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Exploring Some Facets of Distance Education in India: Enrollment Dynamics, Institutional Imperatives and Policy Implications

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Abstract:

The present paper highlights some emerging facets and policy perspectives of distance education in India. With the ever-increasing need to achieve the target of higher gross enrolment ratio, better employability and trained manpower in the country, the paper underlines the ways in which distance education is serving as a crucial catalyst between the learners and teachers. Using statistical tools like the Correlation and Regression Analysis, the paper pinpoints the relevance and interconnectedness of some factors related to Distance education and their implications with respect to governance of HEIs in India. Based on the findings, the paper suggests certain policy considerations for making distance education more effective amidst the growing need for distance education in India.

Key Words: *Distance education, gross enrolment ratio, higher educational institutions.*

Introduction:

Educational institutions have widely been recognized as critical components of the teaching-learning ecosystem which facilitates the development of an economic system based on an innovative ecosystem contributing substantially to the development of the human capital of any country (Tolstykh et al., 2021). The higher educational institutions or HEIs are regarded to be the epicenters of skill orientation, enhancement and upgradation or imparting employability among the graduates who intend to join the labour market. At the time of independence, there were only 20 universities and 500 colleges to cater to the needs of approximately 2.0 lakh students in India. With the passage of time, a significant up surge has been witnessed in the learning community to pursue higher academics in India. A report released by All India Survey of Higher education (AISHE) of 2021-2022 indicates that there are around 1168 universities and 45473 colleges which resulted in considerable increase in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) compared to the recorded GER ratio in previous years. The GER in 2021-2022 has increased to 28.4 percent in comparison to 23.7 in the year 2014-15. One of the major reasons behind this noteworthy trend can be assigned to the significant growth in the growth of academic institutions offering learning programmes and courses in distance mode to the students, often called distance education in common parlance. Distance learning or DL, offers learning opportunity to the students mainly in form of self-study through learning materials and occasional physical interaction between the teacher and the learner (Kubikova et al., 2024).

The first instance of any individual or an organization offering education or training lessons was performed by Caleb Phillips via US mail to the students in Boston (Clark, 2020). With the passage of time, several other countries in Europe and USA adopted the Distance Learning model for imparting education and training to the intended students and learners. Owing to multiple benefits, the distance education system has been effective in view of the flexibility in teaching and learning, reducing the requirement for physical presence in class, learning in comfortable environment, etc. It has gained wide recognition and acceptance, particularly during the period post global pandemic (Duan et al., 2024). The model can offer significant benefits to the countries which have deficient or low student enrollment ratio. In this context, distance education system is gaining momentum in recent years in India wherein, after the implementation of NEP, or New Education Policy (2020),

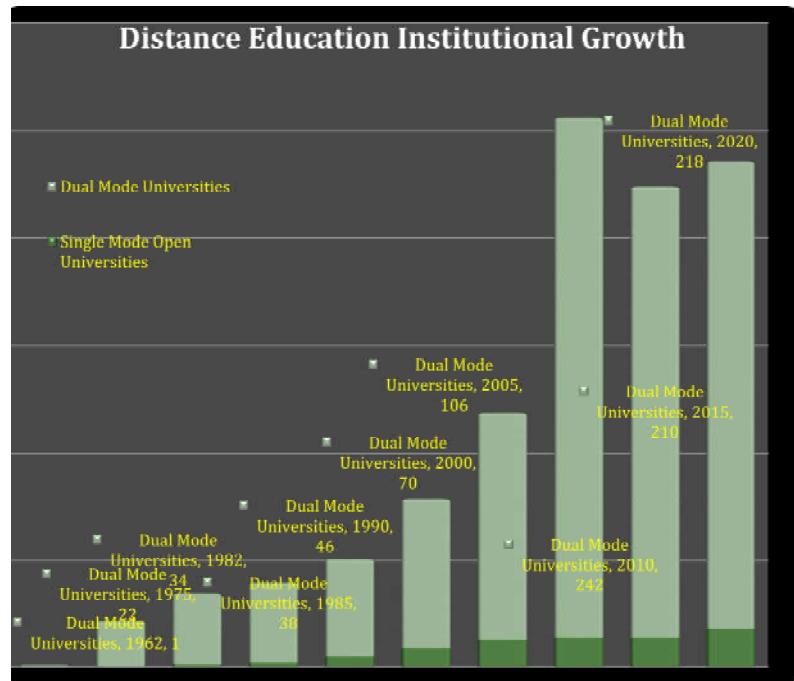
the government nurtures the ambition to enliven the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER). The government intends to achieve the goal of 50% higher education enrollment in upcoming times for which around 2500 higher educational institutions will be required (Siddique, 2024). Considering the GER which is around 29% in current year, the goal of achieving 50 percent GER can be achieved through emphasizing more on distance education which can have better penetration among the student fraternity. In this context, there is need to undertake appropriate policy formulations associated with the governance of HEIs. According to a reliable data source, out of the total enrolment of around 433 lakhs students in higher education, around 387 lakhs are through regular course in present year. This indicates that around distance education contributes to around 11% of total gross enrolment presently. In order to attract more learners, the focus shall be on expanding for distance education in India (Itegi, 2016). It is to be noted that distance education is still at its nascent stage in India and waiting to evolve completely. The ecosystem of distance education in India lacks coordinated policies and efforts which needs sincere addressing mechanisms to make it widely recognized and accepted by the different stakeholders of the society. There still remain certain concerns like infrastructural development, placements, self-regulation related to teaching and learning in the field of distance education in the country (Aheto et al., 2024). With the above considerations in mind, the present paper explores the emerging facets of distance education in India with respect to institutional imperatives, enrollment dynamics and policy implications and for HEIs and Regulators associated with distance education.

Literature Review: With the rapid technological and digitization initiatives underway along with the shifting changes in the market demands, the global education scenario is facing enormous challenges to ensure accessibility of the educational institutions to the students and learners without involving an increased financial budget. This ever-increasing demand between the need and demand between the learners and educational institutions can be addressed through a well-developed ecosystem of distance education. Distance education remains a teaching pedagogy where education gets connected to the learners through the use of technology keeping aside geographical barriers and physical presence (Aheto et al., 2024). This method encompasses occasional face to face interaction during flexible working hours or as per the needs of the students who mainly rely on self-study materials for their progress towards

updating their academic knowledge (Abakah et al., 2023). There are assertions and assumptions that distance education has the potential to ensure equality in education and alleviate poverty if funded and managed properly (Mnyanyi, 2009). It has been accepted to ensure social justice in academic practice due to the accessibility and flexibility offered for the benefit of the students (El-Sbahi et al., 2024). The model is most suitable for non-traditional and slow-learners who wish to get education without attending regular classes (De La Varre et al., 2010). Empirical evidences exist highlighting positive perception and attitude regarding learning materials supplied to the distance education when compared with regular courses (Martin & Rainey, 1993). Also, the performance of the students pursuing distance education was also found to be higher across different tests as compared with regular students (Souder, 1993). However, feelings of isolated learning and high attrition rates are critical issues in the context of distance education (Roblyer, 2006). This becomes all the more important for countries moving forward on the development trajectory where the infrastructure and policies for proper implementation of distance education is not up to the mark. Since India suffers from certain technical constraints like internet connectivity and bandwidth issues along with affordability of tech-savvy devices, distance education from this perspective can cater to the growing needs of teachers and learners even in the farthest corners in the country (Muthuprasad et al., 2021). While gross enrollment ratios suffer from deficit in developing countries, the fragmented infrastructure prevents the intended learners to pursue degree of their choice. Alongside are other factors like language barrier, distance, accessibility and affordability, etc. which hinder the learners to enroll and pursue higher education programmes. In this context, distance education courses are found to be extremely helpful for the students and learners who for different reasons like time and money constraints, willing to learn at their own pace and according to their pace, are unable to attend regular classes. However, for this to happen, several policy considerations are required in terms of efforts from responsible agencies or institutions, teachers and higher educational leaders. A holistic approach can only deliver fruitful results towards making distance education more effective within the existing framework of educational system.

Distance Education and Learning Scenario in India: Distance education has emerged as a significant and effective teaching learning pedagogy amidst

the educational landscape of India owing to its characteristics of transgressing geographical boundaries and reaching out to learners who suffer from financial and time constraints. The mode of education has been significantly offered benefits for a country like India which is marked by geographical, financial and socio-economic and digital disparities. In recent years, distance education has gained wide acceptance among the learners aspiring to acquire degrees in the field of professional education. At present, there are 1168 Universities in India. Out of these, 423 are State Public University, 391 are State Private University, 153 are Institutes of National Importance, 81 are Deemed University- Private, 53 are Central University, 33 are Deemed University-Government, 16 are State Open University, 10 are Deemed University-Government aided, 6 are Institute under State Legislature Act, 1 is State Private Open University, and 1 is a Central Open University (AISHE, 2022). Higher education framework of India is mainly comprised of academic institutions running courses in regular mode and distance education as a distinct mode was introduced as correspondence course in 1960s when the need for extending education to the rural and deprived communities was felt by the policymakers (Carr-Chellman, 2005). Motivated by the positive responses it received, the Government of India opened the first University exclusively for Distance Education in 1990s in India and named it as IGNOU, popularly called Indira Gandhi National Open University. Since its inception in the year 1962 in form of correspondence course and establishment of IGNOU in 1990s, distance education has received great emphasis and impetus in the country by the policy makers and as a result, distance education has become one of the hallmarks of Indian education system owing to around 17 lakhs of students exploring their career in higher education through distance education mode with support from around 100 Directorates of Distance Education functional under 100 Dual Mode Universities (UGC, 2019). There are basically two type of universities offering distance mode programmes such as single mode university both National and State level and dual mode universities or institutes. The following figure presents a trajectory of the growth of distance education in India.



(Source: https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/aishe_eng.pdf)

The projections provided above highlight the trend of steep institutional growth in distance education after 2000. From the chart it is clear that nearly 50% growth is registered from 2000 to 2005 and also around 55% growth has been observed during the period 2005 to 2010. Slight decrease in the number of institutions offering distance education is being observed since 2010 as the quality parameters of the distance mode programmes and courses have become much more stringent. Till 2019, the total enrolment of learners enrolled in distance education was roughly around 10.62% of total enrolment which in other way indicates the room for improvement vis-à-vis the state of affairs in distance education in India (Roy & Brown, 2022). The table 1 presented below provides the state-wise distribution of dual mode Universities in India.

Table 1

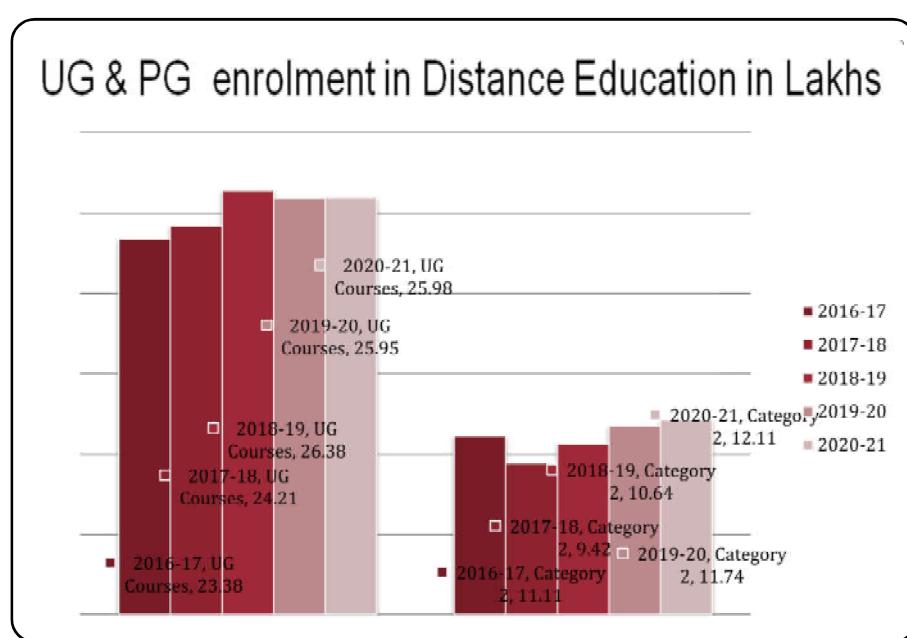
State-wise Dual Mode Universities in states (No. in each State)	
Tamil Nadu	13
Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka	8
Telangana, West Bengal	7
Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh	6
Assam, Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan	5
Haryana	4
Bihar, Punjab, Sikkim, Uttarakhand	3
J&K, Odisha, Chhattisgarh	2
Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Puducherry, Tripura	1

(Source: https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/statistics-new/aishe_eng.pdf, page. 28)

It is evident from the above table that the variation in dual mode universities in India signifies the variations in educational infrastructure, technological preparedness, state-specific educational policies etc. It has been observed that some states have pursued more progressive approach to flexible learning options by facilitating dual mode universities. Furthermore, the increasing number of dual mode universities signifies a growing trend towards flexible and accessible higher education ecosystem across India, thereby accommodating diverse student needs and learning preferences vis-à-vis macro-level human resource development approaches through higher education.

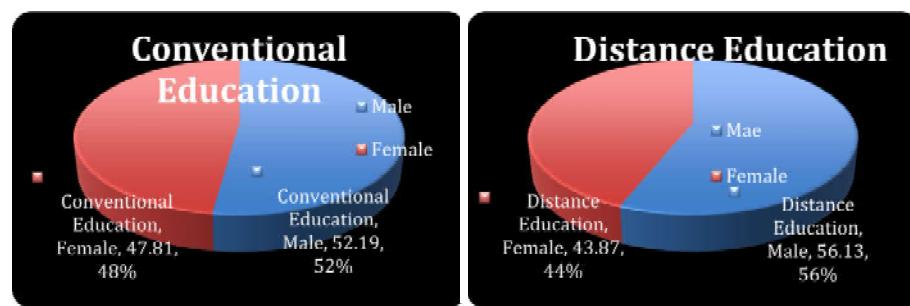
As per the All India Survey on Higher Education Report 2021-22, around 45.61 lakh learners are pursuing their higher education through distance education offered by different Universities across India. Out of this, 64.7 % are undergoing Under Graduate education while 26.6 % are pursuing PG level education. 47.3% of the entire University enrolment is attributed to distance education. Out of this 45.61 lakh learners, 20.06 lakh are female students and 25.67 belong to male learner population. Below graph highlights the total enrolment of students to both UG and PG programmes in India.

Graph 2



The above figure underlines the trend of steady growth of students from 2016-17 to 2018-19 and then there is a dip in the enrolment number 2019-20 and which is maintained in the year 2020-21 also. But in case of PG enrolment numbers there is a dip in the year 2017-18 in comparison to 2016-17 enrolment number but after that it has witnessed a constant and steady growth in next three years i.e. from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

Graph 3



From the above figure it is clear that the gender ratio in conventional education (Male : Female : 52.19 : 47.81) is almost equal to that in distance education (Male : Female : 56.13 : 43.87). In this context, it can be averred that distance education provides female students to study at their own home while balancing education with household activities, child care and workplace. It also helps in bridging the gender gap in higher education and employment opportunities.

