January–June 2026
Volume 87, Issue 1

Indian Journal of Adult Education

प्रौढ़ शिक्षा
Estd : 1939

A Publication of
Indian Adult Education Association
17-B, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi - 110002

Find this journal
at http://iaea-india.com
ISSN 0019-5006

Patron
Professor S.Y. Shah, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Editor
Shri Suresh Khandelwal, General Secretary, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Joint Editor
Professor P.A. Reddy, Vice President, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Associate Editor
Professor Rajesh, Director I/c and Treasurer, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Editorial Board

Chairman
Professor L. Raja, President, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Members
Professor N. K. Ambasht, Former Chairman, National Institute of Open Schooling, NOIDA, UP.
Professor K. Parthasarathy, Former Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Open University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
Professor Asoke Bhattacharya, Former Director, Bangladesh Institute of Lifelong Learning, Bangladesh.
Professor V. Reghu, Former Controller of Examinations, RGNIYD, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu.
Professor B.P. Sahu, Head, Centre for Distance Education, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong.
Professor Tom Sork, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
Professor Regina Egetenmeyer, Julius Maximilian University, Würzburg, Germany.

Editorial Coordinator
Ms. Neha Gupta, Librarian-cum-Documentation Officer, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Assistant Editor
Shri B. Sanjoy, Research Officer, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Copy Editor
Shri Vivek Kumar Chahar, Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi.

Printer and Publisher
Shri Suresh Khandelwal, General Secretary, for and on behalf of Indian Adult Education Association, 17-B, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi.

Printed at M/s Graphic World, 1686, Kucha Dakhni Rai, Darya Ganj, New Delhi -110002.

Subscription
Annual subscription rate for Indian Subscribers is Rs. 750+38 (Seven Hundred Fifty plus 5% GST) and for overseas US $ 50 (Fifty only). For matters related to subscription, change of address, receipt of copy, contact: Prof. Rajesh and Ms. Neha Gupta (directoriaea@gmail.com, ijae.iaea@iaea-india.com, ijae1939@gmail.com, subscriptioniaea@gmail.com)

The ***Indian Journal of Adult Education*** is partially funded by **Indian Council of Social Science Research**.

INDIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT EDUCATION

Volume 87, Issue 1 **January – June 2026**

CONTENTS

From the Editor's Desk

ARTICLES

Adult Learners' Attitudes toward SWAYAM MOOCs in Assam
• *R.D. Padmavathy* 7-24

Quality of Parental Relationship and its Psychosocial Impact on Unemployment Tribal Youth: A Study in East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya
• *B. P. Sahu* • *Andreas Rynjah* 25-38

Social and Psychological Problems among Working and Non-Working Women in Nagaland
• *Murathoti Rajendra Nath Babu* • *Onentila Longkumer* • *Sevelu Lohe* 39-50

From Field Notes to Professional Growth: Examining the Impact of Report Writing and Documentation on Extension Development Students
• *Atul Gautam* • *Nasra Shabnam* 51-74

Digital Readiness in Adult Education: Identifying Challenges among Postgraduate Distance Education Learners
• *Dipak Bhattacharya* 75-92

Awareness, Availability, Accessibility and Utilisation of Open Educational Resources (OERs) among National Open University of Nigeria Learners in Nigeria
• *Olatunbosun Sunday Emmanuel ODUSANYA* 93-109

Assessment of Academic Counsellors' Feedback on the Curriculum, Syllabi, and Delivery of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programs: A Study of IGNOU
• *Amit Kumar Shrivastava* • *Jyoti Srivastava* 110-119

Coping Strategies and Life Challenges among Older Adults in Uttarakhand: A Gender and Socio-Economic Analysis
• *Chetna Thapa* • *Narendra Singh Rana* 120-129

Understanding Educational Mobility: An In-depth Analysis of Higher Education Migration Among Tribal Students in Ladakh
• *Bashir Ahmad* • *Geeta Rai* 130-142

Role of Environment in Adult Learning: Understanding Interactions within the Nested Social System
• *Fouzia Khursheed Ahmad* 143-154

The National Service Scheme (NSS) – State of Voluntary Labour (Shramdan) and University Extension Services
• *Letkhogin Mate* • *Kottu Sekhar* 155-164

Women Empowerment - Analysis of Government Policies and the Way Forward
• *Prachi Sinha* 165-180

The Impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT on Adult Education
• *Meeti Chowdhry* • *Indu Sharma* 181-187

FORM - IV 188

From the Editor's Desk

Dr. Zakir Hussain, the then Vice-President of India, while delivering a Silver Jubilee lecture on March 1, 1964, said, "The History of the Indian Adult Education Association is the History of Adult Education in India." Prof. J. B. Raju and Prof. Richardson, the two active members of the Adult Education Society of Delhi set up in 1937, took the initiative in exploring the possibility of creating a central organisation for adult education by organising the first All India Conference at the Vice Regal Lodge of the University of Delhi on March 11, 1938. The first All-India Conference at the University of Delhi led to the formation of the India Adult Education Association. It was registered on December 02, 1939 and is 87 years old now.

The Indian Journal of Adult Education (IJAE) is published by the Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA). The Association assumed full responsibility for the publication of the Journal in 1951, a task that had previously been overseen by its founder General Secretary Shri RM Chetsingh.

The origin of the journal is closely tied to the history of the adult education movement in the country.

The IAEA expanded its origins by establishing a permanent campus in New Delhi. Recognising the growing need for a dedicated platform to share innovative experiments, case studies and researches, the Association ensured hassle-free regular publication of the journal since 1939.

The journal became a clearing house of ideas and information and helped in promoting, formulating and encouraging projects and experimentations.

In this issue, there are 13 research articles that reflect a wide range of understanding and interpretations of adult education and lifelong learning in a multidisciplinary context, across an array of national, international and regional contexts and interpretations. Topics in this issue include tribal youth, massive open online courses (MOOCs), a case study of Nagaland working women, distance learning, older adults of Uttarakhand, migration among the tribal population in higher education, and NSS and voluntary extension services. The issue also included artificial intelligence and ChatGPT in adult education.

The first article of this issue investigates adult learners' attitudes towards MOOCs offered through the SWAYAM platform in Assam using the survey method. The

research encompasses all adult learners enrolled in the academic programme of the state. The results revealed that 79.63% of participants exhibited a positive attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs.

The findings of chapter one offer valuable insights into varying attitudes towards MOOCs offered through the SWAYAM Platform among adult learners in Assam.

The second article in this issue covers youth unemployment and the psychological effects on the family and parent-youth relationships. The study used qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture the lived experiences of tribal youth navigating the economic instability in their social and cultural environment. Intensive parenting emphasises parental roles as both vigilant guardians and supportive confidants, aiming to cultivate you in self-governance, including academics, social development and emotional health.

Social and psychological problems and working and non-working women in Nagaland in the third chapter explored the social and psychological problems. The descriptive survey method showed a significant difference: "Researchers noticed it among working and non-working women. This is implied in the findings that non-working women experience more social problems than working women.

The next article, 'Renewed fieldwork practice', is a foundational pedagogical element in developing extension education in 'Field notes to professional growth: Examining the impact of report writing and documentation on extension development studies'. The study explored the impact of report writing on the documentation of professional writing. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, the research surveyed 100 respondents across different institutions in India.

The article in the present issue referred to the preparedness of learners to effectively access, use, and apply digital technologies for learning and professional development; it followed a descriptive method, and the findings revealed that learners possessed moderate to high digital readiness through institutional training programmes.

The next article covered Open Education Resources (OERs) at the National Open University of Nigeria.

The next article in this volume considered self-directed learning and continuous education through open education resources. The present study, based on Nigerian learners' perceptions, was conducted by students at the National Open University

of Nigeria. The study investigated the awareness, availability, accessibility and utilisation among learners of the southwestern region of Nigeria.

The seventh article evaluated the performance of academic counsellors on the curriculum and syllabus of IGNOU. Academic counsellors who conduct counselling sessions for various courses on the curriculum and syllabus. Self-learning materials are the core of open and distance learning, which plays an important role in the teaching and learning process.

The next article covered coping strategies employed for older adults in navigating the complex challenges of later life. The present study, based on 150 respondents, highlighted the necessity of gender-sensitive, socio-economically inclusive and regionally tailored interventions to foster defined and healthy ageing among Uttarakhand's older population.

Migration has been a subject of study of social scientists traditionally understood as human movement driven by natural factors and other catastrophes. This article analyses in depth higher education migration among tribal students of Ladakh.

The challenges of the students of Ladakh covered geographical, administrative and climate factors. The paper covered several challenges faced by the students that led to the migration from Uttarakhand.

The next article covered the environment in adult learning. The learning environment plays a significant role in adult learning, creating an environment.

The present paper examines and discusses multiple environmental contexts. The role of the environment in adult learning can hence be seen as being multifaceted, encompassing socio-cultural, political and economic contexts.

The next article in this volume analysed the role of NSS in the context of university extension services. The paper is based on Gandhian philosophy and Shramdan activity. The NSS in higher education acts as a bridge between the community and higher education. It refers to outreach activities.

Ms Prachi Sinha, an independent researcher from USA analyzed the various government policies and the various government policies and the way forward in the context of women's empowerment. This article analysed gender-wise sectoral change leading to the under-representation of women in the main workforce and concluded

with suggestions to improve. In the changing paradigm, women and their participation in the labour market and challenges of gender equality focused in this research-based article.

The impact of generative artificial intelligence and ChatGPT on adult education in this article provides consideration of the classroom situations in the adult learning context. Several instances of use of AI in adult education are analysed in the context of Knowles' andragogical learning.

Suresh Khandelwal
(Editor)

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 7-24
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00002.4
ISSN 0019-5006

Adult Learners' Attitudes toward SWAYAM MOOCs in Assam

• **R.D. Padmavathy**[1]

Abstract

This study investigates the adult learners' attitude toward MOOCs offered through the SWAYAM platform in Assam using a descriptive survey method. The research encompasses all adult learners enrolled in academic programmes within the state, with a sample of 172 postgraduate students from a university in Assam, selected through simple random sampling. The "Scale on Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs", developed and standardised by the investigator, demonstrated high validity and reliability. Statistical analyses, including mean, standard deviation (SD), and t-tests, were used to evaluate the data. Results revealed that 79.63% of participants exhibited a positive attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs. Interestingly, only 5.8% of respondents had the most favourable attitude, while a significant proportion (74.0%) displayed average or above-average attitudes. Conversely, a minority (15.6%) showed below-average or low-average attitudes. No statistically significant differences were found based on gender or age groups, but significant differences were observed between adult learners' disciplines (arts vs. science) and educational levels (undergraduate vs. postgraduate). These findings offer valuable insights into the varying attitudes toward MOOCs offered through the SWAYAM platform among adult learners in Assam, particularly regarding academic discipline and educational level.

Keywords: *attitude, SWAYAM, MOOCs, adult learners, higher education, Assam.*

Introduction

India faces a monumental challenge in higher education expansion, with projections indicating a need to increase capacity from 3.5 million to 14 million students by 2030 (EY-Parthenon & FICCI, 2023). This growth demands not only physical infrastructure development but also comprehensive advancement in faculty resources, curriculum design, quality standards, and affordability mechanisms. The combination

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Tezpur University (Central) Napaam, Tezpur, Assam -784028. ✉ padmajothi@yahoo.in

of India's demographic dividend and economic growth creates an urgent need for skilled workers. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a progressive framework focused on increased accessibility, skills development alignment, technology integration, and improved financing models (Rumi & Mete, 2024).

Innovation in education has become critical as India confronts a skills gap affecting 250 million workers across various sectors (Annual Status of Higher Education [ASHE], 2021). The pandemic accelerated the adoption of online education, complementing NEP 2020's emphasis on educational flexibility through initiatives like the Academic Bank of Credits, enabling customised learning paths, the National Digital Education Architecture, and the National Education Technology Forum. These national government initiatives aim to expand educational opportunities through technological infrastructure development.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have created a paradigm shift in learning accessibility and flexibility. As "a viable option for developing nations with limited access to higher education", MOOCs provide learning opportunities to students worldwide with internet access (Liyanagunawardena et al., 2013). The Ministry of Education has strategically embraced MOOCs to enhance quality and accessibility in higher education (FICCI, 2014). The University Grants Commission operationalised this through the SWAYAM-enabled Credit Framework, which mandates universities to incorporate at least 20% of courses from SWAYAM or similar platforms; allows up to 40% of curriculum to be delivered online (Agha & Mathew, 2021; Kalita, 2021; Samantaray, 2021); promotes high-quality online content development; and provides for full online programmes from reputed institutions (Diwan, 2022).

SWAYAM, India's government-driven online education initiative, has emerged as a prominent resource offering diverse courses across multiple disciplines. Understanding adult learners' attitudes toward SWAYAM MOOCs is essential for evaluating the effectiveness and acceptance of these digital learning tools as India works to transform its higher education landscape.

SWAYAM: India's Digital Education Pioneer

Flexible higher education and lifelong learning are key focus areas of India's National Education Policy 2020, and this is supported by the Academic Bank of Credits and the National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR). India's indigenous MOOC platform built to ensure 'access, equity, and quality' in education is SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), which began in July

2017 as a project launched by the Ministry of Education (Chauhan & Goel, 2017). It provides a flexible learning opportunity (Mishra, 2021), and thus it bridges the gap between conventional and distance education. It is a free higher education platform for unlimited learners using various pedagogical approaches that are aligned to global trends in educational technology (Anderson & Dron, 2011; MHRD, 2017) that offers video lectures, interactive content, self-assessment exercises, faculty development programmes and virtual labs (Government of India, 2018). The premier Indian institutions collaborate with SWAYAM to provide courses alongside high school and postgraduate levels across many disciplines (Chakraborty et al., 2018). The digital revolution has opened new doors in the world of education, as it lacks the constraints of time, money and place (Annual Status of Higher Education [ASHE], 2021).

Unique Features of SWAYAM

Credit Transfer System is used by SWAYAM to integrate with India's formal education system and allows the students to transfer up to 20 per cent of their total credits to SWAYAM courses (Mishra, 2021; Chauhan, 2017). This was expanded to 40% in 2021 (Kalita, 2021; Samantaray, 2021), and Diwan (2022) predicts full online degrees. Also, the University Grants Commission (UGC) initially directed higher education institutions to deliver at least 20% of their programme curriculum through MOOCs via the SWAYAM platform, later revising this upward to 40% (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2016, 2021). Other distinctive features include the following online proctored examinations, which are used to improve the credibility of certification (Sinha & Choudhury, 2022):

- Four Quadrant Approach for content delivery (Chakraborty et al., 2021)
- Multi-lingual content beyond English (Chauhan, 2017)
- Integration with conventional education (Kumar & Kumar, 2020)
- Alignment with Indian curriculum (Chauhan & Goel, 2017)
- Multiple academic levels from high school to post-graduate (Mishra, 2021)
- Rigorous quality assurance processes (Kumar & Kumar, 2020)
- Mobile application for enhanced accessibility (Chauhan, 2017)

The above features distinguish SWAYAM from other MOOC platforms and make it particularly relevant for studying its adoption among adult learners in India.

Navigating Obstacles: SWAYAM's Path to Educational Revolution

SWAYAM addresses the educational needs of diverse learner groups, including

those in remote and underserved areas. By providing free access to high-quality educational resources, it supports lifelong learning and continuous professional development. Despite its potential, SWAYAM faces several challenges. However, the platform also faces challenges such as digital literacy and internet connectivity issues, which can limit its effectiveness in certain regions (Verma, 2023). These hurdles span technological, social, and educational domains. Studies have indicated that completion rates for SWAYAM courses are relatively low, mirroring a common issue in MOOCs globally (Singh & Chauhan, 2017). Additionally, concerns have been raised about the digital literacy required to effectively utilise the platform, particularly in rural areas (Kumar & Kumar, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought renewed focus on online education platforms like SWAYAM. The platform saw a substantial increase in enrolment during the lockdown periods, highlighting its importance in ensuring educational continuity (Mishra et al., 2020). Future developments may focus on enhancing user engagement, improving accessibility, and aligning course offerings more closely with industry needs and employability skills (Panigrahi et al., 2018). As SWAYAM continues to evolve, ongoing research is needed to assess its impact on Indian education and identify areas for improvement.

Review of Related Literature

This review aims to delve into the scholarly, varied perspectives reflected in a multitude of studies regarding the MOOCs and SWAYAM portal, which have been extensively explored in the literature, revealing a predominantly positive outlook. Numerous studies conducted by researchers such as Abderrahmane and Mebitil (2022), Adebayo and Babalola (2021), Kowshik (2020), Alanazi and Gleaves (2019), Jalil et al. (2019), Jesse (2019), Daneji et al. (2019), and Mamattah (2016) have consistently reported favourable attitudes among respondents towards MOOCs. Yadav and Khandelwal (2023) attribute this positivity to the perceived acquisition of life skills, educational value, and personal relevance. Specific studies have highlighted positive attitudes in various contexts, including among university staff and students in Entrepreneurship Development MOOCs (Ahmed et al., 2021), English as a foreign language among students and teachers (Abderrahmane & Mebitil, 2022), and academic staff (Jalil et al., 2019). Majid et al. (2019) shed light on favourable attitudes among Malaysian postgraduate learners, citing user-friendly interfaces and organisational efficiency.

However, Siami (2016) introduced a nuanced perspective, indicating that 63.7% of postgraduate learners display a negative attitude towards MOOCs, with only 21.1% expressing a positive stance and 15.2% remaining neutral. This suggests a complex landscape unaffected by demographic factors such as gender, age, university

type, or subject stream. Gender disparities were noted by Jesse (2019), indicating that male students show a greater interest in MOOCs.

The influence of various factors on attitudes towards MOOCs is apparent, with studies highlighting the impact of technology use (Kowshik, 2020; Alanazi & Gleaves, 2019), ICT competency (Abderrahmane & Mebitil, 2022), and anxiety rates (Razak & Al-Suhail, 2017) on attitudes. Challenges and concerns are evident in the literature, including interface difficulties and fee dissatisfaction (Sera & Lobo, 2018), language and cultural diversity obstacles (Pramanik, 2018), and concerns about communication, certification, and education standards (Kumar, 2023). The perceived usefulness and ease of use emerged as critical factors influencing MOOC uptake, as demonstrated by Aharony and Bar-Ilan (2016).

Pujar (2021) found that there is no significant difference in the opinions of PG and PhD students regarding various dimensions of the SWAYAM MOOCs platform, including the use of online courses, learning resources, technological aspects, learner engagement, and knowledge and skills gained. However, there are differences between rural and urban students in their opinions on the platform and the use of online courses, but not in other dimensions such as learning resources, technology, engagement, or knowledge acquisition. Subaveerapandiyan and Ahamed (2020) found that 74.73% of respondents reported that their university provides an orientation programme on SWAYAM. About half of the respondents preferred submitting their assignments in a Word file format. Over 82% of respondents spent 1 to 3 hours on SWAYAM courses, and half agreed that these courses help gain new knowledge and support lifelong learning. Additionally, most students continued with their enrolled courses, with only a small number discontinuing for various reasons. Ramadas & Karthika (2020) revealed that cost-effectiveness is a highly valued and consistently perceived factor in SWAYAM, but convenience in scheduling is less uniformly appreciated. Nayek (2018) points out the growing awareness of SWAYAM among LIS professionals and its potential for learning without fear of failure, though he notes the limited availability of LIS courses. Kanjilal and Kaul (2016) highlight that SWAYAM is crucial for achieving universal access to education in India, particularly in enhancing technical education and skills. Bharti (2014) praises SWAYAM as a platform that offers affordable, quality education, benefiting both enrolled students and professionals. Samanta (2018) emphasises that SWAYAM represents a new era in online and distance learning (ODL) in India, with its success relying on government and national educational agencies.

The studies and research findings on the SWAYAM MOOCs platform collectively highlight their significance in India's educational landscape. Overall, the attitude towards MOOCs is generally positive, but the literature reveals a complex landscape with varying perspectives across different demographics and contexts. Factors such as technology integration, perceived usefulness, and ease of use play crucial roles in shaping these attitudes. However, challenges identified in the research highlight areas for potential improvement in MOOC design and implementation. These findings illustrate SWAYAM's broad impact and acceptance, along with areas for improvement in course availability and scheduling convenience.

Rationale of the Study

Technology is progressing and developing rapidly in the educational field, creating new opportunities and challenges for educators as well as opening doors for learners. Technology supports a variety of learning styles, which affects students' performance. As a result, students must learn new information and become aware of different teaching strategies.

The Central Government of India's execution of the NEP 2020 highlights the critical role that technology plays in enhancing education. The NEP 2020 recognises those students who use Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled learning show high success rates, even though they may not perform well in traditional subject examinations.

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan, Social Sector, in the year 2007, highlights the transformative potential of IT in pedagogical practices and student learning outcomes, extending beyond mere computer literacy to encompass web-based learning facilitated by contemporary software facilities.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) seeks to guarantee that every student has access to the best learning resources for comprehensive development in line with this vision. The SWAYAM web portal, which provides Massive Open Online Courses in a variety of subjects and educational courses, was introduced by the MHRD. With a focus on accessibility for all students, regardless of their needs or requirements, SWAYAM seeks to offer university-level content through free online courses (Bharti, 2014). Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) initiatives in India still have a number of drawbacks, despite their potential. Remarkably, little research has been done on how students feel about MOOCs provided through the SWAYAM platform in particular.

Assam, a state with a burgeoning adult learners' population, presents an intriguing landscape for exploring these attitudes, which is essential on various levels. This research aims to investigate the adult learners' attitude toward SWAYAM MOOCs in Assam. Determining postgraduate learners' opinions of their attitude toward SWAYAM MOOCs in Assam in higher education is one of the study's main objectives.

Through the lens of statistical analysis and comprehensive survey methods, this study seeks to unearth the prevailing attitudes that influence the acceptance and utilisation of SWAYAM among this demographic. Such insights are crucial for informing educational strategies, policy enhancements, and tailored interventions aimed at optimising the engagement and learning experiences of adult learners in Assam.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the level of attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs among the adult learners
- To examine differences in attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs concerning gender, academic discipline, educational level, and age.

Hypotheses of the Study

- The level of attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs among adult learners is high.
- There is no significant difference in attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs among adult learners concerning their gender, academic discipline, educational level, and age.

Research Design, Tools and Statistical Analysis Used

A descriptive survey method was employed to collect data from adult learners enrolled in postgraduate programmes in Assam. The sample of 172 adult learners currently enrolled at the university was selected through simple random sampling. The "Scale on Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs", developed by the investigator, was used as the assessment tool, which showed high validity and reliability. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation (SD), and t-tests.

The analysis is presented:

Data Analysis

H_1: The level of adult learners' attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs is high.

Table 1: Statistical results regarding levels of adult learners' attitudes towards the SWAYAM MOOCs platform.

Levels of attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs	N	Percentage	Mean	S D
High	10	5.81	7.30	1.889
Above Average	63	36.62	11.32	1.966
Average	64	37.2	13.78	2.019
Below Average	27	15.69	16.74	1.789
Low Average	8	4.65	18.63	1.923
Total	172	100	13.19	3.249

Table 1 shows the levels of attitude towards the SWAYAM MOOCs platform among 172 respondents. From Table 1, upon the conversion of raw scores to weighted scores, the mean score of the sample was 13.19, aligning with the test norms for an average score. The mean represents the average attitude level, while the standard deviation measures the dispersion or variability of the attitudes.

