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Life-World of Sexual Minorities: A Journey from Questioning to Life after Coming Out

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Abstract: *Identifying one as belonging to a sexual minority has serious implications on oneself. The journey that begins with questioning and self-identification followed by coming out has a long-standing effect in shaping one's life whether it be socially or personally. Although the process focuses on identifying oneself and exploring one's sexuality and sexual orientation the impact of it in society is tremendous. The process includes the complexities of dealing with homophobic people and the stigma associated and can be dreadful as the journey progresses. Identifying as sexual minority especially in a country like India where the mainstream culture provokes such practices has even serious effects. The study aims to understand the journey and the life-world of lesbian and gay persons in Kerala with focus on the coping strategies and strengths that aided in resolving the conflicts and empowered them to strive through. The study is qualitative in nature and multiple case study design was used to obtain detailed data.*

Key Words: *Sexuality, sexual orientation, sexual minority, lesbian, gay, life-world.*

1.1 Introduction

Heterosexuality, deeply ingrained in societal norms across cultures and often intertwined with religious beliefs, has historically been upheld as the standard, while homosexuality has been stigmatized and marginalized. This societal dichotomy has led to the treatment of homosexuality with shame and disgust, perpetuating discrimination and inequality. However, attitudes toward

homosexuality are gradually shifting, partly due to increased political activism and advocacy efforts by sexual minorities. These movements aim to challenge the perception of homosexuality as abnormal and instead advocate for acceptance and recognition of diversity in sexual orientation. By asserting their rights and identities, sexual minorities seek to redefine societal perceptions, emphasizing that differences in sexual orientation do not diminish an individual's humanity or value as a member of society.

Reflecting on the journey of identifying as a sexual minority encompasses a multifaceted exploration of lived experiences and perceptions. The experiences of being a Lesbian and Gay (LG) have undoubtedly left profound imprints on individuals' lives, shaping their personal and professional trajectories. LG individuals navigate a complex landscape of contextual informal actions and attitudes, which can significantly influence their sense of self and interactions within society. These experiences, whether positive or negative, contribute to the formation of identity and inform how individuals navigate various social and professional contexts. Understanding these perceptions and experiences provides valuable insight into the nuanced challenges and triumphs encountered by LG individuals on their journey towards self-acceptance and societal inclusion.

Homosexuality and Human Rights

Identifying as a person belonging to sexual minority can have discriminating effects on one's daily life especially in connection with violation of human rights. Biases, negative generalizations, and segregation are profoundly imbedded in our value system and behavioural patterns. For some public authorities the statement of homophobic bias remains both genuine and good. Various human rights violations against sexual minorities encompass several dimensions. These include the denial of equality before the law, often manifesting in specialized criminal arrangements or practices targeting individuals based on sexual orientation, alongside the exclusion of protections against discrimination in anti-discrimination laws. Additionally, violations extend to the right to life, with instances of the death penalty imposed for same-sex sexual conduct, and the right against degrading treatment. Biases and prejudices often impede the right to a fair trial in courts, while freedom of movement may be constrained, particularly for bi-national same-sex couples. Privacy rights are frequently violated concerning intimate relations, while obstacles to practicing religion, accessing work, social security, and forming

families further compound these injustices. Educational systems may perpetuate bias and stigma, infringing upon the right to education for sexual minorities. Throughout history, heterosexuality has been deeply entrenched as the dominant norm within society, often upheld and reinforced by cultural traditions and religious doctrines. This normative view positions heterosexuality as the expected and accepted form of sexual orientation, while any deviation from this standard, such as homosexuality, has been met with societal disapproval and condemnation. Consequently, individuals who identify as homosexual have often faced discrimination, prejudice, and ostracism due to their sexual orientation. However, in recent times, there has been a notable shift in attitudes toward homosexuality, driven in part by increased awareness, education, and advocacy efforts by the LGBTQ+ community and its allies. These movements have challenged prevailing stereotypes and prejudices, advocating for the recognition and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. As a result, there has been a growing acknowledgment that sexual minorities are not abnormal or deviant but rather individuals who deserve the same rights, dignity, and respect as their heterosexual counterparts. This ongoing evolution in societal perceptions reflects a broader cultural shift towards inclusivity, diversity, and equality for all members of society, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. (D'Augelli, 1994).

Coming Out

Coming out represents a significant and often shared social milestone for individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. Historically, the term “coming out” originally referred to the formal debut of young women into society, marking their transition into adulthood (Chauncey, 1994). In its contemporary usage, “coming out” has evolved to signify the act of disclosing one’s sexual orientation, specifically revealing that one is gay. For many individuals, this process of self-disclosure can be emotionally charged, especially after spending considerable time concealing or denying their true identity. However, coming out is not merely about revealing one’s sexual orientation to others; it also involves an internal process of integration and self-acceptance. Through coming out, gay individuals navigate the complex task of reconciling different facets of their identity, striving to authentically embrace and integrate all aspects of themselves into their sense of self. This journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance is a deeply personal and transformative experience,

marking a crucial step towards living authentically and openly as a gay person in society.

Herd and Boxer (1993) characterized Coming Out as a custom cycle of entry that requires a gay individual to:

- i) Forget the standards of regular or essentialist heterosexuality;
- ii) Forget the generalizations of homosexuality; and
- iii) Gain proficiency with the methods of the lesbian and gay culture they are entering.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study delved into the unique experiences of individuals who identify as sexual minorities. Employing a case study design, the research utilized a non-probability, purposive sampling method to select participants for individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The chosen participants, who self-identify as lesbian and gay, engaged in in-depth discussions, complemented by secondary data gathered from journals, newspaper articles, observations, and various sources. Through these interviews and discussions, the study aimed to elicit first-hand insights and perspectives. The collected data underwent qualitative analysis, with a focus on understanding the research inquiries through the lens of the participants' experiences.

3. Case Presentation:

3.1 Case I: Case 1 presents the narrative of Mr A, a 26-year-old woman pursuing her Master's in Commerce while actively participating in a community advocating for sexual minorities. She grew up with two younger sisters and her parents, drawing inspiration from her grandmother's strength as a single parent. Mr A recognized her lesbian identity at a young age, feeling a sense of normalcy despite societal pressures. However, her journey through a Catholic institution for her undergraduate studies was marked by forced conformity to homophobic attitudes, leading to isolation and internalized self-loathing. Despite facing discrimination from teachers and peers, she excelled academically and developed resilience. Following graduation, Mr A openly embraced her sexual identity in her professional life, navigating stereotypes and homophobia. While finding support among friends and online communities, she also faced micro aggressions, including intrusive questions and vulgar comments. Her family, though initially resistant, gradually accepted her orientation, though societal rumours and pressures continue to strain their

relationship. Despite these, Mr A maintains her independence and strives to empower other sexual minorities while pursuing personal interests and seeking emotional support through therapy. In her social circle, Mr A confronts both acceptance and occasional homophobic remarks, yet she remains assertive in educating and correcting others. Despite encountering discrimination in public spaces, she remains resilient and engaged in activities that bring her joy, including music and supporting fellow lesbians. Through her journey, Mr A embodies resilience and determination, striving to live authentically and advocate for herself and others in the face of societal prejudice.

3.2 Case - II

Mr B, a 37-year-old entrepreneur who holds a master's in business administration. Hailing from a Hindu family in a rural village, Mr B grew up close to his two elder sisters and his parents. His journey of self-discovery began at the tender age of 9, grappling with feelings he couldn't understand in a society that offered no visibility or support for sexual minorities. As he matured, the internet became a lifeline, offering a glimpse into a world where his identity was not taboo but shared by many. However, his path to self-acceptance was fraught with obstacles, particularly within his conservative family. At 26, pressured by his family's marriage proposals, Mr B made the courageous decision to come out, facing rejection and emotional abuse. His family, unable to comprehend his sexual orientation, struggled to reconcile societal norms with their son's truth. Forced to resign his job abroad, Mr B returned home, where depression loomed over him like a dark cloud. Despite these challenges, he found solace in his involvement with the sexual minority community, though his identity remained hidden. Years passed, and Mr B's resilience led him to find love on a dating site meant for gay individuals seeking meaningful connections. Their secret marriage in a temple, just months before the decriminalization of Section 377 in India, marked a poignant moment in their lives. However, the journey to acceptance was far from over. Publicly revealing their marriage sparked backlash from both families and society, threatening their safety and well-being. Yet, Mr B remained steadfast, advocating for same-sex marriage rights and challenging societal misconceptions. Today, three years after coming out, Mr B and his partner continue to fight for their rights in the Kerala High Court, determined to pave the way for others in the LGBTQ+ community. Despite the hurdles, Mr B remains a beacon of hope, sharing his story to inspire change and

foster acceptance in a society still grappling with the complexities of sexual orientation and identity.

3.3 Case - III

Ms C, a 31-year-old woman, was born and raised in a conservative Hindu family in a rural village in Kerala. From a tender age, she grappled with feelings of difference, navigating a society devoid of visibility or support for sexual minorities. Despite her close-knit family dynamic, which included her parents and three older brothers, she felt isolated, unable to openly express her sexual orientation.

Her journey toward self-acceptance was fraught with challenges, compounded by internalized homophobia and the looming fear of rejection from her family and community. The internet emerged as a beacon of hope, offering her access to information and communities where her identity found acceptance and celebration. In defiance of societal norms and familial expectations, Ms. C courageously embraced her identity as a lesbian woman in her early 20s.

However, finding romantic connections within her community proved arduous, given the prevailing taboos surrounding same-sex relationships. Turning to online LGBTQ+ communities, she discovered solace and solidarity, forging meaningful friendships with fellow lesbian women who shared her struggles and experiences.

Empowered by her own journey, Ms. C became increasingly immersed in LGBTQ+ activism within her local community. Beginning with modest initiatives such as organizing informal support groups and awareness campaigns, she gradually expanded her efforts, challenging societal norms and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights. Over time, her endeavors garnered momentum, fostering partnerships with local NGOs and government initiatives dedicated to promoting inclusion and diversity.

Throughout her odyssey, Ms C exemplified remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. Confronting her internalized homophobia, she prioritized self-care and mental well-being, embracing her identity with unwavering confidence and pride. Along the way, she emerged as a beacon of inspiration for others grappling with similar challenges, offering invaluable support, guidance, and hope to those navigating their own journey of identity and acceptance.

3.3 Case - IV

Mr D, a 28-year-old accountant, hailed from a middle-class family, where he was fortunate to have supportive parents and an older sister, seemingly leading a conventional life. However, during his teenage years, he grappled with feelings of attraction towards other boys, sparking internal questioning and uncertainty. Fearing societal judgment, he concealed these emotions, masking them behind a facade of conformity. As he transitioned into his early 20s, his internal struggle deepened, exacerbating feelings of isolation and loneliness. Bereft of confidants, he lived in constant dread of rejection from his loved ones, further withdrawing into himself, burdened by shame and self-doubt.

The pressure to conform to heteronormative expectations weighed heavily on him, compelling him to meticulously maintain a guise of heterosexuality to conceal his authentic identity. Despite his efforts to blend in, the weight of societal norms only heightened his sense of alienation and desolation. However, a glimmer of hope emerged when he found the courage to come out, buoyed by the support of a colleague who shared similar experiences.