With a view to regulate distance education in India, the University Grants Commission implemented the regulation regarding Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes in 2020. The primary purpose behind the implementation of the statute was to achieve the vision and mission of New Education Policy 2020 which intends to achieve the total GER of 50 percent by 2025. Alongside, the statute also aims to bring quantitative and qualitative improvements and significant facelifts in distance education. However, employment prospects remain a primary and one of the critical concerns for concerned stakeholders of distance education in the country. There are concerns among the learning fraternity regarding the validity and acceptability of the programmes and courses by the employers in the job market. Their concerns are genuine and need to be addressed by establishing the fit between the courses offered and the industry requirements. Distance education, though offers flexibility and autonomy while pursuing any course, but “no physical interaction” often results in limited understanding or upskilling of learners related to any topic or concept. The learners completely rely on Self Learning Material (SLM) for clearing their doubts

and understanding critical concepts. So, in some sense, distance education should inculcate critical thinking among the learners. Critical thinking remains one of the fundamental pillars of educational system of any country. Critical thinking promotes innovativeness and entrepreneurial spirit which is a prerequisite to develop human capital of the country. India, along with China, is one of the emerging markets of the world. To improve the sustainability of economic growth, it is an absolute necessity that India does not fall short of skilled manpower. The distance education system in India shall be revised to meet the skill gap and ignite the entrepreneurial spirit among the learning population so as to reap the advantages of manpower it has. Synchronous approaches personal interaction and hands on training shall be made a compulsory part for courses for promoting employability. India is a country with diversified languages and cultures. Distance education is still offered in English or Hindi or some other language which has majority speakers. The learners from rural and hinterlands of the country find it difficult to make an adjustment with the language barriers which result in high attrition rates. Policies should be placed ensuring appropriate representation of different languages towards delivery of learning lessons to the students and learners. In this perspective, the internet accessibility has a critical role to play. Internet connectivity will address the issue of hands-on training and online interactions in courses requiring physical interaction. However, India is deficit in terms of reliable internet access and connectivity across the country. In other words, the country suffers from widening digital divide which also affects learning among the learners. Below table highlights the status of internet and telephone connectivity in urban and rural India.

Table 2

Particulars	Wireless	Wireline	Total (Wireless+ Wireline)
Broadband Subscribers (Million)	884.01	40.06	924.07
Urban Telephone Subscribers (Million)	634.47	30.92	665.38
Net Addition in March, 2024 (Million)	-1.64	0.62	-1.02
Monthly Growth Rate	-0.26%	2.06%	-0.15%
Rural Telephone Subscribers (Million)	531.02	2.88	533.90
Net Addition in March, 2024 (Million)	2.49	0.06	2.55
Monthly Growth Rate	0.47%	2.21%	0.48%
Total Telephone Subscribers (Million)	1165.49	33.79	1199.28
Net Addition in March, 2024 (Million)	0.85	0.69	1.54
Monthly Growth Rate	0.07%	2.07%	0.13%
Overall Tele-density* (%)	83.27%	2.41%	85.69%
Tele-density in urban areas* (%)	127.51%	6.21%	133.72%
Rural Tele-density in rural areas* (%)	58.87%	0.32%	59.19%
Urban Subscribers	54.44%	91.49%	55.48%
Rural Subscribers	45.56%	8.51%	44.52%

(Source: https://trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/PR_No. 23 of 2024_0. pdf)

The availability of the internet shall be complemented by availability of devices which are affordable for semi-urban and rural areas in the country. This will ensure a step ahead in the direction of addressing the problem of digital divide in India.

Policy Perspectives for transforming Distance Education in India for Inclusivity, Quality, and Employability

In the light of the above discussion, some policy perspectives can be identified which can address structural and systemic challenges while leveraging the potential of distance education in order to enhance India's higher education landscape vis-à-vis inclusivity, quality and employability. HEIs can facilitate accessibility and inclusivity through Distance Education. In this context, the regulatory bodies need to facilitate policy aimed at the expansion of ICT price bracket, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, in order to lessen the digital divide. Appropriate policies also need to be formulated for ensuring the availability of inexpensive devices for learners mainly from the economically disadvantaged background. Thirdly, there is need for strengthening regulatory frameworks in order to ensure the quality and adherence to benchmark standards in distance education programmes. In this context, proactive effort also needs to be taken for ensuring HEI accreditation standards for dual-mode universities and single-mode distance education institutions in order to maintain credibility and enhance quality. Effort also needs to be taken to provide necessary guidelines for development of Self-Learning Materials (SLMs) that would facilitate problem-solving, analytical skills and entrepreneurial orientation among the learners of distance education programmes. At the government level, there is need to forge the interdepartmental alignment among the concerned department like Education, Information Technology, Skill Development etc. for a holistic policy formulation for Bridging Digital Divide aimed to enhance ICT reach through tele-density, broadband penetration etc in underserved regions of our country. Effort needs to be taken in leveraging technology for facilitating teaching-learning through distance education. In alignment with the current global trends in education, HEI in India also need to formulate policies for effective use of artificial intelligence, development of virtual laboratories and application of simulation tools for interactive and practical learning experiences in distance education.

Evidence-based Insights and Policy Perspectives: Imperatives for HEIs and Regulatory Bodies

Background discussion

In the light of the backdrop presented in the previous section of this paper,

an effort has been taken to examine the relevance and interconnectedness of some factors related to Distance and Online education and their implications with respect to HEI governance.

In the context of the present study, In this context, state-wise data on Enrollment (UG), Enrollment (PG), Male Students (%), Female Students (%), Internet Penetration (%), Number of Dual-Mode Universities, Dropout Rate (%), Faculty Availability (Per 1000 Students) have been considered with respect to the year 2021-22. The data have been obtained from AISHE survey held in 2021-2022 and Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRAI) Reports which offer significant insights into internet penetration rates across different states in the country. Enrolment data signify the strength of the students enrolling themselves in different undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) distance education programmes in the various states with respect to the academic year 2021-22. Gender Distribution connotes the percentage distribution of both genders enrolling in distance learning programmes in across different states considered in the study. The actual percentage of population with access to internet connectivity in each state being covered in the study is measured through internet penetration which, as already discussed denotes a significant factor of facilitating distance and online education. Dual mode universities are the ones that offer regular programme alongside the distance programmes and in recent times there is an increasing trend towards integrating distance education with the mainstream educational systems in various universities. Then, we have considered the percentage of students who have discontinued their distance education studies before completion and this measures the dropout rate. The number of faculty members available per 1,000 students in distance education programmes signifies faculty-student ratio, which is an indicator of the quality of faculty support for distance education. Table 1 provided in the appendix considers some of the significant aspects relating to HEI governance vis-à-vis distance education wherein grouped states into broader regions have been considered, while taking into account geographic relevance. In this exercise, the first column of the table connotes the state code based on the categorization of states into broader geographic or demographic clusters (e.g., Southern, Western, Eastern, Northern) based on similarities in higher education infrastructure, enrollment trends, and internet penetration. However, in order to come to meaningful conclusion, statistical analysis comprising Correlation and Regression Analysis was performed using the state-specific data. Thus,

for ease of interpretation and broader understanding, states have been grouped into regional categories; the underlying analysis, including correlation and regression has been conducted using state-specific data in order to ensure accuracy and robustness of the analysis. This approach preserves analytical precision while providing scope for a generalized understanding of regional trends relevant to policymakers and HEIs in distance education.

Insights from Correlation Analysis

(See Table 1: Correlation Analysis)

It has been observed (Table 1) that majority of the variables considered do not have statistically significant relationship. In the context of the present work, the statistically insignificant relationships may be due to the relevance of factors such as contextual constraints, cultural orientation, student motivation, HEI governance etc. which might play a more substantial role than the quantitative aspects being analyzed. However, there are a few statistically significant relationships which have significant implications from a policy perspective. In this perspective, we have used the value of r (correlation coefficient in order measure the strength of relationship between the variables between considered. In this exercise, we have observed that Internet Penetration has a statistically significant negative relationship with Dropout Rate ($r= -0.6410.$) and positive relationship with Faculty Availability ($r=0.960^{**}$). Again, faculty availability has a negative statistically significant relationship with dropout rates ($r=-0.706$). It is worth mentioning that although we have identified a few statistically significant values of correlation coefficient (r), there are several policy implications.

In the light of the above results, it can possibly be averred that states having higher internet penetration exhibit lower dropout rates, signifying that enhanced internet connectivity plays a vital role in reducing barriers to distance education and facilitates student retention. Secondly, higher internet penetration's positive correlation with improved faculty availability, indicate that states with strong digital infrastructure most probably attract or support more faculty members for distance education programmes. Furthermore, the importance of student-faculty interaction and support in improving retention in distance education has to be considered by HEI administrators in the right perspective.

In view of the above interpretation of results there are several policy recommendations for HEI administrators and regulatory bodies. These are as follows:

1. Effort needs to be taken by the appropriate authority to provide budgetary support in establishing and expanding a strong ICT infrastructure. This is more relevant in rural and underdeveloped regions where there is deficient ICT infrastructure.
2. In this context, providing financial support for availing internet services for students from economically weaker sections to ensure equitable access to online resources need to be a part of our policy perspectives. This will enable affordability and accessibility.
3. Regulators and HEIs need to leverage high internet penetration to make education more accessible and affordability.
4. Government initiatives need to be promoted and public-private partnership can be explored on a sustainable basis.
5. Another policy imperative for HEI administrators would be to encourage and adapt hybrid/blended learning models on a sustainable basis which would facilitate penetration and access to higher education.
6. Emphasis needs to be given on ICT-driven human resource development of faculty members. HEIs need to invest in effective upskilling of faculty members and Distance education administrators with ICT enabled pedagogy to ensure effectiveness of teaching learning environment in distance education.

Taking this perspective further, HEIs and regulators can leverage on a robust internet infrastructure and facilitate remote employment of qualified faculty by overcoming geographic constraints in teaching-learning in HEI with special reference to distance education. However, in this exercise, HEIs need to employ more faculty members dedicated and oriented to distance education by following the principles of person-organisation fit. HEIs and regulators need to adapt a holistic ICT-enabled Learning Management Systems (I-LMS) and other digital platforms to facilitate uninterrupted teaching-learning improve faculty efficiency and accessibility to a larger student base even cutting across geographical barriers. Additionally, in order to establish a sustainable and uninterrupted connectedness between faculty and students in distance mode, real-time online classes and interactive sessions can be introduced to bridge the gap between students and faculty, fostering a sense of connection and engagement.

Insights from Regression Analysis

(See Table 2: Regression Analysis)

An effort has been taken in carrying out regression analysis with a view to examine the impact of Internet Penetration, Dual-Mode Universities, and Faculty Availability on Dropout Rate in distance education. This enables us to isolate the unique contribution of each independent variable, facilitating a better understanding of their impact on dropout rates while controlling for the other variables. Regression diagnostics have been addressed by examining key statistics like R-squared in order to evaluate model fit and significance values (p-values) for each predictor to determine their contribution. Additionally, multicollinearity was minimized by ensuring the predictors were theoretically distinct and not unreasonably correlated, as indicated by their Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). This approach supports the development of evidence-based policies by identifying key predictors and quantifying their effects. In carrying out regression analysis we have considered dropout rates as the dependent variable in view of its critical role as an outcome measure of the effectiveness and accessibility of distance education (Simpson, 2013). Regression analysis has accordingly been carried out with a view to objectively examine the extent to which each independent variable (e.g., Internet penetration, faculty availability) influences the dropout rate, while we control for the effects of other variables.

The results highlighting the findings of the regression analysis have been provided in the table below (Table: 2) and the inferences have been drawn accordingly. Although correlation showed a significant negative relationship, the regression model does not confirm this when controlling for other variables.

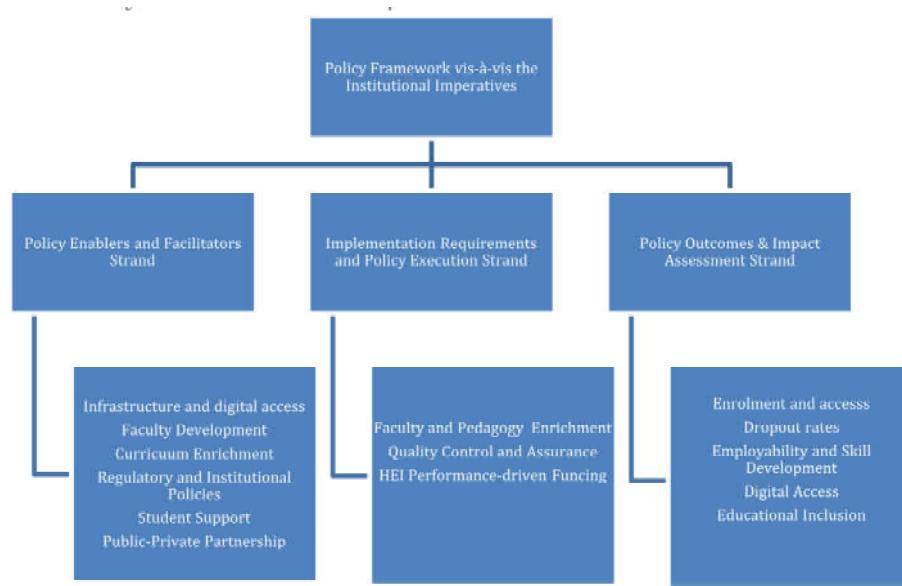
- | It is evident from the table that high p-value suggests Internet Penetration is not a significant predictor of dropout rates in the regression model.
- | Secondly, Dual-Mode Universities are observed to be, not having a direct effect on the student dropout rates, possibly because their presence alone is insufficient without other backup factors like faculty availability and programme quality. While the results of correlation suggest strong negative relationship, the regression model shows that faculty availability is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). However, it is evident that the direction of the relationship remains consistent, signifying the fact that better faculty availability could reduce student dropout rates.

It is evident from the result that both correlation and regression analyses indicate that faculty availability and internet penetration have negative

relationships with dropout rates. However, these effects lose significance in the regression model. Thus, the results of regression analysis show that no single predictor is independently significant in this model, though Faculty Availability shows the strongest influence. It can also be observed from the results of regression analysis the weak impact of Dual-Mode Universities implying that quantitative increase in these types of universities may not be effective from a policy perspective. Policies should therefore emphasize on quality assurance, curriculum relevance and faculty support to reduce dropout rates effectively. Thus, HEI policies that integrate improvements in faculty resources, digital infrastructure and institutional quality will most probably yield the best outcomes for reducing dropout rates in distance education.

A Policy Framework vis-à-vis the Institutional Imperatives for Distance Education

On the basis of the insights drawn from the analysis in the previous sections of the paper, we have developed a Policy Framework vis-à-vis the Institutional Imperatives for Distance Education which has been exhibited in the figure 2 below.



The regulators and administrators related to HEI governance need to consider the policy strands in terms of 1. *Policy Enablers and Facilitators*; 2. *Implementation Requirements and Policy Execution* and 3. *Policy Outcomes and Impact Assessment* which are shown in the figure.

In terms of the first strand, HEIs need to recognise and develop the fundamental aspects for enhancing the ambit of distance education in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Thus, Policy enablers and facilitators need to be recognised and considered since these are precursors for Policy implementation. In this regard, policies and guidelines need to be explicated regarding Infrastructure and Digital Access; Faculty Development; Curriculum Enrichment; Regulatory and Institutional Policies; Student Support System and Public-Private Partnership. Policies aimed at broadband expansion and avenues for fostering public-private partnerships for affordable ICT devices and other digital initiatives for the excluded class need to be formulated. Upskilling, sensitisation and motivation of faculties for embracing digital technologies and setting quality benchmarks in this regard would act as enablers and facilitators for distance education. In this context, the role of regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE etc. comes into sharper focus for standardization, sponsoring schemes for online learning, and ensuring benchmark-oriented accreditation for distance courses. HIEs also need to incentivise students through scholarships exclusively for distance learners, inclusion of marginalized sections and develop wellness & mental health initiatives. Effort also needs to be taken for fostering industry collaborations for internships, certifications and co-creating skill-oriented distance programmes through public-private partnership.

