Hanson 2023).

Most debates surrounding the sad beige baby trend focus on whether it affects child development. The American Optometric Association acknowledges that high-contrast objects are more likely to capture a baby's attention (Larsen 2024). Pediatrician Dr. Laura Sigman states that while rapid visual development occurs around six months of age -when babies begin to show preferences for certain colours- research on how colour impacts infant development remains inconclusive (Lee 2023).

In reality, the issue with sad beige mom or sad beige baby is not the colour beige itself. In this context, beige does not inherently signify something sad or melancholic. Rather, the emphasis is on the challenges faced by women who feel pressured to conform to the beige aesthetic, which has been imposed and assigned value as a product of consumer culture. These challenges include the time spent spraypainting furniture or toys, the potential health risks such altered products may pose to children, the constant need to keep light-coloured items clean, the impact on children as they begin to assert their own choices against these imposed restrictions, the effects of this alignment effort on family well-being, and the financial burden of purchasing these often-expensive products. Issues such as children's rights, the best interests of the child, women's empowerment and liberation, caregiving responsibilities, and family and societal well-being are core concerns of social work. Therefore, examining the beige mom trend and its effects from a social work perspective is highly significant.

Conclusion

In this study, the ways in which new motherhood models are constructed as identities created and shaped on digital platforms in connection with the increasing use of social media have been described. Like other social roles, motherhood is shaped around certain norms and ideals; however, its boundaries and dimensions have been constructed with such ambiguity and excessiveness, in line with the characteristics of the era in which it is experienced, that it can be considered "impossible."

Today, with the rise of digitalization and social media platforms, it would not be incorrect to say that motherhood roles have become performative. Mothers, who present themselves on the social media stage through the roles they define to gain approval from viewers and introduce themselves, on the one hand, offer ways to handle the highly demanding burden of childcare, while on the other hand, closely follow what influential mothers are doing. The ways of raising children and the perceptions of how one should be a mother are also shaped under the influence of social media, drawing mothers into a

competitive environment. The goal of raising the most successful child, the state of maintaining a disciplined and authoritative attitude, the act of assuming full responsibility for everything related to the child, or the display of products associated with dominant aesthetic perceptions under the name of child welfare can all be seen as efforts to establish one's identity and achieve the image of the ideal mother.

From a feminist perspective, it can be argued that these motherhood identities reproduce societal pressures on women and integrate motherhood with consumer culture. Although the alpha mother model exhibits discourses and attitudes that emphasize women's strong presence in other areas, good or intensive motherhood is emphasized to a degree that surpasses other areas of success. This can lead mothers into intense tension and stress, which, in turn, may pave the way for the rise of the motherhood model that alleviates the burden of motherhood through alcohol consumption. However, the methods that could address the negative impact of the unrealistic ideal of motherhood are far more diverse and multidimensional than this. For instance, the perception and acceptance that the burden of caregiving is sometimes only and sometimes primarily the mother's responsibility need to change. Mothers should be provided with support resources that allow them to consider their own well-being as well. In this sense, women, or in other words, mothers, need to develop discourses and attitudes that will put an end to the endless competition among themselves. At this point, awareness of the issue needs to be raised, and it should be acknowledged that each child, each mother, and each family have unique dynamics and characteristics, making it necessary to embrace diverse approaches tailored to each family. In the constructed climate of motherhood, it is important to recognize that perspectives dominate, that motherhood neoliberal commercialized as a product of consumer culture, and that certain products are marketed through these roles.

From another perspective, sharing women's experiences is highly valuable. Social media can be considered a significant power in this regard, serving as a platform where women or mothers can share their experiences with one another without any competitive or performative intent. Developing awareness through others' experiences or knowing that there are others who share similar experiences can contribute to individual empowerment. In this sense, approaching the sharing of femininity or motherhood experiences on social media within this

framework could create an alternative environment to the current situation.

In conclusion, the transformation of motherhood identities on social media offers a space for individual liberation (such as self-expression) while also creating new mechanisms of social pressure. Digital platforms make different narratives of motherhood visible, but they also function as a space where certain norms and ideals are reinforced. In this context, critically evaluating how motherhood gains representation on social media presents an important area of discussion in terms of gender equality and the structural pressures experienced by women.

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Trajectories of revolutionary ideology: Inquiry into the paper currency design of the Chinese Soviet Republic under the Chinese Communist Party (1931-1937)

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of currency design in the Chinese Soviet Republic as a tool for ideological dissemination and cultural transformation. By analyzing the integration of Soviet Socialist Realism and traditional Chinese artistic elements, the study highlights how visual strategies in currency design were used to reinforce Communist values and reshape national identity. Comparative analysis with the currency designs of the contemporaneous Republic of China, led by the Kuomintang, underscores differences in political and cultural messaging. This research emphasizes the strategic use of visual culture to influence public perception and behavior, illustrating the potency of art in political and social contexts. The findings suggest that currency design can be an effective medium for ideological indoctrination and offers insights into the broader significance of revolutionary art forms in shaping collective consciousness.

Keywords: 1930s, design criticism, design history society, Chinese designers, cultural nationalism

Introduction

The nexus between political upheaval and cultural expression remains a pivotal area of inquiry within the discipline of art history and visual studies (Tagg 1992). This paper seeks to explore this interconnection through the lens of paper currency design during a critical period in Chinese history—the era of the Chinese Soviet Republic (CSP). Under the governance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the design of paper money was not merely a utilitarian necessity for economic transactions but also a carefully crafted artifact imbued with rich ideological significance (Chong Kun Yoon 1968).

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The Chinese Soviet Republic (1931-37), a nascent state born out of revolutionary fervor and political strife, utilized every facet of cultural production to cement its ideologies among its populace (C. K. Yoon). As a key component of the CSP's revolutionary journey, researchers have tended to study the CSP from political, economic, and social perspectives, with very little mention of the banknotes issued by the CSP (Marc Opper 2018). Paper currency, a pervasive and accessible medium, emerged as a crucial vehicle for disseminating revolutionary ethos (Ernst 2014). The aesthetic and symbolic choices made in these currency designs provide a unique window into the ways in which the CCP sought to communicate its legitimacy and revolutionary ideals (Wambui Mwangi 2002). This paper aims to decode these visual strategies, examining how the elements of design were employed not just for their functional value but as potent tools of political and ideological expression.

This investigation is anchored in the theoretical frameworks of Cultural Materialism and Artistic Semiotics, which together enhance our understanding of how material culture and semiotic processes reflect, inform, and shape societal conditions and ideological constructs. Cultural Materialism, developed by Raymond Williams, asserts the imperative role of material cultural forms (such as currency) in both reflecting and shaping societal structures and conditions (Prendergast 1995). Artistic Semiotics, particularly the contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, provides a methodology for analyzing how signs within these currency designs function as conveyors of meaning, embedding complex messages about authority, identity, and collective memory within seemingly mundane objects (Chandler 1994; Skaggs 2017). By employing these frameworks, this paper will dissect the layers of meaning embedded in the paper currency of the Chinese Soviet Republic, exploring how these designs served as a canvas for ideological instruction and a mirror reflecting the turbulent socio-political landscape of the time. The ultimate goal is to illuminate how art and design, as expressed through the medium of paper currency, function as critical dialogues between the state and its citizens, encoding and reinforcing the narratives of power and revolution.

This introductory exploration sets the stage for a detailed analysis of the specific design elements of the currency, their historical and political contexts, and their broader cultural implications. Through this lens, the paper will contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between art, politics, and society during one of the most tumultuous periods in Chinese history.

Historical and ideological contextualization

The emergence of the Chinese Soviet Republic marked a pivotal intersection of political ideology and artistic expression, which profoundly influenced its cultural outputs, notably in the design of currency (C. K. Yoon). This section provides a critical examination of the ideological underpinnings and their manifestations in the visual culture of the period, particularly through the medium of currency. The ideological framework of the Chinese Soviet Republic was steeply embedded in Marxist-Leninist thought, advocating for a radical restructuring of society through proletarian leadership (M. Opper). This revolutionary philosophy was not merely a political doctrine but also a cultural strategy that permeated all forms of artistic expression (Bowler 1991). The currency design, in this context, functioned as a visual manifesto, encapsulating the ideals of revolution and communal solidarity (Kirshner 1997). Artistic elements were employed not as mere decoration, but as semiotic tools loaded with political significance (Bal and Bryson 1991; Murray Edelman 1995).

Under the aegis of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the state's approach to cultural production was rigorously controlled and directed towards serving the revolutionary cause (Shambaugh 2008). The CCP's influence extended deeply into the realms of visual arts, where currency design was orchestrated as a form of state-sponsored art (Wang 2007). The party leveraged its cultural apparatus to ensure that every element of currency design adhered to a strict ideological line, effectively making artists and designers instruments of state ideology (Gladston 2014). The integration of art and politics was meticulously managed through a network of cultural committees and propaganda units, which dictated the artistic narratives to be followed (Richard Curt Kraus 2004). The currency thus became a curated exhibit of socialist realism, a style characterized by glorified depictions of the working class and idealized portrayals of the party's leaders. This approach not only reinforced the visual iconography of socialism but also aligned public perception with the state's ideological objectives (Wyatt 2008). In the broader strategy of statecraft, currency was utilized as a primary vehicle for ideological dissemination, embedding complex narratives into the daily lives of citizens (Cohen 2018). Every banknote issued was a piece of propaganda, a miniaturized canvas

where art and ideology converged to foster a collective identity and educate the populace on the virtues of the socialist path (Siegenthaler 2016). The design features of the currency—such as the use of proletarian motifs, revolutionary red and other symbolic colors, and inscriptions espousing unity and strength—were not arbitrarily chosen. They were the result of careful artistic deliberation intended to communicate specific political messages and values. The iconography used in these designs drew from a deep well of Soviet-inspired socialist realism, adapted to reflect the unique cultural and political landscape of China (Shen and Xia 2016).

Deconstructing the aesthetics of currency design

On 7 July 1932, the National Bank of the Chinese Soviet Republic issued a unified series of paper currency, creatively spearheaded by designer Huang Yaguang (John E Sandrock). This launch included various denominations, each intricately crafted to embed political ideologies through symbolic artistry.

The currency series featured denominations of 1 Yuan, 5 Jiao, 2 Jiao, 1 Jiao, and 5 Fen (Raeburn 1937). Notably, each banknote carried the Cyrillic signatures of Mao Zemin and Deng Zihui—key figures in the bank and finance ministry—lending a personal touch that connected the currency directly with the leadership, enhancing the notes' authenticity and authority. The consistent inclusion of their portraits further personalized the regime's message, creating a visual link between the state's economic promises and its leaders.

5 Fen Note: This note is distinguished by its dual-color scheme—emerald green and brown—each choice resonant with earthy stability and the vibrancy of new growth, symbolizing the regeneration under Communist governance. The depiction of the Red Army on the march, framed by a world map, is a powerful visual narrative that speaks to the international aspirations of the Communist movement and its grounded, mobilized efforts within China. The use of "Bank of the Chinese Soviet Republic" at the top anchors the note's legitimacy, while the promise at the bottom to exchange paper for silver coins reassures its value.



An aged and worn 5 Fen banknote from the Chinese Soviet Republic, featuring faded green and gray tones with Chinese text and serial number D 959354 prominently displayed. The note shows signs of significant wear and tear indicating its historical usage.

Figure 1 Caption: 5Fen, Photographed in the author's personal collection

1 Jiao and 2 Jiao Notes: These notes are marked by their rich, deep hues—maroon and blue, respectively—colors traditionally associated with nobility and trustworthiness. The 1 Jiao note features a central floral pattern that subtly alludes to cultural heritage and renewal, whereas the 2 Jiao note boldly displays a portrait of Lenin, emphasizing alignment with Soviet Communism and its ideological heroes. Such imagery not only decorates but declares the sociopolitical lineage and commitment of the regime.



Figure 2 Caption: 1 Jiao, 2 Jiao. Photographed in the author's personal collection

5 Jiao Note: Featuring an eight-petaled plum blossom, a symbol of resilience and renewal in Chinese culture, set against a deep purple background, this design element bridges traditional Chinese symbolism with the revolutionary context. The surrounding world map and denomination suggest a global perspective and the expansive reach of the state's ambitions.



An image of a historical 5 Jiao banknote from the Chinese Soviet Republic, featuring ornate black and white patterns with Chinese characters prominently displayed. The banknote has a central floral mediallion and is bordered with intricate designs and denominational numerals. The serial number 'B 882577' is visible at the top. The note shows signs of wear and age, reflecting its historical significance

Figure 3 Caption: 5 Jiao. Photographed in the author's personal collection

1 Yuan Note: The most significant denomination, colored in maroon, prominently features Lenin's portrait alongside the denomination in large script, reiterating the currency' connection to broader Communist movements. The detailed back design in green, featuring intricate patterns and the prominent display of the denomination in English, underscores the note's dual function as both a local economic instrument and a piece of international propaganda.



An image of a historical I Yuan banknote from the Chinese Soviet Republic, prominently featuring a detailed portrait of Lenin in the center, surrounded by intricate patterns and Chinese characters. The banknote is colored in shades of brown and legic, showing significant signs of wear and aging. The serial number '688557' is printed at the bottom, and traditional Chinese decorative elements enhance the visual appeal of the note, reflecting this historical and monetary significance.

Figure 4 Caption: 1Yuan. Photographed in the author's personal collection

The currency of the Chinese Soviet Republic, notably complex in its production, reveals a unique intersection of technical constraints, artistic choices, and ideological imperatives. The diverse textual variations in characters across different denominations highlight a nuanced approach to typography that reflects both practical limitations and deliberate design choices. For example, characters such as "\phi," " 苏," "维," "国," "银," and "行" exhibit significant differences in stroke orientation and style. Some characters appear upright, while others tilt slightly forward or backward, suggesting variability in the printing setup or manual adjustments. This variability not only addresses the pragmatic aspects of printing technology of the time but also underscores an artistic intention to impart a subtle dynamism within the static medium of paper currency. Further exploring the character "苏," variations such as connected or separate initial strokes and inconsistent lengths and angles of diagonal strokes reveal an artisanal approach to each batch of currency printed. These variations are not mere inconsistencies but rather artistic nuances that could be interpreted as a reflection of the individuality of each print run, which in the broader context of art criticism, can be seen as an effort to humanize and personalize the currency during a tumultuous political era. The use of prefix letters in the currency's serial numbers, such as A, B, C, D, E for the five fen notes, and varying across other denominations, serves a functional purpose due to the limitations of the six-digit numbering machines. However, from an artistic standpoint, these prefix letters add another layer of complexity and aesthetic differentiation to the banknotes. Each letter not only extends the serial number but also introduces a textual element that interacts with the other visual components on the note, enhancing its visual hierarchy and the interplay of textual and graphic elements.

In terms of color variation, the banknotes showcase a range of hues that were initially sourced through covert operations from Nationalist territories and later produced locally under increasingly difficult conditions. The variation in ink colors—from deep greens and maroons to lighter tones—reflects not only the availability of resources but also the intention to use color as a means of visual distinction and ideological expression. The fluctuating shades could be interpreted as a visual metaphor for the instability and flux of the era, with each hue capturing a moment in time within the broader narrative of the Chinese Soviet Republic. The signature variations of key figures such as Deng

Zihui and Mao Zemin, which differ across denominations and even within the same denomination, add a layer of authenticity and security to the currency, while also serving as a focal point for artistic examination. The slight variations in signature placement, orientation, and spacing contribute to the overall aesthetic and functional integrity of the banknotes, offering insights into the meticulous yet variable processes involved in their creation.

Over the same period, The currency produced by the major official banks of the Republic of China, such as the Bank of China, Communications Bank, Central Bank, and Farmers Bank of China, displayed a sophisticated blend of Chinese calligraphy on the front and English on the reverse, showcasing the cultural penetration of Western influences and the "West learning spreading to the East (徐滄水 1924)." This typographical choice was emblematic of the era's globalization and reflected the influence of Western powers on China's economy. In contrast, the Chinese Soviet Republic's currency predominantly featured Chinese calligraphy with minimal use of English, aiming to resonate more directly with local revolutionary sentiments and less with international or bourgeois influences.

In terms of layout, the Republic of China's notes adhered to a symmetric design centered around a vertical axis, creating a balanced and harmonious visual appeal that conveyed stability and order. This symmetry was enhanced by the strategic placement of text and numerals in varied arrangements—horizontal, vertical, and diagonal—to maintain dynamic and engaging compositions (刘明刚 2011). On the other hand, the Chinese Soviet Republic's currency exhibited more varied and complex layouts that reflected the tumultuous conditions under which they were produced, often eschewing symmetry for more pragmatic and revolutionary-themed designs that prioritized ideological content over aesthetic balance.

The decorative patterns on the Republic of China's banknotes frequently utilized European-style filigrees and were characterized by advanced color gradations, a testament to the sophisticated steel engraving techniques employed by Western companies that dominated banknote production (Purtle). These intricate patterns and the high quality of printing highlighted the technological prowess of Western printing capabilities. Conversely, the patterns and icons on the Chinese Soviet Republic banknotes were simpler and focused more on ideological symbolism such as hammers, sickles, and vignettes of

workers and soldiers. These designs were not only influenced by the limited printing resources but also by a deliberate choice to use the currency as a medium for spreading Communist propaganda.

In Color Schemes, The Republic of China's notes featured a rich palette of yellow-green, blue-purple, and dark red, with subtle gradients that were achievable through advanced Western printing technologies (C. Wang et al. 2021). These colors, along with their sophisticated application, indicated a level of monetary stability and internationalism. In stark contrast, the Chinese Soviet Republic used bold primary colors, particularly red to signify revolution and green for agriculture, applied in solid blocks to accommodate the less advanced local printing techniques available during that time. These colors were chosen for their strong symbolic meanings and ease of production under constrained conditions. For two currency designs of the same period, while the Republic of China aimed to project an image of stability, modernization, and international alignment, the Chinese Soviet Republic focused on mobilizing revolutionary spirit and resilience through more stark, symbolically rich designs. This analysis highlights the role of currency as a critical interface where art, technology, and politics intersect, shaping the public's interaction with and perception of the state's authority and ideological orientation.

Semiotics of rebellion: Encoding ideology through design

An in-depth investigation into the semiotic layers of currency design of the Chinese Soviet Republic reveals how symbols and motifs function as potent carriers of ideological narratives, intricately woven into the fabric of the currency. Currency, often a mundane aspect of daily life, is transformed into a dynamic tool for ideological expression in the hands of the Chinese Soviet Republic (M. Opper). Each element—the choice of symbols, their placement, and the interplay between different motifs—carries specific ideological messages intended to resonate with and mobilize the populace. For instance, the consistent use of the hammer and sickle across various denominations is not merely symbolic of labor but serves as a unifying emblem of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry (Platoff 2020). This emblem is strategically placed to catch the eye, its placement on the currency acting as a constant reminder of the Communist commitment to these core classes (J. E. Sandrock). Further, the inclusion of portraits of key revolutionary leaders like Lenin not only personalizes the currency but also semiotically links the Soviet regime's current endeavors with a broader historical narrative of revolutionary legitimacy and continuity (Getty 2013). They command respect and loyalty, serving as focal points that draw the user's gaze and, by extension, engagement with the ideological messages they embody. The scenes depicted on various notes—whether of military parades, agricultural labor, or industrial prowess—are carefully chosen to depict the ideal socialist state (C.Y. Zhang 2016). These scenes are encoded with aspirational narratives, each element crafted to depict the unity and strength of the collective effort. For instance, scenes of the Red Army not only highlight military might but also symbolize protection, security, and the defense of socialist values against external threats (Li 2007). The workers and peasants are depicted in robust health and in productive settings, symbolizing the promised prosperity under Communist governance (Drever 2018). The semiotic richness of these designs extends to the use of color and typography. The predominant use of red across the currency serves as a visual anchor, instantly associating the notes with Communist ideology, known for its association with revolution and the struggle for workers' rights. The typography, often bold and straightforward, enhances readability and impact, ensuring that the messages are clear and accessible.

Visual elements in currency, such as imagery, color, and typography, are not merely decorative; they are imbued with ideological significance, crafted to resonate with the collective consciousness of the society (Hymans 2004). In the context of the Chinese Soviet Republic, each element was carefully selected to project and reinforce the values and goals of the Communist regime. Imagery is a powerful communicator of ideals. The depiction of industrious workers, peasants in fields, and soldiers in unison not only illustrates the regime's commitment to these social classes but also promotes an ideal of collective labor and unity. These images are emblematic, representing the backbone of the Communist ethos. They are designed to inspire pride and a sense of belonging among the citizens, continually reminding them of the regime's focus on communal progress and strength through unity. Color plays a critical role in visual communication, carrying significant psychological impact. The predominant use of red across the currency is a strategic choice, symbolizing revolution, vigor, and the sacrifice of the masses. This use of red not only aligns with the global communist movement's color symbolism but also serves to instantly evoke an emotional response from the viewer, connecting them to the revolutionary spirit.

Additionally, the incorporation of more subdued tones, such as greens and browns, reinforces themes of growth and stability, grounding the revolutionary messages in a sense of enduring progress and natural renewal. Typography in the currency also contributes to the construction and communication of revolutionary ideals. The use of bold, clear typefaces ensures that the messages are legible and authoritative, conveying a sense of certainty and order. The typography often includes slogans and mottos that encapsulate key communist ideologies, designed to educate, mobilize, and reinforce the collective identity and mission of the state. This straightforward, impactful use of text helps unify the visual message across the various denominations of the currency, making the ideological narrative accessible and omnipresent.

Visual strategies in currency design, such as the use of specific symbols, colors, and imagery, are crafted not only to carry aesthetic value but to embed deep-seated messages that resonate with the viewer's daily experiences (Gruber and Haugbolle 2013). These elements become tools for ideological indoctrination, influencing perceptions and behaviors through constant interaction. Symbolic Imagery plays a pivotal role in this process. By repeatedly exposing citizens to images of collective labor, military readiness, and leadership figures, the currency reinforces the values of unity, diligence, and loyalty to the Communist cause. Such imagery helps to normalize these ideals, embedding them into the fabric of everyday life. Over time, these images help to shift public perception, aligning it more closely with the values depicted. For instance, the depiction of industrious peasants and workers not only highlights the dignity of labor but also promotes the Communist ideal of a classless society where everyone contributes to and benefits from collective efforts. Color Psychology is another powerful tool in shaping perceptions. The strategic use of red, as previously discussed, invokes feelings of excitement, urgency, and passion, which are aligned with revolutionary activities (Rossi 2019). This constant visual cue helps to keep the spirit of revolution alive, maintaining a sense of ongoing struggle and vigilance among the populace. Subtler colors like green and brown, associated with growth and the earth, reinforce messages of fertility, stability, and rebirth, suggesting that the revolutionary path will lead to prosperity and renewal. Typography and textual content in currency design also contribute significantly to shaping ideological perceptions (W. Mwangi). The bold and clear fonts used for slogans and

denominational values are not just practical for ensuring legibility but also serve as assertive reminders of the state's messages. The presence of these texts in everyday transactions ensures that the state's ideals are regularly communicated to the public, reinforcing the authoritative voice of the government and its omnipresence in daily economic activities.

Through these visual strategies, the currency of the Chinese Soviet Republic serves as a continuous medium of ideological expression. Each element works synergistically to reinforce the Communist narrative, subtly influencing the public's perceptions and aligning them more closely with the state's goals. This transformation of perception through visual design is not merely about changing how people see their currency but about reshaping how they view their society, their roles within it, and their collective future.

Synthesis of artistic and ideological influences

The currency of the Chinese Soviet Republic serves as a rich canvas for the interplay of external and domestic artistic influences, embodying a complex synthesis that reflects both global ideological movements and deeply rooted cultural traditions. Externally, the influence of Soviet art, particularly the Socialist Realism style, is paramount in the visual strategy of the Chinese Soviet Republic's currency (Rusnock 2002). Socialist Realism, an art form that emerged as the state-sanctioned style in the Soviet Union, emphasizes heroic portravals of workers and peasants, depicting them in idealized, often monumental forms that symbolize collective strength and socialist ideals (Karpova 2015). This style's adoption in the currency design was not merely an aesthetic decision but a calculated move to align the visual narrative of the Chinese Soviet Republic with that of the broader Communist bloc. The imagery of Lenin and the ubiquitous hammer and sickle iconography further reinforce this Soviet influence, embedding symbols of communist solidarity and revolutionary zeal into the daily transactions of Chinese citizens (Barnes 2010). On the domestic front, the currency design incorporates traditional Chinese artistic elements that resonate with local cultural sensibilities and historical continuity (P. Gladston). This strategic integration serves to localize the communist ideology, rendering it more palatable and relevant to the Chinese populace. Traditional motifs, such as pastoral scenes reflecting agricultural life and the use of specific color schemes that echo historical Chinese art, play a critical role in this cultural bridging (Tang 2015). Additionally, the employment of Chinese calligraphy in the currency's typography not only adds aesthetic value but also connects the modern revolutionary messages with ancient forms of Chinese expression, revered for their artistic and cultural significance. The convergence of these external and domestic artistic influences creates a nuanced visual discourse within the currency's design. This discourse is a deliberate fusion, aimed at crafting a visual identity that both communicates the revolutionary messages of the Chinese Soviet Republic and respects the cultural heritage of its people. The resulting design is a sophisticated amalgam, where Soviet artistic principles meet traditional Chinese aesthetics, creating a unique ideological and visual synthesis. This deep integration of art forms serves multiple functions: it legitimizes the new regime by aligning it with a powerful international movement, it educates and mobilizes the populace by embedding ideological symbols in everyday objects, and it maintains a continuity with the past, thus easing the cultural transition to a new social order. Through this lens, the currency transcends its role as a mere medium of economic exchange and becomes a vital tool in the cultural and political indoctrination process. illustrating how design and art are employed not just to decorate but to persuade, unify, and transform a society.

The synthesis of artistic influences in the currency design of the Chinese Soviet Republic not only creates a unique visual lexicon but also reflects broader trends in political art and propaganda, particularly during times of intense ideological dissemination and nation-building. This insight into the synthesis provides a deeper understanding of how visual elements are leveraged in political contexts globally, highlighting the strategic use of art as a medium for shaping public consciousness and reinforcing regime legitimacy (M. Edelman). The convergence of Soviet Socialist Realism with traditional Chinese artistic elements in the currency design illustrates a broader trend in political art where art is employed as a vehicle for ideological affirmation and a tool for socio-political engagement (Gill 2011). Socialist Realism, with its emphasis on the idealized portrayal of workers and heroic narratives, was a dominant artistic strategy used across the Communist world to promote socialist values (Gutkin 1999). It aimed to inspire the working class and project an image of a progressive, industrially advancing society (Cai 2016). This approach to art aligns with broader trends in political propaganda that seek to mobilize the populace by presenting an aspirational vision of the

future, often characterized by unity, prosperity, and collective effort (Stremlau 2011). Incorporating local cultural motifs and traditional aesthetics, as seen in the Chinese Soviet currency, reflects a trend in political art to contextualize revolutionary ideals within the familiar visual and cultural frameworks of a nation (Z. Zhang 2018). This strategy is not unique to China but can be observed in various revolutionary movements worldwide, where the integration of indigenous elements into political propaganda helps to root international ideologies in local contexts, making them more palatable and relatable to the target audience (Wehrey and Boukhars 2019). For instance, during the same period, other revolutionary states and movements, from Cuba to Vietnam, also incorporated local cultural references and nationalist themes into their propaganda to strengthen the resonance of their messages with their respective domestic audiences (Fernandes 2006).

Moreover, the use of currency as a medium for such artistic and ideological expression is indicative of a broader trend where everyday objects are transformed into conduits of political messaging (Remillard 2007). Currency, because of its universal necessity and constant circulation, serves as an ideal vehicle for this purpose (Kindleberber 2005). This approach is reflective of a larger strategy within political propaganda to permeate everyday life with ideological narratives, ensuring that the political messages are not confined to public speeches or posters but are integrated into daily transactions and interactions (Desan 2014). This synthesis in the Chinese Soviet Republic's currency design thus not only underscores the adaptive and integrative strategies of political regimes to embed ideology through art but also highlights the role of art in constructing and affirming national identity under new regimes. It exemplifies how political art evolves from purely aesthetic expressions to become powerful tools of political engagement and social engineering, reflecting and shaping the sociopolitical narratives that define eras of transformation. Understanding this synthesis within the broader context of political art and propaganda provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which art influences public perception and behavior, illustrating the potent intersection of art, politics, and daily life in shaping collective consciousness and historical legacy.

Cultural repercussions and artistic aftermath

The introduction of currency that bore the marks of both revolutionary symbolism and traditional Chinese artistic motifs played a significant role in normalizing the visual elements of the Communist ideology among the general populace (R. C. Kraus). The constant circulation of these banknotes meant that every segment of society repeatedly engaged with the imagery and messages they carried, thereby embedding these elements within the collective consciousness. Over time, this repetitive exposure did not merely influence the aesthetic preferences of the people but also subtly aligned their cultural identity with the values and goals of the Communist regime (Doctoroff 2012). The currency's design, by incorporating elements of Socialist Realism—a style characterized by its didactic emphasis on depicting idealized versions of workers and peasants in heroic scenarios alongside traditional Chinese art forms, played a dual role. It acted as a bridge between the revolutionary new and the culturally familiar. This bridging was crucial in a country with deep historical and cultural roots like China, where a sudden break from the past could have led to cultural dissonance. Instead, the artistic strategies employed in the currency design fostered a sense of continuity, making the revolutionary ideals feel like a natural progression of the Chinese cultural narrative rather than an abrupt imposition. The currency impacted the broader artistic landscape by setting a precedent for the types of imagery and themes that were considered culturally valuable and politically acceptable. Artists, designers, and other cultural producers, seeing the motifs and styles endorsed on the currency, were likely influenced in their own creations, contributing to a cultural shift towards more ideologically aligned art forms (Keane 2013). This shift was significant not only in the visual arts but also in literature, performing arts, and public discourse, gradually transforming the cultural landscape to reflect the new socialist reality. In terms of national cultural identity, the currency helped forge a new collective identity centered around the values of communal labor, sacrifice, and revolutionary zeal. These values, repeatedly reinforced through daily economic interactions via the currency, became cornerstones of the national identity under the Communist regime (Cooper 2009). The integration of these values with traditional cultural symbols ensured that the transition in national identity was both profound and nuanced, reflecting a complex interplay of revolution and continuity.

Reflecting on the legacy of the currency designs of the Chinese Soviet Republic provides valuable insights into the trajectory of Chinese artistic expressions post-revolution (Hui 2016). These designs, which seamlessly blended ideological symbolism with traditional artistic motifs, have left an indelible mark on the evolution of art and design in post-revolutionary China, influencing various forms of cultural expressions and artistic practices. The integration of political and traditional elements in the currency designs during the Chinese Soviet Republic period set a precedent for subsequent artistic endeavors in China. Post-revolution, as China embarked on constructing a new socialist society, the themes and stylistic approaches initially popularized through these currency designs continued to resonate (Lin 2017). The emphasis on Socialist Realism, which prioritized depictions of the proletariat in an idealized manner, became a dominant artistic style not only in visual arts but also in literature, cinema, and other cultural productions (Gao 2011). This style was instrumental in shaping the narrative of a new China, portraying it as a unified, industrious, and forward-moving nation.

Moreover, the legacy of these currency designs is evident in the way they helped to standardize certain symbols and motifs that became synonymous with Chinese identity and national pride. For instance, the recurring imagery of workers, peasants, and soldiers—originally propagated through the currency—became staple icons in Chinese propaganda art. These images served as powerful tools for instilling a collective memory and identity, reinforcing the Communist Party's ideals and the virtues of socialism. The currency designs influenced the broader visual language of China by encouraging a blend of accessibility and didacticism in artistic productions. The clear, bold, and direct style seen in the currency's typography and graphic elements has permeated various forms of public and commercial art, from street banners to educational posters, and even into contemporary digital media. This style emphasizes clarity and message-driven artwork, which continues to be a significant aspect of Chinese visual culture. The impact of these designs also extends to how art is used as a vehicle for education and ideological indoctrination. The strategic use of art to convey political messages in the currency paved the way for more expansive and systematic approaches to using art in public life, promoting state narratives and values. This approach has had lasting implications for how art is perceived and utilized in Chinese society, maintaining a tight interweaving of art with political and social

functions. In reflection, the legacy of the currency designs from the Chinese Soviet Republic era is profound, influencing the trajectory of Chinese artistic expressions in significant ways. These designs helped mold a visual culture that is uniquely Chinese, yet distinctly shaped by the revolutionary context from which it emerged. They not only reflect the historical and cultural transformations of their time but also continue to influence contemporary artistic and cultural practices in China, demonstrating the enduring power of art as a mediator of social values and national identity.

Concluding reflections

The synthesis of key research findings from the analysis of currency designs during the Chinese Soviet Republic era provides a comprehensive understanding of the intersection of art and politics, elucidating how deeply intertwined these domains are, especially in contexts of significant socio-political change. This synthesis reveals the multifaceted role of art in political discourse, not just as a reflection of cultural and political dynamics but as an active participant in shaping and propagating ideological narratives.

Art as a tool for ideological dissemination: The designs of the Chinese Soviet Republic's currency illustrate how art can be strategically utilized to disseminate ideological content. By embedding socialist symbols and revolutionary motifs within everyday objects like currency, the regime was able to ensure constant exposure to its ideological messages, thereby normalizing and reinforcing its political ideals across the populace. This use of art transforms mundane transactions into opportunities for ideological reinforcement, showcasing the potent capabilities of visual art as a medium for continuous political communication.

Cultural synthesis and identity formation: The integration of traditional Chinese elements with Soviet-influenced Socialist Realism within the currency's design highlights art's role in cultural synthesis and identity formation. This blending serves to localize broader socialist ideals, making them more accessible and acceptable to the Chinese public by linking new ideologies with familiar cultural narratives. Such strategic cultural synthesis not only aids in easing the transition to new political regimes but also plays a critical role in shaping a unified national identity that aligns with the state's goals.

Legacy and influence on subsequent artistic practices: The legacy of these currency designs extends beyond their immediate temporal

context, influencing subsequent generations of artistic expression in China. The aesthetic choices and thematic focuses that were popularized through these designs have echoed through decades, influencing public art, propaganda, and even commercial art practices. This enduring influence underscores the deep impact that politically driven art can have on the broader artistic landscape, shaping aesthetic norms and expectations well into the future.

Reflecting on the insights garnered from the study of the currency designs of the Chinese Soviet Republic, several future directions for research within design history and political iconography become These directions not only promise to expand our evident. understanding of the complex interplay between art and politics but also aim to uncover broader cultural and historical implications of design in various political contexts. Firstly, future research could benefit from comparative studies that examine currency designs or other forms of political iconography across different political regimes. Such studies would provide insights into how different political systems utilize visual culture to reinforce authority, disseminate ideology, and foster national identity. Comparing regimes with differing ideologies, such as authoritarian versus democratic, could particularly illuminate how governmental structures influence artistic expressions and the dissemination of political messages. Additionally, as digital media continue to dominate visual culture, research could explore how the transition from physical to digital formats affects the creation and circulation of political iconography. This includes investigating the role of digital currencies, social media, and online platforms in shaping contemporary political narratives and how these platforms redefine interactions between art, politics, and the public. There is also a need for longitudinal studies that track changes in political iconography over time within a single nation to understand how shifts in political landscapes affect artistic expressions and national identity. Such studies could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of cultural resilience and transformation, especially in nations experiencing rapid political changes or cultural amalgamation. Furthermore, incorporating ethnographic methods to study how different populations perceive and interact with political iconography can yield nuanced understandings of the impact of design on public consciousness. This approach would consider factors such as age, education, and cultural background to determine how various groups interpret and engage with the symbols and motifs presented in political

art. This reflective discussion on the future directions for research within design history and political iconography highlights the need for a multidisciplinary approach that integrates art history, political science, sociology, and digital media studies to fully understand the potency and implications of visual culture in the political domain.

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Harmonizing policies in research and extension of Cebu Normal University: A governance archetype

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Abstract: Anchoring the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this study harmonized the policies in research and extension of Cebu Normal University, a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Philippines, towards an archetype that will help align, aid and operationalize governance based on the existing laws, guidelines, rules, regulations and the like. As such, the research is a policy-excavation on the available issuances and/or instruments, for example, the constitution as a legal framework, legislative enactments, executive orders/dicta of statesmen, resolutions, memorandum circulars, special orders, and similar documents by authorities that are subject to the widest dissemination, information and proper guidance that are not contrary to law, setting the strategic directions in compliance with the goals set-forth by the university. Referencing policies, Cebu Normal University commits in the delivery of research and extension that advances public interest concerning the community and all stakeholders concerned. This all the more proves that Cebu Normal University adheres on the minimum-maximum requirement of the policies therein, recommending an archetype in governance that will intensify the programs and/or initiatives undertaken by the university.

Keywords: policies, research and extension, Cebu Normal University, governance archetype

Introduction

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development stipulates the seventeen as itemized goals per the following, "No poverty (SDG 1), Zero hunger (SDG 2), Good health and well-being (SDG 3), Quality education (SDG 4), Gender equality (SDG 5), Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), Industry, innovation and

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infrastructure (SDG 9), Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), Climate action (SDG 13), Life below water (SDG 14), Life on land (SDG 15), Peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16), and Partnerships for the goals (SDG 17)".

Internationalizing Cebu Normal University requires robust adherence to policies, programs and all other initiatives to comply with the standards set-forth to universities in the world. Such is the reason for the compliance of all mandates from the international, national, local and institutional to connect to the macro-micro and vice-versa levels of governance (Lavoie 2009) in order to cascade to the communities and all stakeholders on appropriate alignment, all directions for the sake of public interest and service.

With the current leadership and administration, the entire university and all stakeholders (Burris and Neem 2024), most especially the faculty doing research and extension, should contribute to the deliverables in affecting change to the public, especially the lessprivileged, underserved and depressed sectors of the society. The challenge is how to cascade and trickle-down the policy to the community, the programs, initiatives and the like to reach to the topbottom-grassroots of those who are supposed to be served accordingly. The impetus of this research is in order to answer the following queries: Firstly, what are the available and/or existing policies of Cebu Normal University in research and extension per the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Secondly, how are these policies ordered, arranged and/or harmonized that shaped governance in Cebu Normal University? Lastly, based on the findings and conclusions, what archetype can be designed in order to align, aid and operationalize governance research and extension in Cebu Normal University? In line with the foregoing problem statements, this research is, thus, undertaken.

Literature review

Public policy can be generally defined as a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives ("Meaning of Public Policy" n.d.). Thomas Dye defined public policy as "whatever governments choose to do or not to do (Lazo 2011) ("Republic of the Philippines COLLEGE OF PUBLIC GOVERNANCE, AND SAFETY (CPGS) Course Syllabus in PS 113:

Public Policy" n.d.; "Republic of the Philippines COLLEGE OF LAW, PUBLIC GOVERNANCE, AND SAFETY (CLPGS) Course Syllabus in PA 4005: Public Policy Analysis" n.d.).

In the manner by which government takes action through policies and laws (Lowi 2003), it has to undertake the public policy cycle in harmonizing all its affairs and activities (Fathari and Efendy 2023) as guide in the ideation, agenda-setting, initiation and formulation, execution (Kalaba 2016), evaluation such is the case (Yuan et al. 2024) towards policy retention, amendment and/or revision, thus, policy development *per se*.