- **High:** A small percentage, 5.8% of respondents, displayed the most positive attitude towards the SWAYAM MOOCs platform, characterised by a mean attitude score of 7.3 and a standard deviation of 1.889.
- **Above Average:** The largest portion, comprising 36.6% of respondents, demonstrated a mean attitude score of 11.32 with a standard deviation of 1.966, indicating a positive outlook on SWAYAM MOOCs.
- **Average:** Following closely, 37.2% of respondents had a mean attitude score of 13.78 and a standard deviation of 2.019, reflecting a moderately positive attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs.
- **Below Average:** A smaller subset, 15.6% of respondents, exhibited a mean attitude score of 16.74 and a standard deviation of 1.789, suggesting a somewhat negative stance towards SWAYAM MOOCs.
- **Low Average:** The smallest percentage, 4.65% of respondents, held the least positive attitude, with a mean attitude score of 18.63 and a standard deviation of 1.923, signifying a highly negative perception of SWAYAM MOOCs.

The data illustrate that the majority of respondents (74%) had an average or above-average level of attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs, with a notable percentage (15.6%) demonstrating a below-average or low average attitude. This variation showcases the diverse range of attitudes held by adult learners towards SWAYAM MOOCs. Thus, the H_1 is rejected. Consequently, it can be concluded that the attitude level towards SWAYAM MOOCs among adult learners in Assam is average.

H_0: There is no significant difference in attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs among adult learners concerning their gender, stream of study, academic level, and age.

Table 2: Statistical results regarding attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs across various demographic groups.

Variables		N	Mean	S.D	T-test	Sig.
Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs	Male	58	14	3	1.187 df(170)	0.237
	Female	114	13	3		
	Arts	100	12.84	3.274	1.683 df(170)	0.044
	Science	72	13.68	3.170		
	UG	85	13.64	3.105	1.781 df(170)	0.047
	PG	87	12.76	3.344		
	>21 - <24	62	13.11	3.295	0.239 df(170)	0.812
	>24 - <28	110	13.24	3.237		

The statistical results pertaining to attitudes toward SWAYAM MOOCs among different demographic groups are presented in Table 2. This is a condensed analysis of the results:

- **Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs based on gender:**

Male learners (N=58) showed a mean attitude score of 14, and female learners (N=114) had a mean score of 13. The t-test result for gender is 1.187, df(170), with a significance level of 0.237. This analysis suggests a non-significant difference in attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs between males and females.

- **Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs based on field of study (arts vs. science):**

Arts students (N=100) displayed a mean attitude score of about 12.84, with a somewhat significant difference compared to science students (N=72), whose mean attitude score was approximately 13.68.

The t-test result for adult learners' stream of study is 1.683, df (170), with a significance level of 0.044. This indicates a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards the SWAYAM (MOOCs) platform between adult learners in arts and science disciplines.

- **Attitude towards the SWAYAM (MOOCs) platform based on educational level (UG vs. PG):**

Undergraduate learners (UG) students (N=85) showed a mean attitude score of around 13.64, while postgraduate adult learners (PG) students (N=87) had a mean score of about 12.76.

The analysis suggested a somewhat significant difference in attitudes between UG and PG students. The t-test result for undergraduate adult learners is 1.781, df(170), with a significance level of 0.047. This suggests a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs between UG and PG students.

- **Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs based on age groups:**

Age groups >21 - <24 (N=62) and >24 - <28 (N=110) showed mean attitude scores of around 13.11 and 13.24, respectively. The analysis indicated a non-significant difference in attitudes towards SWAYAM courses between these age groups, with a minor difference noted but without the significance level provided for the older age group.

The t-test result for the age group >21 - <24 is 0.239, df(170), with a significance level of 0.812. This indicates a non-significant difference in attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs between this age group and the >24 - <28 age group.

Major Findings and Discussion

The findings of the investigation offer insightful information about the adoption

situation of MOOCs, with a particular focus on SWAYAM MOOCs in Assam. The key findings of the study are as follows:

- Attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs:
  - 79.63% of adult learners in Assam show a positive attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs.
  - The overall attitude level towards SWAYAM MOOCs among adult learners is assessed as average.

- Gender and Age Dynamics:
  - No significant difference in attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs was found based on gender or age groups.

- Disciplinary and Academic Level Disparities:
  - Statistically significant differences in attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs were observed between: a) Students in arts and science disciplines, and b) Undergraduate and postgraduate adult learners.
  - Adult learners from the science stream demonstrated a more positive attitude compared to those from the arts stream.

These results both align with and diverge from previous research, highlighting the complex nature of online education acceptance.

- **Positive Reception of SWAYAM MOOCs Platform:** The high percentage (79.63%) of adult learners exhibiting a positive attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs aligns with a substantial body of existing research. This widespread acceptance corroborates findings from numerous studies (Abderrahmane & Mebitil, 2022; Jrall & Gupta, 2021; Purkayastha & Sinha, 2021; Rueda et al., 2021; Mohile, 2021; Ramadas & Karthika, 2020; Jalil et al., 2019; Soy, 2019; Wang & Sun, 2017; Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2016; Yin, 2022). The consistency across these studies suggests that SWAYAM MOOCs have successfully positioned themselves as a viable and attractive educational option. However, the "average" overall attitude level indicates that while learners are generally positive, there is still room for improvement in how SWAYAM MOOCs are perceived and implemented.

- **Demographic Neutrality:** The absence of significant attitudinal differences based on gender and age is particularly noteworthy. This finding aligns with

several previous studies (Jrall & Gupta, 2021; Mohile, 2021; Kowshik, 2020; Florin & Malathi, 2019; Soy, 2019; Razak & Al-Suhail, 2017; Wang & Sun, 2017; Mackness et al., 2016; Siami, 2016). The consistency across these studies suggests that SWAYAM MOOCs have the potential to be a democratising force in education, transcending traditional demographic boundaries. This could have far-reaching implications for educational equity and lifelong learning initiatives.

- **Disciplinary and Academic Level Disparities:** The most intriguing aspect of the findings lies in the significant attitudinal differences observed across academic levels and disciplines. The more positive attitude among science stream learners compared to those in the arts stream is particularly striking, as it contradicts some previous research findings. Notably, this result diverges from studies by Kowshik (2020), Ambadkar (2020), Jalil et al. (2019), and Majid et al. (2019), which found more positive attitudes among arts stream learners towards SWAYAM MOOCs.

The disparity between undergraduate and postgraduate learners' attitudes adds another layer of complexity. This divergence underscores the nuanced nature of attitudes towards specific online learning platforms. This could be related to differences in course complexity, the perceived value of online credentials at different academic levels, or varying expectations of educational experiences between these groups. These findings underscore the need for a nuanced approach to SWAYAM MOOCs' development and implementation. While SWAYAM MOOCs have broad appeal, there is a clear need to address the specific requirements and preferences of different academic disciplines and levels.

These discrepancies may stem from variations in course offerings, teaching methods, or perceived relevance to specific academic disciplines and educational levels. To address this apparent contradiction, a more thorough investigation and analysis are necessary, considering factors such as course content, instructional strategies, and individual preferences across various contexts within the arts and sciences. By uncovering these nuances, we can deepen our understanding of the diverse perspectives on SWAYAM MOOCs held by adult learners from different academic backgrounds. Examining these differences also offers valuable insights into the factors that shape attitudes toward SWAYAM MOOCs among students with varied academic profiles. This, in turn, can inform the development of more tailored online education strategies that meet the specific needs of different learner cohorts.

Future research could benefit from:

- Qualitative studies to delve deeper into the reasons behind these disciplinary and academic level differences.
- Comparative analysis of SWAYAM MOOCs' design and content across different disciplines.
- Investigation into the integration of SWAYAM MOOCs within traditional curricula at different academic levels.
- Exploration of regional factors in Assam that might influence SWAYAM MOOC adoption across different academic streams.

Conclusion

This study contributes significantly to our understanding of SWAYAM MOOC adoption, particularly in the context of Assam. The research on adult learners' attitudes towards the SWAYAM MOOCs revealed that while a high percentage (79.63%) of adult learners exhibit a positive attitude, the overall attitude level towards the SWAYAM (MOOCs) platform among adult learners is assessed as 'average'. It highlights both the promising potential of SWAYAM MOOCs in democratising education and the need for tailored approaches to maximise their effectiveness across diverse academic contexts. The findings provide a solid foundation for policymakers, educators, and SWAYAM MOOCs developers to refine strategies for online education, ensuring its relevance and efficacy for a broad spectrum of learners. However, the contradictions with some previous studies, especially regarding attitudes of arts versus science students, underscore the complex and possibly context-dependent nature of SWAYAM MOOCs' adoption. This complexity calls for continued research to fully understand the nuances of learners' attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs across different academic disciplines and contexts. Although the study reveals the dominant mindset, more investigation is warranted to explore the particular factors shaping these mindsets in greater detail. This would aid in the creation of more focused and successful educational interventions as well as policies that support online learning in the area. Ultimately, this research serves as a stepping stone towards enhancing the effectiveness and accessibility of SWAYAM MOOCs for adult learners in Assam and potentially beyond, paving the way for more inclusive and adaptive online education strategies.

References

Abderrahmane, D., & Mebitil, N. (2022). Examining EFL students and teachers' attitudes towards e-learning: A focus on MOOCs. *AABHATH Review*, *7*(1), 775–788. https://doi.org/10.54528/1549-007-001-057

Adebayo, E. A., & Babalola, Y. T. (2021). Awareness and intention to use massive open online courses by law students in Osun State, Nigeria. *Information Impact: Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, *11*(4), 37–47. https://doi.org/10.4314/iijikm.v11i4.4

Agha, R., & Mathew, G. (2021). STROCSS 2021: Strengthening the reporting of cohort, cross-sectional and case-control studies in surgery. *International Journal of Surgery, 96,* 106165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijsu.2021.106165

Aharony, N., & Bar-Ilan, J. (2016). Students' perceptions on MOOCs: An exploratory study. *Interdisciplinary Journal of e-Skills and Lifelong Learning*, *12*, 145–162. https://doi.org/10.28945/3540

Ahmed, M. M., Sultana, N., Jayanti, S. A. D., Mardoni, Y., & Helmiatin, H. (2021). Attitude towards entrepreneurship development courses of MOOCs. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, *16*(1), 129–141. https://doi.org/10.1108/AAOUJ-09-2020-0081

Alanazi, H., & Gleaves, C. W. (2019). Investigating student attitudes towards using hybrid MOOCs in the higher education of Saudi Arabia. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)*, *10*(1), 3140–3146. https://doi.org/10.20533/licej.2040.2589.2019.0412

Ambadkar, R. (2020). E-learning through SWAYAM MOOCs: Awareness and motivation among commerce students. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, *9*, 3529–3538.

Anderson, C., & Dron, J. (2011). Three approaches to researching the impact of MOOCs. In *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (pp. 1245–1257). IGI Global.

Annual Status of Higher Education (ASHE). (2021). *In the states and union territories of India*. Centre for Research and Planning, New Delhi, Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Bharti, P. (2014). Indian HRD ministry launches a MOOC platform—SWAYAM. *Ed Tech Review*. https://www.edtechreview.in/trends-insights/trends/indian-hrd-ministry-launches-a-mooc-platform-swayam/

Chakraborty, P., Mittal, P., Gupta, M. S., Yadav, S., & Arora, A. (2018). Opinion of students on online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Human Behaviour and Emerging Technologies*, *3*(3), 357–365. https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.240

Chakraborty, S., Sharma, R., & Gupta, P. (2021). *Four quadrant approach for content delivery in MOOCs*. Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), NCERT.

Chauhan, J. (2017). An overview of MOOCs in India. *International Journal of Computer Trends and Technology*, *49*(2), 111–120.

Chauhan, J., & Goel, A. (2017). MOOC education in India: A study of SWAYAM—An Indian MOOC initiative. *International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering*, *5*(9), 37–41.

Daneji, A. A., Ahmad, F. M., & Khambari, M. N. (2019). The effects of perceived usefulness, confirmation and satisfaction on continuance intention in using massive open online course (MOOC). *Knowledge Management & E-Learning*, *11*(2), 201–214. https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2019.11.010

Diwan, P. (2022). Massive open online courses (MOOCs) in India: Opportunities and challenges. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, *10*(7), 232–238.

EY-Parthenon & Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). (2023). *Transformation of Indian higher education: Strategies to leapfrog*. https://www.ey.com/content/dam/ey-unified-site/ey-com/en-in/insights/education/documents/ey-ficci-parthenon-transformation-of-indian-higher-education-strategies-to-leapfrog.pdf

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). (2014). *MOOCs in higher education: Vision paper*. FICCI Higher Education Committee.

Florin, G. A. J., & Malathi, S. (2019). Awareness and utilization of massive open online courses (MOOC) among college students. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, *6*(51), 14783–14789.

Planning Commission, Government of India. (2007). *Eleventh Five-Year Plan 2007–2012: Social sector* (Vol. II). Oxford University Press.

Government of India. (2018). *SWAYAM: Expanding access to quality higher education*. https://swayam.gov.in/

Jalil, H., Marof, A. M., & Omar, R. (2019). Attitude and behavioural intention to develop and use MOOCs among academics. *iJET*, *14*(24), 31–41. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v14i24.12105

Jesse, E. (2019). *Student attitudes toward use of massive open online courses* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Dayton]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Centre. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num= dayton1573740761560753

Jrall, R., & Gupta, J. (2021). Awareness about the MOOCs platforms and its usage: Need of an hour in pandemic. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, *8*(11), C197–C205. http://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2111225.pdf

Kalita, B. (2021, March 28). UGC allows universities to offer 40% of courses online through SWAYAM. *NDTV*. https://www.ndtv.com/education/ugc-allows-universities-offer-40-of-courses-online-through-swayam-2400452

Kanjilal, U., & Kaul, P. (2016). The journey of SWAYAM: India MOOCs initiative. In *Proceedings of the 8th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8)*. Commonwealth of Learning. https://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2592

Kowshik, M. C. (2020). A study on the attitude of teacher educators towards MOOCs. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, *8*(9), 4077–4087. https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2009525.pdf

Kumar, A., & Kumar, P. (2020). Digital divide in online learning: An Indian perspective. *Interactive Technology and Smart Education*, *17*(4), 353–368.

Kumar, R. (2023). Massive open online courses (MOOCs) in India: Concerns about communication, certification, and education standards. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, *4*(5), 563–567.

Liyanagunawardena, T., Williams, S., & Adams, A. (2013). The impact and reach of MOOCs: A developing countries' perspective. *eLearning Papers*, *33*, 1–8.

Mackness, J., Bell, F., & Funes, M. (2016). The rhizome: A problematic metaphor for teaching and learning in a MOOC. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *32*(1). https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2486

Majid, F., Kamarudin, R., & Zamin, A. (2019). Postgraduate students' perception of massive open online courses (MOOCs) in enhancing their learning experience. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, *7*(4), 101–105. https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.7n.4p.101

Mamattah, R. S. (2016). *Students' perceptions of e-learning* [Master's thesis, Linköping University, Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Adult Learning and Global Change Program]. Linköping University Electronic Press.

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. (2017). *Guidelines for developing online courses for SWAYAM*. https://swayam.gov.in/about

Mishra, L., Gupta, T., & Shree, A. (2020). Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, *1*, 100012. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100012

Mishra, P. (2021). *MOOCs and online learning: Trends and opportunities*. Sage.

Mohile, R. S. (2021). A study on e-learning using SWAYAM (MOOCs): Awareness among undergraduate and postgraduate students. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, *9*(1), 1785–1789.

Nayek, J. K. (2018). A survey report on awareness among LIS professionals/students about SWAYAM: A government of India initiative on e-learning. *Knowledge Librarian: An International Peer Reviewed Bilingual E-Journal of Library and Information Science*, *5*(1), 39–45.

Panigrahi, R., Srivastava, P. R., & Sharma, D. (2018). Online learning: Adoption, continuance, and learning outcome—A review of literature. *International Journal of Information Management*, *43*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.05.005

Pramanik, S. (2018). Attitude of postgraduate learners towards SWAYAM: Indian version of MOOCs. *Harvest*, *3*(1), 33.

Pujar, S. M. (2021). A study on SWAYAM—Indigenous online learning platform. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, *9*(4), 5984–5988.

Purkayastha, N., & Sinha, M. K. (2021). Unstoppable study with MOOCs during COVID-19 pandemic: A study. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*, 4791. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4791

Ramadas, R. B., & Karthika, P. (2020). A study on the impact and awareness of SWAYAM. *Studies in Indian Place Names*, *40*(16), 608–616.

Razak, N. A., & Al-Suhail, H. D. (2017). Arab Iraqi EFL students' attitude towards MOOC. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, *8*(1).

Rueda, R., Martínez, M., Cervantes, A., & Zamorano, C. (2021). Teachers' perception about MOOCs and ICT during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, *14*(1), Article ep343. https://doi.org/10.30935/cedtech/11479

Rumi, N., & Mete, J. (2024). Educational reforms in India: The opportunities and challenges of implementing NEP 2020. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, *5*(10), 5114–5120.

Samanta, A. (2018). Analytical study of SWAYAM. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, *5*(3), 1374–1379.

Samantaray, N. (2021, March 30). UGC issues guidelines regarding online courses, allows universities to offer 40% semester courses on SWAYAM. *Times Now*. https://www.timesnownews.com/education/article/ugc-issues-guidelines-regarding-online-courses-allows-universities-to-offer-40-semester-courses-on-swayam/738791

Sera, R. J., & Lobo, S. S. (2018). *Perception and experience of users on MOOC's SWAYAM: A study with reference to postgraduate learners of Belthangady Taluk* [Preprint]. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1414712

Siami, L. R. (2016). *Awareness and attitude of post graduate students towards massive open online courses in Bangalore urban district* [Master's dissertation, Christ University, School of Education]. Christ University Institutional Repository.

Singh, S., & Chauhan, J. (2017). SWAYAM: The dream of Indian MOOC. *International Journal of Computer Sciences and Engineering*, *5*(9), 37–41.

Sinha, A., & Choudhury, A. (2022). Digital education and SWAYAM: Bridging the gap. *Journal of Educational Research*, *14*(2), 78–91.

Soy, S. S. (2019). A study on the awareness of MOOCs among students of higher learning in Paschim Bardhaman District of West Bengal. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, *9*(1), 708–719. https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:ijrss&volume=9&issue=1&article=049

Subaveerapandiyan, A., & Fakrudhin Ali Ahamed, H. (2020). Awareness and usage of SWAYAM courses among library and information science students: A survey. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-Journal)*. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/3705

University Grants Commission. (2016). *UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) Regulations, 2016*. Gazette of India: Extraordinary (Part III, Sec. 4), No. F. 1-100/2016.

University Grants Commission. (2021). *UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) Regulations, 2021*. Gazette of India: Extraordinary (Part III, Sec. 4).

Verma, M. (2023). Challenges and prospects of SWAYAM. *Educational Policy Review*, *12*(3), 101–115.

Wang, N., & Sun, S. (2017). MOOC: Awareness, participation and evaluation from China college students. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, *95*, 229–234. https://doi.org/10.2991/iceemr-17.2017.59

Yadav, R., & Khandelwal, A. R. (2023). A study on students' perception and attitude towards MOOCs. *Madhya-Bharti: Humanities and Social Sciences*.

Yin, X. (2022). Study on the new mode of MOOCs in the modernization process of China's education reform. *Journal of Higher Education*, *8*, 1–7.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 25-38
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00003.6
ISSN 0019-5006

Quality of Parental Relationship and its Psychosocial Impact on Unemployment Tribal Youth: A Study in East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya

• **B. P. Sahu**[1] • **Andreas Rynjah**[2]

Abstract

In India, youth unemployment is a major issue, and educated youth, especially women, bear the brunt of it. The psychological effect of unemployment affects the family dynamics and has a significant impact on parent-youth relationships. The complex relationship between the unemployed youth and the family ties is examined in this study, with particular emphasis on the emotional attitudes of unemployed tribal youths. Examining both positive (affectionate support, communication, and understanding) and negative (rejection, criticism, and emotional distance) feelings, the study examines how unemployment influences emotional bonds, mutual respect, and overall family cohesion. The study, which uses both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, captures the lived experiences of tribal youth navigating the economic instability in their sociocultural environment, characterised by their tribal family configurations.

Keywords: *unemployment, parent-youth relationship, positive feelings and negative feelings, tribal youth, Meghalaya.*

Introduction

Youth unemployment is recognised as a major risk factor (Paul & Moser, 2009) as it creates serious societal problems in the long run. It has negative repercussions on mental health, causing psychological distress and altering the attitudes and behaviours of the youths. According to Baxter et al. (2012), unemployment in the family may follow an intergenerational course which can affect the well-being of both parents and youth. Mühlböck et al. (2022) have opined that long-term unemployment has major consequences for young people. It stops them from gaining job experience, resulting in negative impacts on their lifetime income and blocking

[1]Professor and Dean, School of Education, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, Meghalaya. ✉ bpsahusw@gmail.com
[2]Research Scholar, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, Meghalaya. ✉ andreasmeg7@gmail.com

their career options. Later in their life, it has scarring effects. Youths facing economic hardship due to unemployment often rely on their family for financial and emotional support. Parent-youth relationships can have a significant impact when any of the family members experience unemployment, potentially leading to increased stress and conflict within or outside the family.

Parental support significantly impacts youths' well-being, fostering positive outcomes across various aspects of their lives. Often intended to ease the hardships of youth unemployment, it can have paradoxical effects on young adults' sense of the goal of becoming self-efficacious and independent. Parental financial support, youth may benefit from other forms of support in job loss, networking and seeking help from community resources. Parents who demonstrate concern, approval and a willingness to help their youth are more likely to have youth who experience higher well-being and positive outcomes. The quality of parent-youth relationships is characterised by open communication, shared responsibility, shared experiences, mutual support and closeness. This relationship also plays a crucial role in youth development, impacting their self-esteem, creativity and overall well-being. Positive parenting plays a crucial role in supporting young adults during periods of unemployment, both during the transition to adulthood. When facing a job loss, positive parental support can buffer the negative effects of unemployment. Positive parenting focuses on building strong positive relationships with youth, developing empathy and understanding and creating a supportive environment.

Review of Literature

Popov and Ilesanmi (2015) conducted a study on "Parent-Child Relationship: Peculiarities and Outcome". According to the authors, the relationship between parents and their children can be regarded as the most important relationship an individual can experience. Poor parent-child relationships were reported to contribute to the development of internalising symptoms such as depression, low self-esteem, and body image difficulties in children. Sharma and Srivastav (2023) investigated the relationship between parent-child relationships and an individual's personal values and social maturity in young adults in India. The study revealed that challenges such as academic and career pressures, social norms, and technology use negatively impacted the development of personal values and social maturity among young adults. Frasquilho et al. (2016b) conducted a study on "Unemployment, Parental Distress and Youth Emotional Well-Being: The Moderation Roles of Parent–Youth Relationships and Financial Deprivation". The study found that as parental distress increases, so does the likelihood and severity of emotional difficulties in their children.