The second strand has been named as Implementation Requirements and Policy Execution Strand which comprises aspects aimed at bridging the gap between infrastructure and student outcomes through well-executed HEI strategic action orientation. HEIs need to set-up digital learning units following the ‘hub and spokes’ approach primarily in rural areas. HRD and skill development of faculty need to be properly emphasised and initiated. The necessary initiatives may include compulsory ICT training for teachers, utilisation of user-friendly and affordable AI-based learning platforms and competency-based teaching-learning methodologies. Strict assurance measures, academic audits, strict operational control system of distance education and alignment with NEP 2020 standards need to be considered.

HEIs in distance education need to develop student engagement system by creating interactive platforms, promoting hybrid learning models and enhancing synchronous learning opportunities. At the Government level, provisions like incentives for e-learning tools, providing research grants for EdTech solutions and integrating digital learning into mainstream education policies can be explored.

The third strand is associated with Policy Outcomes & Impact Assessment. Here, emphasis is required to be given on measuring the effectiveness of policy interventions through tangible educational and performance outcomes by using the suitable metrics. HEI performance in terms of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) improvements due to expanded ICT access, satisfaction and retention rates in distance programmes, tangible outcomes arising out of employability and skill development initiatives etc. are important considerations in this regard. Measurement signifying greater digital and educational inclusion, number of effective interventions for reducing urban-rural digital can also be considered as an important aspect of this strand.

Conclusion:

The discussion held in previous sections highlight the emerging facets of distance and online education in the country. While the distance and online learning ecosystem can significantly address the teaching and learning environment in India from multifarious perspectives like addressing the problem of gross enrolment ratio or making the graduates or addressing the problem related to training of manpower, there remains sufficient number of challenges to make distance education model aligned with the different stakeholders in the society. Distance education has the potential to offer equity and inclusivity resulting in bridging the educational gap among the students and learners. However, for that to happen, appropriate infrastructural and policy support must be extended to the ecosystem. Proper emphasis is also an imperative towards ensuring the standards of the programmes and courses run by different higher academic centres. In order to increase employability among the all categories of students, and distance learning students in particular, focus should be given on professional and entrepreneurship courses along with the traditional courses which will promote scientific vigour among the learners. Programmes and courses need to be offered in regional languages in order to ensure acceptability of the programmes and courses among the

students. Specific provisions related to scholarships shall also be arranged for poor students pursuing any degree in distance mode. Provisions for mentoring the students can significantly add to the employment enhancement of the students pursuing distance education. These initiatives will foster motivation among the learners to pursue courses in distance mode with full enthusiasm. Specific training programmes shall be conducted for the teaching community to address the problems concerning learners in distance education mode. Community engagement approach can be adopted where teachers can reach out to students in the rural areas after certain duration. This will ensure better learning among the learners. The corporations should also come forward to extend employment opportunities to the students who have graduated from the distance educational institutions. The goal of achieving higher gross enrolment ratio, increased employability of the students, availability of trained manpower etc can only be ensured if a multi-pronged strategy emphasizing the upliftment of distance education in the country is adopted. And each and every stakeholder of the society shall look into the same direction in order to make that happen.

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Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Dataset on Evidence-based Insights and Policy Implications: Imperatives for HEIs and Regulatory Bodies									
State Code	Enrollment (UG)	Enrollment (PG)	Male Students (%)	Female Students (%)	Internet Penetration (%)	Dual-Mode Universities	Dropout Rate (%)	Faculty Availability (Per 1000 Students)	
SR1	520,000	210,000	55	45	78	13	12.5	15	
SR2	410,000	160,000	57	43	65	8	10.2	12	
SR1	460,000	190,000	54	46	72	8	9.8	14	
ER	360,000	130,000	53	47	60	7	14.1	10	
WR	610,000	260,000	56	44	75	6	8.7	13	
NR1	710,000	310,000	58	42	58	6	15.3	9	
WR	310,000	110,000	56	44	63	5	13.2	11	
SR2	410,000	190,000	52	48	85	5	10.5	16	
NR2	260,000	95,000	59	41	62	4	16.4	10	
NR2	210,000	80,000	54	46	64	3	11.7	12	

Sources: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22: Provides detailed statistics on higher education, including enrollment figures and gender distribution; Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	18.033	7.674		.2350 .057
	Internet	.153	.286	.538 .535	.612
	Dualmode	.136	.278	.151 .490	.642
	faculty	-1.403	1.130	-1.281 -1.242	.261

a. Dependent Variable: dropout

Significance of Self-help Groups (SHGs) in Promoting Women Empowerment and Economic Development: A Review of Kudumbashree Mission in Kerala

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Abstract: Women's empowerment is one of the most significant aspects of socio-economic, political and cultural development in any country. Many ways are available to achieve this goal, and one way is through Self-Help Groups. The role of women in India has evolved significantly, transitioning from traditional roles both in urban and rural India, due to economic support from public and private authorities boosting the entrepreneurship models. Women have become society's backbone, and their contributions must be acknowledged and valued. The societal position of women in India in household, culture, religion, and demographic indicators play a significant role for earners and homemakers. The current study focuses on exploring the contributions of self-help groups in promoting the growth and development of an economy and it makes an effort to critically examine the Kudumbashree mission, which is a poverty eradication and women empowerment program implemented by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM), of the government of Kerala. Initiated in 1998, the Kudumbashree Mission aims to create a comprehensive platform for women's empowerment through a network of SHGs, focusing on poverty alleviation, socio-economic development, and self-reliance. The study highlights the key achievements of the Kudumbashree Mission, including the formation of a vast network of SHGs, financial inclusion through microcredit, and the provision of skill development and entrepreneurial opportunities. By empowering women at the grassroots level, the mission has not only improved household incomes but also contributed to community development and enhanced women's participation in decision-making processes. The Kudumbashree Mission exemplifies how strategic

empowerment programs can drive substantial economic and social changes, offering valuable insights for similar initiatives worldwide.

Key Words: *Kudumbashree; Women Empowerment; Women Entrepreneurship; SHGs.*

1. Introduction:

A self-help group brings people together who are dealing with similar challenges to help, build support and community around shared life experiences. It is a common form of community-based organization in many developing countries. Originating from the need to address poverty and enhance community engagement, SHGs have gained prominence as a sustainable model for fostering economic growth and social equity. In India, SHGs have been instrumental in bridging gaps between marginalized communities and mainstream development opportunities, and the Kudumbashree Mission in Kerala stands as a prominent example of this impact (Karunakaran N, 2014). Governments, donors, and non profit organizations are increasingly delivering interventions through locally organized SHGs, in the belief that such institutional arrangements will enhance development outcomes (Smitha E K and Karunakaran N, 2020), encourage sustainability, and foster capacity in local civil society. In addition, SHGs are thought to provide economies of scale and scope, as the groups may be used to reach more people at a lower cost per person, and may also serve to deliver interventions that address multiple issues (Smitha E K and Karunakaran N, 2020).

The significance of SHGs within the Kudumbashree Mission is multifaceted. Firstly, these groups facilitate access to microfinance, enabling women to start and sustain small-scale enterprises. Secondly, they offer a platform for women to engage in collective decision-making, thus enhancing their socio-political participation and leadership roles. Thirdly, SHGs contribute to the broader goal of economic development by promoting local entrepreneurship and improving household incomes.

Despite the success of the Kudumbashree Mission, the model faces challenges such as maintaining group cohesion, ensuring effective management, and scaling its impact (Smitha E K and Karunakaran N, 2021). Understanding the achievements and limitations of this mission provides valuable insights into the broader potential of SHGs as a tool for women's empowerment and economic development.

1.1. Review of literature: The Sixth Economic Census published by the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women represent roughly 14% of the total entrepreneurship in India (only 8.05 million out of the total 58.5 million entrepreneurs in India). Among this, 2.76 million women (13.3% of women entrepreneurs) work in the agricultural sector whereas 5.29 million women representing more than 65% work in the non-agricultural sector. SHGs have indeed been seen mainly as entities for savings and borrowings. This was the thinking of an earlier generation of SHGs, but today, in some parts of the country, SHGs are taking on new roles and responsibilities that lie at the very core of livelihood security for the poor and also developing entrepreneurship. SHGs are an essential part of a planned policy to obtain a balanced economic group of poor women. Women in the Self-Help Group emerge as leaders or entrepreneurs. It provides marketing assistance with highlights on the market investigation, up gradation, expansion/diversification of commodities, packaging, and creation/improvement of the market infrastructure facilities (Garg, S.K. et al., 2012).

The union government of India defines the women entrepreneur' to own an enterprise and control by a single or group of women, with a financial interest of 51% capital investment, and at least 51% of employment by the enterprise. The definition of women in a developing economic context can broadly be divided into urban Indian women and rural Indian women each of whom has different forces of social economic parameters, contributing towards the initiation of entrepreneurship; that traditional women associated with the household (kids, kitchen, knitting) showed early home-based and cooperative-based start ups related to (papad, pickles, and powdered spices) (Vinitha. K and Karunakaran N, 2021),

Ganesan, et al. (2002) and Dhameja (2002) emphasized gaining confidence in households, showing creativity and innovative solutions within households to achieve economic independence, later on followed by employment opportunities in the area of balancing family and social life. The challenges discussed by Garga and Bagga (2009) showed that challenges faced by entrepreneurial women related to male dominance in the household in decision-making, lack of mobility, shortage of start up finances, and lack of education on business fundamentals. The Indian rural women were at a disadvantage, due to a small section of middle class and upper class exploiting the state and the central government start-up funding scheme. Goyal and Yadav (2014) found that the evolution of business

models in entrepreneurship has affected its adoption and growth from urban to rural areas in India, and also from males to females, from an entrepreneur perspective. Singh and Raina (2013) and Karunakaran N (2018) argued that entrepreneurship in Indian society in both urban and rural areas was seen as a profit-making economic venture in any industry or sector, which witnessed the significant difficulty of accessing financing to be a primary challenge.

Self-help groups (SHGs) form a key dimension in Indian society (Karunakaran N, 2024). They have shown increased women's participation in financing, laying the structural framework of entrepreneurship business model, support across the business lifecycle, exporting the products to countries, advertising in local markets, and sustainability in local economy areas through job creation (Shastri, et al. 2022). Therefore, the dynamics of SHG in economic development and empowerment of women towards entrepreneurship has shown credible support in overcoming the challenges and risks that exist in the domain. Cohoon et al. (2010) argued that the progress of women's entrepreneurship journey started with a welfare approach, a development approach, and later on a multidisciplinary approach. Mathew and Panchanatham (2011) stated that the challenges also pertain to the self-identity and self-capability of the women, the personality type and the degree of connections in society, commitment in business, courage, and creativity, conviction and clarity about business goals in the business life cycle that help to overcome successive challenges of time. Despite its successes, the Kudumbashree mission faces several challenges. Issues such as group cohesion, effective management, and the scalability of initiatives remain critical concerns (Sundararaman, 2015). Furthermore, there are ongoing debates about the sustainability of SHGs and the long-term impact on women's economic status (Krishna, 2014).

1.2. Objectives:

The main objectives include:

1. To find the significance of Self-help groups in promoting women's empowerment and economic development.
2. To analyze women's decision and motivation to opt for Kudumbashree State Government support in Kerala for entrepreneurship against other financing options.
3. To find gaps and offer suggestions to improve the Kudumbashree Mission Kerala for women empowerment and economic development.

2. Materials and methods: Data were mainly collected from primary and secondary sources. The respondents were selected from West-Eleri Grama panchath of Kasaragod, Kerala. The sample population includes those members who were active in the Kudumbashree group during the period, of January 2020 to December 2023. A pre-tested structured questionnaire prepared in local language (Malayalam) was used for primary data collection. The Kudumbashree members were individually met to collect accurate data directly. A random sample of 50 members from 20 Kudumbashree units was selected for the study. Secondary data were collected from Kudumbashree mission reports, annual reviews, and strategic documents. Academic articles, research papers, and case studies related to SHGs, microfinance, and women empowerment, reports from local government agencies and non-governmental organizations were also used.

3. Analysis and discussion: On May 17, 2023 inaugurated the 25th anniversary celebrations of Kudumbashree. This largest self-help group network in the country was established in 1997 in Kerala (became fully operational in April 1999), aiming at eradicating poverty and empowering women following the recommendations of a government-appointed task force. The mission was launched with the support of the Government of India and NABARD (National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development). The organization which falls under the department of local self-government plays a vital role in implementing several programs charted out by the government and has won several national and international awards for its activities. The organisation undertakes work in several sectors including local economic development, social development, and microfinance, and implements schemes announced by the union and state governments. The Kudumbashree members are actively involved in the estimation of the populations in extreme poverty, youth seeking employment, tribal development, and empowerment of children through Balasabha. At present, Kudumbashree has 1070 CDS (Community Development Society, 19470 ADS (Area Development Society), and 316860 NHG (Neighbourhood Groups), 46 lakh women community network, spread across the state. Kudumbashree has achieved notable success offering additional insights into best practices and potential improvements (Reddy, 2017).

Despite India's amazing economic growth, the country's official poverty rate is at 170 million people. This represents 12.5 percent of the overall population of the country (Singh, A. and Raina, M, 2013). Since independence, the

government has attempted to eradicate poverty through a variety of efforts. In today's globe, scarcity is a fundamental problem that affects both developing and undeveloped countries. The government is regarded to be able to solve the problem of poverty by a determined effort. Applicable opportunities for the poor can be provided through financing asset development facilities. Women's houses are the cruellest victims of poverty and sorrow. As a result, any anti-poverty project must aim to enhance living standards while also empowering women's communities. Women will be able to work and earn a living. More successful methods of boosting people's living standards include microcredit and self-help organizations. By establishing microcredit and productive companies, the Kudumbashree scheme strives to improve the living standards of disadvantaged women in rural areas. From the studies, it is evident that there is a strong push to promote Kudumbashree units to fulfill the state's livelihood missions to provide better jobs and livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged. Kudumbashree units, which operate through SHGs, require active participation from members consistently, and they tend to place more trust in women in this regard (*Shastri, S., Shastri, S. and Pareek, A., 2019*). Analysis on Kudumbashree mission's SHG model is timely and significant. It addresses critical issues of gender inequality and poverty, offers insights into integrated development approaches, informs policy and practice, contributes to academic research, supports for sustainable development, and provides a replicable model for other regions. Understanding the successes and limitations of Kudumbashree mission is essential for advancing the impact of SHGs on women's empowerment and economic development.

3.1. Kudumbashree, a Kerala model of development: It is a pioneering development model in Kerala, renowned for its holistic approach to poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. Launched in 1998 by the Government of Kerala, the Kudumbashree mission integrates community mobilization, microfinance, and local development initiatives to create a sustainable framework for socio-economic upliftment. This model has garnered attention both nationally and internationally for its success in transforming communities through collective action and grassroots involvement.

3.2. Core Components: The model is built around three core components:

(1) Self-Help Groups (SHGs): The foundation of the model, where women form small groups to engage in savings, credit, and mutual support. SHGs

provide access to microfinance, enabling members to start small businesses and improve their economic conditions.

(2) Area Development Societies (ADS): Intermediate bodies that coordinate activities at the local level, ensuring the implementation of various development projects and providing support to SHGs.

(3) Community Development Societies (CDS): The apex bodies that oversee and manage the activities of ADS and SHGs, ensuring alignment with broader development goals and policies.

3.3. Organizational Structure: The mission operates through a well-defined and multi-tiered organizational structure designed to facilitate the effective implementation of its development goals. The structure supports the formation and management of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and ensures that community-driven initiatives are coordinated and scaled appropriately. It operates through a multi-tiered organizational structure, composed of 10-20 women. SHGs are the basic operational units. Their focus is on savings, microcredit, and group activities. ADS are the federations of SHGs within a particular geographical area and they facilitate larger-scale projects and provide training and support to SHGs. On the other hand, CDS is the highest level of the organizational structure; CDS are federations of ADS and coordinate the mission's activities at the district and state levels. Through microfinance, SHGs provide access to low-interest loans and encourage savings among members. This financial support helps members start and sustain small businesses. Training programs are offered to enhance members' skills in various trades, including agriculture, handicrafts, and entrepreneurship. It engages in local development projects such as health awareness campaigns, education initiatives, and infrastructure improvements.

