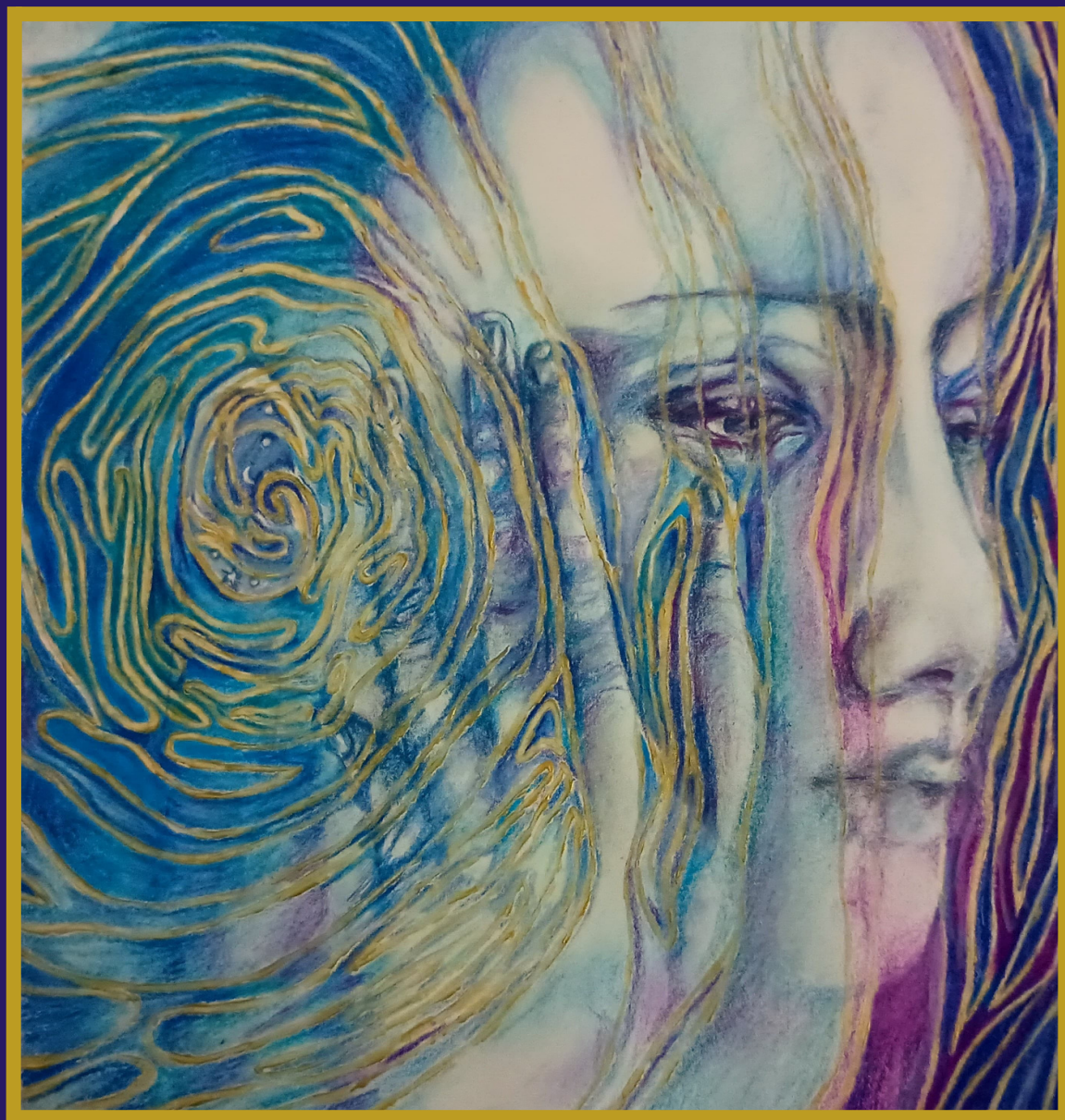




VOLUME I, 2026

EPISTEME

A JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES



ANATOMY OF POLYCRISIS

**DEPARTMENT OF B.A. PROGRAMME
LADY SHRI RAM COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**

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*To the Department that led us here and
the team that brought it to life,*

A Note from the Teacher-in-charge: Prof. Jyoti Darbari

I am delighted to introduce the maiden issue of our department's journal, *Episteme: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, Volume I (2026)*. The choice of name for the journal is based on the philosophy of the programme itself, namely, the idea of pursuing knowledge, the unity of ideas from different fields, and the academic conscience, which thrives on dialogue.

The members of the editorial board, appointed in January, called upon contributors to submit essays under the theme *Anatomy of Polycrisis*, which draws inspiration from the multiple challenges faced today, ranging from environmental concerns to global health emergencies. During the last semester, we have been engaged in crafting this journal together, culminating in an artful cover and wonderful writing. The essays contained herein capture the breadth of intellectual interests of the Department, spanning issues ranging from climate justice, community cohesion, dispossession, media ethics, history of racial relations, mental well-being, gendered identities, and changing cultures of sport within the context of digitized worlds. Despite their diversity in terms of focus, they are all characterized by a common concern with issues related to inequality, identity, care, and belonging in a time of overlapping crises. They therefore offer a demonstration of the spirit of interdisciplinarity that is at the heart of the B.A. Programme.

We hope that this volume heralds the creation of a new intellectual platform where interdisciplinary discussion, critical thinking, and collaborative inquiry can thrive. I congratulate the editorial team and the faculty advisors for bringing out this thoughtful inaugural issue. This journal sets a strong foundation and a high benchmark, and I am confident it marks the beginning of many such meaningful publications in the years ahead.

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

We are immensely honoured to present the inaugural edition of the B.A. Programme Department's Academic Journal, *Episteme: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, Volume I (2026)*. Inspired by thinkers like Aristotle and Foucault, this journal aims to build a space where knowledge is sought with rigour, curiosity and the pursuit of truth. The strength of the Department lies in its ability to amalgamate different disciplines and produce discourses that break barriers. Hence, *Episteme* stands as the structure, one that is large enough to invite critical exploration, but firm enough to never forget its ethos and values.

As the founding members of this journal, we undertook this endeavour with unparalleled love and excitement. What began as a nascent idea in our classrooms found fruition in the publication of our first edition. The theme, *Anatomy of Polycrisis*, was inspired by the reality we live in. From ecological instability and economic volatility to political conflicts and global pandemics, this age has witnessed the heights of convenience and the trenches of trust. The theme of our journal runs like a current through all the works published in this edition. There is concordance in their spirit, complementing the differences in perspectives and approaches.

All the papers in this volume adhere to the guidelines of the APA 7th edition and have been formatted accordingly. The papers have also undergone rigorous checks for plagiarism and AI use. We offer apologies for any inconsistencies or inadequacies in our journal that may have been overlooked. In each subsequent edition, we hope to better ourselves and present scholarships of excellent quality.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the staff advisors, Dr Thuanbina Gangmei, Mr Abhijit Maity for their mentorship and feedback, especially during times of editorial uncertainty, to the teacher-in-charge of our department, Professor Jyoti Darbari and the principal, Professor Kanika Ahuja for giving us this opportunity. Further, we would like to thank the members of the Editorial and Design Team, without whose efforts this publication would not have been actualised. We would also like to specially mention Shreya Karn, a 1st year student of our department, who designed and illustrated the cover page. This note would be incomplete without acknowledging the BA Programme Union (2025-2026) who empowered us to take on this initiative.

Our journey as Editors-in-Chief has been tumultuous and short-lived, yet beautiful because of the people we shared it with. Being in our final year, we pass the baton on to a new batch of students who will take this collective forward. We wish them the best.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we enjoyed creating it!

Yours,

Aiyana Faith Lyngdoh Iangrai

(Third-year student of BA Programme - Political Science and Psychology)

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Editors-in-Chief (2026)

Introduction

An all encompassing theme like *Anatomy of Polycrisis* was chosen to let the doors for submissions be as wide open as possible. This being our inaugural edition, we hoped to invite scholarly works from all of our disciplines on a multitude of phenomena. However, a few works that do not fit the rubric of the theme entirely have been accepted for the journal to encourage critical inquiry in our peers without restricting the scope. Research papers that align with the theme have been given priority and are followed by off themed submissions and both these groups are arranged in the alphabetical order of their titles.

Climate Care Burden: Quantifying Women's Unpaid Labour Surge from Climate Shocks in India's Polycrisis investigates the unfair reality of women across India during times of climate crisis. Using secondary data, the author attempts to test this relation empirically. The research paper's macroeconomic implications provides context to the role of gendered division of labour during times of ecological instability witnessed more frequently in today's world. The author attempts to answer the age-old question in economics about quantifying women's unpaid labour, but this time, specifically through the specialised lens of the climate crisis.

Communalism: Social Awakening or Artificial Dividend? analyses the debate between the two contesting views in the scholarship on communalism, one that bases the phenomena simply on religious differences of communities and the other that understands it as a strategic politically manufactured division orchestrated by the British in India. This paper studies seminal works in this sub-domain to unfold the complexity of Indian communalism, its history and its contemporary manifestation.

Press Freedom and Safety in Crisis and Conflict explores the predicament journalists find themselves in in conflict prone regions of the world. The research paper documents the crimes against journalists and state restrictions on press freedom from the 1960s to the current times. The Vietnam War, Afghanistan under Taliban, Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine are each studied in depth to reveal the extent of violation of existing institutional and legal frameworks built to protect the freedom and the lives of journalists.

No Home, No Return: Internal Displacement and the Erosion of Belonging in Manipur is an exposition on the sustained violence in Manipur that has led to widespread internal displacement. The article examines the roots of the violence and grounds it in the anxieties about access to resources and the failure of the state machinery. The author argues that the violence and the internal displacement feed into each other as the fleeing communities have organised themselves into ethnically segregated zones creating hard impermeable boundaries. The displacement has caused psychological distress due to a loss of identity and belonging.

The Epigenetics of Inequality: Intergenerational Transmission of Jim Crow-Era Trauma and Institutionalized Racism in Black American Lineages explores the phenotypic trajectory of Black lineages in the Jim Crow South and how the ancestors of these individuals still possess trauma and psychological lacerations despite not being subjected to legal segregation. The article details the lives of the African Americans under the operation of the “Separate but Equal” Laws which institutionalised segregation between the whites and the blacks and focuses on how ancestral trauma continues to manifest in forms of chronic illnesses and health disparities, regardless of varied socio-political contexts.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Its Impact on Romantic Relationships, as the name suggests, studies how ADHD impacts romantic relationships differently based on gender. Using peer reviewed datasets, it determines the varied impact, reporting how women with ADHD are more prone to experiencing declining relationship satisfaction, while men show hypersexual behaviours driven by impulsivity. It also explores the cultural gap between gender norms and the manifestation of ADHD.

Feminine Melancholy among Creative and Intellectual Women employs thematic analysis to explore female melancholy among literary figures from the 19th and 20th century, namely Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath and Kabambari Devi. The paper draws upon psychological frameworks to highlight that melancholy in these contexts cannot be understood merely as individual psychopathology but as a complex interaction among factors such as intellect, emotion and gendered experiences. It studies the varied experiences of melancholy due to culture and structural frameworks, emphasising on the necessity of systemic change in addressing women's mental health.

Sports Viewership and Participation Through the Lens of New Media uses a sample of 31 participants to propose the effects of social media on the outlook of a number of areas in sports by both sportspersons and non-sportspersons. The author uses focused group discussions and an online survey to achieve the objectives of the study. The paper contributes significantly to the domain of sports studies by being a platform where women's opinions on sports are analysed theoretically and empirically, which is often unheard of.

True to the spirit of the Department of B.A. Programme, these eight articles invite curious minds to learn more, whether it's on climate care or epigenetics, refusing to be bound by one discipline. They detail insights from varied fields and provide readers the chance to absorb academic work in a manner that opens their minds and prompts further questions.

Climate Care Burden: Quantifying Women's Unpaid Labour Surge from Climate Shocks in India's Polycrisis

Aditi Arya¹ | aditiarya.contact@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper analyses the connection between climate shock and the gendered division of labour within households in India's urban areas. The researcher uses secondary data sets such as the Time Use Survey (2019), the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2024), and climate shock data collected by the Indian Meteorological Department to analyse the impact of climate shock on household labour distribution. Descriptive statistics, regression methods, and macroeconomic models are used to examine the relationship between climate shocks and unpaid work. The author concludes that extreme weather events such as heatwaves and floods increase unpaid work for women. This demonstrates the relationship between infrastructure disruption and the unpaid work burden. The author argues that climate shocks are not just environmental crises but also care crises, which have implications for gender inequality and economic resilience.

Keywords: unpaid care work; climate shocks; gender inequality; heatwaves;

¹Bio-note: Aditi Arya is a finance graduate, currently in her first year of M.com at the School of Open Learning, University of Delhi, India. Her research interests lie at the intersection of climate economics, gender studies, sustainable development, and public policy, with a particular focus on unpaid care work and its socio-economic implications. She has authored several papers including “Strategic Consulting for Venture Capital and Private Equity: Unlocking Portfolio Growth and Exit Opportunities”, “Edufusion: Integrating Artificial Intelligence With Teaching Practices to Enhance Learning Experiences ” and “Consumer Behaviour towards acceptance of Electronic Vehicle”

care economy; female labour force participation; climate resilience; household vulnerability

Introduction: Climate Shocks and the Invisible Care Economy

India is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world in the face of climate change. Climate change is resulting in an increase in the frequency of extreme climatic changes like heatwaves, fluctuating monsoon patterns, and flooding in cities (India Meteorological Department [IMD], 2023). While the impact of these climatic changes is often considered in relation to their impact on infrastructure and the economy, the most immediate impact is on families and households. Basic activities like the availability of potable water, the provision of meals, the management of family members, and the provision of adequate sanitation facilities are becoming far more time-consuming. These are a part of the care economy, which is the invisible economy that is necessary for the functioning of families and societies.

A recent series of climatic changes is a case in point. In May 2024, temperatures above 45°C caused disruptions in the supply of electricity, water, and transportation in some cities in India. In some cases, like the cities of Mumbai and Bengaluru, which have been experiencing floods on a regular basis, disruptions in the supply of sanitation facilities, drinking water, and transportation have been experienced. However, in all these cases, the responsibility of ensuring the continuity of family and domestic activities rests on the shoulders of women.

The responsibility is a heavily gendered one. For example, in India, as revealed in the Time Use Survey, women spend 299 minutes per day on unpaid domestic and care work, as opposed to men, who spend 97 minutes per

day (Government of India, 2020). Climate shocks add to these responsibilities. For example, in the case of heatwaves, women in urban settlements may spend hours waiting for water tankers from the municipality due to water shortages.

Figure 1

Women Fetch Water From a Freshwater Tank in a Village in Tamil Nadu.



Note. From Women fetch water from a freshwater tank in a village in Tamil Nadu, India [Photograph], by F. Stark, 2009, Alamy (<https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-women-fetch-water-from-a-freshwater-tank-in-a-village-in-tamil-nadu-27156649.html>). Copyright 2009 by Friedrich Stark.

These loads have significant economic consequences. For example, despite an increase in educational levels, the female labour force participation rate in India is one of the lowest in the emerging economies of the world, ranging from 35-37 per cent (Periodic Labor Force Survey, 2024). This has been attributed to the emergence of time poverty due to unpaid care work

(Ferrant et al., 2014; Rao, 2023), although the effect of climate shocks has not been given significant attention in this context. The article aims to bridge this knowledge gap by assessing the effect of climate shocks on unpaid care work in urban India and its implications for women's labour force participation in the context of polycrisis (Tooze, 2022).

Literature Review: Climate, Gender, and the Care Economy

Climate, Gender, and the Care Economy

Climate shocks like heatwaves, floods, and water scarcity are recognised as affecting people's lives, particularly at the household level. While these shocks are often talked about in terms of the damage they have caused or the economic loss they have entailed, their immediate effects are often considered in relation to the demands they place on households. Across many countries in the world, these demands are placed on women, and the role of unpaid care work has been an important but understudied aspect of the impacts of climate change. The scholarship on the relationship between unpaid care work and climate change has been discussed in the following three strands.

Gendered Division of Labour

In addition, feminist economists emphasise the significance of unpaid care work as the unseen basis of the economy. Unpaid care work includes taking care of children, preparing meals, and maintaining homes, which are essential for supporting labour markets but remain unpaid and, therefore, unaccounted for in the economy (Folbre, 2012). Results from the Time Use Survey conducted in India showed that women spend approximately 299-352 minutes daily on unpaid care work, which is more than the amount of time men spend

(Government of India, 2020). In the world, women and girls spend more than 12.5 billion unpaid care work hours daily, contributing an estimated \$10.8 trillion to the economy annually (Oxfam, 2023). This has been attributed to the presence of gender stereotypes, which have made women take the responsibility of unpaid care work, thereby causing women to experience time poverty (Ferrant et al., 2014).

Climate Change, Gendered Vulnerability and Economic Productivity

Studies have increasingly shown that climate change is a contributor to inequalities. The feminist political ecology is a theory that suggests that climate change is affecting the environment, and this, in turn, is affecting the socially disadvantaged. According to reports from UN Women (2024), it was shown that climate change was increasing the time spent on water collection by 20-30 per cent, especially in informal settlements. Lack of investment in care services, such as childcare, healthcare, and basic utilities, makes households work harder to compensate for this by providing more unpaid work (Elson, 2017). The literature has also highlighted that there is a lack of consideration of gender labour in adaptation policies to ensure household resilience (Rao, 2023).

Literature Gap

However, few studies attempt to quantify the impact of climate shocks on unpaid care labour. Additionally, there is limited application of the phenomenon of "Polycrisis," wherein various crises, such as environmental, economic, and social crises, intersect with each other. The present study seeks to bridge this literature gap by exploring the impact of climate shocks on unpaid care labour in urban India.

Conceptual Framework: Climate Polycrisis and the Care Burden

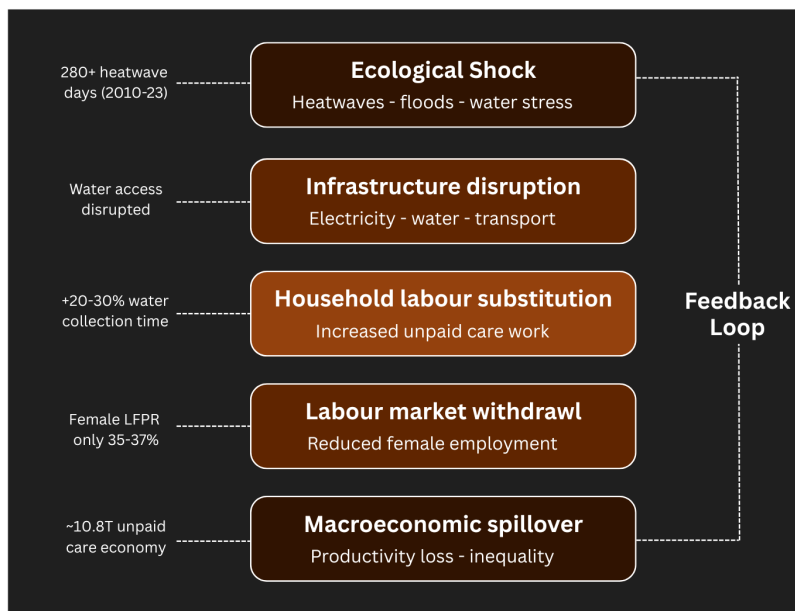
- Today's crises tend to be felt as interconnected rather than as discrete shocks. This has been characterised by Adam Tooze as polycrisis, wherein crises intersect and mutually intensify each other's effects (Tooze, 2022). In this understanding of crises, climate change is both cause and catalyst.
- In urban India, climate-related disruptions such as heatwaves, floods, and water scarcity often affect critical public services such as electricity, sanitation, transport, and water supply (India Meteorological Department [IMD], 2023). When these infrastructures fail, families must adapt and compensate to restore their normal functioning. This often results in household labor substitution; wherein increased unpaid work emerges as a substitute for failing public services.
- There is evidence that this transformation is extremely gendered. Already, women contribute disproportionately to unpaid domestic and caregiving tasks, and disruptions caused by climate change add to this burden (Ferrant et al., 2014; Government of India, 2020). Finding water in times of shortages, dealing with sanitation in times of floods, or handling heat-related diseases increase the time burden of women.
- Economic ramifications are also brought about by these pressures. Women might decrease the time they spend working at work or even quit the labour market as unpaid care work escalates. This has an economic impact since it influences the total level of income that households have. At a more practical level, it has an impact on economic productivity and inequality (Elson, 2017; Rao, 2023).