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1990) stresses that early childhood attachments between parents and their children play a critical role in the later development and mental functioning of the youth. It further highlights that caring parent-youth relationships are crucial for youth development, influencing their social, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. Social learning theory is often described as the bridge between traditional learning theory and cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977).

Social learning theory agrees with the behaviourist theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Mediating processes occur between stimuli and responses, and behaviour is learnt from the environment through the process of observational learning. Bandura (1977) believe that youths are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behaviour and its consequences. Bandura expanded his theory to social cognitive theory (1986), which places emphasis on cognitive factors such as self-efficacy, self-regulation and the reciprocal relationship between behaviour, environment and personal factors.

Statement of the Problem

Unemployment is one of the biggest issues which the economy faces today and a hurdle to the growth and development of the economy. The unemployed youth generation lives on the support of their families, parents and closest relatives. Long-term unemployment makes young people frustrated and dissatisfied because they are forced to postpone indefinitely important functions typical not only of individuals but of society as well, such as getting married and obtaining the status of parenthood. The longer the time for employment, the higher the age for getting married, and the already concluded marriages start showing signs of falling apart.

The unemployed youth might be coping with a variety of issues at the time of unemployment. Lack of communication is the most significant issue during this period. Many parents find their youth moody, rude, and disagreeing, and youth often get upset by such behaviour and tend to become more rebellious.

Need and Justification of the Study

The emotional detachment between parents and the youth has become a growing concern in today's society, most specifically among the youth who are unemployed. With the increasing demands and distractions of modern life, many unemployed

youth find it challenging to establish and maintain strong emotional connections with their parents. This detachment has significant consequences for the well-being and development of the youth. Hence, it is crucial to address this issue and explore strategies to foster and nurture healthy parent-youth relationships, especially at the time of unemployment crisis.

Objectives

1. To study the socio-demographic characteristics of the unemployed youth.
2. To explore the quality of the parent-youth relationships of the unemployed tribal youth.

Research Methodology

A) For the purpose of the study, a survey method was adopted in order to explore the quality of parental relationships and their psychosocial impact on the unemployed tribal youths.

B) Universe and Sample

The universe of the study was the East Khasi Hills District, spread across eleven blocks in the state of Meghalaya. The unemployed youths who completed at least Class X from across eleven blocks of the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya and who registered themselves in the employment exchange constitute the population of the study. As of the data available for the year 2020, there were altogether 6133 unemployed youth who registered themselves in the employment exchange. For the purpose of sampling, a random sampling procedure was adopted by the investigator to draw the sample from the population. The sample comprises 613 unemployed youth (242 male and 371 female).

C) Research tool and data collection

The data was collected through a self-prepared interview schedule.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data: The following section is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of data.

Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of the Unemployed Youths.

Sl. No	Demographic profile of the unemployed youths				
1.	Sex of the respondents			N	Percentage (%)
	Male			242	39.48
	Female			371	60.52
	Total			613	100
2.	Age group (Years)	N	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage (%)
	18-25	200	66 (27.27)	134 (36.12)	(32.63)
	26-35	400	167 (69.01)	233 (62.80)	(65.25)
	36-45	13	9 (3.72)	04 (1.08)	(2.12)
	Total	613	242	371	100
3.	Residence	N	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage %
	Urban	165	63 (26.03)	102 (27.49)	(26.92)
	Rural	448	179 (73.97)	269 (72.51)	(73.08)
	Total	613	242	371	100
4.	Religion			N	Percentage (%)
	Seng Khasi			118	(19.25)
	Christian			415	(67.70)
	Hindu			48	(7.83)
	Muslim			29	Percentage (%)
	Sikhism			01	(0.16)
	Buddhism			02	(0.33)
	Total			613	100
5.	Category			N	Percentage (%)
	Schedule Tribe			563	91.84
	Schedule Caste			03	0.49
	General			36	5.87
	OBC			11	1.79
	Total			613	100
6.	Marital Status	N	Male (%)	Female (%)	Percentage %
	Single	328	126 (52.07)	202 (54.44)	53.51
	Married	279	115 (47.52)	164 (44.20)	45.51
	Separated	6	1 (0.41)	5 (1.35)	0.98
	Total	613	242	371	100
7.	Type of Family			N	Percentage (%)
	Nuclear family			424	69.17
	Joint family			189	30.83
			Total	613	100

8.	**Type of Residence**			**N**	**Percentage (%)**
	Own house			447	72.92
	Rented house			153	24.96
	Government Quarter			13	2.12
			Total	**613**	**100**
9.	**Numbers of Family Members**	**N**	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**	**Percentage (%)**
	1-2	106	26 (10.74)	80 (21.56)	17.29
	3-4	214	79 (32.64)	135 (36.39)	34.91
	5-6	189	88(36.36)	101(27.22)	30.83
	7-8	70	32(13.22)	38 (10.24)	11.42
	9 and more	34	17 (7.02)	17 (4.58)	5.55
	Total	**613**	**242**	**371**	**100**
10.	**Migration Status**	N	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**	**Percentage (%)**
	Rural to Urban	65	26 (10.74)	39 (10.51)	10.60
	Urban	100	37(15.29)	63 (16.98)	16.31
	Rural	448	179 (73.97)	269 (72.51)	73.08
	Total	**613**	**242**	**371**	**100**
11.	**Income Groups**			**N**	**Percentage (%)**
	LIG			396	64.6
	MIG			171	27.9
	UIG			46	7.5
	Total			**613**	**100**
12.	**Educational Qualification**	**N**	**Male (%)**	**Female (%)**	**Percentage (%)**
	Secondary	91	42 (17.36)	49 (13.21)	14.85
	Higher Secondary	169	93 (38.43)	76 (20.49)	27.57
	Graduate	184	61 (25.21)	123 (33.15)	30.02
	Postgraduate	162	45 (58.60)	117 (31.54)	26.43
	Other (Diploma, certificate and allied courses)	7	1 (0.41)	6 (1.62)	1.14
	Total	**613**	**242**	**371**	**100**

Table 1.1 shows the demographic profile of the unemployed youths. The data was collected from 613 unemployed youths spread over 11 blocks in the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya. The data show that 39.48 per cent of the unemployed respondents were male and 60.52 per cent were female. The data reveal that 27.27 per cent of males and 36.12 per cent of females were in the age group of 18 to 25 years, followed by 69.01 per cent of males and 62.80 per cent of females in the age group of 26 to 35 years and 3.72 per cent of males and 1.08 per cent of females in the age group of 36 to 45 years. As far as their residential status was concerned, 26.03 per cent of males and 27.49 per cent of females resided in urban areas, and on the other hand, 73.97 per cent of males and 72.51 per cent of females resided in rural areas. Out of 613 unemployed youth, 19.25 per cent belong to Seng Khasi, and

67.70 per cent are Christians, 7.83 per cent are Hindus, 4.73 per cent are Muslims, 0.16 per cent are Sikhs, and 0.33 per cent belongs to Buddhism.

With respect to the category of the unemployed youths, it was revealed that 91.84 per cent belong to the Schedule Tribe, followed by 0.49 per cent Schedule Caste, 1.79 per cent from OBC and 5.87 per cent from the General category. As regards their marital status, 52.07 per cent of males and 54.44 per cent of females are single, 47.52 per cent of males and 44.20 per cent of females are married, and 0.41 per cent of males and 1.35 per cent of females are separated. With reference to family status, 69.17 per cent belong to the nuclear family and 30.83 per cent to a joint family. With respect to the resident status of the unemployed youths, 72.92 per cent have their own house, 24.96 per cent are in a rented house and 2.12 percent from the Government Quarter. With respect to the number of siblings, 10.74 per cent were male and 21.56 per cent were female and had 1 to 2 members; 32.64 per cent were male and 36.39 per cent were female and had 3 to 4 members; 36.36 per cent were male and 27.22 per cent were female and had 5 to 6 members; 13.22 per cent were male and 10.24 per cent were female and had 7 to 8 members; and 7.02 per cent were male and 4.58 per cent were female and had 9 or more members in their family. With respect to their migration status, 10.74 per cent of the unemployed youths are male and 10.51 per cent female who have migrated from rural areas to urban areas. Further, the data reveal that 64.60 per cent belong to the lower income group, 27.90 per cent to the Middle Income Group, and 7.50 per cent are in the upper income group. As regards the educational status of the unemployed youths, 17.36 per cent male and 13.21 per cent female have dropped out of only secondary education; 38.43 per cent male and 20.49 per cent female have dropped out of only higher secondary education; 25.21 per cent male and 33.15 per cent female have dropped out of only graduation; 18.60 per cent male and 31.54 per cent female have passed postgraduate education; and 0.41 per cent male and 1.62 per cent female belong to other categories.

Affectionate positive feelings of parents' youth relationships are crucial for building a strong and healthy parent-youth relationship. Physical affection effectively facilitates positive experience between parents and unemployed youth in the family, thus promoting healthy emotional development and fostering a sense of security, happiness and confidence. Active reasoning, giving and receiving affectionate positive feelings, is associated with better perception, reduction of stress, and a variety of psychological well-being, with greater self-esteem. The affectionate positive feeling of parents emphasises the value of having positive social-emotions, warm and kindness, cognitive growth and limiting the expression of negative thoughts.

Table 1.2: Differences in Self-perception of Male and Female Unemployed Youth in Accomplishing Affectionate Positive Feelings of their Parents.

Sl. No	Affectionate Positive Feelings	Male		Female		χ^2 Value	Significan **/ Not Significan *
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)		
1.	My parents feel that I am jolly	145 (59.92)	97 (40.08)	285 (76.82)	86 (23.18)	19.98	**
2.	My parents are sensitive	210 (86.78)	32 (13.22)	319 (85.98)	52 (14.02)	0.08	*
3.	My parents behave with me in the nicest ways.	147 (60.74)	95 (39.26)	309 (83.29)	62 (16.71)	39.07	**
4.	My parents never let me down	191 (78.93)	51 (21.07)	355 (95.69)	16 (4.31)	42.27	**
5.	My parents appreciate my fun	87 (35.95)	155 (64.05)	282 (76.01)	89 (23.99)	98.09	**
6.	My parents provide me with good support	188 (77.69)	54 (22.31)	358 (96.50)	13 (3.50)	39.04	**
7.	My parents are very kind-hearted	184 (76.03)	58 (23.97)	335 (90.30)	36 (9.70)	22.95	**
8.	My parents love me very much	179 (73.97)	63 (26.03)	337 (90.84)	34 (9.16)	31.29	**
9.	My parents pay attention to me	187 (77.27)	55 (22.73)	328 (88.41)	43 (11.59)	13.53	**
10.	My parents like to help me	172 (71.07)	70 (28.93)	351 (94.61)	20 (5.39)	64.76	**
11.	My parents understand my situation/trouble	196 (80.99)	46 (19.01)	357 (96.23)	14 (3.77)	38.50	**
12.	My parents listen to what I have to say	97 (40.08)	145 (59.92)	288 (77.63)	83 (22.37)	88.38	**

d_f= 1 at .05 level of significance, χ^2_t =3.84

Table 1.2 shows differences in Self-perception of unemployed male and female youth in accomplishing affectionate positive feelings of their parents. To study the gender difference, 12 items as reflected in the table were analysed using a $\chi 2$ test with d_f = 1 at .05 level of significance. It was found from the data that there exist significant differences between male and female unemployed youths on affectionate positive feelings shown by the parents, such as expressing their feeling that I am jolly, behaving with me in the nicest ways, never letting me down, appreciating my

fun, providing me support at times, being kind-hearted, showering their love, paying their attention, helping me, understanding my situation/trouble and listening to me. However, no significant difference was observed in the sensitivity of parents towards the issues confronted by the male and female unemployed youth.

The percentage analysis reveal that the prominent affectionate positive feelings of their parents for the unemployed females are 'Providing good support (96.50 per cent), understanding the situation (96.23 per cent), never allowing to be down (95.69 per cent), helping as required (94.61 per cent), showing their love (90.84 per cent), being kind-hearted (90.30 per cent), paying attention to them (88.41 per cent), sensitive to my needs (85.98 per cent), consistently demonstrating their kindness, politeness and empathy (83.29 per cent), listening to me (77.63 per cent), appreciating my jolliness (76.82 per cent) and appreciating my fun (76.01 per cent), whereas the prominent affectionate positive feelings of their parents for the male unemployed youths are "sensitiveness (86.78 per cent), understanding the situation (80.99 per cent), never allowing to be down (78.93 per cent), Providing support (77.69 per cent), paying attention (77.27 per cent), being kind-hearted (76.03 per cent), showering love (73.97 per cent), helping as required (71.07 per cent), good behaviour (60.74 per cent) and appreciating my jolliness (59.92 per cent)."

The common affectionate positive feelings of their parents shown by both male and female unemployed youths are 'appreciating my jolliness, behaving with me in the nicest ways, never letting me down, appreciating my fun, providing me support at times, being kind-hearted, showering their love, paying their attention, helping me and understanding my situation.

Disapproval of negative feelings: Unfriendly and disapproving parental attitudes towards youths can negatively impact their development, leading to low self-esteem, poor emotional regulation and difficulties in forming healthy relationships. The psychological impact of consistent parental unfriendliness and disapproval can contribute to mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and even substance abuse by the youths as a way to cope with negative emotions.

Table 1.3: Differences in Youths' Self-Perception with respect to Disapproval of Negative Feelings of the Parents.

Sl. No	Disapproval of negative feeling	Male		Female		χ^2 Value	Significant **/ Not Significant *
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)		
1.	My parents feel that I am a bit too fussy	82 (33.88)	160 (66.12)	91 (24.53)	280 (75.47)	6.33	**
2.	My parents nags at me	117 (48.35)	125 (51.65)	131 (35.31)	240 (64.69)	10.34	**
3.	My parents feel that I am short-tempered	102 (42.15)	140 (57.85)	158 (42.59)	213 (47.51)	0.01	*
4.	My parents feel that I complain too much	169 (69.83)	73 (30.17)	276 (74.39)	95 (25.61)	1.53	*
5.	My parents get annoyed without good reason	81 (33.47)	161 (66.53)	54 (14.56)	317 (85.44)	30.52	**
6.	Lack of empathy	117 (48.35)	125 (51.65)	145 (39.08)	226 (60.92)	5.14	**
7.	My Parents grumble too much	74 (30.58)	168 (69.42)	51 (13.75)	320 (86.25)	25.56	**
8.	My parents are not very patient	86 (35.54)	156 (64.46)	73 (19.68)	298 (80.32)	19.18	**
9.	My parents get too angry	65 (26.86)	177 (73.14)	49 (13.21)	322 (86.79)	18.03	**
10.	My parents frown at me	118 (48.76)	124 (51.24)	97 (26.15)	274 (73.85)	32.89	**
11.	My parents tease me	61 (25.21)	181 (74.79)	59 (15.90)	312 (84.10)	8.05	**
12.	My parents tell me off	197 (81.40)	45 (18.60)	196 (52.83)	175 (47.17)	51.98	**
13.	My parents are too busy to have time for me	86 (35.54)	156 (64.46)	79 (21.29)	292 (78.71)	15.10	**

d_f= 1 at .05 level of significance, χ^2_t =3.84

Table 1.3 shows the self-perception differences in accomplishing unfriendliness and disapproval of negative feelings adopted by the unemployed youths. To study the gender difference, 13 items as reflected in the table were analysed using a χ^2 test with d_f = 1 at .05 level of significance. It was found from the data that there exist significant differences between male and female unemployed youths on disapproval of negative feeling by the parents in the variables like fussiness, nagging, short-tempered, complaining too much, reflecting their annoyances, grumbling, being impatient, being angry, teasing, frowning, writing me off and being too busy to have time for me, whereas no significant difference was observed on labelling me as short-tempered and complaining in nature.

The percentage analysis reveals that the prominent disapproval of negative feelings of their parents shown towards the unemployed females were 'perceiving the complaints as excessively negative (74.39 per cent) and the feeling of my parents that I am totally off', whereas the prominent disapproval of negative feelings of their parents towards the male unemployed youths are 'the feeling of my parents that I am totally off (81.40 per cent) and perceiving the complaints as excessively negative (69.83 per cent)'. The common disapproval and negative feelings shown by both male and female unemployed youths are that they perceive their complaints as excessively negative and the feeling of my parents that I am totally off.

Main findings

1. It was found from the data that there exist significant differences between male and female unemployed youths in affectionate positive feelings shown by the parents on all the above parameters, except the sensitivity of parents to the issues confronted by the unemployed youths.

2. The study revealed that there exist significant differences in the disapproval of negative feelings of their parents between male and female unemployed youth in the domains of fussiness, nagging, annoyances, grumbling, impatience, anger, teasing, frowning, writing me off and being too busy to have time for the youth, whereas no significant difference was found in the short temperance and complaining of the parents.

Discussion of the results

The data revealed that female unemployed youth are encouraged to engage in social activities and social gatherings, allowed to spend more time in and around the home, supported at difficult times, provided with safety supervisions, supported towards furtherance of their education, provided with family support, and are rewarded for their positive behaviours than the male youths, whereas the male youths' feelings about loss of household income were more prominent than the female unemployed youth's.

The positive behaviours and affection between parents and the female unemployed youth, with respect to mutual respect, open communication, trust and a supportive environment, were more forthcoming, whereas it was less forthcoming for the male unemployed youth. This is mainly attributed to the matrilineal structure of the society. The affectionate positive feelings by the parents for female unemployed youths were reflected more prominently in the variables like being jolly, being nice and having fun with them; providing adequate mental support and being kind-hearted;

showing their love and attention; helping at times of need; understanding and listening to them; and not letting them down than for the male unemployed youths. The findings are supported by Connolly (2024), who found that positive parenting emphasises the value of the development of positive emotions, and Neff (2011), who stated that youth build mutual supportive relationships, warmth and affection with their parents when supported at the time of crisis by the parents. Further, Frasquilho et al. (2016a) corroborate the study with their research findings, which show that a good family environment acts as a protector against the effect of unemployment on youth well-being.

The disapproval of negative feelings was explicit in parent-youth relationships for both male and female unemployed youth. The parents were worried about their demandingness, persistent complaining nature, annoyances, feeling that they spoil others from having fun, accompanied by irritability and grumbling. The parents perceive them as excessively negative, expressing their dissatisfaction with their upsetting behaviour, which irritates them often. At times, the parents get annoyed over the youth without any good reason, which makes them overwhelmed or stressed. The findings are in alignment with the study conducted by Margolin et al. (1996). They found that families experiencing high levels of distress appear to prolong conflict and tension over time, thereby maintaining these negative patterns. Further, Popov and Ilesanmi (2015) state that poor parent-child relationships contribute to the development of internalising symptoms among the youth, and they develop depression, low self-esteem, and image difficulties. And it is also possible that youths with these symptoms may engage less with their parents.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Unemployment is related to a reduction in income. Risky behaviours such as substance abuse and online interactions are often more frequent among unemployed youths and tend to increase with their age, particularly during the unemployment period. Parents' involvement during this phase influences the youth's career success and identity formation, leading to their life satisfaction and good mental health. Therefore, parental and family support may be one of the viable strategies to address the social and psychological consequences of unemployment. Parental education, family cohesion, family income and educational outcome should be considered when providing psychological and social support for youth who struggle with unemployment. At the time of unemployment, the youth need opportunities to explore, take risks and learn from both successes and failures to develop their cognitive, social and emotional skills and thrive in their everyday life. Developing a strong sense of identity for personal values, affiliations and goals, and a capacity for self-direction are crucial

for personal growth and overall well-being. Parents need to provide a range of support, including resources, training and ongoing assistance, and ensure strong relationships with youths.

Conclusion

Intensive parenting emphasises parental roles as both vigilant guardians and supportive confidence, aiming to cultivate youth in self-governance, including academics, social development and emotional health. Poor parent-youth communication significantly impacts youth's well-being, affecting their self-esteem and leading to various psychological and behavioural problems. Lack of open and supportive communication can damage a youth's sense of self-worth, contributing to issues like low self-esteem, depression and behavioural problems. Parent-youth communication styles characterised by openness, positivity, affection, and satisfaction foster a positive self-evaluation in youths, contributing to their overall self-esteem and reducing the risk of engaging in unsocial activities. Positive parenting during adolescence is significantly linked to better career outcomes for young adults, including increased career satisfaction, autonomy, commitment and income. Positive parenting can indirectly lead to better career outcomes by influencing educational achievements. Parenting styles characterised by warmth, responsiveness, parental acceptance, encouragement, open communication, affection, involvement and emotional support are associated with higher self-esteem in youths.

References

Baxter, J., Gray, M., Hand, K., & Hayes, A. (2012). *Parental joblessness, financial disadvantage and the wellbeing of parents and children* (FaHCSIA Occasional Paper No. 48). https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2293760

Bowlby, J. (1990). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. Basic Books.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall

Connolly, P. (2024). *Affectionate communication and physical affection between parents and children with special educational needs: An intervention approach*. Department of Counseling and Psychology, Hong Kong Shue Yan University. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384752221

Frasquilho, D., de Matos, M. G., Neville, F., & Morgado, P. (2016a). Parental unemployment and youth life satisfaction: The moderating roles of satisfaction with family life. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 25*, 3214–3219. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0480-z

Frasquilho, D., de Matos, M. G., Marques, A., Neville, F., & Morgado, P. (2016b). Unemployment, parental distress and youth emotional well-being: The moderation roles of parent–youth relationship and financial deprivation. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development, 47*, 751–758. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-015-0610-7

Mühlböck, M., Steiber, N., & Kittel, B. (2022). Learning to keep the faith? Further education and perceived employability among young unemployed. *Economic and Industrial Democracy, 43*(2), 705–725. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X20944211

Margolin, G., Gordis, E. B., & John, R. S. (1996). Family interaction and children's emotional and behavioral responses. *Journal of Family Psychology, 10*(2), 123–137

Neff, K. (2011). *Self-compassion: Stop beating yourself up and leave insecurity behind*. HarperCollins

Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 74*(3), 264–282.

Popov, L. M., & Ilesanmi, R. A. (2015). Parent-child relationship: Peculiarities and outcome. *Review of European Studies, 7*(5), 253–263.

Sharma, J., & Srivastav, A. S. (2023). Influence of parent-child relationship on an individual's personal value and social maturity. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 11*(3), 1786–1810.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 39-50
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00004.8
ISSN 0019-5006

Social and Psychological Problems among Working and Non-Working Women in Nagaland

• Murathoti Rajendra Nath Babu[1] • Onentila Longkumer[2] • Sevelu Lohe[3]

Abstract

The present investigation is aimed at exploring and comparing the social and psychological problems among working and non-working women in Nagaland state in relation to occupation and marital status. For the present study, the descriptive survey method was used. A sample size of 276 working and non-working women was randomly selected in the study. The self-made tool was developed by the researchers. As a result, it was found that there is a significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to occupation, whereas there is no significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to marital status. This implies that non-working women experience more social problems than working women.

Keywords: *social problems, psychological problems, women, occupation, marital status.*

Introduction

Women are an important entity, as they have the power to shape the nation. Women have many roles to play in society, i.e., wife, mother, sister, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, etc., which sometimes can be stressful for her, playing multiple roles.