The science of policies should take-back to the intentionality of the actors setting plans and strategies in the case (Yuan et al., 2024); Acosta et al. 2012) for doing until an outcome is achieved to be translated to outputs that will serve as deliverables in order to reach to the served-sectors of the society. The challenge is how to capture the realities of policy implementation (Read et al. 2024) to find the gap and the difference between intention and the outcomes. The springboard emanates from the issuances, instruments and other policy documents that are available for study. Policy integrations (Azizi, Biermann, and Kim 2019) in all initiatives and undertakings are needed to harmonize (Fathari and Efendy 2023) all programs and activities in Research and Extension of Cebu Normal University: understanding whether piece-meal, laws and/or policy (Lowi 2003) stipulations ensure direction for all contributions towards strategic outcomes, outputs and deliverables. The organization through its people may see policies as a barrier and/or an opportunity to grow in between all affairs requiring the commitment per issuances so people can execute all programs to align to research and extension.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

According to functionalism, the government has four main purposes: planning and directing society, meeting social needs, maintaining law and order, and managing international relations. According to functionalism, all aspects of society serve a purpose. Functionalists view government and politics as a way to enforce norms and regulate conflict ("Functionalism" n.d.). Policies set the definition of the government in carrying-out its objectives of "what to do" and "what not to do", such that processes are integrated into the system so outcomes towards the intended outputs (Frederickson et al. n.d.) are established accordingly.

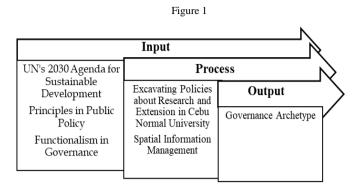


Figure 1 shows the theoretical and conceptual framework infusing functionalism as a perspective in governance serving the input of the study. The policies of Cebu Normal University in research and extension are then processed in understanding the operations and the deliverables to set forth its commitment to public interest towards a "governance archetype" that will help aid, align and disseminate information for public use and/or policy development.

Methodology

The study is a policy-excavation on releases via spatial information management (Lazo 2011) about Cebu Normal University's research and extension per the available issuances and/or instruments, for example, the constitution as a legal framework, legislative enactments. executive orders/dicta of statesmen, resolutions, memorandum circulars, special/office/administrative orders, and similar documents per circulars and orders ("MC NO. 35" n.d.) by authorities that are subject to the widest dissemination, information and proper guidance that are not contrary to law (Lowi 2003), setting the strategic directions in compliance with the goals set-forth by the university. All available policy documents are gathered, consolidated, databased then arranged and/or sorted according to codes, naming, date of issuance and the source of which the policy emanate from a particular level of governance typologized from policy streams that are institutional, local, national (Mas'ud and Syamsurrijal 2022) and/or international. After the final tabulation and ordering, all data were presented then analyzed towards conclusions that served as basis in coming up with a governance-archetype that will help in agenda-setting (Burris and Neem 2024) and/or another cycle of policy formulation and planning,

execution, evaluation (Yuan et al. 2024) and/or policy amendment or revision to further improve the entire research and extension deliverables of the university.

The scope and delimitation of the study rely on the final interpretation of the policy-makers and the implementers and the entire government along all stakeholders that may be affected therein. It is presupposed that the intention of the study is to showcase and understand policy as it is in line with the best and purest intention of scholarly writing in the discipline. The current institutional policies of Cebu Normal University in research and extension are primed along relevant, pertinent and/or existing local, regional, national and international instrumentation.

Results and discussions

Anchoring the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this study harmonized the policies in research and extension of Cebu Normal University, a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Philippines, towards an archetype that will help align, aid and operationalize governance based on the existing guidelines, rules, regulations and the like.

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines as the basic and/or fundamental law of the land set forth all basis of policies both in principles and action in all levels and instrumentalities of the government that should be enshrined therein ("THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES" n.d.). Will all interconnectedness in all aspects of public interest, welfare, common good and the like per the law requires, Article XIV corresponding all its sections set forth the provisions of Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports. Republic Act 8688, An Act Converting the Cebu State College into a State University to be known as the Cebu Normal University ("IRR University RA 8688 Memorandum Order No. 10, Series of 2024_For Dissemination" n.d.) and Appropriating Funds Therefor of Section 2. The University shall primarily provide higher professional and special instructions for special purposes and promote research and extension services, advanced studies, and progressive leadership in education and other fields as may be relevant ("RA 8688" n.d.). Memorandum Circular No. 35 series of 2024 ("MC NO. 35" n.d.), Prescribing the 2024 Revised Classifications, Format, Scope, Purposes and Processing of Administrative Issuances of the University President of Cebu Normal

University Pursuant to Sub-Section 62.3, Rule 10 of the 2024 Internal Rules of Procedures (IRP) of the CNU Board of Regents in Relation to Sub-Sections 4.34 and 4.59, Rule II of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act 8688 Approved per Board Resolution No, 303, s, 2024 adopted by the CNU Board of Regents, Effective 21 October 2024, and for Other Purposes.

Policies about research and extension of Cebu Normal University (CNU)

Item	Policy Code	Name of the Policy/Law/Dicta and	Level of Governance
No.		Other Instruments	
01		The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals	International
02		1987 Constitution of the Republic of	Municipal/Parochial/
		the Philippines	National
03	Republic Act 8688	An Act Converting the Cebu State	Institutional-National
	•	College into a State University to be	
		known as the Cebu Normal	
		University and Appropriating	
		Funds Therefor	
04	Memorandum	Posting or Publication and Conduct	Institutional
	Order No. 10	of Public and Stakeholders'	
	series of 2024	Consultations of the Draft 2024	
		Implementing Rules and	
		Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act	
		No. 8688 and for Other Purposes	
05		AMBISYON 2040	National
06	Memorandum	Prescribing the 2024 Revised	Institutional
	Circular No. 35	Classifications, Format, Scope,	
	series of 2024	Purposes and Processing of	
		Administrative Issuances of the	
		University President of Cebu	
		Normal University Pursuant to Sub-	
		Section 62.3, Rule 10 of the 2024	
		Internal Rules of Procedures (IRP) of	
		the CNU Board of Regents in	
		Relation to Sub-Sections 4.34 and	
		4.59, Rule II of the Implementing	
		Rules and Regulations (IRR) of	
		Republic Act 8688 Approved per Board Resolution No, 303, s, 2024	
		adopted by the CNU Board of	
		Regents, Effective 21 October 2024,	
		and for Other Purposes	
07		Philippine Development Plan 2023-	National
07	-	2028	ivational
08	Republic Act 7722	An Act Creating the Commission on	National
		Higher Education, Appropriating	
		Funds Therefor and Other Purposes	
09		Philippine Quality Framework	National

10		Central Visayas Regional	Local-Regional
		Development Plan from 2023-2028	
11		Cebu Normal University Code	Institutional
12		CNU Research and Extension Manuals	Institutional
13	Joint Circular No. 1, series of 2022	Guidelines for the Implementation of the 8 th Evaluation Cycle of the National Budget Circular (NBC) No. 461, series of 1998	National
14	Joint Circular No. 03, series of 2022	Guidelines on the Reclassification of Faculty Positions in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)	National
15	Memorandum Circular No. 26, series of 2023	Prescribing the Five-Year Vision, Mission, Development Thrusts and Roadmap of the "Golden Journey" of Cebu Normal University for Fiscal Years 2024-2029, and for Other Purposes	Institutional
16	Memorandum Circular No. 23 series of 2024	Prescribing the Implementing Guidelines Governing the Teaching and Workload, Performance Evaluation System, and Requirements on the Reclassification of Faculty Members and Template of the Individual Performance Commitment Review (IPCR) According to Academic Ranks, Effective First Semester, School Year 2024-2025 and Thereafter, Pursuant to Board Resolution on 06 September 2023, Subject to Applicable Laws, Rules and Regulations, and For Other Purposes	Institutional
17	Memorandum Circular No. 30 series of 2024	Strengthening, Clarifying and Supplementing Certain Provisions of Memorandum Circular No. 23, s. 2024	Institutional
18		2024 Revised CNU-PRAISE System	Institutional
19	Memorandum Circular No. 54 series of 2024	Mandating All Research Outputs to Undergo and Obtain a Passing Rating of at Least Eighty-Five Percent (85%) During the Research and Development (R&D) In-House Review a Pre-requisite, Among Others, on the Recognition and Acceptance as Supporting Documents Relative to the CHED Joint Circular No. 3, s 2022 and CHED CAO No. 01, s., 2023, and on the Grant of Authority to Travel for Presentation, and Payment for/Reimbursement of Publication Fee/s Thereof, Whether Within the Philippines or Abroad, and For This	Institutional

	Purpose, Directing the Campuses	
	and Colleges and the Office of the Vice President for Research,	
	Publication, Innovation,	
	Commercialization and Extension	
	and Office of the Director for	
	Research and Development, and	
	Publications to Conduct at Least	
	Quarterly or Semestral R&D In-	
	House Reviews, Respectively,	
	Subject to the Approval by the	
	University President and For Other	
	Purposes	
20	 Other Pertinent Updates and	All Levels of the
	Issuances, Amendments, Revisions	Government
	and/or Existing Laws, Rules and	(International-
	Regulations Within and from Other	National-Institutional-
	Agencies (e.g. Civil Service	Local-and-vice-versa)
	Commission (CSC), Department of	,
	Budget and Management (DBM),	
	Commission on Audit (COA), Local	
	Government Units (LGUs), National	
	Economic Development Agency	
	(NEDA) including MOA and MOUs	
	signed in agreement with other	
	agencies and/or instrumentalities of	
	the government)	

By 2040, the Philippines is a prosperous middle-class society where no one is poor. People live long and healthy lives and are smart and innovative. The country is a high-trust society where families thrive in vibrant, culturally diverse, and resilient communities ("Ambisyon 2040 Vision2040_final" n.d.). The Philippine Development Plan from 2023-2028 stipulates Subchapter 2.2. Improve Education and Lifelong Learning and Subchapter 2.3 Establish Livable Communities under Part II: Develop and Protect Capabilities of Individuals and Families; Chapter 8. Advance Research and Development, Technology and Innovation under Part III: Transform Production Sectors to Generate More Quality Jobs and Competitive Products ("PDP-2023-2028" n.d.). Also, Republic Act No. 7722. An Act Creating the Commission on Higher Education, Appropriating Funds Therefore and Other Purposes ("CHED" n.d.). The Philippine Quality Framework ("PHILIPPINE QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (PQF)" n.d.) is a national policy that describes the levels of educational qualifications and sets the standards for qualification outcomes ("Manila Bulletin on PQF" n.d.). The Central Visayas Regional Development Plan from 2023-2028, Subchapter 4.2 Improve Education and Subchapter 4.3 Establish Liveable Communities under Part II: Develop and Protect Capabilities of Individuals and Families and Part III: Transform Production Sectors to Generate More Quality Jobs and Competitive Products, Chapter 10. Advance Research and Development, Technology and Innovation ("Central-Visavas-RDP-2023-2028" n.d.) The Cebu University Code mentioned its Quality Policy as it "commits itself to deliver excellence in education, research and extension services towards global competitiveness, to meet the increasing levels of customer demand, statutory, regulatory and international standards through continuous quality improvement and governance (University Code, 2018)." The CNU Code, Title Nine and Ten with specific provisions cites all expressed and implied stipulations including the pertinent manuals for general and specific implementation of deliverables in research and extension (Boulevard and City n.d.).

Research and extension are incentivized through reclassification and the promotion of the faculty to produce quality research and extension under the Guidelines for the Implementation of the 8th Evaluation Cycle of the National Budget Circular (NBC) No. 461, series of 1998 (DBM-JC-No.-3-s.-2022-9th-Cycle-NBC-461-with-Annexes n.d.). Joint Circular No. 03, series of 2022, Guidelines on the Reclassification of Faculty Positions in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) (FIRST EVALUATION CYCLE FOR FACULTY POSITION RECLASSIFICATION Based on DBM-CHED Joint Circular No. 3. Series of 2022 LIST OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCES CRITERIA REQUIRED EVIDENCE KRA I-INSTRUCTION Criterion A-Teaching Effectiveness n.d.). Towards the roadmap of policy development in research and extension a five-year development is designed in achieving the goals of the university, ("Five Year Development Plan MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO 26 SERIES OF 2023" n.d.), Prescribing the Five-Year Vision, Mission, Development Thrusts and Roadmap of the "Golden Journey" of Cebu Normal University for Fiscal Years 2024-2029, and for Other Purposes, CNU: A Globally Recognized Educational Institution as Agile and Technologically-Proofed (GREAT) SMART Campus. Memorandum Circular No. 26 of Section 3. Vision-Mission – For Fiscal Years 2024-2029, the Vision and Mission shall be as follows ("Five Year Development Plan MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO 26 SERIES OF 2023" n.d.):

Vision: By 2027, CNU a Globally Recognized Institution as Agile and Technologically-Proofed SMART Campus (GREAT SMART Campus).

Mission: Developing graduates equipped with world-class competencies and imbued with positive values for them to be future-proof ready and become great leaders, professionals and stewards in their chosen vocation and of the society amidst destructive, volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and divergent (DVUCAD) conditions.

Subsequently, ("Five Year Development Plan MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO 26 SERIES OF 2023" n.d.) Section 4. Developmental Goal Philosophy. – For Fiscal Years 2024-2029, the development goal philosophy shall be as follows:

GREAT: A Developmental goal philosophy

G- good governance and administrative services agile to the everchanging needs and the expectations of the academic community and service areas as well as the developmental trends in the corporate and regulatory sectors.

R- research and development programs, projects and studies attuned with and contributory to the international, national, regional and local R&D thrusts that would enhance ingenuity, innovation, creativity, intellectual property rights, and scientific capabilities of the faculty members and students and thereby meaningfully enrich the body of knowledge of various disciplines and strengthen the income generating projects and resource generation of the University.

E- extension services that shall serve as a catalyst for positive and meaningful transformation of the lives of the disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals for them to contribute productively in attaining progress in their respective communities.

A- academic programs and services capable of preparing students to be future-proof ready and resilient amidst rapid societal and technological changes.

T- technology inclusive through SMART Campus modality in the delivery of administrative services and the fourfold functions of the university namely, instruction, research, extension and production.

In capacitating and strengthening research and extension of Cebu Normal University, Memorandum Circular No. 23 series of 2024, "Prescribing the Implementing Guidelines Governing the Teaching and Workload, Performance Evaluation System, and Requirements on the Reclassification of Faculty Members and Template of the Individual Performance Commitment Review (IPCR) According to Academic

Ranks, Effective First Semester, School Year 2024-2025 and Thereafter, Pursuant to Board Resolution on 06 September 2023, Subject to Applicable Laws, Rules and Regulations, and For Other Purposes" ("MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 23" n.d.) and Memorandum Circular No. 30 series of 2024, "Strengthening, Clarifying and Supplementing Certain Provisions of Memorandum Circular No. 23, s. 2024." ("MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO 30 SERIES OF 2023" n.d.) Memorandum Circular No. 54 series of 2024 Mandating All Research Outputs to Undergo and Obtain a Passing Rating of at Least Eighty-Five Percent (85%) During the Research and Development (R&D) In-House Review a Pre-requisite. Among Others. on the Recognition and Acceptance as Supporting Documents Relative to the CHED Joint Circular No. 3, s 2022 and CHED CAO No. 01, s., 2023, and on the Grant of Authority to Travel for Presentation, and Payment for/Reimbursement of Publication Fee/s Thereof, Whether Within the Philippines or Abroad, and For This Purpose, Directing the Campuses and Colleges and the Office of the Vice President for Research, Publication, Innovation, Commercialization and Extension and Office of the Director for Research and Development, and Publications to Conduct at Least Quarterly or Semestral R&D In-House Reviews, Respectively, Subject to the Approval by the University President and For Other Purposes ("Share 'Memorandum Circular No. 54.Pdf" n.d.). The 2024 Revised CNU-PRAISE System provides the officials, faculty members and administrative staff or personnel due recognition of their suggestions, inventions, superior accomplishment, and other personal efforts contributory to attain the efficiency, economy, or other improvement of University operations and such other extraordinary acts or services in the public interest in connection with, or in relation to, their official employment, along with the mandates, four-fold functions, vision, mission, objectives, goals and continuing improvement of the University ("2024 Revised CNU-PRAISE System Certificate of Copyright Registration and Deposit No" 2024). The issuances prescribe lesser workloads in teaching and more in research and extension deliverables and the workforce of the university especially professors of higher ranks to comply with the requirements therein. With the initial plan at hand, this will increase capabilities of the university without compromising quality instruction and its premier services for the stakeholders and all constituencies who are to avail of the services centered on research and extension.

Conclusion

Referencing policies, Cebu Normal University commits in the delivery of research and extension that advances public interest concerning the community and all stakeholders concerned. The policies as prescribed therein expect the university to exceed its targets to increase all its deliverables in research and extension to meet the demands and standards set-forth by the policies in the international, regional and local per institutional requirements to align therewith. Institutional policies drive the ideals of meeting the international, regional and local standards, such that the "internalities along externalities" of good leadership, support system and administration in creating mechanisms that should balance within the institution across agencies and all stakeholders, is important in carrying-out its plans towards the completion of the outcomes towards the expected deliverables that are aligned to CNU's vision-mission, objectives and goals.

Figure 2. Cebu Normal University's Research and Extension Governance Archetype

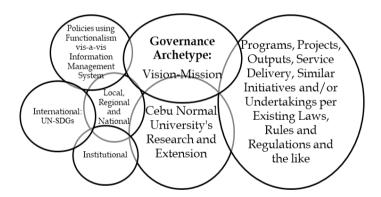


Figure 2 shows the governance archetype as basis for the initial planning, agenda-setting, policy formulation, execution, evaluation, amendment and/or evaluation for policy development infusing functionalism as a perspective in governance vis-à-vis programs, projects, outputs, service delivery, similar initiatives and/or undertakings per existing laws, rules and regulations and the like as basis for policy development to be undertaken per instruction, research, extension and production to improve the university outputs per the vision-mission. All policies should have been databased on a unified management information system for easy access among all those who need for the specification of all research and extension

undertakings for guidance, dissemination and appropriate action for all parties involved therein.

Conclusively, this all the more prove that Cebu Normal University adheres on the minimum-maximum requirement of the policies therein, thereby prescribing a policy framework that will intensify productivity per all the programs and/or initiatives undertaken by the university towards greater heights. Furthermore, this is to recommend an archetype-model, in order to aid, align and operationalize governance in Cebu Normal University that are interlinked and/or intertwine to the international, national, regional and local levels of all government instrumentalities to harmonize research and extension services in dovetailing with instruction and production as mandated by the institution per the corpus of policies as stipulated thereunto.

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Living in the new normal: People's responses to exist during lockdown

Thomas A. Mattappallil and Bibin Sebastian*

Abstract: Lockdown is a contradictory state in which inhabitants of any country are told to stay indoors to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus, yet they are only allowed to leave their homes to acquire necessities (Pirvani, 1-5). During the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown creates disorientation in people's lives and puts them in predicaments. The lockdown compels individuals to grapple with their dilemmas in this paradoxical situation. The recorded testimonies of Tenzin Palyon, Jose K. Jose, and Roy A. Parekatt depict their responses to their predicament by selecting the right choice to survive and adapt to the new normal. The paper posits that the choices Tenzin Sherab, Jose K. Jose, and Roy A. Parekatt made in their contradictory situations, along with their varied responses, helped them regain their identity and achieve autonomy, enabling them to live a meaningful life in the new normal. Barry Schwartz's theory of the paradox of choice as a tool to critically investigate the varied responses identified in their lockdown testimonials. Barry Schwartz mentions paradoxical choice in his (2004) book The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less. In 2008, a new term, the new normal, emerged. In the context of this study, this term explores how the COVID-19 epidemic altered significant aspects of human survival. Cultural theorists contend that emotions within a person interact with culture during a crisis. Human resilience, recuperation, and reconstruction overcome a paradoxical circumstance to give rise to the new normal. The study highlights risks and problems by delving into the contradictory lives of people who endured distortion, negative liberty, anxiety, and restricted access to necessities while under lockdown.

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Keywords: paradoxical lives, lockdown, choice, autonomy, new normal

Introduction

India's lockdown aimed at reducing virus transmission and saving lives has caused significant disruptions and damage in various aspects of society, including culture, education, and economics (Wesselbaum et al. 2022, 569). The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have significantly impacted people's lives, leading to abrupt transitions and changes in their future perceptions. Lockdown transformed into a new normal, allowing individuals to explore contradictory situations by making the right choice in their dilemmas. The forced confinement became the new normal for everyone, and as Bill Gates responded 'In an Ask Me Anything' session on March 18th, on this new social practice, "[e]ventually we will have some digital certificates to show who has recovered or been tested recently or when we have a vaccine who has received it [sic].' For many readers, this was a 'gotcha' moment." This was a sign of their survival, as evidenced by the recorded testimonies given by the witnesses (Siraki et al. 2023, 140). The paper examines the testaments of people that reflect "A New Normal?" a theme that reflects the exigencies of our circumstances and our anticipation of a new sociocultural landscape in the eventual postpandemic era" as the digital records of their lockdown experiences (Célestin 2023, 227). The new normal lives discussed in this paper do not discuss practices like social distancing, wearing masks, or using sanitiser alone, but rather a cultural, social, mental, and physical change that happened in the lives of people that society had forgotten in the pre-pandemic period. This paper applies Barry Schwartz's paradox of choice theory to analyze how individuals navigated decision-making in constrained situations during the COVID-19 pandemic:

There is no denying that choice improves the quality of our lives. It enables us to control our destiny and come close to getting exactly what we want out of any situation. Choice is essential to autonomy, which is fundamental to well-being. Healthy people want and need to direct their own live (Schwartz 2004, 8–9).

Schwartz's theory suggests that while choice is critical for autonomy and well-being, an excess of options can lead to anxiety and distress.

In the context of the pandemic, individuals faced limited choices that compelled them to reassess their autonomy, control, and identity. Complementing this framework is resilience theory, which examines how individuals and communities adapt to crises and restore normalcy across physical, emotional, and social dimensions. The ability to adapt to adversity was often reflected in the choices people made. Additionally, identity formation theory is the key in understanding how individuals renegotiate their personal and social identities in response to the pandemic's shifting landscape. Social adaptation models further highlight how marginalized communities, such as Tibetan refugees, used collective strategies to cope with the contradictions of lockdown life. By adopting a multi-theoretical approach, this paper explores how individuals responded to the paradoxes of pandemic life, reclaimed autonomy under constrained conditions, and reconstructed their identities within the "new normal," providing insight into broader cultural and psychological processes of adaptation, independence, and resilience.

A plethora of studies conducted on people's lives during COVID-19 are relevant to the present study. The article does not address individual experiences but rather how the lockdown has supported psychological health, strong connections, and social support in America by encouraging family-based resilience during COVID-19 (Campos et al. 2014, 2). Catalina Ramirez-Contreras (2022, 1) explores the hybrid lifestyle of youngsters in the new normal, focusing on the impact of virtual conversations on their sleep and eating routines compared to pre-pandemic conditions. The article lacks research on people's responses to disorientation and identity loss during the new normal, unlike Simpson's study on sameness and difference during COVID-19. It provides insight into an individual's power to regain identity (Simpson et al. 2023, 1-3). The article explores paradoxes faced by employees during the pandemic crisis, particularly with work-from-home options, focusing on various organizational issues but not migrant labourers (Pradies al. 2023, 1–4). The study explores how people's choices and responses in contradictory situations help them regain identity and achieve autonomy, using Barry Schwartz's paradox of choice theory. The research paper examines how people respond to their choices when faced with a dilemma, aiming to reclaim their identity and find meaning in life to adapt to the new normal.

Tibetan refugee community

Mr. Tenzin Palyon, a student at Bangalore, is a Himachal Pradeshbased refugee from the Tibetan minority. He was torn between adhering to the directives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Indian Government, as he grappled with his survival as a physically challenged individual during the COVID-19 pandemic. He faces both physical and mental challenges, affecting his mobility within the rooms, his education, his ability to make friends, his absence from traditional school, and his decision to attend online classes. His frustration, disorientation, and loss of identity and meaning in his life were vividly depicted. As Francesca De Lise, Keon Luyckx, and Elisabetta Crocetti (2024, 911) point out, "Identity processes continue to evolve and change throughout the lifespan and are particularly central during adolescence when individuals undergo multiple changes physically, psychologically, and socially". At the same time, Tiago S. Jesus et al. (2021) discussed the ten problems of people with disabilities.

(1) Disrupted access to healthcare (other than for COVID-19); (2) Reduced physical activity leading to health and functional decline; (3) From physical distance and inactivity to social isolation and loneliness; (4) Disruption of personal assistance and community support networks; (5) Children with disabilities disproportionally affected by school closures; (6) Psychological consequences of disrupted routines, activities, and support; (7) Family and informal caregiver burden and stress; (8) Risks of maltreatment, violence, and self-harm; (9) Reduced employment and/or income exacerbating disparities; and (10) Digital divide in access to health, education, and support services" (Jesus et al. 2021, 2).

Tensing understands these problems and chooses to share them with his Tibetan community, friends, and family by using Zoom meetings, and WhatsApp video calls to regain liberty and autonomy over his life by investing some faith in his subjectivity. Moreover, resilience theory provides a framework to understand how Tenzin coped with the physical and mental challenges of lockdown. Despite his frustration and loss of identity, Tenzin demonstrated resilience by drawing strength from his Tibetan community and the teachings of the Dalai Lama. Kaur (2022, 2) discusses the dignity of the Tibetan community as "The theory of being a compassionate sentient being had been brought to practice by the Tibetan community to contribute to the wellbeing of natives and their community". Furthermore, Tensin chooses to adhere to the teachings and sage advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, expressing his gratitude for being a part of the Tibetan community.

Research conducted by Giulia Andrighetto et al. (2024, 1) on cultural changes in communities is evident in Tenzin's life and his community as "Tightness-Looseness theory contends that societies that have experienced chronic ecological and social threats—frequent disease, warfare, and environmental catastrophes—throughout history develop tighter cultures to maintain order and survive chaos and crises". Tensing becomes quite fond of everyone before beginning to read, pray, and meditate. He then had the knowledge and bravery to live fearlessly. The results show that the support he gets from his parents and friends in the Tibetan community contributes to his feelings of happiness and hope. The study found that Tensing and his team coped with the absurdities of the lockdown and adapted to the new normal by using self-governance, discipline, community solidarity, and cognitive understanding.

Overcoming cancer during the pandemic

In a similar spirit, Mr. Roy A. Parekatt has provided recorded testimony on his lockdown experiences. During the lockdown, Mr. Roy was battling cancer and faced the uncertain prospect of either dying from the COVID-19 pandemic or surviving to see the new normal. Despite having graduated from K. E. College Mannam, he never experienced hopelessness; now, his cancer diagnosis has left him without hope. Roy was facing this problem, but he had the unwavering support of his family and close friends. His family has always taken care of him, which has helped him. Even though they used to meet in person, his buddies called him frequently. His loved ones assisted him in regaining hope and faith throughout this difficult period by acknowledging his mental and bodily suffering (Yi et al. 2010, 219-23). Consequently, he gains the confidence to survive in the new normal conditions. He decided to maintain his physical and mental well-being. Kristin A. Vincenzes and her colleagues cite William Glasser's theory to illustrate the significance of choice in survival, as exemplified by Mr. Roy.

William Glasser initially coined choice theory to help understand why people act and think the way they do. Glasser believed that people are intrinsically motivated to meet five innate basic needs: fun, power, survival, freedom, and love and belonging. These needs are universal and often overlap with each other. In the event that a person is not able to meet one of those basic needs, it creates pain and discomfort. As an individual makes choices to balance pain and pleasure, it impacts the person's total behavior: acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology. Glasser believed that a person can directly control

their thoughts (mind) and behavior (action) whilst indirectly controlling their feelings and how their body responds (Vincenzes et al. 2021, 1–5).

Roy's decision helps him recover from mental anguish through regular phone calls from his friends and the affection he receives from his family. According to the study, his existence gains greater significance as he engages more with his family and friends. Annie Issac's novel *My Days in Solitude* explores the life of Tessa, a cancer survivor who achieves both mental and physical well-being with the support of her proactive family members and friends (Isaac 2020, 45). The narrative highlights the striking similarities between Tessa's journey and the experiences of others. Mr. Roy employs a similar approach to get power and independence to adapt and thrive in the new reality brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, he discovered the likelihood and possibilities of his lifespan. Besides, he reestablished his connection with nature and began farming. Elham Emami describes Kiue's perspective on nature's healing process.

According to Kiue, the number of green plants in the joint neighbourhood spaces had a great effect on reducing the psychological fatigue of the residents. Residents near to nature are more likely to be capable of coping with the major issues of their lives. Such residents feel more hopeful and less helpless about their issues (Emami et al. 2018, 70).

In particular, Roy felt that farming on his small agricultural land helped cure or heal his mental distress along with his physical deterioration due to cancer. Being in nature made him feel stronger and more connected. It gave him the confidence to improve his nutrition, general health, and well-being, making his life more meaningful. In addition, Roy believed in nature's capacity to heal, rehabilitate, and restore his faith in his survival in the new normal. As a result, he was able to regain his sense of self and identity. Over time, he developed a deep connection to nature, appreciated its benefits, and became aware of its therapeutic potential. It enabled him to keep up excellent connections with everyone and make his life meaningful with quality in the new normal, as Holli-Anne Passmore et al. (2023, 1-2) state that "Philosophers such as Note and Haybron have written of nature experiences as inspiring meaningfulness in our lives".

Roy Parekatt's battle with cancer during the pandemic presents another illustration of Schwartz's paradox of choice. Roy faced a stark dilemma: the possibility of succumbing to either cancer or COVID-19. Yet, paradoxically, this limitation of options enabled him to focus on

regaining control over his life. Schwartz's theory helps explain why Roy's decision to pursue physical fitness and reconnect with nature became an act of autonomy and survival. Rather than succumbing to hopelessness, Roy chose to cultivate resilience by engaging in meaningful activities, such as farming, that reconnected him with nature and his community. This response can also be framed through the lens of resilience theory, which suggests that engagement with nature can foster psychological recovery and well-being in times of crisis. Roy's connection to nature served as a coping mechanism, helping him reclaim his sense of self and purpose despite his illness. Additionally, identity formation theory supports the notion that Roy's actions were a process of reconfiguring his identity within the constraints of the pandemic, as he moved from being a passive cancer patient to an active participant in his recovery.

Lessons from the Kuwait War

Jose K. Jose found himself in a difficult situation, as the lockdown restrictions prevented him from seeing his granddaughter and friends. He decides to bide his time until the borders reopen, using this opportunity to better himself and his family. He has had similar contradictory experiences in the past, during the Kuwait War. This experience assisted him in deciding his life and the fate of his family during the COVID-19 pandemic. His thorough understanding and sharp thinking helped him respond proactively to change the destiny of his life and that of his family during lockdown (Kato 2017, 475–80). The Kuwait War experience taught him to adapt to changing circumstances. His attitude towards lockdown life was similar to that of the past, moreover, as a process of self-education and reconstituting his identity, power, autonomy, freedom, and liminal spaces. It depicts the resilience expressed by Jose to survive in the new normal.

As Thiemo Breyer (2022, 384) defines, "Resilience would then not amount to swinging back into a 'normal' initial state or regaining a homeostasis but as a metamorphosis of the self". Jose also responded to this new normal with patience as he has staunch faith in God, which became stronger during the lockdown. He lived with faith and hope that the COVID-19 pandemic would culminate like his previous experience of the Kuwait War. It depicts the psychological capacities of patience, consideration, and responsibility to cope with contradictory situations. Similar to Jose's life, Mathew Pinalto (2016, 39) quotes Kupfer's idea of the virtue of patience as "the disposition to

accept delays in satisfying our desires—delays that are warranted by circumstances or the desires themselves". Jose's patience helped him to listen to himself to understand his problems which led him to understand the problems found in his family and neighbours. Josekutty became more independent, mature, and socially active during the COVID-19 pandemic though he was old and had wishes to accomplish. His answers, responses, and testimony served as a platform for him to get his elderly friends' attention. Jose's response and attitude are similar to Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory (ART). Kaplan R. defines the theory:

Socially responsible behaviour often requires inhibiting personal feelings and concerns in favour of group norms and values. An individual unwilling or unable to do this is unlikely to be an acceptable member of a group. Such a person, lacking the support and protection provided by group membership, would be in a most vulnerable situation should some threat or hardship arise (Kaplan et al. 1989, 177–79).

Consequently, his family helped Sri Lankan maids who served at their home. Besides, he assisted the poor through a church-sponsored campaign by supplying essential groceries (Aletta et al. 2023, 1712). Jose became socially active and responsible, enabling him and his family to interact with people and the environment in times of trouble. His reply offered several options for them to live under the new normal circumstances (Levinger et al. 2022, 1).

Analysis and discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying lockdowns introduced significant challenges that forced individuals to navigate paradoxical choices, reshaping their autonomy, identity, and resilience in a rapidly changing environment. This section synthesizes the experiences of the individuals discussed in the case studies—Tenzin, Roy, and Jose—applying Barry Schwartz's paradox of choice, resilience theory, identity formation theory, and social adaptation models to analyze their responses.

All three individuals experienced constrained choices during the pandemic, which shaped their responses to the uncertainty of lockdown life. According to Barry Schwartz's paradox of choice, having limited options often forces individuals to re-evaluate their sense of control, and paradoxically, can lead to a greater clarity of purpose. Tenzin, as a Tibetan refugee and physically challenged student, faced restrictions in terms of mobility, social interactions, and

education. Yet, through his engagement with his community and spiritual practices, he reclaimed autonomy over his life by focusing on activities that reinforced his identity and connection to his cultural roots. The constraints of his situation allowed him to reconfigure his goals, focusing on internal resilience and community solidarity rather than external freedoms.

Similarly, Roy Parekatt, while battling cancer during the pandemic, faced a stark decision between succumbing to his illness or fighting for survival in the new normal. By choosing to focus on physical fitness and reconnecting with nature, Roy exemplified Schwartz's argument that constrained choices can sometimes lead to a more empowered sense of autonomy. Instead of being overwhelmed by the limitations imposed by both his illness and the pandemic, Roy utilized his restricted environment to foster resilience, as seen in his decision to engage in farming and build stronger bonds with family and friends.

Jose, drawing from his experiences during the Kuwait War, similarly navigated the paradox of limited choices by applying his past resilience strategies to the new challenges of the pandemic. His patience and proactive approach to helping his family and community show how, even within the confines of lockdown, individuals can exercise autonomy through acts of social responsibility and care for others. His resilience in the face of repeated crises reflects a conscious choice to transform external limitations into opportunities for personal and communal growth.

Resilience theory offers a framework to understand how individuals like Tenzin, Roy, and Jose adapted to the unprecedented disruptions caused by the pandemic. These individuals practise resilience by using internal and external resources to rebuild their lives under lockdown. Tenzin's spiritual practices and support from the Tibetan community allowed him to maintain psychological stability and regain a sense of purpose despite the challenges of isolation. His ability to adapt to the constraints of online education, limited mobility, and the absence of inperson social interactions speaks to the broader theme of cultural and emotional resilience in times of crisis.

For Roy, resilience was deeply tied to his physical and mental wellbeing. By reconnecting with nature through farming and focusing on his health, Roy not only survived the pandemic but also regained a sense of control over his life. His experience highlights the intersection of resilience and identity reconstruction, as his actions allowed him to reshape his narrative from one of illness to one of recovery and empowerment.

Jose's experience also underscores the role of resilience in adapting to contradictory situations. His ability to draw from his past experiences during the Kuwait War and apply them to the pandemic illustrates how resilience is not just a response to immediate crises but also a skill that can be cultivated and refined over time. His active involvement in supporting his family and community during the lockdown further highlights the importance of social adaptation and collective resilience in times of uncertainty.

The lockdown forced individuals to renegotiate their identities as they faced new social, emotional, and physical challenges. Identity formation theory suggests that crises often prompt individuals to reassess their sense of self, as seen in the case of Tenzin, whose identity as a Tibetan refugee was reinforced through his adherence to the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his engagement with the Tibetan community. His choice to lean into his cultural identity and maintain strong community ties reflects a broader process of identity reconstruction in response to the pandemic.

Roy's experience demonstrates how physical health and personal resilience can play a central role in identity reconstruction. As he faced the dual challenges of cancer and the pandemic, Roy's identity shifted from that of a patient to that of a survivor and advocate for well-being. By focusing on physical fitness and reconnecting with nature, Roy transformed his narrative, using the constraints of lockdown to rebuild his sense of autonomy and purpose.

For Jose, identity reconstruction was closely linked to his past experiences and his ability to apply lessons from the Kuwait War to the present crisis. His proactive efforts to support his family and community during the pandemic reflect a social adaptation model, where individuals navigate crises by adopting socially responsible behaviours. Jose's resilience and adaptability allowed him to not only survive but thrive in the new normal, reinforcing his identity as a community leader and resilient individual.

Across all three case studies, common themes of autonomy, resilience, and identity reconstruction emerge as key factors in navigating the paradoxes and contradictions of pandemic life. While each faces unique challenges, their ability to adapt to limited choices, reconnect with their communities, and rebuild their identities in the face of adversity highlights broader cultural and psychological

processes that are essential for understanding human responses to crises. The application of Schwartz's paradox of choice, resilience theory, identity formation theory, and social adaptation models offers a comprehensive lens through which to analyze these experiences. The constrained choices imposed by the pandemic may have limited freedom in the conventional sense, but they also created opportunities for individuals to redefine autonomy, build resilience, and reconstruct their identities in ways that allowed them to adapt and thrive in the new normal.

Conclusion

The study examines the experiences of individuals with physical disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tensing, a disabled individual, experiences stress related to safety, social interactions, and education. Jose's thoughtful reaction aligns with Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory. Roy's determination enhances his quality of life, and nature can treat cancer. The theoretical framework employed in this study centred on Barry Schwartz's paradox of choice and complemented by resilience theory and identity formation theory provides a comprehensive lens through which to examine how individuals navigated the contradictions of lockdown life. The experiences of Tenzin, Roy, and Jose highlight how constrained choices, far from paralyzing them, became catalysts for reclaiming autonomy, adapting to new social realities, and reconstructing their identities in the new normal. Resilience theory further elucidates how these individuals, with the support of their communities and through engagement with nature and spirituality, overcame the psychological and physical challenges posed by the pandemic. This multi-theoretical approach not only deepens our understanding of individual responses to the COVID-19 pandemic but also offers broader insights into how human beings adapt to crises. By integrating these frameworks, this ongoing discussions paper contributes in psychological, to sociological, and cultural studies about the interplay between choice, autonomy, and resilience in times of uncertainty. This study has further scope to examine the dilemma of the human mind using different psychological theories which have not been used in this paper. All the theories and approaches used in this study can be reused to study post-COVID conditions of the human mind as well.