So, we can see that this polycrisis involving climate change and care can be described as a feedback loop:

Climate shocks -> Infrastructure disruption -> Increase in unpaid care labour -> Decrease in women's labour participation -> Decrease in income

Figure 2

Climate Care Polycrisis Feedback Loop



Note. Sources: IMD, UN Women, ILO, Oxfam

Measuring the Hidden Burden: Data and Analytical Approach

In exploring the impact of climate shocks on unpaid care work and labour participation, this article entirely depends on secondary data sources. In this regard, secondary data sources are synthesized using an analytic framework. In this way, the article is able to incorporate climate change variables with

labour and time series statistics. This section briefly describes the data sources, the context, and the analysis.

Data Sources and Variables

The analysis relies on four major secondary data sets, which are commonly used in gender and labor studies:

- The Time Use Survey (TUS) 2019 by the Government of India provides the estimation of the time spent doing household tasks that are unpaid. This survey shows that gender disparity in time use is high, with women dedicating 299 minutes per day to domestic chores (unpaid work) and men dedicating 97 minutes per day (Government of India, 2020). This forms the background information on which to estimate gender allocations in the area of unpaid work.
- To substantiate these data, one more important source in this research is the Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) data which provides information on trends in terms of labor participation. According to the PLFS, the current estimates of the female labor force participation rate in India are 35-37 per cent (Periodic Labor Force Survey, 2024).
- The data on the climate change variables, including the days of heatwave and extreme precipitation events has been used by the study to measure the exposure of the environment using the data provided by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- The research has utilised the productivity and labour participation data obtained by the World Bank to measure the macroeconomic implications in general.

Table 1*Summary of Datasets and Key Variables Used in the Study*

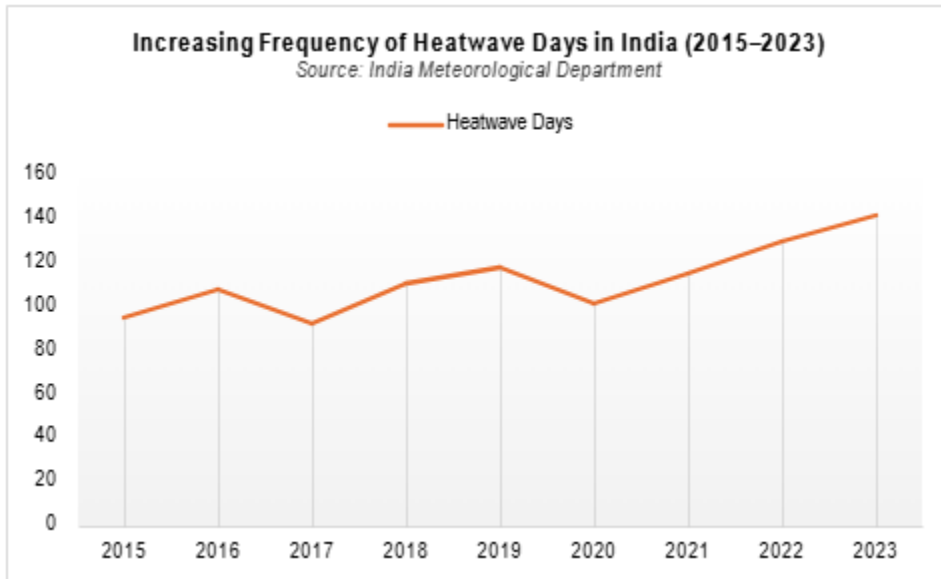
Dataset / Source	Indicator / Variable	Key Value / Statistic
National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) – Time Use Survey	Women’s unpaid care work time	299–352 minutes per day
National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) – Time Use Survey	Men’s unpaid care work time	~97 minutes per day
Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)	Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)	35–37%
Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)	Heatwave exposure	280+ heatwave days (2010–2023)
UN Women	Increase in water collection time	20–30% rise in affected regions
Oxfam Global Inequality Reports	Global unpaid care work	12.5 billion hours per day
Oxfam Global Inequality Reports	Monetary value of the global care economy	\$10.8 trillion annually
World Bank Development Indicators	GDP productivity indicators	Global productivity metrics

Context: Climate-Exposed Urban Systems

The analysis is premised on big cities in India that are the most impacted by climate shocks. Heatwaves, water shortages, and floods have become a routine phenomenon in cities like Mumbai and Delhi impacting electricity, transport, and sanitation infrastructure (IMD, 2023). In these instances, individuals can respond to the shock of infrastructure by providing more unpaid labor particularly in caring and managing resources.

Figure 3

Increasing Frequency of Heatwave Days in India (2015–2023)



Note. This trend illustrates the growing intensity of ecological shocks that potentially reshape household labour allocation patterns.

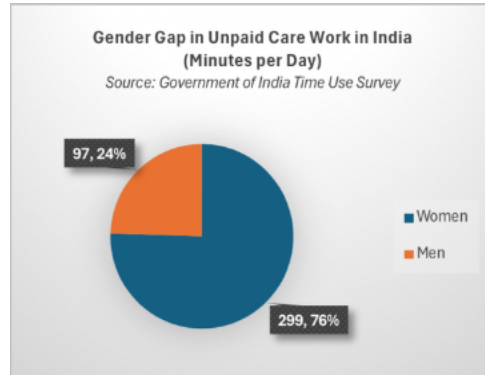
Analytical Strategy

The research uses three analytical methods, which are complementary, to explore the relationship between climate and care.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis: The Time Use Survey and PLFS descriptive statistics are used to explain the current gender disparities in unpaid care and participation in the labour force. These figures give the background conditions under which climate change is interacting with the household labour dynamics.

Figure 4

Gender Gap in Unpaid Care Work in India (Minutes per Day)



Regression-Based Analytical Model: To determine the nexus between the exposure to climate and care labour, the following regression model is used in the study:

The model considers unpaid care work to be an activity of climate shocks and household characteristics. The literature shows that the distribution of time at home is influenced by environmental changes (Ferrant et al., 2014; Rao, 2023).

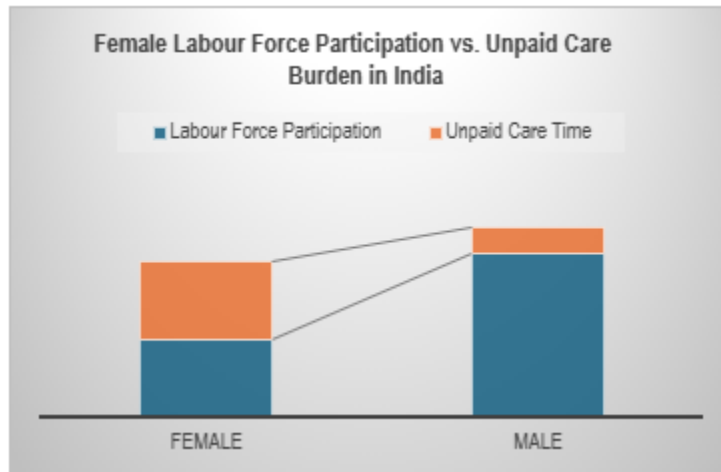
Regression model: Methodology. To explore the relationship between climate shocks and unpaid care labour, a multiple linear regression model was estimated using secondary data for the period 2015–2023. Female unpaid care time (minutes per day) was used as the dependent variable, while heatwave days, flood events, and average household size were included as explanatory variables. The model was estimated using Microsoft Excel’s regression tool, and detailed outputs are provided in the supplementary dataset.

Table 2*Regression Results – Climate Exposure and Unpaid Care Work*

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	p-value
Heatwave Days	-0.011	0.225	0.962
Flood Events	-0.136	1.522	0.932
Avg Household Size	-47.146	9.655	0.004
Constant	501.934	54.671	0
Model Statistics			
R²:		0.94	
Adjusted R²:		0.9	
F-statistic:		26.21	
Model significance:		p = 0.0017	
Interpretation			
The overall regression model is statistically significant because:		p= 0.0017 < 0.05	

Note. Source: Author's calculation: Regression analysis using secondary data from Time Use Survey, IMD climate records, and World Bank household statistics.

Macroeconomic Scenario Estimation: Lastly, the article relies on various macroeconomic variables to establish the potential economic impact of declining female labour participation. The variables establish a nexus between unpaid care work and economic outcomes. There are example such as Monte Carlo, where the projection estimates GDP loss due to labour displacement.

Figure 5*Female Labour Force Participation vs. Unpaid Care Burden in India*

Through such an analysis, the article is able to track the influence of climate shocks on infrastructure systems, labour allocation in households, and ultimately labour markets.

Empirical Findings: Climate Shocks and Time Poverty

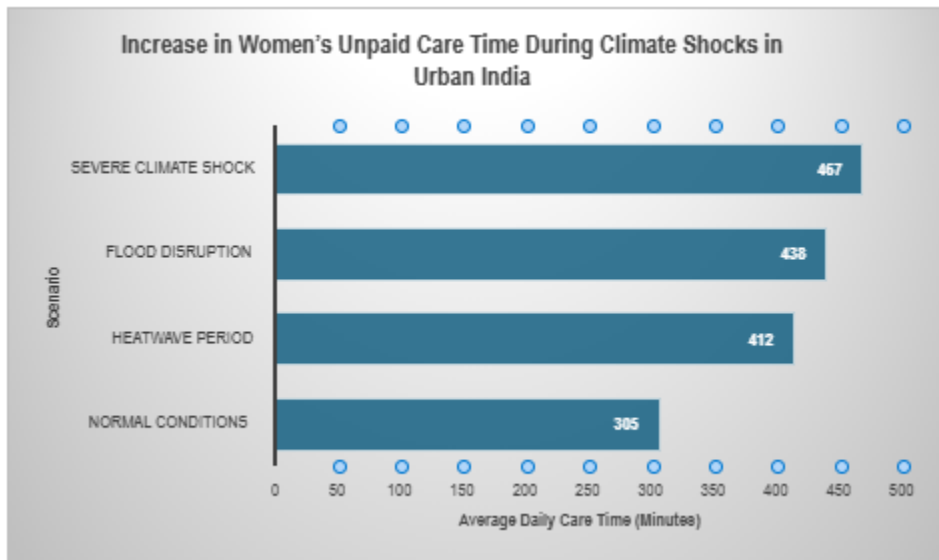
Further, based on the conceptual framework and regression results, the evidence shows an existing relationship between climate-related shocks, unpaid work, and labor participation. Climate-related disruptions increase unpaid work, resulting in time poverty, particularly for women, and consequently economic effects.

Surge in Unpaid Care Labour: The findings indicate that there is a huge growth in unpaid care work in case of climate disruption. In normal conditions, the urban women in the household setting will spend about 305 minutes of their time at home and caring. This increases to almost 467 minutes per day during severe climate conditions such as heatwaves and floods, representing an increase of over 50 percent.

This rise can be explained by three main factors: water shortage in heatwaves, power failures in extreme weather conditions, and the duties of care in case of health risks due to climate disruption. This is an effect of the deteriorating social infrastructure in case of environmental imbalance, which leads to the unpaid workforce and the continuation of gender inequality (Ferrant et al., 2014; Government of India, 2020).

Figure 6

Increase in Women's Unpaid Care Time During Climate Shocks in Urban India



Note. Source: Data compiled using estimates from the Government of India (2020), IMD (2023), and Ferrant et al. (2014).

This figure illustrates how environmental disruptions significantly expand household care responsibilities.

Urban Floods and Household Labour Substitution

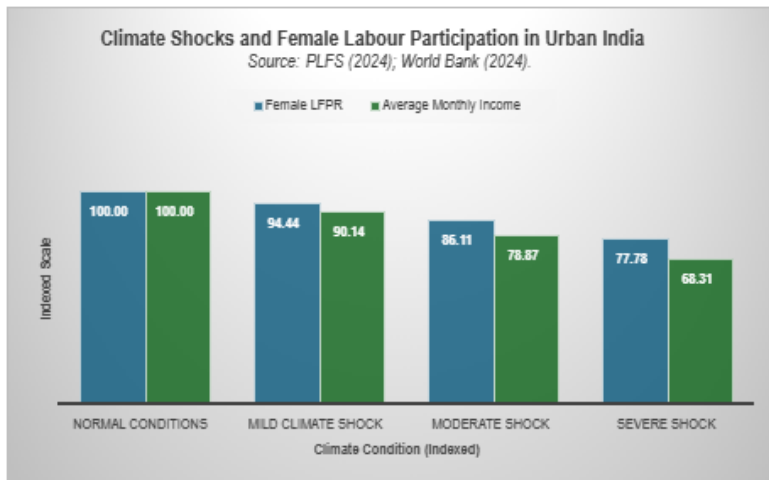
Another example of how failure of infrastructure results in substitution of household labour is in the case of urban flooding. Flooding in cities that lack adequate drainage and sanitation systems impacts the supply of water, transport, and services (India Meteorological Department, 2023).

Under these conditions, women can spend up to four additional hours a day caring about the hygiene of the home, gaining access to water and cooking. This increase in unpaid labour translates to decreased paid labour time, thereby illustrating the idea of household labour substitution during climate change.

Labour Market Exit and Income Loss

Figure 7

Climate Shocks and Female Labour Participation in Urban India



The increased unpaid work has significant implications for participation in the labour market. It has been estimated that 18-23 per cent of

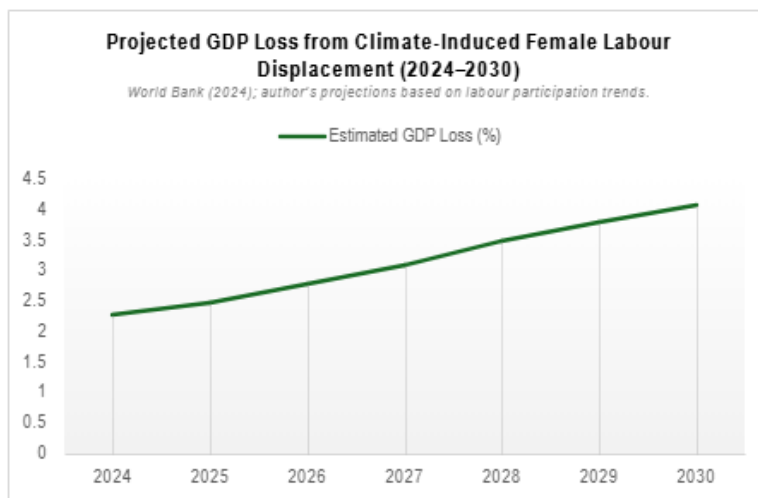
women reduce their paid work hours in extreme climate periods, especially in the informal sector.

This leads to a loss of income, estimated at around ₹4,500, as a result of reduced work hours, affecting the stability of the economy (Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2024). Figure 6 demonstrates how climate disruptions reduce women's labour participation and household income.

Macroeconomic Implications

Figure 8

Projected GDP Loss from Climate-Induced Female Labour Displacement (2024–2030)



This projection highlights the long-term macroeconomic cost of rising unpaid care burdens and declining female labour participation.

In terms of macro-economic effects, unpaid care work has been seen as a contributing factor in overall productivity loss. When combined with data

on labour participation, it has been estimated that the overall loss due to the climate-care burden could be around 2.3 percent annually. In terms of scenario projections, it has been found that without intervention, the loss could rise up to 4.1 percent of GDP by 2030, thus posing an economic risk in terms of the climate-care nexus (World Bank, 2024).

From Crisis to Care: Policy Pathways for a Climate-Resilient Care Economy

The solution to the issue of the climate-care nexus entails policies that acknowledge unpaid care as a vital component of economic security. As the effects of climate change worsen, building care systems and gender-sensitive infrastructure is vital to ensuring the economic security of households as well as women's labour force participation.

Recognising Unpaid Care in Social Protection

An essential action is to include care credits as part of social protection instruments such as pensions or welfare payments. The recognition of unpaid care work is essential in enhancing women's economic security as well as making unpaid care work visible in labour policies (Ferrant et al., 2014; UN Women, 2024).

Climate Resilient Urban Infrastructure

Water access, cooling centres, improved sanitation, and flood-resilient housing are some of the basic urban services that, if improved, would reduce the care burden in the face of climate shocks. Improving basic urban services would

reduce the risk of labor substitution in the face of climate shocks, as emphasised in the World Bank (2024).

Community Care Systems

Community care systems in local communities would provide services such as local care cooperatives, child support services, emergency food services, and local health services. These systems would reduce the care burden in the face of climate shocks.

Gender-Responsive Heat Action Plans

Climate policies in urban areas must also be gender-responsive, as emphasised in the Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan, which includes early warning systems, cooling centres, and health services in the face of extreme heat waves. Improving gender-responsive climate policies would be beneficial in improving public and economic resilience in the face of climate shocks.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that climate shocks reshape household labour dynamics and deepen gender inequalities in the care economy. In addition, disruptions in water, electricity, and sanitation services contribute to the increase in unpaid care work, which is mainly done by women. The increase in unpaid care work leads to time poverty and affects women's labour market participation and income levels. In terms of the polycrisis approach, climate change, infrastructure weakness, and gender inequities interact to form more risks to the economy. To tackle this problem, there must be the recognition of unpaid care work in climate change adaptation efforts. Climate-smart infrastructure, heat action plans that take gender into account, and care

systems can help in minimising unpaid care work and building economic and social resilience.

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Communalism: Social Awakening or Artificial Dividend?

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Abstract

Communalism in India represents one of the most pressing challenges to the unity and democratic pluralism in the postcolonial era. This paper is an attempt to examine the two dominant historiographical interpretations of communalism: one contesting that it emerges organically from the primordial religious antagonisms and deep-rooted social consciousness, and the other perspective that it is largely an artificial construct, with its roots in the institutionalisation of ‘divide and rule’ through British colonial policy and elite political manipulation. The paper traces the origin and evolution of communalism from the reformist and revivalist movements of the 19th century to the constitutional engineering by the colonial state. It argues that communalism cannot be reduced to simplistic analogies of colonial conspiracies or ancient hatred but a contingent and layered process shaped by identity politics and deliberate institutional interventions. This dual inheritance of religious consciousness and structural interventions, moving

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beyond proclaimed binaries, continues to animate the communal discourse in contemporary India

Keywords: communalism, social consciousness, divide and rule, antagonism, colonial intervention

Introduction

According to the report of Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, India has witnessed an alarming 84% rise in communal violence in 2024, as compared to that of previous year. Indian society today is facing the peril of rising polarisation and this entrenching sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is resulting in more episodes of communal conflicts in postcolonial India. In the sphere where there is a tendency for religious communities to view themselves as discrete and antagonistic entities, it is pejorative to understand the underlying root of communalism through the layered and evolving complexities. The debate between these perspectives is not a merely academic exercise in historical causation, but an attempt to understand this intricate phenomenon beyond more simplistic binaries between ‘ancient hatred’ and ‘colonial conspiracies’.