[1]Associate Professor, Department of Education, Nagaland University (A Central University), Kohima Campus, Meriema, Nagaland - 797 004. ✉ mrnb.svu@gmail.com
[2]Research Scholar, Department of Education, Nagaland University (A Central University), Kohima Campus, Meriema, Nagaland-797 004. ✉ onentila88@gmail.com
[3]Counsellor, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Nagaland, Ruziezou, Kohima, Nagaland - 797001. ✉ sevelumerolohe@gmail.com

Women expand their lives to include a career while also maintaining their conventional roles.

Working women are those who hold full-time salaried jobs, whereas non-working women are those women who do not hold full-time salaried jobs. Working women, after finishing their work in the office, come home and take care of their household, and the same with non-working women, who are expected to take care of the household full-time. These demanding roles from both working and non-working women stress the women to a great extent, leading to various problems.

In some orthodox families, it is difficult for a woman to convince her family to work or hold a job, whereas in some, women are restricted to their homes and discriminated against based on their zero income. And even with women holding a job, there are instances in which she is discriminated against or abused at the workplace. A non-working woman is expected to be a perfect daughter, mother, wife, etc., and stay at home to carry out the household chores or take the orders of her husband, in-laws or family without any complaint. With all the difficult situations women face, it leads to social and psychological problems, which can happen anywhere, maybe at home, in the neighbourhood, at the workplace, in church, and in society. They are subjected to these problems, which often hamper their lives.

In a Naga society, women have traditionally enjoyed a high social position with a pivotal role in both family and community affairs. They hold a major role to play, and all these multiple roles and overlapping responsibilities, she has to support her family financially and emotionally take a toll on her physical, emotional, and mental health. They face many problems in real life at their homes, workplaces, and all places they stay and work, which affect their mental health as well.

Both working and non-working women face challenges daily when it comes to social and psychological problems. 'Social problems' refer to any condition or behaviour that has negative consequences on a person or a large number of people and that is generally recognised as a condition or behaviour that needs to be addressed.

Social problems can be in the form of employment discrimination, sexual harassment, women battering, gender-based violence, and sexism. Psychological problems are psychological disorders or abnormalities of the mind that result in persistent behaviour patterns that can seriously affect your day-to-day life and its functions. It has a huge impact on multiple areas of one's life.

Review of Literature

Kaur (2012) conducted a study on the social problems and psychological problems related to educated working women, with the main aim of exploring the social and psychological problems among working women. The result revealed that the social and psychological problems of the professionally and non-professionally educated women differ significantly with their levels of education. The researcher suggested that social support should be provided in the workplace, as it is a potential facilitator for change, equal opportunities in all aspects of employment should be promoted, and a strict watch on the activities of sexual abuse should be taken.

Nawaz et al. (2013) conducted a study on the problems of formally employed women in a case study of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan, and the result indicated that working women of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan, face social and workplace problems which include stressful working hours, no security of a job, low pay or wages, discrimination based on their gender and non-recognition of their hard work.

Longkumer (2014) conducted a study on the status, role, and problems of educated working women in Nagaland. The result revealed that due to multiple responsibilities, working women do not get ample time for their personal work, and also, sexual abuse or assault is prevalent in the workplace.

Kaur (2019) studied the socio-psychological problems of working women in the service sector: a field study of Mansa and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts of Punjab. It has been found that working women, both married and unmarried, from the two districts of Punjab are equally facing socio-psychological problems while balancing their dual (work and family) lives.

Rathod (2019) studied the work profile of rural and urban working and non-working women with the main aim of studying the personal characteristics and time utilisation patterns of various home activities. It has been found that the non-working and working women in rural areas have insufficient time to participate in activities related to exercise/yoga, as compared to the working and non-working women in an urban area. The low membership was noticed, and also, the non-working women in both urban and rural areas get more time to be involved in home activities.

Abbasi et al. (2019) studied the problems of women in the workplace with the main aim of exploring the problems faced by working women in Pakistan. The result indicated that working women in Pakistan face various problems both at home

and in the workplace, which hampers their contribution to economic development in the country. The researcher further recommended that women be approached with a positive attitude in all spheres of their lives.

Javaid et al. (2020) conducted a study on the societal challenges faced by working women in Pakistan with an aim to study the challenges faced by working women in the educational sector in the urban areas of Pakistan in relation to their dual jobs that they have to perform, household chores and work or job-related duties. It was found that working women face problems in balancing their dual jobs and responsibilities assigned to them, although they get support from their families.

The researcher further recommended that more support with a good attitude towards women be needed, as social support leads to successful job performance or careers for working women.

Akhtar and Shaheen (2022) conducted a study of adjustment problems among working and non-working women and aimed to explore the level of adjustment among working and non-working women. 40 women from Jamshedpur (20 employed and 20 unemployed) were included in the sample. Mohsin Shamshad's adjustment inventory standardised Bell's adjustment scale. The t-test was used to assess the data. The results showed that working and non-working women's levels of adjustment differed significantly.

Singh and Singh (2023) carried out a comparative study on adjustment and life satisfaction between working and non-working women. For this study, a sampling technique was employed, and a sample of 50 working women was chosen. The degree of adjustment among working and non-working women was evaluated using Bell's adjustment inventory. The degree of life satisfaction among working and non-working women was measured using the Q.G. Alam and Ram ji Shrivastava life satisfaction scale. With the use of SPSS software, the results were assessed and examined following the application of statistical methods such as mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The outcome demonstrated that working and non-working women varied significantly in their levels of adjustment and quality of life.

Kaur (2024) attempted to find the relationship between career values and psychological and social problems. The stratified sampling technique was applied to collect the data of 300 respondents from Ludhiana, Punjab, to test the relationship between career values and psycho-social problems of working women. A negative correlation was found between career values and psychosocial problems, with a

significant impact of psychological and social problems on the career values of working women.

Significance of the Study

In the present society, women, in general, face unique barriers in pursuit of the social, political, economic, or psychological aspects. Both working and non-working women face social and psychological problems daily, directly or indirectly, in their sphere of life. The need to address these problems and frame them as challenges, and the fact that women are responsible for confronting and bringing a solution to these problems.

Women are considered more compassionate and empathetic than men and often are considered a sign of weakness. Women face so many problems or issues that we cannot articulate, and they are facing so much without complaining, so there is a need to study the social and psychological problems faced by the working and non-working women to understand and support them, and also, to fight against the stigma or any wrongdoers for justice and equality so that women can speak up if any issues or problems arise without fear.

Considering the problems faced by women, particularly in Nagaland, concerning their social and psychological problems, the information from the present study will help bring awareness to every individual and find ways to bring about improvement, changes, and effective solutions. As a result, women in general, whether working or non-working, will be able to manage their emotions and stress, understand their needs better, develop effective and positive coping mechanisms, and mould and build confidence in themselves to face any challenges that life poses. It will also enable them to make the right and conscious choices in their day-to-day life.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find the level of social and psychological problems among working and non-working women.
2. To explore and compare the social as well as psychological problems related to working and non-working women with respect to occupation.
3. To explore and compare the social as well as psychological problems related to working and non-working women with respect to marital status.

Methodology

Method: The descriptive survey method was used.

Sample: The simple random sampling technique was used to select the women, both working and non-working women of Nagaland state. Out of 16 districts in Nagaland, four districts have been selected for the study, namely Kohima, Dimapur, Phek, and Wokha, comprising 25% of the total number of districts, and a sample size of 276 working and non-working women was randomly selected for the present study.

Tools: The self-made tool was prepared by the researchers. Here, the respondents are asked to choose from a range of options. The questionnaire was developed with two dimensions: social problems and psychological problems. The first draft questionnaire consisted of 50 questions in total, 25 each for each dimension. The final tool consists of 44 items. The reliability of the scale was computed by using the Cronbach's Alpha method. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient found for this tool was 0.85. The content validity was established through validation, modifications, suggestions, and recommendations from various experts in the concerned field. Most of the statements were retained, while some were rejected. Intrinsic validity is given by the square root of its reliability. Hence, the intrinsic validity for social and psychological problems among working and non-working women was 0.9219; this value shows that the scale is valid to measure social and psychological problems among working and non-working women. Positive items are to be scored by giving a score value of 1 to strongly agree, 2 to agree, 3 to undecided, 4 to disagree and 5 to strongly disagree. Whereas negative items are to be scored by giving a score value of 5 to strongly agree, 4 to agree, 3 to undecided, 2 to disagree, and 1 to strongly disagree.

Analysis and Interpretation

Objective 1: To find the level of social and psychological problems among working and non-working women.

Table-1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Social problems among the working and non-working women (N=276).

Sl. No.	Level of Scores	Level of social problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	70 & above	Above Average	129	46.74%
2	69-70	Average/Moderate	17	6.16%
3	68 & below	Below Average	130	47.10%
Total			276	100%

The frequency and percentage distribution of the social problems among working and non-working women of Nagaland indicate that 46.74% of working and non-working women have above-average levels of social problems, 6.16% of working and non-working women have an average or moderate level of social problems, and 47.10% of working and non-working women have below-average levels of social problems. Overall, working and non-working individuals have an average level of social problems.

Table-2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of psychological problems among the working and non-working women (N=276).

Sl. No.	Level of Scores	Level of psychological problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	70 & above	Above Average	137	49.64%
2	68-70	Average/Moderate	21	7.61%
3	67 & below	Below Average	118	42.75%
Total			276	100%

The frequency and percentage distribution of the psychological problems among working and non-working women of Nagaland indicate that 49.64% of working and non-working women have above-average levels of psychological problems, 7.61% of working and non-working women have an average or moderate level of psychological problems, and 42.75% of working and non-working women have below-average levels of psychological problems. Overall, working and non-working individuals have an average level of psychological problems.

Objective 2: To explore and compare the social as well as psychological problems related to the working and non-working women with respect to occupation.

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to occupation.

Table-3: Mean, SD, and t-value of working and non-working women with regard to social and psychological problems.

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
Social Problems	Working women	165	68.26	8.685	2.826*
	Non-working women	111	71.39	9.478	
Psychological Problems	Working women	165	67.73	10.130	1.043@
	Non-working women	111	69.04	10.230	
Social and psychological problems	Working women	165	135.99	17.131	2.105*
	Non-working women	111	140.42	17.157	

Note: *'@' indicates not significant at the 0.05 level, and '*' indicates significant at the 0.05 level*

It is found from Table 3 that there is a significant difference in the area of social problems among working and non-working women with respect to occupation, as the computed t-value (2.826) is greater than the tabulated t-value (1.96) for 274 df at the 0.05 level of significance. There is no significant difference in the area of psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to occupation, as the computed t-value (1.043) is less than the tabulated t-value (1.96) for 274 df at the 0.05 level of significance. Overall, it was found that there is a significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to occupation, as the calculated t-value (2.105) is greater than the table t-value (1.96) for 274 df at the 0.05 level. Therefore, hypothesis H_{01} is not accepted. Henceforth, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to occupation.

Objective 3: To explore and compare the social as well as psychological problems related to working and non-working women with respect to marital status.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to marital status.

Table-4: Mean, SD, and t-value of working and non-working women with regard to social and psychological problems.

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value
Social Problems	Married	101	70.28	9.924	1.050@
	Unmarried	175	69.08	8.631	
Psychological Problems	Married	101	69.28	9.972	1.267@
	Unmarried	175	67.67	10.268	
Social and psychological problems	Married	101	139.55	17.552	1.303@
	Unmarried	175	136.75	17.036	

Note: *'@' indicates not significant at the 0.05 level, and '*' indicates significant at the 0.05 level*

It is found from Table 4 that there is no significant difference in the areas of social problems as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to marital status, as computed t-values (1.050, 1.267) were less than the tabulated t-value (1.96) for 274 df at 0.05 level of significance. Overall, it was found that there is no significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to marital status, as the calculated t-value (1.303) is less than the table t-value (1.96) for 274 df at the

0.05 level. Therefore, hypothesis H_{02} is accepted. Henceforth, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in social as well as psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to marital status.

Findings

- The study revealed that 46.74% of working and non-working women have above-average levels of social problems, 6.16% of working and non-working women have average or moderate levels of social problems, and 47.10% of working and non-working women have below-average levels of social problems. This implies that working and non-working women have an average level of social problems.
- The study revealed that 49.64% of working and non-working women have above-average levels of psychological problems, 7.61% of working and non-working women have an average or moderate level of psychological problems, and 42.75% of working and non-working women have below-average levels of psychological problems. This implies that working and non-working women have an average level of psychological problems
- The social problems among working and non-working women differ significantly. This implies that non-working women experience more social problems than working women.
- There is no significant difference in psychological problems between working and non-working women.
- Marital status, i.e., married or unmarried, has no impact on the social problems among working and non-working women. There is no significant difference in social problems among the working and non-working women with respect to marital status
- Marital status, i.e., married or unmarried, has no impact on the psychological problems among working and non-working women. There is no significant difference in psychological problems among working and non-working women with respect to marital status.

Educational Implications

- Education plays an important role in empowering women. It enables women to face challenges and confront their traditional roles. Therefore, women's education is the need of the hour in order to improve women's position in society.

- Education should play an important role in removing negative gender stereotyping among students, and they should be made aware of the problems women face and bring about effective changes.
- The need to recognise women as essential human beings and do away with the gender-based violence against women: education should act as a tool in implementing different activities and strategies to bring about improvement.
- Government and NGOs have to set up various policies and agencies and take into serious consideration the problems that women face and aim at empowering women for their overall development.
- Government and NGOs must take effective steps to sensitise the communities on women's rights.
- Empowerment of women through various pieces of training, workshops, and seminars is a necessity.
- Women's studies research centres should be provided to identify issues and areas where women are facing problems.
- An effective and responsive curriculum catering to the social, cultural, political, and psychological needs of women should be considered.

Suggestions

- Most studies on women should be undertaken to improve the status of women and remove any social barriers.
- It is necessary to change the negative attitude towards women. More freedom should be given to women.
- Society should accept the dual role and responsibilities of women.
- With proper co-operation from family and colleagues, working women can easily avoid socio-psychological stresses.
- Family members should share the responsibilities of the woman to reduce the burden.
- Women in the family, whether employed or unemployed, should be respected and taken care of.
- Family members should always be open to communication and share the problems they are facing with each other.
- Society should be sensitised to the issue of the invisibility of women's household chores, domestic work, and other fundamental activities.
- The head of the office or the employer should have a good and positive attitude towards women in the workplace and should always be open to communication and listen to their problems or any issues that they face.
- There should be a strict watch on activities of any gender-based violence or sexual abuse, both at home and at the workplace.

- A safe environment should be created for women to work.
- Social and psychological support should be provided both at home and in the workplace.
- Equal opportunities in all aspects of employment should be provided for women.
- Psychological problems are as serious as social problems; therefore, both have to be taken into serious consideration to bring out effective solutions.
- Proper health clinics or facilities for the targeted population of women should be provided by the government or NGOs.

Conclusion

This study explores and compares the social and psychological working and non-working women with respect to their occupation and marital status. In the present society, women, in general, face unique barriers in pursuit of the social, political, economic, or psychological aspects. Women, both working and non-working, face social and psychological problems on a daily basis, directly or indirectly, in their sphere of life. The need to address these problems frames them as challenges that women are responsible for confronting to bring out solutions to these problems. Women are considered more compassionate and empathetic than men, and that is often considered a sign of weakness. Women face so many problems or issues that we cannot articulate, and they are facing so much without complaining, so there is a need to study the problems faced by women in general in order to understand and support them, and also, to fight against the stigma or any wrongdoers for justice and equality so that women can speak up if any issues or problems arise without fear. Society should be sensitised to the issue and problems faced by women, and effective solutions to these problems must be found.

References

Abbasi, A. M., Abbas, I., & Malik, S. (2019). Exploring the problems of women at workplace. *Journal of Social Sciences and Media Studies*, *3*(1), 17-27.

Akhtar, Z., & Shaheen, G. (2022). A Study of Adjustment Problem among Working and Non-Working Women. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *10*(1), 330-337. https://doi.org/10.25215/1001.028

Javaid, Q. U. A., Khan, Z. U., & Siddiq, U. (2020). Societal challenges faced by working women in Pakistan. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology, 17*(7), 10275–10288.

Kaur, M. (2019). *Socio psychological problems of working women in service sector: Field study of Mansa and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts of Punjab* [Doctoral dissertation, Central University of Punjab]. Shodhganga. http://hdl.handle.net/10603/254876

Kaur, P. (2012). *A study of social and psychological problems related to educated working women* [Doctoral dissertation, Maharaja Ganga Singh University]. Shodhganga. http://hdl.handle.net/10603/296387

Kaur, S. (2024). Career values as affected by psychological and social problems among working women, *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 15(4), 402-426. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWOE.2024.143171

Longkumer, I. (2014). *Status role and problems of educated working women in Nagaland* [Doctoral dissertation, Nagaland University]. Shodhganga. http://hdl.handle.net/10603/131008

Nawaz, M. A., Afzal, N., & Shehzadi, K. (2013). Problems of Formally Employed Women: A Case Study of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan. *Asian Journal of Empirical Research*, *3*(10), 1291-1299.

Rathod, S. M. (2019). *Work profile of rural and urban working and non-working women with special reference to their time utilization in home activities* [Doctoral dissertation, Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University]. Shodhganga. http://hdl.handle.net/10603/331249

Singh, G., & Singh, J. (2023). A Comparative Study of Working and Non-Working Women on Adjustment and Life Satisfaction. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *11*(2), 1829-1833.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 51-74
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00005.X
ISSN 0019-5006

From Field Notes to Professional Growth: Examining the Impact of Report Writing and Documentation on Extension Development Students

• **Atul Gautam**[1] • **Nasra Shabnam**[2]

Abstract

Fieldwork practice is a foundational pedagogical element in development extension education, providing students with immersive exposure to community settings, enabling them to translate theory into practice. Documentation and report writing are not merely administrative obligations; they function as critical tools that promote reflective learning, continuous improvement, and professional competence. This study explores the impact of report writing and documentation on the professional development of Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students during fieldwork. It investigates four domains: (a) enhancement of critical thinking, (b) development of professional competence, (c) influence on self-efficacy, and (d) best documentation practices. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, the research surveyed 100 MDEx students across different institutions in India using structured questionnaires, with data analysed via SPSS.

Results show that structured report writing significantly bolsters students' ability to reflect on field experiences, connect theoretical frameworks to contextual realities, and recognise barriers in community innovation uptake. These findings align with recent research in educational settings on the importance of goal clarity and scaffolded writing practice, as well as the need to support learners through online writing models.

Keywords: *report writing, documentation, professional development, extension theories, fieldwork practice.*

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Adult & Continuing Education and Extension, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. ✉ intelgautam@gmail.com
[2]Professor, Department of Adult & Continuing Education and Extension, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. ✉ nshabnam@jmi.ac.in

Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The primary aim of this study is to explore how report writing and documentation influence the professional development of Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students during their fieldwork practice in India. The same could apply to students in adult and continuing education and, to some extent, to the social work discipline. Documentation is a core skill for extension professionals because it integrates field observations with theoretical models, supports accountability, and fosters systematic reflection (Roy & Maji, 2023; Van den Ban & Hawkins, 2002). Grounding field practice in structured reporting helps students move beyond descriptive note-taking toward analytical and evaluative writing that enhances their professional identity (Kaya & Yaðýz, 2023).

Introduction

Fieldwork education is the cornerstone of development extension pedagogy, designed to equip students with the skills and competencies necessary to work effectively in real-world community contexts. Unlike purely classroom-based learning, fieldwork immerses students in the dynamic realities of rural and urban development, exposing them to diverse stakeholders, institutional frameworks, and socio-economic challenges. Within this experiential learning process, report writing and documentation emerge as critical practices that both capture and shape the professional growth of students. For Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students, systematic documentation of fieldwork activities provides a platform for reflection, accountability, and integration of theory with practice (Swanson & Rajalahti, 2010).

Documentation as a Professional Competency

In extension education, documentation extends beyond the maintenance of records; it is a professional competency that ensures transparency, accuracy, and continuity in programme delivery. As in social work, where record-keeping establishes accountability to clients and institutions, in extension, practice documentation plays a parallel role in ensuring that interventions are evidence-based and replicable (Savaya, 2010). Reports serve multiple purposes: they inform supervisors, facilitate peer learning, guide decision-making, and provide institutional memory for future practitioners.

Moreover, proper documentation aligns with the ethical responsibility of extension professionals. The alignment of ethical responsibility with the growing emphasis on

accountability and transparency in higher education and development programmes across India.

Theoretical Foundations of Documentation in Extension

Several theoretical perspectives guide the role of report writing and documentation in extension education.

1. Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003)

Documentation helps students track the diffusion process within communities—identifying innovators, early adopters, and laggards. For example, when MDEx students record responses to agricultural demonstrations, they generate evidence about barriers to adoption and strategies for accelerating diffusion.

2. Participatory Extension Approach (Chambers, 1997)

This approach emphasizes co-creation of knowledge between extension agents and community members. Through documentation, students can highlight how participatory rural appraisal (PRA), focus groups, or farmer field schools foster collaborative problem-solving. Such records strengthen community ownership of development interventions.

3. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993)

Report writing is also a form of investment in human capital. By learning to document systematically, students enhance their analytical and communication skills, which are transferable to their future professional roles. Documentation, thereby, increases the value of their education in the labour market.

4. Systems Theory in Extension (Checkland, 1999)

Extension is embedded in complex systems of farmers, government agencies, markets, and civil society organisations. Documentation enables students to capture these interconnections, offering insights into how institutional linkages and feedback loops affect programme outcomes.

These theories underscore that documentation is not a mechanical exercise but an analytical practice rooted in professional and theoretical frameworks.

Documentation in Indian Extension Practice

India's extension system provides rich examples of how documentation underpins professional practice. At Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), students learn to document farm trials, demonstrations, and farmer feedback systematically. Similarly, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) rely on record-keeping to track savings, loans, and capacity-building activities (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development [NABARD], 2022). Development programmes such as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and Digital India initiatives highlight the role of ICT tools in enhancing documentation, where mobile-based apps and dashboards record real-time progress (Meera et al., 2019).

These cases show how MDEx students, during their fieldwork, mirror the practices of professional extension agents, observing, recording, and analysing community responses. By writing reports on such experiences, they not only reflect on their learning but also contribute to institutional knowledge systems (Gautam & Kaushik, 2023).

Relevance in Contemporary Extension Education

The relevance of documentation in extension education has become even more significant in the 21st century, where development practice extends across multiple domains beyond agriculture. Contemporary extension professionals must demonstrate competencies in areas such as digital literacy, de-addiction, conflict resolution, gender equality, and participatory governance**.** These are emphasised in the pedagogy of Jamia Millia Islamia (Jamia Millia Islamia [JMI], 2022), the focus of the present study. Documentation during fieldwork serves as the bridge between classroom preparation in these areas and their practical application in community contexts.

Digital Literacy: With the expansion of ICT-based development programmes, including *Digital India*, *Common Service Centres (CSCs)*, and *Digital Saksharta Abhiyan*, the ability to facilitate digital literacy has become a core competency for extension professionals. Reports also provide evidence of how digital literacy narrows the digital divide, particularly for marginalised groups such as women and smallholder farmers.

De-Addiction and Community Wellbeing: Extension professionals increasingly engage in de-addiction campaigns in collaboration with public health departments and NGOs. Documenting these interventions requires not only factual

accuracy but also sensitivity and confidentiality. For students, this process enhances their skills in behaviour-change communication and community mobilisation as they reflect on both challenges and successes of de-addiction initiatives (Kumar & Anand, 2021).

