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ARTICLES

FROM REFORM TO CONTROVERSY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) FRAMEWORK

IFTIKHAR HUSSAIN BHAT

Assistant Professor, School of Law, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K
E-mail: **iftikharhussain@uok.edu.in**

Abstract

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework in India is currently undergoing a critical analysis, against the backdrop of recent reforms and controversies. This reflects the ongoing challenges and opportunities in environmental governance. Evaluating the efficacy and legitimacy of the EIA process reveals issues such as inadequate enforcement, limited public participation, and contentious project approvals. Real-world case studies illustrate the complexities of environmental decision-making. Recommendations for enhancing the EIA framework encompass strategies to strengthen regulatory oversight, promote transparency, enhance public participation, and integrate cumulative impact assessment. By addressing these recommendations, India can bolster its environmental governance, fostering sustainable development and equitable decision-making. This analysis underscores the importance of evidence-based policy, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive management in navigating environmental challenges and advancing sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Environmental Impact Assessment, India, reforms, controversies, governance, sustainability, recommendations

I. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): Context and Evolution

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic process used to identify, predict, evaluate, and mitigate the potential environmental effects of proposed projects, plans, or policies (Glasson et al., 2012). It serves as a

decision-making tool to ensure that development activities are carried out in an environmentally sustainable manner, minimizing adverse impacts and maximizing positive outcomes (Petts, 2009). The concept of EIA emerged in response to growing concerns about the environmental consequences of development projects and the need to integrate environmental considerations into decision-making processes (Sadler, 2013). Originating in the United States in the 1960s, driven by recognition of environmental degradation resulting from rapid industrialization and urbanization, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 laid the foundation for modern EIA practice (Glasson et al., 2012). EIA has since evolved into a widely adopted practice, with many countries enacting laws and regulations requiring assessment of environmental impacts for various projects (Wood, 2003). EIA is guided by several key principles, including early integration into the planning and decision-making process, comprehensive analysis of proposed projects' environmental effects, promotion of public participation and stakeholder engagement, advocacy for transparency and accountability in processes, and mandate for assessment of alternative project designs, locations, and technologies (Glasson et al., 2012). Applied to infrastructure development, industrial activities, mining operations, urban development, and policy planning, EIA is conducted at various project stages, with the level of assessment depending on project scale, complexity, and environmental significance (Petts, 2009).

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a crucial tool for sustainable development, ensuring that proposed projects undergo comprehensive evaluation for potential environmental consequences before they are approved or implemented. In India, the EIA framework has undergone significant evolution since its inception, reflecting both the country's commitment to environmental protection and the challenges posed by

rapid industrialization, urbanization, and infrastructure development. The concept of EIA was introduced in India in the early 1970s with the enactment of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act in 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act in 1981 (Parikh, 2003). These legislations mandated the assessment of environmental impacts for certain industries, focusing primarily on pollution control measures. However, the scope and effectiveness of these early initiatives were limited. It was in the 1990s that India witnessed a significant development in its approach to environmental assessment with the introduction of the EIA notification under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The EIA notification of 1994 marked a milestone by formalizing the EIA process, making it mandatory for a wide range of development projects to undergo environmental clearance before commencement (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2007). This notification laid down the procedural framework for conducting EIAs, specifying the types of projects requiring clearance, the criteria for project categorization, and the process for public consultation. Over the years, there have been several amendments and revisions to the EIA notification, reflecting changing environmental concerns, technological advancements, and evolving legal and policy frameworks. Notable revisions include the amendments of 2006 and 2009, each aiming to streamline procedures, enhance transparency, and strengthen environmental safeguards (MoEF&CC, 2010). India's EIA framework operates within the broader context of environmental governance, incorporating principles of sustainable development, public participation, and precautionary measures. The framework encompasses various stages, including screening, scoping, baseline data collection, impact prediction, assessment of alternatives, public consultation, decision-making, and post-project monitoring. One of the significant aspects of India's EIA framework is its project categorization system, which

classifies development projects into categories based on their potential environmental impacts. Projects are categorized as Category A if they have significant environmental implications and Category B if they have moderate impacts. Category A projects require a comprehensive EIA report and undergo a rigorous clearance process, including scrutiny by expert appraisal committees and public consultations. Category B projects follow a less stringent process but still require environmental clearance.

II. Recent Reforms in India's EIA Framework

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework in India, established under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, aims to integrate environmental considerations into decision-making processes related to development projects. The framework encompasses various stages, including screening, scoping, assessment, public consultation, decision-making, and post-clearance monitoring. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) is the nodal agency responsible for administering the EIA process in India. Recent reforms in India's EIA framework were introduced with the overarching objectives of enhancing environmental protection, promoting sustainable development, streamlining procedures, and improving transparency and accountability. These reforms aimed to address several shortcomings identified in the existing framework, such as inadequate public participation, limited consideration of cumulative impacts, and inefficiencies in project review processes. One of the significant changes introduced through recent reforms is the revision of project categorization based on their potential environmental impacts. The reforms aim to ensure that projects with significant environmental implications undergo more rigorous scrutiny and assessment. This categorization is crucial for determining the level of assessment required for a project and facilitates better allocation of resources for

environmental management. The reforms have placed greater emphasis on public consultation in the EIA process. Project proponents are now required to conduct meaningful consultations with affected communities and stakeholders, considering their inputs in decision-making processes. This change aims to enhance transparency, accountability, and community participation in environmental decision-making, ensuring that the concerns and interests of all stakeholders are adequately addressed. To streamline procedures and improve efficiency, the reforms have introduced online submission and processing of EIA documents. This digitalization initiative aims to expedite project reviews, reduce paperwork, and enhance accessibility to EIA-related information for stakeholders and the public. The online platform facilitates faster communication, document exchange, and coordination among regulatory authorities, project proponents, and the public, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of the EIA process. The recent reforms have expanded the scope of post-clearance monitoring and compliance enforcement. Project proponents are now required to submit periodic reports on project implementation and environmental performance, ensuring that projects adhere to the conditions stipulated in environmental clearances. This change enhances accountability and ensures that environmental safeguards are effectively implemented throughout the project lifecycle. Additionally, increased monitoring helps in detecting and addressing any adverse environmental impacts that may arise during project implementation. The reforms have encouraged the use of technological tools, such as remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and satellite imagery, for baseline data collection, impact assessment, and monitoring of environmental parameters. These technological advancements enable more accurate and comprehensive assessments of environmental impacts, facilitate data-driven decision-making, and improve the overall quality and reliability

of EIA reports. Furthermore, the integration of technology enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the EIA process, enabling regulatory authorities to make informed decisions based on scientific evidence and analysis.

The recent reforms in India's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework have been aimed at enhancing environmental protection, promoting sustainable development, improving transparency and public participation, streamlining procedures, and strengthening enforcement and compliance mechanisms. However, the implementation of these reforms has been subject to critical analysis, with various stakeholders raising concerns about their effectiveness, adequacy, and impact on environmental outcomes. One of the primary challenges in the implementation of EIA reforms is the lack of adequate enforcement mechanisms. Despite the introduction of stricter regulations and procedural requirements, enforcement agencies often lack the capacity, resources, and expertise to effectively monitor compliance and enforce environmental safeguards. While the recent reforms emphasize the importance of public participation in the EIA process, there are concerns about the adequacy and meaningfulness of public consultations. In many cases, public consultations are tokenistic, with limited opportunities for affected communities to voice their concerns and influence decision-making. Another challenge is the limited scope of impact assessment, particularly with regard to cumulative and long-term impacts. The current EIA process often focuses on individual projects without adequately considering their cumulative effects or the broader context of regional development and environmental degradation (Parikh, 2018). The effectiveness of EIA depends heavily on the quality and reliability of baseline data. However, there are often weaknesses in baseline data collection, including gaps in data availability, accuracy, and completeness. This can lead to inaccuracies in impact prediction and

assessment, undermining the credibility of EIA findings (Singh & Murty, 2014). The implementation of EIA reforms is also influenced by political and economic factors, including pressure from industry lobbies, vested interests, and considerations of economic development. This can lead to conflicts of interest, regulatory capture, and compromises in environmental protection standards (Srivastava & Srivastava, 2007).

Enhancing the capacity and expertise of regulatory authorities, enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders is essential for effective implementation of EIA reforms. This includes providing training, technical support, and resources to improve understanding of EIA principles and procedures. Improving transparency and accountability in the EIA process is crucial for building public trust and confidence. This can be achieved through measures such as making EIA documents and decisions publicly accessible, establishing independent monitoring mechanisms, and ensuring accountability for non-compliance. Increasing the meaningful participation of affected communities and stakeholders in the EIA process is essential for improving the quality and legitimacy of decision-making. This requires creating opportunities for early and meaningful engagement, providing accessible information, and empowering marginalized groups to participate effectively. Strengthening the integration of cumulative impact assessment into the EIA process is necessary for addressing the interconnectedness of environmental impacts and ensuring holistic decision-making. This involves developing methodologies, tools, and guidelines for assessing cumulative effects and incorporating them into project evaluation and decision-making. Encouraging research and innovation in EIA methodologies, technologies, and best practices can help address emerging challenges and improve the effectiveness of environmental assessment. This includes supporting interdisciplinary research, fostering collaboration between academia, government, and

industry, and promoting the adoption of innovative approaches to impact assessment and management.

III. Controversies Surrounding India's EIA Framework

India's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework has been a subject of ongoing debate and controversy due to various concerns raised by stakeholders regarding its effectiveness, transparency, and alignment with sustainable development goals. One of the major controversies surrounding India's EIA framework is the perceived expedited clearance process for certain projects, particularly those deemed to be of strategic importance or classified as 'fast-track' projects. Critics argue that these projects often receive preferential treatment, bypassing rigorous scrutiny and public consultation processes, which can undermine environmental protection and community interests (Chaturvedi & Uddin, 2019). The lack of transparency and accountability in decision-making further exacerbates these concerns, as affected communities may feel marginalized and disenfranchised. Another contentious issue is the exclusion of certain projects from the purview of EIA requirements. This includes projects falling under certain categories or thresholds, such as small-scale industries, irrigation projects, and certain types of mining activities. Critics argue that such exclusions may lead to environmental degradation and social conflicts, as these projects may still have significant impacts that warrant thorough assessment and mitigation measures (Bhargava & Rao, 2017). This can lead to conflicts between development objectives and environmental sustainability goals, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas or regions with vulnerable communities. There have been concerns raised about the adequacy and meaningfulness of public consultation processes in the EIA framework. Critics argue that public consultations are often conducted superficially, with limited opportunities for affected communities to participate in decision-making and

voice their concerns. This lack of meaningful engagement can undermine the legitimacy of the EIA process and erode public trust in regulatory authorities. Limited access to information, language barriers, and power imbalances between project proponents and affected communities further hinder effective participation. This raises questions about the democratic legitimacy of decision-making processes and the extent to which community interests are considered in project approvals. Another controversy relates to the potential for conflict of interest and regulatory capture in the EIA process. There have been allegations that regulatory authorities responsible for conducting EIAs may have close ties with project proponents or industry stakeholders, leading to biased decision-making and compromised environmental outcomes. This raises questions about the independence and integrity of the regulatory process (Jayalakshmi & Purushothaman, 2018). There are concerns about weaknesses in the monitoring and enforcement of environmental conditions and mitigation measures stipulated in EIA approvals. Critics argue that regulatory authorities often lack the capacity and resources to effectively monitor project compliance and enforce environmental safeguards, leading to violations and environmental harm going unchecked (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2019). Strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms is essential to ensure compliance with EIA conditions and prevent environmental damage.

The perspectives of stakeholders are pivotal in shaping environmental policies and regulations, including those pertaining to India's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework. Understanding the diverse viewpoints of stakeholders and analyzing the legal implications of their involvement is essential for effective environmental governance. Government agencies, including the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and state pollution control boards, are key stakeholders in the EIA process. Their perspective often focuses on balancing economic

development with environmental protection, ensuring regulatory compliance, and facilitating project approvals within legal frameworks. Government agencies are responsible for drafting EIA regulations, reviewing environmental impact assessments, and granting environmental clearances (Babu & Singh, 2019). Industry and business associations represent the interests of project proponents, developers, and investors. Their perspective typically emphasizes the need for regulatory certainty, streamlined approval processes, and reduced compliance costs. Industry stakeholders advocate for EIA reforms that facilitate ease of doing business while addressing environmental concerns. They may lobby for project exemptions, expedited clearances, and relaxed environmental standards to promote economic growth and competitiveness (Ramachandraiah, 2016). Environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) advocate for environmental conservation, sustainable development, and community rights. Their perspective often focuses on environmental justice, public participation, and ecological sustainability. Environmental NGOs and CSOs play a critical role in scrutinizing EIA processes, challenging project approvals through legal avenues, and mobilizing public support for environmental causes (Gadgil, 2019). Academia and research institutions contribute expertise, scientific knowledge, and critical analysis to the EIA discourse. Their perspective emphasizes evidence-based decision-making, interdisciplinary research, and capacity-building initiatives. Academic institutions conduct studies on environmental impacts, develop EIA methodologies, and offer training programs for EIA practitioners. They also engage in policy dialogue, advocacy, and public education to promote environmental awareness and governance (Sahu & Sarangi, 2017). Affected communities and indigenous peoples are often marginalized stakeholders in the EIA process. Their perspective revolves around social justice, cultural

heritage, and community rights. Indigenous communities, in particular, advocate for the recognition of their traditional knowledge, land rights, and consent rights in the context of project development and natural resource extraction. They may oppose projects that threaten their livelihoods, disrupt ecosystems, or violate their rights to free, prior, and informed consent (Sundar, 2018).