Bipin Chandra, in his work *Historians of Modern India and Communalism* (1984), put forth the view that communalism is a phenomenon where the majority and minority religious ideology and practices confirm the notion of ‘One belief alone is true’ and ‘rest is untrue or incomplete’. Communalism in itself has different aspects - social, psychological, economic and political. Being based on the religious sentiments of the people it has drawn legitimacy from the society’s respect for the past traditions which have not been scientifically understood.

A prominent perspective reduces the complex phenomenon of communalism as an atavistic or irrational outburst of religious sentiments based on the differences among communities and impacted by the rising sense of social and cultural renaissance movement. Another dimension constructs communalism as a politically manufactured division, sustained by the policies of British raj and internalised by the indigenous elites (Bayly, 1988). This paper is an endeavour to analyse these historiographical debates which are at the crossroads to each other. The aim of this study is not to reduce communalism to one dimension but trace the processes through which it has been constructed and contested and as seen through the lens of modern history, perpetuated, even in the modern time.

What is the idea of Communalism?

Communalism in modern India can be understood as the politicisation of religion as the primary axis of social identity and also of collective political action. It has increasingly become an ideology that is creating competing and antagonistic “Us vs Them” sentiments among religiously different communities (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs etc.). It can be understood as Bipan Chandra (1984) points out ‘a belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests. That all the followers of a religion share not only a community of religious interests but also common secular interests.’ This religious community has today become the basis of the organisation of modern politics in India. The communal view asserts that the religious distinction is among Indians, the most fundamental cleavage or distinguishing mark that overrides all other distinctions. It would mean that religious communities are politically monolithic groups having exclusive interests. This invariably leads to the notion that interests of the people following different religions stand juxtaposed to one another. It follows that mutual hostility and

even hatred between these ‘communities’ is and has always been a perpetual element.

However, the phenomenon of communalism in India cannot be reduced to a simple question of prejudice. Rather it represents a deeply political and socially entrenched process through which religious identities have been transformed into rigid, antagonistic categories, deepening the fault lines. Scholars like Bipan Chandra (*Communalism in Modern India* 1984), Gyanendra Pandey (*The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, 1990) Mushirul Hasan (*Will Secular India Survive, Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885–1930*) and Paul Brass (*The Production of Hindu–Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, 2003) have analysed the specific features through which communalism operates in the Indian context. As Bipan Chandra (1998) notes, it has reduced India’s layered identities like caste, language, class, and region into a singular label of ‘Hindu’ or ‘Muslim’. A central feature to this idea is the rewriting of the history into a narrative of permanent conflicts and tensions. Gyanendra Pandey (1990) talks about how this communal discourse selectively recalls the episodes of antagonism while completely ignoring shared traditions such as the Bhakti–Sufi syncretism, composite languages, and cultural exchanges. The ideas as pointed out by Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) also thrive on the construction of an “us versus them.” It shows how this zero-sum framing later underpinned Hindutva politics, where Hindu identity was mobilised against a permanent Muslim ‘other’ The colonial state reinforced these divisions by their sectarian policies making religion a base for politics. Finally, communalism in India often finds expression through episodic violence against the different communities.

Historical Background

The trajectory of communalism in India reveals a historically contingent, rather than primordial phenomenon. In ancient India, identities were organised

more on varna-jati and clan structure along with regional affiliations. Interestingly, the cultural antagonism as later understood was absent in the ancient period. Romila Thapar's essay in *Communalism and the writing of Ancient Indian History* (1990) interrogates the communalist ideologies and role they played in distorting the historiography of early India. It is often argued that communalism is rooted in the privileging of religious identities and the present-day sectarian consciousness dates back in the past. This reduces the dynamic processes of Indian history into binaries of Hindu vs Muslim or Aryan vs non-Aryan. Thapar argues that such readings misappropriate ancient texts and archaeological evidence to legitimise the 'exclusivist' political claims. In this perspective, religious communities are often essentialized as timeless and homogenous. She argues that ancient India society was structured far more by clan, region, caste and political economy and there were less rigid religious divisions as it was more intertwined with polity and economy, rather than as a singular determinant of identities (Thapar, 1990). The methodological flaws in this misinterpretation of communal historiography are the result of selective use of resources, anachronistic interpretations and disregard to the socio-economic and political context.

For a very long time the term 'Muslim India' has been used synonymously with seven centuries of medieval history and it still continues to be very much in circulation. With the advent of Islam in the 7th and 8th centuries and establishment of Delhi sultanate in 1206 were often marked as the however these emergences were more of political contestations, often framed in dynastic or territorial terms, rather than religious. Harbans Mukhia (1983) in his essay '*Medieval Indian History and the Communal Approach*' critiques the communalist interpretation of medieval Indian history as its projection of perpetual conflict between Muslims and Hindus. He argues that such interpretation is ahistorical and presents the image of communal

antagonism in a period marked by political, economic and cultural plurality and vibrance. Mukhia proclaimed that rulers of the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal empire did not govern solely on religious grounds but their policies were more framed on pragmatic concern of power and administrative loyalties than by sectarian interests. This manifested in the architectural, linguistic and devotional traditions, which undercuts the rigid communal divides. The Mughal period was marked by both syncretism as exemplified by Akbars' *Din-i-Illahi*, abolition of *jazia* and promotion of Bhakti-Sufi tradition to the sporadic conflict under Aurangzeb which were more politically motivated than being programmatically communal. Rather than celebrating the dynamism and hybridity of medieval India, the communalist readings have weaponised history to justify the present-age reality of sectarian conflicts (Mukhia, 1983).

The decisive shift occurred under colonial rule, starting with the attempts to institutionalise Hindu-Muslim periodization as evident from James Mill's *History of British India* (1817). While most of the reform movements were inclusive, the valourization of religious identity contributed to the consolidation of cultural nationalism. The Britishers policies like codification of religious identities or separate electorate in 1909, formalized the religious as political category and hence entrenching the rift between the communities. The rise of communal organisations like Muslim league (1906) and Hindu Mahasabha (1915) mobilised the sectarian politics, with major flashpoints being Partition of Bengal (1905), Khilafat movement, Lahore resolution (1940) and ultimately the partition.

Communalism as a Socio-Religious and Cultural Consciousness

The progression of the 19th century early reformists movement which started off as deep-rooted cultural consciousness, took the turn of communal politics in the twentieth century. This transformation has been foregrounded in

different dimensions. The early social and cultural consciousness saw the attempts by both Hindus and Muslims to reconcile with modernity. Organisations such as Brahmo Samaj (1828) by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Prathana Samaj (1867) sought to reform and rationalise Hindu traditions by opposing practices like Sati, Caste discrimination. The aim was to present Hinduism as a purified and ethical faith, based on cultural ethos and traditional values.

Similarly, among Muslims, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan initiated the Aligarh movement, emphasising scientific and modern education and reinterpretation of Islamic values in the age of modernity. David Kopf is of the view that these reform movements often sought to create ‘reconstructed traditions’ which once used to be modern and were rooted in ancient authenticity. However, these reconstructions laid the ground for reforming communities in an exclusivist manner, sowing the seed of religious identity as of prominent value.

While these movements were aimed at creating ‘Indian renaissance’, they also carried the seeds of religious consciousness. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan while advancing for modern to Muslims, also laid the foundation for a separate Muslim socio-political identity. Similarly, Arya Samaj, founded by Dayananda Saraswati, was both reformist as well as revivalist in nature. It promoted its vision through the *Shuddhi* movement which aimed at reconversion of Hinduism from Islam and Christianity. Sumit Sarkar presents these reformist impulses as often being blurred by revivalism, where he states that “community regeneration was imagined less in universalist terms and more in terms of distinct communal solidarities.”

By the late 19th century, Hindu revivalist movements gained strength through cow protection movements which started in the 1880s, through the support of organisations such as Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma sabhas

which aimed at mobilising Hindus. Religious symbols were vehemently used and often in opposition to Muslims, who were traditionally proclaimed as cow slaughters.

Swami Vivekananda, while having a rational and humanist outlook, also spoke of the greatness of Hindu civilisation, giving a push to religious consciousness which in later stages would have a major impact on political landscape through organisations such as Hindu Mahasabha and Hindutva philosophy which envisions India as primarily a Hindu nation. Christophe Jaffrelot (1990), notes in *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, that this was the birth of an ideology that treated religion as conterminous with nationhood. Similarly, Sumit Sarkar (1983) points out that Hindu revivalism “transformed the idiom of nationalism into one that was increasingly religious in tone,” thereby limiting the scope of inclusive sense of nationalism in India.

For Muslims, after the decline of mighty Mughal rule, the period of the 19th century was marked by introspection. Various attempts were made for identity assertion, such as the Deoband Movement (1866), which sought to preserve the orthodox Islamic learning, while on the other hand was Aligarh movement, aiming at modern, western and scientific reformation of the community. Both were responses to the changing realities of the colonial world and emphasised on preserving distinct Muslim identity. The turning point came with the formation of the All-India Muslim league in 1906. Initially, it was loyalist to the Britishers, aiming at preserving the interests of Muslims, as evident from the separate electorate in 1909, which ultimately made Hindus and Muslims as political rivals. Then, the Khilafat movement of 1919-24, brought religion directly into mass politics. Judith Brown is of the view that Khilafat movement reinforced “the political potential of religious identity,” linking local grievances with global Islamic concerns. Ayesha Jalal (1985) in her work, *The Sole Spokesman*, points out the interwar period as the

point of transformation where elite pressure groups-based politics turned into mass-based organisation based on religion.

In the inter-war years, 1920s and 1930s witnessed an intensification of communal politics. The Sangathan movement, championed by Swami Shaddhanand, directly confronted Muslim identity, sparking communal tensions. On the other hand, Muslims leaders were constantly demanding political safeguards as evident from the Delhi Proposals (1927) and Jinnah-Sapru negotiations, showing the growing divergence between the two communities. Partha Chatterjee states this growing rift as the failure of nationalist politics to integrate diverse identities within the civic framework. In the absence of such integration, religious consciousness became the vehicle of political and social separation.

The Colonial State and the Institutionalisation of Communalism

The British rule and policy hold a significant responsibility for the growth of communalism in modern India. Francis Robinson (2007) writes: *“The British deliberately created division of Indian society for their own imperial purpose. Indian nationalist historians found this argument particularly attractive and accuse their imperial rulers of having broken an evolving synthesis of Hindu-Muslim culture.”* Nationalist and anti-imperialist leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Azad saw communalism as essentially a colonial manipulation. Gandhi consistently argued that communal divisions in India were artificially deepened by British policies. He believed Hindu-Muslim unity was natural to India’s social fabric and that communalism was a colonial poison injected to derail national unity. Anti-imperialist scholar Bipan Chandra (1984) strongly argued that communalism was not a primordial fact of Indian society but a modern ideology, nurtured by colonial policies like separate electorates, censuses, and administrative patronage.

British rulers did play an important role in the promotion, spread, growth and the ultimate partial success of communalism in India. Their role became crucial precisely because they held state power, a crucial determinant in the political fortunes of any political ideology or movement. To deny this is to become an apologist for imperialism. The aim of the British policy was not for the love of a particular community, rather a tool to check the politicisation of Indian people, to curb their consolidation and to disrupt the process of India-in-the-making. The policy of dividing Indians on communal lines and giving support to communalists became, from the end of the 19th century, an important instrument of colonial policy in the thwart of rising national movement. It virtually started since the founding of the National Congress. This policy was also developed to meet the exigencies of politics back home in Britain where the growing democracy and labour movement were increasingly questioning imperialism in general and the policy of suppression of the popular national movement in particular. Communalism was presented by the colonial administrators as the problem of the defence of minorities. And the defence of minorities became a major part of the theory of imperialist legitimization, as its other components like welfare of the colonized, civilizing mission, white man's burden, etc. got increasingly discredited.

One of the most foundational tools through which the state deepened communal consciousness was enumeration and then classification of population. The modern decennial Census (systematically conducted since 1871) transformed religion into a primarily social and political identity. Bernard Cohn in his seminal analysis of the "politics of enumeration" has argued that the colonial census did not merely record the pre-existing identities but actively constructed them by fixing boundaries and hierarchies in official categories (*1901 census under H.H Risley*). Religion was placed in the forefront and treated as an exclusive, monolithic category and the administration assigned it unprecedented salience in the fiscal, legal and

political arenas. This made population ratios a matter of competition and power and sharpened the perceived majorities/minorities. The second and more crucial colonial intervention was constitutional engineering, which formally institutionalised the communal difference. The Morley–Minto Reforms of 1909 granted Muslims separate electorates, enabling them to elect representatives exclusively from their own community.

This idea was further expanded in the Communal Award (1932). As Bipan Chandra (1984) points out, these measures redefined communities as a bounded electorate making religion a basis for rights and representation. Then was administrative reorganisation, and political crisis that sharpened communal cleavages. The partition of Bengal (1905), was framed as an administrative reform but in effect it was perceived as favouring Muslims in the east and discriminating against Hindu elites in the west. As Francis Robinson (2007) notes, such measures fuelled communal perceptions and gave momentum to separatist politics.

It was resisted by the Congress-led Swadeshi movement while sections of Muslim elites welcomed it as a chance to build greater influence. The Britishers also selectively patronised religiously defined elites, such as the recognising of the Muslim League after 1906. This not only entrenched communal leadership but also encouraged the growth of organisations whose political legitimacy rested on religious identity. Another factor was the colonial framing of communal violence. It normalised the perception of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Paul Brass (1990), in his work *Production of communal violence*, demonstrates that riots were rarely spontaneous, and mostly followed an organised pattern and were interpreted through a communal lens. Colonial inquiries, and press coverage systematically and routinely portrayed such conflicts as evidence of ancient religious animosity, rather than as outcome of local political, economic, or social disputes. This

curated and institutional framing reinforced communal narratives, embedding the idea of perpetual inter-communal rivalry in the public imagination and legitimising religion as a central axis of political mobilisation. These mechanisms together explain why nationalist critics identified colonial policy as a decisive aggravator of communal tensions.

Conclusion

The analysis of both arguments shows that it is neither an immutable legacy of ancient antagonism nor the artificial constructs of colonial rulers that led to the emergence and fostering of communalism in India. Rather, it is composed of a layered and contingent process which has been shaped by multiple and intriguing aspects: religious reformist movements, revivalist consciousness, forced institutionalism by colonial rule and politics of identity. As debates between scholars reveal, an attempt to reduce communalism to one single dimension would risk an oversimplification of deeply embedded and evolving complexities. The partition of 1947, represents the culmination of this dual process where religious consciousness which has constructed communities as distinct socio-political entities get interwoven with the colonial interventions, only to leave the scars and narratives which would shape the communal discourse of post-colonial India. In the present scenario of rising polarisation, Paul Brass's theory of 'institutionalised production of riots', finds resonance with binary narratives of ancient hatred and colonial conspiracy being constantly used to perpetuate communal violence and religious divides.

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No Home, No Return: Internal Displacement and the Erosion of Belonging in Manipur

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Abstract

Since May 2023, Manipur has witnessed sustained ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities which has resulted in large-scale internal displacement. This article attempts to examine displacement not merely as a consequence of conflict but as its enduring impact. Drawing on institutional reports, academic research, and journalistic accounts, it situates the crisis within the longstanding hill-valley asymmetries, governance structures, and political representation along with the documented failures in state protection and accountability and control over coercive force. Primarily relying on the framework of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) the analysis shows the spatial reorganisation into ethnically segregated zones weakening institutional access, in turn leading to disrupted livelihoods and psychological distress including gendered vulnerabilities. These conjoint pressures constitute a lived polycrisis embedded in everyday life of the survivors. The article argues that the internal displacement has become the primary site through which conflict is sustained wherein the loss of home is closely tied to the erosion of identity and belonging.

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Keywords: Hill-Valley Asymmetry; Internal Displacement (IDPs); ethnic conflict; spatial segregation; administrative invisibility; institutional breakdown; civilian militarisation; psychological trauma (PTSD); livelihood disruption; gender-based violence; polycrisis

Introduction

Since 3rd May 2023, Manipur has experienced sustained ethnic violence between the valley-based Meitei community and the hill-based Kuki-Zo groups. The region became a national concern for India, beginning with a day-long attack along the Bishnupur-Churachandpur border areas. The conflict has officially resulted in over 260 deaths and the displacement of nearly 60,000 people, many of whom still reside in relief camps (Press Information Bureau, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025). Consequently, this displacement has marred the lives of men, women and children, deprived them of a stable environment along with access to education, health and work. The internet blackouts, beginning in May 2023, made it difficult to report immediate violence in Manipur. The enduring consequence of the violence lies in the systemic displacement of survivors. It was the Bloody Day of 3rd May, 2023, wherein rallies of thousands stormed into the villages, fires broke out, homes were vandalised, and thousands of lives were upended. The state experiences protracted internal displacement, in which individuals are unable to return to their homeland for an extended period and may temporarily flee but remain within the country's boundaries. These individuals are officially referred to as internally displaced persons (IDPs). (UNHCR, 1998; Government of India, 2023).

The contemporary state of Manipur starkly reflects the uprooted souls, affected largely due to the ethnic conflict. The immediate trigger point of the ethnic violence, which erupted along the Churachandpur border, is often considered the Manipur High Court's judgement (March 2023) on the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status of the Meitei community, which guaranteed reservation in job sectors, education fields and legal protection over land. The deeply rooted structural inequalities are reported to be the underlying cause, surrounding the disposition of land, power, and political representation. (People's Union for Civil Liberties [PUCL], 2025).

The data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) illustrates a clear shift of tension into a full-scale conflict due to the subordination anxiety amongst communities. The figures reveal a surge in cases against STs from 1 in 2022 to 3,399 in 2023 (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2022, 2023). This shift is evident in the state's total violent crime statistics, which skyrocketed from 631 cases in 2022 to 14,427 in 2023. Including 6,203 cases of arson.

Displacement has emerged as the primary condition as a result and last resort for the survivors. Through which the crisis continues to be experienced, produced, and lived. The overlapping pressures of social, institutional, economic, and psychological conflicts together constitute a lived polycrisis.

Ethnic Conflict as Structural Condition

The persistence of displacement is situated within Manipur's institutional and territorial distribution structure. The Imphal valley, which comprises a small proportion, i.e. 10% of the land area, functions as the administrative and political centre of the state. Whereas, in a striking contrast, the hill districts,

covering a much larger geographic area, are governed through customary land systems. The latter falls under constitutional protections such as the Sixth Schedule-type arrangements in the Northeast, though with distinct limitations in Manipur (PUCL, 2025).

The Meiteis (mostly Hindu, with some Sanamahi and Muslim) live in the valley, while the Kukis and Nagas (mostly Christian) reside in the hilly regions. Access over land is therefore central to the region's power dynamics. Thus, the ST Status of the Meitei community caused an upheaval among opposing communities as it directly impacts the job opportunities and safeguards land ownership, territorial access, and political safeguards (Baker, 2023).

The resulting aftermath clearly aligns with Horowitz's theory of ethnic competition, which explains that a conflict intensifies when groups perceive direct threats to their resources and political power (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 141-145). Securitisation theory (Buzan & Waever, 1998, pp. 21-24) also helps one to clarify how land and identity are constructed as existential concerns and their encroachment is treated as urgent threats that produce heightened responses.