Mr D's journey towards self-acceptance was met with a complex array of responses from those in his life. While some embraced him with open arms and understanding, others grappled with acceptance, leading to moments of rejection and misunderstanding. Yet, amidst these challenges, he discovered solace in LGBTQ+ support groups and online communities, finding kinship with individuals who shared similar struggles. Through therapy and introspection, he embarked on a journey of prioritizing his mental well-being, gradually shedding the layers of shame and self-doubt that had long hindered his progress.

Today, Mr D stands as a vocal advocate for LGBTQ+ acceptance and visibility in Kerala. Leveraging his role as an accountant, he endeavors to foster inclusivity and diversity within the workplace, challenging stereotypes and promoting greater understanding among his peers and colleagues. His journey serves as a testament to resilience and the transformative power of self-acceptance, inspiring others to embrace their authentic selves and advocate for positive change.

4. Discussion And Findings

4.1 Discussion

Profile of the Cases

Case No.	Age	Sexual orientation	Sex	Education	Living status	Religion	Occupation
1 Mx A	24	Lesbian	Female	Pursuing M.com	Alone	Hindu	Financial associate
2 Mr B	37	Gay	Male	MBA	family	Hindu	Business
3 Ms C	31	Lesbian	Female	Bachelor of Arts	Alone	Hindu	Social Activist
4 Mr D	28	Gay	Male	Bachelor of Com.	Partner	Christian	Accountant

Navigating the Path of Sexual Minority Identity: A Personal Journey

Understanding the complexities and nuances of identifying as a sexual minority involves delving into the unique journeys of individuals as they navigate self-discovery, acceptance, and societal interactions. The study uncovers the varied experiences of four individuals, each traversing their path with distinct challenges and triumphs.

Questioning: Case 1 effortlessly grasped her sexual orientation from a tender age, supported by a circle of friends facing similar circumstances, thus negating the need for a formal period of questioning. Observing others with similar attractions, she found validation and normalization in her experiences. Case 2, also recognizing his same-sex interests early on,

underwent a brief phase of introspection, though unfamiliar with the terminology of homosexuality. In contrast, Case 3 embarked on a journey marked by profound self-examination and turmoil, grappling with the conflict between her conservative Hindu upbringing and her evolving identity. Case 4, while not wrestling with questioning, faced challenges centered around the acceptance of his true self.

Coming out: Case-1 publicly disclosed her sexual orientation after years of subtle expressions, opting to share her journey via social media. While met with both supportive messages and threats from friends and the community, the revelation of her identity through letters from her girlfriend shocked both her and her family. Conversely, Case-2 found himself thrust into the coming out process unexpectedly, compelled by familial pressures arising from a marriage proposal search. Despite not intending to come out, confiding only in his sister, the ordeal led to immense stress, resignation from his job abroad, and the dissolution of his relationship, exacerbating depressive symptoms for three years. Both cases faced online backlash following their public disclosures. For Case-3, coming out was fraught with rejection and isolation, resulting in social withdrawal as her community and family struggled to accept her identity. Meanwhile, Case-4 grappled with years of fear surrounding coming out, opting to conceal his true orientation and endure the weight of an inauthentic identity.

Experiences of Rejection: Case-1 perceives that her sexual orientation hasn't led to outright rejection but rather sparked curiosity among others. However, she experienced passive rejection from her family's attempts to persuade her, prompting her journey toward independence. Conversely, Case-2 encountered multifaceted rejection from family, community, and friends due to his sexual orientation. As Case-3 embraced her identity openly, she encountered subtle discrimination and micro-aggressions within her social circle. Comments from acquaintances and family members insinuated that her identity was somehow inferior or deviant, intensifying her feelings of alienation and self-doubt. Similarly, Case-4 faced hurtful remarks throughout his journey of embracing his identity.

Experiences of loss: The individuals experienced a range of losses, including severed social relationships due to homophobic attitudes, social isolation, feelings of inferiority, and diminished self-esteem. Additionally, some family members grappled with reconciling their love with their own prejudices,

resulting in strained dynamics and emotional distance. Case-2 also grappled with loss, believing that he could have uncovered various talents and skills if not for the lack of acceptance and support from his family.

Victimisation: The individuals encountered various forms of victimization from multiple facets of society, including their workplaces, families, communities, and public transportation. These experiences encompassed homophobic comments, actions, and behaviors, contributing to their sense of vulnerability and marginalization. Conversely, Case-2 experienced less external victimization in society but endured significant victimization within his family dynamic. This included threats of suicide, emotional abuse, and other forms of mistreatment, amplifying his struggles and compounding his emotional distress.

Micro-aggression: Each of the four cases recounted instances of experiencing micro-aggressions at different points, perceiving that certain segments of society engage in such behaviors without fully grasping their impact on others. While micro-aggressions are a daily occurrence, Case-2 noted a decline in such events over time, attributing it to increased awareness and sensitivity towards sexual minorities in society.

Social Support: Case-1 finds her social support network in various forms, including the sexual minority community where she actively participates, as well as her friends and younger sister, who often rally to her defense during family conflicts. Additionally, her past relationships have served as a significant support system, guiding her through different phases of life. For Case-2, his social support primarily stems from the LGBTQ+ community, particularly organizations like Queerrhythm, enabling him to engage in activities without disclosing his identity publicly. However, he faces a lack of support from his family and friends. Finding inclusion within the community has been instrumental in rebuilding his confidence, with his partner serving as his most significant source of support, sharing common interests and standing by his side through adversity. Both individuals draw solace and strength from their chosen family and the LGBTQ+ community. Online spaces provide vital lifelines, offering validation, understanding, and a sense of belonging that often eludes them in offline interactions.

Personal Growth and Identity Development

Personal Growth and Reflections: Each of the cases perceives their journey as a transformative process, beginning with self-acceptance and

continuing to evolve. Case-1 attributes her heightened sensitivity to the challenges she faced in gaining acceptance, fostering a deeper understanding of others' struggles. Case-2 regards his experiences as a unique narrative to share with the world, finding pride in the person he has become despite the challenges encountered. Case-3 reflects on her personal experiences as a catalyst for discovering resilience and solidarity within her network, empowering her to embrace her identity and advocate for a more inclusive society.

Anticipated Rejection and Discrimination: Before and after coming out, all individuals anticipated facing rejection and discrimination, with this anticipation intensifying post-disclosure. They were mentally prepared to encounter stigmatizing behaviors at public events like marriages and social gatherings. Case-1 even strategized planned responses to address such situations when they arose.

Anxiety Among Sexual Minorities: Case-2 observes that anxiety and stress are constant companions in the lives of sexual minorities. Particularly, anxiety surged after coming out to family, as it was often an unexpected event. Following public disclosures, anxiety heightened due to threats, derogatory comments, and the reactions of family members, adding to the emotional burden experienced by these individuals.

Internalized Stigma: Case-1 did not experience internalized stigma, perceiving homosexuality as commonplace and having friends with similar orientations. However, Case-2 and Case-3 expressed increasing fear as they became aware of their sexuality. Case-2 and Case-4, feeling isolated, struggled with a sense of abnormality, influenced by societal perceptions that often deemed homosexuality as wrong.

Identity Concealment: Each case grappled with concealing their identity to varying degrees, driven by the fear of rejection and isolation. Following their coming out experiences, Case-1 boldly expressed her identity without fear, whereas Case-2 and Case-4 opted to conceal their identities temporarily, hoping for others to reveal themselves to avoid being alone. Case-3, feeling confined by the inability to freely express her orientation, internalized feelings of shame and self-doubt, questioning whether acceptance for her true self would ever be attainable.

Social Relationships and Participation: Case-1's social relationships were significantly limited as she isolated herself in hopes of concealing her orientation. In contrast, Case-2 faced some challenges in his social relationships but found that more individuals were accepting of him. Following their coming out experiences, both cases experienced increased participation in community activities, empowering them to express themselves. While two individuals initially withdrew socially after coming out, they have since improved their participation within their community, particularly through online platforms.

Influence of Contextual Informal Actions and Attitudes

Experience of Gain: The individuals' experiences of gain can be categorized into personal and social realms. Personal gains encompass strength, personal empowerment, connections, acceptance, and heightened self-awareness. Meanwhile, social gains entail acquiring unique perspectives, increased sensitivity, and advocating for marginalized voices.

Coping Strategies: Case-1 employed coping strategies such as adjusting her attitude and cultivating mental resilience. Conversely, the other individuals coped by actively engaging in community events and using their voices to advocate for and empower others who were still in the process of coming out, drawing strength from their own experiences of adversity.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the multifaceted journey of identifying as a sexual minority, marked by processes of self-discovery, societal pressures, and familial dynamics. Despite encountering various forms of victimization and micro-aggressions, the individuals' experiences underscore the pervasive influence of societal attitudes. However, the presence of robust social support systems emerged as crucial in fostering resilience and alleviating adverse impacts. Furthermore, the experiences of both cases underscore the profound impact of contextual informal actions and attitudes on personal and professional lives. Through their journeys, they have acquired personal strengths, forged connections, and found acceptance, while also assuming unique social roles as advocates for marginalized voices. By adopting coping strategies tailored to their circumstances, they have navigated societal attitudes and discrimination, contributing to their personal growth and empowerment as LG individuals. These experiences underscore the significance of acceptance, understanding,

and solidarity in fostering an inclusive environment for sexual minorities. They highlight the ongoing journey toward acceptance and inclusion within the LG community, emphasizing the collective efforts needed to create a more inclusive society.

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Everyday Challenges Faced by Domestic Workers: An Empirical Study among Female Domestic Workers Living in Chan Para, Salugara, Siliguri

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Abstract: *The involvement of women in the informal labor market constitutes a longstanding phenomenon, which has witnessed a notable escalation over time. Presently, the informal labor sector encompasses a substantial proportion of women, particularly those migrating to urban areas with limited educational attainment. This paper endeavors to meticulously examine the myriad problems and challenges confronted by women engaged in domestic work, elucidating their strategies for navigating these obstacles while sustaining their daily employment. A particular focus is dedicated to unmarried domestic workers who commenced their labor at a young age. Notably, the domestic labor force in this context often juggles multiple household responsibilities within a day, yielding meager remuneration. Primarily possessing rudimentary educational qualifications, these domestic workers predominantly hail from socially marginalized backgrounds, encompassing various castes, religious affiliations, and geographic origins, with a significant proportion migrating from rural settings due to multifarious reasons. The research inquiry centralizes on delineating the challenges encountered by women domestic workers within their occupational milieu. To address this inquiry, the author proposes a methodological framework integrating diverse data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, unstructured interviews, participant observation, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling. The study site is Chan Para Salugara, situated in Siliguri, West Bengal, where the multifaceted dynamics of domestic labor are to be scrutinized and analyzed.*

Key Words: *Women domestic workers, challenges, rights and wellbeing.*

Introduction

In India, it is estimated that over four million individuals are engaged in domestic work (Deshingkar et al., 2008). This sector continues to persist as an unregulated and disorganized industry, characterized by a lack of formal recognition for its workforce, who are commonly referred to as “informal help” (Deshingkar et al., 2008). Remarkably, their remuneration, on average, falls significantly short, amounting to merely one-third of wages found in other sectors (Deshingkar et al., 2008). The terminology “domestic worker” serves as a prevalent descriptor for this unstructured realm of employment (Deshingkar et al., 2008). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), “domestic work” is defined as labor undertaken within one or more households. Those individuals engaged in domestic work within an employer-employee relationship are categorized as domestic workers (Chen, 2011). Notably, the demographic composition of this workforce predominantly comprises female housekeepers (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). A “domestic worker” often assumes responsibilities that encompass an array of household tasks, including cleaning, housekeeping (commonly referred to as “housekeeping”), and the provision of care to dependents, encompassing children and elderly individuals (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). Duties may extend to encompass culinary, laundry, ironing, grocery procurement, and sundry housekeeping chores, with some domestic employees also residing within the households where they work (Sharma, 2001). A subset of domestic workers resides in the very households where they are employed (Chen, 2011). These individuals provide services to their employers on a continuous and routine basis, with remuneration typically provided in the form of either cash or kind (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020).