The legal implications of stakeholder engagement in the EIA process are significant, particularly concerning public participation and access to justice. Environmental laws in India, such as the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010, provide avenues for public consultation, grievance redressal, and judicial review of environmental decisions. Stakeholders have the right to participate in EIA consultations, submit objections and suggestions, and challenge project approvals before regulatory authorities and courts (Madhav, 2017). The legal standing of stakeholders in the EIA process varies depending on their role, interests, and rights under environmental laws. While government agencies have statutory powers to issue environmental clearances and enforce regulatory compliance, non-governmental stakeholders, such as environmental NGOs and affected communities, often rely on public interest litigation (PIL) and advocacy campaigns to influence EIA outcomes. Courts have recognized the locus standi of environmental groups and affected individuals to bring environmental cases before judicial forums, ensuring their right to legal representation and due process (Ramraj, 2018). Legal provisions related to transparency and accountability in the EIA process are critical for ensuring procedural fairness and regulatory compliance. The Right to Information Act, 2005, empowers stakeholders to access EIA documents, project reports, and government records related to environmental decision-making. Regulatory authorities are required to conduct EIA consultations in a transparent manner, provide reasons for their

decisions, and consider public feedback in project approvals. Judicial review mechanisms, such as judicial commissions and environmental tribunals, ensure accountability for regulatory actions and adjudicate disputes arising from EIA processes (Muralidhar, 2019). The legal implications of stakeholder perspectives in the EIA framework extend to issues of environmental justice and human rights. Environmental laws recognize the fundamental rights of citizens to a clean environment, health, and livelihood security. Courts have interpreted these rights expansively, holding that environmental protection is a constitutional mandate and a prerequisite for the enjoyment of other rights. Stakeholders, especially affected communities and indigenous peoples, invoke constitutional provisions and international human rights norms to challenge projects that infringe upon their rights or violate environmental standards (Gadgil & Guha, 2018). The legal liability of corporations and project proponents in the EIA framework encompasses environmental damage, public health risks, and social impacts. Environmental laws impose obligations on companies to conduct EIAs, comply with environmental standards, and mitigate adverse impacts on ecosystems and communities. Violations of EIA conditions, environmental norms, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments may result in legal sanctions, penalties, and compensation claims. Stakeholders can hold corporations accountable through civil litigation, regulatory enforcement actions, and corporate governance mechanisms.

IV. Examining Impact and Response to Controversial EIA Cases

Real-world case studies provide valuable insights into the practical application and impact of India's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework. By examining controversial EIA cases, we can better understand the complexities, challenges, and outcomes of environmental decision-making processes.

Posco Steel Plant Project: The proposed Posco steel plant project in Odisha was one of the most controversial EIA cases in India's recent history. The project, a joint venture between South Korean steelmaker Posco and the Odisha government, aimed to establish a mega steel plant and associated infrastructure in the Jagatsinghpur district. The project faced significant opposition from environmental activists, local communities, and civil society groups over concerns about land acquisition, displacement of tribal communities, and environmental impacts. The Posco steel plant project triggered protests, legal challenges, and public outcry over its potential environmental and social consequences. Critics raised concerns about the destruction of mangrove forests, disruption of ecologically sensitive areas, and pollution of water bodies due to industrial effluents. The project's massive land requirement and displacement of indigenous communities fueled tensions and conflicts, leading to violent clashes between protesters and law enforcement authorities. In response to widespread opposition, the Posco steel plant project underwent multiple rounds of regulatory scrutiny, public consultations, and legal battles. Environmental clearances for the project were granted, revoked, and re-evaluated multiple times, reflecting the contentious nature of the decision-making process. The project faced delays, cost overruns, and logistical challenges due to regulatory hurdles, land acquisition disputes, and public resistance. Ultimately, the Posco project was shelved in 2017, following years of legal and regulatory setbacks and changes in market conditions (Satpathy, 2017).

Vedanta's Bauxite Mining Project in Niyamgiri Hills: Another high-profile EIA controversy in India involved Vedanta Resources' proposed bauxite mining project in the Niyamgiri hills of Odisha. The project aimed to extract bauxite ore for alumina production, posing environmental and social risks to the region's biodiversity, wildlife habitats, and tribal communities.

The Dongria Kondh tribe, who consider the Niyamgiri hills sacred and integral to their cultural identity, fiercely opposed the project, citing threats to their livelihoods, land rights, and cultural heritage. The Vedanta bauxite mining project sparked national and international attention due to its potential ecological and human rights implications. Environmentalists, activists, and indigenous rights advocates rallied support for the Dongria Kondh tribe's struggle to protect their ancestral lands and traditional way of life. Legal challenges and public campaigns highlighted the need to respect indigenous rights, uphold environmental laws, and prioritize sustainable development over corporate interests (Bhuyan, 2013). The project faced legal obstacles and regulatory hurdles at various stages of its development. The Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment in 2013, ruled against the project, citing violations of environmental laws and indigenous rights. The court's decision reaffirmed the importance of informed consent, environmental impact assessments, and adherence to legal procedures in project approvals. The case set a precedent for indigenous rights and environmental protection in India, underscoring the need for inclusive and participatory decision-making processes (Bhattacharjee, 2013).

Ken-Betwa River Linking Project: The proposed Ken-Betwa river linking project in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh is a contentious EIA case that involves inter-state water diversion and river basin management. The project aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken river basin to the water-deficient Betwa river basin through a network of dams, canals, and reservoirs. While proponents argue that the project will alleviate water scarcity, enhance agricultural productivity, and mitigate floods, critics raise concerns about ecological impacts, loss of biodiversity, and displacement of local communities. The Ken-Betwa river linking project has generated debates and

controversies over its potential benefits and risks to the environment, wildlife, and human populations. Environmentalists warn that the project may disrupt natural ecosystems, fragment wildlife habitats, and exacerbate water conflicts between upstream and downstream regions. Concerns have been raised about the viability of large-scale river interlinking projects in the context of climate change, hydrological uncertainties, and socio-economic disparities (Jain, 2018). The project has undergone environmental assessments, feasibility studies, and public consultations to evaluate its impacts and alternatives. Stakeholders, including environmental groups, local communities, and government agencies, have voiced divergent opinions on the project's desirability, effectiveness, and sustainability. Proponents emphasize the need for water security and inter-state cooperation, while opponents advocate for ecological conservation, decentralized water management, and community-based approaches to resource governance. The project remains under scrutiny, awaiting further regulatory approvals and public deliberations (Sinha, 2019).

The case studies examined above illustrate the complexity and significance of EIA controversies in India's environmental governance landscape. These real-world examples highlight the competing interests, values, and policy priorities that shape environmental decision-making processes. While EIA frameworks provide a systematic approach to assessing environmental impacts and promoting sustainable development, they are often subject to scrutiny, critique, and legal challenges from various stakeholders. Addressing EIA controversies requires balancing competing interests, fostering inclusive dialogue, and ensuring transparency, accountability, and equity in decision-making processes.

V. Recommendations for Enhancing India's EIA Framework

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework in India plays a crucial role in striking a balance between economic development, environmental conservation, and social welfare. However, the effectiveness and legitimacy of the EIA process have been subject to scrutiny and debate, with stakeholders raising concerns about transparency, public participation, and regulatory compliance. Some important recommendations for enhancing India's EIA framework, focusing on strategies to improve its efficacy, legitimacy, and sustainability are as follows:

1. Strengthening Regulatory Oversight

Enhancing regulatory oversight is crucial for ensuring the integrity and credibility of the EIA process. Regulatory authorities, such as the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and State Pollution Control Boards should be empowered with adequate resources, technical expertise, and enforcement mechanisms to monitor compliance with environmental regulations. Regular audits, inspections, and performance evaluations of EIA procedures and project approvals can help identify gaps, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Lele, 2019).

2. Promoting Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are essential principles for building trust and confidence in the EIA process. Regulatory decisions, including environmental clearances, project approvals, and monitoring reports, should be made publicly available and accessible to all stakeholders. Online platforms and databases can facilitate the dissemination of EIA information, data, and documents, enabling greater scrutiny and public participation. Establishing independent oversight bodies, such as environmental ombudsmen or audit committees, can ensure accountability for regulatory actions and promote ethical conduct (Sharma & Tyagi, 2018).

3. Enhancing Public Participation

Meaningful public participation is fundamental to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the EIA process. Proactive engagement strategies, such as early scoping meetings, community consultations, and participatory decision-making forums, should be integrated into the EIA process from the outset. Capacity-building initiatives, awareness campaigns, and outreach programs can empower marginalized communities, indigenous groups, and vulnerable populations to participate effectively in EIA consultations and decision-making processes. Mechanisms for soliciting public feedback, addressing grievances, and incorporating stakeholder inputs into project design and mitigation measures should be institutionalized to ensure inclusive and participatory governance.

4. Strengthening Technical Capacities

Enhancing technical capacities is essential for conducting robust and scientifically rigorous EIAs. Training programs, workshops, and certification courses should be provided to EIA practitioners, regulatory officials, and decision-makers to enhance their understanding of environmental assessment methodologies, data analysis techniques, and best practices. Collaboration with academic institutions, research organizations, and international experts can facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and innovation in EIA techniques and tools. Investing in state-of-the-art technology, remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and modeling software can improve the accuracy, efficiency, and reliability of impact assessments (Kumar & Singh, 2017).

5. Promoting Cumulative Impact Assessment

Integrating cumulative impact assessment (CIA) into the EIA framework is essential for addressing the cumulative effects of multiple projects and activities on the environment, ecosystems, and communities.

Guidelines, methodologies, and decision-support systems should be developed to assess cumulative impacts at various spatial and temporal scales. Collaboration between government agencies, academic institutions, and research organizations is needed to develop standardized approaches, data-sharing mechanisms, and monitoring protocols for CIA. Strategic environmental planning, landscape-level assessments, and ecosystem-based management strategies can help identify synergies, trade-offs, and mitigation measures to minimize cumulative impacts and promote sustainable development.

VI. Conclusion

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework in India is a cornerstone of environmental governance, enabling the evaluation of development projects' potential impacts on the environment and local communities. Through the analysis of recent reforms, controversies, case studies, and recommendations, it becomes evident that the EIA process in India is complex, multifaceted, and subject to various challenges and opportunities. The recent reforms in India's EIA framework aimed to enhance environmental protection, promote sustainable development, and strengthen regulatory mechanisms. However, the implementation of these reforms has been met with criticism and controversy, highlighting issues such as inadequate enforcement, limited public participation, and challenges in baseline data collection. Moreover, controversies surrounding specific projects, such as the Posco steel plant and Vedanta's bauxite mining project, underscore the complexities and conflicts inherent in environmental decision-making. Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for improvement and enhancement of India's EIA framework. Recommendations for enhancing the efficacy and legitimacy of the EIA process include strengthening regulatory oversight, promoting transparency and accountability, enhancing public participation,

strengthening technical capacities, and promoting cumulative impact assessment. By addressing these recommendations, India can improve the effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability of its environmental decision-making processes. As India continues to navigate the complexities of environmental management and sustainable development, it is essential to recognize the importance of evidence-based decision-making, stakeholder collaboration, and adaptive management. By learning from past experiences, embracing innovation, and fostering partnerships, India can overcome existing challenges and achieve its environmental and developmental goals in a manner that is equitable, resilient, and environmentally sustainable.

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CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA - A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

AJAZ AHMAD GILANI

Research Fellow, CCMG, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi
Email: ajaz.gilani@gmail.com

Abstract

Child labor has become an important global issue and it is true that this problem is assuming an alarming proportion. Several factors have been contributing to the flare-up of this social problem. The sight of small kids polishing shoes on the roads, cleaning utensils in hotels and dhabas or working in factories is not unusual. It seems the hardships of life took birth with them only. This study attempts to determine the nature and magnitude of child labour in India and engages with why children are forced to take up employment and what could be the possible consequences of child labour. Methodologically, this study is based on the data collected from various governmental and non-governmental published reports using mixed approach to address the objectives of this study. The findings of the study show that although there has been a decline in the cases of child labour in India from 2001 census to 2011 census however the number of child labour cases is still high.

Keywords:

Child-labour, Child rights, Crime, Bonded labour, Prevention

Introduction:

Child labor is disproportionately prevalent in underdeveloped as well as developing nations across the world. It is an indisputable reality that the children of today will be the adult citizens of tomorrow, bearing full responsibility for the nation's growth and development. Child labour is an issue that appears to be endangering the future of many children. Generally, it is a term used to describe any work performed by

minors in any field, regardless of whether it is suitable for them or not. The most blissful and unforgettable time in a person's life is their childhood. However, children at a tender age are compelled forgo all happiness and live the life of an adult (Gupta and Voll, 1987). It takes away all of their joy and appears to leave a lasting negative impact on their lives. This malpractice and the cases of exploitation of children at workplaces are growing rapidly. While the issue of child labour has received both national and international support for its eradication however, there is a need to take an initiative towards completely bring an end to this problem.

Child labor is a curse not just on mankind but also on the civilization. These young souls are forced to work from an early age in order to provide for the livelihood of their families. The sensitive young brains are eventually negatively impacted by this practice of child labour. The present study is carried out to understand the problem of child labour in India and to investigate the nature and extent of this problem. Right to happiness is the basic right of every human being but some, particularly children, are denied of the right to happiness; they are forced to work in inhuman conditions. Since childhood is an unforgettable period of one's life, so a happy childhood is the right of every child and it is the concern of every welfare state to provide for the children. Childhood must be viewed as a time of innocence and protection as opposed to productivity and preparation for adulthood (Medved and Medved, 1999). The sight of small kids polishing shoes on the roads, cleaning utensils in hotels and dhabas or working in factories is not unusual. It reflects the fact that the hardships of life took birth with them.

Employing children is a crime. It is an act that endangers a child's physical and emotional health as well as hinders their development without giving them an opportunity for good education, food and shelter.

Methodology

Methodologically, this study uses mixed approach to shed light on the problem of child labour in India. It will focus on the nature, factors, consequences and magnitude of the problem in India. The data for this study is extracted from NSS reports and other national statistical reports for analysis. An attempt is made to trace the causes, consequences and magnitude of child labour besides its impact on the over-all condition of the child. The study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the problem, with a view to generate public awareness in this issue.

Child population and child workers in India

India is the second most populous nation in the world according to 2011 census. As per census of 2011, India had a total population of 121.09 crore among which 16.45 crore were children in the age group of 0-5 years and 37.24 crore in the age of 5-14 years corresponding to 13.59 percent and 30.76 percent respectively (table 1).