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Educational levels and economic growth in Nigeria: Evidence from ARDL and Toda-Yamamoto causality approaches

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Abstract: The declining gap between education and economic growth in Nigeria needs urgent policy attention. This paper therefore examines educational levels-economic growth nexus in Nigeria by autoregressive distributed lag and Toda-Yamamoto causality test to time series data spanning 1981 to 2020. Augmented Dicky-Fuller, Phillips-Perron and Zivot-Andrews unit root tests indicate a mixture of I(0) and I(1) stationarity properties of data. Bounds test reveals cointegration between primary, secondary and tertiary education indices, and real gross domestic product (RGDP). Findings indicate positive impact of primary, secondary and tertiary education indices and education policy dummy (NEP) on RGDP with the tertiary education index being significant. Toda-Yamamoto causality test reveals that secondary and tertiary education indices and NEP cause RGDP without a feedback effect. Diagnostic tests justify reliability of the parameter estimates. Hence, the study recommends for educational reform in line with the actual needs of the global economy, increased educational funding and strict implementation, monitoring and periodic evaluation of education policies in Nigeria.

Keywords: educational levels, economic growth, ARDL, Toda-Yamamoto causality, Nigeria

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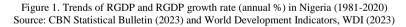
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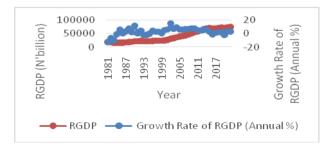
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Introduction

Human capital especially education is pivotal to long-term economic growth (Alfoul 2024); and earlier studies of Schultz (1961), Becker (1964), Mincer (1984), Romer (1986) and Lucas (1988) highlighted the importance of human capital in promoting innovation and driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The transformative capacity of education in fostering innovation and enhancing productivity has been widely recognised in both empirical and theoretical literature. Three channels through which education affects economic growth have been identified as increasing the collective ability of the labour force to complete existing tasks faster, facilitating the transfer of knowledge about new information, products and technologies created by others, and increasing creativity which spurs a country's ability to invent new products, and technologies (Ziberi et al. 2022; Grant 2017; World Economic Forum 2016; Barro and Lee 2013).

The first motivation behind this study is the poor performance of the Nigerian economy in terms of real gross domestic product (RGDP) and its growth rate despite the large number of graduates and abundant natural resources. Mulhearn and Vane (1999) note that a stable and satisfactory rate of economic growth is one of the four main objectives of macroeconomic policy in every country. But over the years, the value of RGDP of Nigeria has been low, though with rising and falling trends; and the actual growth rate of RGDP has fallen below the targeted growth rate on most occasions as depicted by Figure 1. This suggests that Nigeria's economic growth may be below its potential which necessitates urgent policy intervention in order to improve RGDP of Nigeria.





The second motivation behind this study is empirical gap. Studies like Dragoescu (2015) for Romania, Dudzevičiūtė and Šimelytė (2018) for 17 selected European Union countries, Singh, Sieng and Saukani (2018) for Malaysia and Adeniyi, Ajayi and Adedeji (2020) for 8 West African countries have examined education-growth nexus. On the whole, these studies established that the number of students enrolled into primary, secondary and higher education institutions, percentage of the population who have successfully completed tertiary education, average years of schooling and rate of return on education made significant positive impact on economic growth except Adeniyi et al. (2020) that found negative impact in a few countries.

Marquez-Ramos and Mourelle (2019) investigated educationgrowth nexus in Spain using STR model and time series data spanning 1971-2013. Findings at country level indicate nonlinearites in the nexus between secondary and tertiary education levels with a positive effect on GDP growth but different patterns emerge for various regions. Odhiambo (2021) studied the causal relationship between education and economic growth in South Africa using ECM-based Granger causality and time series data covering the period of 1986-2017. Findings reveal a unidirectional causality from RGDP per capita to total education expenditure and primary school enrolment; and a bidirectional causality between secondary school enrolment and RGDP per capita in the short run; and a unidirectional causal flow from secondary school enrolment to real GDP per capita in the long run. In view of the findings, the study concluded that the causal relationship between education and economic growth in South Africa depends on the variable used to proxy education; and that causality tends to change over time. Maneejuk and Yamaka (2021) examined both linear and nonlinear impacts of education on the economic growth in ASEAN-5 countries. Findings of the linear model for all five countries reveal that average annual government education expenditure per student in the tertiary level, secondary and tertiary education enrolment rates impacted positively on GDP of all the countries whereas that of nonlinear model indicate that most of the education indicators are significant and positive. Applying instrumental variable two-stage least squares to time series data spanning 1997-2020, Ziberi et al. (2022) explored the link between education and economic growth in North Macedonia. Findings reveal that public expenditures on education significantly increased GDP growth rate when tertiary education enrolment is used as instrumental variables. Alfoul et al. (2024)

investigated the effect of education on economic growth using panel ARDL model and data from 18 sub-Saharan African countries spanning 2000-2020. Findings indicate that education proxy by secondary school enrolment made an insignificant negative impact on economic growth proxy by GDP growth rate in the long-run and a significant negative impact in the short-run.

In Nigeria, Ayara (2002) who used standard growth-accounting model found that education proxy by secondary and tertiary school enrolments impacted negatively and insignificantly on GDP. Yusuf (2014), and Emediegwu and Ighodaro (2016) employed vector error correction model. Yusuf (2014) found that capital and recurrent expenditures on education and post-primary school enrolment made significant positive impact on GDP per capita. Emediegwu and Ighodaro (2016) found that budget allocation to education and primary education enrolment exerted significant positive impact on RGDP growth rate while that of post-primary education enrolment is insignificantly negative. Ayeni and Omobude (2018), and Onwunali et al. (2024) utilized ARDL technique while Jelilov et al. (2016), Aigbedion et al. (2017), and Ogunleye et al. (2017) employed OLS multiple regression. All of them found a positive relationship between GDP and education except Jelilov et al. (2016) and Ogunleye et al. (2017) that found an insignificant negative impact of primary school enrolment on RGDP and Aigbedion et al. (2017) who established a significant negative impact of education expenditure on RGDP. Omojimite (2010) and Omodero and Nwangwa (2020) used Granger causality technique. While Omojimite (2010) found a causal relationship between total and recurrent public expenditure on education and GDP; Omodero and Nwangwa (2020) found no causality. These studies focused on the impact of school enrolment, education expenditure and budget allocation to education on GDP but neglected the impact of other vital education indicators like educational attainments and changes in national education policy on RGDP. In order to fill these gaps and also capture the impact of each level of education on RGDP, the study built a primary education index, a secondary education index and a tertiary education index which contain access to education and educational attainment at each level of education respectively. The study also constructed a dummy variable to capture the impact of changes in national education policy on RGDP. This study simultaneously estimated the impact of education levels on RGDP and investigated their direction of causality using autoregressive distributed lag approach and the Toda-Yamamoto causality test unlike previous studies. Specifically, the study investigated: 1. the impact of primary education index, secondary education index, tertiary education index and changes in national education policy on real gross domestic product in Nigeria; and 2. the direction of causality between primary education index, secondary education index, tertiary education index, changes in national education policy and real gross domestic product in Nigeria from 1981 to 2020.

The remainder of this paper is structured into section 2 materials and methods, section 3 results and discussions, and section 4 conclusion, policy implications and recommendations.

Materials and methods

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored on the endogenous growth theory. The theory maintains that the overall output of an economy at time t (Yt) is a function of total physical capital (Kt), total human capital (Ht) and total labour force (Lt). It assumes that the production function is of the form of a standard Cobb-Douglas function stated as:

$$Y_{t} = AK_{t}^{\phi}L_{t}^{\varphi}H_{t}^{\gamma} \tag{1}$$

where Y_t is output or RGDP; K_t is physical capital; L is the number of workers employed; H_t is total human capital; A is the technology parameter; t is the observation subscript denoting time; whereas ϕ , φ , and γ denote parameters to be estimated.

Human capital,
$$H_t = EA_tL_t$$
 (2)

where EA_t is the average educational attainments per worker.

Substituting Eq. (2) into Eq. (1) gives:

$$Y_{t} = AK_{t}^{\phi}L_{t}^{\varphi}(EA_{t}L_{t})^{\gamma} \tag{3}$$

$$Y_{t} = AK_{t}^{\phi}L_{t}^{\gamma}L_{t}^{\gamma}EA_{t}^{\gamma} \tag{4}$$

$$Y_{t} = AK_{t}^{\phi}L_{t}^{\varpi}EA_{t}^{\gamma} \tag{5}$$

where $\varpi = \varphi + \gamma$; hence, $L_t^{\varphi} - L_t^{\gamma} = L_t^{\varpi}$

Taking natural logarithms, a linear transformation of equation gives:

$$\ln Y_{t} = \ln A + \phi \ln K_{t} + \phi \ln L_{t} + \gamma \ln EA_{t} + \varepsilon_{t} \tag{6}$$

where ln = variables in their natural logarithm, εt is the white noise

error term. Eq. (6) is the basic model which enables this study to relate economic growth proxy by real gross domestic product (RGDP) to the different education variables. The extended model in Eq. (7) contains additional control variables which capture the peculiarities of the Nigerian economy.

Model specification and data

Following the endogenous growth model with slight modification, a linear model that captures objective one is specified in Eq.7 as:

$$\begin{split} &\ln RGDP_{t} = \varphi_{0} + \varphi_{1}PEIND_{t} + \varphi_{2}SEIND_{t} + \varphi_{3}TEIND_{t} + \varphi_{4}NEP_{t} + \varphi_{5}EPC_{t} \\ &+ \varphi_{6}lnGFCF_{t} + \varphi_{7}PGRt + \varepsilon_{t} \end{split} \tag{7}$$

where $lnRGDP = the natural logarithm of real gross domestic product; PEIND = primary education index built with primary school enrolment and completion rates and years of schooling; SEIND = secondary education index built with secondary school enrolment and completion rates and years of schooling; TEIND = tertiary education index built with tertiary school enrolment rate and years of schooling; NEP = changes in national education policy, measured by a dummy variable of zero or one for the absence or presence of change in the national education policy in Nigeria respectively; EPC = electric power consumption in Nigeria, a proxy for technology; <math>lnGFCF = natural logarithm of gross fixed capital formation, a proxy for physical capital, PGR = population growth rate, a proxy for labour force, <math>\varepsilon_t$ is the white noise error term whereas t is a time subscript; $\varphi_0 = constant$ while $\varphi_1, \varphi_2, ..., \varphi_7$, = coefficients of the variables. Based on theory, all the variables are expected to impact positively on RGDP.

This study employed annual time series data from 1981 to 2020 to investigate the impact of formal educational levels on economic growth in Nigeria. Note that RGDP and GFCF are in log form whereas other variables in rates and percentages were not logged. Table 1 presents the summary of the variables, measurements and sources of the data used in the empirical analysis.

Table 1. Summary of the variables, measurement and data sources Source: Authors' compilation (2024)

Variable	Measurement	Sources of data
Real gross	GDP at 2010 constant	CBN Statistical Bulletin
domestic	market prices (N'Billion)	(2023)
product	market prices (14 Billion)	(2023)
(RGDP)		
Primary	Primary school	Researcher's computation
education	Primary school enrolment ratio (%	Researcher's computation using PCA technique and
index	gross), primary school	data from National Bureau
(PEIND)		of Statistics, NBS (2023),
(PEIND)	completion rate and primary school years of	
	schooling	and World Development Indicators, WDI (2023)
Cacandany	•	
Secondary education	•	Researcher's computation using PCA technique and
index	enrolment ratio (% gross), secondary school	data from NBS (2023), UIS
	completion rate and years	
(SEIND)	of schooling	(2023), and WDI (2023)
Tortiony	Tertiary school	Researcher's computation
Tertiary education	enrolment ratio (% gross)	using PCA technique and
index	and tertiary school years	data from NBS (2023), UIS
(TEIND)	of schooling	(2023), and WDI (2023)
Changes in	Dummy variable	Researcher's construct
national	constructed by the	(2024)
education	researcher. 1 for a year	(2024)
policy	with changes in the NEP	
(NEP)	and 0 for a year without	
(INEI)	changes in the NEP	
Electric	Electric power	WDI (2023)
power	consumption (kwh per	WDI (2023)
consumption	capita)	
(EPC)	capita)	
Gross fixed	Gross fixed capital	CBN Statistical Bulletin
capital	<u> -</u>	(2023)
formation	Tormulon (14 Dillion)	(2023)
(GFCF)		
Population	Population growth rate	WDI (2023)
growth rate	1 0	11 DI (2023)
(PGR)	(
(1 011)		

Estimation techniques and procedures

This study employed the autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) technique developed by Pesaran, Shin and Smith (2001) in order to achieve objective one and the Toda-Yamamoto causality test developed by Toda and Yamamoto (1995) to achieve objective two. The choice of ARDL is because of its suitability for I(1), I(0), or a mixture of I(1) and I(0) stationary variables (Sulaiman and Abdul-Rahim 2014; Sulaiman, et al. 2015); and a finite data sample size of 30 to 80 observations in which Narayan (2004) developed the set of critical values. Further, ARDL has the capacity to estimate different lags as well as both short-run and long-run coefficients simultaneously (Chindo, Abdulrahim, Waziri, Huong, and Ahmad 2015; Durmaz and Jie 2024). The ARDL framework of Eq. (7) is compactly specified in Eq. (8) to capture short-run and long-run impacts of formal educational levels on RGDP and the error correction term (ECT) as follows:

$$\begin{split} &\Delta \ln RGDP_{t} = \varphi_{0} + \varphi_{1} \ln RGDP_{t-1} + \varphi_{2}PEIND_{t-1} + \varphi_{3}SEIND_{t-1} + \varphi_{4}TEIND_{t-1} + \varphi_{5}NEP_{t-1} \\ &+ \delta_{6}EPC_{t-1} + \varphi_{7} \ln GFCF_{t-1} + \varphi_{8}PGR_{t-1} + \sum_{j=1}^{k} \theta_{1j} \Delta \ln RGDP_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{k} \theta_{2j} \Delta PEIND_{t-j} + \\ &\sum_{j=0}^{k} \theta_{3j} \Delta SEIND_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{k} \theta_{4j} \Delta TEIND_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{k} \theta_{5j} \Delta NEP_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{k} \theta_{6j} \Delta EPC_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{k} \theta_{7j} \Delta \ln GFCF_{t-j} \\ &+ \sum_{i=0}^{k} \theta_{8j} \Delta PGR_{t-j} + \sum_{i=0}^{k} \theta_{9j} \Delta ECT_{t-j} \end{split} \tag{8}$$

where the variables are as defined above, $lnRGDP_{t-1} = lagged$ value of natural logarithm of RGDP, $\varphi_0 = constant$ whereas $\varphi_1, \varphi_2, ..., \varphi_8 = long$ -run coefficients, $\theta_1, \theta_2, ..., \theta_9 = short$ -run coefficients, $\Delta = difference$ operator, $k = optimal\ lag\ length$, and $ECT = error\ correction\ term$.

To test for the exitence of cointegration between RGDP and the independent variables, the ARDL bound test approach to cointegration test incorporating the NEP as dummy is used and the hypothesis is specified as:

$$H_0 := \phi_1 = \phi_2 = \phi_3 = \phi_4 = \phi_5 = \phi_6 = \phi_7 = \phi_8 = 0$$
 (no cointegration).
 $H_1 := \phi_1 \neq \phi_2 \neq \phi_3 \neq \phi \neq \phi_4 \neq \phi_5 \neq \phi_6 \neq \phi_7 \neq \phi_8 \neq 0$ (cointegration exists).

The test is conducted by testing the null hypothesis (H_0) against the alternative (H_1) using the F test which employs asymptotic critical value bounds which depend on whether the variables are I(0), I(1), or T_0 02

mixed. The two sets of critical values generated are I(0) and I(1) known as the lower bound, and the upper bound respectively. The decision rule is to reject H_0 if the computed F statistic value is greater than the upper bound at 5% significance level and conclude that cointegration exists; but if the computed F statistic value is less than the lower bound, the null hypothesis of no cointegration is accepted. However, the test becomes inconclusive if the computed F-statistic falls between the lower and upper critical bounds. The existence of cointegration necessitates the estimation of both short-run and long-run coefficients as in this study.

The Toda-Yamamoto causality test proposed by Toda and Yamamoto (1995) and employed in Wolde-Rufael (2009) and Salahuddin and Gow (2019) was utilised to actualise objective two which is to investigate the direction of causality between RGDP and education variables. Shahbaz et al. (2013) notes that a better understanding towards policy implications of empirical findings is enhanced by tracing causal link among the variables. When variables are integrated of mixed order, the traditional Granger causality test (Granger 1969) becomes inappropriate (Salahuddin and Gow 2019). To obviate some of these anomalies, Toda and Yamamoto (1995, subsequently T-Y) based on augmented VAR modelling introduced a Wald test statistic that asymptotically has a Chi-Square $(\gamma 2)$ distribution irrespective of the order of integration and/or cointegration features of the variables. T-Y procedure is novel as pre-testing for cointegrating features is not required, hence, the potential bias associated with unit roots and cointegration tests is avoided, thus it can be applied irrespective of whether the variables are of I(0), I(1), I(2) or of a mixture of I(0), I(1), and I(2) (Rambaldi and Doran 1996; Zapata and Rambaldi 1997; Clark and Mirza 2006). Clark and Mirza (2006) note that pre-tests for unit roots and cointegration could suffer from size distortions which could lead to the use of inaccurate model for causality test. This study conducts the T-Y causality test because the variables in this study are of a mixture of I(0) and I(1). The key advantage of T-Y test is that it is not sensitive to the order of integration. T-Y utilized a modified Wald test (MWald) to restrict the parameters of the VAR (k) where k denotes the lag length aimed at artificially augmenting the correct order k by the maximal order of integration denoted dmax. Pittis (1999) opines that when this is done, a (K+dmax)th order of VAR is estimated and the coefficients of the last

lagged dmax vectors are ignored. The mathematical details of the test are not provided here to save space (please refer to Toda and Yamamoto, 1995 for such details). Employing the seemingly unrelated regression (SURE) framework, the T-Y causality test could be estimated using a VAR (4) model specified as follows:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \ln RGDP_{t} \\ PEIND_{t} \\ SEIND_{t} \\ TEIND_{t} \end{bmatrix} = C_{0} + C_{1} \sum_{i=1}^{4} \begin{bmatrix} \ln RGDP_{t-1} \\ PEIND_{t-1} \\ SEIND_{t-1} \\ TEIND_{t-1} \end{bmatrix} + C_{2} \sum_{i=0}^{4} \begin{bmatrix} \ln RGDP_{t-2} \\ PEIND_{t-2} \\ SEIND_{t-2} \\ TEIND_{t-2} \end{bmatrix} + C_{3} \sum_{i=0}^{4} \begin{bmatrix} \ln RGDP_{t-3} \\ PEIND_{t-3} \\ SEIND_{t-3} \\ TEIND_{t-3} \end{bmatrix} + C_{4} \sum_{i=0}^{4} \begin{bmatrix} \ln RGDP_{t-4} \\ PEIND_{t-4} \\ SEIND_{t-4} \\ TEIND_{t-4} \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} \mu_{1}^{\text{NRGDP}} \\ \mu_{1}^{\text{NEIND}} \\ \mu_{1}^{\text{NEIND}} \\ \mu_{1}^{\text{TEIND}} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$(9)$$

In Eq. (9) C1,...C4 are four 4 by 4 matrices of coefficients with C0 being the identity matrix, μ ts are the white noise error term with zero mean and constant variance. We test the educational levels (PEIND, SEIND, TEIND) do not Granger cause lnRGDP. The null hypothesis is stated as: $H_0: C_{ij} = 0$ versus $H_1: C_{ij} \neq 0$ where C_{ij} are the coefficients of the variables.

Results and discussions

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics is employed to reveal the behaviour of the variables of the model. Table 2 presents the summary of descriptive statistics. The proximity between the mean and median and the small values of the standard deviations of PEIND, SEIND, TEIND, NEP, and PGR indicate that their data cluster around their sample means which implies that they are not grossly affected by their extreme values. The large distance between the mean and median and the large values of the standard deviations of RGDP, EPC and GFCF is evidence that their data are highly dispersed from their sample means implying that they are grossly affected by their extreme values. All the variables are positively skewed except SEIND which exhibits a negative skewness. RGDP, SEIND, TEIND, EPC and PGR with kurtosis values less than 3 are platykurtic; PEIND with kurtosis value of 3 is mesokurtic whereas NEP and GFCF with kurtosis values greater than 3 are leptokurtic. RGDP, PEIND, SEIND, TEIND, EPC and PGR are normally distributed following their Jarque-Bera probability values that are greater than 0.05 while NEP and GFCF are not normally distributed following their Jarque-Bera probability values that are less than 0.05.

Correlation matrix

Correlation matrix was conducted in order to determine the degree of association among the variables. Table 3 presents the correlation matrix. The correlation matrix in Table 3 reveals that all the independent variables are positively correlated with RGDP except PEIND and SEIND that are negatively correlated with RGDP. From the correlation coefficients, it can be inferred that there is no multicollinearity among the variables as none of the pairs of regressors has a coefficient greater than 0.61. Gujarati and Porter (2009) asserted that multicollinearity exists if the correlation coefficient between any pair of regressors exceeds 0.80.

Table 2. Summary of descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Median	Maximum	Minimum	Std. Dev.
RGDP	37243.45	26182.87	72094.09	16211.49	20015.68
PEIND	0.415586	0.369535	1.000000	0.000000	0.245076
SEIND	0.575539	0.547694	1.000000	0.000000	0.265914
TEIND	0.412448	0.497147	1.000000	0.000000	0.369562
NEP	0.125000	0.000000	1.000000	0.000000	0.334932
EPC	105.8325	98.96437	154.1723	51.08055	27.61001
GFCF	8598.236	8206.830	15789.67	5668.870	1987.939
PGR	2.580769	2.582495	2.709830	2.488792	0.066333

Table 2. Summary of descriptive statistics (cont'd) Source: Authors' computation (2024)

Variables	Jarque-	Jarque-Bera	Sum Sq.	Observations
	Bera	Prob.	Dev.	
RGDP	5.089529	0.078492	1.56E+10	40
PEIND	4.699574	0.095389	2.342425	40
SEIND	0.889919	0.640850	2.757701	40
TEIND	4.567088	0.101922	5.326468	40
NEP	50.74830	0.000000	4.375000	40
EPC	2.484213	0.288775	29730.18	40
GFCF	24.30300	0.000005	1.54E+08	40
PGR	2.652550	0.265464	0.171603	40

Table 3. Correlation matrix

Correlation	RGDP	PEIND	SEIND	TEIND
RGDP	1.000000			
PEIND	-0.342065	1.000000		
SEIND	-0.223998	-0.391511	1.000000	
TEIND	0.645187	-0.229742	-0.311776	1.000000
NEP	0.006954	0.103444	-0.280148	0.033311
EPC	0.648472	-0.337904	-0.331376	0.553771
GFCF	0.400035	0.241225	-0.282528	0.340984
PGR	0.495338	-0.084055	-0.606995	0.435255

Table 3. Correlation matrix (cont'd) Source: Authors' computation (2024)

Correlation	NEP	EPC	GFCF	PGR
NEP	1.000000			
EPC	-0.004530	1.000000		
GFCF	0.226472	0.153077	1.000000	
PGR	0.191637	0.537555	0.360816	1.000000

Unit root tests

Unit root test was conducted to determine the stationarity property of data utilised in the empirical analysis. Table 4 presents the augmented Dickey–Fuller (ADF) and Phillips–Perron (PP) unit root tests while Table 5 presents the Zivot-Andrew's unit root test with a single structural break. The test was implemented with intercept and the maximum lag length of 9 was auto-selected on SIC basis for ADF test and Newey–West Bandwidth employing the Bartlett–Kernel procedure for PP test.

	A		
Variables	t- statistic I(0)	t- statistic I(1)	Result
RGDP	-1.041159	-3.783083*	I(1)
PEIND	-2.005030	-5.742917*	I(1)
SEIND	-1.946392	-5.145058*	I(1)
TEIND	-0.432778	-6.105773*	I(1)
NEP	-7.555210*	-3.937994*	I(0)
EPC	-2.174719	-7.478639*	I(1)
GFCF	-2.404291	-5.103451*	I(1)
PGR	-5.125087*	-3.058851**	I(0)

Table 4. Results of ADF and PP unit root tests of stationarity

Table 4. Results of ADF and PP unit root tests of stationarity (cont'd) Source: Authors' computation (2024)

]	PP Test	
Variables	t- statistic I(0)	t- statistic I(1)	Result
RGDP	0.451047	-3.783083*	I(1)
PEIND	-2.222015	-5.742611*	I(1)
SEIND	-1.946392	-5.091118*	I(1)
TEIND	-0.432778	-6.105173*	I(1)
NEP	-7.574747*	-20.70182*	I(0)
EPC	-2.152015	-7.604205*	I(1)
GFCF	-3.610453**	-5.613544*	I(0)
PGR	-2.403062	-4.363696*	I(1)

Note: ***, **, * implies rejection of the null hypothesis at 10%, 5%, or 1% significance level

Table 4 which shows the ADF and PP results of the unit root test indicates that most of the variables are stationary at first difference, I(1) while few of the variables are stationary at levels, I(0). The result of Zivot-Andrews unit root test with structural break presented in Table 5 shows that the break point (mid-point) years are at 2004, 1998, 2004, 2013, 1998, 2004, 2001 and 2011 for RGDP, PEIND, SEIND, TEIND, NEP, EPC, GFCF and PGR respectively. These years are very significant as important policy changes affecting formal education as a major driver of RGDP in Nigeria were made. For example, the national

education policy in 2013 spelt out the prospects of early childhood care development, pre-primary, primary and junior secondary educations.

Table 5: Zivot-Andrews breakpoint unit root test

Level form I(0)				
	t-Statistic	Break Date	Lag	Result
RGDP	-2.916131	2004	4	Non-stationary
PEIND	-5.131726**	1998	4	I(0) with break
SEIND	-6.792704*	2004	4	I(0) with break
TEIND	-3.971896	2013	4	Non-stationary
NEP	-8.384042*	1998	4	I(0) with break
EPC	-4.460320	2004	4	Non-stationary
GFCF	-6.387448*	2001	4	I(0) with break
PGR	-4.398053***	2011	4	I(0) with break

Table 5: Zivot-Andrews breakpoint unit root test (cont'd) Source: Authors' computation (2024)

	First diff	<u></u>		
	t-Statistic	Break Date	Lag	Result
RGDP	-4.988638***	2000	4	I(1) with break
PEIND	-6.230660*	2012	4	I(0) with break
SEIND	-5.786328*	2005	4	I(0) with break
TEIND	-7.288573*	1991	4	I(1) with break
NEP	-6.290714*	2008	4	I(0) with break
EPC	-8.637637*	2002	4	I(1) with break
GFCF	-5.606443*	1994	4	I(0) with break
PGR	-2.446218*	2012	4	I(0) with break

The break locations, i.e. intercept/trend and both are denoted by the midpoint indicating rejection of the null hypothesis at 10% (*); 5% (**) and 1% (***) levels of significance respectively, based on percentage points of the asymptotic distribution critical values in the Zivot and Andrew (1992) Table.

The need and prospect of senior secondary education, technical and vocational education and training and mass and nomadic educations were also spelt out by the 2013 National Policy on Education. The need and prospect of senior secondary education, technical and

vocational education and training and mass and nomadic educations were spelt out by the 2013 national education policy. The Zivot-Andrews break-point unit root results of I(1) and I(0) validates the ADF and PP results

Cointegration test

Having confirmed the stationarity property of the variables, the study conducted cointegration test and the result presented in Table 6 indicates existence of cointegration as the F-statistic value of 9.191170 is greater than 3.28 upper bounds value at 5% significance level. The study therefore concludes that there is a long-run relationship between education variables and RGDP. This necessitates the estimation of both short-run and long-run coefficients of the model.

Test statistic		Value	K
F-statistic		9.191170	6
Critical	Value		
Bounds			
Significant		I0 Bound	I1 Bound
10%		1.99	2.94
5%		2.27	3.28
2.5%		2.55	3.61
1%		2.88	3.99

Table 6. ARDL F-bounds test to cointegration Source: Authors' computation (2024)

The results were estimated under ARDL (1,1,0,1,0,0,1) using the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and maximum dependent lag length of one.

From the short-run result presented in the upper part of Table 7, RGDP at lag 1 and PEIND at lag 1 made significant negative impact on RGDP while level PEIND, SEIND, TEIND, TEIND(-1) and NEP made positive impact on RGDP with TEIND(-1) being significant. Specifically, 1% increase in RGDP(-1) and PEIND(-1) reduced RGDP by 0.275102 unit and 0.115736 unit respectively whereas 1% increase in PEIND, SEIND, TEIND, TEIND(-1) and NEP increase RGDP by 0.040971 unit, 0.013456 unit, 0.134351 unit, 0.301690 unit and 0.014364 unit respectively. Interestingly, the control variables of EPC, GFCF, PGR and its lag 1 made positive impact on RGDP with PGR being significant. Precisely, 1% increase in EPC, GFCF, PGR and PGR(-1) promotes RGDP by 0.000869 unit, 0.058672 unit, 1.099777

unit and 0.160256 unit respectively. The coefficient of ECT which measures the speed of adjustment of RGDP towards long-run equilibrium shows that approximately 27.51% disequilibrium was corrected annually to ensure convergence at the long-run.

Table 7: ARDL short-run and long-run estimates (Dependent variable: LNRGDP)
Source: Authors' computation (2024)

Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. LNRGDP(-1) -0.275102 0.077828 -3.534735 0.0015 D(PEIND) 0.040971 0.043550 0.940766 0.3552 PEIND(-1) -0.115736 0.033260 -3.479704 0.0017 SEIND 0.013456 0.036205 0.371670 0.7130 D(TEIND) 0.134351 0.073879 1.818534 0.0801 TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.00649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. </th <th></th> <th>Short-run</th> <th>Result</th> <th></th> <th></th>		Short-run	Result		
D(PEIND) 0.040971 0.043550 0.940766 0.3552 PEIND(-1) -0.115736 0.033260 -3.479704 0.0017 SEIND 0.013456 0.036205 0.371670 0.7130 D(TEIND) 0.134351 0.073879 1.818534 0.0801 TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004	Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(PEIND) 0.040971 0.043550 0.940766 0.3552 PEIND(-1) -0.115736 0.033260 -3.479704 0.0017 SEIND 0.013456 0.036205 0.371670 0.7130 D(TEIND) 0.134351 0.073879 1.818534 0.0801 TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004					
PEIND(-1) -0.115736 0.033260 -3.479704 0.0017 SEIND 0.013456 0.036205 0.371670 0.7130 D(TEIND) 0.134351 0.073879 1.818534 0.0801 TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7	LNRGDP(-1)	-0.275102	0.077828	-3.534735	0.0015
SEIND 0.013456 0.036205 0.371670 0.7130 D(TEIND) 0.134351 0.073879 1.818534 0.0801 TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887	D(PEIND)	0.040971	0.043550	0.940766	0.3552
D(TEIND) 0.134351 0.073879 1.818534 0.0801 TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183	PEIND(-1)	-0.115736	0.033260	-3.479704	0.0017
TEIND(-1) 0.301690 0.076779 3.929321 0.0005 EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	SEIND	0.013456	0.036205	0.371670	0.7130
EPC 0.000869 0.000649 1.338804 0.1918 LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	D(TEIND)	0.134351	0.073879	1.818534	0.0801
LNGFCF 0.058672 0.065801 0.891659 0.3805 D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	TEIND(-1)	0.301690	0.076779	3.929321	0.0005
D(PGR) 1.099777 0.336851 3.264880 0.0030 PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	EPC	0.000869	0.000649	1.338804	0.1918
PGR(-1) 0.160256 0.137210 1.167963 0.2530 NEP 0.014364 0.017080 0.841007 0.4077 ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	LNGFCF	0.058672	0.065801	0.891659	0.3805
NEP ECT 0.014364 -0.275102 0.017080 0.028589 0.841007 -9.622501 0.4077 0.0000 Long-run Variable Result Variable Coefficient -0.420703 Std. Error 0.135144 t-Statistic -3.112989 Prob. 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	D(PGR)	1.099777	0.336851	3.264880	0.0030
ECT -0.275102 0.028589 -9.622501 0.0000 Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	PGR(-1)	0.160256	0.137210	1.167963	0.2530
Long-run Result Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	NEP	0.014364	0.017080	0.841007	0.4077
Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	ECT	-0.275102	0.028589	-9.622501	0.0000
PEIND -0.420703 0.135144 -3.112989 0.0043 SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193		Long-run	Result		
SEIND 0.048914 0.125784 0.388877 0.7004 TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
TEIND 1.096647 0.142933 7.672456 0.0000 EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	PEIND	-0.420703	0.135144	-3.112989	0.0043
EPC 0.003158 0.001887 1.673083 0.1059 LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	SEIND	0.048914	0.125784	0.388877	0.7004
LNGFCF 0.213273 0.210183 1.014705 0.3193	TEIND	1.096647	0.142933	7.672456	0.0000
	EPC	0.003158	0.001887	1.673083	0.1059
	LNGFCF	0.213273	0.210183	1.014705	0.3193
PGR 0.582534 0.501972 1.160490 0.2560	PGR	0.582534	0.501972	1.160490	0.2560
C 6.434040 2.324961 2.767375 0.0101 $\mathbb{R}^2 = 0.710919$; $\mathbb{R}^{-2} = 0.676910$; \mathbb{R} -statistic = 1027.153; Prob(E-					

 $R^2 = 0.710919$; $R^{-2} = 0.676910$; F-statistic =1027.153; Prob(F-statistic) = 0.000000); Durbin-Watson stat. = 2.14

About 71.09% variation in RGDP is jointly explained by the independent variables of the model as indicated by R-Squared while F-statistic and its p-value reveals that the overall model is significant. Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.146187 indicates absence of serial correlation which is a desirable quality of an econometric model.

The long-run result in the middle part of Table 7 indicates that PEIND made significant negative impact on RGDP as 1% increase in PEIND reduced RGDP by 0.420703 unit. This finding contradicts theory. A plausible explanation may be that primary education level is not sufficient to equip the human capital with the requisite productive skills required for production and given the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria, the few jobs available are rationed among those with higher qualifications (Ahamba et al. 2020). SEIND, TEIND, EPC, GFCF and positively impacted with TEIND being significant. Numerically,1% increase in SEIND, TEIND, EPC, GFCF and PGR increased RGDP by 0.048914 unit, 1.096647unit, 0.003158 unit, 0.213273 unit and 0.582534 unit respectively. Sadly, the NEP has no long-run impact on RGDP. This implies that the impact of the changes in national education policy is not sustainable. This necessitates an urgent need for further revision of the NEP.

Toda-Yamamoto causality test result

Result of Toda-Yamamoto causality test conducted to determine the direction of causality between educational levels and RGDP is presented in Table 8.

	Chi-Square (χ^2)	Prob.	Conclusion
$\Delta PEIND \rightarrow \Delta LNRGDP$	2.064263	0.3562	Do not reject
Δ LNRGDP \rightarrow Δ PEIND	2.609072	0.2713	Do not reject
Δ SEIND $\rightarrow \Delta$ LNRGDP	17.86809	0.0001	Reject
Δ LNRGDP \rightarrow Δ SEIND	4.814484	0.0901	Do not reject
$\Delta TEIND \rightarrow \Delta LNRGDP$	9.278873	0.0097	Reject
Δ LNRGDP \rightarrow Δ TEIND	0.448831	0.7990	Do not reject
$\Delta NEP \rightarrow \Delta LNRGDP$	8.459508	0.0146	Reject
Δ LNRGDP \rightarrow g Δ NPE	0.030710	0.9848	Do not reject

Table 8. Toda-Yamamoto causality (modified WALD) test results Source: Authors' computation (2024)

The T-Y causality test in Table 8 indicates no causality between PEIND and RGDP. Interestingly, SEIND, TEIND and NEP cause RGDP without a feedback effect. This implies that secondary and tertiary education indices as well as national education policy Granger-cause economic growth in Nigeria within the reviewing period because their Chi-square statistics are significant at 5% as indicated by their probability values.

Diagnostic tests

The diagnostic tests are performed to ascertain the reliability of the estimates for forecasting and policy formulation and the results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Diagnostic tests Source: Authors' computation (2024)

Battery of Tests				Results			
B-G	Serial	Lagrange	Multiplier	0.115211(0.8916)			
(Correlation)							
B-P-G	Heterosl	xedasticity	1.307920(0.2729)				
Ramsy	y Reset		1.163728(0.2906)				
J-B N	ormality		0.430684(0.806266)				

From the residual diagnostic tests of model adequacy reported in Table 9, the probability values in parentheses are greater than 0.05 implying absence of serial correlation, heteroskedasticity and specification error; and non-violation of normality assumption, hence the obtained results are reliable. The parameter stability of the estimated function is confirmed by the CUSUM and CUSUM of Squares displayed in Figure 2 as the lines appear within the acceptable region.

Figure 2. CUSUM and CUSUM of squares graphs Source: Authors' computation using Eviews



This implies that the model of this study is stable within the 5% level of significance. Hence, the estimates are appropriate for prediction and policy formulation.

Conclusion: Policy implications and recommendations

This study investigated the nexus between educational levels and economic growth in Nigeria from 1981 to 2020 by applying ARDL and Toda-Yamamoto causality approaches to annual time series data. Results indicate that: primary education index made insignificant positive impact on lnRGDP in the short-run but its impact at lag 1 and in the long-run is significantly negative; secondary and tertiary education indices made positive impact on lnRGDP with the latter being significant in both short-run and long-run; changes in national education policy made insignificant positive impact on lnRGDP. Causality test reveals a unidirectional causality flowing from SEIND, TEIND and NEP to ln RGDP. The study concludes that secondary and tertiary educational levels as well as national education policy are strong drivers of economic growth in Nigeria within the period under review.

In the light of the findings, the study recommends as follows: 1. Educational programmes in Nigeria should be reformed in line with the actual needs of the global economy in terms of skills, knowledge and technology and the country should pay more attention to education quality. 2. Government should increase education funding to improve teaching and learning facilities at all levels of formal education. In fact, government should initiate and implement policies that promote student academic needs – well equipped libraries, laboratories, technology and engineering workshops, provision of active internet facilities and institutional subscription for high impact journals and other online study materials, agricultural demonstration centres and agricultural farms; and students should be exposed to practical entrepreneurial apprenticeship experience while in secondary and tertiary institutions. Further, there is need to motivate the manpower (teaching and non-teaching) staff across all levels of education in Nigeria. Staff development should be taken seriously; adequate remuneration and improved welfare packages should be implemented so as to encourage teachers, lecturers, researchers, curriculum developers and education administrative workers. This will reduce the high incidence of brain drain and attract foreign expatriates into the education sector. 3. Education policies should be strictly implemented,

adequately monitored and evaluated periodically by formal education experts to identify areas of strength and weakness and should be revised accordingly to improve its efficacy.

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Shaping green consumer behavior through environmental awareness: Comparative insights from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan

Ammar Alawadh, Nosheen Rafi, Masood Nawaz Kalyar and Muddassar Bilal*

Abstract: Environmental awareness and consumer behavior have been increasingly shaped by societal shifts towards sustainability, manifesting in the rise of green consumerism worldwide. This research focused on green consumer behavior in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan while comparing their economic, cultural, and environmental elements. Based on the learning theory of consumer behaviour, the study explored the role of environmental awareness and knowledge and their impact on green purchase intentions and consumer behavior in relation to the SDGs. A stratified random sample of 500 respondents was collected from each country. Structural Equation Modelling was employed to test relationships and mediation analysis which led to the confirmation of hypotheses. Further, the mediated moderation analysis showed that perceived value for green products strengthen the relationship between purchase intentions for green products and overall green consumer behavior. The study's findings highlighted the role of environmental education and policy intervention in promoting consumption, tailored unique socio-economic sustainable to environmental contexts of each region.