Institutional findings suggest that the crisis was never limited to inter-group tensions. Amnesty International (2024) and Human Rights Watch (2025) both document the pattern of delayed intervention, uneven policing, lack of accountability and in response, the continued operation by armed groups. Weapons were looted from state armouries and were subsequently circulated amongst civilian groups (Human Rights Watch, 2025; The Hindu, 2026). It marks the complete erosion of the state's control over the legitimate use of force.

In this context, violence has enabled displacement, but it is displacement that has sustained the conflict's effects over time. The government "completely abdicated its responsibility to protect the civilian population," says the human rights activist Babloo Loitongbam, who is also a Meitei community victim of the violence. The Supreme Court of India characterises aspects of the crisis as reflecting an "absolute breakdown of law and order" (The Hindu, 2026).

The Free Movement Regime (FMR), a part of India's Act East Policy in 2018, which allowed unrestricted cross-border movements between Manipur and Myanmar of up to 16 km, has proven detrimental to the Indian state. The porous border is fragile to illegal immigration, illicit trafficking networks, influx of weapons and narcotics, catalysing the extreme internal instability of the state.

Displacement and Ethnic Spatial Reorganisation

Internal Displacement in Manipur has transformed into the reorganisation of space along ethnic lines. 60,000 individuals have been internally displaced, with thousands of homes destroyed during the conflict (Press Information Bureau, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025). The major reason for the displacement is the forceful evacuation of communities into distinct ethnically demarcated zones, which signals a major humanitarian crisis.

Human Rights Watch (2025) documents the effective segregation of large parts of the state along ethnic lines, wherein the movement across regions is restricted through checkpoints and informal "buffer zones." Any trespassing of a Kuki into a Meitei-dominant area leads to bloodshed and vice

versa. Al Jazeera 101 East report (2025) similarly describes the restricted mobility and formation of controlled corridors to keep a check on the civilian movement across areas.

Relief camps emerge as the central homes for this restructuring. Initially, they were set up as temporary relief centres for IDPs, but soon became a permanent hermitage due to no improvement at the ground level. Residents note that “camp functions with a rhythm of forced normalcy” with the timely food and schedule, but lacks the natural human schedule, with little to no work. (PUCL, 2025; Amnesty International, 2023).

IDPs often describe that the multiple movements from villages to temporary shelters and then to camps have collectively held a psychologically disruptive experience. This constant traversing and shift of space has direct implications for institutional access and belonging. Irom Abung, an ex-water supplier in Churachandpur, who now lives in a relief camp near a buffer zone, says,

“My land remains. I will never sell it because I know I will return one day. Efforts must be made to bridge the gap between our two communities so people can go back to their lives” (BBC News, 2025).

Displacement and the Erosion of Institutional Belonging

It is to be noted that to provide relief, the government has taken aid from the Disaster Management Act, 2005, which addresses “disaster”, as defined in the Report on National Management of Disaster Management, a “catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence from natural or man-made causes, which is beyond the coping capacity of the affected community”. It can thus be ascertained that the communal violence of Manipur is classified under

“disaster” as it is capable of being handled by communities themselves. Respectively, the governments put IDPs of communal violence on the same footing as victims of natural disasters, and evade their responsibility.

Displacement has not only disrupted the geographical location but also the administrative systems. A large number of internally displaced persons have reported losing their identity documents, land records, and business records. Such losses have, in turn, reduced their chances of acquiring compensation, relief schemes or accommodation. (Amnesty International, 2024).

This produces a condition of “administrative invisibility” in the survivors, which refers to a situation in which individuals are unable to establish their identity within state protocols and therefore lack access to the welfare schemes and institutional support. These limitations have a direct impact on people’s lives. For instance, one Kuki survivor, quoted in Amnesty International (2024), stated:

“The mob abducted my mother... (the police) just kept watching.”

These dreadful accounts instill a lack of trust in state institutions. Therefore, displacement always produces a dual rupture: it separates individuals from their homes whilst also weakening their connection with the institutions that provide them with recognition and protection.

Psychological Consequences and Identity Dislocation

A study using the PCL-5 scale reports that 65.8% of internally displaced individuals have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Rajkumari, 2024).

This shows that survivors suffer from chronic psychological distress due to continued exposure to severe violence and instability.

The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution (1998) notes that displacement disrupts identity by separating individuals from their homes, communities, and cultural environments. In Manipur, this disruption is reflected in the lived experiences of inhabitants.

Grace, a Kuki-Zo survivor, was brutally raped and sexually assaulted by Arambai Tenggol. She was accidentally knocked off and rescued by an auto driver, but she suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, which eventually resulted in her cardiac failure (Frontline, 2024).

“Only regular support, along with a sense that they will receive a form of justice, will instill a will in the survivor to come out of an experience like this. Otherwise, survivors of violence, especially sexual violence, succumb to a feeling of hopelessness. It will be reflected in the way the survivor refuses to take care of themselves. But when PTSD is collective, and everybody has little hope to offer each other, conditions of victims like Grace will only deteriorate further.”

Said Dr Jessie Joseph, a senior psychiatrist.

From Internal Displacement to Structural Precarity

The internal displacement in Manipur has, over time, taken on the characteristics of protracted precarity. It refers to a condition in which individuals face prolonged uncertainty in livelihood, access to services, and future prospects. Thousands of homes have been destroyed or illegally occupied. People cannot go back to their lands. It has created a barrier to land access despite the government's Three- Phase Resettlement Plan for IDPs

(Amnesty International, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2025). Al Jazeera (2025) documents many individuals who used to work in the agricultural field and small trade have shifted to informal or aid-dependent livelihoods.

Government interventions in Manipur focus on immediate relief, such as providing temporary relief camps supplied with food. However, their involvement falls short in addressing the long-term rehabilitation for the uprooted. Under these conditions, returning to the original homeland remains impossible for the displaced. Displacement thus moves beyond a temporary state and begins to restructure the long-term social and economic life of the people. The displaced individuals have also expressed hesitation about returning even if the conditions improve.

Conclusion

The crisis in Manipur extends beyond the episodes of violence and is sustained in the persistence of internal displacement. The reorganisation of space into ethnically segregated zones, weakening of trust in state institutions, and disrupted livelihoods have produced psychological distress in the people. Like a domino effect, rising vigilante impunity led to the collapse of the entire social fabric.

Hence, polycrisis does not remain an abstract idea but becomes a lived reality. Yet, the full extent of its impact remains uneven due to restricted access to affected areas and the absence of consistent, ground-level data. What emerges with clarity is that in Manipur, the loss of home is conjoint with the erosion of identity and belonging.

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Press Freedom and Safety in Crisis and Conflict

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Abstract

When trouble strikes, reporters often pay the price, silenced by attacks, laws that block speech, or systems that look away when crimes happen. More than 1,600 have died since 1993, figures from UNESCO show, many caught in war zones or hunted down just for doing their job. Alongside bullets and bombs come invisible dangers: hacking, false charges, ruined equipment, especially aimed at female journalists who face abuse online plus are shut out from newsrooms. A United Nations blueprint launched in 2012 promised safer conditions through better protection, prevention, and punishment of offenders, but reality lags far behind. Core rights spelled out in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration appear on paper only in places like Gaza, Afghanistan, Ukraine, where governments clamp down or soldiers aim directly at press badges. Even plans born in diplomacy, such as the one drafted in Rabat, fail when local power refuses to act. From different corners of the world, stories pile up, of censored truths, manipulated facts, newsrooms starved of funds, all chipping away at what people believe and how they see governance. Where words are controlled, trust fades; where truth-tellers vanish, debate dies. Responses must shift

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with new risks, cross borders without hesitation, enforce rules with real teeth so those chasing headlines aren't left exposed when darkness falls.

Keywords: press freedom, journalist safety, international law, UN Plan of Action, impunity, conflict zones, censorship, freedom of expression

Introduction

Though often overlooked, the risks faced by reporters in war and emergency settings have become central to discussions on fundamental freedoms. International legal frameworks require governments to support conditions where information flows freely, allowing societies to stay aware. Vital to progress, watchdog institutions like the European Court of Human Rights stress how press professionals aid justice efforts, strengthen civic systems, not merely report news. Despite such recognition, threats persist intensely, targeted attacks, physical harm, silencing through murder act as severe suppression tools. Since the early nineties, records tracked by UNESCO show more than sixteen hundred media workers killed worldwide. Alongside these fatalities come growing arrests, tech-based aggression, particularly aimed at female correspondents, invasive monitoring, online targeting, false narratives spread widely, aggressive rhetoric, all reshaping journalism into something far more dangerous.

Starting with global cooperation, key initiatives such as the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (2012) lay out coordinated ways to shield reporters - through safeguards, legal follow-up, oversight, and training, rooted in Article 19's right to speak freely, including reasonable limits backed by guidance like the Rabat framework. Despite this groundwork, real-world progress stalls when violence erupts: journalists are killed, locked up, or blocked from reporting, often as part of broader efforts to

crush opposition voices. Drawing from a revised journal piece, this version examines how well those systems work using focused examples, from conflict zones like Ukraine-Russia and occupied Palestine, authoritarian settings in Southeast Asia like Vietnam/Laos/Cambodia, fractured regions across West Asia, and war-torn areas such as Afghanistan, to test current responses under pressure. By shifting emphasis toward tangible outcomes, it redirects attention to strengthening enforcement, responsibility, and fairness where distrust runs deep and conflicts blur lines between physical and digital battlefields.

International Legal Frameworks

Although the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists began in 2012, its core rests on three pillars: safeguarding reporters, stopping attacks before they happen, and ensuring legal consequences follow violence. Rooted in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to speak freely allows limits, but only if truly needed and carefully measured, further clarified through guidance like the Rabat Plan of Action. Yet today, space for independent media keeps narrowing; confidence among audiences weakens, while online dangers grow sharper, raising doubts about how well these frameworks hold up outside policy rooms.

Israel–Palestine Conflict

By September 2025, over two hundred reporters had lost their lives in Palestine since early October 2023, turning Gaza into the deadliest zone for press workers ever recorded and marking the biggest media crisis in human history (Khan, 2025). The restrictions on foreign media, censorship, shadowbanning of social media content, destruction of media facilities, and unprecedented killings of journalists have had a massive impact on global narratives and solidarity, with public opinion highly polarized.

Billion-dollar arrangements link Israel to major platforms like YouTube and Spotify, shaping how digital material gets regulated. Control over online narratives emerges through these partnerships, often sidelining voices supportive of Palestine. Content questioning Israeli policy frequently disappears under broad accusations of prejudice. Universities and institutions echo this pattern, penalizing speech deemed too sympathetic toward Palestinian causes. Labels matter as what some call dissent, others brand as hate, blurring necessary distinctions. Zionism, a political stance, becomes falsely tangled with Jewish identity in public discourse. Seeing the difference matters, especially when silence spreads through fear of mislabeling. Punishing critique does not protect people, it shields policies from scrutiny. Power shifts quietly when free discussion narrows without debate. Equating opposition to a state with bigotry warps moral clarity.

Israel's crackdown on the media has been cited as a grave violation of international law. Journalists are directly targeted, arbitrarily detained, and murdered, while media infrastructures and equipment have been destroyed, leaving journalists with little to no resources (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2026). The adoption of the Foreign Media Law in April 2024 allowed the banning of foreign media outlets, including the permanent ban on Al Jazeera, restricting coverage and silencing dissent.

Since 1967, Israel has imposed military censorship on Palestinian journalism through detentions, bans, revocation of press licenses, and strict control over publication content. Journalists have been killed even during unarmed protests, including during the Great March of Return, and prominent cases such as Shireen Abu Akleh highlight the persistence of impunity.

One by one, reporters vanish - buildings reduced to rubble behind them - showing how weak global systems really are. When protection fails this badly, rules meant to defend reporting start looking hollow. Not a single

promise holds up under such pressure. The situation demonstrates the urgent need to reevaluate international laws on press freedom and their effectiveness.

Afghanistan War and Taliban Rule

Following the exit of American forces in 2021, power in Afghanistan shifted dramatically when the Taliban assumed control - bringing two decades of conflict to a close. Under their authority, governance has taken on authoritarian traits, while press freedoms have sharply declined due to harsh restrictions imposed on media workers.

Fewer reporters can work freely now, after records showed more than 316 separate breaches, detaining journalists, photographers, and media commentators. Women covering stories face deeper setbacks, numbers falling fast because classroom access narrows, job paths close, voice fades in public discussion. Over fifty percent of news organizations shut down, hit hard in print, TV, radio, and web spaces. Where criticism of government is outlawed by tight control rules, reporters turn to offshore sites or internet tools to share stories.

Journalists report physical abuse during detention, threats, harassment, and increasing reliance on self-censorship as a survival tactic (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The Taliban enforces control through violence, arbitrary detention, and coercion, while the press functions largely as a mouthpiece for the regime, with no scope for dissent or critical questioning. The situation worsened further with extreme measures such as the nationwide internet shutdown, cutting off millions from access to information and isolating Afghanistan from the global media landscape. Despite international initiatives and UN-backed efforts, there has been no successful enforcement of press laws.

Not every global rule holds firm where force shapes authority, as seen in Afghanistan, prompting questions about how well current laws adapt to such realities. When control stems from strength, not votes, old assumptions bend. This shift reveals gaps in what international systems can achieve. Frameworks built on consent falter under compulsion. Effectiveness demands adjustment, yet change remains uneven. Legal tools must evolve, even if slowly, to meet conditions on the ground. What works elsewhere often fails here. Rethinking becomes less a choice, more an outcome of experience.

Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia

The Vietnam War (1965–75), a Cold War conflict involving North and South Vietnam and their allies, is often referred to as the “first television war,” with extensive media coverage bringing the realities of war into public view. From the front lines, hundreds of reporters filed stories; roughly 600 had official clearance by 1968. Yet danger shadowed their work; more than 70 lost their lives throughout Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Shells, surprise attacks, gunfire between troops, hidden mines, even deliberate harm making the region one of the most dangerous environments for reporting.

The U.S. administration increasingly viewed the press as an enemy, blaming media coverage for declining public support for the war. The Pentagon Papers revealed contradictions between official claims and internal decision-making, reinforcing the role of journalism in exposing state narratives and holding power accountable (Britannica, 2013)

Caught in crosshairs, reporters drew suspicion from governments and armed groups alike. Hostility grew as coverage unfolded, turning media workers into frequent targets. Murders, abductions, and unexplained vanishings marked the period, each incident adding to a grim pattern. Coverage came at a steep cost and many paid it fully. Even so, reporters kept

recording events throughout the war, offering clear views of what was actually happening. Because of the risks involved, coverage from Vietnam exposed ongoing struggles between government control and the right to publish, with media workers facing danger while sharing facts, often left without support or justice.

Russia-Ukraine War

A large-scale military attack by Russia against Ukraine started on 24 February 2022, as troops moved from Belarus toward Kyiv. Because of this event, scholars have revisited how effective the UN's 2012 plan to protect journalists truly is - especially after ten years of adjustments and new safeguards. Since the collapse of Cold War tensions, nothing has disrupted European stability quite like this war, driven partly by Moscow's unease about NATO growth and shifts in continental defence frameworks (Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2025). Underlying these geopolitical concerns lies a deeper issue: resistance to recognizing Ukraine's national identity and sovereignty. Meanwhile, limited engagement from Washington during the earlier U.S. administration weakened diplomatic pressure. As a result, human suffering intensified across affected regions.

It has led to the destruction of civilian life, crippled state infrastructure, prompted a food grain crisis by impacting supplies, and induced global inflation. According to Human Rights Watch data, Russian military actions show widespread breaches of wartime conduct rules. Civilian zones and medical centers faced bombardment without clear military purpose. A few of these attacks are being regarded as war crimes, including torture, summary execution, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, and looting of cultural property. The repeated attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure have made life unsustainable, terrorizing millions of civilians.

War deepened dangers for journalists, worsening an already fragile press environment due to widespread information warfare. Though some media remained under oligarch influence, Ukraine's media landscape showed variety and endurance. Reliable reporting came largely from independent sources working against false narratives. Newsrooms struggled to function as their financial foundations were shaken soon after hostilities began. From 2014 until 2022, deliberate efforts by Kremlin-backed campaigns aimed to mute Ukrainian voices, striking at free expression itself (RSF, 2025).

The ban on Pro-Kremlin media, along with restricted access to Russian social media, has intensified ever since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Media outlets relaying Russian propaganda have been blocked, and the Russian army has deliberately targeted journalists, media outlets, and telecommunications infrastructure to prevent the Ukrainian population from having access to free information.

Starting under legal terms, after the 2014 Maidan uprising, various laws emerged aiming at clearer media operations, better public access to data, along with safeguards for reporters. One standout change came in 2017 - launching Suspilne, an autonomous state-funded broadcaster. By late 2022, another legislative update aligned Ukrainian standards more closely with those across Europe. When military rule applies, press freedoms face limits now and then, particularly near active combat zones. Nowhere has the toll been clearer than in Ukraine's shrinking newsrooms. With conflict draining economic strength, advertising revenue vanished - so did reader support. Hundreds of outlets shut down, unable to hold on. Others pulled back sharply: staff cut, output slowed. Survival itself became uncertain. Some kept going, but at a fraction of their former capacity.

What stands out most is how little protection journalists actually have in conflict zones. Even when marked clearly as media, they still draw fire -

often on purpose - as the tally of wounded and dead grows longer by the week. Those chasing deeper truths face growing hostility, not just on the ground but through digital sabotage. Hacks that expose informants, blocked access to public data, and deliberate disinformation campaigns feed a troubling pattern. Safety, it seems, remains conditional at best.

Arman Soldin was killed in rocket fire on 9 May 2023 while covering the situation near Bakhmut. Ukrainian journalist Bohdan Bitik was fatally shot by a Russian sniper near Kherson. Oksana Haider, Brent Renaud, Ihor Hudenko, Viktor Dedov, and Maks Levin are among those killed. Russia's imposition of sanctions on journalists, arrests, censorship laws, blocking of media platforms, and targeting of independent outlets highlight direct threats to journalistic autonomy. Attacks, detainments, murders, and enforced disappearances of journalists is commonplace, directly violating the efficacy of the UN law for press freedom.

West Asia and press freedom

The Persian Gulf War began in 1991 after Saddam Hussein of Iraq ordered the invasion and occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, resulting in calls for intervention of the US by Saudi Arabia and other states. It was waged by a coalition force of 35 states led by the United States. Beginning with naval and aerial bombardment on 17 January 1991, a ground assault followed on 24 February. Iraq was forced out of Kuwait, but Saddam Hussein remained in power.

The second Gulf War, known as the Iraq War, was an outcome of the US invasion of Iraq to destroy weapons of mass destruction. While the war lost public support, it led to the trial and hanging of Saddam Hussein. The war resulted in massive casualties and inflicted damage and suffering. Reports from Abu Ghraib prison circulated widely. In 2007, a new strategy was

announced to bring stability, before Obama announced the withdrawal of US troops in 2011, bringing the conflict to an end.

Meanwhile, CNN's reporting during the Gulf War stood out for its live updates along with frontline perspectives shaping public view. This moment gave rise to what became known as the CNN effect, influencing both how wars are covered and how decisions are made in command centers.

A significant aspect to press freedom is censorship during the Gulf War, marked by strict curbs over information dissemination. Journalists were confined to working in press pools organised by the military. Only a limited number of journalists were assigned to divisions, creating "pack journalism" (EBSCO, 2025). These restrictions were justified on grounds of journalist safety.