Domestic work is seen as a low job which could easily be carried out without any skills and impure occupation traditionally performed by people, mostly women and children, whose lives are still dominated by a caste system that assigns people his/her place in the society (Anderson, 2000). They face many challenges because their work is not considered and that their decent works are continually ignored (Anderson, 2000). The working hours are determined by the needs and demands of the employers (Anderson, 2000). Given the time, effort, and labour required for domestic work, domestic workers’ salaries are extremely low when compared to other job categories, even within the informal sector (Anderson, 2000).

For individuals residing with the employers, wages are frequently added to the cost of their food and clothing. Domestic employees may be paid in 'cash' or 'kind' depending on the situation (Lalrempui and Elizabeth, 2020). There is no set norm that must be followed in this regard; instead, it relies on the verbal agreement (Lalrempui and Elizabeth, 2020). Similar to Lalrempui and Elizabeth (2020), the authors of this paper identify a significant challenge confronting employed women. The execution of their professional activities is often hindered by interruptions stemming from childbirth. A considerable number of women encounter difficulties in rejoining their pre-pregnancy occupations, consequently experiencing downward mobility that may manifest in accepting low-paying, part-time positions with restricted employment rights.

In contemporary India, female paid domestic workers (PDWs) represent a significant portion of the informal labor force, comprising around two-thirds of the total domestic workforce (Thakkar, 2023). The field of domestic work is commonly stigmatized, associated with low social status, servitude, and perceptions of being menial and unclean (Thakkar, 2023). Many female domestic workers with painful and untold stories were encountered during the research in Siliguri. It was observed that they expressed, "We are doing this to survive and provide education to our children whom we wished to see another life style". The occupational activities undertaken by domestic workers within private households in Siliguri serves a critical purpose, providing insights into the essential responsibilities they shoulder, from culinary tasks to caregiving duties. This delineation sheds light on the functions crucial for household functioning and emphasizes the regularity and constancy inherent in these tasks. Examining factors such as geographical proximity of workplaces and transportation modes enriches scholarly comprehension of domestic labor engagement. Similarly, scrutinizing the adversities faced by domestic workers, including job security and workplace safety concerns, offers valuable insights into the challenges of the domestic labor landscape. The paper enhances academic discourse and informs practical efforts to improve working conditions and support systems for domestic workers, benefiting policymakers, labor advocates, and employers.

Literature Review

Caregiver and Domestic workers

The term "caregiver" may be employed as an alternative descriptor for domestic workers due to their consistent prioritization of caregiving within

the scope of their responsibilities (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Within the conceptual framework of caregiving, two pivotal components warrant examination: (1) Caring Activities and (2) Caring Feelings (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Activities encompassing tasks such as the changing of diapers or the provision of empathetic listening are inherently classified as caregiving activities (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Caring Feelings, on the other hand, denote the caregiver's emotional investment characterized by concern and affection, which serve as motivational catalysts impelling the execution of their responsibilities not solely as obligatory duties but also as emotionally charged actions (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). It is pertinent to acknowledge that these two facets can exhibit variations among individuals, contingent upon their accrued work experiences in the capacity of caregivers (Lyon, 2011).

In the context of the “marketization of care,” monetary considerations assume paramount significance within the caregiving milieu (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). This orientation towards financial priorities may, at times, engender a deviation from the cultivation of genuine care feelings (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Consequently, when monetary concerns assume precedence within the realm of caregiving, caregivers may exhibit a proclivity towards the mechanistic fulfilment of their duties, marked by impersonality and a conspicuous absence of sincere affection towards their professional responsibilities (Folbre & Nelson, 2000).

Furthermore, the performance of caregiving activities can deteriorate into a mechanized routine bereft of the inherent qualities of concern and affection, thus engendering impersonality in the caregiving process (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Notably, distinct variances exist in the settings wherein caregiving is dispensed, delineating formal “professional” caregiving, characterized by remuneration and formal structuring, from informal caregiving, typified by its familial orientation within domestic confines (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Notwithstanding these categorical distinctions, an underlying homogeneity emerges between these two domains of caregiving (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Notably, women assume a predominant role within both formal and informal caregiving paradigms (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). Moreover, it is salient to observe that tasks integral to both these domains often entail intimate and potentially stigmatized forms of labor, colloquially designated as “dirty work,” further compounded by its relatively low societal status (Folbre & Nelson, 2000).

Inherent challenges abound within the caregiving vocation, particularly in instances where caregivers are unable to meet their self-imposed standards (Folbre & Nelson, 2000). During the course of research, the researchers encountered an illustrative case – a 23-year-old caregiver who candidly delineated her challenges. In her account, she articulated instances wherein she found herself subjected to blame in situations where infants cried without apparent cause. She recounted the additional burden of enduring harsh criticism when confronted with challenges in maintaining effective control over the child or in affording herself the luxury of adequate rest and leisure during the course of her caregiving duties.

Challenges of Women Domestic Workers

Women engaged in domestic work confront a myriad of challenges that often elude widespread recognition, thereby rendering them as constituents of one of the most vulnerable segments within the labor force (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). This vocation constitutes a primary wellspring of employment opportunities within the informal sector, proffering a semblance of routine labor for indigent and unskilled women dwelling both in urban and rural domains (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). The predicament is further compounded for women laboring as domestic aides within urban localities, predominantly because they are frequently non-indigenous to the areas in which they are employed (Anderson, 2000; Kakati & Tamuli, 2022).

Migrant domestic workers typically emanate from economically deprived rural backgrounds and, by virtue of their extant legal, economic, and political circumstances, find themselves dispossessed of the entitlements accorded to female domestic workers (Blackett, 2021; Kakati & Tamuli, 2022). This confluence of factors bespeaks an array of tribulations, characterized by the lack of societal recognition for their labor as legitimate employment, thereby culminating in the ceaseless infringement upon their rights to a modicum of decent work (Blackett, 2021). Notably, the idiosyncratic character of their workplace conveys an inherent obscurity, amplifying their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse (Blackett, 2021).

Historically, domestic labor has borne the ignominious reputation of constituting a menial and unclean occupation, predominantly carried out by women and children hailing from socially disadvantaged strata. Consequently, women engaged in this form of work are often bereft of the due reverence and equitable treatment from their employers, even in the contemporary milieu (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). In comparison to their counterparts in the

organized sector, Women Domestic Workers (WDWs) are further beleaguered by an intrinsic dearth of institutional support, unity, and collective capacity (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020). As a corollary, these workers frequently witness their entitlements to a dignified labor relegated to the periphery, as the singular nature of their profession exposes them to an augmented susceptibility to the predations of exploitation and abuse (Lalrempuii & Elizabeth, 2020).

Although a significant portion of women work in this industry, there is still a lack of clear statistical understanding. The industry suffers from issues such as poorly regulated low wages and a deficiency in policies (Sahni & Junnarkar, 2019). Within this contextual framework, the undertaking of an exhaustive inquiry into the predicaments encountered by female domestic workers situated in urban areas assumes significant relevance. The impetus for the selection of this research topic emanates from the conviction that the study's findings may offer valuable insights to a broad spectrum of stakeholders invested in the amelioration of conditions for women engaged in domestic work, with a particular focus on Siliguri. Furthermore, it promises to furnish a comprehensive overview of the prevailing circumstances surrounding domestic workers at the national level. Consequently, the research paper endeavors are concentrated on elucidating the array of challenges confronting female domestic workers and the strategies they employ in their daily quest to navigate these challenges. The research problem underpinning this study pertains to the identification and comprehension of the challenges encountered by women domestic workers within their workplace environments. In order to elucidate this overarching research problem, a set of delineated research objectives are posited

- a) The first objective of the paper is to analyze the categories of occupational activities domestic workers are primarily engaged in.
- b) The second objective is to examine the adversities confronted by the domestic workers in the workplace.

Methods

The methodological framework adopted in the course of research endeavor is predicated on a multifaceted approach, encompassing in-depth interviews, unstructured interviews, and participant observation. In addition, the utilization of snowball and purposive sampling techniques has been instrumental in the selection of appropriate respondents drawn from the target population. This

methodological rigor ensures the comprehensiveness and robustness of research findings, thereby substantiating the credibility and validity of the study's outcomes.

The researchers chose one particular locality Salugara located in Siliguri in the state of West Bengal. It was difficult to study the entire location therefore researchers chose small portion of area where around 70 plus houses are consist of in order to do the research. Researchers enter into the family through interaction and casual talk. Before entering into the dialogue, the area was visited once just to become familiar with the people, especially the women domestic workers. Every evening, a walk was taken to meet them because it's impossible to meet them during the day as they all go to their workplace.

Data collection was initiated with family visits, gradually entering into dialogue using the research questions prepared. Additionally, unstructured questions were utilized according to the field settings. Participation observations helped to observe the respondent's behaviour. Fifteen domestic workers were interviewed for the studies from the particular locality chosen locality.

Empirical Findings

Daily activities of domestic workers in their workplace

Based on observation and interaction with respondents (total 25), researchers found out that the domestic workers are engaged in various activities such as;

Activities Table

Sl	Activities involved	Percentage
1	Cooking	86%
2	Preparing lunch for the children	13%
3	Leaning and dusting the house	93%
4	Taking care of elderly	13%
5	Caring for a baby	6%
6	Washing and ironing the clothes	33%
7	Gardening	13%

The aforementioned activities pertain to the responsibilities undertaken by domestic workers when they engage in their work within private households. Fundamentally, their duties remain consistent on a daily basis, particularly for those employed by a single family. A significant proportion of these workers exhibit a preference for proximity to their workplace, facilitating a daily commute that mitigates extraneous expenditure. The majority of these domestic workers labor within a convenient walking distance of 10 to 15 minutes from their respective residences. However, there exist a minority for whom employment necessitates the utilization of alternate modes of transportation, such as tuk-tuks, buses, or bicycles.

An investigation was conducted to assess their subjective perception of the ease or difficulty inherent in their occupation. Diverse responses emerged from the domestic workers. Some individuals expressed contentment with their work, particularly when juxtaposed with outdoor labor, which exposes them to the elements. The notion of having a “permanent job” to sustain their livelihood was appreciated. In certain instances, families employed two to three domestic workers who could alternate their tasks on a weekly or monthly basis, in accordance with agreements among themselves or their employers.

This flexibility in work allocation imbues a sense of relief and job satisfaction, a universal aspiration shared by individuals across various vocations, irrespective of their nature of work. The purview of domestic workers often extends to culinary and cleaning duties within these households, often located within apartment complexes due to the nature of their employment. Consequently, their workday typically spans a duration of 4 to 5 hours, with tasks encompassing meal preparation, housekeeping, and dishwashing, as necessitated by their contractual obligations.