Keywords: green consumer behavior, green purchase intension, environmental knowledge, environmental awareness, green product value

Introduction

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The environmental awareness in consumer behaviour has led to societal change, where people are embracing environment friendly practices and making greener purchase. This shift is particularly evident within green consumerism which organizes consumers based on the ecological impact of products and services (Maurer and Bogner 2020; Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas 2020). Environmental issues remain prevalent due to several factors, including updated information, policies and social media groups (Kautish et al. 2020; Shafique et al., 2020). Thus, consumers are increasingly aware of the impact of their activities on the environment and are seeking ways to minimize it. This awareness has significantly influenced consumer behaviour, encourage them to buy green products. The growing emphasis on environmental protection in the global economy has also shifted consumer awareness toward green consumerism (Ogiemwonyi and Jan 2023). This research focuses on green consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, chosen for their diverse cultures, economies. and physical environments. The study aims to examine the impact of green consumer behaviour, with a focus on environmental awareness and knowledge, identifying factors that contribute to the in-crease in green consumers in those regions.

The learning theory of consumer behaviour provides a solid theoretical foundation for examining how consumers learn and modify their consumption habits over time (Yildirim 2022). The theory suggests that consumers are influenced by various stimuli, which initiate learning process that shapes their purchasing behaviour (Hojnik et al. 2020). From this perspective, environmental consciousness and literacy are two essential requirements that raise consumer awareness of environmental issues, shaping their sentiment and behaviour toward green products (Zhang et al. 2024). Applying green consumer behaviour is also aligned with a more extensive context represented by Sustainable Development seventeenth Goal Responsible Consumption and Production. Promoting environmental awareness and knowledge enhancing consumer attention, and increasing the perceived value of environment friendly products can encourage more responsible behaviour (Chang et al. 2021). This shift can help in decomposing the ecological impact, encourage sustainable resource utilization, and thus help attain the SDGs.

That is the extent to which people are aware of a particular issue concerning the environment and the impacts of the activities they undertake within the environment. It involves the understanding of the environment in the broadest sense and the acceptance of the need for sustainable solutions in the environmental context. Environmental knowledge on the other hand can be defined as the awareness of other miscellaneous and specific concepts regarding the environment together with details of issues and solutions to environmental issues (Gunawan et al. 2024). It has some facts and the knowledge that is used within applying it on enhancements on such decision-making in other to get better results regarding the state of the environment (Hojnik et al. 2020). Green consumer behaviour refers to the decision process that involves consciously selecting goods and services based on the effects they have on the environment (Manolis and Manoli 2021). This behaviour could thus be attributed to a higher level of concern for the environment and the need to ensure environmental order. In this study, green purchase intention is used as a motivational variable between awareness/knowledge and purchasing behaviour (Maurer and Bogner 2020). It reflects the concern of the consumer towards the purchase of green products through awareness of the environment and information (Anwar and El-Bassiouny 2020). Environmental awareness serves as one of the major determinants of consumer behaviour, especially in green consumer behaviour.

The study is underpinned by the learning theory of consumer behaviour which is a comprehensive model that enables researchers to explain how the consumers change their consumption pattern over time (Yildirim et al. 2024). The theory proposed that a learning process is impacted by several stimuli that in turn influence the consumer behaviour (Hojnik et al. 2020; Zaheer et al. 2023). Using this theory, the study focuses on the research question on environmental awareness, knowledge, and consumer behavior towards buying green products (Kalyar and Rafi 2013; Kalyar et al. 2019). This theoretical lens assists in understanding how awareness and knowledge play out their roles in the process towards the generation of green purchase intentions and actual consumer behaviour.

The purpose of this research study is to analyse and compare the factors that influence green consumer behaviour toward SDGs in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan regarding learning theory frameworks. Consequently, the primary aim of this study is to assess and compare Saudi Arabian and Pakistani consumers' overall understanding and knowledge regarding the environment and his/her green purchasing preferences and behaviour. The rationale for this research arises from the observing cultural, economic and environmental disparities

between the two countries. Therefore, the study seeks to contribute to this strand of literature to advance understanding of how differences in awareness and knowledge affect green intentions and behaviour in different contexts. In addition, the study is in synchronized with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 relative to Responsible Consumption and Production (Chang et al. 2021; Shiel et al. 2020). It is placed to improve knowledge of how increasing the awareness of the environment and knowledge leads to consumers' responsible behaviour for achieving sustainability (Anwar & El-Bassiouny 2020; Chang et al. 2021).

Literature review and development of hypotheses

Environmental awareness and green consumer behaviour

Environmental awareness means an understanding of the physical environment and accepting the consequences of human behaviour on it. It includes a keen understanding and respect for the environment and the prompt need to conserve it. Environmental awareness and the adoption of sustainable consumption patterns are vital pillars in the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially environmental ones. Environmental awareness on the other hand involves acknowledging the fact that protection of the environment is necessary and assessing the effects that societal activities have on nature (Bashirun and Noranee 2020). According to Severo et al. (2021), attitude refers to cognitive information in terms of environmental matters including cli-mate change, pollution, and loss of species, which foster pro-environmental behaviour. However, there is a type of awareness that is effective, a form of emotional connection to environmental issues that can compel people to do something about it (Yamane and Kaneko, 2021). Education-Action programs that advocate thinking and action are more effective in fostering the behavioural comprehension of knowledge making it turn into practical action toward environmental conservation (Raza and Khan 2022). Green consumer behaviour is defined as those actions that involve using money to purchase goods and services in a way that would not harm the environment (Sival et al. 2021). The favourable attitudes toward the environment mean more favourable actions toward the environment, and causational beliefs or perceived consumer effectiveness significantly affect consumer behaviour (Alagarsamy, Mehrolia and Mathew 2021). Peer pressure also remains relevant; marketers who seek to target consumers with messages regarding green products, impact social approval standards for the same (Voola et al. 2022). However, some of the perceived barriers include; perceived higher costs, availability, and inconvenience all of which can limit green consumer behaviours, thus the need to solve such challenges when encouraging green consumption. environmental awareness and green consumer behaviour, the following are the SDGs that are highly connected: SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production SDG 13 – Climate Action SDG 15 – Life on Land SDG 14 - Life below Water (Amoako et al. 2020). These ideas are incorporated into literature in frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour as well as the Value-Belief-Norm Theory to forecast and explain environmentally sensitive behaviour. There is a sense in which the endeavour to promote sustainable consumption patterns can contribute to achieving sweeping sustainability objectives and creating a healthier world for future generations.

H1: Environmental awareness is positively related to green consumer behaviour for SDGs

Environmental knowledge and green consumer behaviour

Environmental knowledge refers to the understanding environmental issues, including the causes and consequences of environmental problems, as well as the role of individual actions in mitigating these issues. It encompasses both factual knowledge about environmental issues and the ability to apply this knowledge in everyday life (Prieto-Sandoval et al. 2022). The researchers (Yamane & Kaneko, 2021) have proved that there is a strong positive relationship between environ-mental awareness and its impacts on customer behaviour. For instance, in a research (Amoako et al. 2020) it is found that consumers who depicted a higher level of E-scheme knowledge will engage in environmentally friendly behaviours like energy conservation and recycling. This is the case because environmental knowledge gives consumers the relevant information that they require to come up with proper consumption patterns (Khan et al. 2023).

Educational programs and awareness campaigns, media coverage and social influence, and personal experience and feedback received from others have been cited as essential determinants in environmental knowledge (Zameer and Yasmeen 2022). Awareness creation through educational programs and corresponding consumer awareness campaigns can improve environmental knowledge (Ling et al., 2024).

It also plays an important role in increasing environmental concern and awareness since consumers are constantly exposed to such issues through the media and social networks (Maurer and Bogner 2020). Consumer knowledge is also influenced by personal observations and in-formation received from other sources, as people transform their knowledge and that of others to create their own knowledge (Shiel et al. 2020). Consequently, environmental knowledge is a critical element that forms consumer behaviour, especially in the green consumerism realm (Lavuri 2022). Through presenting the relevant information to make in-formed decisions, knowledge of the environment can affect the perception of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Essiz et al. 2023). This means that issues such as education, media, and first-hand experiences affect the level of understanding of the environment. This study can help in formulating interventions aimed at encouraging individuals to increase their level of knowledge on the environment to create an effective environment for encouraging sustainable consumption practices and environmental sustainability.

H2: Environmental knowledge is positively related to green consumer behaviour for SDGs

Environmental awareness and green purchase intentions

The green purchase intentions can be defined as the consumers' readiness or tendency to buy products that are green or that have some form of connection to the conservation of the environment (Nikolić et al. 2022). The products include characteristics like recyclability. biodegradability, the use of sustainable or Organic material and so on which restrict the negativity on the environment. Green purchase intentions refer to the consumer's behavioural inclination to make decisions to purchase goods and services that are labelled as environment-friendly based on their knowledge, self-attitude, the influence from other people, and perceptions or impacts on the environment with their consumer decisions. Environmental awareness is the concern of the state of the environment or the sensitivity towards the environment and the impact of human activities on the biosphere. This learning entails components of climate change, pollution and eradications of bio-diversity amongst others as it creates disposition and perception on sustainability (Dinu et al. 2020). Studies (e.g. Aldieri et al. 2022) have found that enhancing the environmental consciousness brings about the individual's preparedness for environmentally friendly consumer participation toward decisions because of the positive perception of environmental products and the belief that consumers' actions contribute to environmental enhancement.

H3: Environmental awareness is positively related to green purchase intentions

Environmental knowledge and green purchase intentions

Green purchase intentions and environmental knowledge show a significant relationship since environmental knowledge impacts green purchase intentions (Maciejewski and Lesznik 2022). Environmental literacy means being familiar with the environmental conditions and the effects of an individual and his actions toward the environment. The researchers (Voola et al. 2022) found that there is a positive relationship between environmental knowledge and green purchase intention because when consumers are aware more of the environment they will be sensitive regarding their purchases to the environment. This knowledge ensures consumers are aware of the ad-vantages of consuming green products in that they decrease pollution and preserve re-sources, thus increasing their incentive to buy such products. Secondly, environmental knowledge forms attitudes and beliefs that are reported to highly influence green purchase intentions. For instance, when people are conscious of the consequences of polluting the environment with plastics, then they will be forced to use products that are reusable or biodegradable (Kerber et al. 2023). Studies indicated that environmental knowledge enhances the perceived consumer effectiveness, which in simple terms means that it makes the consumers feel capable enough to make the right green choices. However, it is seen that environmental knowledge is not sufficient to stimulate green purchase intentions; that is, other factors such as social pressure, personal orientation, and self-perceived factors such as higher prices or unavailability also contribute significantly (Lavuri 2022). As such, to improve the levels of green purchase intentions, different strategies have to be adopted, they are the level of environmental knowledge, perceived barriers, and social influence. By raising awareness and knowledge of the existing environmental problems, consumers will be more likely to make the right decisions in their choice of products and foster the concept of individual responsibility for the environmental situation and thus stimulate the demand for green products on the market, which will positively affect the changes in business and the transition to a more sustainable economy (Siyal et al. 2021). Education and awareness intervention in

addition to the barriers to green consumption can lead to the development of sustainable habits consistent with general environmental conservation sustainable development (Dinu et al. 2020).

H4: Environmental knowledge is positively related to green purchase intentions

Green purchase intentions and green consumer behaviour

Intention to buy green products has a positive relationship with the consumer in the context of SDGs (Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas 2020). The research (Mohiuddin et al. 2018) indicated that green consumer behaviour relates well with the strong purchase intentions of green products and sustainably supported brands. From the perspective of the client, such a shift in the consumption pattern minimizes the negative effects on the environment while encouraging the business organizations to support sustainable development goals, particularly in the area of responsible consumption and production as espoused in SDG 12 (Yildirim 2022). the research (Zaheer et al. 2023) indicates that consumers' green products' purchase intentions determine the customers' actual purchase behaviour and in the process, support environmental and societal gains. The positive relationship established here therefore calls for further encouragement of green purchase intention as a way of enhancing sustainable consumer behaviour as espoused by the sustainable development goals (Nguyen & Le 2020).

H5: Green purchase intentions positively related to consumer behaviour for SDGs

Mediating role of green purchase intentions

Green purchase intention is therefore a bridge between attitude and actual pro-environmental behaviour; it can hence facilitate the achievement of the SDGs (Ogiemwonyi and Jan 2023). Environmental concern therefore entails appreciating the effects of the environment and factors such as pollutants, global warming, and deforestation among others (Yildirim et al. 2024). Another hypothesis is that higher levels of environmental perception lead to higher levels of green purchase intentions among consumers; it means that consumers are more likely to buy eco-friendly products (Hung and Chang 2024). These intentions can help establish the connection be-tween the recognition of the problems and the chances of a transformation in the consumers' behaviour.

Earlier studies were conducted in this context as it emerges from the interaction of environmental awareness and the intention to buy green products (Chang et al. 2021). This intention was considered to impact the consumers' behaviour, in common, and, there-fore, their actual behaviours, regarding purchasing products that align with the objectives of the SDGs, especially those that are associated with the ideas of sustainable consumption and the protection of the environment. However, the extent of conformity and usage which is contingent on this mediation is a function of other variables such as; culture, perceived relevance of the values, and potential barriers to use like cost and ease (Malarvizhi et al. 2022).

These boundaries can be overcome through the encouragement of education, policy, and strategic marketing efforts to support the theory regarding green purchase intention to reinforce the mediating factor regarding GA preferring tangible and environmentally friendly actions for sustainable development (Mohiuddin et al. 2018). Overall, green purchase intention as a mediator between environmental awareness and actual buyer behaviours that are indicative of the desired change in consumer habits and line with the SDGs is an effective concept (Zhang et al., 2024).

H6: Green purchase intentions positively mediate environmental awareness and consumer behaviour for SDGs

The 'green purchase intention' also stands as a vital mediator between environmental knowledge and the actualized sustainable behaviour benefiting the consumer three pillars Environmental attitude increases the understanding of problems like pollution and global warming, thus increasing the green purchase attitude consumers' readiness to make purchases that are friendly to the environment. These intentions serve as somewhat of a middleman between awareness and behavioural change, motivating the consumer to be environmentally friendly (Voola et al. 2022). Several studies have produced evidence that demonstrates that when consumers' awareness of the environment is raised, they are more willing to purchase environmentally friendly products thus altering their behaviour in ways that are necessary for the achievement of the SDGs including responsible consumption as well as action towards climate change (Comrey and Lee 2013; Hung and Chang 2024; Kharbanda et al. 2023). However, the usefulness of this mediation can be influenced by factors such as social acceptability, user's beliefs about the issue, and perceived impediments to change such as costs and ease of the

process (Bashirun and Noranee 2020). By eradicating them through education, policy, and marketing, a firm's green purchase intentions will be enhanced.

H7: Green purchase intentions positively mediate environmental knowledge and consumer behaviour for SDGs

Moderating role of perceived value

Perceived value for green products involves the consumer's evaluation of the amount and quality of the benefits and utilities of the green products relative to the benefits and utilities of the total costs (Amoako et al. 2020). These aspects include; the environmental cost of green products and the costs of products themselves, their quality and effectiveness, their perceived health benefits, and the long-term costs of these products (Zameer and Yasmeen 2022).

Green purchase intention encompasses the consumers' attitude towards the purchase of green products while green consumer behaviour covers the purchase and usage of green products (Synodinos et al. 2023). Since these consumers expect high value in green products, their green purchase intentions are likely to be translated into green consumption. Such aspects of perceived value include environmental concerns, product characteristics, cost, and perceived satisfaction with green products (Siyal et al. 2021). For instance, if the consumers only learn that the buying of sustainable goods is good for the natural environment, these consumers will be willing to translate the good intentions into action and thus help achieve the SDGs like SDG 12 on Consumption and Production, SDG 13 on Climate Change, and SDG 15 on Life on Land. On the other hand, when the perceived value of green products is low, the consumers with HI-GP may not act as green consumers because they perceive green products to be expensive, low in quality, or inconvenient. Some of the ways to enhance the perceived value of green products include; arranging aware-ness programs, ensuring high green product quality and performance (Rafi et al. 2022), providing subsidies and discounts for green products, and the use of proper marketing communication to promote aspects that support the green product value. Therefore, the perceived value for green products affects the relationship between green purchase intention and green consumer behaviour for the realization of the SDG goals.

H8: Perceived Value for green products moderates the relationship between green purchase intentions and consumer behaviour for SDGs

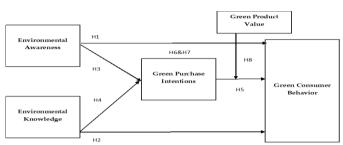


Figure 1. Illustrating hypothesized model

Methodology

This research employed a quantitative research strategy to analyse the correlation between environmental knowledge, awareness of the environment, green purchasing behaviours intentions, consumer involvement, perceived value of green products, and green consumer behaviour. Environmental knowledge and environmental awareness were the two independent variables, green purchase intention was the mediator, while the perceived value for green products served as the moderator and the green consumer behaviour for achieving SDGs was the dependent variable.

The population of Saudi Arabian and Pakistan consumers was used and data were gathered systematically by using a stratified random sampling technique to capture equal representation from each country. The target population included men and women aged 18 years and above from both countries. Data were collected from the participants using an online survey.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: sample demographics and the constructs that captured the study variables. In the demographics section, respondents were asked questions regarding their country, gender, age, level of education, and occupation. The constructs section measured the following variables: Environmental knowledge (IV), determined using the Scale developed by Mohiuddin et al. (2018) with slight amendments. This variable consisted of five items. Environmental awareness, also an independent variable was measured by adopting a scale, initially devised by Mohiuddin et al. (2018) but with slight alterations made to some of the questions. Green purchase intentions as the mediating variable was measured with the scale developed by (Nguyen and Le 2020) with slight tailoring to fit with research objectives. Perceived value for green products

(Moderator), was measured by the adapting the scale developed by (Nguyen and Le 2020). This variable involved the following five items. Green consumer behaviour for SDG (dependent variable) was constructed upon a scale proposed by (Kamalanon et al. 2022) with slight modifications. This variable comprised four items. All statements used a 5-point Likert scale including 'strongly disagree' (1) and 'strongly agree' (5).

To perform data analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to examine the hypothesized relationships between the variables. The analysis included the following steps: Frequency Analysis provided details of the demographic profile of the participants. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and the validity of the measurement scales was checked using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Case-1: Data analysis (for Saudi Arabian respondents)

The first case study sample consisted of 500 participants from Saudi Arabia with a gender distribution of 67.8% male, 22% female, and 10% preferring not to disclose their gender. Age distribution, 51.6% were aged 26-39 years, 29% were 18-25 years, 4.6% were 40-49 years, 1.8% were 50-59 years, and 13% were over 60 years. Regarding education, 17% had a higher secondary level education, 53.8% had a Bachelor's degree, 7.6% had a post-graduate degree, 1.8% possessed a professional degree, and 19.8% had other educational qualifications. Occupationally, 29.2% were private sector employees, 26.2% were business owners, 13.4% were public sector employees, 12.8% were students, and 18.4% fell into other categories. The relationships between environmental awareness (EAW), environmental knowledge (EK), green purchase intentions (GPI), and green consumer behaviour for Sustainable Development Goals (GCB), while also considering the moderating role of perceived value for green products (GPV). The hypotheses tested in this study included both direct and indirect relationships, as well as moderating effects.

 Constructs
 1
 2
 3
 4

 1
 Environmental Awareness

 2
 Environmental Knowledge
 0.381***

 3
 Green Purchase Intentions
 0.539 ***
 0.621***

Table 1. Correlations coefficients for study constructs

4	Green Consumer Behavior	0.701***	0.482***	0.591***	
5	Green Product Value	0.174***	0.104***	0.308***	0.305***
	*** Significant at p<0.001				

The correlation matrix highlighted strong positive relationships among the variables studied. Environmental awareness (EAW) correlated significantly with green consumer behaviour (GCB) at 0.701 and green purchase intentions (GPI) at 0.539, indicating that higher awareness led to more sustainable consumer actions. Environmental knowledge (EK) also showed positive correlations with GCB (0.482) and GPI (0.621), emphasizing its role in influencing green behaviours.

As Table 2 describes the path coefficient for the relationship between EAW and GCB is 0.038 (p<0.000), indicating a significant positive relationship. This confirms H1, suggesting environmental awareness was positively related to green consumer behaviour for SDGs. The path coefficient for EK and GCB is 0.473 (p<0.000). indicating a significant positive relationship. This supported H2, demonstrating that environmental knowledge contributed to green consumer behaviour. With a path coefficient of 0.761 (p<0.000), EAW significantly influenced GPI, strongly supporting H3. This finding highlighted that individuals with higher environmental awareness were more likely to have intentions to purchase green products. The path coefficient for EK and GPI was 0.146 (P<0.000), indicating a significant positive relationship. This confirmed H4, suggesting that environmental knowledge enhanced green purchase intentions. The relationship between GPI and GCB was confirmed with a path coefficient of 0.367 (P< 0.000), supporting H5. This demonstrated that stronger green purchase intentions led to increased green consumer behaviour.

Constructs Relationships	Coefficient	P-values
EAW→ GCB	0.038	0.000
$EAW \rightarrow GPI$	0.761	0.000
$EK \rightarrow GCB$	0.473	0.000
$EK \rightarrow GPI$	0.146	0.000
$\mathrm{GPI} \to \mathrm{GCB}$	0.367	0.000
$GPV \times GPI \to GCB$	0.119	0.000

Table 2. Path Coefficients for hypothesized relationships

Table 3 explains the total indirect effect of EAW on the GCB via GPI is 0.280 (p<0.000. These findings confirmed H6, indicating that GPI significantly mediated the relationship between EAW and GCB. While the EK on GCB via GPI had significant path coefficient 0.054 the results supported H7, showing that GPI significantly mediated the relationship between EK and GCB.

 Constructs Relationships
 Coefficient
 P-values

 $EAW \rightarrow GPI \rightarrow GCB$ 0.280
 0.000

 $EK \rightarrow GPI \rightarrow GCB$ 0.054
 0.000

Table 3. Total indirect effects

The interaction term (GPV x GPI) had a path coefficient of 0.119 (p < 0.000), indicating a significant moderating effect as described in Table 1. This supported H8, suggesting that the perceived value of green products enhanced the positive impact of green purchase intentions on green consumer behavior.

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Figure 2. Illustrating the graphical representation of path coefficients for Saudi Arabia

Case-II: Data analysis (for Pakistani respondents)

The second case study sample involved 500 participants from Pakistan with a gender distribution of 75% male, 16.6% female, and 8.4% preferring not to disclose their gender. Age-wise, 16.2% were aged 18-25 years, 32.7% were26-39 years, 12.2% were 40-49 years, 32% were 50-59 years, and 6.8% were over 60 years. In terms of education, 13.2% had a higher secondary level education, 36.6% had a Bachelor's degree, 14.2% have a post-graduate degree, 29.8% possessed a professional degree, and 6.2% had other educational qualifications.

Occupationally, 19.4% were students, 27.5% were private sector employees, 7.8% were public sector employees, 36.9% were business owners, and 6.2% fell into other categories.

Table 4 explains the correlation matrix revealing significant and positive relationships among the variables examined. Environmental awareness (EAW) exhibited strong correlations with both green consumer behaviour (GCB) at 0.311 and green purchase intentions (GPI) at 0.567, indicating its substantial impact on promoting sustainable consumer actions. Environmental knowledge (EK) also demonstrated positive correlations with GCB (0.433) and GPI (0.342), underscoring its role in influencing environmentally conscious behaviours.

Table 4. Correlations coefficients for study constructs

	Contructs	1	2	3	4
1	Environmental Awareness				
2	Environmental Knowledge	0.4321***			
3	Green Purchase Intentions	0.567 ***	0.342***		
4	Green Consumer Behavior	0.311***	0.433***	0.322***	
5	Green Product Value	0.174***	0.234***	0.323***	0.323***
***	Significant at p<0.001				

Table 5 shows that the path coefficient for the relationship between EAW and GCB was 0.092 (P 0.000), indicating a significant positive relationship and supporting H1. The path coefficient for EK and GCB was 0.307 (P<0.000), indicating a significant positive relationship. This supported H2, demonstrating that environmental knowledge contributed to green consumer behaviour. With a path coefficient of 0.159 (P<0.000), EAW significantly influenced GPI, strongly supporting H3. The path coefficient for EK and GPI was 0.759 (P<0.000), indicating a significant positive relationship. This confirmed H4, suggesting that environmental knowledge enhanced green purchase intentions. Similarly, the relationship between GPI and GCB was confirmed with a path coefficient of 0.355 (P<0.000),

supporting H5. This demonstrated that stronger green purchase intentions led to increased green consumer behaviour.

Constructs Relationships	Path Coefficient	P-values	
$EAW \rightarrow GCB$	0.092	0.000	
$EAW \rightarrow GPI$	0.159	0.000	
$EK \rightarrow GCB$	0.307	0.000	
$EK \rightarrow GPI$	0.759	0.000	
$\mathrm{GPI} \to \mathrm{GCB}$	0.355	0.000	
$GPV \times GPI \to GCB$	0.057	0.000	

Table 5. Path coefficients for hypothesized relationships

The total indirect effect of EAW on GCB via GPI is 0.455 (P<0.000). This finding confirms H6, indicating that GPI significantly mediated the relationship between EAW and GCB, enhanced the overall effect of environmental awareness on green consumer behaviour. Similarly, the total indirect effect of EK on GCB via GPI was 0.169 (P<0.000). This result supported H7, showing that GPI significantly mediated the relationship between EK and GCB.

Table 6. Total indirect effects

Constructs Relationships	Coefficient	P-values
$EAW \rightarrow GPI \rightarrow GCB$	0.238	0.000
$EK \to GPI \! \to GCB$	0.036	0.000

The interaction term (GPV x GPI) had a path coefficient of 0.057 (P< 0.000), indicating a significant moderating effect. This supported H10, suggesting that the perceived value of green products enhanced the positive impact of green purchase intentions on green consumer behaviour.

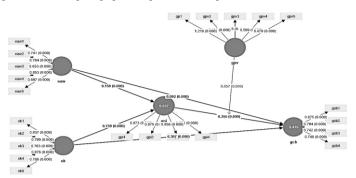


Figure 3. Illustrating the graphical representation of path coefficients for Pakistan case

Discussions, implications, and limitations

This comparative analysis examines the relationships between environmental awareness (EAW), environmental knowledge (EK), green purchase intentions (GPI), and green consumer behaviour for Sustainable Development Goals (GCB) in two distinct economic and environmental contexts: The two countries are Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The research also examines the moderating effect of the perceived value of Green products (GPV).

Saudi Arabia is a member of the country with high income and it has a sufficient amount of capital that could be used to finance environmental projects (Amoako et al. 2022). Their Vision 2030 ideals of economic transformation and development (Sen et al., 2021). Environmentally, the challenges that the country has included factors such as scarcity of water as well as high energy factors hence making consumer green behaviour important in development (Malarvizhi et al. 2022). While Saudi Arabia has tremendous resources and funds for the environment. Pakistan is a developing country with less resources for such projects. There are several challenges that the government faces in achieving economic growth while at the same time ensuring that there is proper care for the environment. On the environmental aspect, the main concerns in Pakistan include air, water, and forest pollutants; green consumerism must be encouraged as part of sustainable development (Shamsi et al. 2022). Comparing Saudi Arabia and Pakistan understanding of environmental awareness (EAW), environmental knowledge (EK), green purchase intentions (GPI), and green consumer behaviour for Sustainable Development Goals (GCB) in different economic and environmental settings prompted by differences in

economic development, industrialization, and environmental policies and awareness.

The following table outlines the specific implications of these factors in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, highlighting how differing conditions and policies affect the progression toward sustainable development goals and consumer behaviour in each country.

Theoretical implications

The findings of the current study hold theoretical contributions to the green consumer behaviour literature in the context of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Comparing Saudi Arabia and Pakistan highlights that sociopolitical and economic conditions shape how environmental knowledge and awareness translate into green consumer behaviours. The use of learning theory supports the claim that knowledge and awareness of the environment play a critical role in influencing people's attitudes and behaviours toward sustainable consumption. The positive significant correlations of environmental knowledge, purchasing intentions, and actual green consumer behaviour show that information and education are essential for the change in consumers. The results affirm the crucial role of environmental knowledge in shaping green consumer behaviour, reinforcing the importance of educational interventions for fostering sustainable habits. The study demonstrates that information and education significantly impact green consumer behaviour, highlighting the importance of educational programs and informative campaigns in fostering environmentally friendly habits. This theoretical perspective explains that the practice of educational programs and informative significant campaigns can be in creating consumers environmentally friendly habits.

Practical implications

From a practical perspective, the findings presented in the study offer valuable recommendations for policymakers who seek to incite changes in consumption patterns in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Concretely, raising the level of environmental education in schools and Universities, using the media and community approaches to stimulate awareness among the population, and providing appropriate incentives to purchase eco-logical products in stores can increase the knowledge of the population about environ-mental issues. Given the strong correlation between environmental awareness and green purchase

intentions (0.761 in Saudi Arabia), policy interventions should prioritize educational programs to promote environmental consciousness among consumers. The findings indicate that policies aimed at increasing environmental education and awareness should focus on enhancing consumer green purchase intentions, as higher intentions directly lead to stronger green consumer behaviour. These pragmatic strategies are particularly crucial in turning good ideas into actual actions that help in advancing and fostering environmental stewardship initiatives, like lowering carbon impact and encouraging more sustainable and green conduct and behaviours.

Managerial implications

At the managerial level, the study provides valuable information to businesses and marketers looking forward to reaping from the increasing trend in consumption and use of sustainable products in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Bearing these theories in mind, awareness of factors affecting green consumer behaviour like the perceived value of green products can assist businesses in framing their strategies and products. In a nutshell, the sustainable marketing strategies that can contribute to the growth of sustainable business are: increasing the focus on the environmental impact on the product, providing accurate information about the sustainability initiatives, and appealing to the consumer's self-identity as a sustainably minded individual. The study's results highlight the importance of businesses emphasizing the perceived value of green products in their marketing strategies. particularly in Pakistan where perceived value is a stronger moderator. Furthermore, establishing relationships with ecological organizations and engaging in sustainability management increase CSR images and consumer loyalty to an environmentally sustainable business.

Limitations and future directions

There are some limitations in this study. In the cross-sectional study design, the longer-term choice transition of green consumers cannot be examined due to the lack of temporal context. Moreover, gender distribution of the sample could affect the results as gen-der influences the level of green consumption. The present research also limited to consider the influence of new media technologies on people's environmental consciousness and their buying behaviour, as well as to evaluate the efficacy of certain policies and measures designed to foster sustainable development.

The following are potential areas for future research that would build upon the outcomes from this study to deepen our understanding of green consumer behaviour within diverse socio-economic environments: First of all, future studies regarding green consumer behaviour could comprise other nations with different economic structures and culturally different consumers. Research conducted in different areas could aid in the determination of common trends regarding sustainable consumption and area-specific factors. Secondly, it has been stated that further longitudinal research could be informative regarding the dynamics of green consumer attitudes and behaviours arising from transitional economic conditions. technological innovations, and ecological legislation. Such research could provide more information about the sustainable outcomes of different interventions and awareness programs.

Additionally, future studies could explore how gender-specific factors influence sustainable consumption patterns, providing insights into targeted interventions for different demographic groups. Furthermore, more theoretical development is needed in the potential utility of digital and social media in influencing green consumers' behaviours. Studying how online platforms, social media campaigns, and influencer marketing affect environmental awareness and purchasing decisions could offer possibilities that can be useful for marketers and policymakers who are looking to use digital media for the promotion of sustainability.

Conclusion

The increased concerns towards environmental issues and the implementation of sound economic policies in KSA offer a solid platform to change the consumers' environmental consciousness and buying behaviours for environmentally friendly products. On the other hand, Pakistan needs to address the environmental concerns along with its economic constraints which require concentrated efforts on environmental awareness, as well as value-based marketing communications that can encourage green consumerism. The in-sights gathered can thus be used by policymakers and marketers in both countries to observe certain measures given the prevailing economic and environmental realities to sup-port sustainable development goals and cultivate a culture of environmentalism.

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A study on identifying leadership behaviors and styles of prospective kitchen chefs

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Abstract: Leadership involves setting common goals within a group, influencing others' behaviors, and directing them toward a target. Leadership behaviors and styles can vary depending on the individual and professional characteristics of the leaders. Kitchen organizations are structured in a way that requires division of labor due to their inherent nature, with sections such as cold, hot, pastry, bakery, soup, breakfast, and butchery. Therefore, individuals working in various positions within the kitchen, such as head chefs, sous-chefs, section chefs, and line cooks, must possess leadership qualities. This study aimed to determine the leadership behavior tendencies and leadership styles of students studying gastronomy and culinary arts at Artvin Coruh University. Consequently, the study group comprised students in gastronomy and culinary arts programs at Artvin Coruh University. The saturation (complete enumeration) technique was applied during sampling, and 128 candidate students were included in the study. It was found that participants demonstrated higher participation "people-oriented in leadership" behaviors. Significant differences in leadership behavior tendencies and leadership styles were observed only between genders. Male participants indicated higher adherence to structural and political leadership styles than did female participants. In conclusion, adopting a people-oriented leadership style by students of gastronomy and culinary programs could be an advantage in their careers, as they are likely to lead many people throughout their professional lives.

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Introduction

Leadership is one of the concepts that has existed and been studied since the dawn of humanity. Leaders can be defined as individuals who set a group's goals, influence members' behaviors, and guide them (Reşitoğlu et al. 2023). Therefore, it can be said that leaders hold a significant position within organizations due to their responsibilities and their role as models for group members. It is impossible to assert that broad and comprehensive leadership theories encompass all the dimensions of leadership. Theories related to leadership appear to attempt to explain specific aspects of this concept (Köseoğlu 2019). One of the newer approaches to organization and leadership, the Four Frames Model developed by Bolman and Deal (2003), presents a multifaceted view of organizations and leadership through four frames. In their management theory, Bolman and Deal examined organizations from four perspectives: structural, human resource, political, and cultural symbols (Tanrıöğen et al. 2014).

In recent years, extensive international studies in the field of leadership have shown that leadership behavior is crucial for organizational success (Kumar & Kaptan 2007). In terms of businesses, leadership skills are needed in terms of bringing together culture, technology, organizational structure, human resources and processes (Oğan 2022). Leadership significantly impacts employee productivity, profitability, and performance in public and private sector organizations (Okorie & Kennedy 2017). Consequently, leadership styles have become an essential topic in management studies, with many researchers viewing them as a critical variable influencing how members function within an organization (Yahaya et al. 2016). Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership within the context of kitchen organizations. Upon reviewing relevant research in this context, topics and sample groups include positive leadership, organizational climate and leadership styles, people management and leadership, job satisfaction related to leadership style, perceptions of organagerial support, leader-member interaction, and "leadership moments" enacted by kitchen managers, head chefs, and employees (Ekşili & Alparslan 2021; Güngör & Atay 2019; Güngör et al. 2022; Delekovcan 2013; Aykac & Buyruk 2024; Lortie, Cabantous & Sardais 2022). However, the literature contains only a limited number

of studies that examine the leadership qualities of culinary students. This study contributes to the literature by investigating the leadership behaviors and styles of chef candidate students in higher education.

This study was conducted to identify the leadership behaviors and styles of students studying gastronomy and culinary arts at Artvin Coruh University. Considering the likelihood of these students working in the industry, they hold potential as chef candidates for professional kitchens. Leaders in various sections manage professional kitchens, such as head chefs, sous-chefs, and section chefs (e.g., cold, hot, pastry, soup, and butchery). Thus, leadership qualities are crucial for students studying gastronomy and culinary arts because of their positions they may hold. Accordingly, this study's aim to determine the attitudes and leadership styles of chef candidates studying gastronomy and culinary arts underscores its significance. Therefore, examining the leadership behaviors and styles of chef candidates pursuing culinary education at a higher education level is important in the field of gastronomy. This study is expected to contribute to the literature by highlighting the positive effects of leadership qualities and behaviors on organizational performance, job satisfaction, and motivation levels.

Conceptual framework

Leadership is vital for achieving efficient team management in businesses and organizations, enhancing work motivation, contributing to teamwork, inspiring employees, and achieving goals. A team leader fosters an environment in which team members continuously develop in their professional fields, maintaining high morale and motivation, realizing their potential, and creating a space of mutual respect and trust. Teamwork ignites innovation and creativity, and guides decision-making (Oğan 2021). It promotes communication within the organization, shared responsibility, and a commitment from everyone to strive for success (Henry 1998). Working as a team rather than as an individual has a distinct advantage in generating more effective and higher-quality solutions (Ingram & Desombre 1999). Furthermore, a team leader possessing a range of skills, such as listening, communicating, foreseeing, intervening, negotiating, learning, and teaching, will fulfill a facilitative role more effectively and significantly contribute to the team's success (Donellon 1998). Consequently, employees with leadership qualities play a crucial role in both organizations and other employees.

Individuals work within their knowledge, experience, and abilities. In reality, each person has certain limitations, in that they may try to conceal. Through teamwork, members cover each other's weaknesses and strive to create a perfect whole (Scarnati 2001). Teamwork and team leaders are critical to ensuring the effective existence of an organization. This approach enables employees to enjoy their work and be satisfied with it. Thanks to team leaders, employees increase their performance, while organizations raise their success rates and become more resilient. Team leaders prefer to keep up with global competition, as their roles enhance harmony, performance, quality, and innovation (Cakıroğlu 2014). So much so that today, new leadership styles have emerged due to the development of technology. Oğan & Cetiner (2024) listed these leadership styles as visionary, business-oriented, development-supportive, transformational, interactive freedom-granting. A leader's ability to minimize the status barrier between themselves and their team members is the most crucial element in building an effective team and ensuring its success. In this regard, an effective leader should be perceived as one of the groups and help all members feel comfortable within the group (Gordon 2002).

Food and beverage establishments require many stages of kitchen operations, including planning, organizing, menu development, and product preparation. These tasks must be conducted in accordance with hygiene and sanitation rules and guest satisfaction (Harbalıoğlu & Ünal 2014). Various professional groups work within kitchen organizations, including apprentices, journeymen, cooks, section chefs, head chefs, interns, and dishwashers. A profession encompasses skills acquired through income training within a specific field and following established rules (Aykaç & Buyruk 2024). Therefore, individuals with leadership qualities must perform duties associated with the requirements of each occupational group. Owing to the inherent nature of the work and the profession's demands, trained personnel are essential in kitchens. The culinary profession can be defined as the work of a skilled person who, independently and within a specified time, prepares breakfasts, soups, vegetable dishes, appetizers, pastries, salads, sauces (hot and cold), meats (red meat, poultry, offal, game), seafood, legume dishes, rice, pasta, desserts, and beverages (MEGEP 2007, 12). Yılmaz and Tanrıverdi (2017) described qualified kitchen workers as individuals who have received both theoretical and practical training, who love their profession, and who continuously strive to improve themselves. Bişiren and Gençer (2023) note that culinary training begins with a master-apprentice relationship, progressing through high school, associate degrees, and undergraduate levels. Nowadays, culinary training is also available in private academies and postgraduate studies. Thus, vocational training has made significant progress in kitchen organizations, where leadership qualities of employees are valued.