Table 1:
Total population of India and sex-wise child population (In Crores)

	Persons	Males	Females
Age Group	121.09	62.33	58.76
0 – 5 years	16.45	8.58	7.88
5 – 14 years	37.24	19.44	17.81

Source: Census of India 2011

Among this classification of population the population of children is scattered along the rural and urban landscape in India as shown in table 2.

The above table 2 offers the age-wise and sex-wise distribution of children in the rural and urban areas of India. Table 2 shows that the population of children is around three times higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. This suggests that children who engage in work are mostly from rural areas. Research conducted on child labour in India shows that there are myriad of factors responsible for child labour being

more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas (see: Barman and Barman, 2014).

Table 2:
Sex-wise child population distribution in rural and urban India
(In Crores)

Age Group	Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
0 – 5 years	12.13	6.31	5.82	4.32	2.27	2.05
5 – 14 years	27.36	14.23	12.12	9.88	5.20	4.68

Source: Census of India 2011

As is evident from table 3 above that the highest percentage of child labour in 2001 was in Uttar Pradesh (15.22%) followed by Andhra Pradesh (10.76%), Rajasthan (9.97%), Bihar (8.82%), Madhya Pradesh (8.41%), West Bengal (6.77%) and so on. However in the year 2011, the highest percentage of child labour was observed in Uttar Pradesh (20.59%) followed by Maharashtra (11.41%), Bihar (10.37%), Andhra Pradesh (9.30%), Madhya Pradesh (6.58%), and so on. One important observation that table 2 above reveals is the fact that for majority of states/UTs, the number of child labourers has gone down, however, in few states/UTs the number of child labourers has slightly gone up.

Table 3:
State/UT-wise child labour in India and their percentage share**

States/UTs	No. of child* labourers 2001	No. of child* labourers 2011	%age share of child* labourers in the state	
			2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	1363339	404851	10.76	9.30
Arunachal Pradesh	18482	5766	0.15	0.13
Assam	351416	99512	2.77	2.29
Bihar	1117500	451590	8.82	10.37
Chandigarh UT	3779	3135	0.03	0.07

Chattisgarh	364572	63884	2.88	1.47
Dadra and Nagar H	4274	1054	0.03	0.02
Daman and Diu UT	729	774	0.01	0.02
Delhi UT	41899	26473	0.33	0.61
Goa	4138	6920	0.03	0.16
Gujarat	485530	250318	3.83	5.75
Haryana	253491	53492	2.00	1.23
Himachal Pradesh	107774	15001	0.85	0.34
Jammu & Kashmir UT	175630	25528	1.39	0.59
Jharkhand	407200	90996	3.21	2.09
Karnataka	822615	249432	6.49	5.73
Kerala	26156	21757	0.21	0.50
Lakshadweep UT	27	28	0.00	0.00
Madhya Pradesh	1065259	286310	8.41	6.58
Maharashtra	764075	496916	6.03	11.41
Manipur	28836	11805	0.23	0.27
Meghalaya	53940	18839	0.43	0.43
Mizoram	26265	2793	0.21	0.06
Nagaland	45874	11062	0.36	0.25
Odisha	377594	92087	2.98	2.12
Puducherry UT	1904	1421	0.02	0.03
Punjab	177268	90353	1.40	2.08
Rajasthan	1262570	252338	9.97	5.80
Sikkim	16457	2704	0.13	0.06
Tamil Nadu	418801	151437	3.31	3.48
Tripura	21756	4998	0.17	0.11
Uttar Pradesh	1927997	896301	15.22	20.59
Uttarakhand	70183	28098	0.55	0.65
West Bengal	857087	234275	6.77	5.38
India Total	12666377	4353247	100	100

Children in the age group of 5 – 14 years
** Data Extracted from Census of India 2001 & 2011

Child labour – A Debate

It is well said that 'just as dogs were raised to hunt for their masters before they were pets; so are children raised as a source of income for their family'. Millions of children in India toil as virtual slaves, unable to escape the work that will leave them impoverished, illiterate, and often crippled by the time they reach adulthood (Human Rights Watch, 2003). India is often described

as the largest democracy in the world. India won its independence in 1947 and three years later, the Constitution of India was adopted and thus India looked forward to a utopian future. One aspect of this was the attainment of free and compulsory education within ten years of the enactment of constitution i.e. by 1960. Another was the assertion that no child will be forced by the economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength. But unfortunately, the well-being and rights of children count less. Children are the most important assets of a nation. They are indeed the future of the country. A healthy and educated child of today is the active and intelligent citizen of tomorrow. Thus, the topmost responsibility of a nation is to give a descent childhood to the young and vulnerable group of children and to allow them to prepare for a descent adult working life. But in reality, there is a wide gap between the conditions of children and their standards. The government has taken many initiatives but they are inadequate and insufficient to handle this problem.

In India, child labour is not a new phenomenon. It has been in existence since time immemorial and thus constitutes an ugly feature of the social life of our country. With the advent of industrialization and urbanization in the 19th century, the factory and industry pacified their advancement (Narasaiah, 2005). Agriculture became more mechanized. Children started being employed in different organized and unorganized sectors in both rural and urban settings. In rural sector, children are engaged in fields, plantation, forestry, domestic job, fishing and cottage industry. While in urban sector, they are employed at houses, shops, restaurants, small and large industries, transport, garages, etc (Shukla and Ali, 2006). This is so because children provide a cheap and uncomplaining labour force as against adults who could be more demanding and hence more difficult to handle. Also children are preferred as they are not

unionized and so can easily be controlled or tortured without any fear of backlash.

Though the category of the child labour is very heterogeneous, however, they can broadly be classified into four main categories.

1. **Child labour in bondage**: This enables the employer to deem ownership rights over the child. In this case, a child is sold for a little sum but borrowed for various purposes. Due to this a child loses all his basic rights. As we see in the rural areas of India, children are often found working on farms, doing menial labour or other domestic labour for the landlords, which is the result of the indebtness. They work in order to pay off the debt or the loans borrowed from the landlords. It has also been found that children in this category are often lured in prostitution, pornography, begging, drug peddling and other petty crimes.

2. **Girl child labour:** On the basis of gender, women have always faced discrimination in almost all spheres of her life and similar is their case as a girl, as a child and as a labourer. In both rural and urban areas, it has been found that the percentage of girls is higher than that of the boys. The reason for this is that girls are often put to work as domestic servants engaged in cooking, cleaning, fetching water, taking care of younger siblings, etc. (These jobs are sometimes non-remunerative and so are not considered as labour).

3. **Street children workers:** We often see street children working as rag-pickers, hotel workers, vendors, shoe-shiners, garage and petrol pump assistants, etc. All these children are included in this category. It has often been found among the street children that they are prone to a variety of diseases and abuses both sexual and physical besides indulged in drug addiction. They don't

have any prospect of medical assistance in this regard.

4. **Itinerant child labour:** We have often seen people migrating from one place to another in search of job. These people wander in groups' alongwith their family. Their children have often been found engaged in agricultural labour, in construction work, brick-kilns, mines, circus, etc. It also includes those children working on trains, cleaning compartments or singing jingles, etc.

As a nation, if young children are allowed to work, society is creating a class of uneducated people that will not be able to reach their full productive potential. Ultimately, the nation will be unable to compete with other international societies especially in a world that relies on people's capacity to use modern technology. Child labour in poor countries is an integral part of labour force. Children are forced to enter labour market at a tender age to earn pittance or contribute to family work. These children who are in the growing process permanently distort or disable their bodies when they carry heavy loads or are forced to adopt unnatural positions at work for long hours.

The concern over child labour is now greater than in the past both within India and the rest of the world. India has all along followed a pro-active policy in the matter of tackling the problem of child labour and always stood for constitutional, statutory and developmental measures that are required to eliminate child labour.

Magnitude of Child Labour:

There are a number of definitions of child labour however those used by government and academic circles can vary a great deal. The census of India defined child labour as any person under the age of 14 engaged in any one of the 59 occupations or processes listed as hazardous under the India's Child Labour Act of 1986. This definition builds on the ILO's Convention

on the worst forms of child labour, which identifies child labour based on the characteristics of work involved (International Labour Organization, n.a.). India's 2011 census counted 16.45 million child labourers. Official statistics tend to under-estimate the number of child labourers for a few reasons. Typically, child labour is conceptualized as involving gainful economic activity, either for wage or non-wage based remuneration. Practically, state regulators face difficulties in identifying children that work at home or in informal economy, where the overwhelming majority of production in India takes place. Interestingly, a large chunk of child population in India as per the 2011 census are neither working nor attending school. The Indian state has no official knowledge of how these so called nowhere children spend their time. Many of the children are likely to be contributing to the livelihood of their families, typically working at home or on the family farm. These activities fall outside the restrictive or legal definition of work used for official statistics.

As per the census data however, the trend on the magnitude of child labour is not uniform across the country. There is a decline in the incidence of child labour in southern and western Indian states and UT's between 2001 and 2011. However, there has been an increasing trend in the eastern and northern Indian states and UT's as shown in Table 2. This is the reflection of the emerging crisis of poorer regiments of population.

The phenomenon of child labour in J&K is in no way different from that of the one prevailing in the rest of the country. Its evolution, growth and magnitude have followed the same pattern. However, the difference lies only in the nature of employment. Since J&K is predominantly agriculture oriented one and so children help their parents in fields and farms. Though with the advent of modern factory system, there has been a change and increase in the avenues of employment marginally, however, majority of the children continued

to work in the fields followed by traditional handicrafts sector.

Factors of child labour

The socio-economic backwardness followed by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, demographic expansion, etc. are commonly considered as the most prominent causative factors for large scale employment of children (Naidu and Ramaiah, 2006). Besides these, low income of bread-earner of the family, ignorance, inequitable distribution of land assets, insufficient protective legislation, etc. also contribute to the rise of child labour in our country (Sen, 1983).

Poverty in India is a major contributing factor which has given rise to the problem of child labour. In India, approximately 40% children live a life of poverty. It is very hard to arrange the meal for two times a day and that is why small children are compelled to go for work to earn (Kaur and Kaur, 2003). At the same time, the inadequacy of the wage of adult earning members of the family compels them to send their children to work and supplement to family income (Tripathy, 1989). Another reason would be the need of income to the family because sometimes children have to support their family members so they generally run towards industries.

Similarly the higher rate of illiteracy indicates the ignorance of persons who push their children to join child labour force instead of providing them education. Children seek work because of their unemployed parents or adult relations in the family, which is sometimes due to under-employment of the adults (Tripathy, 1989). The reason for this under-employment is the large size of the family. A person believes in having more and more children without realizing the fact that they would be able to provide the basic amenities of life to their children.

In some industries like bidi, glass, matchbox, carpet, etc, children as workers are increasingly preferred. There is the lack of organizational support to child

labour which is the most plausible reason for their preferential employment in such industries. They have no voice and strength to fight for their dues, rights and privileges. Besides, there is no institutional set-up which can apprise them of their rights and mandatory provisions.

In brief, child labour manifests itself due to a variety of well known factors that are worth to mention here once again:

- The first and foremost cause of the child labour is the income level of the family. An agricultural labourer earning less than 50 rupees per day is unlikely to spare time and money for furthering his or her child's education. In-fact, work is a burden for the child but a support for the family.
- Poor parents have the lack of adequate access to credit and hence these parents are forced to engage their children in some extreme forms of child labour like bonded labour.
- On the grounds of gender, bias amongst girls is a key factor behind the higher prevalence of child labour in vulnerable households.
- There are children from certain minority groups like SCs and STs who, because of their social status and deprivation, have no or least access to get themselves enrolled for educational attainments.
- Large families result in the lack of income since there are more mouths to feed. Family Planning programmes have shown that in many cases where the birth rate drops in a given region, child labour declines.
- Another reason for the absence of parental support for the education of the child is the parent's own illiteracy and poverty.
- The poor social and legal awareness about the concept and nature of child rights, especially among political and economic leaders must be addressed.

- There has always been a big demand for the cheap, undemanding and unorganized labour, making children attractive as labourers.

Consequences of child labour:

The popular perception of child labour is strongly negative and it is unclear theoretically that to what extent child's labour in harmful. In-fact the prevalence of child labour is a bolt on the conscience of a society. It harms not only the present generation but also the posterity. If one conceives the idea of child labour, it brings before eyes the picture of exploitation of little, physically tender, illiterate and under-nourished children working in hazardous occupation and unhealthy conditions.

However the major consequences of child labour include physical injuries and malnutrition, which are caused by badly maintained machinery on farms and in factories or the hazards encountered in industries such as mining, ceramics or fire-works manufacture. Pesticide poisoning is also one among the biggest killers of child labourers (Levine, 2007). The global death toll each year from pesticides is supposed to be approximately 385 million. It has been found that the growth deficiently is prevalent among working children who tender to be shorter and lighter than other children. These deficiencies also had an impact on their adult life. Long term health problems including a variety of cancers are common those children who are forced to work with dangerous chemicals. At the same time, exhaustion and malnutrition are the result of under-developed children performing heavy manual labour, working long hours in unbearable conditions and not earning enough to feed themselves adequately.

In-fact, children are remarkable imaginative and re-silent but also heart-breaking, fragile and vulnerable.

Conclusion

Child labour as a problem is assuming an alarming proportion. There are several factors, which have been

contributing to the flare-up of this social scourge like poverty, illiteracy, lack of social awareness, over-population and unemployment. India is undoubtedly a highly populated nation in the world. And due to poverty, the hunger-driven children are forced to go out and fend for themselves and their families as well. So there is an urgent need to improve productivity on the one hand and on the other there is a need to focus on the provision of basic amenities like food, clothing, health and education to these marginal sections of the society.

Alongside, the vicious cycle that exists between poverty and child labour as well as between illiteracy and child labour needs to be tackled. Poverty is no excuse for denying a child the basic right to survival, protection, development and participation.