Conflict Resolution and Mitigation: Development interventions often intersect with community conflicts over land, resources, or social divisions. JMI's extension education framework emphasises conflict transformation and peacebuilding as vital competencies (JMI, 2022). By documenting conflict cases during field placements, students learn to analyse root causes, document negotiation strategies, and reflect on outcomes. Such reflective documentation equips them with skills in dialogue facilitation and participatory decision-making (Dutta, 2020).

Integration with Extension Theories: These emerging sectors reinforce the application of extension theories. For example, reports on digital literacy sessions draw from Diffusion of Innovation theory to analyse the pace of adoption. Conflict mitigation efforts exemplify systems theory, highlighting the interconnectedness of social, economic, and cultural subsystems.

Building Professional Competence: Ultimately, documenting experiences in these diverse fields prepares MDEx students for careers in multidisciplinary development settings. Reports become records of both learning and professional growth, showcasing students' abilities to apply theoretical frameworks to contemporary challenges. Documentation ensures that Indian MDEx graduates emerge as reflective, accountable, and competent professionals who can address complex developmental realities with confidence.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the impact of report writing and documentation on the professional development of Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students during fieldwork practice in India. A descriptive design was selected because it allows for the systematic analysis of characteristics, perceptions, and practices within a defined population, providing insights into patterns and relationships without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In extension education, where field-based experiences are highly contextual, descriptive designs are particularly useful in capturing student reflections and competencies (Roy & Maji, 2023).

Research Objectives

The methodology was shaped by four core objectives:

1. To assess the impact of report writing on the critical thinking skills of MDEx students.
2. To evaluate the relationship between documentation and professional competence in extension practice.
3. To examine the influence of documentation on students' self-efficacy.
4. To identify best practices in report writing and documentation within the fieldwork context.

These objectives guided the development of the research tools and analysis plan, ensuring alignment between theoretical foundations and practical field-based experiences.

Study Area, Population, and Sampling

The study was conducted across multiple universities and institutions in India offering postgraduate programmes in development, extension and allied disciplines such as lifelong learning, adult and continuing education and social work.

The research captured diverse fieldwork contexts, including rural, semi-urban, and urban placements in organisations such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations, and government extension departments.

The study population included master's level students (MDEx students) enrolled in recognised Indian universities. Respondents were chosen from institutions that emphasise structured fieldwork practice as part of their pedagogy, including Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi University, Banaras Hindu University, and state agricultural universities. This focus ensured that participants were actively engaged in documentation during their field placements.

Using convenient sampling, a total of 100 students enrolled at the master's level participated, representing a reasonably diverse sample in terms of gender, institutional affiliation, and specialisation areas. This approach aligns with prior extension education research that has used student-centred samples to explore pedagogical impacts (Chilvers, 2021).

Data Collection

Data were collected between February 2024 and June 2025 through a structured online questionnaire, designed to capture quantitative insights while allowing for reflection on subjective experiences. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions (using Likert scales) and yes/no items to ensure consistency and comparability. Key domains covered were:

- Students' perceptions of report writing and critical thinking.
- Relationship between documentation and professional competence.
- Self-efficacy in report writing.
- Perceived best practices and challenges in documentation

Data Interpretation

Data is collected and analysed to study the impact of report writing and documentation using a set of questionnaires. The data are analysed and presented in tabulated, graphical and descriptive interpretations. After each section, the dimension-specific result is presented along with its fieldwork application. This is to give a better understanding and fieldwork application of the dimension. A collective and comparative analysis is also made as a synthesised outcome of the analysed data.

(1). Impact on Critical Thinking

Table 1: Impact of Report Writing on Critical Thinking (N = 100).

Indicator	% Agree	% Disagree
Report writing helps apply theoretical knowledge to field realities	91%	9%
Reports include both objective observations and reflective insights	94%	6%
Well-structured reports support better decision-making	92%	8%
Report writing should be integrated more extensively into the curriculum	93%	7%
Writing reports enhances the ability to analyse field activities	94%	6%
Documentation strengthens creative thinking and articulation	95%	5%

Note. Students strongly associate report writing with analytical reflection, decision-making, and creativity.

As shown in Table 1, report writing significantly enhanced the analytical and reflective capacity of MDEx students. Over 91% of respondents agreed that documentation helped apply theory to practice, while 94% emphasised the inclusion of both objective observations and reflective insights. Structured reports were also

seen as valuable tools for decision-making (92%) and for strengthening creative thinking and articulation (95%).

Figure 1: Bar Chart of Report Writing on Critical Thinking (N = 100).

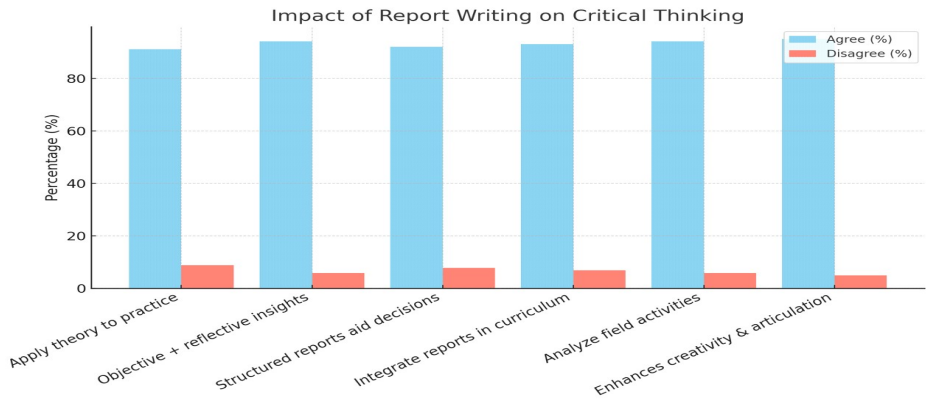
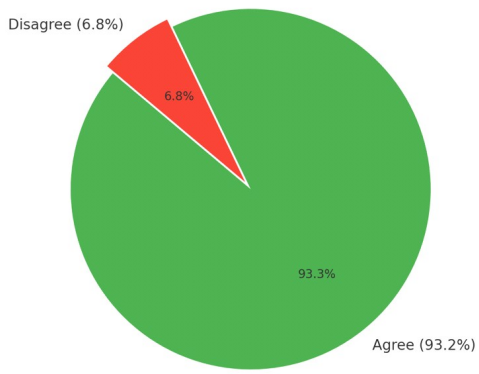


Figure 2: Pie Chart of Overall Agreement on Critical Thinking (N = 100).



(2). Relationship with Professional Competence

The findings in Table 2 demonstrate that 97% of students believed documentation clarified interventions, while 93% recognised its role in maintaining confidentiality and ethics. Reports were also seen as vital tools for documenting community progress (97%) and enhancing collaboration (94%). However, maintaining objectivity in sensitive cases was more challenging, with only 69% agreement.

Table 2: Relationship between Report Writing and Professional Competence (N = 100).

Indicator	% Agree	% Disagree
Documentation clarifies interventions during fieldwork	97%	3%
Confidentiality and ethics maintained through report writing	93%	7%
Reports serve as tools to document community/client progress	97%	3%
Reports enhance collaboration with supervisors and peers	94%	6%
Documentation helps track professional growth and learning	94%	6%
Students ensure objectivity while handling sensitive cases	69%	31%

While reports enhance professional competence across domains, maintaining objectivity in sensitive cases remains a significant challenge.

Figure 3: Bar Chart of Report Writing on Professional Competency (N = 100).

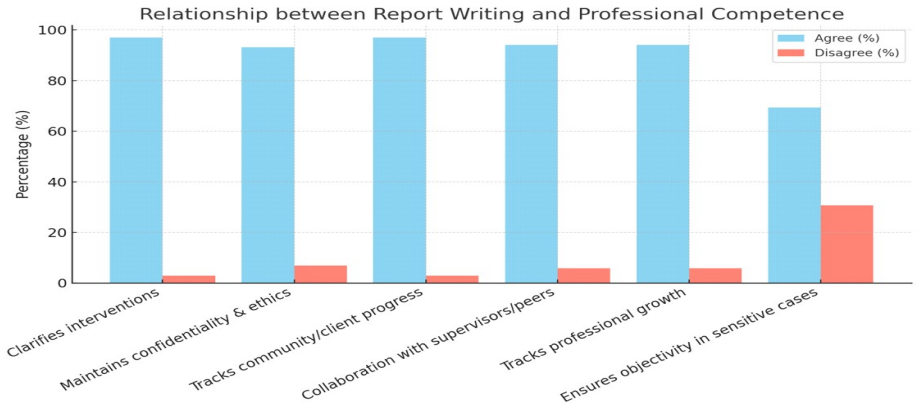
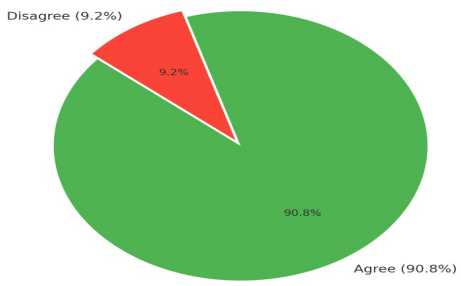


Figure 4: Pie Chart of Overall Agreement on Professional Competency (N = 100).



As indicated in Table 3, report writing bolstered self-efficacy among students. A high 90% expressed confidence in report writing, while 94% agreed that it enhanced accountability. Students also reported improved recall and summarisation of key details (96%) and greater self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses (96%). However, 59% admitted stress due to workload and skill gaps.

Table 3: Effect of Report Writing on Self-Efficacy (N = 100).

Indicator	% Agree	% Disagree
Confident in the ability to write effective reports	90%	10%
Report writing develops organised approaches to multiple tasks	89%	11%
Documentation improves accountability and responsibility	94%	6%
Reporting enhances the ability to set clear goals for interventions	89%	11%
Improves ability to recall and summarise key details accurately	96%	4%
Report writing develops self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses	96%	4%
Documentation causes stress/anxiety due to workload or lack of skills	59%	41%

Note. Report writing strongly supports self-efficacy but also contributes to stress among students.

Figure 5: Bar Chart of Report Writing on Self-Efficacy (N = 100).

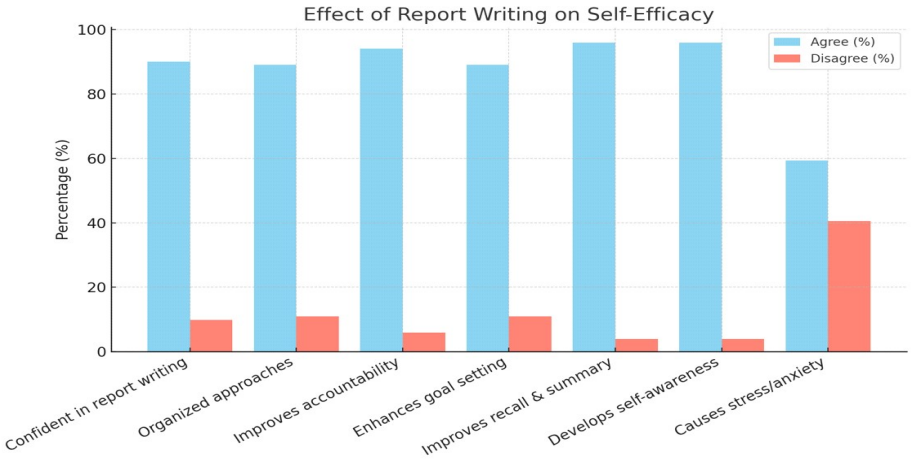
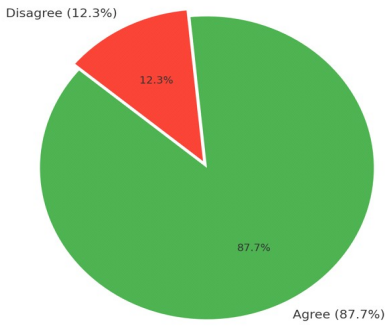


Figure 6: Pie Chart of Overall Agreement on Self-Efficacy (N = 100).



Best Practices in Report Writing and Documentation

The results presented in Table 4 identify best practices. A significant 95% maintained daily/weekly logs, while 96% benefitted from standardised formats provided by institutions. Collaboration with peers (95%) and supervisory feedback (92%) were highlighted as critical supports. Yet, 65% noted that inadequate training reduced their confidence.

Table 4: Best Practices in Report Writing and Documentation (N = 100).

Indicator	% Agree	% Disagree
Inadequate training reduces confidence in report writing	65%	35%
Students maintain daily/weekly logs of fieldwork activities	95%	5%
Standardised formats for report writing are provided by institutions	96%	4%
Use of record books/templates supports systematic documentation	84%	16%
Digital tools (apps, templates, software) used for documenting activities	67%	33%
Immediate documentation after sessions improves accuracy	72%	28%
Reviewing previous reports helps improve new documentation	94%	6%
Collaboration with peers improves the quality of documentation	95%	5%
Regular supervision and feedback enhance documentation quality	92%	8%
Proofreading/editing is essential for accuracy	86%	14%

Note. Peer collaboration, supervision, and standardised formats emerged as the strongest best practices in documentation.

Figure 7: Bar Chart of Report Writing and Documentation (N = 100).

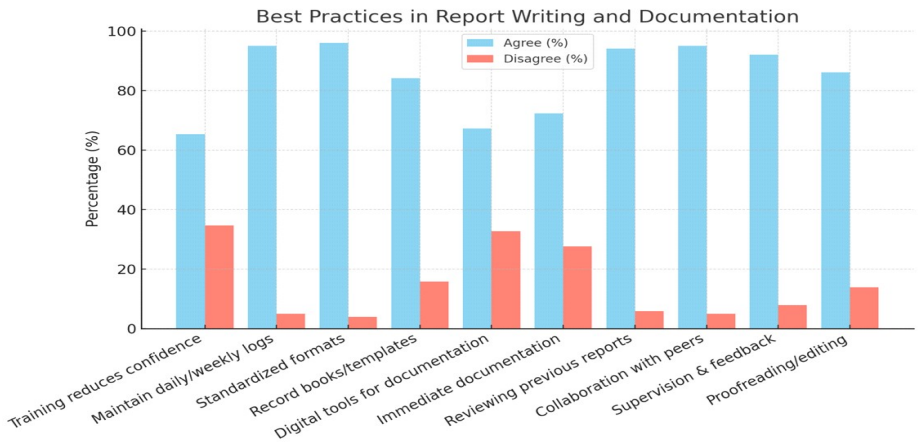
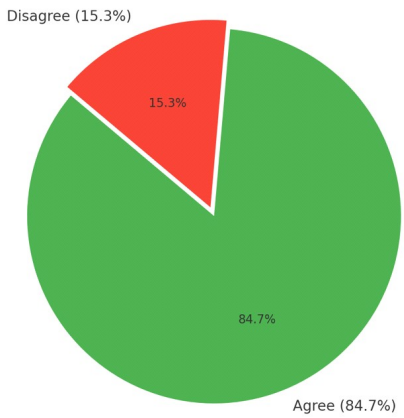


Figure 8: Pie Chart of Overall Agreement on Best Practices (N = 100).



Synthesis of Findings

Across all dimensions, the study reveals that:

1. Report writing significantly strengthens critical thinking and reflective capacity.
2. Documentation develops professional competence, particularly in accountability and ethical practice.

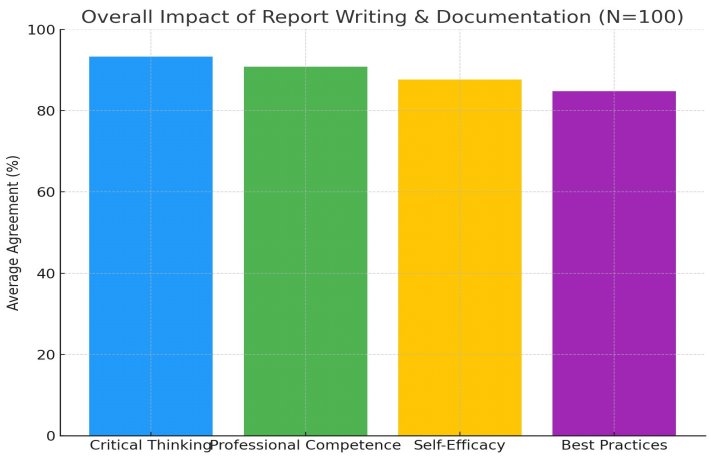
3. Self-efficacy is enhanced through structured reporting, though stress remains an issue.
4. Best practices such as standardised templates, peer collaboration, and ICT adoption ensure higher documentation quality.

These results suggest that documentation is not a mere clerical activity but a professional competency essential for extension educators, combining theory, practice, and ethics.

Results

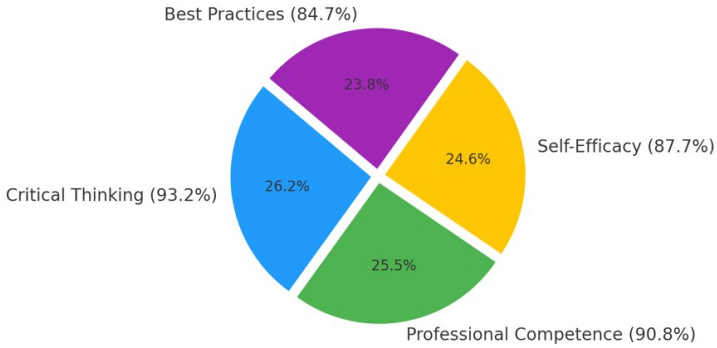
The study explored the impact of report writing and documentation on the professional development of Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students in India. Results are presented in four dimensions: critical thinking, professional competence, self-efficacy, and best practices in documentation.

Figure 9: Combined Bar Chart of Report Writing Impact Dimensions (N = 100).



This chart (Figure 9) illustrates the average agreement percentages across four key domains: critical thinking, professional competence, self-efficacy, and best practices. Distinct colours highlight each domain's relative contribution.

Figure 10: Combined Pie Chart of Report Writing Impact Dimensions (N = 100).



The pie chart (Figure 10) presents the proportional contribution of each domain to students' professional development, with critical thinking and best practices emerging as slightly higher contributors compared to the other dimensions.

Collective Interpretation of the Factors

- **Critical Thinking (93.3% average agreement)**: The strongest dimension, indicating that report writing is most effective in helping students integrate theory with practice, engage in reflective analysis, and strengthen problem-solving.
- **Best Practices (84.9% average agreement)**: High scores show that students strongly benefit from structured formats, peer collaboration, and supervisory feedback. This highlights institutional support as a crucial enabler.
- **Professional Competence (90.8% average agreement)**: Documentation enhances accountability, ethics, and collaboration, but the lower score in objectivity (69.3%) reduces the average slightly.
- **Self-Efficacy (86.3% average agreement)**: Students report confidence and organisational growth, but the relatively high stress factor (59.4% agree) brings the average lower compared to critical thinking.

Synthesis of Findings

Across all dimensions, the study reveals that:

1. Report writing significantly strengthens critical thinking and reflective capacity.

2. Documentation develops professional competence, particularly in accountability and ethical practice.
3. Self-efficacy is enhanced through structured reporting, though stress remains an issue.
4. Best practices such as standardised templates, peer collaboration, and ICT adoption ensure higher documentation quality.

These results suggest that documentation is not a mere clerical activity but a professional competency essential for extension educators, combining theory, practice, and ethics.

Application in Field Practice

The findings from this study not only highlight the role of report writing in academic learning but also demonstrate its practical relevance in the field**.** For MDEx students, documentation serves as a bridge between classroom theories and ground realities. The application of these findings is discussed across critical development sectors in India, where extension professionals play a pivotal role.

1. Application in Digital Literacy Programmes

Digital literacy has emerged as a cornerstone of contemporary development extension in India. Initiatives such as the *Digital India Mission* and *Common Service Centres (CSCs)* provide platforms for rural communities to access e-governance, financial services, and online education.

- **Critical Thinking:** Students documenting digital literacy sessions reported that rural women were less confident in adopting smartphones than younger men. Reflective documentation helped them critically analyse barriers such as gender norms and low self-confidence, linking their observations with *the Diffusion of Innovations Theory* (Rogers, 2003).
- **Professional Competence:** Reports clarified interventions such as training methods, participation levels, and feedback, ensuring accountability to both communities and sponsoring agencies.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Documentation enhanced students' confidence in managing ICT-based interventions while also revealing stress points due to technological unfamiliarity.
- **Best Practices:** The use of digital templates for recording attendance and feedback streamlined data collection, showing how ICT can strengthen reporting itself.

2. Application in De-Addiction and Public Health Campaigns

De-addiction programmes, particularly in states like Punjab and Himachal, represent an urgent social challenge. Extension professionals contribute through awareness campaigns, rehabilitation linkages, and counselling facilitation.

- **Critical Thinking:** Reports encouraged students to go beyond superficial observations, prompting analysis of stigma, family dynamics, and relapse risks.
- **Professional Competence:** Documentation helped maintain the confidentiality of affected individuals, reflecting ethical practice in sensitive areas.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Writing about sensitive cases increased students' awareness of their own biases and ethical responsibilities, building confidence in handling delicate issues.
- **Best Practices:** Immediate field notes and anonymous case summaries were adopted as strategies to balance accuracy with confidentiality.

3. Application in Conflict Mitigation and Community Dispute Resolution

Conflict mitigation, especially in contexts of land disputes, water sharing, and resource allocation, is an important area of extension work. Documentation plays a critical role in ensuring objectivity and transparency.

- **Critical Thinking:** Students' reports captured not just the outcomes of disputes but also the underlying socio-economic structures, such as caste hierarchies and unequal landholding.
- **Professional Competence:** By documenting dialogue stages and participant contributions, students enhanced their competence in participatory facilitation.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Writing reports helped students set clear goals for each stage of mediation, reinforcing their sense of professional preparedness.
- **Best Practices:** Standardised case templates ensured consistent data capture across different conflict scenarios.

4. Application in Livelihood and Skill Development Programmes

Livelihood promotion, especially through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and vocational training, is a major focus of extension.

- **Critical Thinking:** Students analysed adoption patterns of skill development programmes (e.g., tailoring, food processing, and dairy farming) and identified gaps such as a lack of market linkages.

- **Professional Competence:** Reports tracked SHG savings, credit utilisation, and repayment cycles, making students competent in financial documentation.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Regular reporting increased students' confidence in managing community-level microfinance data.
- **Best Practices:** Collaboration with peers in preparing SHG progress reports reduced errors and enhanced objectivity.

5. Cross-Sectoral Reflections

The application of results across these sectors highlights three key insights:

1. **Documentation is transformative:** It turns routine observations into critical reflections, shaping students into professional extension workers.
2. **Ethics and accountability are central:** Confidentiality in de-addiction cases or objectivity in conflict resolution ensures credibility.
3. **Best practices are transferable:** Standardised formats, ICT tools, peer collaboration, and supervisory feedback are relevant across all extension domains.