The growing competition in recent years has made it essential for restaurants to have strong kitchen management to ensure competitive success. Being skilled in cooking does not necessarily equate to being a successful manager of the kitchen. While individuals with innate leadership skills are often assumed to succeed in management, various studies have shown that education and training can develop or even establish these skills if they are not naturally present (Güngör et al. 2023). Although the high-level culinary field includes many actors (chefs, cooks, critics, etc.), head chefs are primary figures. Elite head chefs, seen as guiding leaders, are often portrayed as charismatic, technically skilled, inspirational, and innovative "star" artists focused on creating gastronomic masterpieces (Lortie et al. 2023). The performance and workplace motivation of kitchen personnel are directly related to the leadership style of kitchen managers.

Methodology

This study aims to identify the leadership behaviors and styles of students receiving gastronomy and culinary arts education at Artvin Çoruh University. This research is a quantitative study, with a population consisting of gastronomy, culinary arts, and culinary students at Artvin Çoruh University. For sample selection, saturation (complete enumeration) sampling technique was employed, in which every unit in the population was included in the sample (Ergin 2013). Thus, this study intended to ensure the voluntary participation of all gastronomy and culinary students at Artvin Çoruh University.

A survey technique was used to collect research data. In social sciences research, quantitative and qualitative data collection is primarily conducted through surveys. Consequently, the scientific rigor and suitability of survey techniques are often scrutinized (Arıkan 2018). Bolman and Deal's (1990) "Leadership Orientations Survey" was administered to students in the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts and Culinary Departments at Artvin Çoruh University to achieve the study's purpose. This quantitative study used complete enumeration

sampling, so the survey was conducted face-to-face with the students. The survey included all students attending classes or exams, of which 128 students completed it.

The survey consisted of three sections, the first section addresses characteristics. second examines leadership the behaviors, and the third focuses on leadership styles. The first section of Bolman and Deal's leadership orientation survey included 32 items. with eight statements for each of the four leadership types (structural, human resources, political, and symbolic). Respondents were asked to rate these items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always). In the second section, six questions were designed to help participants describe themselves, with each offering four statements representing different leadership styles. Participants were asked to rank these statements, with "1" indicating the statement that best describes them and "4" indicating the least representative statement. Thus, students' leadership behaviors and styles were scored based on their level of agreement.

The data collected from the surveys were entered into SPSS 19, and descriptive statistics, homogeneity tests (Levene's test), variance analysis, and Duncan's tests were performed. The first test conducted on the data was reliability analysis. The reliability analysis results for the survey data were 0.812, 0.835, 0.852, and 0.787 for the four sections, respectively. These results indicate the high level of reliability of the survey data.

Finding

A total of 128 participants were included in this study. Of the participants, 25.8% were male, and 74.2% were female. Students from the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Department constituted 64.8% of the sample, whereas those from the Culinary Department comprised 35.2%. First-year students accounted for 43.8%, sophomores for 39.8%, and juniors for 16.4%.

Findings on leadership behaviours

In the first section of the scale evaluating the leadership behaviors of the participating students according to leadership style, the average scores for the four leadership styles are compared in (Table 1).

Leadership Styles	N	Minimum	Maximum		Standard Deviation
Structural Leadership	128	1.88	4.88	3.6543	.6313
Human-Centered Leadership	128	2.00	5.00	3.9805	.5892
Political Leadership	128	1.38	4.75	3.3617	.7402
Symbolic Leadership	128	1.88	5.00	3.5519	.6646
Valid Surveys	128				

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Responses to Leadership Style Behaviors

As shown in Table 1, students displayed the highest engagement with human-centered leadership style. The differences in the means among these leadership styles were tested for significance using variance analysis. First, the homogeneity of variances was examined, as shown in the Levene test results (Table 2).

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.798	3	508	.147

Table 2. Homogeneity of Variances Test for Leadership Behaviors

As seen in Table 2, the variances in the mean responses for leadership styles in the first section are equal. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for equal variances are presented in Table 3. This analysis indicates that the mean values differ significantly across leadership styles.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.801	3	8.600	19.836	.000
Within Groups	220.251	508	.434		
Total	246.051	511			

Table 3. ANOVA Results for Leadership-Related Behaviors

The ANOVA results in Table 3 indicate statistically significant differences in the mean responses of the four leadership styles. To determine which leadership styles had higher or lower mean scores, Duncan's post-hoc test was conducted. As shown in Table 4, the average score for the human-centered leadership style was higher than that for the other styles. Structural and symbolic leadership styles were statistically similar, falling into the same subset, while political leadership had the lowest mean score. This suggests that the students in this study generally favor a human-centered leadership style.

		Subset for	or alpha =	0.05
Leadership Styles	N	1	2	3
Political Leadership	128	3.3641		
Symbolic Leadership	128		3.5544	
Structural Leadership	128		3.6572	
Human-Centered Leadership	128			3.9833
Sig.		1.000	.212	1.000

Table 4. Grouping Mean Scores for Leadership-related Behaviors via Duncan Test

In the section above, the Likert scale average scores for the responses in the first part of the survey were examined. Table 5 provides the mean of the total scores (sum of Likert-scale values) for each leadership style (Table 5).

					Standard
Leadership Styles	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Deviation
Structural	128	15.00	39.00	29.2344	5.0501
Leadership					
Human-Centered	128	16.00	40.00	31.7891	4.7780
Leadership					
Political Leadership	128	11.00	38.00	26.8672	5.9266
Symbolic	128	15.00	40.00	28.3125	5.3547
Leadership					
Valid Surveys	128				

Table 5. Mean Scores for Leadership-Related Behaviors by Total Value

The values in Table 5 can also be interpreted as the sum of the average scores in Table 1. Following Bolman and Deal's approach, which assesses responses as a total score for each behavior, a similar comparison was conducted in this study.

Findings on leadership styles

Participants were asked to identify their leadership style in the second part of the study. This section contains statements reflecting the four leadership styles across the six situations. Participants were instructed to rank these statements by assigning a value of "4" to the statement that best described them, followed by "3" for the next best and "1" for the least descriptive. The average scores generated from participants' rankings are presented in (Table 6).

Leadership Styles					Std.
Leadership Styles	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Deviation
Structural Leadership	113	7.00	24.00	15.2389	2.8576
Human-Oriented	112	7.00	24.00	16.3750	3.4852
Leadership					
Political Leadership	112	3.00	23.00	12.0357	3.4743
Symbolic Leadership	111	3.00	22.00	15.4865	3.2161
Valid N (listwise)	111				

Table 6. Descriptive Data for Leadership Styles

As seen in Table 6, participants tended to identify statements reflecting a "human-oriented leadership" style, aligning with the findings from the first part of the study. This is consistent with the results of similar studies using the same scale (e.g., Yıldırım et al. 2020; Frazier et al. 2007; Joo et al. 2014; Tan & Adams 2018). A variance analysis was conducted to determine whether the differences in ranking scores among leadership styles were statistically significant. The results of the variance analysis are presented in Tables 7, 8, and 9.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.779	3	444	.150

Table 7. Homogeneity of Variances Test for Leadership Styles

As shown in Table 7, the ranking scores of the leadership styles that best represented the participants had homogenous variance (Sig. > 0.05). The ANOVA results for these homogeneous variances are presented in Table 8.

Source of	f				
Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	30.373	3	11.458	10.538	.000
Within Groups	127.510	444	.287		
Total	161.882	447			

Table 8. Variance Analysis Results of Leadership Style Rankings

The ANOVA results indicate statistically significant differences in the mean ranking scores among the four leadership styles. Table 9 shows the grouping of these averages based on Duncan's test.

		Subset for alpha = 0.05		
Leadership Styles	N	1	2	3
Political Leadership	112	2.0504		
Structural	113		2.6011	
Leadership				
Symbolic	111		2.6029	
Leadership				
Human-Oriented	112			2.7907
Leadership				
Sig.		1.000	.980	1.000

Table 9. Grouping of Leadership Style Averages

According to the Duncan test results, participants, similar to their responses in the "behaviours" section, identified more strongly with a human-oriented leadership style and least strongly with a political one.

Findings on demographic characteristics of participants

To date, the study has evaluated the overall results of all participants. This section assesses the findings based on the demographic characteristics of the participants and examines whether there are significant differences between them. The results related to the leadership style preferences of the students in different departments are presented in Table 10.

Department		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Culinary	Structural Leadership	45	2.13	4.75	3.6639
Department	Human-Oriented	45	2.00	4.75	3.9290
	Leadership				
	Political Leadership	45	1.63	4.75	3.3778
	Symbolic Leadership	45	1.88	4.88	3.6603
	Valid N (listwise)	45			
Gastronomy &	Structural Leadership	83	1.88	4.88	3.6491
Culinary Arts	Human-Oriented	83	2.00	5.00	4.0084
	Leadership				
	Political Leadership	83	1.38	4.75	3.3531
	Symbolic Leadership	83	1.88	5.00	3.4931
	Valid N (listwise)	83			

Table 10. Responses to Leadership-Related Behaviors by Department

As shown in Table 10, students from both departments predominantly identified with behaviors reflecting a "human-oriented leadership" style, similar to the initial stage of the study. A variance analysis was

conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in leadership style preferences across demographic characteristics, as summarized in Table 11.

Demographic Characteristic	Leadership Style	F	Sig
Characteristic	Structural	0,820	0,630
A	Human-Oriented	0,678	0,770
Age	Political	0,676	0,772
	Symbolic	0,848	0,601
	Structural	0,016	0,900
Donartment	Human-Oriented	0,569	0,452
Department	Political	0,047	0,828
	Symbolic	1,824	0,179
	Structural	2,637	0,076
Grade	Human-Oriented	0,032	0,968
Grade	Political	0,280	0,757
	Symbolic	0,845	0,432
	Structural	9,415	0,003*
Gender	Human-Oriented	0,575	0,450
Gender	Political	5,984	0,016*
	Symbolic	2,039	0,156

Table 11. ANOVA Results for Demographic Characteristics and Leadership Style-Related Behaviors

Table 11 shows a statistically significant difference only between genders regarding leadership-related behaviors. Responses concerning structural and political leadership styles varied significantly by gender. As shown in Table 12, male students reported higher inclinations toward "structural" and "political" leadership styles than did female students.

Gender		Structural	Political	
Male	Mean	3.9356	3.6250	
	N	33	33	
	Std. Deviation	.50498	.64726	
Female	Mean	3.5566	3.2703	
	N	95	95	
	Std. Deviation	.64355	.75150	

Table 12. Relationship Between Gender and Leadership Styles

Conclusion

Leaders can be described as individuals who establish the goals of a group, guide members around these shared goals, and influence their behavior. Based on insights from studies in the literature, leaders are found to significantly impact productivity, profitability, and employee performance within various organizations, including the public and private sectors (Kaiser et al. 2008, 96; Judge et al. 2002, 765). Thus, leadership is the key to ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of enterprises and institutions. Culinary-related organizations involve various procedural steps, including planning, organizing, menu development, and product preparation. These organizations feature multiple occupational groups such as apprentices, journeymen, chefs, section heads, executive chefs, interns, and dishwashers. Given the specific characteristics and natural demands of work in kitchen environments, examining leadership behaviors in kitchens is critical. The performance and workplace motivation of kitchen employees are related to kitchen managers' leadership behavior.

Considering that students pursuing gastronomy and culinary arts at the higher education level are potential chef candidates, this research aims to determine students' leadership behavior tendencies and leadership styles in gastronomy and culinary arts programs at Artvin Çoruh University. Professional kitchens are managed by leaders of various sections, such as head chefs, sous chefs, and section heads (e.g., cold, hot, pastry, soup, and butchery). The study reveals that participants generally favor "people-oriented leadership" behaviors. In a survey by Beck-Frazier et al. (2007), who employed the same scale as education faculty deans, "people-oriented leadership" behaviors were highlighted. Another study using this scale by Joo et al. (2014) reported that subordinates working with deans tend to prefer structural leadership behaviors. Similarly, Yıldırım et al. (2020) found that nursing students adopted people-oriented leadership behaviors when studying university students.

Significant differences in leadership behavior tendencies and leadership styles were found only between genders among the participants' demographic characteristics. Differences in structural and political leadership styles were observed between men and women, with men showing a higher preference for these styles than women. While Joo et al. (2014) did not find gender-based differences in leadership styles, Tan and Adams (2018) reported that male middle and high school students emphasized structural and political leadership

styles more than their female counterparts did. Adopting peopleoriented leadership styles may be advantageous for students in gastronomy and culinary programs, because they are likely to lead numerous individuals throughout their careers. This style is beneficial because it requires employees to work closely with their subordinates in confined kitchen spaces.

This study contributes to the literature by revealing the leadership styles adopted by gastronomy and culinary arts students and examining the influence of leadership behaviors on the performance and motivation of kitchen staff. People-oriented leadership behaviors can enhance motivation and improve organizational performance by fostering the development of human relations among employees. It is recommended that this research be applied to different businesses or sectors, with participants possessing varying personality traits in other regions, because the demographic characteristics of individuals in various industries are likely to produce diverse results.

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Acceptable women of Müfide Ferit: A blend of nationalism and feminism

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Abstract: From the Second Constitutional Monarchy to the early years of the Republic, Müfide Ferit Tek was one of the significant woman writers. Her feminism is a fusion of nationalism and feminism, which is quite different even if she is cited among feminist writers. Her conception of feminism differed from that of many of her counterparts and from what is understood now. Her works presented a strong, patriotic, self-reliant woman who was loyal to her own principles and stood on her own two feet as the ideal of an acceptable lady. This article is particularly interested in the feminist views of Müfide Ferit. The purpose of this study is to examine how Müfide Ferit Tek contributed to the history of feminism in Turkey by fusing nationalism and feminism from the late Ottoman era to the Republic. Müfide Ferit, a significant woman author of the late Ottoman and early Republic period, approached feminism from a unique angle and made a clear contrast between women who were acceptable and those who were not in her writings.

Keywords: Müfide Ferit, Ottoman feminism, nationalism, feminism

Introduction

The Tanzimat Edict of 1839 marked the beginning of the Ottoman Empire's modernization and innovation process, which continued with the establishment of the Constitutional Monarchy. During this process, the Ottoman women begin to assume public roles. Among other significant advancements, women were allowed to pursue careers in business, education, and intelligence (Toprak 1988, 34).

The country's constitution was changed for the first time with the Second Constitutional Monarchy (1908), and as a result of the increased freedom of opinion at this time, the topic of women also

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¹ Tanzimat and Constitutional Monarchy were the periods in which social free doms increased, as the Ottoman Empire recently restricted the sultan's powers.

started to be discussed. During this period, women tried to make their voices heard by establishing associations and publishing newspapers (Özcan Demir 1999, 107). The battles to legalize women's rights and provide Ottoman women the same rights as women in the West are what spring to mind when discussing feminism in the Ottoman Empire. In this context, women such as Halide Edip, Nezihe Muhiddin, Emine Seniye, and Fatma Aliye organized conferences, founded organizations, and tried to express their views through the media (Çalışkan 2002, 321). Müfide Ferit Tek, a woman author who championed women's rights during this time, elevated feminism to a new level. She established the groundwork for nationalist feminism in Turkey by fusing feminism with nationalist concepts.

The purpose of this research is to expose Mufide Ferit Tek's method of combining feminism and nationalism in her own writings. Ottoman feminism, which has a cosmopolitan framework, loses the idea of nationalist feminism, which is not frequently utilized in Turkish feminist literature. This research will raise awareness of this idea and add to the body of feminist literature. Primary and secondary sources will be used in a literature review.

Ottoman feminism

Feminism is derived from the Latin word 'feminine', meaning 'woman'. Feminism is an approach that includes the liberation of women, the prevention of their oppression, the legitimation of their rights, their actions in public and private spheres and equal rights (Sevim 2005, 7). The perception of feminism first emerged in England in the 18th century. It entered the academic field with "A Vindication of the Right" by Mary Wollstonecraft, published in 1792 (Taş 2006, 74).

It is well known that since the beginning of time, women have fought for some of their own rights. With the rise of the "first wave" feminist movement, calls for equality in public life become more apparent. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, calls for legal equality served as the foundation for the feminist and women's movements. They started to express their calls for women to be included in the definition of citizens in order to achieve 'equal citizenship,' which is what nation-states guarantee. The feminist movement known as the "first wave" is therefore also known as "egalitarian feminism." (Berber 2017) Among the demands in the first stage were demands for being visible in the public sphere, such as the

right to education, the right to work outside the home and the right to vote. Women's movements and demands that emerged in the West spread to other parts of the world in waves, and the Ottoman Empire was also affected by these developments simultaneously (Çakır 1994).

Demands for the right to citizenship, education, and the ability to vote were paramount in the Ottoman Empire and the women's movements that existed at the time the Republic of Turkey was subjects of the women's movement, organizations from many localities started their own journals, formed associations and foundations, and actively participated in the fight (Zihnioğlu 2016). Educated, middle-class women started talking about women's status in Ottoman society through associations and media like newspapers and magazines, beginning with the problems that most affected them. Discussions cover a wide range of subjects, including married couples with several wives, men's right to divorce, women's social marginalization, and dress codes. Along with demanding their right to exist in social, professional, educational, and public spheres, they often critique the conditions of femininity within the family. But several women of that era also called for personal liberty and selfdetermination (Berber 2017).

At the beginning of the 20th century, demands were gradually met, and legal changes took place on some of the discussed issues: such as the registration of the institution of marriage, raising the age of marriage for women, the end of the right to unilateral divorce and women's right to divorce. (Zihnioğlu 2016) During this period, educational opportunities for women were gradually increasing. In 1914, women were granted the freedom to attend college. Women who were educated spoke foreign languages, even if they were few in number. They initiated the first feminist movement in the Ottoman land with the establishment of the Constitutional Monarchy and the impact of the voting rights movement (Suffragette Movement) that persisted in the West during the similar time period (Çakır 1994).

Ottoman feminism is the term used to describe the work done by women in the liberated Ottoman Empire after 1908 and their public participation. Ottoman feminism was dubbed the "Three Styles of Feminism" by Akşit (2008). The first was the conservative feminist view pioneered by Fatma Aliye. It was a view based on the Islamic religion, in which efforts were made to improve the situation of women in the family and to ensure that women's rights were guaranteed by law. Another view was the feminist view, which had

many connections with the rising feminism in Europe, led by writers such as Halide Edip. This style, which wanted the reorganization of areas such as social life, law and education that were in the hands of men, was considered to have an elitist perspective (Durakbaşa 2000, 209). Another type was the type led by Sabiha Sertel. This view was against the authorities and close to anarchism. It was struggling with the bourgeois aspects of feminism (Shissler 2007).

Women with nationalist views may also be seen when Ottoman feminism was brought up. This concept, which blends feminism and nationalism, came into being particularly during the First World War, when the nation was occupied. The problem of women became a requirement for intellectuals throughout those years. During the war years, when their husbands were serving at the front, women were forced to labor. This setting led to the emergence of feminist and nationalist ideologies (Şermet 2019).

Some woman writers combined nationalism with feminism after seeing the country's freedom through Turkish nationalism. One of these authors is Müfide Ferit Tek. Her name is more commonly associated with being a nationalist, even a Turanist writer. However, from the late Ottoman period to the early years of the Republic, while emphasizing the importance of women's entering the worklife in the books she wrote, the conferences she gave, and the studies she conducted, she also defined an ideal type of woman suitable for Turkey, laying the foundations of nationalist feminism by explaining the ideal and the non-ideal in his works.

Important fragments of Müfide Ferit's life

Born in Kastamonu on April 29, 1892, Müfide Ferit passed away in Istanbul on March 24, 1971. Because of her father's constitutionalist views, Şevket Bey was exiled to Tripoli, where Müfide Ferit spent her early years. She was educated in the Italian nuns' school because there was no Turkish school for girls in this area. At home, her father taught her French, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. She studied the piano on her own. He later sent her to France to attend Versailles High School. She returned to Tripoli following her father's illness and married Ahmet Ferit Bey, the first Internal Affairs Minister and former ambassador (Ekşi and Çelik 2024). Both his father and her spouse influenced Müfide Ferit's political beliefs because they were both related to the political life (Er and Özcan 2012, 293).

Müfide Ferit Tek's life is filled with various changes due to her husband's job. Her husband was sent to the exile due to his political ideas. They returned to Istanbul with the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy. Müfide Ferit's husband, Ahmet Ferit Bey, begins his writing activities in the last periods of the Ottoman Empire. Thereupon, Müfide Ferit wrote in *İfhâm* newspaper published by Ferit Bey. She also wrote articles in magazines such as *Türk Kadını*, *Türk Yurdu* and *Şehbâl* with the nickname Süyüm Bike. During this period, she joined the Turkish Nationalist movement with her husband, in this context she began to stand out as a defender of the idea of Turkism. Based on this ideology, she wrote *Aydemir* and made a splash for her time (1918) when she was only twenty-four years old (Esin 1972, 14).

Those years were the years when the Ottoman Empire was under occupation and salvation was sought from this situation. After the Balkan Wars, when *İttihatve Terakki* (the *Committee of Union and Progress*) realized that the idea of Ottomanism would not be a solution to the situation of the country, some intellectuals put forward the idea of Turkism. Müfide Ferit and her husband, Ahmet Ferit, traveled to cities like Sinop and Bursa and authored books about the state of the nation there after he was banished due to issues inside the Committe of Union and Progress Party (Demircioğlu 1998, 7).

Ahmet Ferit and his wife Müfide Ferit were the first to support the War of Independence because they believed that the nation's peace and prosperity came first, along with the state's existence and independence. Müfide Ferit, a conference speaker in this context, participated as a speaker in anti-occupation demonstrations. She conducted research and authored essays arguing that Turkish women ought to be in the position they deserve (Er and Özcan 2012, 293).

Müfide Ferit wrote the novel *Aydemir*, based on her memories of the period in which she lived, in 1918, with the encouragement of her sister Selma's husband, Yusuf Akçura. This was followed by the novels *Pervaneler* in 1924, *Leyla* in 1925, and *Affolunmayan Günah*, whose German translation was published in 1933. After the Ankara Government appointed Ahmet Ferit Tek as ambassador in Paris between 1919 and 1922, Müfide Ferit gave conferences and wrote articles on the subjects of the War of Independence, Turkish Thesis, Turkish Women and Feminism (Zengin 2016, 559).

Müfide Ferit also enrolled in Sorbonne Oriental Literature courses to complete her education, which was left unfinished after the death of her father. During the period when Ahmet Ferit was serving as ambassador in London, she resided in Paris and completed her higher education at the Paris École Libre des Sciences Politiques Diplomatique in 1928. During 1921, 1923, and 1943, Müfide Hanım lived overseas as Ferit Tek served as an ambassador in Paris, London, Warsaw, and Tokyo. When her husband retired, she went on working for woman. Between 1945 and 1948, she and her friends started the Turkish Soroptimist Club, which she continued to grow until her death in 1971 (Zariç 2022, 106).

Following the founding of the Istanbul Soroptimist Club in 1948 Müfide Ferit Tek, the Federation of Turkey was established in Ankara, 1953. As a member of the International Soroptimist European Federation and now has around a thousand members, it is an organization dedicated to the public good. It works with women and young girls in five key areas: health, a sustainable environment, education, economic development, and the abolition of violence against women (Turkey Sorophimist Federation 2025).

Since Müfide Ferit is mostly recognized as a Turkist and nationalist woman writer, she is not among the first woman authors and activists who spring to mind when Ottoman feminism is brought up. The ideal Turkish woman type she portrayed in her lectures and novels, is critized arguing that it was not connected to true feminism. Despite the criticism she received from some quarters, her lifelong efforts to empower women and assure their independence, particularly in the economic sphere, are truly impressive.

Müfide Ferit 's conception of nationalism

Some intellectuals turned to Turkism during the last years of the Ottoman Empire when it was searching for answers and ideas like Islamism and Ottomanism failed. With the Ottoman Empire on the verge of collapse, Turkist intellectuals were at the forefront of initiating the National Struggle, which would result in the establishment of the independent Republic of Turkey, and they fought intellectually and put their ideals into the service of the nation and homeland (Köçer 2003). During this period, Gaspirali Ismail's slogan "unity in thought, work and language" has been accepted throughout the Turkish world. "Turkists" are a group of intellectuals who focused their research on Turkish mythology, history, and culture. Among them was Ziya Gökalp, who stressed the value of Turkish unity (Bars 2017). A broader form of Turanism was a view that dreamed of the

unity of Turks living not only in the Ottoman lands but all over the world (Meral 2022).

Müfide Ferit Tek's nationalism can be described as the transformation of nationalism and Turkism into Turanism. We can infer this from the ideal or non-ideal characters she develops in her books and stories.

In one of the most famous novels of her, *Aydemir* (1918), she bears the traces of Turanist thought and the novel was written with the desire to embrace Turks outside Turkey. It deals with the political and social problems of the Eastern Turks under Russian captivity. A young man named Demir makes his ideal decision in the book, following a struggle between his ideal and his affection. He is someone who travels to Turkestan to fulfill his goal of Turan, leaving behind the girl he is in love with and all of his loved ones in Istanbul. One evening, Demir talks about his dreams to the girl he loves:

I will wander around, Miss Hazin! I intend to start from Haifa. Haifa, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kashkar and provinces. I want to make Samarkand the first centre. Even in places I can't reach, I will send the assistants I will find. But the main thing is always one: Awake Turks. I will try to use every means to achieve this. I want to set up a community in the city, wherever I pass by (Tek 2002, 40).

Demir goes to Turkestan and realizes most of his dreams. Even if he wants to return to Istanbul and marry the girl he loves, his dream of Turan prevents him. When people ask him the reason, he says that his hometown was everywhere that is Turkish (Tek 2002, 30).

Following Halide Edip Adıvar'sbook *Yeni Turan* written in 1912, Aydemir's book is regarded as the second Turanist work (Karataş 2013, 39). As a result, *Aydemir*'s novel holds a place in the annals of national literature.

In her book titled *Pervaneler* (1924), Müfide Ferit emphasizes that Turks should not break away from national consciousness, culture, and morality. The novel describes the cultural problems experienced by Turkish men and women who marry foreigners and warns about the missionary activities carried out by foreign schools in Turkey. The novel focusses on the regret experienced by Burhan Ahmet, who married a Catholic French woman. She expresses in the novel that Burhan's real sin is he raised his children in an upbringing with two religions, two mentalities, two temperaments and two nationalities (Tek 1924, 155). Furthermore, the extent of the harm done to Turkish

culture and religion by the missionary schools that were established in the last periods of the Ottoman Empire is described in the book. The devaluation of Turkish-Islamic civilization and the promotion of a consumption-based lifestyle of Americans are described. She expresses her ideas as:

Growing up in these schools makes one an American fan. Their neighbourhoods, hometowns, and families start to see them as foreigners. After they graduate from this school, what will happen? Entertainment is the primary goal. These schools' primary goal is to distance children from Turkish identity (Ibid, 156).

She employs the following phrases in reference to Bizans High School, a missionary school:

There was no Turkishness here, America in the midst of Turkey's poverty. This is the world that spreads its ease, money, and limitless pleasures like a joke. American control over young brains is evident even in the physical layout of the school. Even the material organization of the school demonstrates American dominance over young minds. Turkish girls deny their nationalities and beliefs (Ibid, 51).

Pervaneler is a book that was written with sensitivity to both national and religious issues (Çetin 2018, 22). The author Müfide Tek's nationalist side comes out in the book. She aims to raise awareness of the issue by explaining how foreign schools set up in the nation cause Turkish kids to become estranged from their own identity. A national and religious approach to education is the answer to this issue for her.

During the occupation years, Müfide Ferit wrote articles trying to revive nationalism and oppose the occupation. She wrote articles in the newspaper *İfham*, published in 1912. In the article titled *Milli Vazifeler Karşısında Günahlarımız*, she talks about the misery and dereliction in which a Turkish soldier was left on the streets of Istanbul and she expresess that he was a hero of Anafartalar, Çanakkale, the Caucasus and he became a veteran, but he fainted from hunger in Istanbul. She thinks it is offensive that a soldier who fought for her nation in Istanbul would go hungry and suffer. (Tek 1919, 22)

In her work titled *From Edirne to Bursa* (1913), which describes the occupation of Ottoman lands during the Balkan Wars, she explains how the days were full of brutality by saying that human blood stood out like a red belt. In the seized Ottoman land, she recounts the horrific sights she witnessed, including the bloodied bodies on the ground and the predicament of all the women and children who had to flee. (Tek

1913) The articles she later wrote in *Hâkimiyeti Milliye* newspaper to encourage and morale the Turkish soldiers in the war can be given as another example of her nationalist views. She addresses the Turkish soldiers as magnificent floods and a blessed river in the land where everyone said they were dead (Ibid, 2).

Antep was one of the most important cities that resisted the occupation during the War of Independence. In the article titled *Gaziantep*, published in the same newspaper, Müfide Ferit explained how the city of Antep resisted the occupation, and for this reason, she made a proposal to the Turkish Grand National Assembly to grant the title of veteran to Antep. Her proposal was accepted by the Assembly (Demircioğlu 1998, 17).

Müfide Ferit's Turkish nationalism is like a synthesis of Turanism and nationalism. Her views advocating the unity of the world's Turks were combined with her love for Turkey, and she supported the Turkish nation with her novels, stories, columns and other works during the war years when the Ottoman lands were under occupation. She always worked to preserve the national consciousness and fought Turkish youngsters who were being raised in an environment that was alien to their own identity. She also underlined that Turkish women currently bear a lot of responsibilities.

Müfide Ferit's feminism

In order to understand Müfide Ferit's views on feminism, women's rights and the ideal woman type, it is necessary to first look at the female characters in the books she wrote and the missions she assigned to them

In her book titled *Pervaneler*, written in 1924, Müfide Ferit fictionalized alienation from national culture through women. A character, Leman, one of the female students studying in missionary schools opened by foreigners to degenerate Turkish culture, is aimless and fond of fun. She does not want to marry men, but to travel and live a comfortable life. Nesime, who is studying at the same school, does not want to be "aimless" like the women she sees in the lodge, even though her family is a member of the lodge, and she was raised with a religious education. She wants to compete with men in every sense. Leman and Nesime are women without identity awareness, and it is obvious that the author does not see them as acceptable women (Tek 1924). Leman, Nesime and Bahire leave the school they entered as foreigners. After graduating, each of them marries foreign men and

moves further away from their Turkish identity. They can neither be locals nor remain Turks in the countries they go to. The striking point here is that these characters are women. For instance, even after marrying a foreign woman, Doctor Burhan Ahmet maintains his Turkish identity. Stated differently, the narrative consistently depicts women as non-national and males as national. Male characters retain their personality even if they marry foreign women (Erkoç 2021, 421).

Another feature of Bahire's character is that she represents a maletype woman. Bahire is a woman with short hair and dresses like men. She even disguises herself as a man while dancing tango. She depicts her as:

She was a 'sportswoman' in every sense of the word and she would do whatever was necessary to announce this to the world. She always walks around in her underpants, has a male attitude in her movements, and is also more attractive than men. With her best friend, Miss Hare, they decided not to get married and fight against men. (Tek 2002, 38).

Bahire is very different from the male type of women envisioned by other writers of the period. The male-type women mentioned in other novels try to demonstrate equality, competing with men by playing the same sports with them or wearing the same style. Bahire rejects marriage and denies her femininity. She represents a very extreme example of feminism. She does not accept her femininity. According to Müfide Ferit, women becoming masculine, deny their femininity, but due to their creation, they cannot be a man either. The author focuses on this aspect of feminism that attracts attention. These girls who deny their femininity can be neither men nor women. Furthermore, Müfide Ferit thinks that this way of thinking is a kind of extreme feminism, and it gives a harm to future generations (Yılmaz 2016, 35).

Non-ideal female characters in Müfide Ferit's novels are either characters who live in Western imitation and lack their own national culture or they are characters who cheat on their spouses by ignoring their own national and religious values. In this case, Müfide Ferit's feminism is a feminism that has not broken away from its own values.

In her book *Affolunmayan Günah*, published in 1933, she does not include nationalist discourses, but rather describes a forbidden love. It tells the longing of Sevda, a married woman, for her former love, Kurt. She criticizes the desire of women who have gained their social rights through the female characters in the novel to become sexually liberated

and be with different men. Sevda, the heroine of the novel, is a member of the Turkish Foundation (Türk Ocağı), a nationalist association. As a woman who appears both conservative and nationalist, she is criticized for having an illicit relationship (Özcan 1991, 25).

In her book *Aydemir* (1918), the woman character, Hazin, opened a school and started teaching. Her aim is to raise a young generation with national feelings such as love of homeland and nation. The teachers she trains will follow Demir's path and serve the same purpose (Tek, 2002). Here, Müfide Ferit emphasized the importance of the education of Turkish women. For her, the education of women is an important element in the destiny of society. Their ability to be present, to work for their country and to be a partner in the struggle expresses Müfide Ferit's thoughts on the women's movement (Çonoğlu 2022, 31). Hazin is a nationalist woman who is a member of the Turkish Foundation (TürkOcağı) and always supports Demir, the man she falls in love with. Hazin's life is dedicated to the cause of Demir, who is the ideal man in the novel. Because as a strong woman, she will always support the man she loves from behind the front (Yeter and Yeter 2020, 298).

In her stories called *Hayat Hanım* (1913) and *Gonca Kalfa* (1923), she included the situation of Ottoman society and women in the Tripoli and Balkan Wars. In the story called *Hayat Hanım*, Hayat, an idealist woman, is a self-sacrificing Turkish woman who sacrificed herself for the education of women during the difficult times of the country. She founded a school named Ev Hanımı Mektebi (Housewife School). Women studying at this school start a business for themselves and now take their place in society. HayatHanım, a woman who gives life to other woman in Ottoman Society, brings a prestige to the women who were ignored for years. In this school, women are given lessons such as sewing and cooking. Müfide Ferit asserts that it is critical for women to understand their basic feminine responsibilities in addition to not being reliant on anyone. The family, the foundation of society, will be safeguarded in this way (Atay 2022, 113). In the story, the main character Hayat Hanım says:

Just as every individual in the world has a duty towards society, a woman also has a duty, too. Her duty is to be a mother and housewife. How can a society that neglects each individual's duty survive? The woman will manage her home, raise her children well, and learn an art and skill without neglecting her children and husband. It is very important to learn the

innovations that benefit Turkishness and to know the etiquette for a woman (Ferit 1913, 442).

In the story, *Gonca Kalfa* (1923), she tells the story of Gonca, who was brought from Yemen to Istanbul by her uncle and sold as a servant to a mansion. In this story, she criticizes the fact that women are sold as slaves and draws attention to this problem. She tells about nameless, anonymous, and lonely women who are sold for money (Tek 1923). She also touches upon the women's issue in her articles written in different places and in the conferences she gave. For instance, she gave a conference on feminism at *Türk Kadını Dershanesi* which was opened in 1918 to provide education to Turkish girls. The text of her long speech at the conference was published in the 20th issue of the magazine called *Türk Kadını Mecmuası* dated 17 April 1335/1919 and in the 21st issue dated 8 May 1335/1919. In her speech, she expresses:

If our women are not going to work, they should start a clean, moral and heart-warming family; if they are going to start business life, they should work with men under suitable conditions. Half of humanity is female, and half is male. What is the point of excluding a part of this whole? Just as when half of a body remains paralyzed and idle, that body cannot walk, cannot survive vigorously, and is ultimately doomed to die. A society that does not lead, advance, and elevate its women cannot progress or live. What is feminism? They call feminism the profession of demanding that women be equal to men in civil, social, and political rights. While nations are working, societies are being born and formed, women are always assistants and companions to men, their position is completely equal to men, then as the nation becomes richer and tends towards debauchery, they expel women from their places and reduce them to the level of instruments of pleasure, tokens of wealth and let them live like that. There are also some inappropriate actions of women here. Nothing can be more natural than this. Women who are always kept under the restraints, without purpose and responsibility, sometimes as slaves, sometimes as toys, sometimes by being worshiped, sometimes by being beaten, of course cannot be responsible or capable of managing themselves. When they first find their reins free, they will naturally take their heads and run. Maybe in good ways, maybe in dangerous ways, probably the fault lies with those who keep them under control and prevent them from learning the ways (Tek 1919, 1).

And:

Feminism can occur only in three conditions. First, women will have the civil rights. The second condition is that they will have social rights and lastly legal rights. In this context, in her opinion, it is difficult for feminism to exist and be accepted in every society. Women cannot receive equal wages even if they do the same job as men. Additionally, women living in cities are not as

free as those living in villages. In villages, women can work in the fields with men, but in cities, women mostly stay at home. Women should not be isolated from the public sphere. Turkish culture is not a culture that isolates women, Turks should return to their essence. (Ibid, 1)

During her speech, she also touched upon religious issues. She examined the position of women in terms of different religions as follows:

In the 15th century, it was examined in the Christian world whether a woman had a soul or not. Could such a situation be possible? Half of humanity is male and female, the other half is female. How can half of humanity have a soul and the other half not? In the Jews, women are exalted in difficult times, but they are forgotten when they fall into pleasure. Islam, on the other hand, protected women in the Arab society, where women were not valued. Arabs could marry as many women as they wanted, and their daughters were buried alive. (Ibid, 2)

Müfide Ferit, who criticized societies' perspective on women under the guise of religion, also evaluated the place of women in different civilizations:

In Indian culture, women were first of all men's companions and then became their belongings. So much so that after the man dies, his wife is burned along with his belongings. When the Egyptian Civilization was first established, women were very valuable, but as the civilization weakened, the value of women decreased. In Arab culture, women have never been valuable. In the Greek Civilization, in the Middle Ages, women lived under the protection of their husbands, fathers or sons, without any legal rights. In Roman Civilization, women were also confined to the home. However, Roman women could not tolerate this issue and struggled on this issue. It is a fact that women are valued initially when states are being established, but when the danger passes and order is established, women are pushed to the background, and they are no longer needed. (Ibid, 2)

In her speech, she expressed what she believes. Turkish feminism should bring to Turkish women as follows:

First of all, Turkish women must have the right to work. A society or situation has not yet emerged that would allow Turkish women to be given political rights. Women and girls should be educated. Education should be given so that they can have a profession and get rid of being dependent on men. Women need a profession. (Ibid, 2)

Another place where she expressed her thoughts about feminism was her article called *Hanımlar Darülfunun'da Erkeklerle Aynı Dershanede Ders Yapmalımı Yapmamalımı*? (Should Ladies Study in

the Same Classroom as Men in Darülfunun?), published in the magazine Büyük Mecmua, in 1919. This was the date when there were discussions about women being educated in the same class with men at the country's first university called Darülfunun. She expresses her ideas as:

Women and men are obliged to act together in this difficult period when the country is in a difficult situation. The solution to this situation is not education in different places. New needs cannot be met with old customs (Tek 1919).

After examining feminism mostly from a Turkist standpoint, Müfide Ferit had a dream of a woman who could support herself and be financially independent. The association he founded in the first years of the Republic for the empowerment of women and their employment was an association that worked in this sense.

Conclusion

Müfide Ferit was a writer who believed that nationalism, the Turkish Union, and even the Turan ideal would save the occupied nation in the late Ottoman era. She is more well-known for her Turkist writings and opinions than for her feminist ones, but her perspective on feminism, however, is also striking. In her writings, the ideal female character is a Turkist, nationalist woman who constantly supports the man and is devoted to her customs. If a woman is a mother, she must raise a clean generation. She must give patriotic children to this country, but being a mother is not a woman's sole responsibility. A woman needs to be employed, have a talent, or have a profession. She must therefore be financially stable.