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IS SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS) A GATEWAY FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT (GENDER INEQUALITY ISSUES, DECISION MAKING AND LEADERSHIP & EXPOSING CRIME AND HARASSMENT) OF FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS? A STUDY

SYED UZMA KUBRAVI

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir

Email: **syeduzmak11@gmail.com**

&

MANZOOR HUSSAIN

Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir

Email: **dr.manzoor_hussain@yahoo.co.in**

Abstract

Social networking sites (SNs) are a gateway of empowerment and have achieved an immense popularity among people all around the world. Though, social networking evolved to enhance communication through disseminating information and building interaction among people, yet its growing usage indicates a more viable potential to discuss issues and challenges through blogs, chats, online campaign, online discussion forums, and online communities. Eventually, it serve as a new effective platform for bringing people's rights, issues and problems to the attention of a wider public and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. In the light of this backdrop, the present study is based on a sample of 200 respondents and conducted to investigate the role of social networking sites in addressing gender inequality issues, decision making, exposing crime and harassment among female college students of Srinagar district of Kashmir.

Key Words: Social Networking Sites, Empowerment, Gender, Decision Making, Crime, Harassment, Female College Students.

1. Introduction

Women constitute almost 50 percent of the world's population. Despite being the builders and teachers of the nation they have been exploited since long. At earlier times, they were treated at par with their counterparts but during post-vedic and epic ages they had to face many atrocities. They were ill-treated and neglected of many powers in various sectors. Today also, women across the globe face various kinds of discrimination by male-dominating society. This has led to the concept of women empowerment. Women empowerment has become a buzzword as it is the prerequisite of any progressive society. Women empowerment is essential for the development of any human generation because women have the calibre to change the destiny of a nation and is very much necessary in the nation's growth be it economically, politically or socially.[1]To achieve women empowerment there are various sources that can play a significant role. Social networking sites happen to be one. Social network sites are the web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. These sites are the online platforms where connections and interactions are established. The journey of social networking started with Six.Degrees.com in 1997, followed by others such as LiveJournal, Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, and Facebook[3]. Now, there are special categories of SNSs dealing with different fields of life like business (LinkedIn), education (Classmates), research (ResearchGate), writers (MyCreativeCommunity), books (Shelfari), travel (TravBuddy), religious (MyChurch) and many more. Even there are content specific SNS also like Flickr (photo sharing), Twitter (text sharing), Last.FM (music listening habits) and YouTube (video sharing).People use social networking sites to connect with others in

many ways including creating and sustaining relationships, dating, connecting others with similar interests and sharing information.

With the growing dominance of the Internet, the use of social networking sites has already begun and consequently, communication is rapidly changing and becoming mobile, interactive, personalized and multi-channel. This extraordinary revolution is affecting the basic fabric of societies because it has the potential to cover large population. Its reach to common people has increased and has undoubtedly become a very powerful organ in virtually all spheres of life. It has the power to become an agent of social change and bring women's issues to the attention of a wider public and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equality. It has the capability like all social media to spread the healthy concepts of being woman, of what is the role of women in modern society, of good examples that women give us every day, of the results they have achieved and continue to reach out to women in many fields of economics and beyond, the social consideration of women, giving to young women good ideas and examples for their economic empowerment.[5]Since empowerment is very paramount for the bright future of the society, the subject for empowering the women has to be put on light. Today, social networking technology directly impacts women's growth and development by enabling their voice to reach out and be viewed globally. Kashmir is not an exception to this phenomenon. However, in context of Kashmir, very little is known about the impact of social networking sites on the women's empowerment. Thus, this study was an attempt to explore the role of social networking sites in enhancing women empowerment.

2. Operational Definitions
a) Social networking sites
Social network sites are the online services that allow to connect, communicate, and form and exchange content with others.

b) Empowerment

The World Bank defines empowerment as "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process is action which both builds individual and collective assets and improves the efficiency and fairness of the organization and institutional context which govern the use of these assets".

c) Indicators of Empowerment

- Participation in crucial decision-making processes.
- Increase in self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Awareness of her social and political rights.
- The degree to which the media take heed of women's issues.
- Feeling and expression of pride and value in her work.

d) Facilitating factors

- Education and awareness
- Existence of women's organisations availability of support systems for women
- Feminist leadership
- Networking; promising media coverage.

e) Constraining factors

- Illiteracy
- Orthodox views that limit women's participation no funds
- Discriminatory policy environment
- Negative and sensational coverage of media.
- Heavy work load.

f) Women Empowerment

The concept of women's empowerment was introduced at the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985 where Empowerment was stated to be 'a

distribution of social power and centre of resources in favour of women'. The term "empowerment of women" could also be understood as the process of providing equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and power positions to women so that they are able to play a role on par with men in society.

3. Materials and Methods

The main objective of the study was to explore the role of social networking sites (SNs) as gateway for women empowerment. Specific objectives were to analyse the role of SNs in addressing the gender inequality issues, decision making and exposing crime and harassment of female college students of Srinagar district of Kashmir. The data were collected through both quantitative as well as qualitative research techniques, enabling researchers to get a complete picture of the problem under study. For this purpose, techniques like online questionnaire and focus group discussions were employed. Focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted to gather subjective data in order to illuminate the perceptions and gain greater insight and knowledge of the problem under study. The universe of the study constituted the Srinagar district, Jammu & Kashmir, India. The study employed a random sampling method. 200 participants were selected for the study. However, only 170 (85 percent) responded to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was created using Google forms and distributed in various social media groups created by college authorities. The online survey used for gathering quantitative data was completed in three months, that is, from April 2018 to July 2018. After that, 4 focus group discussions were employed, one in each zone of Srinagar district. One focus group consisted of six participants. Participants from different backgrounds were included. In total, 24 participants took part in the focus group discussions. Willingness to participate was the focal point to select participants. The background of the topic and the purpose of the focus group discussion were briefed to the participants.

At every moment, researchers focused on the participants' rights, ensured them to keep their information confidential. On average, each FGD lasted for 70 minutes. FGDs were audio-recorded with the prior consent of the participants. All recorded FGDs were conducted in the Urdu language, later translated into the English language.

The researchers carefully analysed each audio-recording before they could initiate the process of transcription. After careful analysis of data, transcription was completed followed by a careful reading of the text. Then the text was divided into numerous segments besides labels with codes. The codes were then collapsed into major themes. Finally, the researcher came with seven themes that covered the study's core areas.

4. Age, Residence, Marital Status and Educational Status of Participants

Table 1 displays the necessary information about the sample women of Srinagar district in Kashmir. Information about age, residence, marital status, educational status and occupational status of 170 participants was covered. It was revealed that 54.11 percent of the participants belonged to 18-45 years of age group and 45.89 percent to the age group of 46 and above. Coming to residence it was found that 10.00 percent belonged to rural areas and 90 percent belonged to urban areas. While revealing marital status, it was revealed that a majority of 75.29 percent were married, followed by unmarried with 23.52 percent. While 1.19 percent reported to be widows, none reported to be divorced and deserted. Education-wise, it was reported that 98.82 percent were literate and 1.18 percent were illiterate. Occupation wise, table 1 reveals that majority (50.59 percent) of the participants were students followed by participants doing private jobs (18.23 percent), engaged in self-help groups (14.70 percent), govt service (10.59 percent). Least (5.89 percent) reported as house-wives.

Table:1.
Age, Residence, Marital status, educational status and
Occupational status of Participants

Age in Years	Value	Total	Percentage
	18-45	92	54.11
	46 and above	78	45.89
Residence	Rural	17	10.00
	Urban	153	90.00
Marital Status	Married	128	75.29
	Unmarried	40	23.52
	Divorced	0	0.00
	Deserted	0	0.00
	Widow	2	1.19
Educational Status	Literate	168	98.82
	Illiterate	2	1.18
Occupational Status	House wife	10	5.89
	Govt Service	18	10.59
	Student	86	50.59
	Self-help group	25	14.70
	Private Job	31	18.23

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

5. Data Analysis
5.1: Membership and Usage level of SNS among Participants

Tables 2 and 3 below display the data about the membership and usage level of SNS respectively among participants:

Table: 2.
Use and Membership on SNS

Use and Member		
Response	**Number**	**Percentage**
YES	144	84.71
NO	26	15.29

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

As can be observed from table 2, a majority; 144 sample participants (84.71 percent) use social networking sites. However, some participants (15.29 percent) reported that they are not the members of social networking services.

Table:3.
Frequency of Use of SNS

	Response	Number	Percentage
Frequency of using SNS	Very often	62	36.49
	Sometimes	26	15.29
	Occasionally	38	22.35
	Rarely	18	10.58
	Never	26	15.29
	Total	**170**	**100.00**

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

The data from table 3 reveals that out of 170 participants, the majority i.e., 62 (36.49 percent) participants use SNS very often, 26 participants (15.29 percent) use it sometimes, 38participants (22.35 percent) use it occasionally and 18 participants (10.58 percent) use rarely. 26 percent (15.29 percent) reported that they never use SNS.

5.2: Social Networking Sites and Women Empowerment

Empowerment of women is essential for the development and prosperity of the women, family, society and country. Social networking sites can play a vital role in the empowerment of women by providing education, information, awareness, economic empowerment and self-decision making. Online presence on social networking sites is providing women with new freedom, independence and control, liberty, and empowerment like never before. It helps them to try

things that were impossible in the real scenario. They help women in accessing resources for their development by means of exposure, knowledge and information. Awareness and education can enrich the inner strength of women. Social networking sites with their coverage have the capacity to boost self-usage, confidence and collective strength.[7] In order to examine the role of social networking sites in women empowerment in Srinagar district of Kashmir, the researchers' classified seven themes. A five-point Likert scale was used as: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Later such themes were also recognised in focus group discussions.

5.3: Highlighting the gender inequality issues

Gender inequality is found almost all over the world. Women are not enjoying social, mental, educational, and professional rights equal to their male counterparts. Women in both organized and unorganized sector face gender discrimination by way of physical and mental harassment of women at work. It should not be forgotten that gender inequality is not just a women's issue. It is an issue of the nation. Social networking sites play a vital role by bringing these issues ahead. Hashtags identifying women's issues that are being used on social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram play a tremendous role in mobilising public attention on women's rights, increasing the visibility of issues that are under-reported in mainstream media. In order to see whether social networking sites play a role in highlighting the issues of gender inequality, the researcher asked the question related to it. The responses are shown in table 4.

Table 4:
Gender Inequality Issues

Theme	Responses					
SNS help you to highlight the gender inequality issues	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	36	46	36	32	20	170
Percentage	21.18	27.05	21.18	18.84	11.75	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

Table 4 reveals it clearly that the majority of the participants, 46 women (27.05 percent) agreed with the statement that "SNS help you to highlight the gender inequality issues" while 36women (21.18 percent) strongly agreed and 36 (21.18 percent) were neutral about the statement. However, more than 18 percent disagreed (32; 18.84 percent) and strongly disagreed (20 women (0.65 percent) with the statement. The results have been substantiated from focus group discussions as well where majority of the women affirmed that SNS have become important platforms for them to highlight the issues of gender inequality issues. The perceptions of some of the women have been highlighted as under:

"I believe that SNS serve as vital platforms where women can bring gender issues to the attention of a wider public. The hashtag campaigns do help in bringing the gender discrimination and gender stereotypes into the spotlight."

"Being on SNS help you not only to connect with anyone but to create the content as well.....whenever I face any sort of gender discrimination, I share it with my friends on social networking sites. Access to these sites can help in removing gender inequality by addressing the gender related issues."

"I write blogs on these virtual sites to sensitise women about gender related issues. These sites have the capability to address and challenge the gender-based inequalities."

From the quantitative data and perceptions quoted above, it becomes clear that most of women consider SNS a vital platform to bring gender issues and gender stereotypes to the attention of a wider public. They use these sites to make women aware about the gender related issues all over the world.

5.4: Participation in decision making and leadership

Social networking sites are such platforms that can increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making processes and help the success of online advocacy campaigns focusing on women's rights. Women are more visible on online platforms now than they have been at any other point in modern history. Based on this premise, the researchers sought to investigate whether SNS play a role in enhancing participation in decision making and leadership among participants.

The majority of the participants with 32.36 percent (55 women) agreed with the statement that "SNS help you to participate in decision making and leadership" while 24 women (14.12 percent) strongly agreed; 34women (20.00 percent) were neutral about the statement. However, a good number of women (38; 22.36 percent)

disagreed and strongly disagreed (19 women (11.16 percent) with the statement (Table 5).

Table 5:
Decision Making and Leadership

Theme	Responses					
SNS help you to participate in decision making and leadership	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	24	55	34	38	19	170
Percentage	14.12	32.36	20.00	22.36	11.16	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

Concerning this, the perceptions and opinions of women were also obtained during focus group discussions, some of which are quoted as under:

"SNS has increased my capacity to participate in decision making and leadership"

"I think SNS help women in decision making when they establish more connections to get information and opinions. It is a fact that social networking has influenced our living and thinking process as well. It is positively enabling us to learn new things and giving us chances to make decisions for ourselves."

"I use SNS everyday…..these are powerful platforms to seek the attention of wider public and motivate and encourage women in making self-decisions and enhancing their leadership qualities."

"SNS invites us to participate in the discussion and encourages us to express views on the burning issues…this gives a feeling of being equal."

The findings and perceptions shared by women clearly reveal that SNS help majority of the women to

participate in decision making and leadership. They see these online platforms as useful means to seek the attention of wider public and to motivate and encourage women in making self-decisions and enhancing their leadership qualities.

5.5: Awareness about social and political rights

Social networking sites empower women on social and political front also. These sites have the potential to make women about the social and political rights. Hashtag activism on social networking sites act as a tool to share voices of women in each and every protest. In order to see whether social networking sites make participants aware about the social and political rights, data was gathered which is shown in table 6.