For those domestic workers who serve two to three different households, the duration of work allocated to each residence equates to a two-hour commitment before transitioning to their subsequent appointment. Part-time domestic workers engage in their occupation for a period ranging from 4 to 5 hours, while some extend their labor to encompass a minimum of 8 to 9 hours, depending on the specific circumstances. Conversely, full-time domestic workers do not adhere to a rigid temporal constraint; instead, they are granted a 1.5-hour respite during their workday. Their daily labor commences at 6 a.m. and concludes at 9 p.m., with occasional instances of being unable to take a break due to heightened work demands.

Adversities that Domestic Workers Confront in the Workplace

The inquiry advances to the second question: what challenges do domestic workers confront within their occupational milieu? Respondents expounded upon the multifaceted problems and difficulties inherent to their respective workplaces. An inquiry into their dynamics with employers was also undertaken to gain a comprehensive understanding of these challenges. A substantial number of participants shared their experiences, with a subset articulating concerns surrounding the formal nature of their employment, despite having dedicated nearly two years to their duties. These individuals articulated a sense of constraint, whereby they were unable to engage in open dialogue or voice their opinions, owing to an obligation to unreservedly adhere to their employers' directives.

Some employers exhibited a lack of understanding when domestic workers necessitated leave, be it due to health issues or to allocate time for familial responsibilities. Domestic workers conveyed instances where their job security was jeopardized through threats of termination, an unsettling prospect that left them feeling muted and vulnerable. Furthermore, grievances pertained to salary deductions attributable to absentee days and periodic delays in wage disbursement. Of the 14 respondents, only two reported occasional benevolent gestures from their employers, expressed in forms of additional support or tokens of appreciation for the services rendered.

An added dimension to the domestic workers' experience involved safety concerns in the workplace. Perceptions of security varied, with domestic workers generally feeling more secure in households that comprised both spouses. However, an undercurrent of insecurity permeated work in male-only households, particularly during nocturnal hours, owing to prevalent societal perceptions regarding the potential for untoward incidents. Internal dynamics also surfaced as a source of conflict among workers, stemming from a myriad of causes, including jealousy, disputes over workload allocation, and discrepancies in salary distribution. These internal frictions occasionally eluded employer awareness.

Physical strain emerged as a noteworthy challenge, attributed to the relentless and demanding nature of their work. These workers also underscored their difficulty in allotting leisure time to their families. Fatigue often prevented them from engaging in late-night social interactions upon returning home,

irrespective of adverse weather conditions. Rain or shine, domestic workers were bound by their occupational obligations, signifying the unyielding imperative to secure their livelihoods and support their families.

In addition to workplace challenges, domestic workers were also encumbered by domestic concerns, including financial constraints necessitated by their children's educational expenses, healthcare-related exigencies, and the responsibility of caring for elderly parents or in-laws. These familial tribulations, in turn, cast a pall over their capacity to focus on their work and maintain a high level of concentration. Balancing the demands of their family lives with their professional responsibilities represented yet another dimension of the challenges faced. Full-time workers, in particular, contended with curtailed personal freedom, being obliged to accompany their employers even on personal errands, such as shopping.

Domestic workers concede that they navigate an array of daily challenges stemming from various sources. They recognize that these challenges may occasionally result from their own shortcomings, though not invariably. Feedback and critique offered by employers incentivizes them to strive for enhanced work quality. When confronted with particularly daunting challenges that elude resolution, some may contemplate transferring their employment to another household, albeit with an awareness of the associated risk to job security.

Domestic workers grapple with a dual spectrum of challenges, both within their familial domains, concerning their immediate family and relatives, and within the workplace, concerning their relationships with their employers. These multifaceted challenges manifest on a daily basis, and relief materializes when domestic workers share these burdens with individuals capable of empathizing with their predicaments, be they their parents, close relations, or friends grappling with analogous challenges. When queried regarding the engagement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in organizing awareness or sensitization programs, respondents indicated a lack of awareness concerning such initiatives within their local context.

Summary and Conclusion

The text discusses the challenges faced by female domestic workers in India, particularly emphasizing the unregulated and disorganized nature of the sector. The research sheds light on the low wages, lack of formal recognition,

and societal perceptions that contribute to the vulnerability of domestic workers. It also explores the caregiving aspect within domestic work, highlighting the impact of marketization on genuine care feelings. The challenges faced by women in this profession, especially migrant workers, are discussed, along with the historical stigma associated with domestic labor. The study aims to identify and comprehend the challenges faced by women in domestic work, offering insights into their daily struggles.

The methodology involves in-depth interviews, unstructured interviews, participant observation, and the use of sampling techniques to gather data from 15 domestic workers in a specific locality. The findings cover the types of activities engaged in by domestic workers, their working conditions, and the challenges they encounter. The challenges include issues with job security, workplace safety, internal conflicts, physical strain, and balancing family responsibilities.

The primary objective of meticulously analysing the categories of occupational activities undertaken by domestic workers within private households holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, such analysing allows for a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental responsibilities shouldered by domestic workers, ranging from culinary tasks to caregiving duties. By delineating these activities, the study sheds light on the essential functions that sustain domestic work and contribute to the smooth functioning of households. Moreover, emphasizing the regularity and constancy inherent in these tasks underscores their significance in the daily lives of domestic workers, particularly those employed by a single family unit. Additionally, examining the geographical proximity of workplaces to residences and the modes of transportation utilized provides contextual insights into the occupational milieu, thereby enriching scholarly comprehension of domestic labor engagement. Ultimately, by delving into these aspects, the study enhances academic discourse surrounding domestic work, facilitating a deeper understanding of the occupational engagement of domestic workers.

Similarly, the secondary objective of scrutinizing the adversities encountered by domestic workers within their workplace environments is equally crucial. By elucidating the multifaceted challenges faced by domestic workers, including issues such as job security, leave accommodations, salary deductions, and workplace safety concerns, the study provides valuable insights into the complexities of the domestic labor landscape. The firsthand testimonies

provided by respondents offer a nuanced perspective on the adversities pervading domestic work, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by domestic workers. Such insights not only inform academic discourse but also have practical implications for policymakers, labor advocates, and employers seeking to improve working conditions and support systems for domestic workers. In this way, addressing the second objective of the study contributes to the advancement of knowledge and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting the rights and well-being of domestic workers.

The research underscores the urgent need for foundational data on initiatives and schemes for the benefit of female domestic workers. The study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by these workers, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of their predicaments. The findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of challenges, both within the workplace and in personal lives, and the coping strategies adopted by domestic workers. The conclusion calls for further evaluation of existing programs and the efficiency of these initiatives in addressing the diverse challenges faced by women in domestic work. Overall, the research advocates for improved conditions, recognition, and support for female domestic workers, particularly in urban areas like Siliguri.

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Impact of OTT (Over-the-top) Media on Consumer Buying Behaviour in Purba Bardhaman District in West Bengal: An Empirical Study

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine how OTT (Over-the-top) media affects Indian consumers' preferences for online entertainment platforms. It also looks at how customers in Purba Bardhaman district perceive subscription-based entertainment services and what factors influence their behaviour on these platforms. The study also looks into how social media influences consumers' decision-making when it comes to choosing and using online entertainment platforms. The research methodology for this study primarily focuses on data collection and analysis. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data has been collected using a mixed methods approach in order to fully comprehend the ways in which social media influences consumer behaviour with regard to online entertainment platforms. Primary data for this study has been gathered using a self-structured questionnaire. Likert scale-based survey questions has been used to measure respondents' opinions on social media, online entertainment platforms, and their content preferences. The questionnaire also inquiries about the frequency and impact of social media usage on purchasing decisions. The sample size of Purba Bardhaman district has been determined using suitable statistical methods to reliable and generalizable results. Random convenience sampling has been used for qualitative sampling. In addition to graphical data representations, content and frequency analysis approaches were used in the examination of qualitative data. These findings have been drawn based on these analyses.*

Key Words: *Social media marketing, OTT, consumer behaviour, buying habits and entertainment platforms.*

1. Introduction

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, all the countries have faced that pandemic situation and similarly have witnessed a significant shift in consumer behaviour for online entertainment platforms such as Over-The-Top (OTT) services. The emergence of digital content streaming has given consumers unparalleled power over their media consumption, providing them with on-demand access to a movie series, TV shows, music, and more. Because of this, people have welcomed personalized viewing experiences, embraced the binge-watching trend, and chosen content using sophisticated algorithms. The goal of this research study is to investigate the significant impact that OTT media has on consumer purchasing decisions, specifically with regard to over-the-top (OTT) services.

The emergence of over-the-top (OTT) platforms like as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Jio Cinema, Disney+ Hotstar, and others that offer on-demand video content beyond traditional broadcasting and cable services has caused a transformation in the entertainment industry. This shift in media consumption patterns has been largely attributed to the growing popularity of social media platforms (Yadav, M. D., & Jain, A., 2021).

The Second section of this study provides the literature reviews, the third section provides the objectives of this study. Conceptual model has been evaluated in fourth section; research methodology has examined in fifth section. In section six this study provides analysis & findings and in the last but not least section seven provides conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Overview of Linear Media (Pay-Tv)

According to the TAM (Television Audience Measurement), Annual Universe Update - 2015, out of 234 million households in India, over 167 million have televisions, and over 161 million of those have access to cable or satellite TV, including 84 million DTH customers. Since 2013, the number of digital TV households has increased by 32% as a result of the switch from terrestrial and analogue transmissions. Households with televisions have been increasing at a rate of 8–10%. September 2014 data shows that 64% of households had digital TV. As of 2018, India boasts over 850 TV channels that broadcast in all of the major languages spoken there, and 197 million households own television sets (BARC India, 2018). The growth in digital broadcast has been

due to the introduction of a multi-phase digitization policy by the Government of India. An ordinance was introduced by the Govt. of India regarding the mandatory digitization of Cable Services. According to this amendment made in section 9 of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Amendment Ordinance, 1995, the internet & broadcasting ministry is in the process of making Digital Addressable System mandatory. As per the policy, viewers would be able to access digital services only through a set-top box (STB).

Starting in December 1991, Disney Star introduced four major television channels into the Indian broadcasting space that had so far been monopolized by the Indian government-owned Doordarshan: MTV, STAR Plus, Star Movies, BBC News and Prime Sports. In October 1992, India saw the launch of Zee TV, the first privately owned Indian channel to broadcast over cable followed by Asia Television Network (ATN). A few years later CNN, Discovery Channel and National Geographic Channel made their foray into India. Later, Star TV Network expanded its bouquet with the introduction of STAR World, Star Sports, ESPN, Channel V and STAR Gold (Jameela, K., 2023).

Throughout the 1990s, along with a multitude of Hindi-language channels, several regional and English language channels flourished all over India. By 2001, international channels HBO and the History Channel started providing service. In 1995–2003, other international channels such as Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, VH1 and Toon Disney entered the market. Starting in 2003, there has been an explosion of news channels in various languages; the most notable among them are NDTV, CNN-News18, Times Now and Aaj Tak (Jameela, K., 2023).

2.2. CAS (Conditional Access System)

CAS or conditional access system is a digital mode of transmitting TV channels through a set-top box (STB). The transmission signals are encrypted and viewers need to buy a set-top box to receive and decrypt the signal. The STB is required to watch only pay channels.