On the other hand, the non-ideal woman she describes in her novels is an unconscious European wannabe who is disconnected from her own culture. By marrying foreign men, these women either fully alienate themselves or they choose not to get married and even oppose marriage. Some of the women who refuse marriage dress and behave like men, believing that they are free. Müfide Ferit also takes issue with individuals who refer to this as feminism. This is genderlessness, not feminism, and it will undoubtedly lead to major issues for society down the road.

She contends that women should not be granted legal rights at this time. Women's labor is the top focus for her. Political rights are subordinated to economic power and independence. Women should

own a craft and work. Thus, they should support men. Therefore, Müfide Ferit's feminism is a feminism in which women stand behind men, support them, and raise individuals who are nationalists, loyal to their traditions, and who serve Turkishness.

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Mismatch or alignment? Exploring Social Studies students' expectations, experiences, and educational outcomes in higher education

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Abstract: Student expectations are crucial in shaping academic engagement, learning experiences, and eventual success in higher education. This study examines how expectations align with actual experiences among Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Studies (BSEd-SocStud) students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU), Dapitan City, Philippines. Employing a multi-method approach, this research combines descriptive quantitative analysis of students' socio-economic characteristics with thematic analysis highlighting gaps in their expectations and experiences in four key areas: instructors, administration, school environment, and subjects. Results indicate that most students met their expectations, particularly regarding instructional quality and academic support. However, unmet expectations emerged in areas such as limited institutional support for online learning, inconsistent classroom facilities, and perceived discrimination. Notably, students whose expectations were fully met exhibited higher academic performance, including better GPAs and licensure examination outcomes. Full-time students and those who independently chose Social Studies as a specialization demonstrated more realistic expectations. In contrast, students from lower-income brackets displayed a more pragmatic approach to academic challenges. The findings highlight the critical role of expectation management in shaping student success and institutional strategies for improving learning experiences.

Keywords: student expectations, actual experiences, academic performance, licensure examination, Social Studies education

Introduction

In the Filipino culture, oftentimes, students' choice of enrolling programs in college or university is influenced by their parents, peers,

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personal choice, or significant other. To whomever they attribute their choice, it is thought to be a factor in setting realistic expectations for their academic performance and future achievement. Amidst the factors that influence their choice, they keep going and develop their expectations of their professors, school administration, subjects, and school environment and match them with actual experiences.

When expectations are unmet, students usually attribute and characterize their performance to their professors instead of their high expectations (Graces-Ozanne & Sullivan 2014). Awang et al. (2014) pointed out that there were differences in students' expectations and experiences, where most of these expectations were hardly met, creating a gap with what the institution promised to offer (de Moraes et al. 2019). Transitioning from high school to higher education created varying student expectations, such as viewing teaching as studentfocused, teacher-focused, or similar in high school (Hassel & Ridout 2018). Some of their expectations on teaching and learning are suitable. In contrast, others are uncertain, which creates unrealistic expectations and recommends the significance of the presentation of course module expectations during orientation (Tomlinson 2023). Addressing and understanding students' expectations are also considered to influence their educational motivation, behavior, and achievement. These expectations are crucial in their learning approaches and strategies as they start university classes and eventually transition from one level to another. Dissatisfaction could ensue when there is an issue with clarity during the foundation year that includes their subjects and programs against students' expectations (Ariffin 2022; Keane 2023; Goldring et al. 2018).

While literature strongly suggests that students' expectations and whether these were appropriately experienced influence their academic behavior and achievement in higher education institutions (HEIs), it is also interesting to note the trends in their selected socio-economic characteristics against whether expectations met with actual experiences. This trend is important for academic institutions to improve inclusivity among students by targeting groups with unmet, partially met, or mixed expectations. Furthermore, the literature did not have an explicit objective in looking beyond the gaps on what they expect from HEIs, such as how it might influence achievement after graduation, such as taking licensure examinations. Tomlinson et al. (2022) also suggested that additional investigation can be conducted using a qualitative perspective on students' expectations towards

teaching and learning separately. With qualitative perspectives, students' expectations and actual experiences are not limited to prestructured responses. Furthermore, while these studies provide insights on the topic, they lack a focus on Social Studies education and localized university settings.

For the past years, students' enrollment in the College of Education at Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU), Dapitan City, Philippines, has a fluctuating trend, particularly in its Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Social Studies (BSEd-SocStud) program. For the past five years, the first-semester enrollment in SY 2019-2020 was recorded at 110 students and reached its peak at 149 students in the first semester of SY 2021-2022 and eventually decreased to 108 students in the first semester of SY 2023-2024. Graduates of the program can testify well to their experiences during their stay in the institution and the gaps between these experiences and expectations. These experiences, in turn, can navigate to those who plan to enroll in the program. Additionally, the significance of their expectations and experiences can be better investigated to determine whether the gaps between them can reflect passing the licensure examination and be described by their selected socio-economic characteristics. Hence, this study attempted to describe the JRMSU BSEd-SocStud students' family monthly income, status as a student, reasons for choosing the program, academic performance, and licensure examination for teachers (LET) results, and determine the trend of these characteristics against whether their expectations met with actual experiences.

Methodology

The study applied a multi-method approach to research to address its objectives. It used descriptive quantitative research to describe the selected socio-economic characteristics of the students. The second method was descriptive qualitative with thematic analysis to explore the students' expectations and actual experiences. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The primary researcher conducted the initial coding process independently, identifying recurring patterns across the data. Codes were then grouped into overarching themes through an inductive approach, allowing patterns to emerge organically from the data. To enhance the reliability of the coding process, a secondary researcher reviewed a subset of transcripts, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Themes were refined iteratively until consensus was reached, ensuring accurately represented the participants' experiences. questionnaire checklist using Google form was used to gather the profiles of the students, while an interview was conducted to explore the expectations and actual experiences of the students. For a period of three months, the study involved 27 student-participants who were graduates of BSEd-SocStud. Consistent with qualitative research standards emphasizing depth over generalizability, data saturation was considered when no new themes emerged from additional interviews after the 27th participant, indicating that the dataset was sufficient to capture the range of participants' experiences (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson 2006). While the findings are not meant to be generalized, they offer valuable insights into the expectation-experience alignment within Social Studies education at JRMSU. These students graduated from 2019-2022 in the BSEd-SocStud program [as they were expected to take the licensure examination], enrolled in JRMSU for their entire college years, have access to the internet, and are willing to participate. Codes were used to conceal the identity of the students, such as P1 – P27, to represent the first to 27th participants and a consent form was sought. The researcher's background in Social Studies education provided valuable insights into participants' experiences. Open-ended, non-leading interview questions were used to minimize potential bias, allowing participants to share their narratives freely. Additionally, reflexive journaling was maintained throughout the research process to critically assess potential influences on data interpretation.

Results and discussions

Two themes emerged for the students' expectations and actual experiences towards their instructors or professors, school administration, and subjects, while three themes came out for the school environment. Across all themes, 101 codes were created.

Themes	Expectations – Codes	Actual Experiences –
		Codes
	Instructors/Professors	
Teaching Approach	Knowledgeable	Set High Learning
and Competency		Standards
	Master the lessons	Offered Productive and
		Meaningful Learning
	Possesses Rich in Teaching	Experienced and
	Strategies	Knowledgeable
		lenient approach to

Themes	Expectations – Codes	Actual Experiences – Codes
		grading
		Competent and parent- like
		Inspiring for the best
Teacher-Student Relationship and	Provide quality education	Limited support for online learning
Professional Conduct	Show Excellence in the Profession	Provided Fun learning
	Aim for Student's Growth	Showed Approachability and Friendliness
	Love for Students	Showed empathetic professionalism and Dedication
	Provide Meaningful Learning	Unapproachable
	Engage the classes	Discriminating
	Provide an Inclusive	
	Learning Environment	
	Motivate Students	
	Strict	
	Show commitment to	
	lessons and values	
	Serve as Parents	
	Possess Good personal	
	Qualities	
	Administration	
Academic Quality and Support	High Standard Education	Limited support for online learning
	Support faculty development	Provided fun learning
	Open and Supportive to Students	Organized and conducive learning environment
	Create a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment	Ensured student safety and security
	Promote Stakeholders' engagement	Strived to improve institutional quality
	Deliver Right Services	Provided smooth and organized transactions
	Provide Important Updates	Slightly satisfied
		Provided opportunities for financial and
		personal growth
		Supported holistic

Themes	Expectations – Codes	Actual Experiences –
		Codes
A 322-4		student development
Administrations and Professional Conduct	Good management Skills	Showed empathetic professionalism and Dedication
	Well-mannered	Unapproachable
	Efficient Resources Management	Became a trusted friend
		Administration upholds high standards
		Administration meets expectations
		Highly satisfied with the administration
		Creates peaceful leadership through
		Administration
		performance is acceptable
	School Environment	иссершоге
Quality of Social	Safe, secure, friendly, and	Lot of experiences
Environment	supportive of students	
	Healthy environment	Friendly environment
	Inclusive, and inspiring environment	Sense of belonging
	Peaceful environment	Peaceful and harmonious
		Fun-filled
		less satisfied
Inclusivity and Diversity	Accommodating and friendly environment	Accepts diversity
·	Non-toxic society	Welcoming and calming
	Access to education and social support	Discriminating
	Fair learning environment	
	Comfortable and inclusive	
Quality of Physical	Conducive to learning	Clean and organized
Environment/Facilities	Adjustable/flexible	Environmentally
	environment	friendly
	Equipped for learning	Safe, comfortable, and conducive to learning
	Appropriate facilities	Uneven classroom quality
	Subjects	
Engagement and	Easy, Interesting, and	Fun and full of learning

Themes	Expectations – Codes	Actual Experiences –
		Codes
application	Productive	
	Develop Critical Thinking	Interconnected learning
	Deep understanding of	fostered experience-
	engaged citizenship	based critical thinking
		useful in profession
		Memorable learning
		Helpful
		Remarkable
Difficulty and	Hard and challenging	Hard and challenging
Challenges	Broad field	Time-consuming
	Deep connections	Heavy memorization
	language mismatched	difficult yet enjoyable
		Fulfilling

Expectations and actual experiences towards instructors/professors

Teaching approach and competency. Students emphasized the importance of content mastery and knowledgeability in Social Studies instructors/professors. Many participants (e.g., P2, P14, P10, P27, and P13) expected their instructors/professors to master the lessons. P2 says they should be "intelligent and have mastered already the lessons and topics." P10 and P27 also expected that "they are well-versed in their respective fields" and "Possess great skills, knowledge, and values," respectively. Similarly, participants expected instructors/professors possess the necessary understanding of social studies. They said their instructors/professors must be knowledgeable (P1, P23, P19, P7, P8 and P11). For instance, P7 anticipated them "To be knowledgeable in everything because social studies is a broad subject". Consistent with their actual experiences, most participants said that their instructors/professors offered productive and meaningful learning (P2, P27, P18, P17, P6, P25, P21, and P22). This is apparent in the words of the participants, i.e., "So far I experience productive learning and interesting in their lesson and discussion" - P2; "The performance of the instructors exceeded my expectations that is why I had a meaningful learning experience with them." – P27; and "They allowed us to learn and express our thoughts." - P25. Other participants' actual experiences included instructors/professors' setting high standards of learning and the manifestation of being experienced and knowledgeable. Four of the participants expressed the latter; for example, they said, "They were also skilled at expressing concepts and instructions, which I found to be quite important" – P5; "Most of them are experienced and have relevant knowledge of their fields of expertise." - P10.

Teacher-student relationship and professional conduct

There are many expectations students have in terms of their relationship with their instructors/professors. For instance, P17, P5, P22, P25, and P8 aspired that they would be provided with *inclusive learning environment*. P5 expressed, "They should create a respectful and inclusive learning environment, valuing students' input and diverse perspectives." P17 also supported, "They shall be responsible for students' learning and fair in treating students."

While participants expected positive relationships among their instructors/professors, they confirmed it in most of their experiences, showed approachability and friendliness (P5, P8, P16, P12, P25), and showed empathetic professionalism and dedication (P19, P13, P26, and P3). Being approachable and friendly, P5, expressed, "Major subject instructors were approachable". Further, P8 and P12 uttered related words, "During my college years, I am so thankful to all my instructors. especially on major subjects because approachable," and "Other instructors became good friends with whom we can share our dilemmas, especially during the FLS modality where most students had been really struggling with their studies." respectively. The Dedication and empathy of instructors/professors are shown when P13 said, "They are kind, understanding, and competent." P26 supported it and expressed, "Some teachers really exerted effort to impart knowledge to us, Social Studies students." However, P7 related experience discrimination, as expressed in these words, "Discrimination because I don't answer her questions, every time, she calls me I cannot answer. So she thinks I'm stupid."

Expectations and actual experiences towards administration

Academic quality and support

Most participants expected that the school administration should be open and supportive to students (P2, P22, P26, P19, P23) and that they are provided with a high-standard education (P1, P14, P3, P18) concerning them. One student said, "I expect that the school administration will provide the things needed for the school and for the students" (P2). Another expressed, "To be more accommodating and a conducive area to learn" (P22). Most of them expected that the

administration would be more approachable and supportive of their needs without undermining education standards, as expressed by P14, "They will impose such standard in educating the students to value education for a greater deal."

Generally, the participants had positive experiences in the school administration. The administration provided fun learning, an organized and conducive learning environment, ensured student safety and security, strived to improve instructional quality, provided smooth and organized transactions, provided financial and personal growth opportunities, and supported holistic student development. However, some expressed partial satisfaction, such as having experienced limited support for online learning and being slightly satisfied overall. For instance, P23 expressed, "Some instructors are not able to assist or do some follow-ups, especially online," while P2 said, "So far, I experienced a little bit of satisfaction."

Administration and professional conduct

Students expected that the administration should possess *good* management skills and be well-mannered. This is evident when one student related that he expected the administration to have "good managerial skills" (P6) while the other aspired to be "well-mannered" (P13). Among the participants' experiences, they mostly shared that the administration's performance is acceptable. P16, P18, and P20's words were evident. For instance, when asked, P16 said, "The school administration was totally okay," and P20 supported it, "It's good enough." P13 supported the experience of empathy and dedication among their instructors by expressing that the administration was "kind, understanding, and competent."

Expectations and actual experiences towards school environment *Quality of social environment*

The majority of the students wanted the social environment to be *safe*, *secure*, *friendly*, *and supportive for students* (P2, P5, P17, P25, and P15). This is evident in one participant who expressed, "I expect a safe and secure environment where I can focus on learning without fear of harm or disruption" (P5). Similarly, another one related, "The school environment would be a fun, safe, and supportive" (P25). They received a *friendly environment* based on their actual experiences (P15, P22 and P25). P25 said, "The school environment is fun yet friendly since students from different departments interact with each other."

Fun-filled is another experience of the participants such as P8 and P23 who said, "JRMSU is a fun institution, especially during acquaintance party, students' fest, and foundation week" and "Exciting, challenging, and fun," respectively.

Inclusivity and diversity

Many participants expected a *comfortable and inclusive* environment as significant (P18, P19, P23, and P26), while others aspired for an accommodating and friendly environment, a non-toxic society, access to education and social support, and a fair learning environment. Two participants said about their expectations of the school environment, such as P18, "accommodating environment to make students comfortable," and P26, "I am expecting that the school environment is very pleasant and diverse towards the differences of every student." From their expectations, they experienced an environment that *accepts diversity, welcoming and calming* (P26 and P14). However, P7 related that she experienced discrimination.

Quality of physical environment/Facilities

the participant's expectations towards the physical environment/facilities, they mostly expected it to be conducive to learning (P9, P10, P13, P21, and P27), aside from being a flexible environment equipped for learning and appropriate facilities. An environment conducive to learning is evident in P9, expecting that "the school will be conducive for learning as well as it will help social studies students love the subject." As expected, most participants experienced a safe, comfortable, and conducive learning environment (P13, P6, P9, P24, and P17). To capture it, P24 said, "My experience back then was that the school environment was conducive for learning because the teachers met our needs." In support, P17 confirmed it, "School environment is very conducive for learning and is free from harm." Other participants related to having a clean and organized (P5-"Clean and well-maintained campus") and environmentally friendly (P16-"... I can say it is an environmentally friendly school"). Amidst the positive experience, P10, P20, and P27 expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the physical environment (uneven classroom quality). P10 related, "Most classrooms are suitable for teaching, but some are not encouraging for learning." In support, P27 iterated, "Some classrooms are not well-ventilated, but motivation and quality teaching compensate for the issues."

Expectations and actual experiences towards subjects

Engagement and application

Aside from the participants' expectations in their subjects, such as developing critical thinking and a deep understanding of engaged citizenship, they usually expected that they must be easy, enjoyable, and productive (P21, P2, P22, P25, P11, and P23). The words of P2 and P25 describe this expectation, "I expect that the subject and lesson shall be more funny and interesting at the same time more productive of learning" and "The subject would be easy to understand for us, the students, to clearly comprehend what was the subject all about", respectively. On the other hand, P5 expects to develop critical thinking as expressed in the words, "I expect that social studies will develop my ability to critically assess and evaluate facts, events, and historical situations..."

In consonance, most participants confirmed that fun subjects were full of learning (P2, P9, P16, and P11) and fostered experience-based critical thinking (P8, P19). For example, P2 shared about subjects, "Funny, interesting, and full of learning" in which P11 has similar experience, "I admit, I won't get tired of listening to or attending anything related to these subjects."

Difficulty and challenges

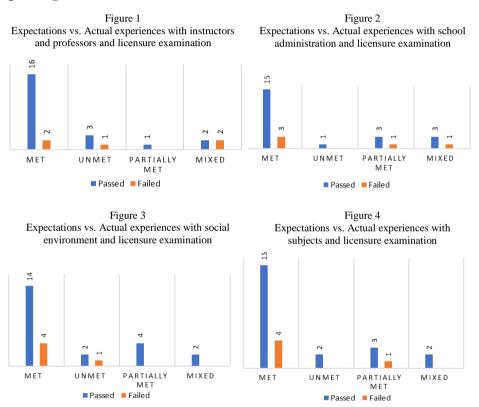
Most participants expected the social studies subjects to be *hard and challenging* (P3, P6, P1, P13, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P12, P4, P26, and P27), followed by social studies as *a broad field* (P14, P17, P10, and P24). Social studies being difficult is expressed in the words of P16, "Before enrolling in the subject, I know this is a difficult one." This is supported by P26, who said, "My expectations with the subjects are very hard and challenging." Being a broad subject is evident in P17, who expressed, "Social Studies is a very broad subject, and I also think that this program involves everything" since it covered a wide area of study as confirmed by P10's expectation, "From fundamental to broadest. The subjects begin with general knowledge, and then move to specific, but more likely a broader one."

Indeed, the participants experienced social studies subjects to be hard and challenging (P1, P6, P7, P15, P26, P26, P3, and P12). For instance, P7 said, "It's very difficult to understand because there are a lot of numbers to be solved, especially in our economics class." However, they see positive sides among their instructors/professors, and P26 confirmed it: "The subjects were quite hard, but with the help

and guidance of teachers, I understood well." Similarly, P25 said, "The subjects are quite not easy, but the instructors helped us to understand further about all the topics we will be tackling."

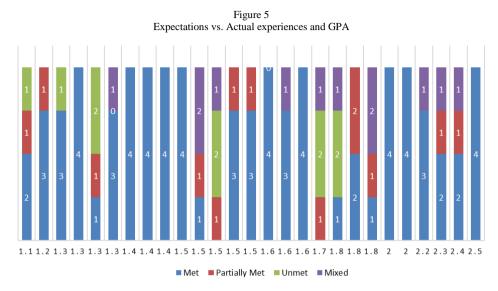
As a whole, 66.66% (18) of the participants met their expectations towards their instructors/professors, school administration, and school environment, while 70.37% (19) for subjects. Very few of them have unmet expectations towards instructors/professors (14.81%), school environment (11.11%), subjects (7.41%), and school administration (3.71%).

Matching expectations with actual experiences and its trend on passing licensure examination



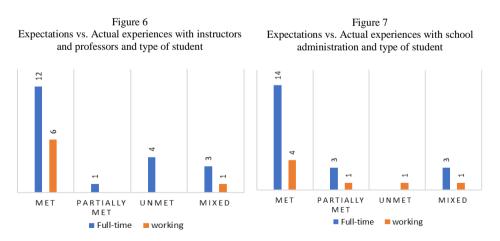
Figures 1-4 show that most participants whose expectations met with their actual experiences with their instructors/professors, school administration, school environment, and subjects passed the LET. Generally, it is followed by those who have partially met expectations.

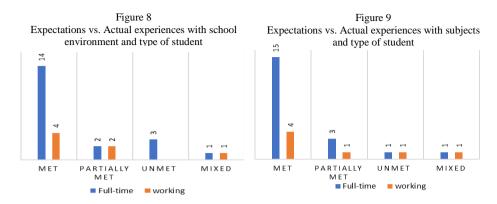
Matching expectations with actual experiences and its trend on GPA



Regarding the trends in their GPAs, Figure 5 presents that most participants whose expectations met with their actual experiences have GPAs between 1.1 and 1.6. In the JRMSU grading system, 1.1 equals 97-98% (very good), and 1.6 is 89% (good).

Matching expectations with actual experiences and its trend on types of student

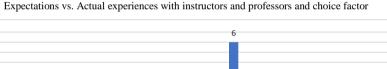


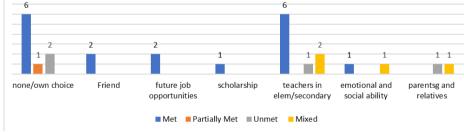


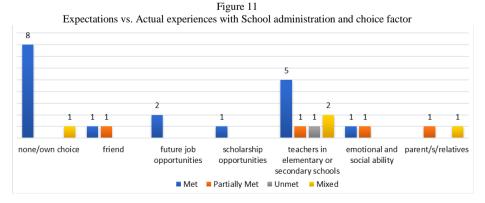
Among the participants, most full-time students met their expectations among their instructors/professors (Figure 6), and less than a quarter of those working students also met their expectations (22.22%). This trend is similar to other dimensions where most full-time students met their expectations on the school administration, school environment, and subjects (Figures 7-9). In contrast, less than a quarter of working students met their expectations as well (14.81%).

Matching expectations with actual experiences and its trend on who influenced taking Social Studies

Figure 10







 $Figure\ 12$ Expectations vs. Actual experiences with school environment and choice factor

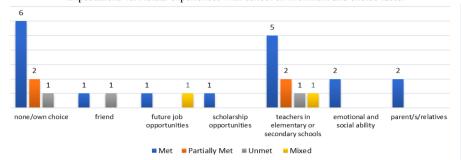
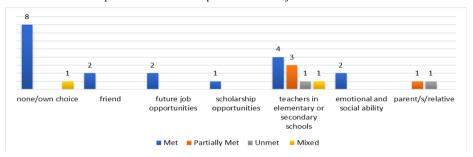


Figure 13
Expectations vs. Actual experiences with subjects and choice factor



Figures 10-13 show that those who mostly met their expectations among their instructors/professors, school administration, school environment, and subjects have chosen BSEd-Social Studies on their own (6, 8, 6, and 8, respectively) followed by those whom their teachers influenced in elementary and secondary school. However, most students with unmet expectations of their school environment and subjectbelonged to those who chose BSEd-Social Studies due to their teachers (2 and 3, respectively).

Matching expectations with actual experiences and its trend on family monthly income

Figure 14
Expectations vs. Actual experiences with instructors and professors and family income

P6,000 P6,001 - P12,001 - P24,001 - P30,001+
AND 12,000 18,000 30,000

BELOW

Met Partially Met Unmet Mixed

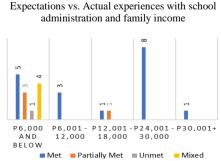


Figure 15

The trend in Figures 14-17 shows that those with a family monthly income of PhP.6,000.00 and below and PhP.24,001.00-PhP.30,000.00 mostly met their expectations. However, those with the most unmet expectations, ranging from 1 to 3 participants, also had a family income of PhP 6,000.00 and below.

Discussions

BSEd in Social Studies students' expectations portray the need for instructors/professors to be knowledgeable and master of the subjects they handle, especially since social studies are broad in scope. Hence, those handling them must have a wide array of experiences. This requires competencies to connect various disciplines in social studies to create a whole picture of society. They no longer abide by the idea that social studies subjects are more on rote learning about historical facts; instead, they emphasize that these facts also have practical applications for more meaningful learning. Students do not appreciate learning unless they see its practical application in their profession and daily lives. This calls for instructors/professors to have enough experience to concretize abstract concepts so that students can better appreciate the courses. With high expectations among instructors/professors, their readiness is a crucial element in the teaching effectiveness for students' success (Lynch et al. 2017), with subjects under social studies described as broad and interdisciplinary. This is why students have similar perceptions that social studies cover broad topics and interdisciplinary approaches, which can be hard without effective teaching strategies among instructors/professors. Corollary, students consider it crucial for instructors/professors to be inclusive and approachable in their approach to learning, being the bearers of a deeper understanding of society. This calls for flexible and adaptable teaching strategies based on the needs of the students. Consequently, discrimination has no room in social studies. Based on the results, students' expectations are not far from their actual experiences, noting that their instructors/professors set high standards in learning, were knowledgeable, experienced, and provided meaningful learning. However, there were unmet expectations regarding the quality of the social environment due to some unconducive classrooms. Similarly, Tomlinson et al. (2022) revealed that students have high expectations of their teachers, specifically regarding access and resources. Hence, they emphasized the need to have information on preconceived ideas about the university's

teaching-learning and the provision of encouraging experience. The discrepancy between expectations and what was delivered by the institution requires that students be active participants during curriculum development (Mamica & Mazur 2020).

The school administration is seen as responsible for maintaining positive teaching-learning experiences by being open and supportive of students' diverse needs and ensuring a safe and friendly environment. From this. students accentuated management competencies in the performance of their responsibilities. Expectedly, that the school administration carries the burden of providing conducive and well-equipped facilities, mostly realized. They are being looked up to with high regard, and failure to meet expectations results in students' negative experiences. This calls for school leaders to be ready to use every resource to achieve their agenda, as it can impact students' achievement. Accountable leaders should focus on aligning every school aspect to support improvement (Yeigh et al. 2018).

While the majority have met expectations in the four areas, indicating the institution's ability to provide for the needs of the students, it is also noteworthy to consider that the highest unmet expectations belonged to instructors/professors, while the partially met expectations were higher for the school administration, school environment, and subjects. This can be attributed to diverse teaching strategies employed by teachers exacerbated by students' differences.

Closing the gap between students' expectations and experience is critical for meaningful learning experiences. The trend of whether their actual experiences met or unmet their expectations when grouped by their background can be a predictor for the school administration to improve students' experiences for quality learning. The results show that those who have met expectations are highly likely to pass the licensure examination for teachers (LET), with grades between good and very good. Students' expectations at play can impact their achievement and engagement (Tomlinson et al. 2022). Being a fulltime and working student is also a crucial consideration for the administration's decision-making as the groups have expectations, whereas full-time students usually have realistic expectations among their instructors/professors, administration, school environment, and subjects. Furthermore, a disparity between students' expectations and reality results in motivational changes crucial for academic sustainability (Mao et al. 2022).

Factors in the choice of specialization (Social Studies) also enter the context where students have chosen their specialization, and those guided by their teachers in basic education have more realistic expectations than their counterparts. This highlights that independent and guided students are more likely to understand the educational context better. Income can also be a predictor; those in the lowest income bracket have more explicit expectations than those in the middle-income bracket. With financial limitations, they deal with realistic expectations to avoid financial waste.

Conclusions

Though students have high expectations towards administration, environment, instructors/professors, school subjects, these were mostly met. It supports the idea that JRMSU has a better way of meeting the expectations of its students. Despite minimal partially met, mixed, and unmet expectations, these were because of a different positive experienced and negative expectations were met with desirable experiences. Meeting students' expectations can potentially produce positive results in the LET grades. In contrast, those with practical expectations come from full-time student status and consider personal decisions and teachers' guidance in selecting social studies as a specialization, as well as those in the lowest income bracket. JRMSU can consider other students' perspectives during curriculum revision, strategic planning for students' welfare and learning experiences, and college orientation to close the gap between expectations and actual experiences, specifically those with lower grades and part-time status.

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Militarised democracy and its security challenges in South East Nigeria, 1999-2023

N.O. Anyadike, M.I. Eze, E.C. Alaku, O.C. Eze, S.N. Asogwa and K.C. Asogwa*

Abstract: Since the onset of the current democratic experimentation in Nigeria in 1999, the authorities have continued to deploy the military on routine internal security duties. This is evident in the various internal military operations (IMOs) and preponderance of military checkpoints, especially in the Southeast geopolitical zone of the country comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states. The practice has served as an enabler of undemocratic tendencies in the southeast, provoking insecurity. Meanwhile, extant explanations of the security conundrum in the southeast have revolved around securitisation analysis, frustration-aggression thesis, elite politics, and leadership failure. In the process, scant attention has been paid to the phenomenon of militarised democracy and its implications for insecurity in the zone. Using a documentary approach and anchoring analysis on the theoretical frame of authoritarianism, this study argues that the militarisation of the democratic space in the southeast, which is home to the Igbo ethnic group, springs from the overall nature and character of politics in Nigeria, which has tended to privilege militarising tendencies over democratic ethos such as negotiation, compromise, and accommodation. It further argues that this proclivity is due in part to vestiges of dictatorship inherited from colonialism, but is also partly a result of embedded ethic animosities arising from Nigeria's immediate post-independence history. It concludes that until the political class purges itself of militaristic tendencies and imbibes cherished democratic values of tolerance and pluralism, insecurity in the southeast shall continue to fester as an inevitable consequence of the militarisation of the zone.

Keywords: militarisation, democracy, authoritarianism, insecurity

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Background to the study

Although Nigeria returned to democratisation in 1999, the persistence of the dominant class to resolve political conflict through the coercive apparatus of the state rather than discussion and compromise, as the ethos that underpins democratic practice around the world has given rise to the phenomenon of militarised democracy, which has, in turn, fostered insecurity, especially in the southeastern zone of the country. Militarised democracy refers to the undue involvement of the military apparatus in resolving or suppressing disputes arising from differences among political actors on the appropriate manner of conducting democratic business. It denotes the culture of authoritarianism in politics (Adewumi 2022). It also connotes the state's public policy reception to "war-prone policies" such as in Nigeria, where the military's influence in civil matters is constitutionalised (Ibid.). Militarised democracy, therefore, conjures the image of using the military to sabotage the democratic process rather than its constitutional role of guaranteeing the process (Nacla Editor 2023). As a result of this inclination, civil activism, such as citizens' protests to ventilate their views on the manner the state handles its public affairs. is always criminalized (Asogwa et al. 2024). Criminalization refers to the process by which behaviours and individuals are transformed into crimes and criminals (Michalowski 2010) through legislation or the pronouncements of courts, which label as crimes previously legitimate actions. Against this background, Aaronson and Shaffer (2021, 4) define criminalisation as a set of processes through which actors construct legal norms that label certain activities as crimes.

Security, on the other hand, can be comprehended from a multidimensional approach, connoting a stable and "relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends without disruption or harm and fear of such disturbances or injury" (Fischer and Green 2004, 21). It has therefore come to represent public security, which includes the security of private individuals and their property as well as the safety of communal livelihood (Brooks 2009). The absence of the aforementioned metrics constitutes insecurity. Before the return of democratic practice in Nigeria, the dominant manifestations of insecurity in southeastern Nigeria were cultism-related disturbances, daredevil armed robbery by the unemployed category of the youth, inter-communal clashes, and contestations over land ownership. In all these scenarios, the military

played a strategic role in countering and maintaining public order in the polity (EASO, 2018).

Presently the security challenges across the country revolve around political conflicts, the activities of violent non-state actors such as the Islamic insurgency in the northeast, armed banditry in the northwest, and the separatist movement in the southeast, southwest, and southsouth Nigeria as well as the menace of kidnappings, armed robbery, cultism, and human trafficking (Alumona 2019; EASO 2022). This is in addition to systematic violence against civilians. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) conceptualise "violence against civilians" as "deliberate violent acts perpetrated by an organized political group such as a rebel, militia, or government force against unarmed non-combatants.... these conflict events harm or kill civilians, and ... include bombing, shooting, torture, rape, mutilation, etc (EASO 2018, 12). Based on the aggregate activities of these nonstate actors, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2019 placed Nigeria in the third spot around the world, taking into cognizance the number of deaths related to terrorism. Although the number has witnessed a drastic reduction in 2020, moving from 89 % in 2019 to 31% in 2020, the reduction suffers from sustainability challenges as Nigeria climbed to 8th spot out of the top nations with the most severe terrorism issues across the globe in 2020 (EASO 2022; GTI, 2023).

In fact, both the Fragile State Index (2019 and the Global Peace Index 2020 ranked Nigeria in a state of alert due to the intensity of insecurity and violence. Amid these growing threats to Nigeria's internal safety, the Nigerian police, constitutionally empowered with the duty of providing security, have been deemed inadequate (Alumona 2019).

In the face of mounting insecurity across the country, the political leaders have invoked an innocuous provision in the 1999 Nigerian constitution, which empowers the military to intervene and "suppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so" (*The Republic* 2019, 1) and have continued to deploy the military even where more democratic tools would have been more appropriate. Between 1999 and 2023, more than 18 military operations were authorized across the Nigerian federation, including Operation Iron Fence and Operation Python Dance in southeastern Nigeria ostensibly to quell the activities of "armed robbers, hooligans, kidnappers and violent secessionist agitations" (Momodu 2018, 431) but also to suppress non-violent protests against marginalization and

agitations for self-determination. In the process, the soldiers have also served as shields to the electoral infrastructure and election management in the entire Nigerian federation. In Anambra state, where an off-season gubernatorial election took place in 2021, a total of 50,000 troops that included the army, police, and para-military police were deployed, while in the 2023 off-season governorship election in Imo state, 2,300 military personnel were deployed (Omeihe 2021; Ugwu 2023). Such a massive deployment of the military in civil elections sent ominous signals to prospective voters and so negatively impacted popular participation in the elections.

The military has also been involved in resolving inter-communal clashes, such as the land ownership contestations between Aguleri and Umuleri in southeastern Nigeria (Momodu 2018). In the course of these interventions, numerous allegations of human rights abuses, including the extra-judicial disappearance of those they are meant to protect, have been levelled against the military. This has sometimes elicited uncivil responses from members of the public to counter military suppression (Animaswun 2013). Against this background, Nigeria's democracy has been described as a sham, reckless, hybrid, and "a trapped democratic process" (Owolabi and Ajala 2019). Given the seeming proclivity of the elite towards appropriating electoral victory through the bullets rather than the ballots and the prioritizing of the security of the state actors above that of the citizenry, thereby abandoning its primary responsibility to its citizens, it is not out of the place that the militarised democratic polity might have tended to engender insecurity in parts of the country (Ariye 2021, 32).

A plethora of explanations have been provided by scholars of civil-military relationships (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1960) on the right mix of military presence that is tolerable in a democratic polity. The Huntington civil-military scholarship drew inspiration from the liberal theory and the civic republican theory of the role of the military in ensuring that sovereign states provide security for the citizens in a liberal state (Ibid.). These scholars contend that the military is part and parcel of society and that a stable society cannot be guaranteed without the support of the army, but with a caveat that a proper distinction should be made as to areas that constitute the military sphere (Ibid.). Others saw military intervention in third-world politics as "a potential ally" in the ideological warfare against communist expansionism across the satellite states (Lukham 1994). After questioning the impracticality of delineating the military sphere from "the social and

political sphere" and Janowitz's "citizen-soldier ideal", Burk (2002, 15) goes ahead to show that there are still gaps in measuring the civilian-military relationship. Some neo-Marxian scholars have looked in the direction of the character of the postcolonial state and securitization analyses in the explication of the dominance of the military in the third-world democracy (Masunungure 2011; Eriksson and Verweijen 2018). In respect of the current spate of insecurity in Southeastern Nigeria, analysts such as Onu et al. (2022), Nwangwu et al. (2020), and Nwangwu (2023) have all made attempts to link the security crisis in Southeastern Nigeria with the government's repressive character of opposing voices. Nevertheless, extant analyses have failed to identify the concrete manner in which the state has militarised the democratic space in southeastern Nigeria and how this phenomenon has enabled the environment of insecurity.

Taking this as our point of departure, this study sets out to interrogate the impact of militarizing the democratic space on the security situation in southeastern Nigeria. This work is partitioned into six segments. Following the introduction is the second segment that deals with the methodology, while the third part will focus attention on the theoretical framework adopted in the study. Both the fourth and fifth parts will focus on the empirical presentations of the militarization of the democratic space and the concluding remarks, respectively.

Methodology

The study adopted a documentary approach for data collection. A documentary method of data collection enabled the researchers to access much of the secondary data relevant to the study through the desk review and analysis of relevant scholarly materials, journal papers, institutional reports, and policy briefs such as the Institute for Peace and Security Studies Policy briefs on managing security threats in Africa, Reports of UNO Special Rapporteurs on the promotion of human rights, Nextier SPD conflict Trends report on Nigeria, Multi-Stakeholder Consultative reports as well as a synthesis of Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) and European Asylum Support Office (EASO) data set on insecurity situation in southeastern Nigeria. The choice of this methodology is a result of the permanent nature of the data, which can be subjected to re-analysis and is also less expensive. A qualitative descriptive method was applied in describing and analysing all the information and data generated in the

study, alongside the use of charts, tables, figures, and graphs to depict the patterns regarding the effects of the militarization of the political environment on insecurity in southeastern Nigeria.

Theorising militarising democracy and spiralling security challenges in Southeastern Nigeria: A theoretical analysis

Scholars have deployed various theories to explain the security challenges in southeastern Nigeria. Some of these theories have revolved around the frustration-aggression thesis, elite explanation, postcolonial state, and securitisation analyses (Igbini 2020; Adeosun 2021). As informative as these theories are, they are unable to provide satisfactory insight into the state militarization of southern Nigeria in a supposedly democratic environment. The authoritarianism framework, therefore, has a utilitarian value in providing enlightenment in that regard. The genealogy of the authoritarian thesis is associated with the scholarly works of Juan Linz (1964, 1973), Davenport (1995, 2000), Glasius (2000), Svolik (2012), and Przeworski (2023).

In the pioneering scholarly work of Linz (1964), an authoritarian political system is deemed to thrive in the constraining of political pluralism and the promotion of minimal political engagement. It is also a system that privileges the flourishing of political cliques and the undue privileges assigned to the apparatus of the military. Linz therefore defines an authoritarian system as "a political system with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilisation except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined but.... quite predictable ones" (Linz 2000, 159). O'Donnell (1973) shows that these cliques try as much as they can to exclude almost the majority of the people from political decision-making. More fundamentally, while its presence is magnified in military regimes, it is also found in multiparty democracies. In such a scenario, pro-government political parties are allowed to flourish while opposition political parties are repressed in electoral contests and are therefore branded as anti-regime organizations (Przeworski et al. 2000; Svolik 2012).