Table 6:
Social and Political Rights

Theme	Responses					
SNS make you aware about social and political rights	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	41	74	26	16	13	170
Percentage	24.13	43.53	15.29	9.41	7.64	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

Table 6 highlights that majority of the sample participants (43.53 percent) agreed that SNS make them aware about social and political rights. This was followed by 41 women (24.13 percent) who strongly agreed and26 (15.29 percent) were neutral about the statement. A small chunk of women strongly disagreed or disagreed as 16 women (9.41 percent) disagreed and 13 women (7.64 percent) strongly agreed with the

statement. Some of the perceptions, opinions and experiences shared by the women are quoted as below:

"I use many social networking outlets (WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram) to raise awareness about gender-based issues. Not only I educate others but also get to learn about various social and political rights granted to women through educational posts on these sites."

"I follow many academicians, leaders and social activists on SNS. They upload posts, images and videos which eventually make me aware about several social and political happenings in the world. I get enlightened about various rights…….thanks to SNS that has brought a kind of revolution."

"I share stories, narratives and photos and videos that help to create awareness about social, political and economic rights and problems among women."

The data in the table and opinions shared by women as quoted above clearly reveal that majority of the women agreed that SNS help in keeping them abreast of the social and political rights and activities concerned with women.

5.6: Awareness about wage discrimination

Social networking sites are serving as an important source where women can speak out against the oppression and economic exploitation at the grass root levels. Table 7 reveals the responses of the participants with regard to this context.

Concerning the role of SNS in making women aware about the wage discrimination, 49 women participants (28.83 percent) agreed that "SNs make them aware about the wage discrimination"; while a good number of women (24.70percent) were neutral about the statement, 21 women (12.36 percent) strongly agreed to it.

Table 7:
Wage Discrimination

Theme	Responses					
SNS make you aware about the wage discrimination	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	21	49	42	24	34	170
Percentage	12.36	28.83	24.70	14.11	20.00	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

The negative options came from 34women (20.00 percent) who strongly disagreed and 24 women (14.11 percent) who disagreed with the statement that SNs make them aware about the wage discrimination (Table 7).

During focus group discussions also, a mixed bag of opinions was received. Some of the perceptions expressed by the women are highlighted as under:

"One of the biggest advantages of SNS is that it helps in redressing the issues and sharing them publicly. Similarly, it has helped me to highlight the issue of wage discrimination."

"Yes, I believe SNS can bring into spotlight various forms of discrimination including wage discrimination."

"I don't perceive SNS as best place to address the issue of wage discrimination"

"Yes, SNS has made me aware about wage discrimination and eventually I joined a hashtag campaign "EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK".

Thus, through responses and opinions of women, it can be argued that while some women consider social networking sites as the important source and access to speak out against the oppression and economic exploitation of women at the grass root levels, some don't perceive SNS as best place to address the issue of wage discrimination.

5.7: Exposing crime and harassment among women

Social networking sites can function as important tools to expose the women harassment. Women can write blogs and articles on women harassment. They can discuss subjects related to sexual and mental harassment online and provide information related to the women's rights. In order to see whether participants use SNS to expose crime and harassment, question was asked, the responses of which are presented in table 8.

Table 8:
Crime and Harassment

Theme	Responses					
SNS help you to expose crime and harassment	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	12	26	68	42	22	170
Percentage	7.05	15.29	40.00	24.71	12.95	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

As can be observed from the table, the majority of the participants, and 68 women (40.00 percent) were neutral that SNS help them to expose crime and

harassment. This was followed by 42 women (24.71 percent) who disagreed to it. While some women, 26women (15.29 percent) agreed, some 22women (12.95 percent) strongly disagreed with the statement. Only 12 women (7.05 percent) strongly agreed the statement that "SNS help them to expose crime and harassment". In response to the question whether SNS help you to expose crime and harassment, focus group discussions revealed a mixed bag of responses. While some women agreed with the statement, some did not agree to it. Some of the opinions shared by women are quoted as below:

"On SNS, we can share the experiences of violence (in any form) with other victims".

"SNS is the best place to inform victims of crime and harassment about the rights, legal processes and welfare services".

"Many hashtag campaigns like #MeToo movement on these online vehicles enable us to share experiences of violence and break stereotypical attitude of the society and inspire change."

"Whenever I face any form of harassment, I don't share it on SNS because of the society's stereotypical attitude."

"No, I don't like exposing any sort of harassment on these SNS."

5.8: Women Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment is critical to achieving gender equality and sustainable development of a nation. Social networking sites have the potential to make women economically interdependent. They provide women the tools needed to reach out and make business connections and find new jobs. Social networking sites encourage women to establish business by opening online shopping stores. Online

presence in social networking sites is providing women with new freedom, independence and control, liberty, and empowerment like never before. It helps them to try things that were impossible in the real scenario. Kashmir is witnessing the same phenomenon. To see, whether SNS help participants economically, responses were collected which are highlighted in following table:

Table 9:
Economic Empowerment of Women

Theme	Responses					
SNS help you to be economically independent	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	40	61	26	28	15	170
Percentage	23.53	35.89	15.29	16.47	8.82	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

From the data, it was found that **t**he majority of the women, 61 participants (35.89 percent) agreed that SNS help them to grow economically independent. This was followed by 40 women (23.53 percent) who strongly agreed to it. A good number of women with 15.29 percent were neutral. 28 women (16.47 percent) disagreed and 15women (8.82 percent) strongly disagreed the statement that "SNs help you to be economically independent". Similar results were drawn from focus group discussion where majority of the participants affirmed that SNS play a role in making women economically independent.

"I strongly believe that SNS allow us to grow economically. It serves as a powerful platform where we can start new business and contact with customers

directly. I too started a Home Cooking channel on YouTube."

"I created a page on Instagram for my online shopping store and this helped me to reach out to customers easily."

"I have relied on SNS to promote my cakes, bakery and many more. I firmly believe that my success is largely due to these virtual platforms."

"SNS have provided me an opportunity to be self-reliant as I run an online shopping store".

Majority of the women agreed with the statement that "SNs help you to be economically independent."They believe that SNS help them to establish the start-up business and to reach to the customers directly.

5.9: Health, Hygiene and Nutrition for women

One of the important areas of women's development is that of health and nutrition (including maternity). To see whether SNS play a role in developing health, hygiene and nutrition among the participants, responses were solicited. Table 10 reveals the responses.

Table 10:
Health, Hygiene and Nutrition

Theme	Responses					
SNS help you to develop health, hygiene and nutrition	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Number	30	43	39	35	23	170
Percentage	17.66	25.29	22.95	20.58	13.52	100.00

Source: Field work carried out in 2018.

As per the above table, it is found that majority of the women with 25.29 percent agreed that SNS help them to develop health, hygiene and nutrition. A good number of women (30; 17.66 percent) strongly agreed. 22.95 percent of the participants were neutral which was followed by 35 women (20.58 percent) who disagreed and 23 women (13.52 percent) strongly disagreed that SNS help them developing health, hygiene and nutrition. In response to the question whether SNS help in developing health, hygiene and nutrition among women, focus group discussions revealed that while majority of women agreed that they make use of SNS for maintaining health and hygiene, few did not agree to it. Some of the opinions shared by participants are quoted as below:

"I agree that SNS are very important tools to promote and improve health care. These sites provide us with information about health behaviours among women and educate us about the ways to potentially improve health outcomes."

"Last year I was diagnosed with PCOD. Though I consulted a doctor, yet I also made use of SNS to make a healthcare related search about PCOD. I found these sites (especially Facebook and Instagram) as an easy way to educate myself on this disease and these sites made it possible for me to promote healthy lifestyle."

"I find social networking sites very useful because many health tips are provided in the pages of these sites. I search pages, videos and posts to get information on losing weight and nutrition diet charts".

"I do use SNS but I don't follow health related pages and posts because of bogus remedies, myths and fake news about diseases."

While majority of the women perceive social networking sites as important tools to promote and improve health,

hygiene and nutrition, few don't trust the information related to health behaviours on these sites.

6: Discussion

The present study confirms that majority of the women use social networking sites and is members of SNS. Concerning the frequency of using SNS among women, the finding reveals that the majority of the women use SNS very often followed by the women who it occasionally. Very less women reported that they rarely use SNS. This indicates that most of the women are active users of social networking sites. Social networking sites have swiftly and widely spread apprehension about different fields because it has the potential to cover large population. It has also played a vital role in spreading awareness to empower women in society. The majority of the women agreed and strongly agreed that SNS help them to highlight the gender related issues. They consider SNS a vital platform to bring gender issues and gender stereotypes to the attention of a wider public. They use these sites to make awareness about the gender related issues all over the world. They write blogs and articles on women harassment. They discuss subjects related to sexual and mental harassment online and provide information related to the women's rights. Women perceive SNs as powerful means to encourage them in making self-decisions and enhancing their leadership qualities. Besides, the majority of the women agreed and strongly agreed that SNS help in keeping them aware about the social and political rights and activities concerned with women. They see these online platforms as a medium to create awareness about social, political and economic rights and problems among women. The study also revealed that while some women consider social

networking sites as the important source and access to speak out against the oppression and economic exploitation of women at the grass root levels, some don't perceive SNS as best place to address the issue of wage discrimination. Similarly, some women agreed with the statement that SNS help them to expose crime and harassment, some did not agree to it. It was also that while most of the women see SNS as important tools to promote and improve health, hygiene and nutrition, some don't because of bogus remedies, myths and fake news about diseases. However, it was found that majority of the women agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that "SNs help you to be economically independent." They believe that SNS help them to establish the start-up business and to reach the customers directly.

7: Conclusion and Recommendation

Women's empowerment is being considered as a very important ingredient for the development of every nation. Empowering women to participate in all sectors of life is necessary to build a stronger nation. It aims to emancipate women from the chains of legal, social and political restrictions that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to see their beauty and power. Social networking sites serve as a crucial platform for empowering women and assist them in using resources for their development by means of exposure, knowledge and information. The use of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn has helped women by encouraging the civic participation among women in Western, Middle East and Asian countries. Social networking sites play an important role for bringing women's rights issues and problems to the attention of a wider public and challenging

discrimination and stereotypes. It is a deep-rooted fact that human progress is incomplete unless women empowerment is accomplished in any society. Social networking sites for empowerment programs aim to eliminate gender disparities as well as shift locally determined attitudes and changing behaviours towards women and girls that lead to inequalities.

The present study investigated the role of social networking sites in women empowerment in district Srinagar of Kashmir. The study concluded that the majority of the women see social networking sites as powerful tools to address the gender related issues, to be abreast of social and political rights, to enhance the decision making and leadership qualities. They also agreed that social networking sites help them to grow independently. However, some women reported that they don't perceive social networking sites as more important vehicles to expose crime and harassment and to develop health, hygiene and nutrition behaviour among them. Over all, it was found that social networking is a huge platform which could accelerate the process of women empowerment. It plays an important role to empower women in different fields as now it is very easy, to search anything related to empowerment through internet. Hashtags and online campaigns have given women around the world a voice. It has shed light on women's issues not covered by mainstream media. Thus, it has a great calibre for the empowerment of women. Therefore, no other sector can match the efforts that it plays to empower women. Based on conclusion, it is recommended that more action oriented programmes and policies concerned with inculcating in comprehending the various technicalities and prospects of social networking sites keeping into consideration women's empowerment

should be implemented. Additionally, social networking sites should provide political and legal and economic and health awareness to educate the women so that women can reap more benefits from it.

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EXPLORING THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONSUMER CULTURE AND MARRIAGE: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MUSLIMS IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

SHAMEEM AHAMAD GANAYEE

Lecturer (Contractual), Department of Sociology, Government Degree College, Sumbal, Jammu and Kashmir
Email: **ahmadsnazir19@gmail.com**

Abstract

The advent of consumer culture and the forces of globalization have had a profound impact on various aspects of human life, although differently in varied parts of the world. In a globalized world, individuals and communities have been exposed to new ideas, values, and lifestyles, leading to significant changes in societal norms and expectations surrounding every institution especially the institution of marriage. Consequently, the Muslim population, which constitutes a significant portion of the global community, has not been immune to the influence of consumer culture. They have encountered the influx of consumer culture through various channels, such as media, technology, and transnational networks. These factors have contributed to the transformation of marital dynamics and choices within Muslim communities. The present paper aims to explore the relationship between consumer society and marriage in the era of globalization, with a specific focus on the Muslim population. The paper investigates how the rise of consumer culture and the forces of globalization have impacted marital dynamics, choices, and expectations among Muslims. Additionally, the paper explores the interplay between consumerism, marriage, and Islamic traditions, analyzing the challenges and adaptations that arise in the context. The study employs a narrative review (preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature) research method.

Introduction

Consumer society refers to a socio-economic system in which the acquisition and consumption of goods and services play a central role in people's lives. It is characterized by a culture of materialism, where the pursuit of personal desires and the accumulation of possessions are highly valued. It also involves the acquisition and display of luxurious and fashionable goods (Featherstone, 1983). In recent decades, globalization has further intensified consumerism by facilitating the flow of goods, services, and ideas across national boundaries. The Muslim population, which constitutes a significant portion of the global community, has not been immune to the influence of consumer society and globalization (Godazgar, 2007). Muslims have encountered the influx of consumer culture through various channels, such as media, technology, and transnational networks. These factors have contributed to the transformation of marital dynamics and choices within Muslim communities. The advent of consumer society and the forces of globalization have had a profound impact on various aspects of human life, including marriage (Giddens, 2003). In a post-globalized world, individuals and communities have been exposed to new ideas, values, and lifestyles, leading to significant changes in societal norms and expectations surrounding marriage. Consumerism, as a pervasive ideology in modern society, significantly influences individuals, communities, and societal structures. It emphasizes the acquisition and consumption of goods and services as a means to achieve personal satisfaction, status, and identity. Consumerism impacts society in various ways: it promotes materialistic values, where possessions and wealth are often equated with happiness and success. It drives economic growth and plays a crucial role in shaping market dynamics. It influences production patterns, advertising strategies, and consumption patterns, thereby impacting industries, job markets, and economic inequalities. Furthermore, the pursuit of

increased consumption and production places a significant burden on the environment. Consumerism contributes to resource depletion, pollution, and climate change, leading to ecological challenges (Akenji, 2014). It also influences individual identities by attaching meaning and significance to particular brands, products, and lifestyles. It can create social divisions based on one's ability to participate in consumer culture, leading to social stratification and inequality.