The idea of CAS was introduced in 2001, due to a furore over charge hikes by channels and subsequently by cable operators. Poor reception of certain channels; arbitrary pricing and increase in prices; bundling of channels; poor service delivery by Cable Television Operators

(CTOs); monopolies in each area; lack of regulatory framework and redress avenues were some of the issues that were to be addressed by implementation of CAS.

It was decided by the government that CAS would be first introduced in the four metros. It has been in place in Chennai since September 2003, where until very recently it had managed to attract very few subscribers. It has been rolled out recently in the other three metros of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued a notification on 11 November 2011, setting 31 March 2015 as the deadline for complete shift from analogue to digital systems. In December 2011, Parliament passed The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Amendment Act to digitize the cable television sector by 2014. Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai had to switch by 31 October 2012. The second phase of 38 cities, including Bangalore, Chandigarh, Nagpur, Patna, and Pune, was to switch by 31 March 2013. The remaining urban areas were to be digitised by 30 November 2014 and the rest of the country by 31 March 2015 (Tripathi, P. S., Chandra, A., and Prasad, R., 2013).

2.3. Rise of Online Media

After independence, the first Indian OTT platform was sent off by Reliance Entertainment in 2008 as name of BIGFlix. It opened the conduit to entertain video streaming through internet and it is elevated degree of progression in innovation of technology to online video viewing from digital video viewing (Puthiyakath and Goswami, 2021).

BIGFlix offers 2000+ HD diverts in nine Indian regional languages includes Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Bhojpuri, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Gujarati and Punjabi and it will permit a customized theater and multi-screen insight to users (Udoakpan, N., and Tengeh, R. K., 2020).

In India nexGTV is the first OTT portable application to live-stream cricket matches like IPL (Indian Premier League) on smartphones. It sent off in 2010 by Digivive for admittance to both live-TV and on-demand content. The livestream of the IPL beginning around 2015, when rights were won (Dunakhe and Panse 2022) and it played an important role in the growth of another OTT platform, Hotstar (now Disney + Hotstar) in India (Dunakhe, K., and Panse, C., 2022).

India will experience enormous growth in OTT subscribers by 2023. Nowadays, there are 350 million users, but it is estimated to attain up to 500 million users. Although Disney+ Hotstar is the most subscribed to OTT platform in India, owned by star India as of July 2020,

with around 300 million active users and over 350 million downloads. Somewhat recently, the utilization of OTT platforms has expanded to 204 billion minutes, while it was 181 billion minutes before the pandemic. Truth is told, a report by the PwC's Media and Entertainment Outlook proposes that India's OTT market will turn into the sixth biggest market all around the world by 2024.

Online platforms come up with different genres like action, horror, drama, thriller, and comedy. Youth uses more of these platforms to Binge Watch genres they prefer the most. Unfortunately, television fails to provide such perks to its viewers.

2.4. Consumer Behaviour Studies

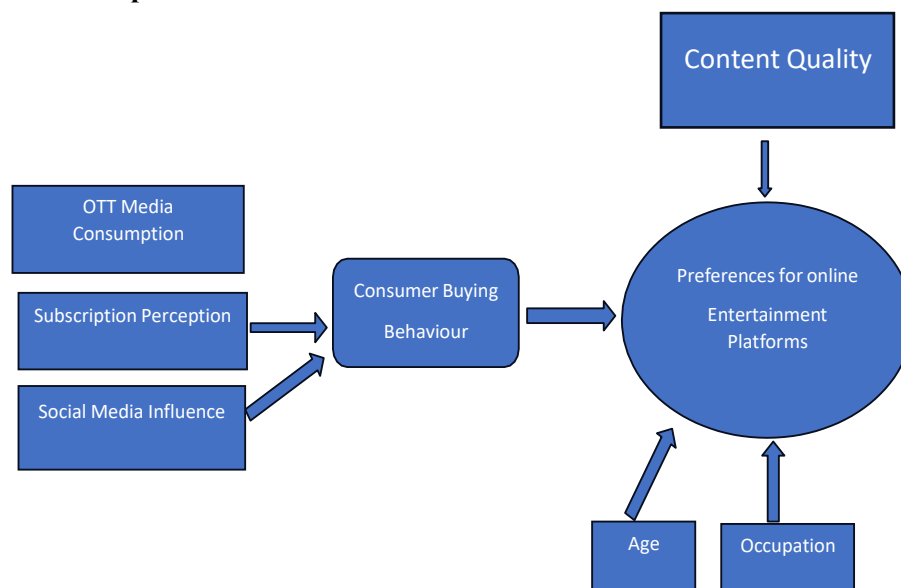
OTT services not only in India but also in south Africa dramatic changes the television broadcasting space, viewing content, viewing timing and lot of choices (Banerjee, Alleman, and Paul, 2013). Thus, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) conducted a consumer survey to determine the television viewing patterns in South Africa. Its preliminary findings suggested that the OTT TV viewers are streaming and downloading content for later viewing, and the cost is the main reason pay-TV subscribers do not upgrade their subscriptions. So, OTT services are complementary services to pay-TV services and low-income earners are mostly using free or paid mobile applications to consume contents, and who have neither OTT TV nor pay-TV they preferred Free-to-Air services for TV consumption (Udoakpan & Tengeh, 2020).

As indicated by the Indian Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms Report 2020, distributed by the MICA (Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad) Ahmedabad, "the quantity of male viewers of OTT applications is more than female viewers in India. The most viewed applications in India by males are Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hotstar. Minimal traffic in females is of around 25-45 age groups. Be that as it may, Voot has around 54% of female users".

3. Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of OTT (Over-the-top) media on Indian consumers' preferences for online entertainment platforms.
2. To understand how customers in Purba Bardhaman district perceive subscription- based entertainment services.
3. To identify the factors influencing consumer behaviour on online entertainment platforms.
4. To examine the role of social media in influencing consumers' decision-making regarding online entertainment platforms.

4. Conceptual Model



5. Research Methodology

Research Method: This study used quantitative research approach to achieve the objectives (Creswell, 2017). An online survey made with a Google Form and the responses of certain participants were used to gather data. Separately, a five-point Likert scale survey was created using a systematic methodology. In the region of Purba Bardhaman, responses were gathered through the use of convenience sampling.

Data Collection: Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in this study. Primary data was collected through self-structured questionnaire, and a thorough assessment of the literature from e-journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, and websites was used to collect secondary data.

Target Population: people who consume pay-tv content, OTT (Over-The-Top) media services, and have internet access were sampled (Rahi, 2017).

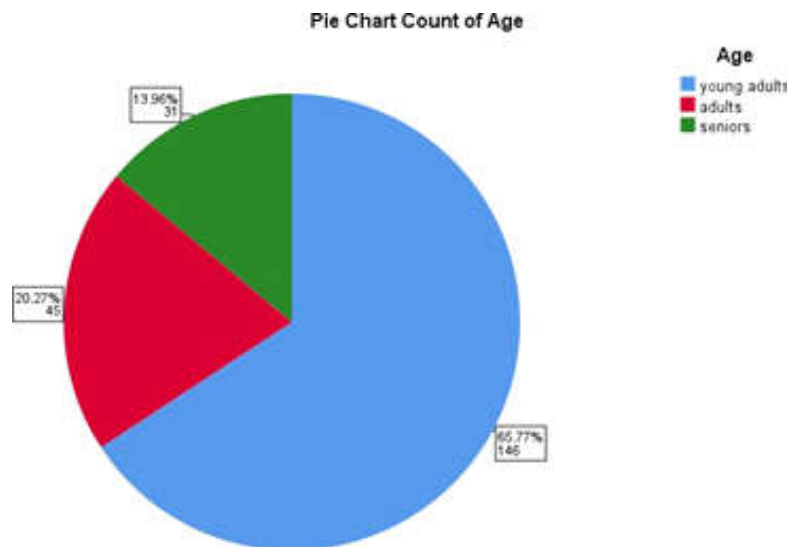
Sample Size: For this study a sample of 222 responses were used.

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling used for this study.

Data Analysis: Graphical representations, correlation test, regression analysis, and Chi-square test were used to interpret the data.

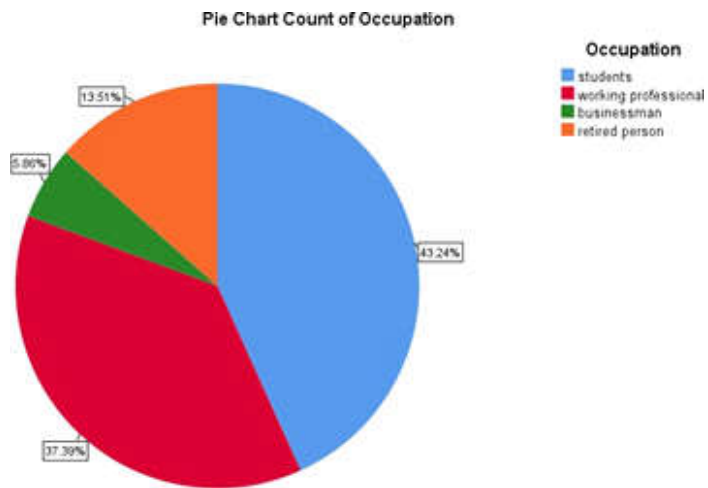
6. Analysis and Findings

Fig. 1: Age



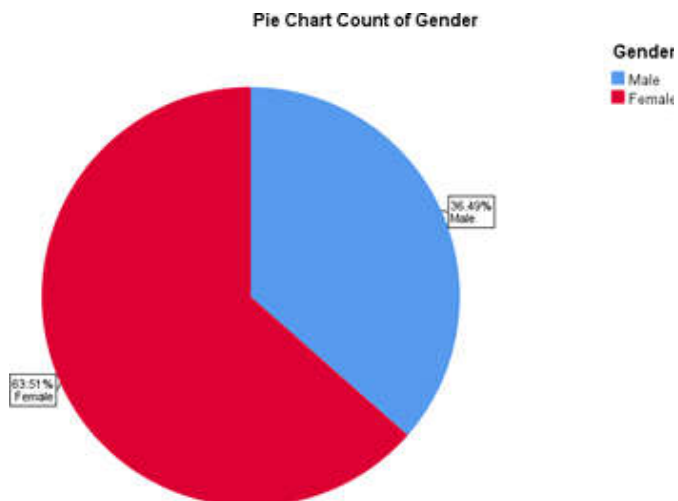
Interpretation: Out of 222 respondents, 65.77 % of the respondents belong to the age group of young adults (18 to 35) and 20.27 % were from the age group of adults (35 to 55) and remaining from above the age of Seniors (above 55).

Fig. No. 2: Occupation



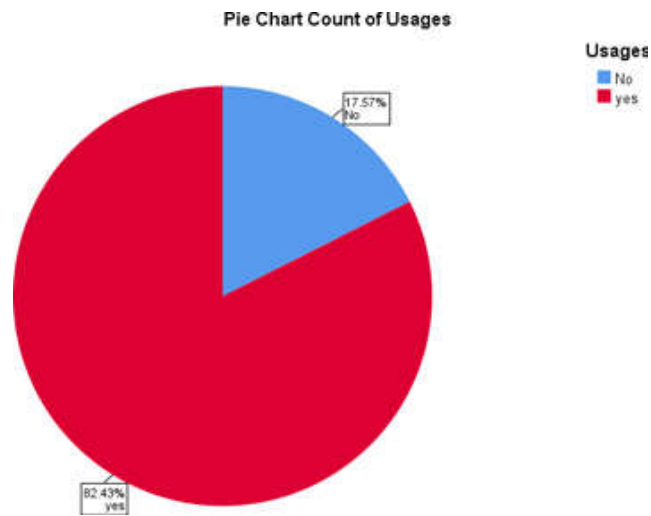
Interpretation: Out of 222 respondents 43.24 % of respondents are students, 37.39% of respondents are working professionals, 05.86 % of respondents are businessmen and 13.51 % of the respondents are retired persons. Therefore, most of the respondents are students.