The governing council is the highest decision-making body within the Kudumbashree mission, consisting of representatives from various government departments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. It provides strategic direction and oversight for the mission's activities and ensures that the mission's objectives align with state and national development goals. This approves policies, reviews, progress reports, and provides guidance on major decisions and initiatives. Kudumbashree provides extensive training programs for SHG members, ADS, and CDS to build their skills in financial management, leadership, and project implementation. Various technical support

units within the SMMU (State Mission Management Unit) and district-level offices assist in project planning, implementation, and evaluation.

3.4. Enterprising experiments: Government of Kerala allocated subsidy to *Janakeeya Hotels*, a public welfare scheme implemented in the state through Kudumbashree and 5043 women entrepreneurs in 1198 *Janakeeya Hotels* will be benefited. Hunger Free Kerala Scheme was also introduced in the state; aimed to provide free or moderate-cost mid-day meals to the poor, marginalized, underprivileged, and bedridden, was extended across the state on an enterprise model.

3.5. Economic impact of Kudumbashree mission: This had a profound economic impact on its participants and the broader community. The mission's focus on women's empowerment and poverty alleviation through self-help groups (SHGs) has led to significant improvements in income levels, employment opportunities, and economic stability for its members.

3.5.1. Increased household incomes: Kudumbashree SHGs provide members with access to microloans and savings facilities. This financial inclusion allows women to invest in small-scale businesses and income-generating activities. Members used to start or expand enterprises such as agriculture, dairy farming, handicrafts, and small retail businesses, leading to increased household incomes.

3.5.2. Financial stability: Access to credit helps families manage financial shocks and invest in productive assets, contributing to greater financial stability and reduced vulnerability to economic fluctuations.

3.5.3. Creation of micro-enterprises: Kudumbashree supports the establishment of micro-enterprises, which range from agricultural activities to small manufacturing units. These businesses generate income and employment opportunities for SHG members and their families. The mission also facilitates market linkages and access to raw materials, helping SHG members increase their productivity and profitability.

3.5.4. Employment opportunities: Micro-enterprises established by SHGs create employment opportunities within local communities. This includes direct employment for SHG members and indirect employment through related activities and services engage in community development projects that require local labour, further contributing to job creation.

3.5.5. Income diversification: By engaging in various economic activities, SHG members diversify their income sources, reducing dependency on a single income stream and improving economic resilience.

3.5.6. Impact on poverty alleviation: The increased income and employment opportunities provided by Kudumbashree contribute to the reduction of poverty among its members. Many families report improved living standards and better access to essential services. Empowered women with increased financial resources contribute to their families' well-being, including improved nutrition, health care, and education for children.

3.5.7. Financial literacy and management: SHG members receive training in financial management, including savings, budgeting, and investment. This enhances their ability to manage household finances and plan for future needs. The availability of banking services through SHGs promotes financial literacy and inclusion, contributing to overall economic development. Members of SHGs are encouraged to save regularly, which builds a culture of saving and financial discipline. This collective saving also serves as a safety net for emergencies and investment opportunities.

Table 1: Information on personal empowerment, economic impact, participation in SHG activities and overall satisfaction with the program

Category	Sub-Category	Survey Question	Response Options	Average Response
Personal Empowerment	Leadership Skills	How confident are you in your leadership skills since joining the SHG?	Not confident, Slightly confident, Moderately confident, Very confident	Moderately confident
	Decision-Making	How involved are you in decision-making processes within your SHG?	Not involved, Slightly involved, Moderately involved, Very involved	Moderately involved
	Self-Esteem	How has your self-esteem changed since joining the SHG?	Decreased, Stayed the same, increased slightly, Increased significantly	Moderate increase
Economic Impact	Income Improvement	Has your income increased as a result of participating in the SHG?	No increase, Slight increase, Moderate increase, Significant increase	Moderate increase
	Financial Independence	How has your financial independence changed since joining the SHG?	Decreased, Stayed the same, Improved slightly, Improved significantly	Improved slightly
Participation	Activity Engagement	How frequently do you participate in SHG meetings and activities?	Rarely, Occasionally, Often, Very often	Often
	Training and Skill Development	How useful do you find the training and skill development provided by the SHG?	Not useful, Slightly useful, Moderately useful, Very useful	Very useful

Overall Satisfaction	Program Satisfaction	How satisfied are you with the overall functioning of the SHG?	Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied	Satisfied
	Impact on Life Quality	How has the SHG impacted your overall quality of life?	Negative impact, No impact, Slight positive impact, Significant positive impact	Significant positive impact
Challenges	Financial Management	How challenging is managing finances within your SHG?	Not challenging, Slightly challenging, Moderately challenging, Very challenging	Moderately challenging
	Group Cohesion	How would you rate the cohesion among SHG members?	Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent	Good

Source: Primary data

Table 1 gives information collected from members of Kudumbashree Self-Help Groups (SHGs), includes personal empowerment, economic impact, participation in SHG activities, and overall satisfaction with the program.

3.5.8. Successful entrepreneurship: Case studies depict that, dairy cooperatives, organic farming projects, and handicraft businesses, demonstrate the practical impact of the Kudumbashree mission on individual and community-level economic development. Testimonials from SHG members provide insights into how participation in the mission has transformed their economic situations, highlighting improved income, financial stability, and entrepreneurial success.

3.6. Challenges and areas for improvement: Despite its successes in promoting women's empowerment and economic development, encounters several challenges that affect its overall effectiveness and sustainability. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the mission's impact and ensuring its long-term success. Issues with loan repayment and financial mismanagement can affect the sustainability of SHGs and their economic impact. Limited access to markets and infrastructure can constrain the growth potential of micro-enterprises. Enhancing market linkages and infrastructure support is necessary to maximize economic benefits. Insufficient financial and human

resources can constrain the ability of SHGs, ADS, and CDS to implement and sustain development programs effectively. SHG members often face difficulties in accessing broader markets for their products and services, limiting their income potential and business growth. Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation and communication facilities, can hinder the ability of SHGs to operate efficiently and access necessary resources. Continuous skill development is needed to keep up with changing market demands and technological advancements. Limited access to training can affect members' ability to run successful businesses. In some areas, cultural norms and social attitudes may pose barriers to women's participation and leadership in SHGs, affecting their overall impact. Ensuring active community engagement and support for SHG activities can be challenging, particularly in regions with low levels of awareness or resistance to change. Measuring and demonstrating the long-term impact of SHGs on poverty alleviation and women's empowerment can be challenging, particularly in quantifying qualitative outcomes. By addressing these challenges through targeted interventions and strategic planning, the Kudumbashree mission can continue to strengthen its impact and achieve its development goals. (Government of Kerala, 2023).

4. Conclusion, findings and suggestions:

Kudumbashree mission is now one of the largest women-empowering projects in India that is recognized all over the world. It assumed the status of the helpline to many of the women. It is a massive anti-poverty program of the Government of Kerala aiming at eradicating poverty and salvaging the destitute from the wretches of extreme deprivation. The paradigm shift in the approach is that any woman who is residing in the Gram Panchayat can become a member of the Kudumbashree. The benefits of the Kudumbashree model are that it is managed wholly by the representatives of the poor and has the leverage of a non-governmental organization which helps in channeling additional resources from various sources both internal and external. The Community Development Society at the local body level facilitates both autonomy and effective linkage with Local self-government. The success of Kudumbashree is not only for the individual benefits of woman but also for their family, community, etc. The status of women's families has thus substantially improved. The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) pointed out that the policymakers of the state should understand the contribution of women in the development process.

Empowering women and improving their social and economic status are essential ingredients for realizing the full potential of economic and political development of the entire society and ensuring sustainable development. Thus, it is concluded that Kudumbashree became the lifeline to many of the poor women in Kerala.

Besides demonstrating the benefits, the analysis suggests the following key recommendations:

Being an association with concerned local governments, self-help groups (SHG) can provide family well-being cluster schemes and programs. This program may primarily initiative to promote sustainable agriculture and allied sectors for local food availability, and various household production by utilization of rural technologies, local tourism, etc. that has high economic value and low environmental impacts. This can ensure women's employability in full-time as well as part-time or women entrepreneurship and also empower the poor.

Technical and managerial knowledge backgrounds are vital resources for any successful entrepreneurship. Self-help groups (SHG) can promote various skill-oriented training for potential entrepreneurial levels through family-friendly work practices. Family-friendly work practices certainly encourage more educated women to enter into entrepreneurial activities.

Thus, a basic genuine policy is adequate in this sector that focuses on women's rights and the well-being of their communities in a sustainable way of development. This policy must facilitate decent work in a green economy, which stimulates high awareness and participation by women through a better scientific perception of environmental protection as well as socio-economic dimensions.

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Power as an Attribute in Interpersonal Relationships

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Abstract:

The dynamics of power are readily observable in many interpersonal relationships, often resulting in a power imbalance among individuals with differing power distances. However, it is difficult to discern power dynamics among individuals in similar positions within a relationship. This study aims to analyse power dynamics among individuals occupying the same positions in a relationship, focusing on friendships and romantic relationships. The study is based on a cross-sectional qualitative research design, with a total of 15 cases, each involving 2 participants, resulting in 30 participants in total. Data was collected by using the Big Five Inventory and a self-constructed questionnaire. The results revealed that power dynamics were present in 80% of the cases. Among participants assessed to have less power, 58.33% scored higher in agreeableness and 66.66% scored higher in neuroticism. Conversely, among those with more power in the relationship, 58.33% scored higher in conscientiousness. Therefore, the study suggests a correlation between certain personality traits and power dynamics in relationships.

Keywords: Personality, Power, Interpersonal relationship, Birth order.

Introduction:

Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher and logician, famously said power is “the fundamental concept in social science, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.” The definition of power changes depending on the discipline or whether it’s viewed as a noun: a thing, such as a resource, right, or position, or a verb: a behaviour that impacts, influences, compels, controls, or directs. A professor of psychology, at the University of California at Berkeley, Dacher Keltner, defines power as “someone’s capacity to alter another person’s condition or state of mind by providing or withholding resources such as food, money, knowledge, affection, or administering punishment such as physical harm, job termination, or even social ostracism.”

Certain people have more power over others. For example, in a classroom, the teacher has more control over the students; thus, the students are bound to follow the teacher's instructions. One such famous study on obedience has been done by Stanley Milgram at Yale University.

In Milgram's study on obedience, he focused on how people tend to obey authority. The results of his study indicated that people are highly influenced by authority and are highly obedient to them. In his 1974 book "Obedience to Authority," Milgram posed the question, "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?"

More recent work by researchers suggests that while people do tend to obey authority figures, the process is not necessarily as unambiguous as Milgram depicted it. In a 2012 essay published in PLoS Biology, researchers suggested that the degree to which people are willing to obey the questionable orders of an authority figure depends largely on two key factors:

1. How much the individual agrees with the orders.
2. How much they identify with the person giving the orders.

The Bases of Power

In the year 1959, social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven studied why some leaders can influence us, how prepared one is to accept the powers of those leaders, and how they develop different methods to get the best out of the people. French and Raven studied this phenomenon and identified 5 bases of power-

1. Legitimate: This type of power is held by people in a formal setting. They expect other people to be compliant and obedient as a part of exercising the formal rights of their position. However, this type of power is not stable and the rights that come with the position can instantly disappear as the other people were being compliant and obedient to the position that the person held rather than the person itself.
2. Reward: The essence of this type of power is that a person (person A) has power over another person (person B) because Person A controls the perceived rewards that person B wants. It is a form of power that is based on perceived positive reinforcement given by a person to another. However, this power weakens gradually when the value of the perceived reward decreases.

3. Expert: This type of power is held by people who have a wider expertise on a subject matter as compared to others. Other people usually perceive them as trustworthy and hence listen to what they have to say and respect their ideas. People holding this type of power usually don't lose their power because other people respect their intrinsic ideas.
4. Referent: People with this type of power don't earn it on their own. It is based on one's own perceived attractiveness, worthiness and relatedness. People withholding this power don't necessarily have to do something to earn it and thus can be abused quite easily.
5. Coercive: This type of power is rooted in the belief that a person can inflict harm for non-compliance. Threats and punishments are the most common tools used to earn this type of power. It is easily abused but sometimes this can be the last resort for getting things which cannot be considered abusive. Either way, it leads to the development of feelings of dissatisfaction or resentment among the people to whom it is being applied.

The Interdependency Theory

Kelley and Thibaut developed this theory in the 1950s, which was a result of their 4 decades-long dedication to it. This theory was important to mention as it states that people's motivation and behaviours are not solely based on their personal unique experiences or cognition or personality. It describes that the social relationships that people build with others influence more with their motivation and behaviour. They explained certain interdependence processes like interpersonal disposition, relation-specific norms, social norms, etc. that lead to such alteration.

Relationship

Human beings are social beings and are born with an innate capacity to form social connections. They cannot live alone or in isolation for a very long period. Hence, they interact constantly to form human relations with each other. They need each other to fulfil their needs and express their thoughts and emotions. Maslow, in 1954, proposed a hierarchy of needs theory, where he mentioned how human needs were arranged in a hierarchy, with physiological (survival) needs at the bottom, and the more creative and intellectually oriented 'self-actualization' needs at the top. In an article by Saul Mcleod, PhD, on the website simplypsychology.org, he wrote "Maslow argued that survival needs must be satisfied before the individual can satisfy

the higher needs. The higher up the hierarchy, the more difficult it is to satisfy the needs associated with that stage, because of the interpersonal and environmental barriers that inevitably frustrate us.

Higher needs become increasingly psychological and long-term rather than physiological and short-term, as in the lower survival-related needs.”

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is as follows-

Physiological needs: These are the most basic needs of an individual for physical survival. These needs may include food, clothing, shelter, sleep, etc.

Safety needs: These needs are required for an individual to experience control and security in their lives. Safety needs may include financial security (e.g., employment, social welfare), social stability, health and wellbeing (e.g., safety against accidents and injuries), etc.

Love and Belonging needs: This need refers to an individual’s emotional need to form interpersonal relationships, connectedness and the need to belong somewhere. These needs may include friendships, intimacy, trust, acceptance, etc.

Esteem needs: This includes an individual’s need to have self-worth, respect and accomplishment. This need is divided into two categories: (i) Esteem for oneself (dignity, independence) and (ii) the desire to be respected by others (status, prestige)

Self-actualization needs: This refers to an individual’s realization of their potential, self-fulfilment, and seeking personal growth. Maslow (1943, 1987, p. 64) describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can, and “to become everything one is capable of becoming”. Although Maslow did not believe that people could achieve true self-actualization, he did believe that people may experience transitory or peak experience, of self-actualization.

Maslow divided these five needs into three sections -

Basic needs - Physiological needs and safety needs

Psychological needs - Belongingness needs, and esteem needs

Self- fulfilment needs - Self- actualization needs

According to Maslow, the lower survival basic needs were the short-term needs and the other needs were long-term needs.