Globalization and its effects on culture and identity
Globalization refers to the increased interconnectedness and interdependence among nations through the exchange of goods, services, information, and ideas. It has profound effects on culture and identity (Tomlinson, 2007). It leads to the spread of dominant cultural values and practices, potentially eroding local traditions and identities. Furthermore, it fosters cultural hybridity, as individuals and communities adapt and incorporate elements from diverse cultures into their own. Globalization enables rapid communication and the dissemination of media content across borders. This exposure to global media shapes cultural attitudes, perceptions, and aspirations, including ideals and expectations surrounding marriage. It increased mobility facilitated by globalization has led to the movement of people across borders, resulting in multicultural societies and the blending of cultural practices. This mobility influences marital choices and the formation of transnational marriages. Moreover, globalization necessitates individuals and communities to negotiate their identities in the face of cultural encounters and influences. This negotiation process can be complex, especially in the context of marriage, where traditional values intersect with globalized ideals.

Interconnectedness and cross-cultural influences

Consumer society and globalization are intricately linked, influencing and reinforcing each other. The interconnectedness brought about by globalization amplifies consumerist tendencies, while consumer culture, in turn, drives the demand for globalized products and experiences. This interconnectedness has led to cross-cultural influences in the context of marriage. In a globalized world consumer culture has influenced marriage patterns, such as a shift towards individualistic values, increased emphasis on romantic love and compatibility, and a focus on lifestyle compatibility rather than traditional considerations. It has facilitated transnational marriages, where individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together in marriage. These marriages navigate cultural differences and require negotiation and adaptation to diverse consumer expectations and lifestyle choices. Furthermore, globalized media platforms and technology play a significant role in shaping consumer desires, lifestyle aspirations, and marital expectations. Media portrayals of relationships and marriage influence individuals' perceptions and choices in a globalized consumer society (Laubach-Young, 2007). While globalization promotes cultural integration, it also fuels movements aimed at preserving traditional values and resisting the homogenizing forces of consumer society. These movements often seek to maintain cultural authenticity within the context of marriage.

Changing Paradigms of Marriage
Traditional paradigms of marriage have undergone significant transformations in the era of globalization. Factors such as consumer society, globalization, and cultural shifts have contributed to changing marital dynamics. The emphasis on individualism and personal fulfillment has impacted marriage, with individuals seeking partners who align with their personal goals, aspirations, and lifestyle choices (Gross, 2005). Moreover, in many societies, there has been a trend

toward delayed marriage as individuals prioritize education, career advancement, and personal development (Browning, 2003). The pursuit of consumerist goals may lead to a postponement of marriage until later stages of life. With the influence of consumer society and globalization, there has been a decline in traditional arranged marriages, where families play a significant role in selecting marital partners. Individuals now have more agency in choosing their partners based on personal preferences and compatibility.

Marital choices and expectations

Consumer society and globalization have influenced the choices and expectations individuals have regarding marriage. Individuals place importance on finding partners who share similar lifestyles, interests, and consumption patterns. Compatibility in terms of leisure activities, consumer choices, and social status has become a significant consideration in partner selection (Shah & Swaminathan, 2008). The influence of media and globalization has placed a higher emphasis on romantic love and emotional compatibility in marriage (Hull et al., 2010). Individuals seek partners with whom they feel a strong emotional connection and share intimate bonds. Personal happiness has heightened expectations of marital satisfaction and fulfillment. Individuals expect their partners to meet their emotional, social, and material needs, leading to increased pressure on marriages to provide a sense of personal happiness and fulfillment.

Influence of media and technology

Media and technology play a crucial role in shaping perceptions (Cockerill, 2002), expectations, and practices related to marriage in the era of globalization. Media, including television, movies, and social media, often portray idealized versions of relationships and marriage. These depictions can influence individuals' perceptions and expectations, creating a gap between

reality and the idealized portrayal. The rise of technology and globalization has facilitated online dating platforms and matchmaking websites. These platforms offer individuals a wider pool of potential partners, crossing geographical boundaries and allowing for the exploration of different cultural backgrounds. Social media platforms not only provide a means for individuals to connect and form relationships but also contribute to the construction of a curated online identity. Social media can influence the perception of others' relationships and shape individuals' desires and aspirations for their marriages.

Shifts in Gender Roles and Power Dynamics:
Consumer society and globalization have brought about shifts in gender roles and power dynamics within marriages. In many societies, there has been a shift towards more egalitarian gender roles, with both partners sharing household responsibilities, decision-making, and financial contributions. This shift is influenced by changing societal expectations, economic factors, and the pursuit of individual fulfillment. Globalization has provided women with increased access to education, employment opportunities, and economic independence. This empowerment has influenced their expectations and roles within marriages, leading to a renegotiation of power dynamics and decision-making processes (Kabeer, 2007). Within the context of a post-globalized world, traditional gender roles may intersect with modern expectations. Individuals and communities navigate this intersection by negotiating cultural values, societal norms, and personal aspirations within their marriages. Understanding the changing paradigms, choices, expectations, and power dynamics in marriages within a globalized world is crucial for addressing the complexities faced by individuals and communities. The influences of consumer society, globalization, media, and technology shape the landscape of contemporary marriages and require thoughtful considerations and

adaptations to ensure healthy and fulfilling relationships. Understanding the interplay between consumer society, globalization, and marriage is crucial in comprehending the evolving dynamics of relationships and choices, particularly within the Muslim context.

Aim of the study
Understanding the intersection of consumer society, globalization, and marriage within the Muslim context holds significant implications. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the following areas: a) to examine the impact of consumer society on marriage patterns and practices among Muslims in a globalized world. B) to explore how consumerism and globalization have influenced the expectations and preferences of Muslim individuals in selecting a marital partner.

Methodology
With an aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between consumer society, marriage, and Muslims in a globalized world, the study employs a narrative review (preliminary assessment of the potential size and scope of available research literature on a given topic) research method to explore the undertaken topic. As reviews provide a synthesis of published literature on a topic and describe its current state of art (Ferrari, 2015). In the initial stage, the researcher framed keywords on the undertaken research and consequently searched sources like Google Scholar, Jstore, and PubMed. The search terms (keywords) define the limits and the nature of the literature search. The key concepts were transformed into keywords, choosing only the most distinctive terms. Using inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 12 studies were selected for final analysis, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing knowledge

on consumerism, marriage, and Muslims. All 16 studies were qualitative, and empirical in nature.

Findings
1. Consumerism, Muslims, and Marriage
Muslim individuals, like individuals from other religious and cultural backgrounds, are not immune to the influence of consumer culture (Wong, 2007). The intersection of Muslim identity and consumerism presents unique challenges and considerations. The Muslim community is diverse, comprising individuals from various cultural backgrounds and regions. Consumer culture interacts differently with different cultural practices and values within the Muslim community. Furthermore, Muslim diaspora communities, residing in non-Muslim majority countries, often navigate the influences of consumer culture while preserving their Islamic values and traditions (Schmidt, 2004). They are encountering unique challenges in balancing their religious identity and participation in consumer society. Muslims have multiple identities that intersect with their religious identity, such as ethnicity, nationality, and socioeconomic status. These intersections shape their experiences and interactions with consumer culture and its impact on their marital choices and expectations.

2. Islamic Values and Consumerism:
Islamic teachings and values provide a framework for Muslims to navigate consumer society and its impact on marriage. Islam promotes the concept of moderation and contentment in material possessions. In Islamic societies, consumer culture is often portrayed as a threat, and harmful to religion as it privileges hedonism, pleasure, individualism, and an expressive lifestyle (Wong, 2007). Muslims are encouraged to avoid excess and to be grateful for what they have, fostering a balanced approach to consumerism and its influence

on marriage. Moreover, Islamic teachings emphasize ethical considerations in consumption, including fair trade, avoiding extravagance, and being mindful of the sources and production processes of products and services. These principles can influence Muslims' consumer choices within the context of marriage. It further prioritizes the spiritual well-being of individuals and highlights the importance of fulfilling emotional and social needs within marriage, rather than solely focusing on material possessions and wealth.

3. Cultural Hybridity and Negotiation of Traditions:

Muslims living in a globalized world often experience cultural hybridity, where their Islamic values intersect with influences from the dominant consumer culture (Khan, 2015). Muslim individuals and communities engage in a negotiation process, adapting to the influences of consumer culture while integrating their Islamic traditions and values into their marriages (Rosen, 2002). This negotiation involves preserving essential aspects of Islamic teachings while adopting elements of consumer culture that align with Islamic principles. Muslims may creatively express their cultural and religious identity within the context of marriage, blending traditional practices with consumer culture. This cultural hybridity can manifest in wedding ceremonies, attire, and celebration styles. Besides, the influence of consumer culture can present challenges to preserving cultural and religious traditions within Muslim marriages. The pressure to conform to dominant societal norms and expectations may require Muslims to actively navigate and strike a balance between tradition and assimilation.

4. Materialism and Its Impact on Marital Satisfaction

The prevalence of consumer society and materialistic values can impact marital satisfaction among Muslims (Teimourpour & Heidarzadeh, 2011). The pursuit of

material possessions and consumerism can lead to financial strain within marriages. The pressure to meet consumerist expectations may result in financial burden and stress, impacting marital harmony and satisfaction. Consumer culture, including media portrayals, can create unrealistic expectations of wealth, beauty, and lifestyle within marriages. Unmet expectations due to the gap between reality and consumerist ideals can lead to dissatisfaction and relationship strain. Materialism may conflict with Islamic teachings on contentment, gratitude, and the importance of non-material aspects in marriage (Chapra, 2008). Misalignment between consumerist values and Islamic values can create tension and dissatisfaction within Muslim marriages.

Discussion

The synthesis of findings highlights the complex relationship between consumer society, globalization, Islamic traditions, and Muslim marriages in a globalized world. Consumerism exerts a significant influence on marital choices, with lifestyle compatibility and material expectations gaining prominence. Globalization has both positive and negative impacts on Muslim marriages, facilitating intercultural exchanges while also presenting challenges of cultural clashes and differing expectations. Islamic traditions play a crucial role in guiding marital dynamics, emphasizing values of moderation, contentment, and spiritual well-being. However, challenges arise in balancing consumerist ideals with Islamic principles, requiring active negotiation and communication within marriages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has examined the relationship between consumer society, globalization, and Muslim marriages in a globalized world. The findings have shed light on the influence of consumerism on marital choices, the impact of

globalization on Muslim marriages, the role of Islamic traditions in shaping marital dynamics, and the challenges and adaptations faced in a globalized society. The research has highlighted that consumerism plays a significant role in shaping marital choices among Muslims, with lifestyle compatibility and material expectations gaining prominence. Globalization has both positive and negative impacts on Muslim marriages, facilitating cultural exchanges while presenting challenges of differing expectations and cultural clashes. Islamic traditions provide a guiding framework for Muslim marriages, emphasizing values of moderation, contentment, and spiritual well-being.

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LIFE EXPECTANCY AND THE RELATED DISPARITIES IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT EVIDENCE

ZAKIR HUSSAIN GADDA

Former Lecturer (Contractual), Government Model Higher Sceondary School, Frisal, Kulgam, J&K
Email: zakirgadda@gmail.com

Abstract

The average life expectancy has improved steadily and significantly across all regions of the world, including India. This extraordinary rise can be attributed to improvements in living standards, economic growth, and poverty reduction, alongside advancements in neonatal healthcare, antibiotics, vaccines, public health efforts, nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation. These advancements have played a key role in reducing mortality across all age cohorts. However, despite progressive health gains, disparities persist in longevity. This study, as such, aims to highlight the trends and disparities in life expectancy at birth across India while relying on secondary sources of data. The study results reveal substantial variations in life expectancy among individuals and groups, influenced by factors such as wealth, geography, gender, and caste. Therefore, addressing these disparities is imperative for achieving equitable health outcomes in India.

Keywords: Caste, disparity, geography, gender, hierarchy, India, life expectancy at birth

1. Introduction

Life expectancy is a statistical measure representing the average number of years that a person is expected to live, typically from birth in a given country, territory, or geographic area. In other words, it measures how long, on average a new-born infant can expect to live if the existing death rates remain static. Life expectancy at birth is a fundamental measure of population health status, and is, therefore, a critical indicator of quality of life (QoL). The global life expectancy has seen a steady

progress since the advent of the Industrial Revolution. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this progress gained momentum after 2000 (WHO, 2016), primarily due to enhancement in living conditions of people. Additionally, the improvement in life expectancy is attributed to advancements in medicine, whereby diseases such as malaria, measles, pneumonia, cholera and smallpox that were hitherto deadly became curable (Cliff et al., 2004). The WHO (2019) reports that between 2000 and 2016, global life expectancy at birth increased by 5.5 years, from 66.5 to 72.0 years. It further states that the healthy life expectancy at birth, representing the number of years one can expect to live in full health, increased from 58.5 years in 2000 to 63.3 years in 2016. However, due to variations in socioeconomic status (SES) and unequal access to food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, and technology, disparities exist in life expectancy across regions and time periods.

Prior research consistently reveals that life expectancy is significantly influenced by income level, with higher incomes often correlating with longer life expectancy (Braveman et al., 2010; Cutler et al., 2006; Marmot, 2005).This is because a higher income implies better access to nutrition, housing, education and care services, all of which lead to better health, lower mortality rates, and longer life expectancy. Consequently, the majority of the longest-living individuals are found in the wealthy nations of the world. On the other hand, people living in less developed countries have inadequate access to basic resources and public health initiatives, resulting in high mortality rates and shorter life spans among them. For instance, in low-income countries, life expectancy is 18.1 years lower than in high-income countries (WHO, 2019). This disparity is particularly striking in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where in 2016 the average life expectancy was only 60.4 years, compared to 80.6 years in the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2019). The

lower life expectancy in Africa is attributed to its inadequate economic development and very high mortality rate primarily from diseases such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea and acute respiratory infections (Boutayeb, 2010). Overall, low-income countries face an acute health disadvantage, resulting in a marked decline in longevity. For example, in low-income countries, one child in every 14 new-born dies before reaching the fifth birthday (WHO, 2019).