Fig. 3: Gender



Interpretation: Out of 222 respondents 63.51 % of respondents were female, 36.49 % of respondents were male. Therefore, most of the respondents were female.

Fig. 4: Usages of OTT media



Interpretation: Out of 222 respondents 82.43 % of respondents are OTT media and 17.57 % of respondents are not are OTT media. Therefore most of the respondents are use OTT media.

Table 1

Correlation Analysis for Impact of OTT (Over-the-top) Media on Indian consumers' Preferences for Online Entertainment Platforms

	Usages of OTT media	Influenced to buy online entertainment platforms
Usages of OTT media	1	0.593**
Influenced to buy online entertainment platforms	0.593**	1

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Interpretation: This table reveals that Pearson correlation of “Usages of OTT media” and “Influenced to buy online platforms” was found to be moderately positive and statistically significant ($r=0.593$, $p< 0.001$). This means that as one variable (Usages of OTT media) increases, the other variable (Influenced to buy online platforms) also tends to increase, and vice versa, to some extent.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Viewers Perceive Subscription-Based Entertainment Services

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Buying Behaviour	3.45	0.78
Influenced	2.87	0.62

Interpretation: In table no. 2 explores the average level of “Buying Behavior” is higher (mean = 3.45) compared to the average level of “Influenced to buy online platforms” (mean = 2.87). “Buying Behavior” shows higher variability around its mean (SD = 0.78) compared to “Influenced to buy online platforms,” which has lower variability around its mean (SD = 0.62). Both variables have the same sample size (N = 222), indicating that the mean and standard deviation calculations are based on the same number of observations for each variable.

Table 3
Regression Analysis
Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour on Online Entertainment Platforms

Variables	Beta Coefficient (B)	p-value	t
Usages of OTT media	0.942	0.000*	41.713
Influenced by Social Media	0.415	0.000*	7.093
$R^2 = 0.888$, $F(2,219) =$	179.96		

Note: *p < 0.001

Interpretation: In table no. 3 the regression model includes two independent variables: “Influenced by social media” and “Usages of OTT media”. The dependent variable “Buying Behaviour on online entertainment platform” is the variable that the model seeks to predict based on the independent variables. The independent variables significantly predict buying behaviour on online entertainment platform, $F(2,219) = 179.96, p < 0.001$, which indicates that the two factors under this study have a significant impact on buying behaviour on online entertainment platform. Moreover, the $R^2 = 0.888$ depicts that the model explains 88.8 % of the variance in the dependent variable (Buying Behaviour on online entertainment platform).

Furthermore, coefficients were assessed to ascertain the influence of each factor on the criterion variable (buying behaviour on online entertainment platform). The result shows that usages of OTT media significantly and positively impact on buying behaviour of online entertainment platform ($B = 0.942, t = 41.713, p = 0.000$) and another factor i.e., influenced by social media also significantly and positively impact on buying behaviour of online entertainment platform ($B = 0.415, t = 7.093, p = 0.000$).

Table 4

Chi Square Test for Role of Social Media in Influencing Consumers’ Decision-making Regarding Online Entertainment Platforms.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.634 ^a	1	.000		
Continuity Correction^b	14.207	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	18.975	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.564	1	.000		
N of valid cases	222				

Interpretation: In table 4, chi-square test reveals that the association between buying behaviour of online entertainment platform and influenced through social media based on observed and expected frequencies. The Pearson Chi-Square test shows a significant association at 05% significance level (p-value < .05) between buying behaviour of online entertainment platform and influenced through social media ($\chi^2= 15.634$, $df=1$, $p= 0.000$).

6.1. Discussion

Through the demographic analysis this study observed that young adult's generation were more usages of OTT media. In other words, this study found that respondents' willingness to view OTT media declined as age increases. Other demographic variable as occupation also impact to buy online entertainment platform as viewers of working professionals has more likely to watch online entertainment platform in their free time and they willing to subscribe OTT media than students and retired persons. The study found no significant influence in willingness to buying online entertainment platforms despite the common perception that men women have different choices and preferences.

This study found that the correlation coefficient of 0.593 indicates a moderately positive relationship between the variables. This means that as the usage of OTT media increases, there is a tendency for individuals to be more influenced to buy online entertainment platforms, and vice versa, to some extent. It explored that, on average, respondents tend to exhibit a higher level of buying behaviour than their level of being influenced to buy online entertainment platforms. The higher variability around the mean for Buying Behavior indicates that there is a wider range of responses regarding buying behavior among respondents, possibly reflecting diverse purchasing habits or preferences. The lower variability for "Influenced to buy online platforms" suggests that respondents' perceptions or feelings of being influenced to buy from online platforms are more consistent or concentrated around a central value. From the regression analysis this study found the significant and positive impact of Usages of OTT media on buying behaviour suggests that increased usage of OTT platforms is associated with a higher propensity to engage in buying activities on online entertainment platforms. Similarly, the significant and positive impact of being Influenced by social media highlights the role of social media in influencing consumers' behaviour and decisions related to online entertainment platform purchases.

The study also extracted through chi-square statistics that there is a genuine relationship between how individuals are influenced through social media and their buying behaviour on online entertainment platforms. These findings suggest that businesses and marketers should consider the influence of social media on consumers' buying behaviour in the online entertainment industry. Strategies that leverage social media platforms to influence purchasing decisions can be effective in reaching and engaging with target audiences.

6.2. Limitation

This study aims to identify the causes and variables influencing customers' subscription choices. Thus, a population with a variety of characteristics was needed for the study. In an attempt to gather data, the study used an online platform and the convenience sampling technique. Future studies, however, could make use of more extensive in-person data collection with a bigger sample size. This study uses correlation and regression test. Yet, reliable methods like structural equation model (SEM) can be used to verify a more thorough model supported by theories of Technology Adaption Model (TAM).

7. Conclusion

The study provides valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between OTT media, consumer preferences, subscription services perception, and social media influence in the context of online entertainment platforms in India, specifically in Purba Bardhaman district. The mixed methods approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior and preferences in this digital entertainment landscape.

In conclusion, by highlighting how OTT media can drastically alter consumer buying behaviour. It emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend this influence and makes predictions about consumer purchasing decisions by utilizing various OTT media as a predictor. Additionally, it suggests avenues for further investigation to deepen the knowledge of the ways in which social media influences consumer behaviour and decision-making.

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Haritha Karma Sena Project in Kerala: Status, Responsibilities and Performance

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Abstract: *The extent of disposability depends on the nature, content, and the extent of solid waste. All local conditions are conducive for the garbage management. The availability of high-tech machineries and skilled labour is mandatory for final processing of solid wastes. Haritha Karma Sena is a system formed to solve the acute waste problem of the state in a decentralized manner. It is working with the objective of ensuring employment and income through the collection and treatment of waste materials, thereby finding a solution to the waste problem faced by Kerala. The project also plays a huge role in achieving cleanliness in the state as part of 'Malinyamuktham Navakeralam'. This paper studied the status, responsibilities and performance of Haritha Karma Sena project in Kerala.*

Key Words: *Haritha Karma Sena; waste management; performance; Kerala.*

1. Introduction:

Waste Management has become an essential service provided by Government for the wellness of public. Due to rapid growth of economies and rising living standards, increase in the quantity and complexity of waste generated. In now a days it has become a serious issue in many states including Kerala, creating lot of ecological issues. Haritha Karma sena is a professional team consisting of Green Technicians and Green Supervisors mainly Kudumbashree Women who will be assigned with the responsibility of collection, transportation, processing, recycling, disposal, and management of waste materials in association with respective Local Self Governments and Suchithwa Mission (Government of Kerala, 2023). Green Technicians are trained man power recruited to provide technical services and solutions on waste management projects. One Green Technician has to visit 250 households in

a ward. In one Ward two Green Technicians will be positioned and one supervisor for managing 15 Wards. So for a Panchayat having 15 Wards, the total man power is 31 (Government of Kerala, 2024). The Green Supervisor must be a graduate able to operate computers and give reports. The collection of user fee will be the responsibility of Green Supervisor. Haritha Sahaya Sthapanams, the accredited agencies of Haritha Kerala Mission which will provide technical assistance to the Haritha Karma Sena (Government of Kerala, 2023). Zirm and Mayer (1990) studied the management of hazardous substances in the environment and Barrow CJ (2020) examined the environmental management principles and practices. Nath KJ (1993) and Chhatwal GR (1997) analyzed the solid waste management in India. Smithson, Myths (1992) and Rajeev SR (2023) also examined the end to end process of solid waste management.

1.1. Objectives: The overall objective is to examine the present status, responsibilities and performance of Haritha Karma Sena project in Kerala. More specifically the specific objectives are:

- (i) to study the responsibilities of Haritha Karma Sena project in Kerala, and
- (ii) to analyse the present status and performance of Haritha Karma Sena project in Kerala.

2, Materials and Methods: The study is solely relied on secondary data; collected from the publications of Govt. of Kerala and India.

3. Results and Discussion: The earth's atmosphere is being changed at an unprecedented rate by pollutants resulting from innumerable human and economic activities. Uncontrolled consumption laid heavy weight on industrial processes. Most of the solid wastes generated from derived demand. The scrupulous use of these materials increases the quantum of solid waste on the earth. Climate change, ozone layer depletion, effects on vegetation and soil, water and other environmental issues are the result of long-range transport of pollutants including acidifying substance; threaten our future world. Management of waste from economic and authoritarian perception has a democratic approach (Government of Kerala, 2023). Management of non-degradable or degradable solid waste is a project, discipline, or carrier. A developable and democratic model is seen in Kerala regarding sold waste management and disposal. A mass and collective movement of women

(Kudumbasree) is functioning in a disciplined way in the state. Haritha Karma Sena, a Kudumbasree initiative in Solid Waste Management, work together with Haritha Keralam Mission, Suchitwa Mission and Clean Kerala Company for a garbage-free state (Government of Kerala, 2024).

The power of Haritha Karma Sena is entrusted with the local bodies. The Haritha Karma Sena collects non-biodegradable waste, especially plastic, not on free of cost but a nominal collection charge levied from houses and institutions and to send into grating units for recycling. The waste is segregated into different sections based on its features; H.M White, P.P, H.M, LD Print, Bajar, Ganny, Bulb, PVC, steel, tubes, bottle, E- waste, LD (Glucose), Bottle caps and Spray bottle (Government of India, 2023). Initially, 22119 Kudumbashree workers are deployed as Green Task Force (Haritha Karma Sena) members in 689 local bodies across the state. They are part of 638 Green Task Force Groups in gram panchayats and 81 urban local bodies. As per the data the Haritha Karma Sena collected 7883942 tons of plastic from houses and 765290 tons of plastics from shops and institutions (Government of Kerala, 2024). The plastics collected from houses are stored in Material Collection Facility centers and charged a minimum user fee. It is used for the payment of salary to the workforce.