Linking Back to Extension Theories

- **Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003):** Documentation helps students track how communities adopt new technologies or practices, identifying innovators, early adopters, and laggards.
- **Participatory Extension Approach (Chambers, 1997):** Collaborative documentation reflects the principles of inclusive decision-making and community ownership.
- **Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993):** Report writing builds transferable skills in analysis, organisation, and communication, which are professional assets.
- **Systems Theory (Checkland, 1999):** Reports help students recognise how social, economic, and institutional systems interact in shaping field outcomes.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how report writing and documentation influence the professional development of Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students in India. The findings across four dimensions of critical thinking, professional competence, self-efficacy, and best practices confirm that documentation is not a peripheral academic exercise but a core professional competency in extension practice. This discussion situates the results in relation to existing scholarship and explores their broader implications.

1. Documentation and Critical Thinking

A central finding was that report writing significantly enhanced students' critical thinking capacity (Table 1). Over 90% of participants agreed that documentation facilitated the application of theory to practice.

This is consistent with earlier research in education and social sciences. In extension education, this aligns with Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations Theory*, where reflection on adoption patterns is essential for understanding why innovations succeed or fail in particular contexts.

Recent Indian studies also underscore the role of documentation in reflective learning. Mishra and Singh (2022) showed that agricultural extension students who maintained structured logs during field placements demonstrated stronger problem-solving skills and adaptability. Our findings mirror this, as MDEx students used reports to critically analyse community resistance in digital literacy or adoption gaps in livelihood programmes.

Thus, documentation fosters a habit of evidence-based reasoning, a skill vital in extension practice where professionals must balance technical knowledge with social realities.

2. Documentation and Professional Competence

The results also showed that documentation enhanced professional competence by clarifying interventions, improving collaboration, and strengthening ethical practice (Table 2). Nearly all students recognised the importance of reports in documenting client/community progress and in maintaining confidentiality.

This finding resonates with the argument that documentation is an integral part of professional accountability**.** However, our results revealed that maintaining objectivity in sensitive cases was a persistent challenge (only 69% agreement). This supports previous literature, which argues that students often struggle with subjectivity in reflective documentation, especially when dealing with emotionally charged contexts such as de-addiction or conflict mediation (Ghosh & Ray, 2021). Addressing this requires both ethical training and stronger supervisory mentoring.

From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with the Participatory Extension Approach (Chambers, 1997). Reports become more than personal reflections; they are participatory documents that incorporate multiple voices, community members, peers, and supervisors, thereby enhancing inclusiveness and accountability.

3. Documentation and Self-Efficacy

A third dimension was the impact of documentation on self-efficacy (Table 3). High levels of agreement were observed regarding confidence in report writing (90%), improved accountability (94%), and enhanced self-awareness (96%). This supports Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, where confidence is built through mastery experiences such as completing reports and receiving constructive feedback.

Recent scholarship affirms this. In a study, Reddy et al. (2022) found that Indian extension trainees who maintained weekly reflective reports showed improved ability to organise tasks and set professional goals.

At the same time, 59% of our participants admitted to experiencing stress due to the reporting workload. This echoes findings by Patel and Thomas (2021), who argued that while documentation supports learning, poor scaffolding often turns it into a source of anxiety. Addressing this requires structured orientation, ICT integration, and supportive supervision to reduce the documentation burden.

Thus, report writing functions as a double-edged sword: it enhances confidence and accountability while simultaneously generating stress if not adequately supported.

4. Best Practices in Documentation

The final dimension examined best practices (Table 4). Students emphasised standardised formats (96%), peer collaboration (95%), and supervisory feedback (92%) as key strategies for effective documentation. These align with international best practices in professional education. For example, Kaya, F., & Yaðýz, O. (2023) highlight peer review as a powerful tool for improving reflective writing, while Meera et al. (2019) note the importance of ICT tools in standardising extension documentation in India.

The adoption of digital tools (67%) reflects a positive trend but also shows room for expansion. As Sulaiman and Davis (2020) argue, ICT-based reporting not only improves efficiency but also enables real-time feedback in extension systems.

The fact that 65% of students reported inadequate training as a barrier highlights an area for curriculum improvement. Without structured training in report writing, students risk treating documentation as a bureaucratic exercise rather than a professional competency. This gap must be addressed if extension education is to keep pace with contemporary demands.

5. Integration with Extension Theories

The study's findings reinforce several theoretical perspectives central to extension education:

- **Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003):** Reports help students track adoption trends, categorise participants as innovators or laggards, and analyse barriers to diffusion.
- **Participatory Extension Approach (Chambers, 1997):** Collaborative documentation reflects participatory learning, incorporating multiple perspectives and voices.
- **Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993):** Report writing is an investment in skill development, increasing students' professional capital and employability.
- **Systems Theory (Checkland, 1999):** Reports capture interconnected socio-economic factors (e.g. livelihood, gender, and policy influences) shaping extension outcomes.
- **Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1997):** Reflection through documentation reinforces learning by observing and analysing both peer and community behaviours.

Together, these frameworks underscore that documentation is not a passive record but an active tool of learning, professionalisation, and transformation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to examine the impact of report writing and documentation on the professional development of Master's in Development Extension (MDEx) students in India. The findings reveal that documentation is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a professional competency that enhances learning, accountability, and personal growth.

The result shows that:

- **Critical thinking** is strengthened as students reflect on field experiences, integrate theoretical frameworks (e.g., *Diffusion of Innovations*), and analyse barriers in adoption, participation, and community engagement.
- **Professional competence** is enhanced through improved clarity of interventions, maintenance of ethical standards, and collaborative practices with supervisors and peers. However, objectivity in sensitive contexts remains a challenge, requiring further capacity-building.

- **Self-efficacy** is boosted by structured documentation, which develops confidence, accountability, and self-awareness. Yet, stress due to workload and inadequate training indicates a need for supportive scaffolding and technological integration.
- **Best practices,** such as standardised templates, peer collaboration, supervisory feedback, and ICT tools, ensure higher-quality reporting. Still, a notable proportion of students perceive insufficient training in documentation skills.

Taken together, these findings highlight that report writing is both a learning tool and a professional responsibility, deeply embedded in extension education. When implemented effectively, it builds a reflective practitioner identity, equips students with transferable skills, and aligns with global standards in extension and development practice. The following recommendations are proposed based on affiliated roles.

For Students

1. **Adopt Reflective Writing:** Move beyond factual reporting to include critical reflection, linking observations to theory and practice.
2. **Use ICT Tools:** Explore apps, digital templates, and collaborative platforms (e.g., Google Docs and field data collection software) to streamline documentation and reduce stress.
3. **Practice Peer Review:** Engage in collaborative documentation to enhance objectivity and learn from diverse perspectives.
4. **Develop Time Management:** Allocate time for immediate post-fieldwork writing to ensure accuracy and reduce last-minute stress.

For Faculty and Supervisors

1. **Strengthen Training Modules:** Introduce workshops on academic writing, reflective documentation, and ethical reporting at the start of field placements.
2. **Provide Structured Feedback:** Supervisors should give detailed feedback on reports, focusing on both content and reflective depth.
3. **Encourage Ethical Sensitivity:** Train students in confidentiality, anonymity, and bias reduction, especially in areas like de-addiction, conflict mitigation, and gender-related programmes.
4. **Model Best Practices:** Faculty should share model reports and encourage discussion of both strengths and areas for improvement.

For Institutions

1. **Standardise Formats:** Provide clear templates for field reports, logbooks, and reflective journals to ensure uniformity and comparability.

2. **Integrate Documentation into Assessment:** Make report writing a graded component, emphasising critical reflection, application of theory, and professional growth.
3. **Expand ICT Integration:** Introduce digital platforms for report submission and review, enabling real-time feedback and archival of student work.
4. **Support Student Well-being:** Address stress associated with documentation by ensuring realistic workloads, mentoring, and access to counselling where needed.
5. **Sector-Specific Documentation:** Encourage tailored documentation practices in digital literacy, public health, livelihood promotion, and conflict resolution, ensuring relevance to sectoral demands.

For Policymakers and Development Agencies

1. **Recognise Documentation as Core Competence:** Embed documentation requirements into national programmes (e.g., *Digital India*, *NRLM, and* agricultural extension schemes) as both monitoring tools and learning strategies.
2. **Invest in Digital Infrastructure:** Provide funding for ICT-based documentation platforms to support institutions and students in rural and semi-urban areas.
3. **Encourage Participatory Documentation:** Promote inclusion of community voices in student reports, aligning with the *participatory extension approach.*
4. **Strengthen Policy-Research Linkages:** Use student documentation as a data source for local policy innovations, particularly in areas of digital literacy, de-addiction, and conflict mitigation.

Conclusion of Discussion and Closing Reflection

In today's rapidly changing extension landscape, MDEx graduates are expected to be reflective practitioners, capable of bridging theory with practice while upholding ethical and professional standards. This study demonstrates that report writing and documentation, when framed as core competencies rather than administrative burdens, can serve as catalysts for critical thinking, competence building, and self-efficacy.

This study also contributes to understanding the multifaceted role of documentation in extension education. It demonstrates that report writing enhances critical thinking, professional competence, and self-efficacy while also highlighting

best practices and areas for improvement. By situating findings within extension theories and linking them to contemporary Indian contexts, the study underscores documentation as a core competency for MDEx students and future extension professionals.

By embedding structured documentation practices into pedagogy, integrating ICT, and promoting collaborative approaches, extension education in India can cultivate a new generation of professionals who are not only skilled facilitators but also thoughtful recorders of community change**.** In doing so, documentation itself becomes a transformative act**,** shaping not only students' professional journeys but also the communities they serve.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.

Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. Intermediate Technology Publications.

Checkland, P. (1999). *Systems thinking, systems practice: Includes a 30-year retrospective*. John Wiley & Sons.

Chilvers, D. H. (2021). The contribution of social work field education to work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 22*(4), 433–444.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.

Dutta, S. (2020). Conflict resolution and participatory development in rural India. *Journal of Development Practice, 12*(2), 89–104.

Gautam, A., & Kaushik, A. (2023). Conceptualisation of Identity and Professional Social Work: A Vedantic Drishtant, *67-75, Concept Publication.*

Ghosh, S., & Ray, P. (2021). Reflective writing and subjectivity in social work education. *Social Work Education, 40*(5), 623–638.

Jamia Millia Islamia. (2022). *Extension education curriculum framework*. Department of Adult Continuing Education and Extension.

Kaya, F., & Yaðýz, O. (2023). Developing and evaluating an online professional development model on academic writing conventions and norms in English. *SAGE Open, 13*(3), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231123456

Kumar, A., & Anand, N. (2021). De-addiction interventions and community engagement in India. *Indian Journal of Social Work, 82*(2), 345–360.

Meera, S. N., Muthuraman, P., Kumar, S. A., & V., R. B. (2019). Evidence of encouraging adoption through frontline demonstrations (FLDs): Indian hybrid rice program. *Journal of Agricultural Extension Management, 15*(2), 55–69.

Mishra, R., & Singh, V. (2022). Reflective documentation and problem-solving skills among agricultural extension students. *Journal of Extension Education, 34*(2), 45–56. https://doi.org/10.26725/JEE.2022.2.34

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. (2022). *Status of microfinance in India 2021–22*.

Patel, R., & Thomas, G. (2021). Documentation practices and student stress in professional education. *Journal of Educational Practice, 15*(1), 22–34.

Reddy, K., Rao, V., & Thomas, G. (2022). Weekly reflective documentation as a tool for professional skill development in extension trainees. *Journal of Rural Development, 41*(1), 55–72.

Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.

Roy, A. S., & Maji, S. (2023). Impact of foliar nutrition on growth and productivity of relay cropped lentil (*Lens culinaris*). In *Proceedings of AISDGONF-2023*.

Savaya, R. (2010). Enhancing student awareness of the importance of full and accurate documentation in social work practice. *Social Work Education, 29*(6), 660–669. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470903552006

Sulaiman, R., & Davis, K. (2020). The new extensionist: ICT-enabled services for rural advisory systems. *Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension, 26*(5), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/1389224X.2020.1794935

Swanson, B. E., & Rajalahti, R. (2010). *Strengthening agricultural extension and advisory advisory systems: Procedures for assessing, transforming, and evaluating extension systems*. World Bank.

Van den Ban, A.W., & Hawkins, H. S. (2002). *Agriculture extension* (2nd ed.). Blackwell Science.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 75-92
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00006.1
ISSN 0019-5006

Digital Readiness in Adult Education: Identifying Challenges among Postgraduate Distance Education Learners

• **Dipak Bhattacharya**[1]

Abstract

Digital readiness in adult education refers to the preparedness of learners to effectively access, use, and apply digital technologies for learning and professional development. The present study aimed (i) to assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners in the context of adult education, and (ii) to identify the major challenges faced by them in developing and applying digital literacy skills. The study followed the descriptive survey method, and data were collected from 110 postgraduate distance learners of the Study Centre of Dukhulal Nibaran Chandra College, Aurangabad, Murshidabad under Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal, using a self-constructed 5-point Likert scale with a reliability coefficient of 0.74 (Cronbach's Alpha). The findings revealed that the learners possessed moderate to high digital readiness, particularly in basic computer and communication skills, but faced significant challenges related to limited internet access, inadequate institutional support, low confidence, and difficulty in managing digital content. The study implies that enhancing digital readiness through institutional training programmes, infrastructure improvement, and continuous learner support is essential to strengthen digital inclusion and promote effective lifelong learning in adult education.

Keywords: *adult education, challenges, digital readiness, distance learning.*

Introduction

In the contemporary era of digital transformation, the education sector has witnessed a paradigm shift towards technology-mediated learning environments. Adult learners, particularly those enrolled in postgraduate distance education programmes, have increasingly become dependent on digital platforms to access, process, and apply academic content. Digital readiness—comprising digital literacy, technological competence, and self-efficacy—plays a crucial role in ensuring effective participation in these learning environments (Getenet et al., 2024; Inan Karagul et

[1]Assistant Professor of Education, Department of Education, Dukhulal Nibaran Chandra College, Aurangabad, Murshidabad, West Bengal. ✉ dipakbhattacharya7@gmail.com

al., 2021). The transition from traditional classroom instruction to digital modes of delivery requires adult learners to possess a multifaceted set of digital skills and attitudes that enable them to adapt to evolving online learning contexts (Marin & Castaneda, 2023).

Adult learners often face distinctive challenges in developing digital competencies, owing to varied socio-economic backgrounds, prior educational experiences, and levels of exposure to technology. Studies have revealed that many adult distance learners experience limitations in accessing adequate technological resources, digital tools, and reliable internet connectivity, which in turn hinders their engagement and performance in online education (Durgunoglu et al., 2022; Kara et al., 2019). Moreover, the lack of institutional support, insufficient training opportunities, and low digital confidence further exacerbate the digital divide in adult education (Richard & Musa, 2024).

In India, open and distance learning (ODL) has expanded significantly, offering higher education opportunities to diverse groups of learners, including those from rural and marginalised communities. However, the digital readiness of such learners, especially at the postgraduate level, remains a critical issue. Research conducted across various universities indicates that postgraduate learners demonstrate varying levels of digital literacy and information management capabilities, which affect their ability to effectively engage in online learning environments (Boro et al., 2023; Diksha & Sharma, 2024). The findings of Kulusakli (2024) and Nawi et al. (2023) further emphasise that postgraduate distance learners' success depends not only on access to digital tools but also on their competence in using them for academic and communicative purposes.

Additionally, digital literacy has been found to influence learners' motivation, cognitive engagement, and overall academic outcomes in virtual learning settings (Karakýþ, 2022). Inadequate digital preparedness may lead to frustration, low confidence, and withdrawal from online learning experiences, particularly among adult learners balancing academic, professional, and personal responsibilities. As highlighted by Kara et al. (2019), addressing these barriers requires a deeper understanding of the learners' digital readiness levels and the contextual challenges they encounter.

Given this background, the present study aims to assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners in the context of adult education and to identify the major challenges they face in developing and applying

digital literacy skills. Understanding these aspects will not only contribute to enhancing adult learning experiences but also inform institutional strategies for digital capacity building and learner support within distance education systems.

Review of Related Literature

The concept of digital readiness has emerged as a central component in the discourse of open and distance learning (ODL), especially within adult education. It encompasses learners' ability to effectively engage with digital technologies, demonstrate digital literacy, and utilise digital platforms for academic and professional growth. As education systems increasingly rely on online and blended modes of delivery, understanding learners' digital competencies and related challenges has become vital to ensuring equitable access and participation.

Digital literacy forms the foundation of digital readiness. Marin and Castaneda (2023) emphasised that digital literacy involves not only technical proficiency but also the critical and pedagogical capacity to employ technology for teaching and learning. They argued that fostering digital literacy among learners and educators alike is crucial for enhancing the quality of open and digital education. Supporting this view, Inan Karagul et al. (2021) explored students' digital literacy levels during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that learners' success in online education is closely linked to their self-efficacy, motivation, and adaptability in using digital tools.

In the context of higher education, several studies have identified significant variability in learners' digital competence. Boro et al. (2023) investigated digital literacy skills among postgraduate students across selected Central Universities of North East India and revealed moderate proficiency levels, indicating a pressing need for digital skill enhancement programmes. Similarly, Diksha and Sharma (2024) examined information literacy among distance learners at the University of Jammu and concluded that while learners possess basic ICT knowledge, many lack advanced skills in digital resource evaluation, data handling, and academic communication in virtual environments. These findings underscore the uneven digital preparedness among postgraduate distance learners in India.

Adult learners often face additional challenges that differentiate them from traditional university students. Kara et al. (2019), through an extensive literature review, highlighted that adult learners in online distance education experience multiple barriers such as limited technological experience, poor internet access, time management issues, and balancing personal and professional responsibilities.

Durgunoglu et al. (2022) further discussed the difficulties faced by adult learners during the transition to remote learning, particularly emphasising the scarcity of technological resources, institutional support, and digital confidence. These factors collectively hinder adult learners' participation and performance in online education.

Motivation and engagement are also crucial aspects influencing digital readiness. Karakýþ (2022) analysed the relationship between digital literacy and online learning motivation, noting that learners with higher levels of digital competence displayed stronger intrinsic motivation and better engagement in digital learning tasks. This suggests that digital literacy not only enhances technical capability but also supports learners' emotional and psychological readiness for online education.

Kulusakli (2024) examined the basic digital competencies of distance learners in higher education and identified significant gaps in digital communication, content creation, and problem-solving skills. The study recommended that institutions integrate targeted training and digital support systems to bridge these gaps. Similarly, Nawi et al. (2023) focused on postgraduate students' digital literacy competence for online reading and found that comprehension, navigation, and critical analysis of digital texts require a distinct set of literacy skills beyond traditional reading abilities.

Moreover, research on digital readiness extends to the competencies of educators who facilitate adult learning. Richard and Musa (2024) proposed an ODL educators' competency framework emphasising the alignment of pedagogical expertise with digital proficiency. They argued that the effectiveness of adult education in digital environments depends on both learner and educator readiness, as the latter plays a pivotal role in designing inclusive and supportive online learning experiences.

The interplay between learners' attitudes, digital literacy, and online learning engagement has also been examined by Getenet et al. (2024), who found that positive attitudes toward technology and higher levels of self-efficacy significantly enhance learners' engagement and persistence in online learning. This reinforces the view that digital readiness is a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements essential for success in distance learning contexts.

In summary, the reviewed studies collectively suggest that while postgraduate and adult learners increasingly rely on digital tools for educational advancement, many continue to face challenges related to access, competence, confidence, and institutional support. The literature reveals a consistent call for systematic interventions to strengthen digital literacy training, improve access to technological resources, and foster supportive online learning ecosystems. Against this background, the present

study seeks to assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners and to identify the key challenges they face in developing and applying digital literacy skills within the context of adult education.

Rationale of the Study

In the age of rapid technological advancement, digital readiness has become a prerequisite for effective participation in higher education, particularly in distance and open learning systems. Adult learners pursuing postgraduate programmes through distance education are increasingly expected to demonstrate digital competence to engage with online resources, communicate effectively in virtual environments, and complete academic tasks independently. However, the degree to which these learners possess the necessary digital literacy skills and confidence remains a pressing concern in the field of adult education (Kara et al., 2019; Richard & Musa, 2024).

Digital readiness encompasses a combination of technological access, digital literacy, and self-efficacy—key factors that determine learners' ability to adapt to technology-enhanced learning environments (Getenet et al., 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to digital and remote modes of instruction, highlighting both opportunities and inequalities in learners' digital capabilities (Inan Karagul et al., 2021; Durgunoglu et al., 2022). For adult learners, who often juggle multiple responsibilities such as employment and family obligations, the transition to digital platforms can present unique barriers. These include limited exposure to modern technologies, inconsistent internet access, and inadequate institutional support for developing digital skills (Kara et al., 2019; Durgunoglu et al., 2022).

In the Indian context, the expansion of open and distance learning (ODL) has made higher education more accessible to diverse learner groups, including those from rural and underprivileged backgrounds. However, research indicates persistent disparities in the digital preparedness of postgraduate distance learners. For instance, Boro et al. (2023) found that postgraduate students in Northeast India demonstrated only moderate levels of digital literacy, suggesting the need for institutional interventions to strengthen their technological proficiency. Similarly, Diksha and Sharma (2024) reported that distance learners possess basic information literacy but struggle with advanced digital research and communication skills, which are essential for postgraduate-level study.

Furthermore, Kulusakli (2024) emphasised that digital competence in higher education must go beyond operational skills to include the ability to communicate, collaborate, and create digital content effectively. Nawi et al. (2023) also highlighted

that postgraduate students' online reading and comprehension abilities are strongly influenced by their overall digital literacy, which affects their academic engagement and performance. These studies collectively point to a critical need for assessing and enhancing the digital readiness of adult learners in distance education programmes.

At the same time, motivation and attitude toward technology play a substantial role in determining learners' readiness to adopt digital learning strategies. Karakýþ (2022) demonstrated that students with higher digital literacy levels tend to exhibit stronger motivation and persistence in online learning environments. Marin and Castaneda (2023) also noted that developing digital literacy is not merely about technological proficiency but involves cultivating positive attitudes, reflective thinking, and the ability to integrate technology meaningfully into the learning process.

Despite the growing body of international literature, there remains a gap in research focusing on the digital readiness of adult postgraduate learners in the Indian distance education context, particularly within regional institutions such as those affiliated with Netaji Subhas Open University. Understanding the existing level of digital competence and identifying the challenges faced by these learners are essential steps toward designing effective digital inclusion strategies and learner support frameworks.

Therefore, this study seeks to assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners and to identify the key challenges they face in developing and applying digital literacy skills. The findings are expected to contribute to the body of knowledge on adult digital education and inform policies and practices aimed at enhancing digital equity and effectiveness in distance education systems.

Objectives

1. To assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners in the context of adult education.
2. To identify the major challenges faced by postgraduate distance education learners in developing and applying digital literacy skills.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners in the context of adult education?

2. What are the major challenges faced by postgraduate distance education learners in developing and applying digital literacy skills?

Methodology of the Study

1. Research Method

The present study followed the descriptive survey method to assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners and to identify the major challenges faced by them in developing and applying digital literacy skills. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate, as it allows the collection of quantitative data from a defined population to describe existing conditions, attitudes, and competencies. The investigator collected the data through a 5-point scale developed on Google Form, which was distributed digitally among the selected participants. This method was chosen to ensure accessibility and convenience for distance learners who were already accustomed to online communication platforms.

2. Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of adult learners enrolled in postgraduate (PG) programmes through distance education under the Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), West Bengal. From this population, a sample of 110 adult learners was selected from the Study Centre of Dukhulal Nibaran Chandra College, Aurangabad, Murshidabad. The participants represented diverse academic disciplines, age groups, and professional backgrounds, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of adult learners in distance education settings. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select learners who were actively engaged in digital learning environments.

3. Tool Used

To collect the data, the researcher utilised a self-constructed 5-point scale designed to measure the digital readiness of adult postgraduate learners. The scale consisted of items focusing on two main dimensions:

- Level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners in the context of adult education.
- Major challenges faced by postgraduate distance education learners in developing and applying digital literacy skills.

The responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

4. Reliability of the Tool

The internal reliability of the self-constructed 5-point scale was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha test. The obtained reliability coefficient was 0.74, indicating a high level of internal consistency and suggesting that the items on the scale reliably measured the same underlying construct of digital readiness. This reliability score meets the generally accepted standards for educational and psychological research instruments.

5. Validity of the Tool

The content validity of the scale was established through expert evaluation. The draft version of the tool was reviewed by a panel of five experts in the fields of Educational Technology, Distance Education, and Educational Research. Their suggestions were incorporated to refine the wording, structure, and clarity of the items. This process ensured that the scale items adequately represented the dimensions of digital readiness relevant to adult postgraduate learners.

6. Data Collection Procedure

The final tool was administered online using Google Forms to facilitate easy participation and response submission. The investigator shared the survey link via email and WhatsApp groups associated with the NSOU Study Centre. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Data were automatically recorded through Google Forms and later exported to Microsoft Excel and SPSS for statistical analysis.

7. Data Analysis

Statistical technique, like percentage analysis, was used to assess the level of digital readiness and identify challenges faced by the adult learners. The responses were also analysed dimension-wise.

Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected using the self-constructed 5-point Likert scale were analysed through percentage analysis to determine the level of digital readiness and the major challenges faced by postgraduate distance education learners. Each item was classified according to the Likert responses: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). The findings are presented under the two main objectives of the study.

Table 1: Level of Digital Readiness among Postgraduate Distance Education Learners (N = 110).

Indicators of Digital Readiness	SA (F/%)	A (F/%)	N (F/%)	D (F/%)	SD (F/%)	Interpretation
Basic computer and internet operation skills	55 (50%)	30 (27.3%)	5 (4.5%)	15 (13.7%)	5 (4.5%)	High
Use of Learning Management Systems (LMS)	8 (7.3%)	10 (9.1%)	7 (6.3%)	55 (50%)	30 (27.3%)	Low
Use of email, chat, and video conferencing	60 (54.6)	20 (18.2%)	3 (2.7%)	14 (12.7%)	13 (11.8%)	High
Ability to create and share digital content	52 (47.3%)	22 (20%)	5 (4.5%)	16 (14.5%)	15 (13.7%)	High
Ability to manage data and online information	10 (9.1%)	43 (39.1%)	8 (7.3%)	30 (27.3%)	19 (17.2%)	Moderate
Awareness of cyber security and online ethics	32 (29.1%)	20 (18.2%)	11 (10%)	27 (24.5%)	20 (18.2%)	Moderate
Confidence in using new digital tools	30 (27.3%)	19 (17.2%)	16 (14.6%)	25 (22.7%)	20 (18.2%)	Moderate
Overall Digital Readiness	35 (31.8%)	23 (20.9%)	8 (7.3%)	26 (23.6%)	18 (16.4%)	Moderate to High

Table 1 presents the percentage distribution of responses on various indicators of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners. The analysis reveals that a majority of learners possess basic computer and internet operational skills (77.3% SA+A), and a substantial proportion are confident in using email, chat, and video conferencing tools (72.8% SA+A). These findings indicate that adult learners are largely comfortable with the fundamental and communicative aspects of digital learning environments.

However, a significant proportion of learners demonstrated low proficiency in using Learning Management Systems (LMS), with 77.3% (D+SD) indicating difficulty in effectively navigating these platforms. This suggests a notable gap between general digital use and academic digital engagement. Furthermore, while learners show a high ability to create and share digital content (67.3% SA+A), they exhibit moderate readiness in managing data and online information (48.2% SA+A) and awareness of cyber security and online ethics (47.3% SA+A).

Overall, the findings indicate that postgraduate distance learners possess moderate to high levels of digital readiness, with particular strengths in basic operational and communication skills but clear limitations in the use of institutional LMS platforms, data management, and cyber security awareness. These gaps highlight areas where targeted digital literacy training is essential to improve academic digital competence and responsible online behaviour.

Table 2: Major Challenges Faced in Developing Digital Literacy Skills (N = 110).

Challenges Identified	SA (F/%)	A (F/%)	N (F/%)	D (F/%)	SD (F/%)	Interpretation
Limited access to digital devices	30 (27.3%)	25 (22.7%)	10 (9.1%)	16 (14.5%)	29 (26.4%)	Moderate
Unstable or low-speed internet	40 (36.4%)	25 (22.7%)	8 (7.3%)	12 (10.9%)	25 (22.7%)	High
Lack of prior exposure to online tools	55 (50%)	10 (9.1%)	8 (7.3%)	21 (19.1%)	16 (14.5%)	High
Low confidence/digital self-efficacy	25 (22.7%)	20 (18.2%)	14 (12.7%)	30 (27.3%)	21 (19.1%)	Moderate
Difficulty adapting to new digital platforms	30 (27.3%)	20 (18.2%)	14 (12.7%)	26 (23.6%)	20 (18.2%)	Moderate
Overall	36 (32.7%)	20 (18.2%)	11 (10%)	21 (19.1%)	22 (20%)	Moderate to High

Table 2 presents the major challenges encountered by postgraduate distance learners in developing their digital literacy skills. The results show that lack of prior exposure to online tools (59.1% SA+A) and unstable or low-speed internet connectivity (59.1% SA+A) are the most prominent barriers, followed by limited access to digital devices (50% SA+A). These findings point toward infrastructural and experiential limitations that hinder learners' ability to develop digital proficiency effectively.

In addition, learners reported moderate challenges in terms of low confidence or digital self-efficacy (40.9% SA+A) and difficulty adapting to new digital platforms (45.5% SA+A). This suggests that many adult learners experience psychological barriers, such as anxiety or uncertainty, when engaging with unfamiliar digital systems.

The overall interpretation indicates that while infrastructural challenges—such as device accessibility and internet stability—are significant external barriers, psychological readiness and adaptability also play crucial roles in the development

of digital literacy. The findings underscore the need for institutional interventions, such as digital skill orientation programmes and continuous technical support, to help adult learners build both confidence and competence in using digital technologies.

Table 3: Major Challenges Faced in Applying Digital Literacy Skills (N = 110).

Challenges Identified	SA (F/%)	A (F/%)	N (F/%)	D (F/%)	SD (F/%)	Interpretation
Time constraints due to professional/family responsibilities	70 (63.6%)	30 (27.3%)	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.7%)	5 (4.5%)	High
Lack of institutional technical support	28 (25.5%)	20 (18.2%)	15 (13.6%)	27 (24.5%)	20 (18.2%)	Moderate
Difficulty managing online information and content	25 (22.7%)	30 (27.3%)	10 (9.1%)	30 (27.3%)	15 (13.6%)	Moderate
Limited collaborative opportunities in digital learning	20 (18.2%)	30 (27.3%)	5 (4.5%)	35 (31.8%)	20 (18.2%)	Moderate
Low confidence in implementing digital tools in assignments/projects	25 (22.7%)	20 (18.2%)	15 (13.6%)	30 (27.3%)	20 (18.2%)	Moderate
Overall	34 (30.9%)	26 (23.6%)	9 (8.2%)	25 (22.7%)	16 (14.6%)	Moderate to High

Table 3 highlights the challenges faced by postgraduate distance learners in the application of digital literacy skills within their learning environments. The most significant challenge reported was time constraints due to professional and family responsibilities (90.9% SA+A), indicating that adult learners often struggle to balance academic and personal commitments, which restricts their ability to apply digital skills effectively.

Other notable challenges include lack of institutional technical support (43.7% SA+A) and difficulty managing online information and content (50% SA+A), which reflect systemic and cognitive barriers to digital engagement. Moreover, limited collaborative opportunities in digital learning (45.5% SA+A) and low confidence in applying digital tools in assignments or projects (40.9% SA+A) further indicate that many learners are not fully equipped or supported to integrate digital tools into practical academic work.

The overall interpretation suggests that while adult learners possess a basic level of digital readiness, their application of these skills is constrained by external factors (time and support) and internal factors (confidence and collaboration). The findings emphasise the importance of developing flexible digital learning environments, enhancing institutional technical support systems, and promoting peer collaboration opportunities to ensure that digital literacy is effectively translated into productive academic practices.

Overall Analytical Summary

Across the three dimensions analysed, the study reveals that postgraduate distance education learners show moderate to high digital readiness but continue to face substantial challenges in both developing and applying digital literacy skills. Structural limitations (e.g., internet connectivity, device access) and personal constraints (e.g., time, confidence) remain significant barriers. Addressing these through targeted capacity-building initiatives, improved technical infrastructure, and learner support mechanisms can enhance digital inclusivity and empowerment in adult education contexts.

Findings of the Study

The present study aimed to assess the level of digital readiness among postgraduate distance education learners and to identify the major challenges faced by them in developing and applying digital literacy skills in the context of adult education. Based on the analysis and interpretation of data, the following findings were derived:

1. Findings Related to the Level of Digital Readiness

(i) A majority of postgraduate distance learners demonstrated adequate proficiency in basic computer and internet operation skills, with 77.3% respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they could perform routine digital tasks effectively.

(ii) A substantial proportion (72.8%) also expressed confidence in using email, chat, and video conferencing tools, indicating a high level of familiarity with communication technologies.

(iii) However, a significant number of learners (77.3%) reported low competence in using Learning Management Systems (LMS), suggesting a lack of familiarity with structured online learning environments.

(iv) Around 67.3% of learners indicated that they were able to create and share

digital content, reflecting a moderately high degree of creativity and engagement in digital spaces.

(v) The ability to manage data and online information and awareness of cyber security and online ethics were found to be at a moderate level, revealing partial understanding and skill in critical digital areas.

(vi) Learners' confidence in using new digital tools was also moderate, indicating the need for regular digital skill enhancement programmes.

(vii) Overall, the findings suggest that the digital readiness of postgraduate distance learners is moderate to high, with strengths in basic operational and communication skills but clear gaps in advanced digital competencies and online learning management.

2. Findings Related to the Challenges in Developing Digital Literacy Skills

(i) The study found that limited access to digital devices and unstable or low-speed internet connectivity were among the most frequently cited challenges, affecting 50–60% of the respondents.

(ii) About 59.1% of learners lacked prior exposure to online tools, indicating that foundational digital training remains insufficient in many adult education settings.

(iii) A considerable number of learners (40.9%) reported low confidence and digital self-efficacy, which hindered their motivation to experiment with or adopt new technologies.

(iv) Difficulty in adapting to new digital platforms was also identified as a moderate challenge, reflecting a need for structured orientation and hands-on training programmes.

(v) Overall, the findings highlight that infrastructural limitations and low digital confidence are the most critical barriers in the development of digital literacy skills among postgraduate distance learners.

3. Findings Related to the Challenges in Applying Digital Literacy Skills

(i) A large majority of respondents (90.9%) agreed that time constraints due to professional and family responsibilities made it difficult to apply their digital skills effectively in academic tasks.

(ii) Lack of institutional technical support was reported by 43.7% of learners, indicating inadequate infrastructural and administrative assistance for distance learners.

(iii) Learners also faced challenges in managing online information and digital

content (50%), which points toward difficulties in critical digital thinking and information organisation.

(iv) Limited opportunities for online collaboration and low confidence in applying digital tools in assignments or projects were reported as moderate barriers by approximately 45–50% of respondents.

(v) On the whole, the findings suggest that external constraints (time, support systems) and internal factors (confidence, practice) jointly restrict the effective application of digital literacy skills among adult postgraduate learners.

4. Overall Findings

(i) The study concludes that the digital readiness of postgraduate distance education learners is moderate to high, with stronger performance in fundamental digital operations and communication but lower mastery of structured online learning and cyber security practices.

(ii) The primary challenges in developing digital literacy are infrastructural and experiential — such as limited device access, poor internet connectivity, and lack of digital exposure.

(iii) The main barriers in applying digital literacy are personal and institutional — including time constraints, insufficient technical support, and low confidence in implementing digital tools.

(iv) These findings emphasise the urgent need for targeted digital skill training, technical infrastructure development, and continuous mentoring for adult learners pursuing postgraduate distance education.

Discussion

The findings of the present study provide valuable insights into the digital readiness and challenges experienced by postgraduate distance education learners in the context of adult education. The results revealed that while most learners possess a satisfactory level of basic digital competency, significant disparities exist in their ability to use advanced tools, manage online learning systems, and apply digital literacy skills effectively. These findings resonate with global research trends emphasising the uneven digital preparedness of adult learners across higher education and distance learning environments (Boro et al., 2023; Kulusakli, 2024).

The study found that learners demonstrated high proficiency in basic computer and internet operations, email communication, and video conferencing. This aligns with Getenet et al. (2024), who observed that learners' familiarity with everyday digital tools positively influences their online learning engagement and self-efficacy.

However, the low competence reported in using Learning Management Systems (LMS) suggests that many distance learners still rely primarily on basic platforms rather than integrated digital learning ecosystems. This finding supports Kara et al. (2019), who noted that adult learners in distance education often struggle with the technical and procedural aspects of structured online learning.

Moderate awareness of cybersecurity and online ethics also emerged as a concern. Inan Karagul et al. (2021) similarly reported that many university students lack adequate understanding of safe digital practices, emphasising the need for targeted training in responsible digital engagement. The moderate level of confidence in using new tools further highlights the need for sustained capacity-building initiatives that can enhance digital adaptability among adult learners.

In terms of challenges, the findings revealed that infrastructural barriers such as unstable internet connections and limited access to digital devices continue to impede effective learning. This supports the observations of Durgunoglu et al. (2022), who found that inadequate technological resources significantly affect the success of remote learning in adult education. Similarly, the lack of prior exposure to online tools indicates that a considerable portion of adult learners enter distance programmes without sufficient digital foundation—consistent with the findings of Diksha and Sharma (2024), who reported that information literacy among distance learners remains limited despite the growing digitalisation of education.

Furthermore, challenges related to time constraints and competing professional or family responsibilities were among the most dominant factors influencing the application of digital literacy skills. This is consistent with Marin and Castaneda (2023), who emphasised that adult learners' engagement with digital platforms is often moderated by contextual factors such as workload, familial obligations, and institutional support systems. The study by Richard and Musa (2024) also supports this observation, suggesting that adult learners' digital engagement depends not only on individual readiness but also on the competencies of educators and the quality of institutional facilitation.

The moderate confidence and limited opportunities for digital collaboration identified in this study echo the findings of Karakýþ (2022), who demonstrated that learners' motivation and active participation in online environments are closely linked to their digital literacy levels and self-efficacy. The lack of sufficient institutional technical support observed among the respondents further strengthens the argument that digital readiness is not solely an individual attribute but a systemic condition that requires coordinated institutional effort.

Overall, the findings of the present study suggest that while postgraduate distance learners possess a reasonable degree of digital readiness, their digital literacy development and application are hindered by infrastructural, psychological, and contextual barriers. Enhancing digital readiness, therefore, demands a holistic approach that integrates access to infrastructure, digital training, motivational strategies, and sustained institutional support.

These findings contribute to the growing discourse on digital inclusion and equity in adult and distance education. They reaffirm the need for educational institutions to re-evaluate their digital education policies and to invest in comprehensive digital literacy programmes tailored specifically for adult learners. Such initiatives can foster a culture of lifelong learning, empower adult students to navigate digital spaces effectively, and strengthen their engagement and success in open and distance learning environments.

Educational Implications

The findings of the present study hold significant implications for adult education and distance learning systems. First, it emphasises the urgent need to strengthen digital literacy training among postgraduate distance learners. Institutions like Netaji Subhas Open University and its study centres should incorporate structured digital readiness programmes that include skill-based workshops on online learning tools, digital collaboration platforms, and cyber security awareness. Educators must be provided with adequate professional development opportunities to guide adult learners effectively in digital environments. Moreover, curriculum designers should embed digital competence as a core learning outcome to enhance learner autonomy, engagement, and self-efficacy. Institutional support systems—such as digital help desks, peer mentoring, and accessible ICT infrastructure—should be strengthened to bridge digital divides and foster equitable participation in online learning.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study provides valuable insights into digital readiness and associated challenges, it is not without limitations.

1. The sample was restricted to 110 postgraduate distance learners from a single study centre (Dukhulal Nibaran Chandra College, Aurangabad, Murshidabad) under Netaji Subhas Open University, which may limit the generalisability of findings to other regions or institutions.

2. The study relied primarily on self-reported data, which might include subjective biases in learners' responses.

3. Furthermore, the research employed a descriptive design using a Likert-scale questionnaire without qualitative triangulation, which limits deeper understanding of learners' lived experiences and contextual barriers.

Future research may address these limitations by adopting mixed-method approaches and involving larger, more diverse samples across multiple institutions.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that while a majority of postgraduate distance education learners exhibit moderate to high levels of digital readiness, significant gaps persist in areas such as online collaboration, problem-solving in digital contexts, and use of advanced digital tools. Major challenges identified include limited access to reliable internet connectivity, lack of institutional training support, and difficulties in integrating digital skills into academic practices. These findings highlight that digital readiness in adult education extends beyond technical proficiency—it involves motivation, adaptability, and sustained institutional support. To truly empower adult learners, distance education systems must evolve to create inclusive, digitally competent learning ecosystems that prepare learners for the demands of the 21st-century knowledge society.

References

Boro, B., Laltlanzova, R., & Chanchinmawia, F. (2023). *Digital literacy skills among the postgraduate (P.G.) students: A study of selected central universities of North East India*. College Libraries, 38(2), 40–49. https://collegelibraries.in/index.php/CL/article/view/112

Diksha, & Sharma, A. (2024). *Information literacy among distance learners of the University of Jammu in the digital world: A case study*. International Journal of Research Pedagogy and Technology in Education and Movement Sciences, 13(1), 47–52. https://doi.org/10.55968/ijems.v13i01.358

Durgunoglu, A. Y., Canturk, M., Kaya, U., Yazici, B., & Sahin, K. (2022). *Moving to remote learning in adult education: Challenges and solutions of limited technological resources and capabilities*. Frontiers in Education, 7, Article 919639. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.919639

Getenet, S., Cantle, R., Redmond, P., & Albion, P. (2024). *Students' digital technology attitude, literacy and self-efficacy and their effect on online learning engagement*. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 21, Article 3. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00437-y

Inan Karagul, B., Seker, M., & Aykut, C. (2021). *Investigating students' digital literacy levels during online education due to COVID-19 pandemic*. Sustainability, 13(21), Article 11878. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132111878

Kara, M., Erdogdu, F., Kokoç, M., & Çaðýltay, K. (2019). *Challenges faced by adult learners in online distance education: A literature review*. Open Praxis, 11(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.11.1.929

Karakýþ, Ö. (2022). *Examining online learning motivations of university students studying via distance education in the COVID-19 pandemic by digital literacy variable*. Kastamonu Education Journal, 30(3), 587–608. https://doi.org/10.24106/kefdergi.927496

Kulusakli, E. (2024). *Distance learners' basic digital competence in higher education*. Yükseköðretim ve Bilim Dergisi, 14(2), 358–365. https://doi.org/10.5961/highereducsci.1455479

Marín, V. I., & Castañeda, L. (2023). Developing digital literacy for teaching and learning. In O. Zawacki-Richter & I. Jung (Eds.), *Handbook of open, distance and digital education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-2080-6_64

Nawi, S. M., Sidhu, G. K., & Kamil, A. S. S. (2023). *Assessing digital literacy competence for online reading among postgraduate students*. In M. Rahim, A. A. Ab Aziz, I. Saja @ Mearaj, N. A. Kamarudin, O. L. Chong, N. Zaini, A. Bidin, N. Mohamad Ayob, Z. Mohd Sulaiman, Y. S. Chan, & N. H. M. Saad (Eds.), *Embracing change: Emancipating the landscape of research in linguistic, language and literature* (Vol. 7, pp. 865–874). European Publisher. https://doi.org/10.15405/epes.23097.78

Richard, C. M., & Musa, N. (2024). *Meeting the digital needs of adult learners: An ODL educators' competency framework*. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 14(11), 1331–1347. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i11/22333

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 93-109
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00007.3
ISSN 0019-5006

Awareness, Availability, Accessibility and Utilisation of Open Educational Resources (OERS) among National Open University of Nigeria Learners in Nigeria

• **Olatunbosun Sunday Emmanuel ODUSANYA**[1]

Abstract

Unrestricted access to lifelong learning, self-directed learning and continuous education is made possible by Open Educational Resources (OERs), the indispensable software that facilitates the creation, utilisation, reuse and delivery of educational materials. OERs are not being fully investigated by students at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), according to reports. Thus, this study looked into how OERs were used, available, accessible and known among NOUN students in southwestern Nigeria.

The design of the descriptive survey was chosen. Every centre in Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and Ogun was counted, and three of the four centres in Lagos were chosen at random. Two departments that consistently use open educational resources (OERs) were purposefully chosen in each of the four faculties—education, science, agriculture and the arts—that were chosen from each centre. From all the centres (Ekiti-140, Ondo-158, Osun-133, Oyo-137, Ogun-132, Lagos-181), a total of 881 students were chosen at random. Scales measuring OERs awareness, (r=0.80), accessibility (r=0.81), and utilisation (r=0.83) were the instruments used. At the 0.05 level of significance, the quantitative data were analysed using linear correlation and descriptive statistics.

The awareness of ($\bar{x}$=2.85) and access to ($\bar{x}$=2.85) the OERs were high against a 2.30 threshold. OERs utilisation was ($\bar{x}$= 2.30). The OERs' awareness (r=0.49) and availability (r=0.47) correlated significantly with utilisation. Learners' awareness, availability and attitude influenced the utilisation of open educational resources in the National Open University of Nigeria.

Keywords: *National Open University of Nigeria, awareness, availability, accessibility, utilisation of Open Educational Resources.*

[1]Department of Politics and Administration eUniversity Africa, Lagos State, Nigeria.
✉ olatunbosunodusanya@gmail.com/olatunbosunodusanya@euniversityedu.africa

Introduction

OERs is still an invaluable resource for granting people access to high-quality, reasonably priced education. As an Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution, NOUN aims to support lifelong learning and offer education to all. In August 2014, NOUN launched its OERs initiatives with the creation of an OERs unit housed in the Vice-Chancellor's office. The NOUN had participated in capacity building in this field in partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The e-courseware that NOUN, an ODL institution, currently offers includes about 2000 course material items, 33 of which have already been converted to open educational resources. In June 2016, the university senate approved NOUN's OERs policy. The open-source master (XML) template that serves as the foundation for the OERs courses includes machine-readable code, embedded metadata and open-source fonts. Following that, the OERs were made available in three formats on the NOUN website: ePUB, Open Document Text (ODT), and PDF under a Creative Commons-Attribution-Share-Alike licence (CC BY-SA) [NOUN (2014) cited in Eyisi and Omokhabi (2020)]. It thus became imperative to investigate the knowledge, attitude, awareness and utilisation of OERs among NOUN learners, especially since previous studies on OERs were mainly conducted among traditional students in dual-mode institutions, with little emphasis on the knowledge, awareness, attitude and utilisation of OERs of NOUN learners.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the awareness, availability, accessibility and utilisation of OERs among learners enrolled at NOUN in the southwestern region of the country. It became necessary, therefore, to look into how NOUN learners know and perceive open educational resources (OERs). This is because prior research on OERs was primarily done among traditional students in dual-mode institutions with little focus on how NOUN learners perceive, know and utilise OERs. This study's main goal was to find out how well-informed, accessible and useful open educational resources (OERs) were among students enrolled at NOUN in the nation's southwest.