In India, much like many other parts of the world, life expectancy has shown a steady upward trajectory. According to the National Health Profile of 2019, it has risen impressively from 49.7 years in 1970-75 to 68.7 years in 2012-16. However, despite this improvement, disparities persist in life expectancy, based on various socioeconomic and demographic factors, but the extent of these variations remains inadequately understood. Therefore, this study aims to provide an overview of the existing disparities in life expectancy at birth across India and to highlight their underlying causes.

2. Methodology

This study relies on secondary sources of data, including a range of reports, academic papers, government publications, and grey literature. The selection criteria for these sources emphasized factors such as reliability, and relevance to ensure the credibility of the information gathered. Data analysis involved synthesizing information from multiple sources to construct a comprehensive overview of life expectancy and the related disparities in India.

3. Results and discussions

The historical and current data on life expectancy in India reveal notable trends and variations. Beginning at 25.4 years in 1800, it remained in the mid to low twenties until 1920, with significant declines during the Great Famine of 1876-1878 and the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918-1919. These events, along with other

endemic diseases like smallpox, resulted in the deaths of millions in India. Since 1920, however, life expectancy has shown a steady upward trend, though it has consistently lagged behind the global average. In 1960, it was around 42 years, rising to approximately 48 in 1980, 58.5 in 1990, and about 62 in 2000 (Times of India, 2014). Notably, from 2001-2005 to 2011-2015, there has been a remarkable increase of five years, with male life expectancy rising from 62.3 years to 67.3 years and that of females from 63.9 years to 69.6 years (Times of India, 2014). The improvement in life expectancy in India can be attributed to advancements in healthcare infrastructure, medical technology, and access to healthcare services. Efforts to control and eradicate endemic diseases through vaccination programs and public health initiatives have also been instrumental in prolonging life expectancy. Additionally, improvements in sanitation, nutrition, and education have contributed to better health outcomes in India. Furthermore, economic development and rising living standards have enabled more people to afford healthcare and lead healthier lifestyles. Therefore, over the years, some key health indicators have shown significant improvement in India. For instance, the infant mortality rate (IMR) decreased from 58 per 1,000 live births in 2005 to 42 in 2012 (Times of India, 2014). Also, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) has dropped from 556 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 130 per 100,000 live births in 2016 (WHO, 2018), positioning the country to achieve the target of an MMR below 70 by 2030, as emphasized by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These health gains have added to the longevity of people in India. However, there are marked disparities in life expectancy within India which are evident across various dimensions, including wealth, residence, gender and caste. Moreover, the statistical evidence highlights the stark differences in life expectancy between privileged and marginalized communities in India.

3.1 Disparities based on wealth

The wealth-based disparities in life expectancy are evident among individuals and groups in India. The data from 2011 to 2015 reveals that the individuals belonging to the bottom 20 percent of households have a life expectancy of approximately 65.1 years, while their counterparts in the top 20 percent enjoy a life expectancy of around 72.7 years (Asaria et al., 2019). This means that there is a significant gap of 7.6 years between the rich and the poor in terms of life expectancy. The wealthier people in India on an average tend to live about seven and a half years longer than those with less wealth. The rich-poor gap in life expectancy is because rich people can afford healthier food and lifestyles, and have often better access to education, socioeconomic opportunities and healthcare (Amin, 2001, Heden, 2015; Hu et al., 2015). Moreover, they may experience less stress due to financial security. These factors collectively contribute to their higher life expectancy compared to poorer individuals who usually face challenges in accessing the requisite healthcare and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Consequently, they have poorer health outcomes and higher mortality rates which negatively impact their life spans.

3.2 Rural-urban divide

According to the "Sample Registration System (SRS) Based Life Table 2013-17" report by the Registrar General of India (RGI), life expectancy at birth is 67.7 years for rural Indians and 72.4 years for urban Indians (RGI, 2019). The difference in life expectancy between urban and rural populations can be attributed to several interconnected factors. Firstly, urban areas typically have better access to healthcare facilities compared to rural areas, leading to earlier detection and treatment of illnesses. Secondly, urban populations tend to have higher levels of education and awareness about health, resulting in healthier lifestyle choices and preventive measures, unlike their rural counterparts.

Thirdly, better infrastructure and sanitation in urban areas except for those living in slums, reduce the risk of waterborne and sanitation-related diseases. Additionally, urban populations generally have better nutrition and food security, contributing to better health and well-being. Conversely, in rural areas, poverty is prevalent, and the marginalized people are unable to afford nutritious meals, and healthcare costs, exacerbating disparities in longevity. Within rural regions, Scheduled Tribes (STs) are particularly disadvantaged in terms of life expectancy, primarily due to their poverty, geographical isolation, reliance on magico-religious practices for disease treatment and inadequate access to healthcare.

3.3 Gender gap in life expectancy

Worldwide, women outlive men, and this life expectancy gap would be even wider if women in low-income countries had better access to healthcare (Thornton, 2019). Similarly, in India, the trend persists, with females having a higher life expectancy compared to males. In 2019, women had an average life expectancy of 75.9 years at birth, while men were expected to live 70.8 years (RGI, 2019). This trend also persists in both rural and urban areas, with women surpassing men in longevity. In urban centres, female life expectancy is 73.70 years, compared to 69 years in rural areas and for men these figures are 71.20 years in urban centres and 66.40 years in rural areas. Over the past decade, India has experienced a remarkable rise in life expectancy, with males gaining 3.2 years and females 3.5 years. However, the gap between male and female life expectancy has also widened from 2.8 to 3.1 years. Studies have confirmed the growing health advantages of Indian females over males since the 1980s (Canudas-Romo & Saikia, 2013). This trend is attributed to factors such as external and non-communicable disease-related mortality among adult and elderly males.

The key factors contributing to the difference in life expectancy between males and females include genetics, lifestyle choices, and social factors. Generally, females tend to have lower rates of risky behaviours such as smoking and alcohol consumption, leading to better health outcomes and longevity. In contrast, males usually engage in more hazardous occupations or behaviours, leading to a higher mortality rate, with injuries being more prevalent among them. Moreover, the suicide rate is higher in men than in women globally as well as in India, adding to the mortality disparity. The National Crimes Records Bureau (2015) reported the total number of suicides in India during 2015 as 133,623, the rate being 10.6 per 100,000 with a male-to-female ratio of 2.25. In India, cultural and societal norms also affect access to healthcare and nutrition, further impacting life expectancy based on gender.

3.4 Caste-based disparities

In India, there are significant disparities in life expectancy across different caste groups. Estimates based on the data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), 2015-2016 and the SRS, 2011-2015 highlight that Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Dalits have the lowest life expectancy at 63.1 years, followed by Other Backward Castes (OBCs) at 65.1 years, and others at 68.0 years. According to the United Nations (UN), an upper-caste woman lives approximately 14.6 years longer than a woman among Dalits (The Indian Express, 2018). Also, both the child and adult mortality are relatively high among the lower castes (Subramanian et al., 2006). Nearly, 50% of all maternal deaths in India occur in lower castes, and their children often suffer from higher rates of undernourishment compared to the general population (Wax, 2010). Therefore, the lower castes have usually poorer health outcomes, which negatively impact their life expectancies. Caste-based disparities in life expectancy usually stem from the hierarchical structure of Indian

society, which places SCs at the bottom, followed by OBCs, with advantaged castes at the top. Historically, the lower castes have faced social and economic marginalization, leading to poorer living conditions and limited access to opportunities and resources such as food, housing, sanitation and healthcare (Allendorf & Pandian 2016; Borooah et al. 2015; Thorat et al., 2017). Moreover, they face social stigma and discrimination in care settings, which act as significant barriers to their access to healthcare. The impact of caste-based discrimination extends beyond physical health, affecting mental well-being as well. Additionally, caste-based employment, education, and health schemes often favour the better-off within caste groups, perpetuating significant inequalities. In essence, the interplay of socioeconomic circumstances, discrimination, and limited access to resources contributes to the significant disparities in life expectancy observed among different caste groups in India.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant disparities in life expectancy throughout India, shaped by a multitude of factors such as wealth, geography, gender, and caste. Notably, individuals from higher income backgrounds, urban areas, and upper castes tend to enjoy longer life expectancies compared to their counterparts from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, rural areas, and lower caste communities. Furthermore, females exhibit a significant advantage over males in terms of life expectancy. Therefore, addressing these disparities is imperative for achieving inclusive and sustainable health outcomes nationwide. This requires enhancing healthcare accessibility, improving socioeconomic conditions, and implementing targeted interventions for marginalized populations. Such measures are essential for countries like India, where significant diversities and inequalities

persist, to attain equitable life expectancy for all individuals and communities.

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UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN URBAN SRINAGAR AND ITS RIPPLE EFFECT ON FAMILY STRUCTURE AND CHILDREN

MUDASIR AHMAD NAZAR

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of
Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K - 190006
Email: guroomudasir@gmail.com

Abstract

Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions with far-reaching consequences for individual victims, their children and their communities. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), "in every three minutes a crime has been reported against women in India. Two women are raped every sixty minutes in the country. A young married woman is found beaten to death or burnt every six hours. Violence against women is not a new thing. Women have been bearing domestic, public, physical and mental violence against them for a very long time, which has also affected their status in society. Domestic violence in Indian culture includes violence from the husband as well as the in-laws. Women are expected to endure violence for fear of bringing shame to their families. It is over the last decade that research in this field of domestic violence has led to greater recognition of the issue as a public health problem. The present study was undertaken to explore the lived experience of married women regarding domestic violence in urban Srinagar. Furthermore, it explores the complex and often obscured issue related to domestic violence, which makes it imperative to shed light on the prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of domestic violence within Kashmir. The socio-political landscape of the region and traditional patriarchal norms exacerbate the vulnerability of women to various forms of violence within familial settings. Administrated online interview method on 12 participants, based on purposive sample technique. The results of the study are divided into four themes, which revealed that violence against women is the harsh reality of today which exists in urban Kashmir in various forms and contents. In Kashmir where women are

thought to be highly esteemed, many examples of violence against women exist. The impact of violence leaves behind many broken families, which impacts children. Children are often the silent and innocent victims, bearing the emotional and psychological scars of broken families out of domestic violence.

Keywords: Domestic   violence,   women,   family structures, broken families, children

Introduction

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, faith or class. Domestic violence is a problem of epidemic proportions with far-reaching consequences for individual victims, their children and their communities. Domestic violence results in death, serious injury, and chronic medical and mental health issues for victims, their children, the perpetrators, and others. The lethal outcome of domestic violence is tragically evident in media reports that describe a steady stream of homicides against victims, their children, family or friends, those who are trying to protect them, innocent bystanders, and perpetrators. Domestic violence is a persistent worldwide problem that affects many women regardless of their

demographic characteristics (Dobash and Dobash, 2017). Sometimes domestic violence begins — or increases — during pregnancy. Domestic violence puts your health and the baby's health at risk. The danger continues after the baby is born. Even if your child isn't abused, simply witnessing domestic violence can be harmful. Children who grow up in abusive homes are more likely to be abused and have behavioral problems than other children. As adults, they're more likely to become abusers or think abuse is a normal part of relationships.

Violence against women tends to increase in any emergency, including epidemics. Stress, disruption of social and protective networks, increased economic hardship and decreased access to services can exacerbate the risk of women suffering violence. The Eastern Mediterranean Region has the second highest prevalence of violence against women (37%) worldwide. This is due to structural systems that maintain gender inequalities at different levels of society, compounded by political crises and socioeconomic instability in the Region. The Region also faces more humanitarian emergencies than any other part of the world, with a huge number of refugees and internally displaced populations.

In India about half of our population is women, they have been ill-treated for a long time. Women have been deprived of their right to life and personal liberty which is provided to them under the constitution of India. Women have been considered physically and emotionally weaker than males, however, at present women have proved themselves in every field of life affirming that they are no less than men whether at home or workplaces. Behind the closed doors of homes all over the country, women are tortured, beaten and killed. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), "in every three minutes a crime has been reported against women in India. Two women are raped every sixty minutes in the country. A young married woman is found beaten to death or

burnt every six hours. Violence against women is not a new thing. Women have been bearing domestic, public, physical and mental violence against them for a very long time, which has also affected their status in society. The statistical data of increasing crimes against women is shocking, women are subjected to various types of attacks i.e. foeticide, infanticide, medical neglect, child marriages, bride burning, sexual abuse of girl child, forced marriages, rapes, prostitution, sexual harassment at home as well as workplaces etc." (Jain & Singh, 2001). Violence against women is a harsh reality. Domestic Violence is certainly a human rights issue and it is important to know the reasons for domestic violence. The main causes for women stalking and battering include, "exploitation of women for more dowry, discrimination against women, alienation of women's self-acquired property fraudulently, torture by husband and in-laws, arguing with the partner, refusing to have sex with the partner, going out of home without telling the partner, not cooking food properly, abusing and insulting by using vulgar language, sexual harassment, molestation, immoral traffic, rape, sodomy and all other inhuman acts. In all above stated causes women are subjected to torture and will be considered as the aggrieved person. Generally, violence takes place due to lack of understanding between the couples as well as in the family members" (Jain & Singh, 2001). Sabarwal et al. (2013) in their study "Determinants of Marital Violence" analyzed the huge number of married ladies in India who experience physical and sexual viciousness inside their family. In this review information gathered from 4,880 rural ladies of four states-Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Bihar-drawn from the National Family Health Survey-2 directed in 1998- 99 and a subsequent report for a sub-gathering of ladies conveyed in 2002-2003. Those significant extents of married ladies experience physical and sexual savagery inside marriage and it is viewed as a typical thing. Many studies have been conducted by

researchers on domestic violence within marital relationships.