Restriction and manipulation of information was used as a tool of dissent. Instead of open reporting, visuals underwent editing to remove disturbing elements. Access to conflict zones became limited, while reporters producing critical accounts found themselves shut out. Group-based reporting replaced independent observation, guided by armed forces personnel. Every article passed through the defense department review before release. Global press freedoms felt the impact, as governments tightened narratives and silenced opposition voices.

The second Gulf War was deadly for journalists, claiming lives between 2003 and 2005. Tareq Ayyoub was killed when a US missile struck near Al Jazeera's office. Cameramen Protsyuk and Couso died after a US tank fired at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad. Reuters cameraman Dana was killed by machine-gun fire from a US tank. Ahmed Kareem and others were also killed by US forces.

Not until after bullets struck press vehicles did attention turn to how weak safeguards truly were. Though rules exist on paper, enforcement lags behind promises. After attacks in Iraq and Kuwait, reports showed little change despite global outcry. In 2006, the UN Security Council resolution urged nations to stop aiming at media workers, calling them non-combatants by status. Pressure built slowly; advocacy groups pushed for recognition equal to civilian protection under war law. With each death unavenged, demands grew louder for consistent accountability across conflicts.

On the same lines, since the Iran war broke out on February 28, when the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran and Tehran retaliated with attacks across the region, several arrests of journalists, interference with reporting, airstrikes damaging media infrastructure, and sweeping restrictions on coverage have been reported. Press freedom conditions in Iran, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (IoPT), Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain are in danger and over 787 journalists have been killed in Israel-Iran's airstrikes, facing censorship, hacking, legal pressures, as well as death threats.

Conclusion

The limited ability of international law in enforcing protection, despite the passage of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists, addressing fundamental aspects of protection, prevention, and prosecutions, is a major loophole violating press freedom and sovereignty. "Impunity" as a concept in international law today stands at the crossroads of media debate, especially as in the 21st century, new age conflicts are emerging and press freedom stands at an all-time low. In this context, the persistent failure to hold perpetrators accountable not only undermines the credibility of international legal frameworks but also perpetuates a climate of fear and silence, making the

urgent strengthening of enforcement mechanisms and global cooperation indispensable for safeguarding journalistic freedom in contemporary conflicts.

Acknowledgement: We extend our heartfelt gratitude to organisations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, United Nations, and International Federation of Journalists for the continued efforts in safeguarding journalists and advocating for press freedom, and pay homage to journalists across the globe who continue to report with courage and integrity, to bring forward stories that matter.

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The Epigenetics of Inequality: Intergenerational Transmission of Jim Crow-Era Trauma and Institutionalized Racism in Black American Lineages

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Abstract

While the Jim Crow Era may be discerned as eons away on the historical timeline, its effect and aftermath is embedded not only in books but also in the body. The trauma and psychological lacerations experienced by African Americans continue to mar the blood of their descendants, despite not being subjected to legal segregation. Moreover, the constant submission to “separate but equal” laws signaled by economic deprivation, social exclusion, systematic disenfranchisement, political marginalisation and the constant threat of violence has emerged to be the dominant environmental sculptor for these communities.

The epigenetic bridge has metastasized from “nurture” to “nature” to reconfigure the phenotypic trajectory of Black lineages in the Jim Crow South. This is supported by the “biological weathering” hypothesis that postulates that the high allostatic load (the cumulative wear and tear of the body after chronic exposure to stress) of ancestors has manifested in the form of predisposition to chronic inflammatory conditions, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic disorders. Subsequently, the health discrepancies in

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contemporary black populations were caused by socioeconomic despotism and racial antagonism of their ancestors. However, what acted as the catalyst was the heritable biological legacy of state-sanctioned oppression. To conclude, by reframing institutionalised racism as a genealogical incursion, this paper asserts that the physiological scars of psychological trauma remain embedded in the African American genome, necessitating a shift towards trauma-responsive care and generational reparations.

Keywords: epigenetics, Jim Crow era, total institution, racial etiquette, transgenerational inheritance, stress response genes, psychological trauma

Introduction

Jim Crow laws refer to a series of ordinances passed by Southern states during 1877 and 1965 that legalized segregation of the Black population. The name originates from a song and dance routine performed by Thomas Dartmouth. How Jim Crow came to be associated with segregation remains, but by the 1890s, it referred to an entire way of life based on racism, violence, and fear of African Americans living in the South. For the whites, Jim Crow meant fun, laughter, and amusement, but in African American homes, the name meant humiliation, degradation, and cowardice.

Jim Crow laws aimed to undermine the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and employed a “Separate but Equal” approach to the newly freed population. They utilized legal loopholes and shortcomings to achieve “slavery in all but its name”. Black people were denied the right to vote by poll taxes (fees charged to poor black people), white primaries (only Democrats could vote, only white people could be Democrats), and literacy

tests (“Name all the Vice Presidents and Supreme Court Justices throughout America’s history”) to prevent their assimilation into the government and ensure they would not get voting rights. In addition to this, they were subjected to constant violence, racism, assaults, lynchings, and targeted attacks from organisations like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

Martin Luther King Jr. compiled various Jim Crow laws. In Georgia, coloured barbers could not serve white women, coloured persons could not be buried upon ground used for burial of the white population, and those licensed to conduct the business of selling beer or wine could not serve the two races within the same room at any time. In Alabama, there were separate waiting rooms and ticket windows for public transportation for the white and coloured races. In North Carolina, the custody of a child could not be appointed to a person of colour, and white and coloured militia were separately enrolled, organized, and conducted. The state of Florida mandated separate schools for the whites and the blacks, and in Oklahoma, teachers who taught in mixed schools were deemed guilty of misdemeanour and were fined.

The Jim Crow System was characterized by violence and vehemence. Blacks who violated the Jim Crow norms, for example, drinking from white water fountains or attempting to vote, risked their homes, their jobs, and even their lives. White people could physically beat black people with impunity and no legal consequences. The blacks had few resources against these assaults due to the criminal justice system being all-white. It was a method of social control. The most extreme forms of Jim Crow violence were lynchings.

Methodology

- The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach complemented by a bibliographical analysis. It utilizes published research and works focusing on the keywords “epigenetics”, “transgenerational inheritance,” and “Jim Crow laws.”
- By analysing the “segregation stress syndrome” and its impact on stress response genes such as NR3C1 and FKBP5, the study aims to assert the impact of the environment on psychological well-being and its consequent manifestation in the form of epigenetic modification.
- This study explores how ancestral trauma is passed down in the genome despite contemporary generations not being subjected to homogenous environments, reevaluating the socio-political marginalisation through a biological lens.

Research Questions

- How has the psychological trauma of the Jim Crow Era impacted the stress response gene of African Americans?
- What is the correlation between oppressive socio-economic policies and their effect on the human genome?
- How does ancestral exposure to institutionalized racism and state-sanctioned oppression cause a predisposition to certain health disparities in future lineages?

The Sociology of a Total Institution and Racial Etiquette

Hugh H. Smythe (1948, pp. 45-48), in *The Concept of Jim Crow*, interprets Jim Crow as a concept connected with “accommodation”. It refers to a

particular human group or a community that has been a victim of systemic inequality and has resulted in social segregation. The Blacks exist as a caste group that has been assigned a low position; the term “Jim Crow” is thus used succinctly to describe this situation to which the Blacks have become accustomed. “Jim Crow” as used in a sociological context thus indicates for a specific social group the Black’s awareness of the badge of inequality, which is learned through the operation of a “Jim Crow” concept in everyday living.

The concept of a total institution is widely known in the field of sociology and is defined by Erving Goffman as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (Goffman, 1961, p. xiii). Some of the characteristics of a total institution included controlling a person’s language, humiliation, and punishment, denying acknowledgment of a person’s name and creating nicknames, a hierarchy, economic control, a loss of personal safety, forced deference and coercion, sexual assault, an inability to protect loved ones, constant surveillance, and suppression of feelings. Total institutions have four main characteristics: batch living, binary management, the inmate role, and the institutional perspective.

In a total institution, inmates are forced to eat, sleep, work, and move within the same bounded, managed space. Jim Crow did this without walls. Through the *Black Codes*, residential segregation, and sundown towns, Black Americans were spatially herded, confined to separate neighbourhoods, separate train cars, separate schools, and separate hospitals. The entire built environment of the South (and much of the North) was designed to keep Black life physically contained and legible to white authority.

Goffman noted that total institutions divide the world into a large, managed group and a small supervisory class with near-total power. Under Jim Crow, white sheriffs, judges, employers, landlords, and mobs collectively formed this supervisory layer. Black Americans had no meaningful legal recourse, courts were white, juries were white, and violence (lynching, riots) was tolerated as an informal enforcement mechanism. The asymmetry of power was absolute and structural.

In Goffman's (1961) analysis, entering a total institution involves a "mortification of the self"; one's prior identity is erased and replaced with a degraded institutional role. Jim Crow performed this systematically. Black men were addressed as "boy," never "Mister." Titles of respect were withheld. Black professionals, doctors, lawyers, and professors were socially invisible to whites. Voting rights were stripped. The entire apparatus of Jim Crow signalled the same message a prison uniform does: your status here is not your own.

Every total institution needs a justifying worldview, an official story that makes the domination appear rational or benevolent. Jim Crow's ideological architecture included pseudo-scientific racism (the supposed biological inferiority of Black people), the "Lost Cause" mythology (which reframed the Confederacy as noble), and the legal fiction of "separate but equal" from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). These weren't just propaganda; they were the institutional perspective Goffman describes: a shared belief system that rendered the entire system self-evidently legitimate to those running it.

What Goffman's framework reveals is that you do not need a single warden or a single gate to imprison millions of people. Jim Crow controlled where Black Americans could live, who could punish them, what identity they

were permitted, and what story everyone agreed to tell, and that was enough. Goffman suggested four types of ‘secondary adjustments’ that individuals use to cope with an attack on their identity: withdrawal, retaliation, submission, and acceptance.

It’s in this fourth type of secondary adjustment that we see the acceptance of racial etiquette. It is, however, important to know that many Blacks followed racial etiquette not because of their complete acceptance of it, but due to fear for their life. An excerpt from the *Ethics of Jim Crow* by Richard Wright (1938) can help us better understand the situation.

“Now, be careful, nigger!” snarled Morrie, baring his teeth. “I heard yuh call Pease! ‘N’ if yuh say yuh didn’t, yuh’re callin’ me a lie, see?” He waved the steel bar threateningly. If I had said: No, sir, Mr. Pease, I never called you Pease, I would have been automatically calling Morrie a liar. And if I had said: Yes, sir, Mr. Pease, I called you Pease, I would have been pleading guilty to having uttered the worst insult that a Negro can utter to a southern white man. I stood hesitating, trying to frame a neutral reply. “Richard, I asked you a question!” said Pease. Anger was creeping into his voice. “I don’t remember calling you Pease, Mr. Pease,” I said cautiously. “And if I did, I sure didn’t mean... till “You black son-of-a-bitch! You called me Pease, then!” he spat, slapping me I bent sideways over a bench. Morrie was on top of me, demanding: “Didn’t yuh call’im Pease? Ifyuh say yuh didn’t, I’ll rip yo’ gut string loose with this bar, yuh black granny dodger! Yuh can’t call a white man a lie ’n’ git erway with it, you black son-of-a-bitch!” I wilted. I begged them not to bother me. I knew what they wanted.

They wanted me to leave”.

The Jim Crow system was undergirded by the following beliefs or rationalizations: white people were superior to black people in all important ways, including but not limited to intelligence, morality, and civilized behavior; sexual relations between black people and white people would produce a mongrel race which would destroy America; treating black people as equals would encourage interracial sexual unions; any activity which suggested social equality encouraged interracial sexual relations; if necessary,

violence must be used to keep black people at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

Stetson Kennedy, in *Jim Crow Guide* (1990), offered these simple rules that black people were supposed to observe in conversing with white people:

- Never assert or even intimate that a white person is lying.
- Never impute dishonourable intentions to a white person.
- Never suggest that a white person is from an inferior class.
- Never lay claim to, or overly demonstrate, superior knowledge or intelligence.
- Never curse a white person.
- Never laugh derisively at a white person.
- Never comment upon the appearance of a white female.

Stress Segregation Syndrome and Epigenetic Inheritance

Research has shown that African Americans suffer every day with racism and stress. Studies show that the stress associated with racism negatively affects the mental health of African Americans. According to Carter, racial stressors have been found, in a variety of studies, to produce physical outcomes such as high blood pressure, risk for heart disease, and increased vulnerability to a variety of negative health outcomes. African Americans deal with the daily stress that is associated with living their lives in an oppressive environment; however, the racism they experience is, in many instances, “unscheduled.” Pearlman has found that such frequent “unscheduled” daily events of “serious stressors usually generate additional stressors, a phenomenon referred to as “stress proliferation”. Understanding the long-lasting effects of racism and

stress can give society an idea of how to treat African Americans who are suffering from the consequences associated with racism.

Miller explores the possibility that “stress segregation syndrome” has an intergenerational aspect to it that predisposes some younger African Americans to psychological damage, stress, and trauma, even though contemporary forms of racial violence appear to be covert and seemingly less damaging than the violence that occurred during the total institution of Jim Crow is a reality (Thompson-Miller, 2015).

Emerging data now suggest that adversities and trauma in one’s generation can be passed down to affect the health and well-being of future generations through transgenerational epigenetic mechanisms.

The concept of generational trauma was first introduced in 1967 by Vivian Rakoff, who recorded markedly elevated rates of psychological distress among children of Holocaust survivors. Since that initial publication, multiple investigators have reported elevated rates of psychological distress in the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. There have also been several epidemiological studies that suggest parental exposure to trauma and stress, inadequate nutrition, and toxicants can impact the health of descendants across several generations.

Epigenetic mechanisms are also one of the ways experiences of trauma and adversity get “under the skin.” Methylation is known to shut off genes when added to the beginning of the gene sequence, and to increase expression when occurring elsewhere on the gene. One of the most highly replicated findings in the field of epigenetics research is that experiences of early life stress can lead to DNA methylation of the glucocorticoid receptor (GR) gene.

The glucocorticoid receptor helps to turn off the stress response, and methylation of the GR gene is associated with a reduced number of glucocorticoid receptors and heightened stress reactivity.

Dias and Ressler used fear conditioning to study the transgenerational transmission of traumatic stress. They conditioned male mice to fear the smell of cherry blossoms by pairing it with an electric shock. The results showed that the offspring of the mice, despite never being conditioned to the odour, feared the smell of cherry blossoms.

Krieger et al. (2020) investigated whether exposure to racial, economic, and environmental injustice is associated with accelerated epigenetic aging. By using the data from the My Body My Story (MBMS) study and the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), he computed ten epigenetic clocks from DNA methylation data and assessed them in association with structural racism, socioeconomic deprivation, and environmental injustice. Among Black non-Hispanic MBMS participants, being born in a Jim Crow state and residing in a conservative birth state were significantly associated with epigenetic age acceleration. Low parental education was associated with accelerated aging in both Black and White non-Hispanic participants. Adult impoverishment showed consistent associations with second-generation clock acceleration across all racial and ethnic groups in MESA.

Geronimus (2006) examined racial disparities in the body's allostatic load among Black and White adults aged 18 to 64 years. By using the data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey IV (NHANES IV, 1999–2002), it was found that Black adults had significantly higher allostatic load scores than White adults across all age groups, and this racial

gap widened progressively from adulthood to middle age. At age 50, approximately 60% of Black Americans had high allostatic load scores, a threshold that White Americans did not reach until approximately age 60. It's important to note that these disparities persisted even after adjusting for poverty, and non-poor Black adults exhibited worse scores than poor White adults. Black women bore the greatest burden across all comparisons. The results are consistent with the 'weathering' hypothesis, which posits that the chronic stress of living in a race-conscious society produces accelerated biological aging among Black Americans independent of socioeconomic factors.

Two genes, NR3C1 and FKBP5, are crucial in our understanding of how stress gets embedded into our body at a molecular level. NR3C1 is essentially the body's "off switch" for stress. It produces a receptor that instructs the brain to stop flooding the body with cortisol once a threat has passed. When a person is exposed to sustained. Small chemical tags called methyl groups attach to this gene through a process called hypermethylation. McGowan found decreased glucocorticoid receptor expression alongside increased cytosine methylation of the NR3C1 promoter in the brain tissue of abuse survivors, demonstrating that adversity can effectively silence the gene's activity (McGowan et al., 2009). When NR3C1 is silenced this way, the body's stress response loses its braking mechanism and remains permanently switched "on", leaving individuals in a chronic state of physiological alert even in the absence of any threat.

Unlike NR3C1, trauma causes FKBP5 to lose its chemical tags in a process called demethylation, which conversely makes it overactive. Klengel et al. (2013) demonstrated that demethylation caused by childhood trauma

was linked to increased stress-dependent gene transcription and long-term dysregulation of the stress hormone system.

Conclusion

Though slavery was abolished on paper, its character and core principles were retained in America through the Jim Crow system. The continuous institutionalised racism, legalized segregation, and political isolation constructed a prison of psychological trauma and biological disruption that still cages the Black population. Jim Crow introduced a legacy of inequality, whose burden will not only be borne by the victims, but by their children and grandchildren, too. The stress and the mental burden inflicted by the constant threat of merely existing have resulted in not only psychological trauma, but also methylation of DNA, reduced number of glucocorticoid receptors, and adverse effects on the genes FKBP5 and NR3C, all of which are responsible for stress management in the individual. We see how agonising socio-political conditions have the potential to create a complex web of sociological, psychological, and biological limitations that trap target groups for generations.

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Ethical Statement: I hereby declare that this submission is our original work

and complies with the ethical standards and plagiarism policies of *Episteme*. I certify that all contributing authors have been duly credited and have consented to this submission.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest and the author does not wish to report any.

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Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Its Impact on Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

Romantic relationships constitute an essential component of adult well-being, with adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) consistently reporting reduced relationship satisfaction, increased relationship dissolution, and more maladaptive relationship conflict compared to neurotypical controls. While recent studies support the notion of ADHD symptom expression as gender-dependent, most prior work has controlled for, but failed to consider, gender as a moderator. The purpose of this secondary data analysis is to synthesize quantitative results from six peer-reviewed datasets, including the ACHA-NCHA III dataset (82,000+ participants), Hertz et al. (2022, 206 participants), and Bruner et al. (2015, 189 participants), to investigate gender as a moderator of the ADHD-relationship quality relationship. Results show that there are two types of relationship harm for ADHD individuals, with women with ADHD showing a gradual decline in relationship satisfaction due to diagnostic delay, symptom masking, and internalized distress, whereas men with ADHD show significantly increased levels of hypersexual behaviors, which are mediated by impulsivity. However, both types of relationship harm show cultural attenuation in non-Western cultural contexts, as gender role expectations

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influence symptom expression.