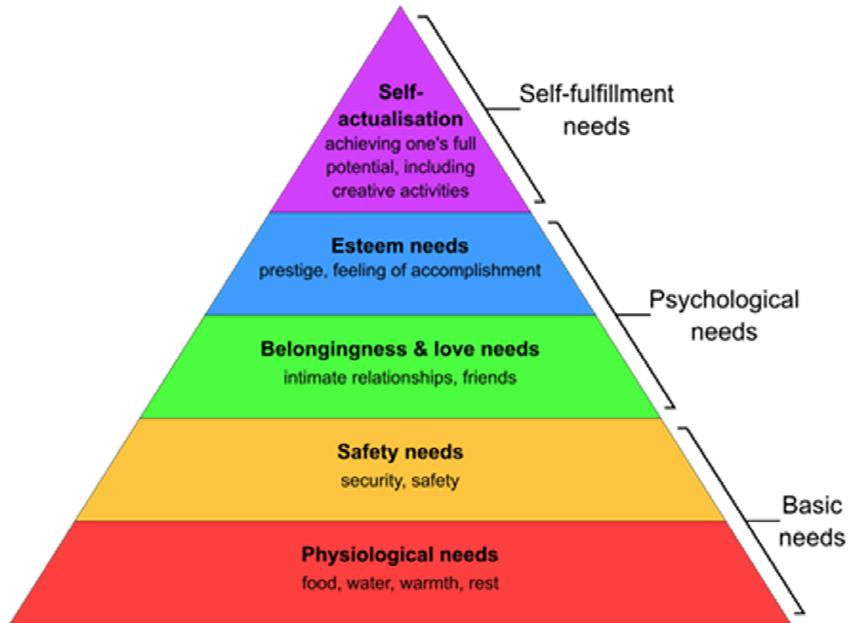


Figure 1.1- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid

So, as mentioned in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need to belong and love falls at the centre of the pyramid and hence, is an important psychological need to be accomplished. Without social connection, it is difficult for an individual to survive as human beings are social beings, as mentioned at the beginning of this topic.

The Big Five model

The Big Five model is a widely accepted model that explains 5 dimensions of personality. It was developed by Costa and McCrae. Cattell's 16 Personality factors and Eysenck's personality theory laid the groundwork for the development of this model. Goldberg refined this model while emphasizing the universality and stability of the traits across different cultures, popularizing its use. A Big Five Inventory was developed later by Oliver P. John and his colleagues, which is a self-report scale that assesses the five dimensions of the Big Five model.

The five dimensions of the Big Five model are as follows:

1. *Openness*: This dimension measures the extent to which one is open to new experiences. People high in this trait tend to be creative, innovative and adventure-seeking.
2. *Conscientiousness*: This dimension measures the extent to which one is organized, goal-oriented and responsible. People high on this trait tend to be highly organized and controlling of their environment. Since these people are themselves organized, they tend to also expect others to do the same.
3. *Extraversion*: This dimension measures the degree to which one is sociable. This sociability might be expressed as enthusiasm and/or being assertive.
4. *Agreeableness*: This dimension measures one's degree of trust, kindness and cooperation. People high in this trait may indicate that they might be exhibiting pro-social behaviour more than others.
5. *Neuroticism*: This dimension describes one's sensitivity to negative emotions. People high on this trait usually have high anxiety, frequent moodiness, etc.

Alfred Adler's Theory of Individual Psychology

Alfred Adler's theory of Individual Psychology focuses on an individual's desire to strive for superiority or self-improvement which is primarily motivated by their social interests. Childhood experiences facilitate a lot in the development of these desires which is either healthy or unhealthy for them or the society. Adler emphasized an individual's social connections and their uniqueness in shaping their behaviours and personality as a whole. He theorized a concept based on a child's development of certain characteristics according to their birth order-

1. Firstborn: They are prone to perfectionism. This characteristic may be rooted in sharing the undivided attention of their parents with their younger sibling(s) and wanting to strive for that exclusive attention by working harder. They are mostly seen to be authoritarian and striving for power. As the individual is a child to new parents, they may also exhibit traits such as being rule-oriented and strict, which are the traits of the new parents as they are still learning child-rearing. The first-born children

- mostly adopt the characteristics of both parents as they receive the sole attention from them in their initial years.
2. Second-born: They seem more reserved and might strive for superiority but under their sibling's shadows. They are usually perceived as the peacemakers and mediators. They are presumed to be calmer than their siblings.
 3. Youngest born: According to Adler, there are two types of youngest children- one, that becomes successful as a result of their drive to become superior, and the second, that doesn't excel much because they couldn't develop their necessary skills and self-confidence.
 4. Only child: As they receive their parents' sole attention, they might grow into becoming dependent on other people. They might also exhibit hostile actions if their needs are not met.

Research Questions

1. Do certain people have more power over others in an interpersonal relationship?
2. Why do some people hold more power over others in an interpersonal relationship?
3. Is personality a factor in determining who holds more power in an interpersonal relationship?

Method

This present research study is based on a cross-sectional study under qualitative research. 15 pairs were taken as samples, which corresponds to 30 participants in total. The variables considered for this research study were - Dominance/Submissiveness, Communication pattern for conflict resolution, Decision-making influence, and Perceived control. The Big Five Inventory was used to assess the personality traits of the participants and a self-constructed questionnaire was used for conducting the interview.

Procedure for Data Collection

The Big Five Inventory was given to the participants in an online mode before their interviews were scheduled. After the personality test results were recorded, the participants were called in for the interview at their convenient time. It is to be noted that the friend/partner that has been

mentioned here is also a participant in the study. They were briefed about the study and were informed about the confidentiality of their respective responses after which the interview was started. The interview was divided into 3 sections -

Stage 1: The participants were asked to give their own opinions.

Stage 2: The participants were asked to answer based on what they thought their partner/friend would answer.

Stage 3: The participants were asked to answer based on their own opinions; however, their partner/friend was present with them and also answered the same questions as them.

Result

The final data have been analyzed using thematic analysis to answer the research questions.

Table 4.1 - Personal details of the respondents.

Demographic variables	Male	Female
Gender	9	21
Type of relationship		
Partner	7	7
Friend	2	14
Birth order		
Single child	1	6
Eldest child	5	5
Middle child	1	2
Youngest child	2	8

The themes considered in answering the research questions for the present study are as follows:

1. Past experiences- 50% of the participants mentioned their or their partner/friend's past experiences which led to the way they behave in different situations. More importantly, these experiences have influenced the participants in building relationships and the way they view their partner in comparison to their experiences with other people.
2. Personal beliefs, principles and boundaries- Every participant mentioned their personal beliefs, principles or boundaries that they would not like to change. However, due to their partner/friend's influence, these beliefs, principles and boundaries have been altered to some extent or completely changed.
3. Predictability- This theme was taken into consideration as it identifies the participants' perceived control and the amount of conflict that might arise between their partners/friends. The more disparity between the predictable nature of the friends/partners, the more conflicts would occur between them, leading to larger power dynamics in their relationship.
4. Resistance and compliance- Almost every participant indicates some amount of resistance and compliance to their partner/friend. 83.33% of the participants who complied with their partner/friend were considered to be in less power than their partner/friend. However, 41.66% of participants who seemed to be more resistant towards their partner/friend's influence indicated that they were more likely to be in higher power than their friend/partner.
5. Individuality: This is an important theme that was identified to understand how one's higher or lower inclination towards individuality makes them more likely to have higher or lower power in the relationship. 75% of the participants who were inclined towards their individuality more than their partner/friend were found to have more power in their relationship.
6. Approach for conflict resolution- There was another variable that have been positively recorded with the given information. Participants were seen to have two types of communication styles when they have any conflict- one, they prefer to solve it at the exact moment when the conflict arises. Second, they prefer to take some time and calm themselves up before communicating with their partner/friend. Dissatisfaction was

noticed when the partners/friends had these conflicting approaches to problem-solving, and also when their partner/friend didn't comply with their approach.

Certain non-verbal cues were also taken into consideration for the analysis of the given information. The amount of time taken to answer a question, hesitations, facial expressions and body language were some of the non-verbal cues that were noted during the interview of the participants.

Discussion:

Discussion on Research question 1: *Do certain people have more power over others in an interpersonal relationship?*

A total of 15 cases were taken, where 30 participants gave their input. Among the 15 cases, 80% cases were assumed to have power dynamics in their relationship and the other 20% were assumed to have equal power dynamics. These power dynamics were mostly based on contextual factors; however, a general analysis has been done for generalization. Past experiences and Personal beliefs, principles and boundaries have been analysed to impact the power dynamics in a relationship. Past experiences help in building one's attachment style and the extent to which one can get vulnerable in their relationships. It also helps in filtering out one's preference for a relationship. The boundaries that are built as a product of one's personal beliefs and principles help in determining one's communication style and approach to conflict resolution. These factors differ among all individuals leading to differing degrees of conflict and hence these power dynamics exist. A study done by Lewandowski and Sahner in 2005 supports how one's personality traits and certain values and principles change to some degree as a result of being involved in past relationships and trauma. Another study done by Mavrodiev et al. in 2013 on "Quantifying the effects of social influence" argues that the nature of the response crucially changes with the level of information aggregation. This insight contributes to the empirical foundation of models for collective decisions under social influence.

Discussion on Research Question 2: *Why do some people hold more power over others in an interpersonal relationship?*

After the analysis process, it has been found that certain themes lead people to hold more power over the other. Factors such as predictability, resistance

and compliance, and individuality lead to the major difference in power dynamics in a relationship. Predictability determines the disparity between one's perceived control and actual control in their relationship. The more disparity in these two factors, the more conflicts are assumed to arise and hence, a larger degree of power dynamics can be noticed. Being resistant towards their partner/friend's influence may be indicative of one's value for individuality. However, being compliant doesn't always indicate that they have lesser value for their individuality. Resistance is considered to be a stronger aspect than compliance. A study on "Resistance to Interpersonal Requests" done by Ifert in 2012, also states that emotional responses to requests and resistance played a significant role in interpersonal influences.

Discussion on Research question 3: Is personality a factor in determining who holds more power in an interpersonal relationship

The Big Five Inventory was used for personality assessment and it was recorded that the participants who were assessed to have less power in their relationship indicated higher levels of openness (50%), extraversion (50%), agreeableness (58.33%) and neuroticism (66.66%) as compared with the people who were assessed to have more power. While people who were assessed to have higher power in a relationship scored higher in conscientiousness (58.33%). The major differences were seen in the neuroticism and agreeableness traits. Participants with higher agreeableness may feel the need to maintain peace and avoid conflicts as much as possible, which is why they may tend to comply with their partner/friend's influences. Now, participants with high neuroticism indicate that they experience negative emotions more frequently than others, and hence, even after complying with their partner/friend, it doesn't give them peace as they conflict with their values and principles. The reason behind participants who were recorded to score higher in conscientiousness and were assessed to have more power in their relationship may be that people high in conscientiousness tend to control their environment which might lead them to develop higher value for their principles and be more resistant to any change that is not favourable to them. Hence, with this information, we can say that personality traits do determine who holds more power in an interpersonal relationship. A study conducted by Klimstra et al., in 2012 stated that personality traits were associated with one's interpersonal identity within intimate relationships. In this study, the neuroticism trait was negatively associated while agreeableness

and conscientiousness were positively related. Overall, it provides a strong link between the initiation, maintenance and dissolution of intimate relationships among adolescents and young adults.

Additionally, it was noticed that participants having lesser power in a relationship were mostly the eldest child of their family, and the participants having more power in a relationship were recorded to be mostly the youngest child of their family. It was also noticed that there were 3 middle child participants and all the 3 participants were assessed to have less power in their relationship. These results might have been an indication of the traits that people acquire as a result of their birth order. However, the studies related to the relationship between birth order and interpersonal relationships were mostly insignificant. Hence, further research on this area might bring out more accurate and significant relationships between these two factors.

Conclusion:

The purpose of this study was to analyse the prevalence of power dynamics within interpersonal relationships based on personality traits. Interpersonal relationships are an important social system and provide insight into one's self. This study found that power dynamics may exist within these relationships due to the interaction of various factors. Contextual factors are consistent in most cases, but other factors such as individual values, personal beliefs, principles, and past experiences also significantly impact power imbalances in relationships. Resistance levels and certain personality traits further contribute to these factors and influence power disparities. A balance between these traits fosters healthy, growing relationships, promoting overall development for both parties involved. It's important to note that the study was conducted with a small sample of only 30 participants, so its findings cannot be generalized to the entire population. Data was collected from a self-constructed questionnaire for conducting the interview which lacks standardization. Additionally, the study only considered personality traits and birth order, while other relevant factors may also play a role in the power dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The data interpretation was conducted using thematic analysis which may introduce subjectivity; a standardized questionnaire could have facilitated a more reliable generalization of the findings.

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In Search of the Facades of Political Marketing and the Ramifications for Strategic Action Orientation of Political Parties in India

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Abstract:

The present paper aims to identify the facades of political marketing from the perspective of a developing nation. In this exercise, the authors have executed a questionnaire followed by statistical analysis in order to come to meaningful conclusion about the facets of political marketing from the Indian perspective. In order to understand the perspective of political marketing and to obtain the opinions of marketing experts, two sets of respondents have been considered namely faculty members of marketing and marketing professionals. In this exercise, we have obtained nine facades of political marketing by using principal component analysis. Secondly, the relevance-practice contrast of political marketing has been established through two-tailed paired t-test and ramification for action orientation of political parties has been discussed. It has been observed through the analysis of the responses of the marketing experts that a gap exists between the relevance of the facades of political marketing and the extent to which these facades are practised by political parties in India.

1. Introduction and Background:

Political marketing connotes the observed expansion of the domain of marketing. However, experts believe that the expansion of the domain of marketing is not simplistic in nature (Enis 1973). Other experts also posit the expansion of the domain of marketing to diverse areas which has increased the relevance of marketing from the socio-political perspective (Keith 1960;

Kotler and Levy, 1969; Shostack 1977; Arndt 1978). In this perspective, the inclusion of the term “idea” in the list of ‘things to be marketed’ in the definition of marketing by American Marketing Association paved the way for the different extendible domains where marketing tools and techniques can be applied (Wring 2007). The gradual developments and expansion in the concepts of marketing accentuated the process of applications of marketing in the field of politics. Political organisations i.e., political parties, subsequently started to market themselves to voters by utilising marketing tools and concepts. This application formally connotes the concept of political marketing (Menon 2008). Experts like Newman (2002) are of the opinion that political marketing emerged as a separate academic discipline over more than two decades and the publication of the Journal of Political Marketing played a pivotal role in the advancement of this academic field (Newman 2002). The political parties in other countries became aware of the application of marketing on the basis of the prevalent political context in order to accrue electoral success. This has also been observed from the perspective of developing nations as well. However, the nature and context of political marketing vis-à-vis the socio-political milieu of nations vary. Thus, contextual factors play a significant role in shaping the facets of nations. In this perspective, it remains to be seen how marketing aspects are relevant in case of a developing country like India.

In developing countries like India, the mainstream political parties tried to discretely promote through different innovative techniques in recent elections (Phadke 2016; Ghoshal & Balachandran 2015; Sheth 2014). This has also been observed in the recently concluded general elections in India. However, the application of political marketing in the Indian context was not observed to be prevalent across different categories of political parties. The Indian political parties need to accept and embrace political marketing in view of its increasing relevance in the global context (Arun 2019).

Marketing orientation within political parties is the primary prerequisite in order to apply the concept of marketing in politics. This orientation will enable the political parties to consider voters as consumers of their political service. The satisfaction of these consumers should be given utmost importance. The objective of consumer satisfaction can be achieved by identifying the factors which can influence satisfaction in a given context. This identification will enable political parties to formulate effective marketing

strategies. This is very similar to marketing research conducted by the business organisations. In the context of political marketing, it is political marketing research. There have been maiden efforts in developing economies by 'Psephologists' to predict the result of the elections on the basis of voter surveys and qualitative analyses (Roy and Sopariwala 2019). However, there is deficient evidence that highlights any concerted effort on the part of political parties to understand the behaviour of the voters in a systematic manner.