Traditional Kashmir society was patriarchal and patrilocal, i.e. the couple lives with the husband's family. Although the practices of infanticide, foeticide, and dowry deaths were not resorted to, women were generally abused, maltreated, subjugated and physically victimized right from their childhood because of the socially structured inequality. However, the family patterns are changing significantly and so are the traditionally defined roles of women. The changing social structure, which exposed Kashmiri women (belonging to all social strata) to the outside world, has made them more vulnerable to all types of sexual abuse. They are subjected to the abuses like sexual harassment, molestation, eve-teasing and even to immoral trafficking, kidnapping, abduction and rape. The Kashmir Valley, a Muslim-dominated area of the state, has been witnessing a lot of domestic violence in recent years; women bear the scars of violence deeper than men and face all kinds of injustices and crimes.

Domestic violence against women is on the rise in Jammu and Kashmir. Even educated and economically independent women are at the receiving end, according to anecdotal evidence contained in police data (Sharma, 2010). The violence against women has increased both qualitatively as well as quantitatively in Jammu and Kashmir over the past more than two decades and the direct impact of the militancy and armed conflict has intensified the problem. "The practice directly or indirectly related to domestic violence against women prevails in urban as well as rural J&K in all educational, economic, social, age, cultural and other groups and classes. 15 per cent of married women are physically and mentally being abused (Dabla, 2009). Almost 70% of all crimes reported to the police involve women beaten by their husbands. This is mostly related to matrimonial disputes family squabbles and harassment for dowry (Gul and Khan, 2014). Women have been bearing domestic, public, physical and

mental violence against them for a very long time, which has also affected their status in society. Domestic violence in Indian culture includes violence from the husband as well as the in-laws. Women are expected to endure violence for fear of bringing shame to their families. It is over the last decade that research in this field of domestic violence has led to greater recognition of the issue as a public health problem. The present study was undertaken to explore the lived experience of married women regarding domestic violence in urban Srinagar. Furthermore, it explores the complex and often obscured issue related to domestic violence, which makes it imperative to shed light on the prevalence, dynamics, and consequences of domestic violence within Kashmir. The socio-political landscape of the region and traditional patriarchal norms exacerbate the vulnerability of women to various forms of violence within familial settings.

Aim of the study
In the present study, the emphasis has been given to understanding the Domestic violence against women in urban Srinagar. To understand the nature and extent of violence, the researcher formulated the following objectives: to study the nature and extent of domestic violence against women, to study the factor responsible for domestic violence against women, and to study the effect of domestic violence on family members.

Methodology
The present study has been conducted in the district of Srinagar. The study is qualitative in nature. The participant pool comprised urban married females aged 27 to 37 years, N=12. The data was gathered by the researchers using an in-depth interview method. Employing a purposive sampling method, participants were selected based on specific criteria:
    a) agreed to participate,
    b) victims of domestic violence
    c) location (living in urban Srinagar)

d) marital status (currently married), and
e) age

Table 1
Demographic profile of respondents

Participants	Age at marriage	Present Age	No. of children	Occupation
P1	24	27	1	Homemaker
P2	26	32	3	School Teacher
P3	28	30	1	Homemaker
P4	25	29	2	Teacher
P5	32	35	2	Nurse
P6	32	34	1	-do-
P7	33	35	Nil	Homemaker
P8	28	30	1	-do
P9	27	30	2	-do
P10	26	28	Nil	Heath worker
P11	33	37	2	Teacher
P12	28	31	1	School Teacher

Source: field study, 2018

Finding of the study
Types of abuse
Abuse of various kinds, including physical, psychological, sexual, and financial, was experienced by the 12 individuals. Object hits, demeaning comments about their appearance, poor cooking skills, and financial hardship were all forms of abuse. As additional forms of abuse and harassment, women often reported their husbands' infidelity, second marriages (legal or otherwise), and financial demands from the birth family. Pregnancy was a time of abuse and neglect for the majority of women. For instance, one partner was physically violent and callous during pregnancy and/or labour, failed to provide adequate rest to his wife during these times, and then disappeared once the kid was delivered. "Abusing is there, and about beating, he has beaten me once or

twice," one woman said of her partner's violent behaviour throughout their pregnancy, which she said caused her to miscarry. One of the violent altercations caused me to miscarry once. I had miscarried due to the stress of his severe beatings, which caused me to cry a lot. The fact that blood was oozing from the cord indicated how dangerous it was (P6).

There were other forms of abuse that the ladies endured besides torture during pregnancy. According to another participant, her husband resorted to further physical violence when she confronted him about his affair. "She told me, "I told my spouse, tell me why you lied to me. The woman [whose husband had an affair] spilt the beans to me. Ever since then, he has made my life hell by thrashing me daily. As soon as he woke up in the morning, he would begin fighting and would not stop until bedtime. He discontinued all forms of physical contact with me. Another manner in which the women were victimized was by being socially isolated. "He used to beat me a lot," P1 said, describing how she was abused as others in the neighbourhood looked the other way. Despite the abundance of people in the area, no one ever came. Some respondents said that after being married, their spouse changed. After just two months of marriage, his true character became apparent, according to one participant (P1). He was a heavy pot smoker who frequently assaulted me. In the past, they would accuse me of having extramarital affairs. "His nature changed after getting married," said P3, another participant. He went from wanting all ladies to exclusively wanting strong workers within four days. "Get money from home and don't trouble me for anything," was his nature. For just four days, he was nice to me. After describing the violent cycle in her marriage, the participant said, "I still used to think, 'Let it go; I can't live with my parents after marriage." My in-laws' house has become my home in the end. Thus, I would weep while trying to remain [in my marriage], but it was an immense burden for me. I would then tell my parents, and my brother would come to collect me. I

used to believe that in four days he would get over his rage and act appropriately again. The same problems persisted when I returned two days later: they constantly beat me, they never gave me anything to eat, and they doubted my character.

Engaging Family Members in Abuse

It was not uncommon for the in-laws to mistreat the women, who were their daughters-in-law, in addition to their intimate partners. Internships with in-laws were the norm for the women surveyed here. Conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law often arose from differences in daily routines, as well as cooking and cleaning techniques. As a result of these disagreements, verbal and physical assaults occurred multiple times. Most of the time, the husband was either directly involved in the argument or just stood by and did nothing to help his wife. If the argument started while he was at the office, he would listen to his relatives' accounts rather than his wife's. One participant's teasing for these lifestyle inequalities is shown in the following comment: No matter how right I am, my hubby will never side with me. Every time his mother tried to hurt me, he would back her up. A second responder gave the story of a mother-in-law who was physically violent. Based on what the mother-in-law claimed, this participant's husband will mistreat her. "Yes, my mother-in-law also beats me. She holds my hair, twists my hand backwards, kicks and punches, and hits me on the head. It's just a simple thing. My mother-in-law would tell him something, and then he would beat me up" (P4). Women were made fun of for a variety of reasons, one of which was that they couldn't cook. My mother-in-law would always tell me, "Something is pungent," when I was in the kitchen making dinner, one participant recalled. Cut back on the salt. Among other things, she would attack me and insult me. Oh, and my brother-in-law would rush over to beat me while my husband was out. Even my mother-in-law was a former batterer of mine (P6).

Many wives also expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that their husbands did not accept their account of events. He primarily pays attention to what my mother-in-law says, P8 admitted. His intellect is unused. He takes his mother's advice on everything. His mother's instructions would be his guide. (P8) My spouse is just like that.

The respondents felt immense societal pressure to make amends with their violent spouse, go back to their in-laws' house, and remain married. This kind of pressure came from the abuser's family as well as the victim's own. My mother would still keep me for four days if I went to her house, according to one answer; plus, my brother and brother-in-law would be there as well. Another thing they'd say is that a woman doesn't deserve respect unless she lives with her spouse, not her parents. Wherever my husband is, I must go. It is my actual dwelling place (P11).

How come this only occurs to females? That is beyond my comprehension. Who will you turn to for help if [your husband] abuses you? Neither your mother's house nor your husband's are suitable for her. What options do women have? You may ask, "What will you do at a women's orphanage?" Also, that doesn't help at all. From what I've heard, all sorts of terrible things occur there. "Where should I go?" is something I often ponder when sitting. Even though my husband is physically abusive, I fear that my brother and his wife will oppose me if I seek my mother's help. Then what's the next step? There were cases where the children's best interests necessitated mending fences with the violent spouse. Many times, the ladies gave in to this pressure. One respondent recounted how she was told she couldn't provide her son with the same fatherly affection and a stable home environment that her husband could: According to my parents, a husband is a husband. 'You're young now,' they advised. On your own, what are you planning to do? Do you have any further plans for the future? How about some paternal affection and a place to live for your son? Well, at least

your husband will have a stable future and a place to call his own. Thus, I consented to his First person.

Impact on children

The respondents who answered talked about how the abuse affected their children in different ways. There was abuse and/or neglect of the children, or the children were used as pawns by their parents. The kids were sometimes allowed to leave with their moms and go to a safe place, usually with their birth family. Other times, they were not allowed to do that. In these situations, the kids were used to bother and scare the women. More than once, the husband just wasn't taking care of things. For example, one husband wouldn't support his family financially and wouldn't pay for food or home bills: Foods like rice and wheat are very expensive, as well as lentils. There are also other costs. "The kids need to eat something." They're kids. They see something and need it. When he doesn't work, how will I pay for everything? Working is the only way to pay your bills and keep your home running. It's always going to be short on people who don't work. (P7). Domestic violence within families creates a cycle of trauma and instability that profoundly impacts both the victims and any children involved. When families are torn apart by violence, children are often the silent and innocent victims, bearing the emotional and psychological scars long after the physical wounds have healed. The breakdown of families due to domestic violence can have far-reaching consequences. Children exposed to violence in the home may experience a range of negative outcomes, including increased likelihood of developing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may struggle with behavioral problems, poor academic performance, and difficulties forming healthy relationships in the future. Moreover, witnessing or experiencing violence at home can perpetuate a cycle of abuse, with some children growing up to become either victims or perpetrators themselves. This perpetuation of

violence can have intergenerational effects, further destabilizing families and communities

Patriarchy and Domestic Violence

Patriarchy has always been an instrument of oppression and exploitation against women resulting in various forms of gender-based violence (Shafi and Jahangir, 2013). It occurs in all settings; at work, in the home, in the streets and the community at large. From the data revealed by P1, P2, and P8, the most significant fact is that married women experience violence primarily at the hands of men they know and within the so-called 'safe heaven' of the home and family. In all of these cases, differences in power between men and women and other forms of inequality play a big part in how violence happens. In Kashmir, women experience the same ups and downs of life as women in other parts of the world. While infanticide, foeticide, and dowry deaths don't happen there, women are still abused, maltreated, subjugated, and physically victimized from a young age because of the way society is set up.

Discussion

This study had several limitations. The small purposive sample of 12 respondents was drawn from the city of Srinagar. Thus, generalizing the results to other populations without similar contextual factors (e.g., rural) is limited. Nevertheless, this study is an important contribution to the scant literature on married women experiencing domestic violence in urban areas. After marriage, women are considered a part of the in-laws' household and are at the bottom of the familial ladder. Abuse may be perpetrated not only by husbands but also by both male and female in-laws (Adam, 2011). The findings in the study demonstrate several situations in which family members were involved in domestic violence. Abuse by the mother-in-law, in particular, was in line with research reported in other studies (Rew, et al., 2013) and may be attributed,

in part, to a female hierarchy centred on generation, and to the fact that she is the mother of a son. Women in this environment do not bond with one another, rather, a pecking order may become established, with the mother-in-law assuming the highest position of influence and entitlement among the women in the family, and the daughter-in-law with the least.

Moreover, the abuse perpetrated by in-laws is in line with the Indian culture's patriarchal beliefs and traditional ideologies involving female inferiority. In most cases, women (both in India and other parts of the world) gain status by giving birth to a male child. Due to the cultural norm that the husband is the only source of security, divorce or separation is not considered a feasible option for women, who are thus pressured to reconcile with an abusive husband. In addition to the stigmatization of divorce in the culture, children play a huge role in women's marital and life decisions. In the current study, children were the driving force behind women's decisions to either stay in or leave the abusive home. The urge to protect their children was some women's impetus for either separating from or reconciling with their abusive husbands. Leaving or staying in an abusive relationship for the sake of protecting the children is in line with other research on abused women conducted in the United States (Bhandari et al., 2011). In Indian culture, a woman's identity is derived primarily from marriage and motherhood; therefore, a woman without a husband is treated as an incomplete person. Furthermore, a divorced woman and/or single mother is perceived as having failed in the role of wife and mother, regardless of the conduct of her partner (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996). This cultural perception leads to multiple disadvantages for women in India. On the one hand, abandonment by her husband, separation, and/or divorce is generally seen as evidence that the woman did something wrong or is flawed in some way. On the other hand, this perception leads to the woman's disadvantage in her natal home. Because

the natal home is now the home of her brother's wife and their children, she may receive direct or indirect messages that she is unwanted there, too. Moreover, a divorced woman is shunned when she participates in holy events or celebrations (particularly weddings) for fear that she may bring bad luck (Ayyub, 2000). These cultural pressures, coming from all sides, leave abused women with very little choice in their lives, and thus, their best recourse is usually to force themselves to try to reconcile with abusive husbands.

Conclusion

Violence against women is the harsh reality of today which exists everywhere. Even in Kashmir where women are thought to be highly esteemed, we found many examples of violence against women. The types of violence are not limited to emotional, psychological, and social it is physical also. It is prevalent in different forms and content, it is unique, as it is perpetrated not only by intimate partners but also by the in-laws. Furthermore, the natal family equally plays its part as a partner of violence, as a woman experiencing domestic violence tends to seek help from her natal family to put pressure on her husband to stop abusing her and her children. However, in the present study, it was found that because of the lack of support from their native kin majority of the respondents were rendered vulnerable to domestic violence. In general, women are expected to endure violence for long periods of their lives for fear of disgracing their families and/or because of a lack of social and financial support independent of their husbands. Moreover, domestic violence within families creates a cycle of trauma and instability that profoundly impacts both the victims and any children involved. When families are torn apart by violence, (what sociologists call the emergence of broken families) children are often the silent and innocent victims, bearing the emotional and psychological scars. Addressing domestic violence requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes the safety and well-being of all

family members. Future research could identify culturally acceptable ways to bring independence and financial strength to victims of domestic violence.

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