Keywords: ADHD, romantic relationships, gender differences, secondary data analysis, cross-cultural

Introduction

Romantic relationships are the core of existence for the majority of humans because this human connection builds on multiple emotions. While romantic relationships can be defined with the help of multiple words like intimacy, closeness, love, and others, the best way to define a romantic relationship can be: Romantic love is an affective state that is both profound and significant. Passionate love, which is a state of total absorption between two people, is the beginning of romantic love (Berscheid & Walster, 1978). In a relationship, especially romantic, the affect is usually two-sided and ends up becoming interdependent. The Significance Quest Theory suggests that the need for significance is universal, whereas the means of satisfying it depend on the sociocultural context in which one's values are embedded. (Kruglanski et al., 2022). According to this theory, having romantic relationships shows socially valued qualities which enhance the significance gained from them and, in turn, also increase the possibility of getting into romantic relationships in the first place. These romantic relationships can be used as a predictor of well-being, life satisfaction and even mental health.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is defined as a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by persistent patterns of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interfere with functioning or development (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). ADHD interferes with the social functioning of the person diagnosed and others in the environment, damaging the quality of the relationship. The preponderance of

the published research on the relationship of ADHD with romantic relationships points to the negative outcomes from ADHD, like low satisfaction in relationships, dysfunctional conflict resolution ways and at times intimate partner violence. Overall, it also leads to higher divorce rates and huge changes in the parent-child dynamic. ADHD is more prevalent in boys, almost 2-3 times more diagnosed in boys than girls. The diagnosis in girls is at times seen later due to multiple reasons, like women masking their symptoms more as children and multiple criteria being directed more towards the behaviours depicted by boys. This lets girls be underdiagnosed at an early age for ADHD. Some research showed the negative effects of the partner diagnosed with ADHD, while the woman is without, showing deteriorating effects on the marriage compared to men in the same situation.

This research will explain three gendered mechanisms, starting with emotional dysregulation, on how women depict more internalising symptoms like anxiety, whereas men show symptoms which are more externalising, like aggression. The second mechanism to explain differences can be hypersexuality shown significantly higher, whereas ambivalent sexual orientation and trauma are linked to sexual behaviour in women. (Hertz et al., 2022).

This research will address three research questions using secondary data analysis across multiple datasets. The research questions are:

1. Does gender create an association between ADHD symptom severity and romantic relationship quality?
2. Are gender differences involved in hypersexual behaviours that mediate the ADHD-relationship quality pathway?
3. Does the Gender x ADHD interaction replicate or diverge cross culture?

Literature Review

ADHD and Romantic Relationship Quality

Research shows consistently that adults who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) typically have negative romantic relationship outcomes when compared to adults who do not. For instance, the adults with ADHD tend to have shorter duration romantic relationships, a higher probability of divorce and less satisfaction with their romantic relationships than their non-ADHD counterparts. The reasons for this are due to their ADHD symptoms, such as inattention, impulsivity and emotional dysregulation. In a review of more than 20 studies completed by Wymbs, Canu et al (2021) established that spouses of adults who have ADHD tend to criticise their partners with ADHD and that the communication between partners with ADHD and their spouses is typically poor. Bruner et al (2015) conducted a survey of 189 college students and found that there is a downward trend in the quality of a relationship for partners with ADHD and that the significant predictor of poor quality of relationship was linked to the ADHD symptoms of the female partner, like hostility with conflict and emotional dysregulation. Canu et al. (2014) provided information about a large set of couples and also found that when comparing partners with ADHD, partners with inattention had greater relationship satisfaction and conflict resolution than partners with hyperactivity-impulsivity; the relationship dynamics between partners moderated the results.

Gender Differences in ADHD Presentation

The symptoms of ADHD and its impacts show substantial variation among people because their gender identity and sexual orientation create different experiences for each. The traditional methods for diagnosing ADHD, which

use gender comparison between men and women, have resulted in underestimation of people with ADHD across various groups, according to research- studying ADHD through gender and sexual orientation differences leads to different prevalence rates among those populations (Hartung et al., 2025). In a study of 1,049 emerging adults, Hartung et al. discovered that cisgender and heterosexual men and women showed identical ADHD symptoms, while Sexual and Gender-Minorities (SGM) exhibited 1.5- to 2-fold higher ADHD symptoms compared to heterosexuals, which showed a strong connection between ADHD and internalising disorders such as depression. Orantes et al. (2025) conducted a new analysis of ACHA-NCHA III data and discovered that sexual minorities showed an overall ADHD prevalence of 14.5%, whereas heterosexuals showed 7.5%, and gender minorities exhibited 23.9% compared to cisgender people, who showed 8.6% prevalence. Orantes et al. discovered that sexual and gender-minority individuals depicted an increased risk for mental health issues because of their high ADHD rates.

Hypersexuality, Relational Risk & Gender

The association between Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and hypersexuality/paraphilias aggravates relational risk factors, like dissatisfaction and infidelity, with gender-specific variations observed. Hertz et al. (2022), in a survey of 206 adults, including 139 diagnosed with ADHD, found that individuals with ADHD exhibited elevated rates of hypersexual behaviours, encircling emotional regulation and impulsivity, especially among females. While there were no disparities in risky sexual behaviours identified, a greater prevalence of same-sex experiences was reported. In another study, Turner et al. studied paraphilic fantasies and behaviours. Specifically, the study showed that very arousing paraphilic fantasies were more common

(58% vs. 41%), as were paraphilic behaviours (45% vs. 28%). These findings were also linked to hypersexuality ($r = 0.17-0.19$), with men showing more sadistic tendencies and women showing more fetishistic tendencies.

Cultural Moderation of Gender $\times$ ADHD Effects

Cultural factors and established gender norms come together to create an additional and excessive barrier that affects how ADHD symptoms affect relationship dynamics. Ersoy & Topçu Ersoy (2019) studied how ADHD affects marriage between Turkish adult partners. The study analysed 120 Turkish adults to show how traditional gender roles lead to mediating effects that connect ADHD with marriage outcomes for women. Gómez-Benito et al. (2019) conducted a cross-cultural study examining the CAARS (Conner's Adult ADHD Rating Scale) among young adults. Results showed that different groups exhibited distinct patterns of inattention and hyperactivity, which resulted in gender differences.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a Secondary Data Analysis (SDA) design, including quantitative findings from peer-reviewed published studies, which are analysed across the research questions. This approach is useful in two aspects of scientific methods and practical as well; the datasets selected from these papers contain valid psychometric instruments with large and diverse samples, and statistical detail to analyse gender as a moderating variable of the ADHD-relationship.

Datasets and Sources

The 3 primary datasets were chosen on the basis of valid ADHD instruments, relevance to the objectives of romantic relationship outcome, and statistics explicitly reporting gendered statistics.

The first one is the American College Health Association National College Health Assessment III (ACHA-NCHA III), which is a survey administered by the American College Health Association on more than 75 universities in the United States between 2019 and 2023 with the help of stratified random cluster sampling. The dataset contains the answers of more than 82,000 college students aged between 18 and 25. It has self-reported cases of ADHD diagnosis, gender identity among five groups, relationship status and loneliness.

The second data source is Hertz, Turner, Barra et al. (2022), an article in *Frontiers in Psychiatry*. The data collection was done through an online survey in 2020-2021. ADHD patients (n=139) were selected in the outpatient psychiatric units in Germany, and online setups helped identify a healthy population sample (n=67), which led to a total population of N=206 German-speaking adults over the age of 18. Although the raw data is not publicly available, all the descriptive statistics, means of the subscales, and results of the inferential tests are provided in detail in the published article, which were used for the analysis.

The third source is Bruner, Kuryluk, and Whitton (2015), which was written in the *Journal of American College Health*. The example of the necessary data collection was done through the years 2012-2014 using an online survey of a volunteer undergraduate population at a U.S. university (N=189), where ADHD was screened using the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS). The variable of gender was binary in nature. Individual-level

data is not publicly provided, but published statistics are detailed enough to compare across studies.

Measures and Operationalisation

The data available in the respective dataset was then operationalised through the following:

The most important independent variable was the severity of ADHD symptoms. ADHD in the ACHA-NCHA III was operationalised as a binary self-reported lifetime diagnosis, which was based on the question- ‘Have a doctor or other health care provider ever told you that you have ADHD?’ The magnitude of ADHD in Hertz et al. (2022) was measured on the Self-Report Wender Reimherr Adult ADHD Diagnostic Scale (SR-WRAADDS) from 0 to 112. In Bruner et al. (2015), the dimension of ADHD was evaluated with the help of the ASRS-18 screener, and 4 or more was regarded.

In all the datasets, gender served as the major categorical moderator. The ACHA-NCHA III captured gender identity in five categories, namely, man, woman, non-binary, transgender and other. In Hertz et al. (2022) and Bruner et al. (2015), binary male/female coding was applied. It is recognised as a limitation of this analysis that non-binary and transgender people are either unrepresented or grouped into binary groups in clinical datasets, limiting the intersectional nature of the gender moderation analysis.

The first dependent variable was relationship quality and satisfaction. This was also assessed in Bruner et al. (2015) and Knies (2021) by the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI), which has a score from 0 to 81, and higher scores imply satisfaction. Relational well-being in the ACHA-NCHA III was

proxied by relationship status and UCLA Loneliness Scale items, because there was no measure of the quality of the relationship in this instrument.

The second dependent variable was- Hypersexual behaviour, which was used in both articles Hertz et al. (2022) and Doroldi et al. (2024), and both of them used the Hypersexual Behaviour Inventory-19 (HBI-19). The total scores are between 19 and 95, and the subscales include Coping, Consequences, and Control of between 7 and 35, respectively. The analysis anchored the relationship between the severity of ADHD and hypersexual behaviour, based on the published connection between ASRS and HBI-19 total score ($r = 0.459$, $p < .001$; Doroldi et al. (2024)).

As a mediator, emotion dysregulation was included. This scale was assessed with the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-36) in Bruner et al.: 36-180; a higher score on this scale means more dysregulation.

Cultural context was also analysed as a between-dataset moderator. Gomez-Benito et al. (2019) offered the cultural group membership into four types: Spanish, Hispanic American, African American, and European American. As a primary non-Western comparator dataset, Ersoy and Topcu Ersoy (2019) used a Turkish clinical sample with the measurement of the gender role attitudes through the Gender Role Attitudes Scale (GRAS), and the marital impact through the Marital Impact Checklist (MIC).

Analytic Strategy

Since the research is performed in the form of a narrative secondary data analysis based on published aggregate statistics, all data analyses have been performed using structured manual extraction instead of the inferential statistics software, as recommended in the descriptive synthesis approach of a

secondary analysis of published aggregate data (Glass, 1976; Cooper, 2010).

Results

Gender Disparity in the Quality of Relationships

Regression analysis in Bruner et al. (2015) showed both inattention and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms predicting lower Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores in women and not in men for the same sample. This gender-specific relationship is a clear result of this hypothesis that gender is a moderating variable. In the ACHA-NCHA III data, by Hartung et al. (2025), internalising the magnitude of loneliness was higher in women and in gender-minority participants than in men with the same diagnosis, which further explains the pattern of harm with social and emotional context. For mixed-orientation couples samples, Knies (2021) concluded that the severity of ADHD symptoms was a predictor of lower CSI scores, and the level of effects is higher for individuals identifying as females. These studies indicate that the association between ADHD and the quality of relationships is not gender-neutral, that is, that the same degree of symptoms leads to more effects for females. This can be explained by delayed diagnosis and masking symptoms too. (Martin, 2024).

Gender Inequality in Hypersexual Behaviour

In Hertz et al. (2022), men with ADHD showed a much higher total HBI-19 score in comparison to women with ADHD, and this was the same for all subscales- Coping, Consequences, and Control, and each of them was statistically significant. Doroldi et al. (2024) found that impulsivity somewhat partially mediated the ASRS-18 to HBI-19 association, and this was seen as

stronger for male participants. Whereas, women diagnosed with ADHD showed patterns of sexual orientation and seeking reactive intimacy more than hypersexuality frequency (Young et al., 2023).

Cross-Cultural Moderation

While comparing Western datasets (Bruner et al., 2015; Hertz et al., 2022; Doroldi et al., 2024) with non-Western comparators (Ersoy & Topçu Ersoy, 2019; Gómez-Benito et al., 2019), the results revealed a reduction of the gender-ADHD-relationship quality association and synthesis. In the Turkish study, the way ADHD marriages were affected and how men reported lesser relational harm in terms of “Unloved and Negative Impacts” was recorded through the attitudes affecting gender roles. Similarly, Gómez-Benito et al. (2019) explained how ADHD severity varies across ethnicity and not a clear gender gap was recorded in Spanish, Hispanic American, African American, and European American groups.

Discussion

Across the datasets, the findings suggested that the effects of diagnosed ADHD is different on the basis of gender, and the same diagnosis leads to different relational harm according to the feminine or masculine role.

Why Women Report Lower Relational Satisfaction

Firstly, women experience a diagnostic delay about ADHD experience which can be estimated to around four years longer than men (Skoglund et al., 2023, as cited in Agnew-Blais, 2024), this means that they at times enter relationships with their partners without understanding their own emotional dysregulations as a whole. To give an explanation to these relational failures,

partners end up putting it on self blame or even personality deficits which leads to resentment over time. Secondly, the idea of suppression of symptoms through ideal neurotypical actions called social masking becomes a hindrance between the internal and true experience of the woman and the relational expectations. Lastly, due to the internalising symptoms depicted by women with ADHD, the relational harm is not observable specifically, fear of abandonment and reduction of self worth (Quinn & Madhoo, 2014).

Hypersexuality as a Male-Specific Relational Risk Pathway

In both Hertz et al. (2022) and Doroldi et al. (2024), the results indicated significantly higher HBI-19 scores specifically for men with ADHD which suggests that the damaging of relationships is through behavioural impulsiveness through sexual and relational risk taking. This dysfunction affects the ability to delay gratification and especially with men- since they have more externalising behavioural outputs- it manifests through issues with maintaining sexual fidelity and regulating arousal seeking behaviour in relationships. Hertz et al. (2022) adds further explanation that these men scored highest on ‘Consequences and Control’ subscales, indicating a reported inability to stop despite negative outcomes.

How Cultural Context Reshapes the Gender Signal

This idea points to two mechanisms: the first is in cultures where male hyperactivity is normalised as masculine temperament and women's emotional difficulties are attributed to relational or hormonal causes, the gender differences get hidden because ADHD is not attributed to either one's actions- this is called suppression (Slobodin & Masalha, 2020). The second is called structural buffering- when collectivist family structures absorb many of the executive demands like childcare, finances, household work - and the major

strain comes from the nuclear family setup rather than direct harm on romantic relationships.

Limitations

Several limitations create a hindrance to the conclusions of this analysis. First, because this synthesis works on published aggregate statistics rather than individual-level raw data, no covariates could be controlled. Second, three of the six datasets used binary male-female gender coding, excluding non-binary and transgender individuals entirely, becoming a gap given that gender-minority individuals carry substantially higher ADHD rates than either binary group (Hartung et al., 2025). Third, the cross-cultural comparison is limited by the absence of non-Western datasets using equivalent instruments to the Western samples, making the comparison imprecise.

Conclusion

Using the peer-reviewed datasets from both Western and non-Western contexts, this secondary data analysis sought to determine whether gender moderates the relationship between the severity of ADHD symptoms and the quality of romantic relationships. Two different relational harm pathways are consistently indicated by the evidence synthesised across these datasets: men with ADHD exhibit a more behaviorally visible risk profile characterised by elevated hypersexual behaviour and impulsive relational conduct, while women with ADHD experience a gradual erosion of partnership satisfaction shaped by diagnostic delay and symptom masking. The transformation of gender from a background variable into an active moderator of processes is the analysis's most important contribution.

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Ethical Statement: I hereby declare that this submission is our original work and complies with the ethical standards and plagiarism policies of *Episteme*. I certify that all contributing authors have been duly credited and have consented to this submission.

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Feminine Melancholy among Creative and Intellectual Women

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Abstract

Throughout history self-expression among women has been curbed by societal norms. This paper explores feminine melancholy among creative and intellectual women in the 19th and 20th centuries, who were restrained by social norms. It employs the technique of thematic analysis to understand how lack of outlet for creativity or intellectual stimulation and repressive norms shaped the psychological experiences in the lives of Kadambari Devi, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. The thematic analysis done using literary and biographical texts related to these women, revealed key recurring themes of gendered experiences, creativity and depression, intellectual frustration and feeling of alienation among the intellectual, across cultures. The paper draws upon psychological frameworks to highlight that melancholy in these contexts cannot be understood merely as individual psychopathology but as a complex interaction among factors such as intellect, emotion and gendered experiences.

Keywords: feminine melancholy, gender and creativity, intellectual frustration, alienation, psychological distress

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Introduction

The concept of melancholy traces back to Aristotle's melancholia, the excess of black bile that caused persistent fear. By the eighteenth century, melancholy evolved into a depressive illness, similar to modern depression (Buie, 2010). Freud later suggests that melancholy occurs unconsciously as a loss one is unable to fully process or identify (*Mourning and Melancholia*, 1917).

The purpose of this review is to explore feminine melancholy in the lives and works of creative and intellectual women such as Kabambari Devi, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath using literary or biographical texts like the *The Bell Jar* (Plath, 1963), *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1929) and *The Broken Nest* (*Nastanirh*) (Tagore, 1901). It aims to find how social restrictions, gender norms and most importantly, lack of creative and intellectual outlet, psychologically impacts creative and intellectual women.

Review of Literature

Various feminist scholars later systematically connected gender and melancholy. Judith Butler linked melancholy to the gendered identities that exist under the heterosexual norms of society (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Psychoanalytic feminist theory suggests that melancholy and gender are more likely to be associated in female development than in male development (Jay, 2008).

Historically, women's affective states have been pathologised as neurasthenia, hysteria, or schizophrenia (Thelandersson, 2023). Out of this, hysteria played a major role in pathologising women's emotional states. Commonly used to diagnose women suffering from vague symptoms such as

depression, anxiety and fatigue, hysteria was used more like a mechanism to regulate women who deviated from the gender norms (Backman, 2024). Autonomy, creative ambition and emotional public expression, were all considered symptoms of this ‘disorder’.

By the 1800s the representations of “*madness*” became feminised, with the rational (*masculine*) seen as capable of curing the irrational (*feminine*) mind (Thelandersson, 2023). In literature, this “madwoman trope” appeared in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) through the “*insane*” character of Bertha Mason. Gilbert and Gubar (1979) further elaborated on this trope and considered Bertha’s ‘insane’ nature symbolic of suppression of women’s emotions in Victorian society.

Structural sexism has resulted in women having traditionally been exposed to many potentially depressogenic stressors, such as domestic burdens, subordination to men, and the perceived and real obstacles in developing an autonomous existence such as a career (Bell, 2014). Concepts of depression and melancholy have mostly been associated with women. Moreover, rates of prevalence of depression are higher for women than for men (*usually about 2:1*) (Hooley et al., 2017).

Melancholy and depression also intersect with an idle lifestyle, which coincidentally many women were forced to adopt. Idleness functions both as a causal factor and symptom of depression, often accompanied by another key symptom: anhedonia, characterised by lack of motivation. Many scholars link this idleness to profound lack of meaning which triggers depressive states. This explains how being confined to domestic roles negatively impacts women's self-esteem and psychological well-being.

The relationship between intelligence and melancholy is complex, while intelligence acts as a protective factor against depression (Weismann-Arcache and Tordjman, 2012), intelligence (*particularly verbal intelligence*) is positively associated with depressive symptoms and rumination (Penny, Miedema and Mazmanian, 2015).

There is also a positive association between creativity and depression (Taylor, 2017), although it depends on the severity of depression. While mild to moderate depression can facilitate creative work, severe cases inhibit creativity (Hadulla, 2021). Art block (*chronic lack of creative output*) or lack of structured creative outlets can worsen a depressive-like state. Likewise, denial of outlets due to social norms worsened the melancholic state for intellectual women.

There have been several studies on depression and melancholy among women, however, but very few studies were cross-cultural (*had a culturally diverse sample*) and analysed it from a creative and intellectual lens.