2. Theoretical Contextualization and Literature Review

As already discussed, extant research works substantiate the growing emergence of political marketing as a separate field of study (Kotler and Levy 1969; Wring 2007; Newman, 2002). In this context, Researchers like O'Cass highlighted the extended domain of marketing embracing politics because an exchange actually takes place when a voter casts his or her vote for a specific candidate (O'Cass 1996). Kotler and Levy (1969) argued that political contests should be a key interest area for the professionals in marketing. Newman (1981) cited a number of consumer-related approaches to understand, predict, and explain the behaviour of the voters (cited in Newman & Sheth 1985). Furthermore, Kotler (1999) also underscored that conceptual framework of brand management could be applied to understand and manage the attitude and behaviour of the voters in a political context without much modifications (cited in Peng and Hackley 2009). Thus, the term "political consumers" defines the electorate or voters better in the field of political marketing. Newman and Sheth (1985) examined seven "distinct and separate cognitive domains" of political marketing. Another important study tried to examine with the help of statistical techniques the gender differences in "voting behaviour", "intensions" and "beliefs" (Newman and Sheth 1984). Recently a study was conducted in England to understand how voters make decisions with the help of cognitive process (Lau, Kleinberg, and Ditonto 2018).

The existing literature is therefore indicative of the fact that research works have been undertaken mostly in developed nations. Moreover, no research work identifies the factors that affect the voting decision from the perspective of developing nations, in general and India, in particular. The theoretical justification of this procedure comes out of the similarities between service organisations and political parties. Marketing a political party has similarities

with marketing of services such as accountancy and legal advice than with selling physical products (Harrop 1990, p. 278). In this perspective, some researchers opine that intertwined aspects like homogeneity, intangibility, perishability and variability which are primarily associated with the marketing of services have been considered relevant with respect to political marketing (Baines, Payne and Egan 2001; Newman 1988). Since some important characteristics of service marketing resemble the characteristics of political marketing, political marketing needs to be examined in the light of the basic service marketing framework. It is very important for a service marketer to identify the important facets of service marketing and deliver on these facets. If the facets are not given due importance and are not practised by the service organisations, the gap between what is required and what is actually done widens and eventually the probability of ineffectiveness increases.

There is no palpable study on political marketing in the perspective of developing economies which substantially identifies the important facades of political marketing. In order to address this gap, the factors identified from foreign literature need to be validated in order to effectively identify the Indian perspective. In this paper, we have considered the Indian perspective of India since it is the world's largest democracy possessing certain unique aspects and it has been considered as a "land of contrasts and contradictions" vis-à-vis other nations across the globe (Bose, 2013). Literature highlights that the dynamics of exchanges in politics have similarities with service marketing where the product is largely indescribable, multifarious, and not easily recognised by the customers (Scammell, 1999). In this perspective, the present paper sets for the agenda to disaggregate the facets of political marketing on the basis of opinions of experts in the field of marketing in view of their extant domain knowledge in the field with respect to the Indian perspective in order to examine the relevance of political marketing from the perspective of developing nations.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction and Questionnaire Construction

In order to identify the facets of political marketing, the opinions of marketing experts have been considered since they are intellectually competent on marketing aspects of service organisation and can provide valuable insights regarding the activities of the political parties which would enable effective conceptualization of the concomitant issues. Accordingly, the questionnaire has been prepared to seek opinion of the marketing experts.

The political marketing questionnaire (PMQ) for the present research work has been prepared in the light of the 7Ps perspective of service marketing (Lovelock and Wirtz 2016). The statements in PMQ have been grouped according to their relations with the 7Ps framework. The marketing experts have been requested to assess each statement in terms of (i) the relevance in the Indian context and (ii) the extent to which the aspect is practised in Indian political context. The opinions of the experts on both relevance and practice have been obtained on a 5-point continuous scale. Since the facets of political marketing from Indian context were never justified before in any literature, it becomes essential to justify some of the important facets presented in the questionnaire identified through the sources mentioned earlier. Aspects like the past credentials and credibility of rank and file of the political parties, content of the manifesto, honesty and clean image of the party leader, party policy an ideology, research in political marketing, voter segmentation, different promises made to different groups of voters, imparting training to party workers (Denver and Hands 2007); structure and process of political parties (Butler and Collins 1994); political parties' activities which enhance the reputations and image of the nation (Hansen 1999; Wring 1997; Caywood and Lacznak 1989; Smith and Hirst 2001; Newman 1994; Brennan and Henneberg 2008). Other aspects like fulfilment of promises (Cwalina, Falkowski, and Newman 2015); conferences as one of the features of service of the political parties (Bhagyaraj and Dhinakar 2017); campaign materials used in Indian elections (Karan, 2008); statements used by political leaders (Saxena 2017); performance of political leaders in the debates and discussion (Temple 2013) have been considered in the questionnaire.

The issue of political advertising in different media before elections (Kaid 2012) is considered in the questionnaire. Furthermore, literature says that communication through social media by political parties is becoming very important in today's world but it is not going to replace the traditional form of communication like election rallies with the voters (Stier, et. al. 2018). Thus, the effect of election rallies has been considered in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the other issues considered in the questionnaire are creativity in political advertisements and innovative promotional activities (Peng and Hackley 2007); charismatic leadership (Needham 2006); symbols signifying a political party (Lynch, Baines and Egan 2002); influence of social media on voting behaviour (Effing, Hillegersberg, & Huibers 2011); messages of

the campaign and appropriate languages for the campaign (Marland 2003); linkage with the corporate sector (Gomez 2002). Political parties are also sometimes criticized for favouring a particular religion or community for securing votes and literature highlights the issue of appeasement (Sarwate 2008). Political parties contest on issues relating to corruption and since it is the result of ambition, political leaders are definitely not free from these vices (Harris 2001). Some other aspects considered are dispute and indiscipline (Gupta 1989; Krehbiel 2000); inter-party alliance and collaboration (Badigannavar 2016); good governance (Eshuis, Braun and Klijn 2013); presence of educated and unblemished people in the party administration (Albritton and Bureeku 2007); workers' involvement in violence and intervention in personal and family matters (Urdal, 2008; Bhattacharyya 2009).

4.2 Sampling Frame and Data Collection

In order to obtain the views of marketing experts, we have considered two sets of respondents namely faculty members of marketing and marketing professionals. While both have domain knowledge in the field of marketing, the faculty members are considered competent on the theoretical aspects while the professionals are assumed to possess an understanding of the practical aspects. Thus, a unique blend of the two aspects is expected from the responses. Accordingly, a list of the faculty members of marketing of the randomly selected universities and institutes in India has been prepared from the information available in the websites of the universities and management institutes. The faculty members have been assigned a particular serial number. Eventually, 146 faculty members have been randomly selected using simple random sampling without replacement technique. All the randomly selected faculty members were sent the questionnaire either via e-mail or by post. Personal visits were also conducted in order to enhance the response rate. In case of marketing professionals, a list of companies based on overall performance was prepared. Each company has been assigned a serial number and 20 companies have been selected from the list using random sampling procedure. The names and contact details of the marketing professionals of the randomly selected companies have been obtained from the company websites. Each and every marketing professional has been assigned a serial number. 72 names were randomly selected from the list of marketing professionals following simple random sampling without replacement. All the 72 marketing professionals were sent the questionnaire by e-mail and by post.

4.3 Techniques for Identification of Facades of Political Marketing and the Concomitant Aspects

In order to identify the facades of political marketing on the basis of the extraction of factors, the basic objective is to reduce a large number of aspects into factors connoting the facades of the same. In this process, factor analysis on the basis of principal component analysis using Varimax rotation has been used (George and Mallery 2006; Field 2009). The extraction of the number of factors has been determined on the basis of Kaiser's criterion which involves factors above the Eigen value of 1 (Kaiser 1960; Yong and Pearce 2013). In this exercise, factor analysis has been carried out following iteration and the facades have been established when all the values of all the identified aspects of political marketing have factor loading greater than 0.5. In undertaking factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity have been appropriately addressed following standard procedure (George and Mallery 2006; Hair et al. 2006). In the context of the factors extracted, variance explained has been considered which signifies the relative significance of each factor in explaining the variance linked with the set of variables that being examined in the study (Hair et al. 2006).

Subsequent to the identification of factors an effort has been made to examine the difference between the relevance of the identified façades and the practice of the same facades in terms of the view of the experts. It has already been mentioned in the previous section that the questionnaire was constructed to obtain the opinions of the marketing experts. Paired-samples t-test was carried out to test whether there is any statistically significant gap between relevance and practice of the identified facades on the basis of opinion of experts in the field of marketing. Paired-samples t-test is usually carried out on individuals or groups who undergo both conditions of the variable of interest (George and Mallery 2006). Since the opinions of only the marketing experts on relevance and practice have been considered, Paired-samples t-test seems to be most appropriate statistical tool in this context. The difference between relevance and practice of the identified facades from the marketing point of view would indicate that what is relevant from a marketing point of view may not be practised by the Indian political parties. This, would in other way, enable us to identify the gaps in political marketing practices in India. This would be effective for suggesting the

areas of political marketing vis-à-vis the strategic action orientation of political parties in India.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

Chronbach's Alpha measurement has been used in measuring the construct reliability of the items of the factors extracted and the values on the higher side signify higher "internal consistency" of the item used in the questionnaires (Cortina 1993; George and Mallery 2006). In general, it is to be considered within the acceptable range and the value of Chronbach's Alpha is accepted up to 0.6 (Hai, et al. 2006). The computation of the reliability of the facades would in other way, signify the strength of a particular factor of political marketing. It is also opined by the experts that validity of a research instrument can be assessed with the help of non-quantitative techniques. Here, the researcher has preferred to use "content validity" (Kothari 2004). Since the questionnaires have played a very important role in this research work, content validity is found to be the most appropriate one in assessing the degree to which research instruments cover all the aspects of this study. The reliability values of each factor (facade) are mentioned in figure 1.

5. Facades of Political Marketing vis-à-vis Strategic Action Orientation of Political Parties in India: Important Ramifications for Developing Nations

5.1 Results of factor analysis and extraction of the facades of political marketing

On the basis of the predetermined sample respondents, responses were collected from the faculty members of marketing and marketing professionals. As previously discussed in the methodology section, the initial phase, mean and standard deviations of all the 57 items were determined. Items have been subsequently removed phase-wise, on the basis of designated mean values, standard and anti-imaging technique in factor analysis. Then, factor analysis was run in the next stage and the process of iteration was been continued until all the remaining items had a factor loading value greater than or equal to (e"0.5). The eventual result of the factor analysis comprised 43 items that congregated into nine factors and the rotation converged in 45 iterations. The results of KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity have been exhibited in table 1 below.

Table 1: KMO Measure of sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.695
	Approx. Chi-Square	2009.251
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	903
	Sig.	.000

It is evident from table 1 that we have obtained satisfactory values of KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of Sphericity. In the light of the satisfactory results of KMO measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, we shall now examine the different factors in the light of the views obtained from experts. On the basis of the items that signify the factors (façade), these have been named as shown in figure 1. Additionally, an effort has been taken to compute the reliability of the extracted factors and these have been referred to as factor (façade) reliability and these have also been exhibited in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Political Marketing Facade Radar



Factor 9 is comprised of a single item and hence the eight factors referred to as facades have been exhibited. The basic issues associated with each façade and the items that constitute the respective façade have been discussed in following subsections.

The first façade of political marketing pertains to *Governance and Image*. This facade accounts for 28.843% of the variance explained and has a reliability value of 0.880. The factor appears to be relevant in the Indian context and the way political parties address this factor would probably increase the gap between the relevance and practice. Corruption in the political parties has been a very big issue in different elections and if strong action is not taken against corrupt members, image transparency of the political parties is likely to be affected. Indiscipline in different forms by the party workers or leaders can have some negative impact on the image of a political party. Action taken against those who are involved in act of indiscipline would improve the image of the political party. Good governance can address these issues. In India, political parties are frequently criticised for sometimes patronising those individuals who are involved in antisocial and criminal activities. The Image and transparency of a political party becomes to some extent believable if the party administration comprises educated and unblemished people. If the political parties change the allies in different situations on the basis of issues not very convincing for voters, there is a chance that the credible image of the political parties may get tarnished. Party activists working under a strong organisation can devote themselves to be continuously in touch with the electorate to recognise and understand their problems.

The second facade, *Study of Voters' Preference*, has emerged as another relevant and important factor when political parties market themselves to political consumers. This factor accounts for 7.72% of the variance explained and has a reliability value of 0.799 as exhibited in figure 1. Political parties need to test the acceptance of the candidate to the voters before nominating the candidate in a constituency through scientific survey in the constituency. Otherwise, voters, despite their overall preference for the political party, may not elect the candidate. Now a days, political parties in India take the help pf professional organisations to appropriately study and address the voters' preferences. In general, Indian political parties are not observed to follow any formal process to apply this technique to segment the voters with the help of relevant variables. Marketing-oriented companies monitor the changes in taste and preference of the consumers and make the required changes in the offerings and thereby undertake marketing research on a regular basis (Hunt & Arnett, 2004). Political parties in India should also

monitor the changes in the needs and wants of the common man. Political parties can understand the problems of the common man through appropriate political marketing research. Continuous survey of the electorate on important issues arising out of the changing political environment, analysis of the responses in a scientific way, and giving proper importance to the opinions of the voters may be useful in addressing the problems of the common man. If activities of any political party contribute towards the enhancement of national image, the image of that political party is likely to improve in the minds of the electorate.

The third facade, *Political Frontage* (variance explained: 6.30%, façade reliability value: 0.795), encompasses the aspects which involve party activities through its leaders, activists, and sympathisers and how it is communicated to the electorate. Reactions of the party leaders on sensitive issues are becoming very crucial at times in the creation of the image of the party. It is observed that insensitive remarks by the party leaders on important as well as sensitive issues in media or while addressing people in a rally hurt the voters. Different news reports mentioning insensitive remarks on women, religion, caste, opposition, other eminent leaders, national icons are the evidences that party leaders frequently make these mistakes. Electronic media play a pivotal role in influencing the opinion of the voters. Discussions on different important issues in the electronic media before elections are very crucial in mobilising the opinions of the electorate. Activists, sympathisers, and political leaders of different political parties participate in these discussions and deliberations and logically acceptable views of the participants are very important in influencing voters. Political parties should, at first, accept the importance of electronic media in influencing voting decision. It can possibly be argued that political parties should be conscious before promising something unachievable. Political stand of the political party should not confuse the electorates, specifically the supporters. It is therefore the responsibility of the political parties to elucidate their stand on important political issues to the voters. If activists are confused, it is difficult for them to convince the voters about the stand of the political party.

The fourth facade, named as *Deliverer* is considered to be another relevant factor in political marketing from the perspective of developing nations. Political parties accomplish their activities through active involvement of their activists. Party offices are located in different localities in order to

implement different kinds of area-specific party activities and to keep in touch with the local people. Local people, on the other hand, expect the activists of the political parties to solve the day-to-day problems. In this perspective, the examples of states like West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, etc can be cited. There are voters who are loyal supporters of some political parties. They do not change their voting decision even if some wrong steps are taken by political parties. On the other hand, some voters in different constituencies can change their voting decision based on issues which arise just on the eve of elections. Furthermore, the assistance from the party activists in difficult times or modest behaviour and constant contact by the party leaders and activists with the electorate can change the opinions of floating voters. Same kind of strategies for loyal and floating voters may not work. Political parties should develop different strategies for these two kinds of voters. In several developing nations mainly in the Indian sub-continent, political parties do not seem to have different strategies for loyal and floating voters. Political leaders create expectation through their appearance and promises. The value offerings from leaders in their speeches reinforce the expectations of the voters. So, political parties should be in search of leaders who are convincing and can be accepted by the electorate and have unblemished image. For this fourth factor, the statistically significant gap between relevance and practice is the result of the facts discussed above.