From the sorted waste, usable materials are reached to the Swap Shops. It encourages the reuse of waste. In this way waste is converted into wealth. Income generation is possible in multiple ways; user fee, selling of reusable materials through Swap Shops and selling of the sorted non-reusable materials. Haritha Karma Sena have link with, their parental concern, Kudumbasree, the technical service provider of Clean Kerala Company, the labour force provider, Employment Guarantee Mission (MGNREGA) and their guide, Pollution Control Board. In 2022-23 the Haritha Karma Sena handed over more than three crore tones of materials to Clean Kerala Company and earned more than five crore rupees (table 1).

Table 1: District wise status and responsibilities of Haritha Karma Sena Project in Kerala

Table 1: District wise status and responsibilities of Haritha Karma Sena Project in Kerala							
Districts	No: of LSGs	No: of LSGs kept fund for HKS	No: of Haritha Karma Sena Identified	No: of LSGs completed training of HKS	No: of Haritha Karma Sena Trained	No: of Haritha Karma Sena units started Operation	No: of HKS consortium formed
Thiruvananthapuram	78	73	1706	71	1970	34	27
Kollam	73	73	2477	72	2634	18	4
Pathanamthitta	58	47	1528	54	1274	38	41
Alappuzha	78	71	3460	72	2290	20	8
Kottayam	77	44	2187	77	2031	33	26
Idukki	54	36	1736	48	1446	18	45
Ernakulam	96	47	2251	34	1469	16	12
Thrissur	94	20	2200	61	2646	20	11
Palakkad	95	72	2862	95	2862	35	9
Malappuram	106	96	2925	86	2876	25	61
Kozhikode	78	48	3004	79	1978	67	27
Wayanad	26	26	491	25	998	7	26
Kannur	81	81	1500	81	1837	59	19
Kasaragod	41	33	1193	33	1206	20	8
Total	1035	767	29520	888	27517	410	324

Source: <https://www.kudumbashree.org/monitor-progress/257/611>

3.1. Transforming towards a Cleaner and Healthier State: Activities related to Haritha Karma Sena are carried out under the joint guidance and cooperation of various development missions, local self-government bodies, and various government private agencies in the state. It was founded on the idea of turning waste into income, are working for a Garbage-Free Kerala in collaboration with Local Self-Governments, Suchitwa Mission, the Health Department, and Clean Kerala Company. This group collected 11000 metric tonnes of sorted plastic and 51000 metric tonnes of other non-organic waste in the last financial year.

3.2. Responsibilities:

3.2.1. Responsibilities of the State Mission:

- | To supervise the activities of the Mission and also to issue guidelines and advice for the smooth functioning of the Mission.
- | To ensure effective coordination between the various departments, agencies and the officials.
- | To examine the Mission document prepared by the State level Karmasena and to issue approval.
- | To examine the scope and possibilities for augmenting resources including CSR fund.
- | To ensure the supervisory- monitoring system function effectively.
- | To issue guidelines to the executing agencies for implementing the approved projects.
- | To ensure proper assistance for the Planning and execution of the activities of the Mission.
- | To ensure effective interventions in the Executive levels and in the association levels, so as to obtain approvals for their implementation.

3.2.2. Responsibilities of the State Level Karmasena:

General responsibilities:

- | Issuing suggestions and recommendations for achieving the goals and objectives of the Mission.
- | Preparation of Mission documents.
- | Presiding over the day to day activities under the supervision of the State Mission.
- | Closely monitoring the activities of the Mission at different levels continually and initiate action for its smooth functioning.
- | Identifying Technical experts, Consultants, Resource persons and submitting recommendations for their engagement to the Empowered Committee.
- | Ensuring the effective involvement and performance of Resource persons and District level Karma Senas.
- | Ensuring if State Mission meetings are convened periodically.

- | Preparation of proposals on the matters which require the approval of bodies like State Mission, Empowered Committee and Government.
- | To ensure if performance of the Mission is documented in a proper manner.
- | Taking necessary action to extend Technical Support and Research and Development from the professional institutions to be made available to the LSG bodies.
- | Identifying a team of technical experts in the State and District level and enable the teams to impart technical knowledge to the Mission.
- | To over of activities of the Local Self-Governing entities and the Mission is the coordinated in a well-synchronized manner.
- | To check of the periodical progress of the activities of the Mission and the status of the execution of the projects are sent to the State Mission, Empowered Committee and the Mission Monitoring team at regular intervals.

Special responsibilities:

- | To initiate actions to achieve the objectives of Haritha Keralam Mission.
- | To provide financial assistance and high-level technical support extended.
- | Involvement in settling technical disputes if any in the execution of projects undertaken by the Local Self-Governing bodies.
- | Providing special technical support if any required.
- | Application of modern technologies and innovations in the LSG entities appropriately.
- | To supervision if the scope of coordination of the three Karma Senas of the Sub Missions shall be examined and implemented.

3.2.3. Responsibilities of the district mission:

- | To supervise the activities of the Mission and also to issue guidelines and advice for the smooth functioning of the Mission.
 - | To coordinate shall be made in such a way that the activities of the agencies and officials shall be centralized at the Local Self-Governing bodies.
 - | To affirm that the local self-government entities and the agencies are taking up the projects as envisaged in the District Mission document.
 - | To identify the educational institutions and hospitals which require upgradation and modernization on the basis of approved criteria.
 - | To ensure resource augmentation through CSR funds.
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3.2.4. Responsibilities of district level Karma Senas:

General Responsibilities

- | Presiding over the day to day activities under the supervision of the District Mission.
- | Compiling the various projects of the Local Self Govt bodies and prepare District Mission document.
- | To see if project implementation in the district level is reviewed properly and initiate steps for the successful completion of the projects.
- | Identification of a team of district-level technical experts and enabling them to transfer technical knowledge.
- | Enabling the services of the technical experts or the services of the Research and Development.
- | To take necessary action whenever the intervention of the District Collector or the State Planning Committee of the Mission is felt essential, necessary action shall be taken.
- | Appropriate proposals shall be prepared and submitted for approval on matters which require State level decisions.
- | The performance of the Mission shall be maintained and documented. Also, assure that the activities of the Local self-government bodies.
- | Affirm that effective actions are undertaken by the working groups and Resource persons in the Local Self-Government bodies.
- | To observe if the periodical progress of the activities of the Mission and the status of the execution of the projects are be sent to the District Mission, District Planning Committee, State level Karma Sena and to Mission monitoring team at regular intervals.

Specific Responsibilities:

- | Recommendations for constituting Sub Committees for Agriculture, Water Conservation, Hygienic Waste Management of the State level Karma Sena.
- | The State level Karma Sena if finds it necessary to have assistance for planning and project formulation, in the spectrum of Agriculture, Water Conservation, Hygienic Waste Management, such recommendations shall be given.

3.2.5. Responsibilities of Block Level Mission:

- | To issue guidelines to the Resource team to ensure the possibilities of coordination at the Block level.
- | To give leadership in the preparation of State level projects for the Health institutions under the control of Block Panchayat.
- | To provide guidelines for the State level projects which have to be coordinated with Grama Panchayats, centrally sponsored schemes and appropriate, conditions for execution shall be prepared.

3.2.6. Village/Municipality/Cooperation:

- | Take the lead role for the preparation of projects for the Grama Panchayat/Municipal area.
- | Initiatives to coordinate the activities of various Government departments, agencies, volunteer organizations with the Local Self-Government entities.
- | Participation of people from all walks of life shall be ensured.
- | Resource augmentation through CSR fund.

Responsibilities of Karma Senas, Village, Block, District Panchayats and Municipalities:

- | Providing technical support for the collection of data and information.
- | To fix the short-term and long-term targets of these Missions distinctly.
- | Projects for Grama panchayat areas and Municipal areas shall be prepared distinctly.
- | Institutional projects for the educational institutions and hospitals under the jurisdiction of the Local Self-Government bodies shall be prepared and codified with the Local Self-Government bodies.
- | Technical assistance shall be made extended to the Local bodies through District level Karma Sena as and when required.
- | Whenever intervention of Mission/Local bodies is seen needed, suggestions and solutions shall be proposed before the respective committees.
- | Decisions and approvals if any required from District or State levels such proposals shall be submitted through Local bodies.

- | The activities of the Mission shall be documented.
- | The performance appraisal of the Mission shall be reported to the Governing bodies on time.
- | Review reports, reports on the progress of the execution of the projects and evaluation reports on the performance of the Mission shall be submitted to the District level KarmaSena and District Planning Committee periodically.

Responsibilities of the Coordinators of the State Mission / Sub Mission:

- | To initiate a lead role in getting the Karma Sena performing their duties and responsibilities in an effective and time bound manner.
- | The duties and responsibilities shall be distributed to the members of the Karma Sena and their activities shall be coordinated and monitored.
- | Detailed proposals on the matter which require the approvals and decision of the Mission Group and Empowered Committee shall be prepared
- | Create an excellent rapport with the Karma Senas.
- | Constantly in touch with the District level Karma Sena and make effective interventions for the smooth functioning of these entities.

3.3. Sustainable Sanitation through Scientific Waste Management Systems: Kerala began collecting user charges from its rural communities in 2020. 7912842 households and 765833 institutions benefit from door-to-door collection of non-biodegradable and dry waste. A total of Rs. 255041184 has been collected as user fees. Haritha Sahaya Sthapanams is the accredited agency of Haritha Kerala Mission, which provides technical assistance to the Haritha Karma Sena. There are 51 Haritha Sahaya Sthapanams empanelled by Suchitwa Mission for providing assistance to LSGIs in waste management of which the Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF) is one. The total quantity of waste generated in Kerala every year is about 25 lakh tones; 69% is organic and 31% is inorganic waste. About 70% of organic waste contains moisture. Combustibility of inorganic waste is 79.2%.

Garbage Free Kerala through Harithakarma Sena: Haritha Karma sena is a professional team consisting of Kudumbashree women who will be assigned with the responsibility of collection, transportation, processing,

recycling, disposal, and management of waste materials in association with respective LSGs and Suchithwa Mission. The activities aimed at sustainable waste management.

Digital waste management: Harithamithram App has been launched by Haritha Kerala Mission and Suchithwa Mission to ensure accurate monitoring of services including doorstep collection. The entire process of solid waste management is coordinated through this application.

Navakeralam Action Plan: The action plan focuses on environmental restoration in all possible ways by solving environmental problems that can cause climate change, spread of epidemics and health problems.

Litter Free Kerala Campaign: Activities have also been expanded in the areas of domestic and biomedical, sanitary waste management, poultry slaughter waste management, construction and demolition waste management, disposal of traditional landfills and solid waste collection in water bodies. Creative activities have also been initiated in the tourism sector.

Kerala Solid Waste Management Project: The total urban solid waste generation in Kerala is 3.7 million tonnes per annum. The Project is implemented in 93 municipalities of the state at a cost of Rs 2400 crore. The development objective of this project is to strengthen the institutional and service delivery systems for solid waste management. The project comprises of three components; institutional development, capacity building, and project management.

4. Conclusion: Haritha Karma Sena is a part of Kudumbashree mission collects non-biodegradable waste from houses and establishments to shredding units for recycling. The waste is segregated into different sections based on its features. The shredded plastic is being given to the local bodies for road tarring by Clean Kerala Company. Each Kudumbashree worker visits minimum 250 houses to collect non-biodegradable waste. The collection is based on user fee. The manufacture of environment-friendly materials, maintenance of waste disposal mechanism, organic farming, and environment-friendly equipment on rent and compost making and associated works are taken up by members.