Methodology

The qualitative study uses thematic analysis (*Braun and Clarke, 2006*) to explore feminine melancholy among creative and intellectual women in the 19th and 20th centuries. It aims to explore the experience of gendered oppression, creative blockage and melancholy in intellectual and creative women across different cultural and historical contexts through related literary and biographical texts. Thematic Analysis (*TA*) was chosen for its flexible approach in identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data.

Sample Selection

The following women were selected for this study:

- Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)- A prominent English modernist author whose work explored women's inner lives and societal restrictions. Despite her success, Woolf struggled with psychological distress and died of suicide in 1941.
- Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)- An American poet and novelist whose writings highlighted the tension surrounding female creative ambition due to restrictive social norms in mid-20th century America. She also struggled with depression and died by suicide in 1963.
- Kadambari Devi (1859-1884)- A 19th century Bengali woman of great intellectual and creative ability, unfortunately best-remembered as Rabindranath Tagore's sister-in-law. Her life reflects the suppression of women's intellectual potential in colonial Bengal. She died by suicide in 1884.

Therefore, these women showcased great intellectual ambition in a repressive society, experienced psychological distress and belonged to diverse cultural contexts spanning 19th-20th centuries.

Data Sources

The key texts analysed included:

- A Room of One's Own (Woolf, 1929)- argues for financial independence and private space as conditions for women's creative freedom.
- The Bell Jar (Plath, 1963) - a semi-autobiographical novel, depicting a young woman's creative ambitions, depression and psychiatric institutionalisation.

- *Nastanirh* or *The Broken Nest* (Tagore, 1901)- features Charulata, believed to be inspired by Kadambari whose loneliness and lack of agency mirror Kadambari's experiences.

Analytical Procedure

The study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase framework for thematic analysis- familiarisation, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and producing a report.

Analysis of these texts revealed four interconnected themes:

- gendered experiences and structural oppression
- creative desire versus creative restraint
- alienation and existential questioning
- melancholy

Result

The study examined how social norms shaped the creative lives and psychological experiences of creative and intellectual women in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thematic analysis of selected literary and biographical texts revealed key above-mentioned interconnected themes, elaborated into further detail in *Table 1*.

Table 1*Thematic analysis of texts*

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Gendered experiences and structural oppression	Institutional barriers Domestic confinement Material deprivation	Lack of financial independence; lack of autonomy; domestic labour expectations; excluded from public institutions; lack of support; restricted public voice
Creative desire versus creative restraint	Writing as outlet Structural barriers to creative expression Thwarted potential (intellectual and creative)	Desire and potential to write; artistic blocks; lack of space; interrupted labour; unfulfilled ambition; repressed creative voice; leads to frustration
Alienation and existential questioning	Institutional and structural alienation Interpersonal isolation and loneliness Alienation from Intellectual communities Existential disconnect from societal values	Lack of belonging among women; exclusion from male dominated intellectual circles; lack of like-minded companionship; emotional neglect; alienation from social norms; conflict with social norms
Melancholy as gendered condition	Depressive and melancholic affect Suppressed emotion Mental health struggles Self-harm and suicide	Internalised pain; Feeling of emptiness; despair and depression; boredom induced depression; Suppressed anger and rage; Psychological distress; Low self-esteem; rumination; suicidal ideation and self-harm; death by suicide

Discussion

The following sections explore and analyse each theme in detail.

Gendered experiences and structural oppression

Gendered experience emerges as a dominant recurring theme across all three texts. Despite differences in geography and time period, Woolf, Plath and Charulata (*who is believed to have been inspired by Kadambari Devi*) live in societies shaped by patriarchy, domestic confinement and suppression of public voice. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf argues that a woman must have some personal space and financial independence to pursue her creative interests. This highlights the importance of autonomy that was lacking in the women of that time. She talks about how historically men's exclusive control over education, property and professions has curbed creative expression among women due to material deprivation. Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* is set in an apparently more liberal Western context, where women are permitted education but limited professional choices. The text highlights the prevalent sexism and surveillance faced by women in the supposedly free and liberal environments. Her character also shows how anger becomes a byproduct of this oppression. This is similar to Woolf's observation that women's writing often contains suppressed rage.

Unlike Plath and Woolf, Charulata does not openly voice out dissent, instead her struggle was more internal and suppressed, yet revolutionary for its time. Recurrent use of veranda and windows in the text, reflect the prevalent domestic confinement and her desire to look beyond it. This reflects conditions similar to those faced by Kadambari Devi whose original works remain largely inaccessible despite various historical accounts suggesting her intellectual and creative potential, due to systemic silencing of female voices.

The different experiences across these women can be explained by Collin's Matrix of Domination which proposes that multiple systems of oppression including race, class, gender interact simultaneously to shape individual experiences (Johnson, 2006). Though all three women faced patriarchal constraints and gendered oppression, their experiences were quite different.

Creative Desire versus Creative Restraint

The deep creative desire in times of female creative restraint is another prominent theme. Writing was an outlet for them in a repressed environment. Since writing functioned as a coping tool for them, obstructions in the environment regarding this led to further psychological distress. Writing freely about one's deepest thoughts significantly improves mental health (Pennebaker & Chung, 2013).

Woolf and Plath, though successful and accomplished writers, document the social and psychological struggles they faced in carving a creative identity as a woman. Woolf attributes this restraint to lack of financial independence and burden of domestic responsibilities which interrupts intellectual labour. She even uses the example of Shakespeare's equally gifted fictional sister, Judith, who lacked the opportunities and had to fulfil domestic expectations, to explain that absence of female literary history is a result of structural deprivation rather than lack of talent, a common belief at the time.

In *The Bell Jar*, Plath similarly demonstrates how creative desire is undermined by lack of social and institutional support. Through Esther Greenwood, she showcases the prevalence of creative blocks among intellectual women despite their keen creative appetite. This suggests how creative blocks can be traced to societal expectations that restrict female

ambition and productivity. Creative potential is highly sensitive to social oppression and institutional constraints (Zaden, Meijer and Beghetto, 2020). Esther's inability to envision a future with social acceptance and creative fulfilment reflects the psychological impact of this restraint. Charulata, like Kadambari, belonged to a more repressive environment, therefore, embodied this creativity privately. In this sense, Charulata lives the life Woolf theorises through figures like Judith Shakespeare, a gifted woman whose creative potential is suppressed by lack of opportunity, education and freedom. The fact that we can find none of her original works is a testament to that.

These women's experiences can be explained by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), which talks about the environment's role in fulfilling important needs such as autonomy and competence to facilitate positive well-being. It suggests that environments that thwart these needs, lead to psychological ill-being. These women lived in "need-thwarting environments" which blocked their creative, emotional and social freedom and led to psychological distress, a sense of lack of competence and frustration.

Feeling of alienation and existential questioning

Alienation emerges as another recurring concept across the texts. However, the context may vary. In *A Room Of One's Own*, Woolf's sense of alienation is primarily structural and institutional. Instances such as the time she was not allowed to enter the Oxbridge library without a male escort made her aware of the gendered politics of intellectual spaces. These women experienced a sense of alienation and particularly, a feeling of not belonging among women who conform to societal norms. In *The Bell Jar*, through Esther, Plath mentions the anxiety she experiences regarding not being maternal like others and feeling suffocated by patriarchal norms that most women around her had

accepted. Alienation had an existential dimension as well. Esther's values and reasoning did not align with that of the society she lived in. The metaphor of the Bell Jar highlights this suffocating isolation she experiences which has been shaped by her gender and the social stigma attached to mental illness. Such experiences align with the Gender Role Stress Theory which suggests that individuals experience distress when they feel they are unable to meet the gendered (*masculine/feminine*) expectations of the society (Eisler and Skidmore, 1987; Gillespie and Eisler, 1992 as cited in Kazmierczak, 2010). The theory also explains the cause of severe distress by emphasising how gender roles are integral aspects of identity and social belonging.

Like Kadambari, Charulata in *Nastanirh* experiences a more social and personal form of isolation. Her sense of loneliness stems from profound emotional disconnect from other women in the household, with whom she did not intellectually or creatively align. Unlike most women in 18th and 19th century Bengal, Charulata did not derive satisfaction from domestic labour alone and desired something to satisfy her creative desire that went beyond the societal feminine roles. Unfortunately, the intellectual sphere that might have offered such fulfillment remained largely male-dominated. Additionally, the sheer emotional neglect by Bhupati, her husband further intensified her sense of alienation. It was only with Amal's arrival that she received companionship and attention, however that too was short-lived. Her experience of isolation was more internal and suppressed. Her life reflects how women's lives are quietly shaped by domestic patriarchy.

Thwarted belongingness (Ribeiro & Joiner, 2009) and Need to Belong Theory (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) both explain how exclusion from meaningful community contributes to depression and suicidal ideation.

Melancholy

Across texts, melancholy emerged as a gendered social condition rather than a purely pathological one. Plath and Woolf's depressive affective state was self-documented and often took the form of frustration and anger. Their public expression of distress could partly be attributed to their liberal environments such as in Woolf's case who wrote during the period of the first wave of feminism. Whereas the melancholy experienced by Kadambari Devi, reflected through the character of Charulata, was more internal and repressed due to the cultural context that discouraged public female self-expression.

All of them unfortunately, after experiences of gendered oppression and creative oppression, experienced severe mental health struggles and ultimately died by suicide at relatively young ages. The severity of their struggles can be seen throughout these texts. *The Bell Jar*, for instance, in detail depicts institutionalisation, treatment for clinical depression and suicide attempts.

Freud's concept of melancholy (1917), as an unconscious grief because of the loss of an object or event, offers great insight into their condition. In their context the lost object was neither a person nor an event, it was a deeper loss of freedom, autonomy, opportunities and creative fulfilment due to societal barriers. However, unlike Freud's focus on individual pathology, melancholy in this context is mainly structural.

Denial of agency is also particularly visible in Charulata's context where she neither voices her distress nor her deep attachment to Amal due to the societal norms. This suppression of emotions is associated with more depressive symptoms such as rumination (Petkus, Gum and Wetherell, 2014; Wenzlaff and Luxton, 2018). Theory of Perceived Control (Rotter, 1966;

Langer, 1975) states that individuals ability to control and influence outcomes enhances their psychological well-being. In the case of these women, the collective denial of freedom and autonomy contributed to their psychological state. Seligman's Learned Helplessness (1972) provides great insight into their psychological lives. It suggests that repeated exposure to uncontrollable negative events makes one believe that they cannot change their circumstances and causes helplessness and depression. Woolf's exclusion from the library, Plath's limited career options despite her potential and Kadambari's domestic confinement, highlight how these women experienced such conditions that led to learned helplessness and melancholy. Lewinsohn's behavioural theory provides deep insight into their psychological state. It explains that a low rate of positive reinforcement (*rewards, pleasure and social connection*) where one receives minimal positive feedback from their environment can result in worthlessness, hopelessness and depression (Whisman et al., 2014).

Their experiences of depression can also be understood through Aron Beck's 1967 cognitive model where he proposes that depression stems from negative core schemas that shape the cognitive triad- negative views of self, world and the future (Chand et al., 2023). The repeated experiences of gendered oppression seemed to have formed such schemas, particularly those regarding their competence and self worth. For instance, *The Bell Jar* addresses Esther's negative self-schemas through her thoughts of inadequacy and low self-esteem despite her achievements as a student. Woolf attributes this lack of confidence, financial independence and personal space.

Most importantly, the concept of psychological climate provides a vital framework of an individual's subjective interpretation of their surrounding conditions including perceived autonomy, control and emotional safety, and how these perceptions influence cognition and behaviour (Toprak and

Karakuş, 2018). The environments inhabited by these women were psychologically restrictive, fostered constraint and lack of agency. This framework emphasises how socially produced conditions, not individual pathology, shaped their melancholic experiences.

Limitations and future directions

The study has several limitations. The sample includes only 3 educated women from upper middle class or upper class backgrounds, which may impact its generalisability. Additionally, for the analysis mostly literary texts were used instead of direct personal accounts, especially for Kadambari since her original work cannot be found. However, the study still provides great insight into how structural oppression affected the psychological experiences of creative women. Future directions could perhaps explore feminine melancholy in creative women in contemporary times.

Conclusion

The study explored feminine melancholy among creative women in the 19th-20th centuries through the analysis of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) and *Nasthanirh or The Broken Nest (inspired by Kadambari Devi)* (Tagore, 1901). Analysis revealed four interconnected themes- gendered and structural oppression, creative desire versus creative restraint, alienation and existential questioning and melancholy as a gendered condition. The findings explain a reinforcing cycle in which gendered oppression leads to creative restraint, intensifies alienation, ultimately resulting in melancholy and suicide. Though all of them experienced melancholy and oppression, the paper acknowledges that manifestations differed due to diverse cultures and time periods.

This paper argues that feminine melancholy was structural rather than mere individual pathology. It challenges models (e.g. Beck, 1967; Seligman, 1972) which explain depression in the context of individual cognition, by showing that these women's thoughts and beliefs were accurate assessments of their oppressive societies, not cognitive distortions. Understanding melancholy as a structural construct validates women's experiences of distress and emphasises on systemic change in addressing women's mental health.

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Ethical Statement: I hereby declare that this submission is our original work and complies with the ethical standards and plagiarism policies of *Episteme*.

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Sports Viewership and Participation Through the Lens of New Media

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Abstract

In an increasingly digital world, it is also getting increasingly difficult to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle. This paper aimed to harness the positive side of this digitisation by narrowing down on the influence that forms of new media brings on sports viewership and participation. Through focused group discussions and an online survey to corroborate facts, it was found that lesser-known and less popular sports have found a new opening through social media content. Interest in individual athletes and their stories has also grown, while opinion polarisation and athlete idolisation move hand-in-hand with this increase in attention. Instagram has become nearly synonymous with social media, proving to be the primary source of information regarding sporting events, news, athletes, and controversies surrounding the concerned sport. Sportspersons and non-sportspersons alike have greatly expanded on both the positive and negative impacts of new media on sports coverage while the focus of content may vary for either group. The study is a crucial step towards understanding how the digital age influences the opinions of its consumers within the domain of sports.

Keywords: sports, new media, viewership, participation, opinion, coverage, digital age

¹⁰ Bio note: Anya Jacob is a 3rd-year student from the Department of B.A. Programme with a major in Psychology and a minor in Sociology at Lady Shri Ram College for Women. Her research interests include sports, consumer market and consumer behaviour, forms of media and their impact, self, personality and impression management, addiction and substance abuse.

Introduction

This study originates from everyday observations of how social media shapes interests, particularly in sports. Instances of individuals developing an interest in sports after viewing short-form content raise questions about the broader influence of digital media. This research explores whether such patterns are widespread and how different forms of new media affect sports engagement.

New media refers to digital platforms that enable interaction, content creation, and distribution, including social media, streaming services, and online content platforms. Unlike traditional media, new media is interactive, instantaneous, and algorithm-driven, allowing users to act as both consumers and producers of content.

Existing literature has primarily examined how media shapes perceptions of sports, with limited focus on how these perceptions translate into participation. This study addresses this gap by comparing sportspersons and non-sportspersons to understand how media influences both viewership and participation.

Objectives of the Study

- Have forms of new media impacted sports viewership and participation, particularly in India?
- How does actively pursuing a sport mediate the effect of media on building narratives and opinions around the said sport?
- Identify means and modes of media that are most effective in influencing persons to engage in sports viewership and partnership.

Significance and Scope of the Study

In this fast-paced, ever-growing world of digitisation, it is becoming almost impossible for any field to stay away from newer, digital forms of media. To add to the vast repository of existing work done in this field of intersection of sports and new media, the present study elaborates on the topic in the Indian context. With increasing digitisation, sports coverage has expanded significantly through new media. At the same time, sedentary lifestyles are becoming more prevalent. This study seeks to understand how digital platforms can be leveraged to promote sports engagement.

The research focuses on distinguishing between sportspersons and non-sportspersons in terms of how media shapes their attitudes and behaviours. It also highlights the potential of new media to promote awareness and participation in a wider range of sports.

Literature Review

Existing research highlights the growing dominance of social media as a source of sports information. Studies indicate that a large majority of young audiences rely on social media for sports updates. Media also plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions, often reinforcing biases and unequal coverage across sports (N. S. R. Sachde & M. S. A. Makwana, 2024). Digital media has transformed sports consumption by enabling real-time engagement, multi-platform viewing, and interactive content. Streaming platforms have replaced traditional broadcasting in many contexts, offering flexibility and accessibility (Dr Krishan Kumar, 2025).

Research also suggests a positive relationship between media consumption and sports participation, driven by role modelling and motivation. However, this relationship is influenced by socioeconomic factors and access to resources (Wei et al., 2025; Tian, Yang, and Zhang, 2023). Scholars have also highlighted the growing focus on athletes' personal lives and entertainment value, often overshadowing the sport itself. While new media enhances visibility and engagement, it also contributes to sensationalism and unequal representation (Zhang, 2023; Kohli, 2024).

A key gap in the literature is the lack of distinction between sportspersons and non-sportspersons and limited research in the Indian context. This study addresses both gaps.

Research Methodology

The Universe of Study

The study focuses on female university students in New Delhi, specifically from Lady Shri Ram College. The institution offers diverse academic and sports opportunities, making it suitable for examining sports engagement. Furthermore, to give a greater in-depth picture of the data, it was decided that variables would only be studied in female participants in this study.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with access to new media. Participants were divided into two groups: sportspersons¹¹ and

¹¹In the context of this paper, sportspersons refer to those participants who are currently pursuing a sport professionally in college.

non-sportspersons¹². Additionally, purposive sampling also helps in identifying participants who have access to these given new media forms, such as Instagram, YouTube, Netflix, Twitter/X, SonyLIV, and so on.

Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 31 female participants aged between 18 and 22. Of these, 15 were active sportspersons and 16 were non-sportspersons. The students were from varied educational backgrounds, with students from departments like Psychology, Commerce, History, Journalism, and B.A. Programme. Moreover, the sportspersons were chosen from Archery, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Handball, Shooting, Swimming, and Tennis.

Techniques of study

Before the formal study was carried out, a pilot study was conducted to gauge the opinions and ideas that potential participants may have surrounding the topic. Following the pilot study and the review of literature, data were collected through focus group discussions and a supplementary survey on the following themes - social media usage, OTT content, peer influence, sports participation, sports athletes and accessories, and impact of digital sports journalism. The discussions explored themes such as social media usage, sports participation, and media influence. The survey was used to validate and support qualitative findings. The focused groups were divided on the basis of whether or not individuals were currently pursuing a sport actively in university.

¹² In the context of this paper, non-sportspersons refer to those participants who are not currently pursuing a sport professionally.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The evolution of sports media reflects broader technological changes. From word-of-mouth to digital platforms, each phase has transformed how audiences engage with sports.

Digital media can both encourage and discourage sports participation. While increased screen time may reduce physical activity, exposure to sports content can motivate engagement through observational learning and role modelling (Tian et al., 2023; Zhong et al., 2025). McLuhan's distinction between hot and cold media is also relevant. New media, characterised by fast, engaging content, promotes quick consumption but may limit deeper engagement. This has implications for how sports are experienced and understood.

Social Cognitive Theory explains how individuals learn behaviours by observing others, particularly influential figures such as athletes. Behavioural Reasoning Theory further suggests that repeated exposure to content, reinforced by algorithms and peer validation, can shape attitudes and behaviours (Zhong et al., 2025).

However, critical perspectives raise concerns. The idea of conformity suggests that individuals may adopt interests to align with social norms rather than personal passion. Goffman's concept of self-presentation highlights how individuals curate identities through visible interests, including sports. To supplement these debates, proponents of One-Dimensional Man by Herbert

Marcuse would argue that the ability to question has taken a back seat and the need to fit in has taken over.