The fifth factor, named as *Inside-Out Political Marketing*, has been identified as another relevant factor of political marketing. From the perspective of a service organisation, internal ('inside-out') marketing is effective when the top management realises its importance and hire, train, and motivate employees to ensure that they provide excellent services to the customers. The objectives are achieved if political parties remain selective while choosing the members of the party. After selection, party members should go through training schedule. In general, political parties with exceptions, across the globe, do not regularly conduct training programmes for party members. Party conferences are organised by some of the political parties on a regular basis to communicate the ideology of the party to its members and previous activities of the parties are supposed to be critically analysed. In reality, the opinions of the lower-level party members are not always taken care of. Views of the leaders are generally not challenged by the members to ensure

that leaders are pleased. Strategies for the future should also be formulated through debate among the members of the party but debate within the party is not always entertained. Communication with the voters throughout the year is very important to understand the change in needs and wants of the electorate. Necessary changes in the party programmes can be made after considering the changes.

The sixth façade, named as *Selective leaning*, is considered to be relevant in the perspective of political marketing. This selective leaning which may be referred to as selective leaning in the light of the Indian trend, can create distance from the common people. If the political leaders are beyond the reach of the common people and travel by expensive cars, a detachment from the common people is inevitable. This causes alienation from the mass. Sometimes some political parties are criticised for helping the corporate sector at the cost of the common people. Relaxation on corporate taxes is one of the facilities given to the corporate sector. If political parties do not become cautious about this, the gap between relevance and practice will get widened. Languages and phrases used in campaign materials must be understood by the common people. If campaign materials are prepared keeping in mind the educated class of the society, the communication with common mass will be distorted and intended message will not be perceived. In general, political parties should desist from selective leaning. In this perspective, there can be some similarities among developing nations, especially, in some countries the Indian subcontinent.

The seventh factor has been named as *Current Political Actions*. The common party activists or cadres play a pivotal role in performing the contemporary political activities and the relevant actions therein. The past records and credibility of these common activists actually create the image of the political parties at local level. These people actually keep in touch with the people in the locality and people approach these activists whenever they are in problem. Moreover, these activists communicate different decisions of the party and help the voters understand the positive effects of those decisions. But in some of the cases political parties do not give proper importance to these activists. Promotions of different political parties in different media have become very common before elections. Some of the political advertisements are created in an innovative way after taking help of the experts of advertising. But in most of the cases, political parties are promoted

in a crude way. The value propositions are to be communicated properly through advertising. Moreover, promises made and claims of previous achievements in the different advertisements must be believable to the electorate. Creativity required to communicate with the electorate is generally observed to be missing in political advertisements. This leads to the gap between relevance and practice. However, mainstream political parties are gradually realising the importance and effect of social media and main political parties have started promoting themselves in social media but regular promotions in social media by most of the political parties in developing nations in general, are still missing. Negative comments against the other leader(s) of the same party who are in favour of the decision can create negative image in the minds of the electorate. It actually shows the lack of coordination and discipline in the party. If the party is to position itself as a disciplined party, these kinds of activities are to be controlled. This therefore creates gap between relevance and practice. It is also reported that party workers are sometimes involved in violence. Party workers are reported to take the help of violence to establish their strong presence, to make the people follow whatever they say, and sometimes just to protest against some incidents. If the political parties do not control these supporters and allow them to repeat these activities, electorate will develop negative impressions against these political parties. Just like salespeople represent the company when they meet the prospect and present the products and services of the company to them, the activists of the political parties actually represent the party in the locality. So, any negative activity of the party activists eventually leads to negative image of the political party.

For the eighth facade, named as *Organisational Reputation* is very relevant in the Indian context and activities of political parties of India are either positively or negatively perceived by the electorate. The continuous advertising in the media by the main political parties is very relevant in political marketing in developing nations but the reality is that the advertisements are telecast continuously only before the main elections. So, the communication with the electorate with the help of advertising throughout the year is not practised by the Indian political parties. Political parties may employ professional advertising agencies and following the parameters of effective promotion, in order to prepare political advertisements since advertising agencies put in

efforts to make the political communication utilising marketing communication. But again, this practice is visible only before elections.

The ninth factor, contains a single item and it has been named as *Political Ideology* which is unique in its nature. Ideology defines the domain which shows the way for political parties to decide on their vision and mission. A strong ideology-oriented political party is likely to adhere to its vision and mission even if there is emergence of a situation which pressurises the political party to deviate. Belief and faith in the ideology are required for brand building and electorate loyalty of a political party. Preferably, a political party should not deviate from its ideology since it can have negative impact on vote bank in the long run. Thus, for obvious reasons, the ninth façade contains a single item.

5.2 Relevance-Practice Contrast of Political Marketing: Ramification for Action Orientation of Political Parties

It has already been discussed in the methodology section that the questionnaire administered among the marketing experts comprises items wherein experts have been requested to give their opinions on the relevance as well as practice of each item. Hence, corresponding to each item we have been able to obtain two sets of values, one signifying the relevance and the other denoting the practice. Now, based on the results of factor analysis as described in the previous sub-section, we have considered the items that fall under each factor (façade) separately for relevance and practice. In other words, same set of items falling under each factor has been clubbed separately under relevance and practice. Thus, we have two sets of factors, each set comprising nine factors. Accordingly, two-tailed paired t-test has been employed to understand whether there is any statistically significant gap between the relevance of the factor and how much it is practised by the Indian political parties.

The result of the paired t-test is given in table 3. All the factors (factor 1 to factor 9) corresponding to the nine facades identified after analysing the responses of the marketing experts are mentioned in table 3 below. Here 'R' represents Relevance of the factor in political marketing and 'P' represents the practice of same the factor in Indian political perspective.

Table 3: Relevance-Practice Contrast of Political Marketing											
Pairs	Paired Differences					T	f	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
				Lower	Upper						
Factor1R - Factor1P	0.836	0.852	0.099	0.671	1.00 1	8.440	3	000			
Factor2R - Factor2P	0.838	0.899	0.105	0.662	1.01 5	7.916	1	000			
Factor3R - Factor3P	0.658	0.924	0.107	0.479	.837	6.127	3	000			
Factor4R - Factor4P	0.585	0.880	0.102	0.415	.756	5.720	3	000			
Factor5R - Factor5P	1.05856	0.860	0.100	0.891	1.22 525	10.580	3	000			
Factor6R - Factor6P	0.42342	0.893	0.1038	0.250	0.59 648	4.076	3	000			
Factor7R - Factor7P	0.59452	0.833	.09761	0.431	0.75 7	6.091	2	000			
Factor8R - Factor8P	0.22297	0.815	.09482	0.065	0.38 0	2.351	3	021			
Factor9R - Factor9P	0.85135	1.029	.11967	0.651	1.05 0	7.114	3	000			

For all the nine factors, the gap between relevance and practice has been observed to be statistically significant. The gaps, which are statistically significant, can be the result of the fact that political parties in India do not give appropriate importance to these factors and are constrained to practice them in their regular activities and political actions. In case of service marketing, if the marketers do not consider the relevant aspects related to their business and practise them to address those aspects, a gap is created and the chance of success reduces to a considerable extent. In the same perspective, political parties as service organisations must consider the relevant aspects of their organisations in particular and political environment in general and work on those to accrue electoral success. Thus, political parties need to consider this in the right perspective and reconfigure their strategic action orientation in the order to be more effective by filling in the perceived gap between relevance and practice.

For the first factor (facade) which is very relevant in the Indian context, it can be averred that the way political parties address this factor increases the gap between the relevance and practice. The Image and transparency of a political party becomes to some extent believable if the party administration

comprises educated and unblemished people. Thus, the statistically significant gap found in the analysis actually shows that actions mentioned above are not adequately taken care of by the Indian political parties. Again, for the second factor, *voters' preference analysis*, statistically significant difference with respect to relevance and practice has been observed since Indian political parties generally do not recognise the importance of this façade and hence the statistically significant difference has been observed. In India preference analysis is carried out just on the eve of election by majority of the political parties. Following the same logic it can be averred that the third factor, though very relevant in the Indian context, activities of the political parties do not seem to attach requisite importance to it. So, the gap between relevance and practice is observed to be statistically significant.

In terms of the fourth façade, it can be opined that the Indian political parties do not seem to have different strategies for loyal and floating voters and if leaders of the political parties are not perceived well by the electorate and the way promises made by those leaders is not very much convincing for the electorate, the political parties cannot make the electorates believe that the intangible value offerings are possible. For this reason, for the fourth factor, the statistically significant gap between relevance and practice is the result of the circumstance discussed above.

The fifth factor has been identified as a very important factor of political marketing. However, political parties in India do not, in general regularly conduct training and orientation programmes for party members. Moreover, there is occasional shift of allegiance from one party to another which disorients internal marketing orientation of rank and file. Ineffective inside-out marketing in political marketing as perceived by experts may be the reason behind the statistically significant difference in the context of the fifth factor. The sixth factor, named as *Selective Leaning*, is considered to be relevant by experts in political marketing. This selective or so to say elitist leaning can create distance from the common people and can explain the statistically significant gap between relevance and practice for the factor entitled "selective leaning".

In case of the seventh factor, the gap between relevance and practice is yet again found to be statistically significant since any negative activity of the party activists eventually leads to negative image of the political party and

thus signifies the gap between relevance and practice in case of this factor. For the eighth factor, named as organisational *reputation*, the gap is again observed to be statistically significant. This signifies that as far as reputation façade is concerned, it is very relevant in the Indian context and activities of political parties of India, either positively or negatively perceived by electorate, cannot bridge the gap between relevance and practice. As far as the ninth factor, Ideology, it may be averred that political parties with strong ideology should also modify their ideology with the changing political environment. In some of the cases political parties are alleged for communicating very popular ideology and vouching to follow it but not sticking to it when situation is not conducive. This creates a gap between relevance and practice.

6. Conclusion

It has already been mentioned in the introductory note of this research article that the paucity of original work on political marketing from the context of developing nations motivated the researcher to conduct a research work on this topic. It was extremely challenging for the researcher to identify the facets of political marketing from the identified perspective because of the lack of research work on political marketing with emphasis on the developing nation's perspective. The aspects were identified from foreign literature and have been improvised with the help of secondary sources concerning activities of Indian politics published in different reputed newspapers, books, and websites. It was again challenging in the sense that the available literature could not give any direction towards the development of proper methodology. Construction of the questionnaires for marketing experts with the help of the identified aspects was methodically done in order to ensure that the statements presented to marketing experts were purely from service marketing perspective. The nine factors which have been identified on the basis of the responses of the marketing experts can be considered as the important facets of political marketing from the perspective of a developing nation. Furthermore, the identification of statistically significant gaps with respect to the identified facets highlights the areas where political parties need to emphasise in identifying their respective political action orientation.

It was also found out through the analysis of the responses of the marketing experts that a gap exists between the relevance of the facets of political marketing and the extent to which these facets are practised by political parties. This is a testimony to the fact that Indian political parties in general do not emphasise on those practices that are strategically relevant in the context of political marketing. So, it is imperative for the political parties to bridge the gap in order to be successful in electoral politics. This therefore develops the basic framework of political action orientation of political marketing. Although in small countries, the results can be generalised, in a vast and diverse country like India, the results may vary from region to region depending on the political environment. This research work will provide a systematic path to analyse the voting behaviour using the concepts and tools of marketing and to formulate effective courses of action to increase the probability of success in electoral politics with respect to developing nations in general and India in particular.

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Linguistic Politeness and Social Hierarchies: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Etiquette in Communication

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Abstract:

'Linguistic Politeness and Social Hierarchies: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Etiquette in Communication' explores how politeness strategies reflect and perpetuate power imbalances in diverse cultural contexts, with a qualitative lens on the nuanced relationship between speech acts and social structures. By examining theoretical perspectives from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and cultural anthropology, this paper underscores how individuals adapt language to maintain face, convey deference, or signal authority in both formal and informal settings. The research illuminates the significant influence of cultural norms on expressions of respect and subordination, emphasizing the multifaceted ways language acts as a vehicle for negotiation of status. Furthermore, it investigates how evolving digital platforms challenge or reinforce politeness norms that have been historically tied to age, gender, and rank. By weaving together interviews, observational data, and critical discourse analysis, the study contributes fresh insights into the persistent power differentials that shape interpersonal communication. Ultimately, this paper argues that sensitivity to cross-cultural variations in politeness does not merely facilitate smoother interactions but also fosters a deeper understanding of the societal structures that underlie them. In an era where globalization and technology rapidly reconfigure communicative boundaries, appreciating these subtleties can help mitigate conflict and foster inclusive, equitable interactions. Through this inquiry, the paper explores how emerging generational networks reshape deference norms, revealing alignments and tensions across cultural boundaries. By examining these patterns through a qualitative lens, the

study aims to illuminate the interplay between discourse, power, and social cohesion.

Keywords: *Politeness Strategies, Cross-Cultural, Linguistic Politeness, Social Hierarchies, Cross-Cultural Communication, Etiquette, Power Dynamics.*

Introduction

‘Linguistic Politeness and Social Hierarchies: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Etiquette in Communication’ explores how politeness strategies reflect and perpetuate power imbalances in diverse cultural contexts, with a qualitative lens on the nuanced relationship between speech acts and social structures.

Objectives

- To analyse how language functions as a form of social control by highlighting the role of politeness strategies in both reproducing and contesting power imbalances.
- To investigate how cultural norms shape linguistic etiquette within hierarchical settings, paying close attention to formal titles, honorifics, and other deference markers.
- To explore the interplay between personal identity factors such as age, gender, and social status and politeness norms across varied cultural contexts.
- To propose interpretive frameworks that enhance cross-cultural understanding of hierarchical communication, ultimately promoting empathy, collaboration, and equity in diverse social environments.

Methodology

This qualitative study adopts an interpretive paradigm, drawing on ethnographic techniques and discourse analysis to unpack the complexities of linguistic politeness. It emphasizes context-rich examinations of naturally occurring interactions, focusing on how cultural norms and power relations shape speech events. Analytical procedures involve coding transcripts for markers of respect, deference, and face-threatening acts, thereby unravelling the subtle dynamics that underpin social hierarchies. Triangulation through researcher reflexivity and peer debriefing ensures that emergent themes accurately reflect participants’ lived experiences.

Discussion

1. The Conceptual Basis of Politeness and Hierarchy

Politeness, as conceptualized in sociolinguistics, transcends mere niceties and emerges as a mechanism of social regulation that maintains harmony among interactants (Brown and Levinson). Rooted in Goffman's notion of face, politeness strategies help individuals preserve self-esteem while acknowledging the social standing of others. Because language choices are seldom neutral, even simple greetings or forms of address can reinforce or challenge existing hierarchies. For instance, a subordinate's consistent use of titles like "Sir" or "Madam" foregrounds power imbalances, highlighting the asymmetrical nature of the interaction. Conversely, seemingly egalitarian approaches, such as first-name address, can mask deeper inequalities if cultural norms dictate otherwise. Politeness is thus both relational and context-dependent: its manifestation depends on cultural expectations, social roles, and individual intentions, thereby intertwining courtesy with structures of authority.

From an anthropological perspective, politeness is viewed as a learned practice, passed down through generational norms and institutional frameworks (Duranti). Children acquire context-specific linguistic behaviours that guide their interactions within families, schools, and peer groups. As these behaviours are internalized, politeness becomes a socially endorsed expectation, facilitating predictable patterns of communication. Yet, this predictability can serve as a double-edged sword: while it fosters a sense of mutual respect, it may also discourage open dialogue in contexts where direct confrontation is necessary to resolve deeper issues. Hence, the study of politeness unveils the tacit 'rules of engagement' that define who holds authority, who defers, and when it is permissible to deviate from established norms. A deeper understanding of these foundational concepts underscores the importance of politeness in shaping both micro-level interactions such as one-on-one conversations and macro-level hierarchies that span entire communities and institutions. Politeness and hierarchy remain inextricably linked, forming the bedrock of social order across cultural landscapes.