Davenport (2007) posits that as time goes on, the suppression of anti-regime activities gets to the level of state repression, manifesting in torture, mass killing, and restrictions of civil liberties of people, such as arrests, bans, curfew, and limitations of expressions, assembly,

associations, and beliefs. Given the non-autonomy of the state institutions in postcolonial Africa (Ake 1985), it is not surprising that all the institutions that approximate the existence of the state, such as the army, Nigerian police, and other uniform professional managers of violence, are mobilised to pursue the goals of the state (Nwangwu 2023). As the democratic state relies more and more upon suppression and the resolution of political conflicts, cultures associated with democracy, such as discussion and compromise, are abandoned, thus giving way to a militarised polity. It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria ranks high in human rights abuse from 1999 to the present period, especially in southeastern Nigeria (Ibeanu et al. 2016; Nwangwu 2023). As the Nigerian state continued on the path of repressing the democratic rights of the people of southeastern Nigeria, there was a deployment of soldiers in an internal security matter of the state.

The deployment of Operation Python Dance in the southeastern no doubt, appeared to have provided the impetus for the emergence of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), which is alleged to serve as the armed branch of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). As the state increased its highhandedness in attacking legitimate organizations such as IPOB, the organization's tactics immediately transitioned from aggressive and confrontational rhetoric to targeting government facilities like police stations, officers, and the assets of the Independent National Electoral Commission, as well as other emblems of Nigeria's sovereignty such as military and police outposts (Asogwa et al. 2024). Between 2021 and 2023, Nigeria witnessed the death of 965 military and police officers in southeastern Nigeria, with IPOB and the Unknown Gunmen being implicated in the deaths of 344 officers in southeastern Nigeria (Asogwa et al. 2024). Many high-profile individuals also lost their lives in southeastern Nigeria as a result of the deteriorating security situation in southeastern Nigeria (Akinyetun et al. 2023).

Historisation of militarisation of the South in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The Olusegun Obasanjo administration and militarisation of Southeastern Nigeria

Claude Ake (1996) noted that the fundamental rationale undergirding Nigeria's agenda of development, in which security occupies a strategic place, is the high premium placed on politics and the culture of authoritarianism by the political actors. Authoritarianism thrives

within a particular setting: the alliance between the autocrat and his governing collaborators (Slovik 2012). Their modus Operandi is the trampling of the laid-down rules (Davenport 2007). As a game that flourishes in the rule of law (O'Donnell 2004), attackers of the democratic edifice surreptitiously uproot the referees of these democratic games. During the period that Olusegun Obasanjo piloted the affairs of Nigeria, he manifested a disdainful attitude toward the rule of the democratic game (Ariye et al. 2012), by declaring that the democratic contestation would be a "do or die affair" (Wuam and Vaaseh 2012, 186). As a political battle, the 2003 election that he supervised witnessed the overwhelming deployment of security personnel and armed thugs to 'safeguard' votes in the states of South-East Nigeria. It was warfare politics as the president promised (Ibid, 186-204). In one of the subaltern communities in the Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu state, the All-Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) flagbearer, Fidel Ayogu, lost his Mopol Escort Commander, among others, due to the seemingly compromised security personnel who superintend the election in favour of the reigning political power (Ugwuja 2015). The invasion of Enugu Ezike by the Enugu State Government agents was not only outlandish but also preposterous and against democratic ethos as well as their oath of office. (Okoye 2012). Another part of southeastern Nigeria in which the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo appeared to have supervised the undermining of the democratic principles in coalition with his coalition was in Anambra state, in a case involving the executive Governor, Chris Ngige. Governor Chris Ngige was kidnapped by the coalitions in Anambra who alleged that he had reneged on the vow he made in front of his political sponsors, who perceived political support as an investment to be recouped after the election (Ariye et al. 2012). The major spectators in the Anambra debacle, Andy Uba, Chuma Nzeribe, and Oke Udeh, relied heavily on the instruments of the state, such as the police, to actualise their nefarious activities (Emordi et al. 2007). The Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), Raphael Ige, maintained that he was only obeying orders from above, evidently referring to the high authorities in the police echelon who were the appointees of the president of the country (Arive et al. 2012). The presidency under Obasanjo trivialised the matter by branding it as a family affair and once referred to Uba, the major instigator of the crisis, as a young man who helped us to win the election in Anambra state". He also reportedly ordered the Governor to negotiate with his

tormentors, thus prompting the former Governor of Anambra state, Chukwu Emeka Ezeife, to observe that the "orders to destroy Anambra state must have been approved from the highest level in Nigeria" (Emordi et al. 2007). A more worrisome correlation between the presidency and the debacle was that the Governor was stripped of his security details for one full year, making him rely on the services of local militia (Ariye et al. 2012).

These developments had far-reaching security implications in Anambra state. Apart from terrorising the office of the Governor, public infrastructure, such as the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) complex in Awka, was damaged. Some sections of the governor's residence and office were also bombed with explosives. There were also civilian casualties and theft of belongings, aimed at falsely suggesting Ngige's failure as a leader (Emordi et al. 2007; Popoola 2014). Given this backdrop, Ibeanu (2005) noted that 'the spate of violence has increased since the 2003 general elections because many politicians are believed to have recruited young gangs and armed them to attack political opponents' (Ibid, 36-56). Sadly enough, the 2003 general elections, the second in the process of consolidating Nigeria's tenuous democracy after many years of military dictatorship, turned out to lay the foundation for unending electoral violence and security challenges in the South East. The refusal to follow the democratic path subsequently enthroned a climate of violence, specifically in Anambra state. Between January and September 2021 alone, 66 different kinds of violent events occurred in Anambra state, resulting in 170 casualties (KDI, 2021).

The excessive power approach by the political class has dovetailed into unprecedented communal clashes between and among hitherto friendly neighbours in the South East. It is not unlikely that the Umuleri-Aguleri crises in Anambra State, as well as those of Ezza-Ezillo in Ebonyi State, were the direct outcomes of the proliferation of SALW and the militarisation of elections in Nigeria. Weapons of violence have become glamorised as armed youths exploit every opportunity to unleash waves of mayhem, killings, robbery, and kidnappings for ransom on hapless and helpless citizens. For Nigeria, and indeed Igboland in particular, therefore, the recent increase in security issues is part of a broader history of political turmoil in its postcolonial kleptocracy, a political system that is unable to provide essential services, let alone hope for its people (Heerten & Moses 2014).

Military engagement in internal security operations and the Escalation of insecurity in southeastern Nigeria

Internal security is sometimes referred to as homeland security. It is conceptualised as the summation of security services carried out by interior security agents which includes all the organigrams of Police and other para-military organisations such as Immigration, Custom, Civil Defence Corps services, and others involved in the management of acts capable of eroding internal order such as "riots, demonstrations, strikes, communal clashes and terrorism" (Peterside 2014, 1302). The power of the Police and other para-military organisations is derived from Sections 215 (3) and (4) respectively of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which mandates them to provide security and order for the generality of the Nigerian population (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

Nevertheless, the Nigerian military organisation, whose primary responsibility entails the territorial protection of the state against external aggressors, has been immensely drafted by the Nigerian state into internal security issues since Nigeria's return to the democratic experiment in 1999 (Okoli and Orinya 2013). Scholars have implicated the post-terrorism security re-engineering attacks on New York, Istanbul, and Madrid in the contemporary period as the external context that provided the impetus for the heightened intervention of the Army in the internal security of many countries across the world (Alumona et al. 2019). While Nigeria is not insulated from the vagaries of the effects of international terrorism, it thrives in authoritarianism, which negates following the path of constitutionalism. There have been various instances of riots and disorderliness that emanated from the public, which would have naturally demanded the deployment of the institution of internal security agents in its management, but rather than doing so, the Nigerian state has unleashed the full forces of the state on the ordinary people of southeastern Nigeria (See Table 1)

Table 1. Trends of military/other states' institutions' engagement in internal security operations in Southeastern Nigeria and its fostering of insecurity 2005-2023

Year	State Institution	Indicting Statement	Violation of IPOB Members' Human Rights	IPOB reaction	Source
November 8, 2005	Federal High Court	MASSOB was given an illegal status	The trial of the leaders of MASSOB	Clashes with police over the detention of the	2005, Law Global Hub, 2005

			without justice	leaders	
2014	The FGN	Non- dissolubility policy contravened	Civil rights	The Zionist movement was born	Ibeanu et al. 2016
September 15, 2017	Nigerian Army	IPOB was labelled a militant organisation	Operation Python Dance began with the arrest of IPOB members	IPOB members resisted the arrest of Kanu	UNO Rapporteur report
September 18	Southeast Governors renounced IPOB	Declared IPOB a terrorist organisation	Increased suppression of civil rights	Confrontation b/w IPOB & security men	UNO Rapporteur report
October, 17	Nigerian Army	Arrest of Nnamdi Kanu for terrorism related charges	Incarceration without trial	Civil disobedience & community evangelism	Nwangwu, 2023
18th January 2018	Federal High Court	security IPOB protest movements IPOB in Aba and Onitsha	Breaches of fundamental human rights	IPOB is resisting the persecution of the state	UNO Rapporteur report
January, 2019	Federal High Court revocation of Kanu's bail	The court proclaimed Kanu's absence criminal	Operation Python Dance II continues operation in Abia state.	IPOB members shielded the palace of Kanu's father	Daily Sun, 3 rd November 2019
January 2021	The presidency	The Nigerian Army's declaration of ESN as an illegal security outfit		ESN is alleged attacked police stations	Nextier SPD Conflict Trends report on Nigeria, 2021- 2023

Source: Adapted from Asogwa et al. 2024

As reflected in Table 1 above, during the early years of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, certain groups of individuals in southeastern Nigeria became dissatisfied with the central government of Nigeria due to their exclusion from the country's security apparatus (Nwangwu et al., 2020). This crop of dissatisfied groups responded to the exclusion from the security infrastructure of the Federal Republic of Nigeria by increasing their demands for exiting the Nigerian state as a separate entity (Nwosu 2021). It began with the formation of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). With MASSOB's Bill of Rights submitted to the United Nations Organisation (UNO) in 1999, and declarations of an attempt to usurp the social responsibilities of the federal government (Okonta 2012).

After these declarations, many young men and women, both at home and abroad, enthusiastically identified with the dream of breaking away from Nigeria and began manifesting their loyalties to those at the helm of affairs of MASSOB. On August 26, 2004, the MASSOB called on all Igbo people in Nigeria, regardless of where they lived, to observe August 26 as Biafra Day. Business owners, artisanal and artisanal traders were ordered to stay indoors. Public service employees were ordered to observe a "quiet moment" in their offices to honour the Biafran people who died during the war. According to Okonta (2012), Biafra Day's observation was "an outstanding success".

The federal government reacted negatively to the sit-at-home protests of MASSOB. The government described the activities of MASSOB as a betrayal of the Nigerian state. The government also accused MASSOB of plotting to disintegrate the country. According to the government, MASSOB was leading an insurrection. The then Attorney-General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Mr. Akintola Olajuku (SAN), stated that MASSOB was pursuing a course of action that may lead to the disintegration of Nigeria (Aro and Ani 2017). Nigeria's government quickly observed that both the contents of the MASSOB declaration and its six points demand, as well as the Sit-at-Home order, questioned Section 2(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, which specifically described Nigeria as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state that is called the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Following this, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared MASSOB an unlawful organisation and began the persecution of MASSOB members by arrest and detention without charge. In the end, the leader of MASSOB was arrested and brought before the Federal High Court in Abuja along with other MASSOB supporters. On November 8, 2005, the Federal High Court found them guilty of being members of an unlawful organisation known as MASSOB Army and charged them with treasonable felonies (Human Rights Watch, 2005; The New Humanitarian, 2005; Law Global Hub, 2005; UK Department of Justice, 2020).

While Uwuzurike and his supporters were in prison, those who inherited the leadership vacuum created began toying with the idea of disrupting the government revenue-generating process. For instance, in May 2006, MASSOB leaders attempted to mobilise women and men on the streets of Onitsha, Anambra state, to protest against punitive

taxes imposed by the state government. This sparked a violent reprisal by the federal government, acting at the request of the governor, who sent troops to the city to kill several MASSOB protesters (Okonta 2012). This development, even though latent, laid the foundation for the separatist movements to drift from non-violence to radicalism with dire consequences for the Nigerian state. By declaring MASSOB an illegal entity, the federal government set in motion all the activities leading to the persecution of its members.

When MASSOB members demonstrated in solidarity with the imprisoned members, they clashed with police in Onitsha, resulting in the burning of the residence of Nigeria's first indigenous ceremonial president (Law Global Hub 2005; UK Department of Justice 2020; and New Humanitarian 2005). According to a report by EASO (2018), members of MASSOB were routinely described as "violent criminals". Nigerian officials were also observed as saying that "although there is no explicit law prohibiting MASSOB activities, its modus operandi runs counter to the principles of the unity of Nigeria." This is not surprising, as an authoritarian regime is always inclined to use force and violence to settle political disputes. By early 2014, when an effort was made to document the recorded murders of Igbos between August 22, 1945, and September 28, 2013, there was no mention of the Biafrans killed by their compatriots in a neo-separatist struggle. It is also notable that by this early period of MASSOB incubation, the only violence associated with Southeastern Nigeria was the issue of cultism. armed robbery attacks, and inter-communal land disputes, of which unemployment was ascribed as the main driver (European Asylum Support Office / EASO 2017).

Yardua/Jonathan administration and militarisation of Southeastern Nigeria

In line with the Umaru Yar'Adua administration's disposition to dialogue with the disaffected groups in Nigeria after his inauguration in 2007, Ralph Uwazurike was released from prison in October 2007. His successor, Goodluck Jonathan, continued with such a disposition, although he once lumped IPOB, OPC, and Boko Haram together as extremist organisations. More so, most Igbo and South-South geopolitical zones welcomed his occupation of the top political position in Nigeria at that time. They regarded him as one of their own, and this had an impact on the struggle of MASSOB. While the struggle continued under the Jonathan regime, unlike the firebrand nature of

President Olusegun Obasanjo's (1999-2007) and President Musa Yar'Adua's (2007-10) regimes, the organisation took a more moderate approach to the dreams of the Biafran people. This led to President Goodluck Jonathan's directive in 2011 that all members of MASSOB detained across the nation, estimated at 1000, be released (Chiluwa 2018). The Special Council to Nnamdi Kanu, Aloy Ejimakor, corroborated this claim by noting that "Nnamdi Kanu was not arrested between 2012 and 2015 because the government then understood that self-determination was not a crime, but the government that came into power in May 2015 decided to treat self-determination as a criminal activity" (Opejiobi 2023,1). Despite the government's magnanimous spirit towards IPOB, they still regarded the organisation as an unlawful organization (Ibeanu et al. 2016). Ben Onwuka led IPOB's attempt to seize the Government House and the Broadcasting Corporation in Enugu no doubt could be attributed to this unlawful status accorded to the separatist movement. This climate of violence exacerbated the already existing security challenges on the ground, as "an estimated 1,000 IPOB members," according to official records, although IPOB alleged 2,000 individuals were extrajudicially murdered by the security forces on the 30th of May, 2016, during the Biafra Memorial Day at Onitsha (EASO 2017).

Muhammed Buhari administration and the militarisation of Southeastern Nigeria

The moment the administration of Muhammadu Buhari kicked off, there was an increased militarisation of southeastern Nigeria. After making controversial remarks critical of the Nigerian President's Office, Nnamdi Kanu was detained by the Nigerian Army in 2015 on accusations related to terrorism, treason, and running an unlawful group. Later, the Director of Information for the Nigerian Army classified IPOB as a terrorist militant group. To dismantle the operations of the banned group, the federal government, via the Nigerian Army, executed a strategy named "Operation Python Dance". Lt General Tukur Burutai, who served as the Chief of Army Staff at the time, described the operation as including infiltrations. encirclements, and searches aimed at combating child kidnappings, setting up roadblocks, checkpoints, and ultimately, showcasing military power to quell the escalating danger in the southeastern regions of the nation (Sahara Reporters 2017). Additionally, this was the period when the president publicly criticised IPOB as a terrorist entity. To legitimise its actions, the Office of the Attorney General of the Federation initiated legal proceedings by filing a lawsuit in the Federal High Court. Following the submission of arguments, the court thereafter issued a ban (Nwangwu 2023).

After declaring IPOB an illegal organisation, other legal entities in Nigeria were also requested to recognise IPOB as a terrorist group. Considering this information, it's not unexpected that the South East Governors Forum (SERF) sanctioned the proscription of IPOB in the southeast region of Nigeria on January 18, 2018. This series of occurrences resulted in several notable developments. This resulted in the widespread oppression of IPOB. The ridiculousness of the army's reason for calling IPOB a terrorist group, along with the legal support the government obtained, becomes clearer when contrasted with the government's leniency in addressing armed wandering herdsmen, outlaws, and individuals who have supposedly renounced Boko Haram, which is accountable for the significant loss of human life and job prospects in northern Nigeria and other parts of the nation since 2015. Since 2015, the number of armed attacks by Fulani-led groups has increased in both frequency and complexity, with little to no intervention from the government (Nwangwu 2023).

Fuelled by this trend, the government has tended to step up its efforts to target IPOB activists through unlawful arrests, secret detentions, extrajudicial murders, and unexplained disappearances. A report from Amnesty International (2018) states that at least 10 IPOB members have been killed and 12 others wounded by soldiers on September 14, 2018. The armed forces claimed that the IPOB activists perished while opposing the capture of their leader at his residence in Umuahia, Abia state. Beyond the initial 10 IPOB members who lost their lives, reports indicate that at least another 10 were shot and removed by the military. The Igbo Civil Society Coalition (ICSCO), a group comprising various organisations, activists, human rights entities, and scholars from Igboland, accused the Nigerian military of causing the deaths of at least 100 individuals and injuring 200 more during the 'Python Dance' military operation in the South-East in 2017 (Sahara Reporters 2018). Operation Python Dance also led to the extra militarisation of the southeastern polity as all manner of security infrastructures, such as different kinds of Personnel Armoured Carrier (APC) and intimidating checkpoints, an excessive manifestation of repression, wanton destruction of public properties, and total disregard for constitutionalism were witnessed in this part of the country

(Godspower 2018, 68). Apart from Operation Python Dance, the federal government of Nigeria has also unleashed various operations in southeastern Nigeria, such as Operation Iron Fence, to decisively deal with the menace of kidnapping, armed robbery, and cult-related crimes (Momodu 2019). The failure of both the federal and state governments to curb the growing spate of extrajudicial killings and other criminal activities in Igboland increasingly calls into question the legitimacy of the state. The lukewarm attitude, coupled with the application of the siege mentality of the coercive agencies, encouraged the motivation for effective recruitment, indoctrination, and mobilisation unemployed vouths in South East Nigeria to challenge the government's lackadaisical behaviour. The immediate impact was the formation of a counter-security organisation by the dissatisfied youth.

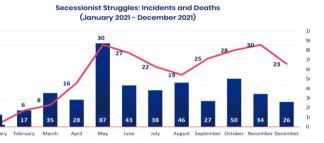
The rise of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) as a counterresponse to the militarisation of Southeastern Nigeria

Regional state leaders in the South-East, following the dictatorial tendencies at the national level, as previously stated, began employing private military factions to carry out violence against unsuspecting individuals and political rivals, aiming to address actual and perceived wrongdoings (Abolurin 2015). The Eastern Security Network (ESN) came into existence on December 20th, following a series of complaints and violent attacks by herdsmen in the Southeast, coupled with a lacklustre response from both federal and state governments. During the launch of the security group, Nnamdi Kanu mentioned that "ESN is our solution to the ongoing insecurity in southeastern Nigeria...the current generation of IPOB will not surrender to allow their community to be devastated by Fulani terrorists to comply with the federal government's ban on their activities, which they view as illegal" (Sahara Reporters 2020, 2). The government labelled ESN's actions as security threats and, as a result, launched military operations in the Southeast, particularly in Orlu, Imo State (The Ripple Nigeria 2022).

By the end of 2021, the assaults on public buildings by the UGM had grown more severe. A study from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database revealed that from January to December 2021, there were 186 incidents linked to separatist groups, resulting in 399 fatalities. The regions of southern Nigeria and southeastern Nigeria accounted for the highest number of these incidents, as shown in Table 2 and Chart 1.

YEAR	STATES	INCIDENTS	DEATHS	
2021	IMO	53	111	
2021	ANAMBRA	29	68	
2021	EBONYI	11	25	
2021	ENUGU	19	40	
2021	ABIA	16	50	
2021	DELTA	17	25	
2021	RIVERS	11	22	
2021	OSUN	11	18	
2021	OYO	20	26	
2021	LAGOS	10	14	
2021	TOTAL	186	399	

Table 2. States with the highest secessionist struggles, Jan-December 2021



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database. 2021

Table 2 and Chart 1, presented above, reveal that when the overall tally of incidents across the southern region of Nigeria is summed, it's clear that the situation escalated dramatically in May 2021, with a peak of 30 incidents and 87 fatalities. The incident count gradually decreased to 28 in October and 23 in December, yet the fatalities from these incidents continued to be substantial, standing at 50 and 26, respectively. Further analysis indicates that the southeastern area alone experienced 128 incidents and 294 deaths, marking a stark contrast with other areas. Comparing this data with the separatist-related violence in Southeast Nigeria from 2015 to 2020, it's evident that the government's labelling of ESN's actions as 'illegitimate' spurred an uptick in IPOB assaults on government facilities. The 2018 report by EASO (2018) highlights that in 2017 and 2018, Southeast saw 140 incidents and 110 deaths, with 37 attacks on civilians resulting in 54 fatalities. The EASO noted that:

Between August 2015 and August 2016, Nigerian security forces led by the army conducted a repressive campaign, extra-judicially killing at least 150 pro-Biafra agitators. In September 2017, security forces cracked on and

arrested over 100 IPOB members.... After the action, the military declared IPOB a terrorist organisation. This decision was endorsed by the Nigerian government and was given legal backing by the Federal High Court in Abuja (European Asylum Support Office 2018, 55).

Table 3 below provides additional details on incidents of IPOB's alleged assaults on government facilities.

Table 3. Empirical indicators of UGM assaults on the state facilities in southeast Nigeria

Month/Year	States	Government	Civilians	Source	
		Infrastructure			
Jan-May, 2021	Imo	25	35	EASO 2021	
Jan-May, 2021	Enugu	6	17	EASO 2021	
Jan-May, 2021	Ebonyi	9	92	EASO 2021	
Jan-May, 2021	Anambra	12	25	EASO 2021	
Jan-May, 2021	Abia	14	19	EASO 2021	

Source: EASO, 2021

Table 3 reveals that a number of these infrastructures included various police stations, police personnel, and the offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) spread throughout the Southeast. This was compounded by the increased actions of IPOB, including the arrest and imprisonment of Nnamdi Kanu. Consequently, following the Kenyan arrest and subsequent jailing of Nnamdi Kanu, IPOB took a more extreme stance, resorting to a sit-at-home order to pressure the government to release him. The stance of the Southeast governors was that IPOB's interference with governance in their areas of authority questioned their capacities as the chief law officers of the state. Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma, stated, "If our goal is to ensure the Igbos are not marginalised, we must be proactive in achieving that. Therefore, we must respect the country's sovereignty" (The Cable Online News, Nigeria, October 17th, 2021). Similarly, Governor Charles Soludo adopted a similar approach by enacting an executive order making it illegal to comply with IPOB's sit-at-home order. He emphasised, "A few days ago, a man from Finland claimed to be declaring a sit-at-home. We must reclaim Anambra from these criminals". (Ripples Nigeria, December 24th, 2022). The faction led by Simon Ekpa in IPOB responded with resistance, stating, "The Biafra movement is more significant than Soludo and all the South-East governors. Soludo cannot halt the sit-at-home. The Biafra movement is more powerful than any sit-at-home. This movement will dismantle Nigeria into pieces" (Ibid.). Table 4 below captures the debilitating

security challenges resulting from Anambra state's confrontation with the men of UGM striving to implement the Sit-at-Home order.

Table 4. Incidents of insecurity as a result of the non-resolution of political matters through discussion

Date	Incidents of attack	Source	Venue	Nature of violence	Victims	Perpetr ators	Impact
09-8- 2021	UGM attacked Nnewi Police Comman d and made away with weapons.	KDI, 2021	Nnewi Police Command	Heavy gunfire exchange	No death documented	UGM	Disorder/ fear
09- 08- 2021	3 buses burnt/2 persons killed in Nnewi	KDI, 2021	Izuchukwu Joint, Nnewi	murder	2 persons died	army	Death
09-8- 2021	Navy confronts UGM during the sit-at- home	KDI, 2021	Anambra	Murder	6 persons died	Nig Navy	Death
09-8- 2021	UGM harassed the vendor and slapped her at his shop	KDI, 2021	Obosi Idemili	wares destroyed	Ozioma Cecilia	UGM	Fear/Prof it loss
09-8- 2021	A man was killed in Awada	KDI, 2021	Awada region	Murder	A young man	UGM	Death
09-8- 2021	Police and 2 men were killed by UGM	KDI, 2021	Awada Obosi	Murder	Police/2 men	UGM	Death

The above table four shows multiple civilians and state actors who lost their lives, as well as the state facilities that were attacked in Anambra state alone as a result of the militarization of southeastern Nigeria due to the exit quest of IPOB. Notably, these attacks occurred at a time when Anambra State was preparing for a gubernatorial election. Rather than toeing the democratic path in resolving these security challenges, the federal government consolidated its authoritarian tendencies by

drafting not less than 50,000 troops in the Anambra gubernatorial election (Omeihe 2021). Similar security challenges were no doubt reported in other parts of southeastern Nigeria. It is therefore not surprising that EASO analysis of the security situation in Southeastern in 2023 implicated UGM as the major driver of tension within the years studied. Arising from the seeming IPOB resistance to the constituted authority in the southeast, it is described as the personification of law "having taken over the power of the government officials and traditional rulers in the area" (EASO 2024, 45). Rather than attempting to discuss the security challenges with those involved. the central government has fortified itself by enabling different security structures, such as the Joint Task Force of Operations tagged Udoka, which comprises troops from the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Police, and other para-military organisations (EASO, 2024). Corroborating these incidents, ACLED analysis of security activities between 2023 and early 2024 indicates that not less than 458 security breaches occurred in southeastern Nigeria; while 172 of the events were regarded as 'battle', 8 as "explosions, 249 as "violence against civilians", and finally 29 as 'riots' (EASO 2024, 47). For sure, there is a correlation between the militarisation of a democratic polity with the exacerbation of insecurity. An authoritarian imprint indeed!

Conclusion

The paper has interrogated militarised democracy and its security challenges in South East Nigeria from 1999-2023. It has brought to prominence the growing frustration among the people of the South-East arising from the militarised democratic disposition of political leaders and its security implications on the region. The emergence and sustenance of organised militarism, as discussed in the paper, is a direct consequence of the authoritarian heritage of colonial politics (Asogwa et al. 2021). The return of civil rule in 1999 brought a ray of hope for quality leadership following the dismantling of the military regime, but the democratic government has not yielded any meaningful impact on the lives and property of the citizens due to the authoritarian character that is entrenched in the fabric of the political actors. The current waves of insecurity arising from banditry, UGM, kidnapping, and other criminal activities of the Fulani herdsmen in Igboland are clear signs of the state's lack of leadership acumen to engage the affected communities in solving the problems. Until the state actors

come down from their loft abodes and engage the disaffected community in a public security matter, rather than the kinetic approach they have adopted in southeastern Nigeria, sustainable security in southeastern Nigeria may, after all, be a mirage.

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Themes of the world's select destination slogans

Mark Herman Sumagang Potoy*

Abstract: One simple yet primordial contributor in promoting the tourism of a certain nation is a well-crafted destination slogan. As such, country destinations are challenged to craft a slogan that stands out from the rest. It is in this view that this study is undertaken to take a closer look into the underlying themes of the world's select destination slogans. It utilizes the qualitative method of research where ninety-eight destination slogans are randomly selected as corpus of the study. After the analysis, the following themes are found, Endless Discovery, Originality, Emotional Association, One and Only, Hospitality, Ego Targeting, Ancient Aura, and Physical Dimension. Among these eight themes, Emotional Association is recorded to be the most frequently used reaching up to thirty-five actual usage. The second most prevalent theme is Endless Discovery which is present in eighteen slogans such as that of Canada, Maldives and Saudi Arabia. Construction of destination slogans should be viewed as a complex process that needs in-depth analysis on how it should be phrased since language is an essential vehicle in successfully conveying the message it intends its tourists to decipher. A destination slogan's deep structure has to be the first element to be considered upon its creation because it will serve as the backbone that will hold everything about it. The meaning behind its surface structure has to be the primordial concern for those who are assigned to come up with a slogan.

Keywords: semantics, deep structure, destination slogan, themes, analysis

Introduction

Destination slogans are integral part in promoting the tourism industry of any country for it serves as a readily available resource where one can take a glimpse of what such destination can offer. Although most of the highly established country destinations still have occupied the top positions in the list, it is noticeable to see relatively small and budding countries to climb the list (Khan 2014). This phenomenon that

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has been observed for quite sometimes is attributed to these countries' outstanding marketing strategies leading to increased public promotional undertakings to ensure that the destination is made known to everyone across the globe. However, the biggest challenge of country destinations is on how to standout from the sea of equally vibrant and favorable countries to visit. It is not a secret that these places share almost the same product that they offer to visitors who visit their country. Hence, these countries' destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have to be truly innovative in creating unique, appealing, and memorable country identity that speak so much about the destination with only one goal in mind which is to get tourists' attention and drive them in to the country (Ritchie& Crouch, in Khan2003).

Apparently, only few studies have been conducted tackling destination slogans. Those that have been made are mostly into tourism, advertising, and business marketing; the reason why language and its importance are overlooked and have been given undue attention that they rightfully deserve. This study attempts to discover the underlying themes of destination slogans. To determine the underlying themes of the different destination slogans that are being analyzed, the study utilizes the framework developed by Sonia Khan. She identified eight major themes namely: Endless Discovery, Originality, Emotional Association, One and Only, Hospitality, Ego Targeting, Ancient Aura, and Physical Dimension. These themes are used to analyzing and to examining the different destination slogans being identified. The identified themes have proven that words and word structures are functioning with a significant role in creating a successful slogan that clearly conveys what the destination truly embodies.

Themes in the destination slogans

Eight different themes are found in the destination slogans being subjected for analysis which are namely: Endless Discovery, Originality, Emotional Association, One and Only, Hospitality, Ego Targeting, Ancient Aura and Physical Dimension. These themes are further classified into two sub-themes except for Emotional Association which has three. Listed under the third column are some of the words used in the slogans that signal the theme they carry. Finally, the last column contains the frequency of slogans that belong to each sub-theme.

1. Endless discovery

This is the first identified theme which sends the message of unlimited adventure through discovering unexplored places that a certain country has. It provides tourists with a seemingly vague yet exciting idea of what a nation can offer through their personal exploration and exploitation of the country. Eighteen destination slogans are found to carry this particular theme. This theme is composed of two sub-themes namely, Exploration and Riches.

Exploration

According to Khan (2014, 31) "exploration attracts tourists who wish to take the 'offbeat' path and have an insatiable appetite for visiting undiscovered places." This sub-theme is evidently used to attract tourists who are seeking for undiscovered, less conventional and more than the usual attractions and locations that they can visit and enjoy. Moreover, it is viewed to have been used in slogans to give tourists an assurance that such nation can offer something different and unending. Categorized under this sub-theme are the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Canada, Japan, Haiti, Kiribati, Moldova, Namibia, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sierra Leone, Zambia. Canada's slogan states, "Keep exploring." By land area, this nation is considered to be the world's second largest country after Russia which roughly occupies two-fifths of the North American continent. However, even with the vastness of the land area of this country, it is as well considered to be part of some of the world's countries with population that is thinly dispersed. It is in this light that the government of Canada is exerting immense effort to entice tourists to come to their country. One good strategy in carrying this out is by letting people know of the things that they are yet to discover in this nation through the clever use of the slogan "Keep exploring." Having the enormous size Canada has, innumerable places are yet to be discovered and explored. This nation is blessed with breathtaking landscapes with vast swaths of wilderness, lakes and mountains. Moreover, it is home to the Niagara Falls, a famous group of waterfalls. Further, this country is a melting pot of multiculturalism being a warm host to many immigrants across the world.

Riches

This is the second sub-theme of *Endless Discovery* which highlights a country's 'riches.' Khan (2014, 31) explicates that this sub-theme is achieved by making the destination a "treasure trove." From the ninety-eight slogans subjected for analysis, only five bear this sub-

theme, namely: Czech Republic, Guyana, Maldives, Solomon Islands, and Tanzania. Czech Republic's slogan states, "Land of stories." This country, situated in Central Europe is popular for its rich history, century-old castles and traditional beers. Its capital city Prague is where one can find the grandiose Prague Castle, built in the 19th century, a well-preserved old town from the Medieval period and a magnificent Charles Bridge adored with lined statues in it. Another notable location in this country is a small town called Český Krumlov located in the South Bohemian region. It is known for its abundance of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque buildings. Indeed, this nation is blessed with rich history and culture, hence the reason why they capitalize on the use of the word 'stories' in its slogan. It can be deduced that Czech Republic wants to convey to the world how uniquely beautiful this country is through giving emphasis on what it is rich with – history and culture.

2. *Originality*

This is the second theme which is generally concerned with the conveyance of the message that a certain destination is uniquely different from others in terms of its genuineness and naturalness hence, the use of words such as true, truly, natural, pure and wild. Two subthemes are identified under it which are Authenticity and Natural Purity. This theme is found to have been present in twelve destination slogans.

Authenticity

With the present condition of the world today where modernization and industrialization are swiftly sprawling into various communities across the globe people are seeking for destinations that still retain an authentic experience of the nation. Khan (2014, 31) has this to say, "...discerning tourists are on the lookout for the real and genuine attractions in order to gain unique and unparalleled experiences at the places visited." This sub-theme is present in the destination slogans of Estonia. Jordan. Madagascar, Malavsia. and Netherlands. Madagascar's slogan, "A genuine island, a world apart" is classified under this sub-theme. These three titles namely, the Eight Continent, Big Red Island and Rainbow Island are few of the names that refer to only one country - Madagascar. "The fourth largest island in the world has been isolated for about 88 million years and many of its plants and animals are unique to the island. The prehistoric breakup of the supercontinent Gondwana separated the Madagascar-Antarctica-India landmass from the Africa-South America landmass around 135 million years ago. Madagascar later split from India about 88 million years ago, allowing plants and animals on the island to evolve in relative isolation" (*One World Nations Online*). The destination slogan of Madagascar directly uses the word 'genuine' to convey the message that this country is authentic in terms of its topography as revealed in its interesting etymology. Apart from this, this nation is also uniquely different as it is where one can find numerous animal species that can only be found in this country such as lemurs. Moreover, this country also boasts its unique rainforests, beaches, and reefs.

Natural Purity

This sub-theme, revolves around the idea of highlighting the natural wonders of a certain destination hence, the use of words such as 'pure,' 'natural,' and the like. Chad, Dominica, Gambia, Grenada, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, and Norway are the countries whose destination slogans carry this sub-theme. "100% Pure" is New Zealand's slogan. This is a country that uses the word 'pure' to emphasize its natural beauty and capacity to entertain tourists from all walks of life. As expressed in one of its promotional videos, New Zealand is pure for its natural wonders where one can choose a relaxing vacation in the countryside or an adventurous journey on the beach or lake; a sweaty hike in the rocky mountains or an immersion with the locals in the villages. New Zealand is situated in the southwestern part of the Pacific Ocean consisting of two main islands. Truly, this nation boasts its purity in terms of the natural sites that can be explored therein such as the beach, waterfalls, rainforests, rivers and more. Tourists are just left to discover the purity of this nation.

3. Emotional association

With the very competitive tourism environment in the world, countries are creating destination slogans that not only present facts about what they can offer but also appeal to tourists emotions through statements about love, fun, and the like. Emotional association is found to have been the most prevalent theme among the slogans being investigated which was used thirty-five times. It is a theme that specifically appeals to the emotional nature of human beings hence, the use of emotionally appealing words such as feel, inspiring, live and so on.

Emotions

This is the first sub-theme of Emotional Association which as to Khan (2014) is used "by striking an emotional chord with the audience."

Generally, this sub-theme tries to appeal to the emotional senses of tourists. There are ten destination slogans that carry this sub-theme, namely: Cape Verde, Cyprus, Denmark, El Salvador, Germany, Lebanon, Slovenia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Tajikistan and Tunisia. Germany's slogan is worded, "Simply inspiring." So, what really is so inspiring about this nation? It is considered as

one of Europe's largest countries, Germany encompasses a wide variety of landscapes: the tall, sheer mountains of the south; the sandy, rolling plains of the north; the forested hills of the urbanized west; and the plains of the agricultural east. At the spiritual heart of the country is the magnificent eastcentral city of Berlin, which rose phoenix like from the ashes of World War II and now, after decades of partition, is the capital of a reunified Germany, and the Rhine River, which flows northward from Switzerland and is celebrated in visual art, literature, folklore, and song. Along its banks and those of its principal tributaries—among them the Neckar, Main, Moselle, and Ruhr—stand hundreds of medieval castles, churches, picturesque villages, market towns, and centers of learning and culture, including Heidelberg, the site of one of Europe's oldest universities (founded in 1386), and Mainz, historically one of Europe's most important publishing centers. All are central pieces of Germany's thriving tourist economy, which brings millions of visitors to the country each year, drawn by its natural beauty, history, culture, and cuisine (including its renowned wines and beers). (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Experience

This is the second sub-theme of Emotional Association which is present in eleven destination slogans, such as in Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Djibouti, India, Indonesia, Laos, Lithuania, Palau, and Rwanda. The sub-theme revolves around the creation of an atmosphere of the country being a dream destination for those tourists who want to have a dreamy experience. The destination slogan of India, "Incredible India," simply describes what it's like to be there incredible! This is a striking use of a very powerful word that signals an equally powerful message to tourists who wish to visit the country. By definition, incredible means impossible or very difficult to understand. What then makes this country incredible? India is the second most populated nation in the world. It is known for its highly sophisticated urbanized culture called Indus Civilization which is believed to be the roots of Hinduism. Buddhism and Jainism are also considered to have originated in India though their presence in the country is diminishing. Moreover, talking about diversity, India is considered to be among the world's most ethnically diverse, in fact,

innumerable tribes and castes and it records hundreds of linguistic groups. This nation is also home to the Himalayas, the loftiest mountain system in the world and the Taj Mahal, one of the world's great architectural masterpieces. With these and more, isn't India incredible?

4. *One and Only*

The aim of this theme is to create a uniquely different image that will stand out from the sea of slogans around the world. It tries to set the destination apart from others. Further, it highlights itself as a destination incomparable to others. This theme is as well seen to be a strategy used to emphasize that there is no other place like the destination. Ten destination slogans are discovered to carry this theme with them and they are further classified into the two different subthemes.

Different

This is the first sub-theme of *One and Only* which is present in eight destination slogans. These are that of Andorra, Australia, Italy, Lesotho, Morocco, Seychelles, South Africa and Tuvalu. Australia's slogan, "There's nothing like Australia" is the foremost example for this sub-theme. It tries to convey to its prospect tourists that this country is unique in so many ways that you can never find a similar destination like it. This sub-theme mainly focuses on how a destination can stand-out with the use of words that manifest its uniqueness and difference from others. With the use of the words 'nothing like,' this slogan strikes a great punch by claiming to be one and only.

Must see

This second sub-theme of *One and Only* emphasizes that the destination is a 'must see.' Slogans classified under this sub-theme use the phrase 'your destination' to pose an emphatic appeal of the country being the ultimate destination. Only Botswana and Venezuela have destination slogans categorized under this sub-theme. With the use of the phrase 'your destination,' these countries try to entice tourist to come and visit them by claiming to be the must see destination.