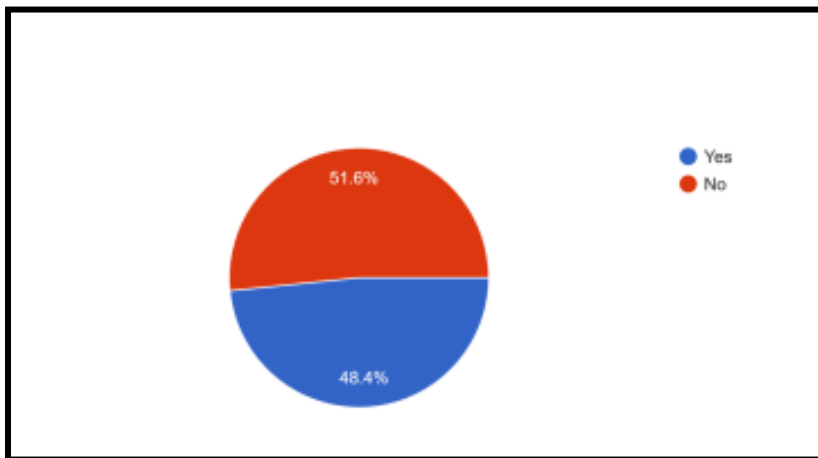
What You See is How You Think - The Intersection of New Media and Sports

Once the group discussions were concluded in groups ranging from 4 to 6 members, a short Google Form was floated to corroborate and highlight the findings as observed and noted in the discussion. These results are presented below.

Sample Distribution

Figure 1

Sportspersons vs. Non-sportspersons

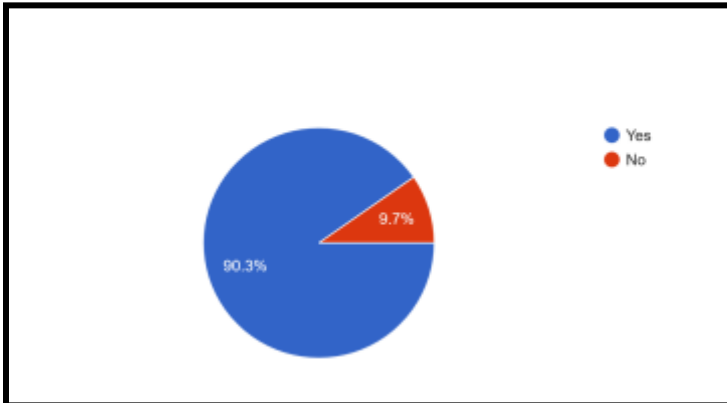


Out of the 31 participants in the study, 15 are currently pursuing a sport while 16 are non-sportspersons.

Previous Sport Participation History

Figure 2

Past sporting experience



Though there were only 15 participants who were currently pursuing sports in college, more than 90% (28 participants) of the respondents had some kind of previous exposure to playing a sport. For most, this was through school while for others it was just as a hobby. For a few sportspersons, their professional sports interest grew out of playing as a hobby, family interest, or peer influence.

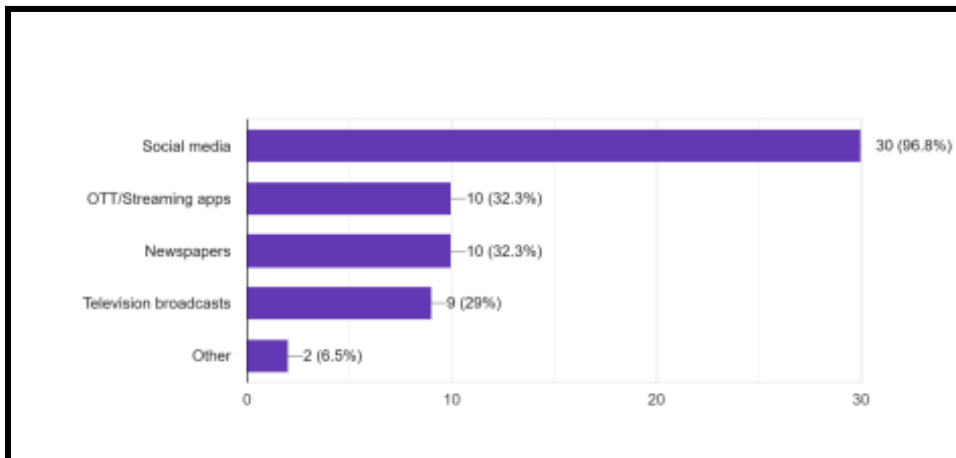
Source of Sports-Based Information

The predominant source of global news and current affairs for the 18-22 year old category under study is social media too. For 30 out of 31 participants, social media is their number one source of sports-based news and updates, therefore signaling a significant implication for the need of accurate, objective, and far-reaching sports coverage through social media channels and accounts.

Interestingly, a key point of difference between sportspersons and non-sportspersons is that for non-sportspersons, streaming apps are the second most commonly used source of such news, followed by newspapers. For sportspersons, social media is followed by television coverage as a source of information, after which streaming apps and newspapers provide new information regarding sports. One can argue that sportspersons are already informed about their respective sporting events, and therefore, are more motivated to watch the match live online rather than use other forms of social media to get an update regarding the results. The sportspersons also showed a greater interest in the actual sport being played rather than the athlete's brand endorsements, personal lives, and associated "gossip", which is perhaps another reason for the preference of streaming apps to watch sports rather than social media apps.

Figure 3

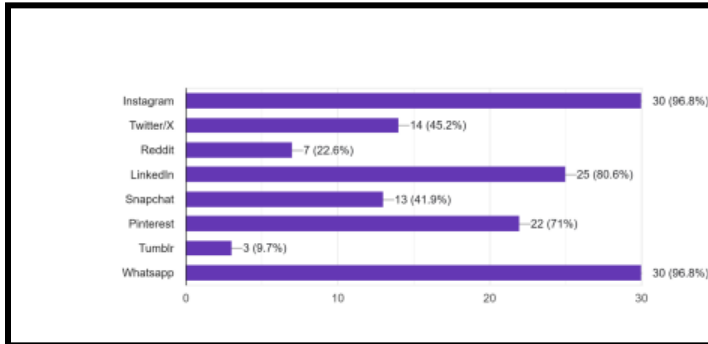
Prevalence of social media for news/updates



Division of Social Media Apps (based on usage)

Figure 4

Social media apps used in general

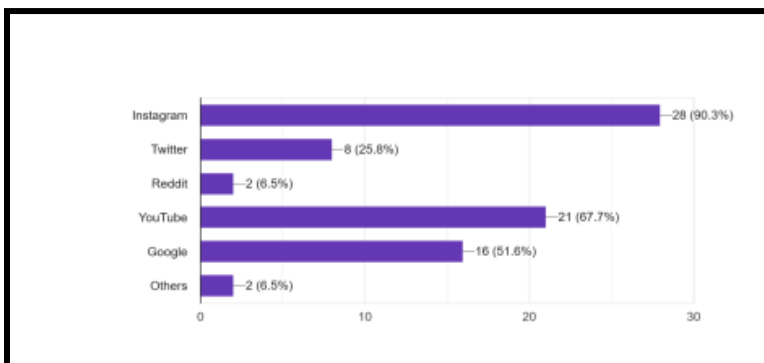


In total, about 96.8% of the respondents use Instagram and WhatsApp (30 users) as their primary social media apps, followed by 80.6% on LinkedIn (25 participants) and 71% on Pinterest (22 participants). Twitter came in next with 45.2% (14 participants) while Snapchat was at 41.9% (13 participants). Reddit (22.6%) and Tumblr (9.7%) were the least used social media platforms among the participants, with 7 and 3 users respectively.

Social Media (used for sports information)

Figure 5

Usage of social media apps for sports use

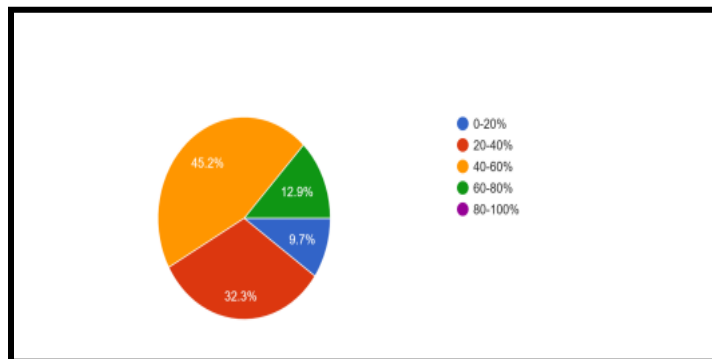


Instagram is the frontrunner for sports-related news and updates. 90.3% participants (28 people, sportspersons and non-sportspersons alike) claim that Instagram is their number one source of sports-based content. For sportspersons, 14 out of 15 use Instagram as their chief content provider, while non-sportspersons also refer to YouTube and Google to learn more or follow sports updates. Out of the 13 sportspersons that also use YouTube, it was observed that this particular medium was an important source of learning new tactics/techniques for the concerned sport.

Extent of Sports Content

Figure 6

Extent of sports content shown on social media feeds¹³



It was found that for 67.8% of the participants (21 respondents), sports comprises 40 or more than 40 percent of their social media - and this includes non-sportspersons as well. Even if there was no prior interest shown towards a particular sport, participants indicated that just because there was a major event happening, some controversy that sparked an interest, or just an “edit” of a sportsperson, reels of the sport started appearing on their feed. Some

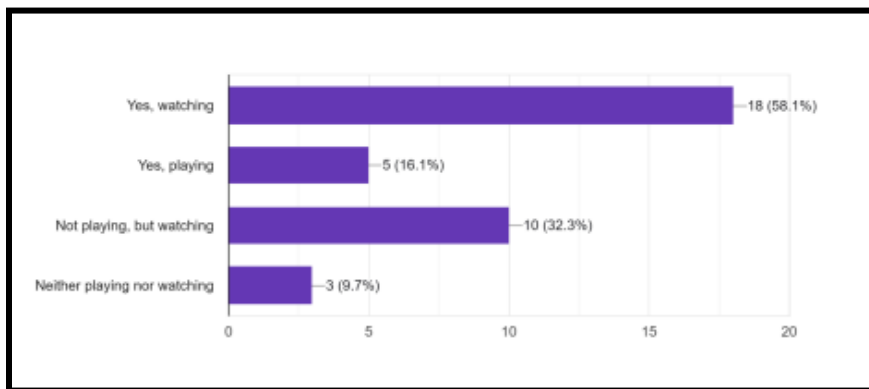
¹³ A feed is a stream of content on social media, which consists of personalised and endless posts, images, videos, etc. of the time

attribute it to the algorithm, saying that if a friend shares a post/reel with them and they open it to watch it, very soon the whole feed is flooded with more of such content.

The Influence of Media

Figure 7

Influence of media on participation and viewership



Though we can see that the mode of transmission of information has shifted from more traditional forms of media to the newer ones, the participants assert that they would still prefer to watch the sports events and matches in the stadiums/arenas, if the venue is accessible and safe and the timings match their schedules. Since these criteria are difficult to fulfill, most times, the streaming apps take over. 83.9% of the participants (26 people) say that they watch the matches online instead because it's more convenient, and a few even mentioned the real-time analyses and instant replay options to be beneficial as well. To this point, a few sportspersons (playing Boxing, Football, and Swimming) also mentioned that they have been able to learn a few tactics or improve their techniques because of what they saw on YouTube and Instagram. Moreover, the participants also reported that they are more informed about the sporting events happening in their areas/localities because

it is more likely to come up on their social media feeds. The more it is shared on stories of people that they follow, the more likely it is for them to learn more about it or go to watch/participate in the event.

And it is not just about the viewership preferences, social media has introduced all participants (with the exception of 3 non-sportspersons) to at least one new sport, which they gained an interest in and started watching. There was 1 sportsperson (Swimmer) who even started playing Badminton for a few months because she was fascinated by the reels that she saw about the sport, its players, and matches. It must be noted, here, that though there was participation in a new sport, it only remained temporary and did not prove to be a sustained interest in the sport, indicating that perhaps social media can provide a boost or motivation to start playing a sport, but continuing with it depends more on individual and situational factors. Among the non sportspersons, 13 out of 16 have also started watching at least one new sport because of social media, podcasts, or documentaries like Olympo, Deepest Water, 14 Peaks, but no one started playing a sport. Winter Games and Paralympics have started gaining more popularity because the stories of these athletes are presented in such an inspiring way online that two of the participants reported actively keeping track of the events that they participated in as well.

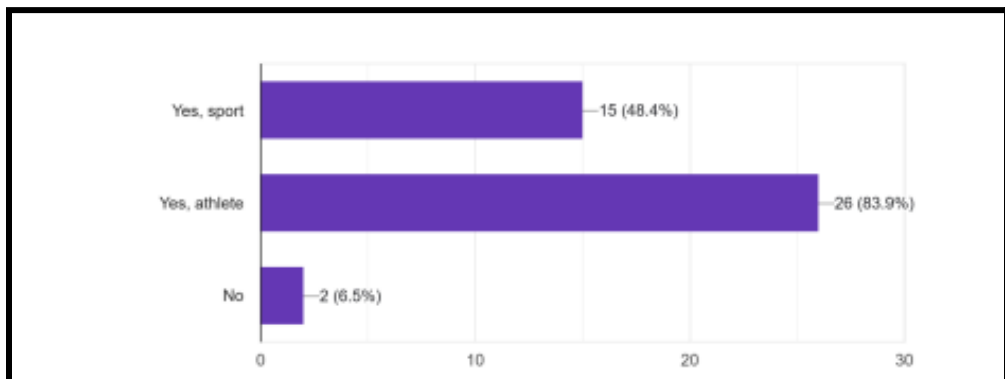
Influence of Media on Opinions

With the exception of 2 participants (1 sportsperson and 1 non-sportsperson), all the respondents have changed their opinions about a certain athlete or sport after reading or watching something on social media. However, they were also quick to point out that social media only provides the starting gun about a certain controversy or update, and that supplementing sources such as Google or interviews/reports are sought to verify the news, particularly because

media, in general, is perceived to “polarise opinions”, and sensationalise even the smallest of things. Moreover, it was also signalled that there is an unequal focus on athletes and sports on social media and streaming apps. For live matches, Cricket and Football were chosen by the participants as the leaders in terms of the extent of events that are broadcast and covered by social media accounts. Adding another layer of inequity, the participants pointed out the bias in portrayal and coverage of women's sports and athletes (along with the pay gap), and the difference in public discourse surrounding men and women players.

Figure 8

Influence of media on opinions



Discussion

The findings indicate that new media have significantly transformed sports viewership. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become the primary source of sports information. While sportspersons may focus more on the sport itself and prefer live viewing, non-sportspersons engage more with social media content in general. New media also influences perceptions of athletes, often shifting focus from performance to personal narratives,

sometimes fuelled by misrepresentation. While this increases engagement, it also contributes to sensationalism and polarisation.

Regardless of this debate, most participants indicated that they, too, have fallen prey to the persuasive power of new media by changing the narrative and image of an athlete, event, or sport at large. On the other end of the spectrum, however, it was also found that interest piqued for a sport, for both sportspersons and non-sportspersons, when there was a major achievement associated with it. For example, participants quoted the likes of Neeraj Chopra, Hima Das, Mondo Duplantis, R. Praggnanandhaa, and Sha'carri Richardson.

Importantly, while the media increases interest in sports, it does not necessarily lead to sustained participation. Factors such as time constraints, age, and peer pressure through skill comparison play a more significant role. Conversely, however, they would be more likely to participate in a sport if their friends played it or asked them to join. The concept of "FOMO" – Fear of Missing Out – was evoked in 3 out of 6 discussions, wherein the participants felt that if the people that they know and follow are playing something novel, they would feel more interested in playing it themselves, giving fuel to the ideas of the one-dimensionality of man (Marcuse, 1964) and self-presentation and impression formation proposed by Goffman.

Limitations of the study

External factors like parental influence, available facilities and infrastructure, self-concept and the kind of occupation the individual is involved in must be considered while studying the influence of various social media platforms on

sports viewership patterns and the impact of new media on sports participation (Cindy Bui, 2023; Zhong et al., 2025).

While this study restricted itself to newer forms of media, a major gap that was observed in the group discussions was the impact of older forms of media, that majorly include television broadcasts. Thus, a further line of study could be differences in sports viewership and participation behaviours on the basis of older forms of media versus those of new media.

Moreover, the study was restricted to a small geographical area within the National Capital Territory of Delhi. The sample size, too, was inadequate to draw more generalisable conclusions.

Future research could include both male and female participants as well as sportspersons from more sports. Furthermore, a comparative analysis could be drawn between the differing levels of socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants.

Conclusion

The study sought to gauge how forms of new media – primarily social media and online video streaming services – are affecting patterns of sports viewership and participation among the college-going population in Delhi. Through focused group discussions and a short online survey, it can be ascertained that there most definitely is an impact that new media, particularly short-form media as seen on Instagram, are creating on sports viewership. Sports participation, on the other hand, has not seen a significant change, but there is certainly growing attention and interest in lesser-known sports and athletes due to social media.

Additionally, the portrayal and representation of athletes, sporting events, and sports in general have a tendency to influence the opinions and preferences of their consumers to the extent that they stop following or supporting the concerned athlete or team. Contrarily, certain controversies and popular memes¹⁴ prove to be heavily influential in piquing an interest towards following a sport. However, sportspersons and non-sportspersons behave differently in terms of their behaviour patterns in this respect.

Sportspersons are more interested in the game itself, and their opinions on individual athletes are less likely to influence them watching or following the sport. They also show a higher preference towards streaming platforms rather than social media apps, perhaps owing to their prior knowledge of the sporting events, compared to non-sportspersons who utilise social media as their primary source of keeping up with and following sports events.

While it can be said that new media has proven to have a major impact on viewing and following sports, the significance of peer influence and individual personality factors is unparalleled when discussing sports participation. Therefore, through this study, it can be said that new media is an increasingly important tool that must be utilised efficiently to encourage more and more people to take an interest in watching and supporting sports and athletes. The likelihood of participation will, thus, likely increase owing to peer groups and friend circles providing motivation and encouragement to consistently watch, follow, and play a sport.

Acknowledgement: This research would not be complete without the

¹⁴ A meme is a means of spreading culturally significant information through imitation. In the digital age, it is mostly shared through humorous images, videos, or phrases that are popularised online.

enthusiastic participation and invaluable insights provided by my respondents. I'd like to sincerely thank each of the 31 participants. Additionally, a huge thanks and sincere gratitude to Dr. Thuanbina Gangmei and Dr. Anuradha Jaidka for their guidance and encouragement in the completion of this paper.

Ethical Statement: I hereby declare that this submission is our original work and complies with the ethical standards and plagiarism policies of *Episteme*. I certify that all contributing authors have been duly credited and have consented to this submission.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest and the author does not wish to report any.

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About the theme: Anatomy of Polycrisis

The reality we live in often feels like a simulation. This era cannot be defined by a singular, isolated incident, but rather by a web of interconnected crises (polycrisis) that has shaped the humans we are today. From ecological instability and economic volatility to political conflicts and global pandemics, we live in an age of mass communication & misinformation that further divides us.

The current global reality is defined by polycrisis, with multiple issues shaping our political, social, and economic context. We have been witnesses to it all, which gives us an advantage when analysing and dissecting these themes. It not only allows for a deeper understanding of these crises but also permits an introspection into how these issues have shaped us in numerous ways.