2. Cultural Norms and Power Distance

In cross-cultural communication studies, the concept of power distance, primarily advanced by Hofstede, indicates how societies handle inequality in

interpersonal relationships. High power-distance cultures often display rigid hierarchies, with linguistic etiquette emphasizing titles, honorifics, and indirect directives to preserve respect and authority. For example, in a corporate setting within such cultures, subordinates may avoid open disagreement with superiors, relying on subtle cues and formulaic expressions to convey concerns without appearing confrontational. This intricate dance of linguistic politeness not only reinforces the status quo but also safeguards face for both parties involved. However, low power-distance cultures, generally found in Western societies, prioritize egalitarian values. Here, direct communication is more common, and hierarchical distinctions are downplayed through informal address forms and the encouragement of open debate. Politeness in these contexts hinges less on strict deference and more on mutual acknowledgment of individual rights.

Despite these broad distinctions, power distance is not an absolute measure; local customs, generational perspectives, and organizational cultures can blur the lines between high and low power-distance orientations. Multinational companies operating across regions often confront this complexity, as employees from varying backgrounds negotiate how to balance deference and directness in daily interactions. Understanding these cultural underpinnings is crucial: failing to recognize high-context norms can lead to perceptions of rudeness, whereas underplaying egalitarian ideals might stifle necessary feedback or innovation. Ultimately, politeness emerges as a flexible tool employed to navigate the demands of hierarchical relationships, even in ostensibly egalitarian cultures. A nuanced appreciation of power distance thus reveals that politeness must be continually recalibrated in response to shifting, complex contexts, serving as both a mirror and a mediator of social stratification across cultural landscapes.

3. Face-Saving and Status Negotiation

Face-saving practices lie at the heart of politeness, particularly in societies where public image and communal harmony are paramount. Brown and Levinson's framework distinguishes between positive face the desire to be liked or admired and negative face the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. In hierarchical settings, face-saving can become even more complex: subordinates might employ indirect language to highlight respect, while superiors, aware of their heightened authority, may carefully modulate

directives to avoid humiliating those beneath them. This nuanced interplay of linguistic strategies ensures that neither party loses face, thereby preserving social cohesion. However, the weight of formality can also inhibit genuine dialogue; subordinates might hesitate to voice dissent, fearing that direct disagreement would jeopardize both their face and the face of their superiors. Consequently, face-saving can function as a double-edged sword, enabling politeness on one hand while potentially stifling critical feedback on the other.

Status negotiation unfolds in these face-sensitive contexts as individuals continually calibrate their speech to align with or subtly contest, existing hierarchies. For instance, subordinates might adopt deferential forms of address yet also engage in coded humour or mild teasing to signal camaraderie and reduce social distance. Superiors may reciprocate with carefully measured informality, acknowledging shared humanity while maintaining the authority vested in their role. Cross-culturally, the precise mechanics of face-saving differ: some languages rely on elaborate honorific systems, whereas others opt for understated linguistic cues that still convey respect. In each case, politeness reflects an ongoing process of social negotiation, with every utterance functioning as a strategic move that shapes, challenges, or reinforces the hierarchical landscape. Recognizing these varied face-saving strategies provides insights into how people manage interpersonal tensions and sustain stable social structures, even under the pressures of evolving cultural norms.

4. Honorifics and Formality in Linguistic Etiquette

Honorifics stand as one of the most visible markers of respect in language, especially in high-context cultures such as Japan and Korea. By appending suffixes like “San,” “Sama,” or “Nim” to names or job titles, speakers overtly signal the relative status of the addressee. Such linguistic devices perform more than mere politeness; they codify social roles, reminding participants of their positions in a hierarchy that extends beyond individual relationships. This formality is not limited to East Asian contexts: variations of the formal “you” as seen in European languages like Spanish or French also function similarly, denoting a socially required distance. The deliberate selection of an honorific or formal pronoun helps navigate sensitive terrain: a speaker must convey respect, maintain face, and uphold the cultural script that governs interpersonal interactions.

However, strict adherence to honorifics and formal language can both clarify and complicate social encounters. On one hand, these markers minimize ambiguity by clearly stating the relational distance between speakers. On the other hand, excessive formality may create barriers to frank communication, potentially impeding teamwork or discouraging younger generations accustomed to more egalitarian forms of expression. Moreover, multilingual societies illustrate how speakers may choose or forgo honorifics based on context, weaving together multiple language systems and politeness norms. This code-switching, while rich in nuance, can also incite confusion when interlocutors do not share the same cultural assumptions about appropriate formality levels. Ultimately, honorifics are a salient example of how linguistic choices converge with societal hierarchies, reflecting evolving attitudes about respect and authority across varied cultural domains.

5. Gendered Dimensions of Politeness

Gender significantly influences politeness strategies, as historically prescribed norms often dictate divergent linguistic behaviours for men and women. Scholars such as Holmes note that women's speech tends to feature more hedges, tag questions, and supportive interjections, fostering an atmosphere of cooperation and rapport. Men, conversely, are often socialized to be more direct or assertive, reflecting the stereotypical association of masculinity with leadership or dominance. These gendered expectations become especially pronounced in hierarchical settings, where men's directness may be rewarded with perceptions of competence, while women who adopt similar tactics risk being seen as abrasive or unfeminine. Consequently, the interplay between politeness and gender can reinforce existing power differentials, particularly in workplaces or academic institutions that favour traditionally masculine communication styles.

Nevertheless, cross-cultural observations reveal that gender norms are neither monolithic nor universally stable. In some societies, women's polite speech is held in high regard, signifying refinement and emotional intelligence qualities that can also translate into leadership capital. Conversely, men may strategically use politeness markers to signal respect for authority or to cultivate solidarity with subordinates. Globalization further blurs these distinctions, with younger generations challenging conventional gender roles and experimenting with diverse forms of speech. While progress toward dismantling rigid gender

binaries in language is ongoing, deeply entrenched expectations continue to shape how politeness is perceived and practiced. Recognizing these complexities can inform institutional policies, enabling more equitable participation by acknowledging that politeness norms often intersect with broader questions of gender identity, power, and respect.

6. Cross-Generational Variations in Deference

Generational differences add another layer of complexity to linguistic politeness, especially in cultures that traditionally accord high respect to elders. Older generations might expect the use of titles, honorifics, or formal pronouns, interpreting direct address or casual speech as impolite or disrespectful. Younger individuals, however, exposed to global media and digital platforms, may perceive these formalities as outdated, preferring more egalitarian and succinct forms of communication. Such discrepancies can create friction within families, workplaces, and social institutions, as each age cohort navigates competing norms about how to address superiors or elders. Politeness, in this context, becomes a site for negotiating continuity and change: while some younger speakers adopt established forms to display filial piety or professional courtesy, others push boundaries by omitting traditional markers of deference.

This generational tension is not limited to language alone; it often reflects broader shifts in social values, education, and technology adoption. In collectivist cultures, maintaining face for elders remains paramount, and perceived lapses in politeness can lead to social sanctions that reverberate beyond individual interactions. Yet, rapid modernization has also granted younger people new forms of expertise particularly in digital realms allowing them to wield soft power in ways that challenge hierarchical norms. Consequently, politeness may evolve into a mutual exchange of respect and learning, rather than a unidirectional show of deference from young to old. Appreciating these cross-generational variations highlights how politeness remains dynamic, shaped by the interplay of traditional obligations and emerging social structures that prioritize flexibility, innovation, and shared authority.

7. Informal Settings and the Limits of Polite Behaviour

While politeness conventions often come to the forefront in formal or hierarchical contexts, informal settings reveal different but equally telling

dynamics. In close-knit friend groups or familial gatherings, directness can signify authenticity rather than disrespect, with teasing and jocular insults functioning as markers of intimacy. In such spheres, linguistic politeness may manifest less in structured honorifics and more in supportive behaviours, such as active listening and empathetic feedback. Nonetheless, even casual contexts are not free of hierarchy: older relatives, social influencers, or community leaders may still command subtle deference, and violations of these unspoken norms can trigger social repercussions. Hence, politeness remains a negotiation of perceived closeness, group norms, and individual sensitivities.

Tensions emerge when individuals attempt to transfer the linguistic styles of intimate circles into professional or intergenerational arenas. The casual language that fosters rapport among friends may appear too bold or presumptive in a workplace setting. Similarly, group-specific slang or shared humour can alienate outsiders unacquainted with the code, thereby undermining inclusive communication. These mismatches underscore the limits of polite behaviour: no single, uniform set of rules can govern every interaction across contexts. Instead, individuals draw upon multiple registers formal, informal, coded, or hybrid depending on the audience and the social stakes. Recognizing that politeness is not a static script but rather an adaptive strategy allows for greater flexibility and sensitivity, helping speakers navigate the blurry boundaries between casual camaraderie and social decorum.

8. Digital Communication and Evolving Etiquette

The rise of digital platforms has profoundly reshaped the landscape of linguistic politeness. Emails, instant messages, and social media posts often collapse traditional cues such as tone of voice and body language leaving only text and symbolic markers like emojis or GIFs. While these digital elements can infuse warmth and personality, they also open avenues for ambiguity: a curt reply might be read as rude, or an emoji-laden message might seem unprofessional in certain contexts. Moreover, power hierarchies can blur when subordinates feel free to directly message superiors, bypassing once-clear channels of communication. Such informality can foster open dialogue but may also lead to misunderstandings if participants hold different assumptions about acceptable digital etiquette.

In cross-cultural digital interactions, these challenges multiply. A single emoji might have divergent connotations across cultural and generational lines,

while the expectation of rapid response times can strain politeness norms that prioritize thoughtful, measured speech. Likewise, platforms like WhatsApp or Slack can encourage a casual tone that clashes with cultural contexts valuing formal address and strict hierarchical protocols. Nonetheless, digital spaces also offer opportunities for more inclusive communication, enabling the expression of politeness through creative visuals or multilingual code-switching. As societies continue to integrate technology into daily life, linguistic politeness evolves accordingly, requiring constant negotiation between old norms and new modes of interaction. In this sense, the digital domain exemplifies how politeness remains perpetually in flux, shaped by social, cultural, and technological forces.

9. Conflict Mitigation through Politeness Strategies

Politeness is often invoked as a mechanism to prevent or mitigate interpersonal conflict. By deploying indirect requests, hedges, or honorifics, speakers soften the impact of criticism or refusal, thus reducing the likelihood of overt confrontation. Such strategies are especially vital in cultures where “losing face” can have significant social consequences. In organizational settings, for example, managers might couch corrective feedback in praise or constructive suggestions, balancing the need to address performance issues with the desire to maintain positive working relationships. This careful calibration of language can be seen as a form of pre-emptive conflict resolution, forestalling hostility through measured deference and empathy. At the same time, excessive politeness might inadvertently prolong underlying tensions if crucial matters remain unspoken or ambiguously addressed.

Cross-cultural encounters further complicate matters, as politeness norms vary widely. A direct style acceptable in one culture might be perceived as blunt or confrontational in another, triggering a negative cycle of misunderstanding. Conversely, highly indirect forms of speech may confuse interlocutors accustomed to more explicit communication. Effective conflict mitigation thus requires a meta-awareness of divergent norms, combined with the flexibility to adapt one’s speech to the preferences of others. Such adaptation does not imply manipulation; rather, it involves empathetic listening, clarifying intentions, and carefully selecting language that respects the dignity and expectations of all parties. By recognizing politeness as a strategic resource, individuals and organizations can navigate cultural and interpersonal

fault lines, fostering cooperation and mutual respect even when disagreements arise.

10. Implications for Cross-Cultural Understanding

A nuanced grasp of politeness strategies bears significant implications for cross-cultural understanding, especially in our globalized world. Multinational corporations, international NGOs, and diverse academic institutions all benefit when stakeholders comprehend the cultural roots of linguistic etiquette, tailoring their communication to avoid needless friction. In practice, this might include offering staff training on culturally specific norms or encouraging a mindful approach to digital exchanges, where tone and hierarchy can become muddled. Moreover, diplomats and negotiators who appreciate both overt and covert markers of politeness are better positioned to interpret nuanced signals, defuse potential conflicts, and find common ground. Such cross-cultural competencies not only smooth day-to-day interactions but also contribute to broader goals of international cooperation and social cohesion. For educators, policy-makers, and community leaders, recognizing the interplay between politeness and hierarchy offers a pathway to inclusive and equitable communication. Schools that incorporate lessons on cultural pragmatics encourage students to understand the diverse ways politeness can manifest, reducing instances of bullying or exclusion rooted in misunderstandings. Similarly, workplace initiatives aimed at raising awareness of high-context versus low-context norms can avert tensions that stem from mismatched expectations around formality and directness. Ultimately, sustained efforts to highlight politeness as a critical dimension of social life deepen collective empathy and create spaces where people from varied backgrounds can interact productively without sacrificing their cultural identities. By foregrounding linguistic etiquette's potential to both fortify and subvert social stratification, we open avenues for dialogue that transcend mere politeness, leading instead toward genuine mutual respect and cross-cultural solidarity.

Findings

The findings reveal that linguistic politeness functions as a socially embedded system for reinforcing or challenging hierarchies across diverse cultural contexts. Honorifics, indirect speech, and formal titles emerged as prevalent markers of deference in high power-distance settings, while egalitarian cultures often preferred more direct, succinct forms of address. Gender consistently

influenced politeness choices, with women more likely to employ relational strategies and men often favouring directness. Intergenerational differences highlighted how younger speakers negotiate established norms by opting for less formal language, sometimes clashing with older expectations of respectful speech. Digital platforms both complicated and democratized politeness conventions, enabling rapid, casual exchanges that can bypass traditional hierarchy but also create misunderstandings. Overall, politeness not only facilitates harmonious interactions but also reveals underlying power structures, suggesting that cultural awareness and adaptive communication skills are vital for navigating complex social landscapes.

Limitations

Although this research offers insights into how politeness and hierarchy intersect in various cultural contexts, several limitations merit attention. First, the focus on interpretive discourse analysis means that broader generalizations may require additional quantitative or mixed-method approaches to validate recurring themes. Second, the study's exploration of hierarchical contexts may not fully account for fluid or egalitarian social structures, where politeness norms shift rapidly due to generational or technological changes. Third, while critical discourse analysis can highlight power differentials, it may underrepresent the role of nonverbal cues, such as body language or facial expressions in constructing polite interactions. Fourth, the interplay between digital and face-to-face communication is complex and evolving, posing challenges to capturing a comprehensive snapshot of current trends. Despite these constraints, the research underscores the enduring influence of linguistic politeness as both a mirror and a mediator of social hierarchies, warranting further investigation in diverse contexts.

Conclusion

Linguistic politeness emerges as a powerful lens through which to observe, interpret, and engage with social hierarchies across a wide spectrum of cultural and contextual settings. By highlighting the interplay of face-saving mechanisms, honorifics, and directness or indirectness in speech, this study illustrates the intricate ties between communication practices and power relations. Far from being a superficial courtesy, politeness actively shapes how individuals and groups negotiate authority, establish rapport, and maintain societal cohesion. It operates dynamically, influenced by factors such as

gender, generation, and cultural norms, which together either reinforce or challenge existing frameworks of deference and respect.

Moreover, the acceleration of globalization and digitalization adds additional layers of complexity. While technology has democratized certain aspects of communication, enabling open dialogue across status boundaries, it has also introduced new etiquette dilemmas that can amplify misunderstandings. Recognizing these evolving dimensions of politeness is essential for policymakers, educators, organizational leaders, and individuals seeking to cultivate more harmonious and equitable social interactions. Ultimately, the findings highlight that sensitivity to linguistic etiquette goes beyond fostering smooth exchanges; it offers a window into the very structures that define social order, making politeness an indispensable key to understanding and navigating the cultural tapestry of the twenty-first century.

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