5. *Hospitality*

This theme emphasizes the value of being welcoming since for a fact, this is the foremost concern of destinations. Visitors are persuaded to come to a certain country for various reasons and it is only just and right for destinations to express whether or not tourists are really do

welcome. There are only six countries with slogans carrying this theme. Below are the two sub-themes, namely Beckon and Invitation together with some of the slogans classified under each of them.

Reckon

This is the first sub-theme which indirectly conveys the message of hospitality. By dictionary meaning, beckon is an act of coming up with a non-verbal signal using the head, arm or hand to entice an individual to follow or come nearer. This slogan "Tourism for everybody" conveys to tourists that Algeria welcomes everyone to come and explore this country. Although the message does not specifically and directly tell visitors on what to do but certainly, the statement clearly expresses inclusivity of anyone to partake in the tourism activities of Algeria. Nepal's slogan "Once is not enough" indirectly conveys being welcoming. It simply expresses warmth for its visitors to come and visit the place again. It further expresses an assurance that tourists who will visit this country will certainly come back and the slogan just tells them why not.

Invitation

This is the second sub-theme of *Hospitality* that focuses on enticement and allurement. It tries to persuade someone to come and visit the destination and expresses directly how welcome tourists are who wish to come to the destination. Iran, Uganda, Belarus, and Oman are the four countries with destinations slogans classified under this sub-theme. These slogans create a hospitable atmosphere that will truly entice tourists to come and visit these countries because of the warmth that these slogans carry with them. Below are some of these slogans.

6. *Ego Targeting*

This theme highlights tourists as special individuals that should be regarded special in all possible ways hence there should be an assurance of their personal satisfaction. There are only eight (8) destination slogans that carry this theme which are then classified under two sub-themes, namely, Personalization and Fulfilment.

Personalization

This is the first sub-theme of *Ego Targeting* which targets each and every individual. Khan (2014, 34) explains that, "Destinations often invite the tourists by stating that a visit to a particular destination country will help a tourist to discover himself/herself and will help him touch base with the meaning of his existence." Six destination slogans are classified under this sub-theme. These are the slogans of Albania,

Bahrain, Finland, Russia, Ukraine, and United States of America. Below are some of these slogans. Albania's slogan "Go your own way" is clearly very personal signaled by the use of the pronoun 'your.' Further, the slogan becomes more striking because it is constructed in an imperative statement. This makes it totally personalized since tourists are directed to make sure they create their own person story in all possible ways they could as they visit the country. This slogan "It's all about U" of Ukraine is uniquely constructed with the use of the first letter of the country's name 'U' instead of directly using the personal pronoun 'you.' With reference to the entirety of the construction, the slogan is undoubtedly and exceedingly personal by letting tourists know that it's all about them and no one else. This creates a welcoming atmosphere of the country and gives visitors an uplifting spirit of trust and confidence of the nation anytime they decide to visit it.

Fulfillment

This is the second sub-theme of *Ego Targeting* which targets the fulfilment of tourists' dreams and aspirations. There are only two countries with destination slogans carrying this sub-theme. Qatar's tourism slogan which says, "Where dreams come to life" embodies this sub-theme. Qatar sends a clear message to its tourists that it can make their dreams come true. This is a striking slogan that appeals to all since everyone has a dream that they have always worked hard for its attainment. East Timor's slogan which is "Being first has its rewards" is an example of an indirect promise of fulfilment. Being a not so popular travel destination, this country struggles to persuade visitors to come and explore the place. With this, the slogan is simply fitting since it promises something good for them.

7. Ancient Aura

This theme primarily revolves around the creation of an image of being the origin of many civilizations a long time ago, hence; the two subthemes History and Birthplace. Destination slogans carrying this theme are primordially written to highlight the destination's major role being played in the history of mankind.

History

This sub-theme carries the image of the destination being a significant contributor in world history. It tries to convey to tourists that coming to such nation is being able to travel back in time. Ethiopia's slogan "Land of origins" can easily be classified under this theme with the use

of the word 'origins.' It creates a nostalgic atmosphere that is what is being looked for by tourists. This country claims to be the land of origins because it is considered to be among the oldest in the world. The Ethiopian Herald through the website *All Africa* provides the reason why this nation is considered to be the land of origins. It says, Ethiopia is

the origin of humankind; home of the earliest remains of human ancestors ever found - the first being which routinely walked on two feet named 'Lucy', the origin or birthplace of the wild coffee plant, 'Arabica', the origin of the Blue Nile, longest river of the planet. The attractive and traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony is enjoyed daily by locals and tourists. Ethiopia is also believed to be the depository of the lost Biblical Ark of the Covenant, stored in the securely guarded Chapel of the Tablet next to the St. Mary of Zion Church in ancient Aksum. The Nechisar Nightjar, the elusive endemic to Nech Sar National Park in southern Ethiopia, is the home to world's rarest bird species. (*All Africa*)

Birthplace

This second sub-theme of Ancient Aura gives emphasis to a destination's role as a place of birth or the starting point of things. The use of words such as 'creation,' 'begin,' and 'started' signal that such slogan can be classified under this sub-theme. Israel, Egypt, and Mozambique are the only ones with slogans categorized under this theme. Below are these slogans. It is needless to say that this slogan is just fitting to be categorized under sub-theme. Israel's "Land of creation" is by far the most popular country that cradles the origin of mankind. The Rakso Travel uses to say about this country: "Lift up your faith by discovering Israel, the Land of Creation and see for yourself the famed locations of Jesus' life. Ablaze your faith with the Holy sites of Jerusalem & Bethlehem, float in Dead Sea, sail the Sea of Galilee, overlook ancient Masada with Cable car ride and many more!" Egypt's "Where it all begins" is another slogan that is already a known fact to many. Egypt is considered to be the birth place of civilizations hence, the slogan is simply fitting. Travelers are already given the idea of what they can expect upon visiting the country – see for yourself the beginning of everything.

8. Physical Dimension

This theme capitalizes on the physical aspects that a certain destination has specifically, its size and geographical location in the map. It attempts to convey to visitors that regardless of its size, whether or not it is small but it can offer a wealth of attractions. This is the least used theme which is employed in only four destination slogans. This is further classified into two sub-themes namely, Size and Center.

Size

Does size really matter? This sub-theme focuses on highlighting the extent and expanse of the nation in terms of its capacity to offer attractions to visitors. Size does not only mean the land mass but as well as what encompasses a certain country. Only two destination slogans have been classified under this theme such as that of Zimbabwe, "A world of wonders." This landlocked nation is situated in Africa's southern part. Its astounding landscape and wildlife can readily be experienced in its safari areas, reserves, and parks. This and more makes this country famous. Its slogan tries to create an image of how gigantic this country is. It claims to be the 'world' of wonders, hence posing a bold statement that it has and can offer everything wonderful. What can be the reason for this claim? This African country is rich with wonderful people and culture. With this, the Mbende Dancing Troupe is declared by UNESCO as Intangible Human World Heritage Site. Moreover, it is as well where one can find The Grand Medieval Palace. It is rich with wonderful natural resources. In fact, it home to the majestic Victoria Falls. Because of these, Zimbabwe is considered to the Adrenaline Capital of the World where bungee jumping, white-water rafting, zip lining, and more are just everywhere. Pristine wildlife is what makes this country extraordinarily wonderful. Visitors who are looking for a close encounter with the big seven; they are proudly on display in this country. With all these are more, isn't this country a world of wonders?

Center

This second sub-theme of *Physical Dimension* mainly focuses on claiming to be the 'center' of a certain place. Noticeably, destination slogans that carry this sub-theme use words that significantly mean in the middle. Quite interestingly, only a single word carrying this meaning has been used in the two destination slogans classified under this sub-theme. The slogans of both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Malawi have used the word 'heart' to give emphasis to its significant role as the center of a certain region where they belong. This is seen to be a strategy in marketing to attract tourists who do not intend to visit all the countries in a region but would want to gain a whole experience representing them all. And one simple way to do it is to visit the center

because surely it represents the rest of them all. Bosnia and Herzegovina claims to be the heart of South Eastern Europe while Malawi proclaims to be the heart of Africa. The former's claim is a clever use of the word 'heart' because it does not only refer its geographical location but as well as to its shape. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a nation that is uniquely shaped like a heart located in southeast Europe's heart. According to *National Geographic* the website Bosnia and Herzegovina "what is most important for the visitor to know today, though, is that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a stunningly beautiful country with a vast array of landscapes, cultures, traditions and people. And as the old cliche goes 'people make the place' – and B&H prides Itself on Its hospitality and treating our guests as if they were family members. And family we take to heart."

Conclusion

The eight themes identified by Sonia Khan are found to have all been present in the destination slogans subjected for analysis. These themes are Endless Discovery, Originality, Emotional Association, One and Only, Hospitality, Ego Targeting, Ancient Aura, and Physical Dimension. Results of the study shows that construction of destination slogans should be viewed as a complex process that needs in-depth analysis of how it should be phrased since language is an essential vehicle in successfully conveying the message that it intends its tourists to decipher. The careful and strategic use of substantive words is a key factor in creating an effective slogan that would appeal to visitors from around the world. Finally, a destination slogan's deep structure has to be the first element to be considered upon its creation and construction because it will serve as the backbone that will hold everything about it. It should be founded on grounds that are strong enough to keep still the existence of the slogan. The meaning behind its surface structure has to be the primordial concern for those who are assigned to come up with a slogan.

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Quality and sustainability of social services in the Czech Republic: Current situation and future perspectives

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Abstract: This article addresses the current situation in the field of social services in the Czech Republic, focusing on key challenges and opportunities that affect the quality and accessibility of these services. We discuss financial constraints, the shortage of qualified personnel, the implementation of quality standards, technological innovations, and the need for service integration across different sectors. Special attention is given to legislation, which after nearly 20 years brings changes and necessitates adaptation to new conditions. The article emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts at all levels to ensure sustainable and high-quality social services that effectively support vulnerable population groups.

Keywords: finance, legislation, quality of care, social services, staffing

Introduction

The topic of social services, i.e., care for those in need, has accompanied the entire history of humanity in a broad sense. With a high degree of generalization, we can say that each era brought different conceptions of this care, whether in terms of responsibility for care, its form, or the definition of the group of people to whom social services should be provided.

In the following text, we will specifically focus on the current conception of social services in the Czech Republic, particularly emphasizing their functioning according to Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, which is set to undergo significant reform. However, to understand the groundbreaking significance of the current legislative framework and the related transformations not only of the social services system but also of the philosophy of their provision, it is necessary to look back into the relatively recent past.

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In the Czech Republic, a paternalistic regulation of the social sector prevailed for a long time, with roots deeply embedded in the communist era. As early as the 1950s, there was a significant transformation of the social security system, which until then had largely mirrored the Western European model. The Institute of Domicile Rights, which had been in place since the 19th century and determined the municipality's obligation towards its members, was abolished. This institute was replaced by Czechoslovak citizenship, and the responsibility for those in need shifted from local resources to the state level, leading to significant centralization and a reduction in the range of care providers – practically eliminating the non-state nonprofit sector, including church institutions, which had previously played a significant role in this area. Emphasis was placed primarily on institutional care, home care services, which were essentially the only provided field service, and counseling. Although we can find areas that developed positively, such as union care for employees in large industrial enterprises or specific types of counseling services, clients were predominantly seen as passive recipients of services, and the responsibility for their adverse life situations was shifted from their shoulders and those of their relatives to the state sphere. Although the state provided care within the built system, it lacked the necessary individualization or efforts to promote their independence and increase their competencies aimed at reintegration into society (see, for example, Matoušek & Pazlarová 2018; Ibid. 2019).

A major turning point in the transformation of social services came in 1989, when the social care system had to respond to the new conditions of the changing social order. In the early 1990s, a reform of the entire social system began, emphasizing the concept of the socalled social safety net (Mertl 2023). However, the area of social services had to wait for its new legislative framework until 2006, when Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, came into effect, bringing a necessary range of new rules and measures. These aimed primarily at equalizing the relationships between providers and users of social services towards their equality, voluntariness, a strictly individual approach, and efforts to avoid excluding recipients of social services from their natural environment, from society (Čámský, Sembdner, Krutilová 2011). The fundamental changes brought by this legislation include: assistance is intended for persons in adverse social situations, emphasis is placed on the individualization of services and support for users' independence, a new categorization of social services in the form of a clear typology of types and forms of services is established, the contractual principle of providing social services is set, a system of registration and control of social service providers is established, and the prerequisites for the performance of social services are also set.

Current research shows that an individualized approach and support for independence have a positive impact on the quality of life of social service users. For example, Novák and Svoboda (2018) in their qualitative research with 200 respondents found that individualized care plans led to a significant improvement in the quality of life of seniors, especially in areas of satisfaction with care, psychological well-being, and social engagement. Research by Dvořáková and Kovář (2019) showed that support for independence through training programs and assistive technologies led to higher levels of independence and life satisfaction. Similarly, a study by Horák and Malá (2020) found that personalized support, which takes into account individual needs and goals, significantly improved the quality of life of homeless people, especially in areas of housing, employment, and social relationships. It is also important to mention that effective provision of social services requires continuous education and supervision of social service workers, which is crucial for ensuring high-quality care (Musil 2019).

The results of the research indicate that an individualized approach and support for independence have a positive impact on the quality of life of social service users. These approaches increase satisfaction with care, psychological well-being, and social engagement. An individualized approach and support for independence are key factors for improving the quality of life of social service users in the Czech Republic. The mentioned research shows that these approaches lead to higher satisfaction, independence, and overall life well-being. Social service providers should implement individualized care plans and support users' independence through training programs and assistive technologies.

In Western European countries, the issue of the quality of social work and its services began to develop more significantly from the 1980s onwards, and in the Czech environment at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. In the early stages of the development of the examined issue, quality models from the business sector were fully adopted and are still being developed in many countries today. However, considering the specific characteristics of social work and social services, it is evident that specific methods have been

developed. Often, the mentioned commercial quality models served as inspiration, but their content was adapted to the needs of social work.

Pillars of the system of social services in the Czech Republic

In this section, the basic rules governing the operation of social services according to Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, and Decree No. 505/2006 Coll., which implements certain provisions of the mentioned Act on Social Services, will be presented.

Authorized persons in the field of social services are citizens of the Czech Republic, citizens of EU member states, and also citizens of other countries if they have legal long-term residence in the territory of an EU member state. Users of social services are those who have entered into a contractual relationship with an authorized provider of social services. Providers are obliged to conclude such a contract with each user if they agree on its content. A contract cannot be concluded, for example, with a user who demands an unfeasible form of service delivery due to technical, financial, capacity, or personnel reasons. The contract can be concluded either in writing or orally (Čámský, Sembdner, Krutilová 2011).

There are several ways to categorize social services in the Czech Republic. We base our categorization on the most well-known, practical, and logical division. According to the mentioned Act on Social Services, there are three basic types of social services:

Social counseling, which can be further divided into basic social counseling, which all social service providers are obliged to provide regardless of who asks for advice, and specialized social counseling, which is provided by specialized counseling centers that profile either according to a specific issue (e.g., domestic violence) or according to the target group (people with disabilities, seniors, foreigners, etc.).

Social care services, which are aimed at helping people ensure their physical and psychological self-sufficiency. They offer assistance in managing self-care tasks and support independence. To ensure the provision of these services, a care allowance can be used, which will be discussed in more detail in one of the following sections of the chapter. Social care services can be further divided based on the specific content of the provided care services into:

- Day care centers;
- Day service centers;
- Emergency care;
- Guide and reader services;

- Home care services;
- Homes for people with disabilities;
- Homes for seniors;
- Homes with special regimes;
- Personal assistance:
- Respite services;
- Sheltered housing;
- Social services in healthcare facilities providing institutional care;
- Support for independent living;
- Weekly care centers.

Social prevention services, which focus on phenomena and situations that can lead to social exclusion and are not caused by an inability to care for oneself due to age or health condition. They primarily focus on the area of so-called "socially negative phenomena" such as crime, homelessness, substance abuse, family crises, etc. Social exclusion is discussed by Daněk and Klugerová (2023). Who note that this is a major issue that modern society is attempting to address. It has negative impacts not only on a local level but also on a national, European, and even global scale. In today's interconnected society, it is important to recognize that social exclusion issues in other countries or on other continents will have an impact on us. Therefore, it is crucial to strive for the elimination, prevention, and combat of social exclusion through all possible means. Social prevention services are also further divided according to their specific content into:

- Contact centers:
- Crisis assistance;
- Early care;
- Field programs;
- Follow-up care services;
- Halfway houses;
- Interpreting services;
- Low-threshold centers:
- Low-threshold facilities for children and youth;
- Night shelters;
- Shelters:
- Social activation services for families with children:
- Social activation services for people with disabilities and seniors;
- Social rehabilitation;

- Social therapeutic workshops;
- Telephone crisis assistance;
- Therapeutic communities.

The mentioned types of social services can be provided as residential, outpatient, or field services. Residential services include accommodation in social service facilities. Outpatient services are those that a person visits or is accompanied to the social service facility, with accommodation not being part of these services. Field services are provided to individuals in their natural social environment.

One of the key areas regulated by Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, is *the staffing of these services*. For the first time in history, it is legislatively defined who is a social worker and what competencies they have. In addition to social workers, social service workers, leading social service workers, and also educational and healthcare workers can operate in social services. The activities of the last two mentioned groups of workers are not governed by the Act on Social Services but by other departmental regulations, i.e., educational and healthcare regulations. This situation reflects the persistent departmentalism, i.e., the responsibility of various ministries for specific areas of the social sphere, which sometimes complicates the daily practice of social service providers.

Professions in the field of social services are defined with an emphasis on the activities they perform, i.e., the prerequisites and competencies needed to perform the profession. A social worker conducts social investigations, manages social agendas, including solving socio-legal problems in facilities providing social care services, provides socio-legal counseling, performs methodological, and conceptual activities in the social field, professional activities in facilities providing social prevention services, detection activities, provides crisis assistance, social counseling, and conducts social rehabilitation. The prerequisites for performing this profession include legal capacity, integrity, health fitness, and professional competence, which means a university or higher vocational education with a social focus (the law specifies specific study fields), or completed accredited educational programs with a minimum of 200 hours and five years of field practice, provided that the person has completed university education in another field.

Social service workers have limited competencies and can perform some activities only under the supervision of a social worker. This also reflects lower educational requirements, as these workers can have only basic or secondary education and completed a qualification course. Similarly to social workers, they must meet the requirements for legal capacity, integrity, and health fitness.

Research shows that the quality of staffing in social services has a direct impact on the effectiveness and quality of the provided services. For example, a study conducted by Musil (2019) emphasizes the importance of continuous education and supervision of social workers to ensure high-quality care. Furthermore, research conducted by Mátl (2018) shows that a higher level of education and professional training of social workers correlates with better outcomes in social rehabilitation and integration of clients into society. Other research, such as a study by Krejčí, Novák, and Svoboda (2020), points out that interdisciplinary collaboration between social, educational, and healthcare workers can significantly improve the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of provided services, although the current state of departmentalism often complicates this collaboration.

Along with the development of society, the *quality* of the product is gaining more importance. One of the basic prerequisites and pillars of a quality product is the quality of the material intended for its production. In the service segment, where the level is directly tied to the human factor of the service provider, the quality is largely dependent on the personality of the person providing the service. In the case of social work and social services, this rule applies doubly, as the quality of social services is determined by the mutual relationship between the social worker and the recipient of social services. However, the requirement to ensure quality is reflected not only in the staffing of social services but also in other components and contexts – it concerns, for example, the environment and conditions in which social services are provided, the legal regulation of the relationship between the social service provider and its recipient, the course of social services, and so on.

Quality in social services is a key topic that affects the lives of millions of people worldwide. Social services encompass a wide range of activities, from care for seniors and people with disabilities to support for families in crisis and assistance to homeless people. The quality of these services is crucial for ensuring a dignified and fulfilling life for their users. This text will focus on the issue of quality in social services from a global perspective, with an emphasis on research conducted in the Czech Republic, Europe, and other parts of the world.

Users of social services consider a quality service to be one that meets their individual needs, both material (e.g., food, housing, clothing) and immaterial (e.g., being part of a community, showing genuine interest, effort, and a healthy degree of helping the recipient of social services, maintaining the dignity and autonomy of the recipient of social services), with the ability and degree of meeting the need by a specific social service being assessed individually by the recipient. Dvořáková (2020) in her work states that the most common attributes of quality social services from the users' perspective are those that are: accessible, visible (users know about the social service), financially affordable, enriching, and integrating into society among "normal" people. Therefore, there is significant pressure on the quality of the service from the consumers themselves, who demand that their needs be met with the highest possible quality.

A large amount of literature focused on the issue of quality in social services and healthcare deals with the general definition of the term quality itself and the discussion of various approaches to quality. For example, Křivohlavý (2003) reminds us that the word "quality" is derived from the Latin "qualis," which in turn comes from the root "qui" – "who?" meaning "who is it?" or "what is it like?" We consider what is individual, tailor-made, to be of higher quality. Quality is a category that describes the level of a product or provided services in quantitative and qualitative terms. Therefore, quality consists of two parts – one part is quantitative, measurable, and the other is qualitative and based on the value system. Quality is a relative, not an absolute category (Holmerová 2014). Theory has not yet agreed on a definition of "quality" (Novák, Svobodová 2022). Possible definitions include meeting or exceeding the expectations of clients and employees (Dvořáková 2020), the level of excellence characterizing the provided service based on accepted standards, or objectively defined measurable benefit expressed by standardized necessity and the expected, usual outcome of the service by experts (Matoušek, Pazlarová 2021).

Quality in social services is therefore often defined as the extent to which services meet the needs and expectations of users. This includes not only the effectiveness and efficiency of the provided services but also their availability, accessibility, safety, and respect for human dignity. Quality is thus a complex concept that encompasses various aspects from organizational structures and processes to individual user experiences.

In the Czech Republic, the issue of quality in social services became the subject of intensive research, especially after the adoption of Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services. This law introduced new quality standards and control mechanisms aimed at improving the level of provided services.

A study conducted by Mátl (2018) showed that an individualized approach and support for independence have a positive impact on the quality of life of social service users. The research also emphasized the importance of continuous education and supervision of social service workers to ensure high-quality care (Musil 2019).

In Europe, quality in social services is often measured using various standards and indicators set at national and international levels. For example, the European Union has developed a set of quality indicators for social services, which include aspects such as availability, accessibility, efficiency, and user satisfaction.

Research conducted in Germany (Schneider et al. 2016) showed that the quality of care in nursing homes is strongly influenced by personnel factors such as the number and qualifications of employees. The study also emphasized the importance of user participation in decision-making processes as a key factor for improving the quality of services.

In the United Kingdom, quality in social services is often assessed through inspections and audits conducted by independent bodies such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Research conducted by CQC (2018) showed that regular inspections and transparent evaluations can significantly contribute to improving the quality of provided services. Globally, the issue of quality in social services is becoming increasingly important, especially in the context of an aging population and the growing number of people with chronic illnesses and disabilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations are developing various initiatives and programs to support quality in social services.

European and global perspectives on quality in social services are crucial for ensuring that citizens receive effective and dignified care. Significant research, such as QUIP, E-Qalin, and studies by ESN, provide valuable insights and tools for improving the quality of services. The Quality in Personal Social Services (QUIP) project (European Commission, 2015) focused on developing and implementing tools for assessing the quality of personal social services in Europe. The aim was to create a unified framework that would allow

for the comparison of service quality across different countries. The research showed that key factors for ensuring high quality are an individual approach, continuity of care, and user involvement in decision-making processes. E-Qalin (2010) is a European quality model developed specifically for social service facilities. This model includes various tools and methodologies for assessing and improving service quality. The implementation of E-Oalin leads to significant improvements in the quality of care and increased user satisfaction in facilities that have adopted this model. The European Social Network (2018) conducts regular surveys and studies focused on the quality of social services in various European countries. These studies provide valuable information on best practices and challenges faced by social service providers. Research by the European Social Network emphasizes the importance of service integration, professional development of workers, and community involvement for ensuring high-quality services.

These initiatives highlight the importance of an individual approach, continuity of care, and user involvement in decision-making processes, which are key factors for achieving high standards in social services. There are several models for measuring and improving quality in social services that are also available in the Czech Republic. Some models require external implementation, control, or certification, while others are based on self-assessment, self-examination. observation, planning, and control. For some models, it is sufficient to familiarize oneself with the logic of evaluation and work with quality indicators, and then start using these models or their tools in everyday practice. The decision to implement a specific model, certification, or control is not simple and requires consideration of available resources, which can be financial or human. Some facilities have an abundance of human resources, while others, especially those using external models, need sufficient financial resources. The potential for improvement exists for all individuals and organizations. However, only some have the determination and courage to utilize this potential.

We have mentioned quality standards several times above. Quality standards are one of the key elements introduced by Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services. These standards generally define what quality provision of social services should look like. Specifically, it is a set of measurable and verifiable criteria that set the minimum level of quality of social services in the Czech Republic in three main areas: personnel security, operational security, and relationships between the

provider and users of the service. There are a total of 15 quality standards containing 49 criteria. Of these criteria, 17 are considered essential, and their non-compliance can lead to the cancellation of the provider's registration for the given social service. Compliance with these standards is verified through social service inspections. Now we will look at the individual standards in more detail. Procedural standards are the most important of these standards. They establish what the provision of the service should look like, what to pay attention to when dealing with a service applicant, and how to adapt the service to the individual needs of each person. A large part of these standards is devoted to protecting the rights of service users and includes creating protective mechanisms such as procedures for filing complaints and rules against conflicts of interest.

The individual procedural standards are:

- 1. Goals and methods of providing social services The service is obliged to define the goals, mission, and principles of service provision and the target group it focuses on.
- 2. Protection of individuals' rights The service has rules for protecting the basic human rights and freedoms of individuals and describes the procedure in case of their violation.
- 3. Dealing with a service applicant The service applicant is clearly informed about the possibilities and conditions of providing social services, and their requirements and expectations from the service are discussed with them.
- 4. Contract for providing social services A contract is concluded with the user, with the provider ensuring that the person understands the content and purpose of the contract. The scope and course of service provision are planned with regard to the personal goal and possibilities and wishes of the person.
- 5. Individual planning of social services The basis of individual planning is dealing with the applicant, identifying their needs and goals, according to which the provider continuously evaluates their fulfillment.
- 6. Documentation on the provision of social services The provider establishes rules for processing, maintaining, and recording documentation on service users. This standard is particularly important in relation to protecting clients' rights.
- 7. Complaints about the quality or method of providing social services The provider has rules for filing and handling complaints about the quality of service provision and informs users about this possibility.
- 8. Continuity of the provided service with other available resources The service does not try to replace other public services and, on the contrary, enables clients to use them. It thus supports maintaining contacts and relationships with the natural social environment.

(Cf. Novák, Svobodová 2022)

Personnel standards focus on the staffing of services. They are based on the logical assumption that the quality of the service is directly dependent on the staff – their skills and education, leadership and support, and the conditions they have for work. These include:

- 1. Personnel and organizational security of social services Establishes the mandatory organizational structure of employees, their rights and obligations, and qualification requirements.
- 2. Professional development of employees This standard sets the methodology for employee evaluation, their financial and moral appreciation, and the way information is exchanged.

Personnel management is an important part of the provided service, especially due to its strong connection to user satisfaction. Quality and pleasant staff are one of the main sources of positive service evaluation by clients. The staff is also dependent on the quality fulfillment of other standards, such as the protection of individuals' rights, dealing with applicants, or individual planning.

Finally, operational standards define the conditions for providing social services. They focus on the premises where services are provided, availability, economic security of services, and quality development. Operational standards are:

- 1. Local and temporal availability of the provided service For the use of the service, the chosen place and time of provision are crucial. This depends on the type of provided service and the target group to which the service is provided. Poorly designed place and time of provision can result in non-use of the service, despite its high quality. Different times of provision will be for field services compared to residential ones, which usually operate continuously. The needs of users can also change over time, so good practice is to continuously check whether the place and time of provision still suit the clients (Cf. Čámský, Sembdner, Krutilová 2011).
- 2. Information about the provided social service The provider has developed a set of information about the provided service in a form understandable to the group of people to whom the service will be provided. Only if the service applicant has enough information can they be convinced that they made the right choice when selecting the service (Cf. Čámský, Sembdner, Krutilová 2011). When choosing the form in which the public will be informed about the service, the target group plays a crucial role. For example, the elderly who are the subjects of this work cannot rely on the use of the Internet, and due to

their reduced self-sufficiency or ability to understand, they may not even understand leaflets or brochures.

- 3. Environment and Conditions The service ensures appropriate material, technical, and hygienic conditions. The influence of the environment is another important criterion for evaluating the service by users, especially in residential facilities.
- 4. Emergency and Crisis Situations The provider has written procedures for handling emergency and crisis situations, and these are communicated to both staff and users.
- 5. Improving the Quality of Social Services The provider continuously monitors and evaluates whether the method of service provision aligns with the defined mission, goals, and principles of the social service and the personal goals of individual users. Additionally, the provider has established rules for assessing user satisfaction with the provided service. This standard is interconnected with all previous ones and culminates the provider's efforts to achieve a high level of service quality. The tool for achieving quality in this case is continuous verification and evaluation (Cf. Čámský, Sembdner, Krutilová 2011).

Current situation and issues in the field of social services

Social services are a key element of social policy that ensures support and care for various population groups, including seniors, people with disabilities, families in crisis, and homeless individuals. The current situation in the field of social services is influenced by several factors, including demographic changes, economic conditions, and legislative adjustments. This text will focus on summarizing current issues and problems in the field of social services, with a particular emphasis on financing, the shortage of qualified workers, and legislative changes.

Demographic and Social Changes – One of the main factors affecting social services is the aging population. According to data from the Czech Statistical Office (2021), the proportion of people over 65 years old in the Czech Republic is continuously increasing, which places growing demands on the capacity and quality of social services. A similar trend can be observed in other European countries, requiring adaptation and development of new forms of care and support.

Aging is a natural physiological process that involves a number of changes affecting the organism. Changes in the physical field are reflected in education primarily by worsening resistance to adverse and disruptive influences, loss of energy, by reducing sensory capacity (Cf. Špatenková, Smékalová 2015).

Financing of social services is one of the biggest problems faced by providers of these services. In the Czech Republic, social services are financed from several sources, including the state budget, regional and municipal budgets, and also from user contributions. However, as shown by a study conducted by the Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic (2020), these sources are often insufficient to cover the growing costs of providing quality services. The lack of financial resources leads to problems with the sustainability and development of social services. Providers often face financial constraints that prevent them from investing in the modernization of facilities, increasing employee salaries, and expanding capacities. This situation negatively impacts the quality of provided services and user satisfaction.

Another serious problem is the shortage of qualified workers in social services. According to research conducted by the Association of Social Service Providers of the Czech Republic (2023), one of the main reasons for this shortage is the low attractiveness of the profession in social services, caused by low salaries, high workload, and insufficient career growth opportunities. The shortage of qualified workers has a direct impact on the quality of provided services. Higher workload and lack of personnel often lead to employee burnout, which can negatively affect their ability to provide quality care and support. This problem is particularly serious in the context of the growing demand for social services due to the aging population.

The legislative framework for providing social services is constantly evolving to reflect changing needs and conditions. In the Czech Republic, the key legislative document was Act No. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services, which introduced new quality standards and control mechanisms. However, as shown by an analysis conducted by the Institute for Social Policy (2020), further legislative adjustments are needed to effectively address current problems in the field of social services. One of the main goals of legislative changes is to improve the financing of social services. This includes not only increasing financial resources but also introducing more effective mechanisms for their distribution and control. Another important goal is to improve working conditions and the attractiveness of the profession in social services, which should include increasing salaries, improving working conditions, and developing career growth opportunities.

The issue of financing and the shortage of qualified workers is not specific only to the Czech Republic but is also relevant in other

European and global countries. For example, in the United Kingdom, the issue of financing social services has become the subject of intense public debate, especially in the context of an aging population and rising care costs (Care Quality Commission 2018).

In Germany, the government is trying to address the shortage of qualified workers through various initiatives, including increasing salaries and improving working conditions (Schneider et al. 2016). Similar initiatives can be observed in other European countries, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to solving these problems.

Among the priorities or possible, necessary changes, according to Stárek and Zpěvák (2024), we can include:

Support for informal care – Adding caregivers as a target group of the law, including a legal definition.

Care allowance – Adding the obligation for care allowance applicants to provide the account holder's name to which the allowance will be sent. Adding the obligation for the Regional Branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic, which controls the use of the care allowance, to apply the control procedure.

Changes in the types of social services — Adding subsidiarity to the basic principles of the law. Defining community-based social services. Merging residential social services (homes for seniors, homes with special regimes, and homes for people with disabilities) into a new social service "social care home." Expanding the basic activities of home care services to include "assistance in ensuring safety and the possibility of staying in the natural social environment," expanding shelters to include people with substance dependencies, and some other services to include the activity "training skills for obtaining housing..." Expanding the range of people provided with home care services free of charge, expanding the target group of specialized social counseling to include people at risk of dependencies and victims of gender-based violence. Adjusting respite services (defining a transitional period).

Establishing a standard for material-technical and personnel security of social services - a legal regulation will contain a closer adjustment of the standards.

Introducing a valorization mechanism for maximum fees for social services - Increasing for the calendar year according to legally defined conditions.

Changes in the quality of social services - Revising the obligations of social service providers (a revision of the quality standards of social services in the implementing regulation will follow) + adding obligations aimed at protecting the rights of vulnerable clients. Following the change in obligations, adjusting offenses and creating a new offense in the area of client rights protection + adjusting the definition of legal quality.

Changes in measures restricting the movement of persons - Abolishing the mandatory sequence of using partial measures to reduce client aggression and respecting an individual approach. Adjusting the obligation to record the use of measures. Removing the measure (administering a medicinal product in the presence of a summoned doctor).

Changes in the registration of social services - Introducing a preliminary step for those interested in registering a social service. Adding the obligation for the registrar to issue a decision on changing the registration without a prior request from the provider in case of changes in relevant data in the basic registers. Adjusting the registration process, including making changes contained in the register. The changes will concern the registration procedure for social services, the provider's application for social service registration, data recording, and the provider's application for registration change. Adjusting the definition of the register and its content, including dividing the register into a public and non-public part.

Changes in the scope of ensuring social services + Ensuring social work - Defining the performance of social work activities by social workers of the municipal office of type III, including adding the term social worker – social curator. The obligation of the authorized municipal office to actively search for entities providing social services without authorization.

Changes in the qualification for performing social worker activities - Clearly specifying that the performance of social work activities is ensured by the regional office through social workers. Adding and specifying the exhaustive list of social worker activities based on practical experience, including new areas of social work activities. Adjusting study fields due to changes that have occurred since the law came into effect. It is proposed to add the area of performance of leading workers in social services.

Discussion

The current situation in the field of social services is influenced by a number of factors, including demographic changes, economic conditions, and legislative adjustments. The main problems are the lack of financial resources and qualified workers, which negatively affects the quality of provided services. Solving these problems requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that includes improving financing, working conditions, and the legislative framework. International experiences show that it is necessary to seek innovative and effective solutions that will reflect the changing needs and conditions in the field of social services.

Despite progress in the quality of social services, many challenges remain. These include, for example, the shortage of qualified personnel, financial constraints, and the need for better coordination between different sectors and services. Research also shows that there is a need to focus more on the individual needs and preferences of users and to improve user participation in decision-making processes.

Technological innovations offer new possibilities for improving the efficiency and quality of social services. For example, the use of telemedicine, digital platforms for care management, and other technological tools can facilitate communication between providers and clients, improve the monitoring and evaluation of services, and reduce administrative burdens. However, the implementation of these technologies requires investments and training, which can be challenging for some organizations.

Effective provision of social services often requires collaboration between different sectors, including healthcare, education, housing, and employment. An integrated approach can ensure that clients receive comprehensive support that takes into account all aspects of their lives. Creating partnerships and coordination between different service providers is the key to achieving this goal.

It is also necessary to mention the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on social services. Increased demand for services, restrictions on personal contact, and the need to adhere to hygiene measures presented new challenges. Organizations had to quickly adapt their procedures and find new ways to provide support, such as through online services. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of social services and the need for their adequate funding and support. In the future, it is important to continue developing and implementing quality standards that will reflect the changing needs and expectations

of users. It is also necessary to support research and innovation in the field of social services to continuously improve the quality and efficiency of provided services.

Conclusion

The concept of quality in social work and social services is closely linked to the everyday reality of services provided in nursing homes, counseling centers for people in need, children's homes, or day care centers. When we enter these facilities as clients, we expect a friendly approach from the staff, competent advice or service, and a pleasant environment. These expectations shape our opinions on whether the services are of high quality or not. On the other hand, providers and service commissioners also emphasize other factors, such as economic outcomes, which can be crucial for ensuring a sufficient number of staff and their satisfaction. The quality of social work is a complex area where the interests of many actors intersect. For social workers, an interest in quality and its development can be a tool to make their work more transparent and professional. However, the concept of quality can also have negative connotations, for example, in connection with the intrusion of management and efforts to economize social work, which can lead to the perception of social work as a commodity and the client as a customer in the commercial sector. Ouality requirements can mean increased administrative burden. overload, and less time for direct work with clients for social workers. For clients, this can mean unclear outcomes or higher financial copayments for services.

Social work organizations today find themselves in a difficult situation, characterized by the reduction of public spending on the social sector. They face competition in the contests for public funds or clients and must demonstrate their results. Clients of social workers often become more active partners and want to co-create the shape of services. When monitoring client satisfaction, it is important not to forget the satisfaction of social workers. It is increasingly important for organizations to provide services in a quality and economical manner. Social workers must learn to describe, plan, develop, and cost services. Social work organizations must develop quality standards for their services and manage the demands of inspections or audits. Knowledge in the field of quality management can help manage these demands, but it is not a solution to all the problems of social organizations. The topic of quality in social work is part of broader social, economic, and

political contexts. This publication can provide readers with orientation in the basic tools for ensuring and developing the quality of social work and social services. The actions of social workers should be based on current knowledge, which should be reflected from the perspective of experience and practice.

In the Czech social work environment, the prevailing opinion is that the quality of social work equals the quality standards of social services. This narrow concept of the quality of social work also prevails in Czech professional literature. However, in Western European countries, there is a broader view of quality that includes other aspects besides professional standards. It will be interesting to see how this development of various quality methods will influence the current socio-economic development and whether social work organizations will manage to overcome financial difficulties without compromising the quality of services. The current situation rather suggests a reduction in the development of social work and social services, although adverse conditions may stimulate the emergence of new work methods or forms of social work organizations.

The conflict between professional approaches and approaches from the traditionally market area within quality is present throughout the professional discussion and in this publication. The relationship between these two areas is constantly evolving. On the one hand, the topic of quality and quality management in social work contributes to higher client satisfaction and awareness and to the positive development of the organization, but on the other hand, it can lead to the reduction of social work to counting time spent with clients or the capacity of facilities.

The current situation in social services is complex and requires coordinated efforts at all levels – from government policies to individual service providers. Ensuring sufficient financial resources, supporting qualified personnel, implementing technological innovations, and improving cooperation between different sectors are key steps to ensuring high-quality and sustainable social services. Discussion on these issues is essential for finding effective solutions and ensuring that social services will be able to fulfill their mission in the future.

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