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Bridging Different Perspectives: Encouraging Dialogue Between Diverse Mindsets

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Abstract: *Approaches to fostering meaningful dialogue among individuals with diverse ideological, cultural, and professional backgrounds are investigated in the current article. The aim is to delve into practical strategies that enhance understanding and collaboration across various perspectives. The study provides comprehensive insights into how organizations and communities can establish an inclusive environment where diverse viewpoints are actively appreciated and integrated. Recognising the increasing globalization of modern society, it is vital to emphasize the significance of inclusive dialogue, not only as a means to facilitate harmonious coexistence but also as a powerful tool to drive innovation and creativity. By embracing diverse voices, organizations can cultivate a richer array of ideas and foster a culture that values empathy and adaptability. This study outlines key strategies for fostering inclusive dialogue, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence training to navigate communication nuances. Structured dialogues and clear communication frameworks help ensure that all voices are heard, reducing linguistic and cultural misunderstandings. A culture of mutual respect and curiosity allows individuals to share perspectives openly, while conflict resolution mechanisms like mediation and active listening address tensions constructively. Intersectional understanding accounts for the complexities of identity, and long-term commitment to evaluation and adaptation ensures strategic responsiveness. Empowering diverse leadership shapes inclusive policies. These strategies promote collaboration, celebrate diversity, and strengthen collective understanding, fostering a culture that values diversity as a strategic strength.*

Key Words: *Interpersonal Communication, Diversity, Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Competency.*

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, fostering an inclusive environment is essential across various settings, including corporate, educational, and community contexts. In corporate environments, implementing leadership training, diversity workshops, and cross-cultural communication activities can significantly enhance collaboration and innovation. Educational institutions benefit from integrating multicultural education and conflict resolution into their curricula, helping students appreciate diverse perspectives and manage conflicts constructively. Community groups can enhance relations and promote active participation by organizing regular dialogue sessions and involving community leaders. General strategies, such as promoting active listening, nurturing empathy, encouraging open-mindedness, and fostering inclusive language, are vital in bridging different perspectives. Additionally, building cultural competence, promoting collaboration, establishing clear communication channels, and providing conflict resolution training contribute to a respectful and effective communication environment. By celebrating diversity and modelling inclusive leadership, organizations and communities can create safe spaces for dialogue and implement feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement and adaptability.

Methodology:

Literature Review: Comprehensive exploration of existing literature on conflict resolution, cultural communication, and diversity management.

Objectives:

- | To identify key barriers to dialogue between individuals with diverse perspectives.
- | To explore successful strategies that foster effective communication.
- | To develop guidelines for enhancing interpersonal communication across diverse backgrounds.

Discussion

Building a welcoming environment is essential in various settings like workplaces, schools, and community organizations. In professional environments, training programs and workshops help leaders and staff understand and appreciate different viewpoints, leading to better teamwork. In educational settings, incorporating lessons on cultural diversity and effective communication helps students learn to respect and understand each other. Community organizations benefit from regular discussions and the active participation of local leaders, which strengthen relationships and encourage involvement. Overall, focusing on listening skills, understanding non-verbal cues, and regularly assessing progress ensures that efforts to promote diversity are successful, fostering a respectful and inclusive atmosphere.

Corporate Settings:

In corporate settings, fostering an inclusive environment through leadership training, diversity workshops, and cross-cultural communication activities proves advantageous. Inclusive leadership training helps leaders understand the value of diverse perspectives, equipping them to create a culture that respects and embraces differences (Thomas, D. A., and Ely, R. J. 1996) (Raj, K. 2019). Diversity workshops provide essential insights into biases and foster mutual understanding, promoting a workforce that collaborates harmoniously. Cross-cultural communication activities, meanwhile, empower employees to navigate cultural nuances and work cohesively. Furthermore, the formation of mixed teams for projects encourages collaboration across varied backgrounds, reducing biases and promoting creativity and innovation through the cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives (Gelf and, M. J., et al. 2007).

Educational Institutions: In educational institutions, integrating multicultural education and conflict resolution into curricula fosters greater understanding among students. Multicultural education provides crucial insights into diverse cultural backgrounds, promoting awareness and respect (Nair, K., and Gupta, S. P.2012). Conflict resolution training empowers students with essential communication skills, enabling them to handle disagreements constructively and fostering a more harmonious learning environment. Role-playing exercises and scenario-based learning further support these goals by allowing students to step into different perspectives, encouraging empathy and appreciation for

varying viewpoints. This experiential approach deepens their understanding of complex cultural dynamics and equips them to engage meaningfully in increasingly diverse societies (Maznevski, M. L., and DiStefano, J. J.2000) (Mor Barak, M. E. 2014).

Community Groups:

In community groups, organizing regular dialogue sessions and leveraging the influence of community leaders can significantly enhance relations and promote active participation. Regular dialogue sessions provide a structured environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can share perspectives and collaboratively address local concerns. These sessions help cultivate mutual understanding, reduce preconceived biases, and foster a sense of belonging (Gupta, D. (Ed.).1991). Engaging community leaders in these efforts ensures credibility and amplifies the message, as they often serve as trusted mediators and advocates for inclusivity. Their involvement encourages broader community participation and facilitates constructive discussions, ultimately contributing to stronger, more cohesive local networks (Ting-Toomey, S. 1999).

General Implementation Strategies:

Active listening fosters a deeper level of understanding by encouraging individuals to genuinely comprehend others rather than simply responding. This approach allows listeners to engage more meaningfully by focusing on the speaker's perspective, thereby reducing miscommunication and building stronger, more respectful connections (Parekh, B. 2006). Additionally, training in non-verbal communication equips individuals with the skills to interpret subtle cultural cues. These skills are crucial in decoding gestures, facial expressions, and body language, which often vary significantly across cultural contexts. By honing the ability to recognize and interpret these non-verbal signals, individuals can better navigate multicultural interactions, promoting greater empathy and enhancing overall communication efficacy (Srivastava, S. 1998).

Evaluation and Adaptation:

Evaluation and adaptation are essential for effective diversity strategies. Integrating feedback mechanisms into all approaches ensures responsiveness to evolving dynamics, allowing for real-time refinement of initiatives. Regular assessments enable organizations to measure progress and identify areas for

improvement, ensuring their strategies align with changing needs and expectations (Bassett-Jones, N. 2005) (Chatterjee, P. 2004). This proactive evaluation fosters a continuous improvement culture, encouraging organizations to remain agile, inclusive, and effective in their diversity efforts while fostering an environment where varied perspectives are consistently respected and valued (Stahl, G. K., et al. 2010).

Leveraging Technology:

Leveraging technology, such as virtual reality environments and online dialogue platforms, provides safe spaces where individuals can engage with diverse viewpoints, fostering mutual understanding. Virtual reality allows participants to immerse themselves in different cultural contexts, offering a unique, experiential approach to appreciating diverse perspectives. Online dialogue platforms enable meaningful discussions, bridging geographical gaps and encouraging open exchanges. By facilitating exposure to varied viewpoints, these technologies help reduce biases, enhance empathy, and promote inclusive interactions, ultimately leading to more cohesive and respectful relationships across different cultural backgrounds (Singh, K. S. (1992) (Bhargava, R., and Varshney, A. (Eds.). 2021). Organizations and individuals can foster a more inclusive, respectful, and effective communication environment that bridges different perspectives and encourages dialogue between diverse mind-sets by implementing the following guidelines:

1. Promotion of active listening by encouraging participants to give full attention to the speaker, understand their message, and respond thoughtfully. Train individuals in techniques such as summarizing the speaker's points, asking clarifying questions, and avoiding interruptions Kumar, K. (2014).
2. Nurturing empathy by fostering the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, particularly those from different backgrounds. Use role-playing exercises and storytelling sessions to help individuals step into others' shoes and experience their perspectives.
4. Encouraging open-mindedness by promoting the willingness to consider new ideas and perspectives without prejudice. Organize workshops and discussion forums where diverse viewpoints are shared and respected, and encourage participants to reflect on their biases Hofstede, G. (2001).

5. Fostering inclusive language by using language that is free from stereotypes, biases, and offensive terms to create a welcoming environment. Provide training on inclusive language practices and create guidelines that outline respectful communication standards.
6. Building cultural competence by developing the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Offer cultural competence training that covers key aspects of various cultures, including norms, values, and communication styles.
7. Promotion of collaboration and teamwork by encouraging working together towards common goals, leveraging diverse strengths and perspectives. Implement team-building activities and projects that require collaboration and highlight the value of diverse contributions.
8. Establishment of clear communication channels by creating formal and informal channels for ongoing dialogue and feedback. Set up regular meetings, suggestion boxes, and anonymous surveys to ensure continuous communication and address concerns promptly.
9. Providing conflict resolution training by equipping individuals with skills to manage and resolve conflicts constructively. Offer workshops on conflict resolution techniques such as mediation, negotiation, and effective communication strategies.
10. Celebration of diversity by recognizing and honouring the unique backgrounds and contributions of all individuals. Organize cultural events, diversity days, and recognition programs to celebrate and learn from different cultures and perspectives (Hunt, V., et al. 2015, February 2).
11. Modelling inclusive leadership by ensuring leaders exemplify inclusive behaviour and set the tone for the organization. Train leaders on the importance of inclusivity, and ensure they demonstrate respect, openness, and support for diversity in their actions and decisions.
12. Creation of safe spaces for dialogue by establishing environments where individuals feel safe to express their thoughts and experiences without fear of judgment or retribution. Develop policies that support safe spaces, and designate areas or times for open discussions and sharing sessions.

13. Implementation of feedback mechanisms by regularly seeking and incorporating feedback to improve communication practices. Use surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments to enhance communication across diverse backgrounds (Triandis, H. C. 1994).
14. Bridging different perspectives and encouraging dialogue between diverse mind-sets is crucial for fostering effective communication. Successful strategies begin with promoting active listening, where participants are trained to fully engage with the speaker, understand their message, and respond thoughtfully. This can be achieved through workshops that emphasize summarizing, asking clarifying questions, and avoiding interruptions.
15. Cultivating empathy is another vital strategy. Role-playing exercises and storytelling sessions help individuals understand and share the feelings of others, especially those from different backgrounds. Encouraging open-mindedness is also essential; organizing discussion forums where diverse viewpoints are shared and respected can significantly reduce prejudice and bias.
16. Using inclusive language that is free from stereotypes and biases creates a welcoming environment for all participants. Training on inclusive language practices and establishing guidelines for respectful communication further support this goal. Building cultural competence through training that covers various cultural norms, values, and communication styles enables individuals to interact more effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

Promoting collaboration and teamwork by implementing team-building activities that require joint efforts towards common goals can highlight the value of diverse contributions. Additionally, establishing clear communication channels through regular meetings, suggestion boxes, and anonymous surveys ensures ongoing dialogue and feedback.

These strategies collectively enhance interpersonal communication across diverse backgrounds, creating an inclusive and effective communication environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, fostering dialogue among diverse mind-sets necessitates intentional efforts to address communication barriers. This study lays a crucial foundation for developing practices that encourage inclusivity and understanding. By embracing these strategies, organizations and communities can cultivate environments that value diverse perspectives, leading to more productive interactions. Such efforts are essential for building harmonious relationships and leveraging diversity as a strength in an interconnected world.

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