The research set out to accomplish the following specific goals: determine the awareness of open educational resources and their utilisation among NOUN learners; determine the relationship between open educational resource availability and its utilisation among NOUN learners; and ascertain if NOUN learners have access to open educational resources.

Research Question 1

Do NOUN students easily access OERs to support their learning?

Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses:

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between the awareness of OERs and their utilisation among NOUN learners.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between OERs' availability and their utilisation among NOUN learners.

Methodology

An ex-post-facto survey design was used for this investigation. Because it does not require the manipulation of variables, this specific design was selected because it is appropriate. Students from NOUN's six centres in Southwestern Nigeria made up the study sample. 16515 people from the eight departments—Ekiti (2628), Ondo (2971), Osun (2498), Oyo (2566), Ogun (2467) and Lagos (3385)—as well as the OERs unit staff, are included in the study population. There were 881 NOUN students in the sample for this research. The researchers employed a multi-stage sampling process to select the participants. In the first phase, NOUN was specifically selected by the researcher as the only single-mode distance learning institution that used Open Educational Resources (OERs) in its teaching and learning procedures. With the exception of Lagos State, where three of the four centres were randomly selected and the fourth centre was used to test the instruments' reliability, the researcher used a total enumeration sampling technique to include all of the state's centres in the second stage of the study. Using the stratified sampling technique, the researcher separated the NOUN students into their various faculties in the third stage. Additionally, the purposive sample technique was used to select the main operating faculties from each centre that had a high student enrolment out of the seven faculties that were there. These faculties included the faculties of education, science, agricultural science and arts. In the fourth stage, two departments that were present in all faculties were purposively selected for inclusion in the study. Moving on to the fifth stage, the researcher used Yaro Yemini's formula to calculate the appropriate sample size for the study. To calculate the appropriate sample size for the study:

using the formula: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N\ (e)^2}$

Where: N = Total Population

I = Constant

e = Error margin (0.05)

$= \frac{16,515}{1 + 16515\ (0.05)2}$

$= \frac{16,515}{42.2875}$

n = 440.5

To make the sample size more representative, the figure above was multiplied by two, which is 440.5 x 2 = 881.

Instrumentation

For this investigation, the researcher created the Open Educational Resources Questionnaire (OERsQ), a self-structured questionnaire. Comprising four subscales, the questionnaire was intended to collect data on diverse facets associated with open educational resources. The questionnaire comprised the following subscales in addition to gathering the respondent's demographic and socioeconomic data: the OERs Awareness Scale, OERs Availability Scale, OERs Accessibility Scale and OERs Utilisation Scale.

Open Educational Resources Awareness Scale

The researcher created a tool to gauge a NOUN student's awareness of open educational resources (OERs). 15 closed-ended questions with a Likert four-point rating scale made up the instrument. Response options on the scale were SA, A, SD and D with corresponding weights of 4, 3, 2 and 1 on a one-to-one basis. Four ODL specialists from the Faculty of Education's Department of Adult Education and Department of Science and Technology Education were chosen in order to verify the validity of the instrument. Regarding the identified items' suitability for measuring awareness, they offered their professional opinions.

The final version of the item was created by removing five questions based on their feedback. At the Apapa Study Centre in Lagos State, a trial investigation was carried out to evaluate the items' dependability. Twenty NOUN students who aren't

included in the study's population participated in a pilot test of the questionnaire. Determining the degree of internal consistency between the questionnaire items served as the foundation for the pilot testing. Following the questionnaires' pilot testing, the Cronbach alpha value of 0. 80 showed that the tool had dependable internal consistency.

Open Educational Resources Availability Scale

This section comprises ten items designed to measure the availability of OERs provided by NOUN for students. The participants were requested to express their responses as either "Yes" or "No" for each item. To validate the instrument, both face and content validity were assessed by four experts who were academic staff members from the Department of Adult Education and Science and Technology Education within the Faculty of Education, specialising in ODL. These experts provided their professional opinions on the suitability of the identified items for measuring the availability of OERs. Based on their feedback, three questions that were considered redundant were eliminated, resulting in the final version of the instrument.

The instrument's reliability was evaluated through a pilot study carried out at the Apapa Study Centre in Lagos State. The questionnaire was pilot-tested among 20 NOUN students who do not form part of the study's population. The basis for the pilot-testing was to ascertain the level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items. The resulting Cronbach alpha value of 0.80 obtained from the pilot-testing of the questionnaire indicated that the instrument demonstrated reliable internal consistency.

Open Educational Resources Accessibility Scale

This section consists of ten items designed to evaluate the accessibility of Open Educational Resources (OERs) provided by NOUN for students. Each item presents four response options: Slow and Unstable (SU), Fast Only (FO), Fast and Stable (FS), and Good with High-Speed Bandwidth (GB). These response options were assigned weights of 4, 3, 2, and 1, one to one. Face and content validation were conducted to ensure the validity of the instrument. Four experts specialising in ODL from the Department of Adult Education and Science and Technology Education within the Faculty of Education reviewed the identified items to assess their appropriateness in measuring accessibility. Based on their feedback, three questions that were deemed unnecessary were removed, resulting in the final version of the

items. A reconnaissance survey was conducted to evaluate the dependability of the items. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to NOUN students at the Apapa Study Centre in Lagos State, excluding participants from the main study population. The data obtained from the pilot survey were analysed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency. The resulting Cronbach alpha value of 0.88 indicated that the instrument exhibited reliable internal consistency.

Open Educational Resources Utilisation Scale

This section comprises seven items aimed at assessing the frequency and types of usage of OERs. Each item offers five response options: Never Used (NE), Use When Needed (UN), Use Once Daily (UOD), Use Once a Week (UOW), and Use at Least Once Every Month (UOEM). These response options were assigned weights of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Additionally, participants were requested to indicate their usage of various types of OERs by selecting either "Yes" or "No".

The validity of the instrument was assessed by evaluating both face and content validity. Four experts, who were academic staff selected from the Department of Adult Education and Science and Technology Education within the Faculty of Education and specialising in open and distance learning, provided their professional opinions on the appropriateness of the identified items for measuring utilisation. Based on their feedback, certain questions were merged, some were rephrased, and two questions were eliminated, resulting in the final version of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was assessed through a pilot study. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to NOUN students at the Mushin Study Centre in Lagos State, excluding participants from the main study population. The data obtained from the pilot study were examined to assess the internal consistency of the reliability. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.83, indicating that the instrument exhibited reliable internal consistency.

The researcher, along with the facilitators from the NOUN, personally administered the questionnaires to the participants. 881 copies were distributed to the selected centres; however, 866 copies were retrieved from the NOUN learners, while 19 copies were not properly filled and were not considered valid for investigation. The data that was gathered underwent analysis utilising basic percentages, mean calculations, and frequency counts to examine the demographic information of the respondents. The research question was analysed using percentages and frequency counts, while the two hypotheses were analysed using linear correlation with a significance level of 0.05.

Results or Findings

Table 1: Demographical Characteristics of Respondents.

s/n	Variables	Labels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	21-30 years	570	67.3
		31-40 years	206	24.3
		41-50 years	64	7.6
		Above 51 years	7	0.8
2	Gender	Male	405	47.8
		Female	442	52.2
3	Marital status	Single	578	68.2
		Married	256	30.2
		Divorced	13	1.5
4	Employment status	Student	445	52.5
		Self-employed	233	27.5
		Civil servant	169	20.0
5	Academic qualification	NCE	152	17.9
		Diploma	233	27.5
		GCE A-level	142	16.8
		Others	320	37.8
6	Level of course	300 level	532	62.8
		400 level	252	29.8
		500 level	63	7.4
7	Usage of OERs	Once in a day	266	31.4
		Twice daily	248	29.3
		Less than once in a week	173	20.4
		More than once in a week	160	18.9

The demographic information about the respondents was displayed in Table 1. Given the age distribution, the majority of respondents (67. 3%) are relatively young, with the majority falling between the age range of 21 and 30. The age group of 31–40 years old makes up 24.3 per cent of the population, whereas the age groups of 41–50 years old and over 51 years old are under-represented, with 7.6 per cent and 0.8 per cent, respectively. The sample is nearly evenly distributed by gender, with a slight gender gap (52.2 per cent to 47.8 per cent) between males and females. This close balance suggested that both genders were fairly equally represented in the research. When it comes to marital status, 68.2 per cent of respondents are single, 30.2 per cent are married, and 1 point 5 percent are divorced. Upon determining the employment status of the participants, it was found that 52.5 per cent of them are students, followed by 27. 5 percent self-employed individuals and 20.0 per cent civil

servants. This suggests that the study primarily represents the viewpoints of individuals who are currently enrolled in educational institutions, with a notable proportion of them holding employment. In terms of educational background, respondents range from 37.8% who were classified as others to 27.5% who have diplomas, 17.9% who have NCE qualifications and 16.8% who have GCE A levels. According to the course level, the majority of respondents—62.8%—are in the 300-level, while the 400 and 500 levels have lower percentages. Finally, the respondent's use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) varies. 24 per cent use OERs less than once a week, 18.9 per cent more than once a week, and approximately 34 per cent use it once a day and 29 per cent twice a day.

Research Question 1

Do NOUN students easily access OERs to support their learning?

Table 2: Respondents' accessibility to Open Educational Resources.

		ACCESSIBILITY					
S/N	**Items**	**Slow and unstable (SUS)**	**Fast only(FO)**	**Fast and stable (FS)**	**Good with high-speed bandwidth (GHSB)**	$\bar{x}$	**S.D**
1	Digital Course Materials	48 5.7%	106 12.5%	448 52.9%	245 28.9%	3.05	0.80
2	E-library	20 2.4%	122 14.4%	506 59.7%	199 23.5%	3.04	0.69
3	Course modules	29 3.4%	188 22.2%	475 56.1%	155 18.3%	2.89	0.73
4	Electronic resources: journals	42 5.0%	185 21.8%	454 53.6%	166 19.6%	2.88	0.77
5	Online Streaming videos	36 4.3%	209 24.7%	443 52.3%	159 18.8%	2.86	0.76
6	OERs – Textbooks	56 6.6%	161 19.0%	488 57.6%	142 16.8%	2.85	0.77
7	Animation	49 5.8%	204 24.1%	439 51.8%	155 18.3%	2.83	0.79
8	Assignments	28 3.3%	251 29.6%	430 50.8%	138 16.3%	2.80	0.74
9	Tests /Assessment	31 3.7%	244 28.8%	459 54.2%	113 13.3%	2.77	0.72
10	Quizzes	38 4.5%	248 29.3%	453 53.5%	108 12.8%	2.74	0.73
Weighted mean = 2.85							

Table 2 presents the accessibility of OERs among NOUN students to support their learning. On the digital course material, it shows that 5.7% of NOUN students claimed that it is slow and unstable to access, 12.5% agreed it's fast only to access, 52.9% said it's fast and stable, and 28.9% said accessibility is good with high-speed bandwidth. 2.4% of respondents were of the view that the e-library is slow and unstable to access; 14.4% said it is fast only; 59.7% were of the view to be fast and stable to access; and 23.5% said accessibility is good with speed band width. On course modules/units, 3.4% of respondents indicated that accessibility was slow and unstable, 22.2% said it's fast only, 56.1% were of the view to fast and stable, and 18.3% said accessibility was good and high-speed bandwidth. Regarding electronic resources and journals, 5.0% of the respondents reported that the accessibility level was slow and unstable, while 21.8% indicated it was fast. A majority of 53.6% mentioned that the accessibility was fast and stable, and 19.6% expressed satisfaction with good and high-speed bandwidth for accessibility. In terms of online streaming videos, 4.3% of NOUN students perceived the accessibility as slow and unstable, 24.7% considered it fast, 52.3% reported it as fast and stable, and 18.8% found the accessibility to be good with high-speed bandwidth. For 6.6% of NOUN students, OERs textbooks are slow and unstable to access, fast only according to 19.0% of respondents, and fast and stable according to 57.6% of respondents, and 16.8% of accessibility was good and had high-speed bandwidth. For 5.8% of NOUN students, animation is slow and unstable to access, fast only according to 24.1% of respondents, fast and stable, according to 51.8% of respondents, and for 18.3%, accessibility is good and high-speed bandwidth. On assignments, according to NOUN students, 3.3% said it is slow and unstable, 29.6% believed it is fast only, 50.8% said it is fast and stable, and 16.3% said it is good with high-speed bandwidth. On tests/ assessments, 3.7% of distance learning students claimed that it is slow and unstable to access, 28.8% agreed it's fast. Only to access, 54.2% is fast and stable, and 13.3% said accessibility is good with high-speed bandwidth. On quizzes, according to NOUN students, 4.5% said it is slow and unstable, 29.3% believed it is fast only, 53.5% said it is fast and stable, and 12.8% said it is good with high-speed bandwidth. The findings had mean scores that ranged between 2.77 to 3.05, where the weighted mean is 2.85. The data indicate that NOUN students have easy access to Open Educational Resources, which serve as valuable support for their learning endeavours

The findings reveal that NOUN students have a fast and stable level of accessibility to OERs materials, thanks to the 24-hour online services provided by the university. This highlights the importance of students accessing and utilising OERs in NOUN. The university has established an OERs platform and repository to facilitate easy access for students. The result of this research is in line with a

prior study by Ememe and Modebelu (2019), which found that the majority of NOUN students in their case study had access to OERs for their assignments and academic learning, demonstrating their proficiency in accessing OERs materials online. Given that NOUN is the sole single-mode distance learning institution in the country, it is understandable that substantial resources and funding are allocated to provide OERs to students. This commitment is evident through the establishment of a dedicated unit for OERs at NOUN, ensuring the integration of OERs at all levels of teaching and learning to enhance the quality and accessibility of higher education for thousands of distance-learning students. This is consistent with the viewpoint expressed by Yuan (2012), highlighting the increasing interest in OERs, particularly in the context of distance education. OERs have the potential to facilitate lifelong learning and self-learning and offer valuable teaching and learning opportunities. The utilisation of open content has helped NOUN address challenges associated with providing freely accessible educational resources to its students. Despite the time and financial investment required to develop various types of OERs for diverse distance learning students across different disciplines, NOUN has made these resources available on its online repository. NOUN's approach aligns with Wiley, Caswell, Henson, and Jensen (2008), asserts that courses can be disseminated electronically or made accessible online, allowing unlimited student access to the materials.

The study's findings indicate that NOUN students have a high level of accessibility to OERs, as these resources are freely available to them for academic purposes without any restrictions, except as specified on the NOUN website(s). Raza and Allsop (2006) emphasise that ODL can bring education to learners' homes, eliminating the need for physical travel. They further highlight the importance of ensuring feasible accessibility for the effective utilisation of OERs in ODL programmes. Access to OERs is crucial in improving learning outcomes and plays a significant role in the strength and success of any ODL institution. In line with this, the NOUN has launched the NOUN Portal of OERs, which serves as an online repository of the initial 40 NOUN courses, re-released under Creative Commons open licenses. Both distance-learning students and traditional students need access to diverse educational resources to facilitate their learning, irrespective of where they are located geographically. The NOUN study centres adopted for this study reported that access to OERs is good, providing students with the opportunity to utilise OERs and eliminating geographical barriers. However, the accessibility of OERs for distance learning students can be influenced by various factors. Hence, the availability of OERs has significant implications for the process of teaching and learning.

The outcomes of this research align with the findings of Geith and Vignare (2008), who highlight the importance of easy accessibility as a fundamental value

and significant advantage of OERs. This indicates that NOUN students have convenient access to various types of OERs from the institutional repository, including animations, course modules, assignments, audio-visual materials, College Open Textbooks, FreeTech Books, Open Commons, Open Culture, and the Open Textbook Library, which offer a diverse selection of OERs across multiple fields of study. These results demonstrate that NOUN has a dedicated OERs Unit and has successfully transformed its previously copyrighted courses into fully open-licensed OERs. This result further corroborates Wiley's (2007) claim that a significant portion of MIT OpenCourseWare users primarily comprises independent self-learners. Among the participants, 16% identified as tutors and 32% as learner students, while 49% indicated to be self-learners.

The findings in this study align with the conclusions drawn in earlier research conducted by MIT (2001) and UNESCO (2002), as well as Jena (2012). Jena (2012) highlights the importance of OERs in keeping knowledge up to date. The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses demonstrate that OERs at NOUN are accessible to every student, regardless of their location, further enhancing their effective utilisation. NOUN students can only benefit from the utilisation of OERs when there is easy accessibility that is easily downloaded without internet disruption for learning purposes. When NOUN students are denied access to OERs by institutions, students don't benefit from their utilisation, which may hinder or affect their learning since they are distance-learning students, and facilitation is online, where they rely heavily on learning materials. The availability of OERs through online learning provides students with access to a diverse range of learning experiences. These experiences are not only rich and interactive but also undergo quality assessment and reflect the values and characteristics of the institution that offers such OERs.

This finding supports Itasanmi's (2020) assertion that OERs offer significant advantages to distance learners, particularly in terms of accessing a wide range of learning materials that complement their course modules without additional costs. This is especially beneficial for students who have limited interaction with lecturers and primarily rely on course modules. It highlights the recognised value of OERs in facilitating self-paced learning, enhancing the learning experience, and promoting equitable access to resources, as learners can engage with the materials anytime and anywhere using various technological devices. Therefore, it can be inferred that the accessibility of OERs in NOUN is high, which positively influences its utilisation among students.

The convenient accessibility of OERs for NOUN students may have a significant impact on their utilisation of OERs. This indicates that NOUN is wholeheartedly embracing the OERs approach and converting its entire range of courses into open educational resources. The institution is actively promoting easy accessibility of OERs to its students through the dedicated OERs unit, ensuring that students from various locations can access these resources without restrictions. Furthermore, NOUN provides a round-the-clock service, enabling students to access OERs at any time of the day. Accessibility of OERs is of paramount importance to teaching and learning, as it is through easy accessibility that their utilisation can be enhanced among students. On accessibility, the result revealed that accessibility has a direct influence on OERs' utilisation among students. Without easy access to OERs, students may not be able to utilise them for various reasons, such as doing assignments, tests, quizzes, preparation for exams, and research purposes, amongst others.

Hypothesis Testing

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between the awareness of OERs and their utilisation among NOUN learners.

Table 3: Linear correlation showing the relationship between the awareness of OERs and their utilisation to support learning among students.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	r	P-value	Remark
Awareness of OERs	59.6671	11.4293	847	.494*	.000	Sig.
Utilisation of OERs	38.9799	11.6607				

* Sig. at 0.05 level

According to the data presented in Table 3, a significant relationship exists between the awareness of OERs and their utilisation for supporting learning among students ($r = .494$, $n = 847$, $p < 0.000$, which is < 0.05). Consequently, the initial hypothesis is rejected, indicating that awareness of OERs is indeed linked to their utilisation for supporting learning among students. The awareness of OERs encompasses understanding their meaning, repositories, and how they differ from other copyrighted educational materials. Therefore, without awareness of OERs, students may face challenges in effectively utilising them. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007), it has

been recognised from the early stages of OERs' development that awareness of these resources is vital for their advancement, acceptance, and utilisation. In other words, without awareness of OERs, their utilisation may be hindered. Awareness plays a significant role in influencing the utilisation of OERs. Without knowledge of the existence of OERs, many students may struggle to locate and effectively utilise them for their academic work or to support their learning. Therefore, when students possess a strong level of awareness concerning OERs, they are more likely to be motivated and encouraged to utilise OERs efficiently for supporting their learning. The awareness of NOUN students regarding OERs repositories serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it enables them to locate appropriate open resources that are relevant to their learning needs. Secondly, it empowers them to effectively utilise these resources for learning purposes or to support their overall learning experience. This indicates that NOUN students possess knowledge and understanding of OERs content, various types available, and copyright considerations, allowing them to distinguish them from other electronic materials. This heightened awareness has positively influenced the utilisation of OERs by NOUN students. NOUN may have made significant efforts to raise awareness of OERs among its students, possibly through collaborations with institutions and organisations focused on OERs initiatives, ensuring that NOUN students are well-equipped to benefit from and utilise OERs. This finding aligns with the study of Nyamwembe et al. (2018), which also identified the existence of a positive association between OERs awareness and utilisation. Similarly, the study's result is also in consonance with the findings of Itasanmi (2020). Thus, as OERs awareness increases, so does its utilisation among the student's increases. Therefore, the higher the awareness, the higher the chances of OERs use.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between OERs availability and its utilisation among NOUN learners.

Table 4: Linear correlation showing the relationship between the availability of OERs and their utilisation among NOUN students to support learning.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	r	P-value	Remark
Availability of OERs	54.3600	7.6719	847	.467*	.000	Sig.
Utilisation of OERs	41.3490	5.9115				

* Sig. at 0.05 level

According to the analysis presented in Table 4, there is a significant relationship between the availability of OERs and their utilisation for supporting learning among NOUN students ($r = .467$, $n = 847$, $p < 0.000$, < 0.05). Consequently, the hypothesis is rejected. The availability of OERs plays a crucial role in influencing their utilisation for supporting learning among NOUN students. When OERs resources are made accessible to NOUN students, they can utilise them effectively in their learning endeavours. The level of OERs utilisation is directly proportional to the extent of availability provided to NOUN students. This indicates that NOUN has invested significantly in online education, making a wide range of OERs available to its students. Various OERs, such as animations, tests, quizzes, videos, course modules, and more, are accessible to students, facilitating their utilisation. These findings align with the perspective put forth by UNESCO (2017), which recognises OERs as encompassing textbooks, curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video, and animations.

Availability of OERs determines utilisation by students for various purposes; thus, NOUN's provision through making OERs available on its platform is important for its utilisation by its students. The findings of this study align with the observation that the availability of OERs to potential students is not solely determined by the quantity of OERs within their field of study but also by the relevance, quality, and subjective judgement of the user. This is consistent with the findings of Akomolafe and Adegun (2014), who reported that the availability of OERs has significantly improved the quality of learning materials and subsequently the learning outcomes. In part because of the reality that NOUN learners, the findings of this study can be, in this era of information technology, have easy access to the internet for obtaining relevant learning materials.

The study findings demonstrate that there is a high availability of certain OERs in the university repository, as indicated by the participants' responses. Moreover, the findings reveal that NOUN's e-libraries and repositories offer readily accessible OERs for teaching and learning purposes. These findings align with previous studies conducted by Samzugi and Mwinyibegu (2013) and Nwaokolo-Ojo et al. (2016), which also reported the availability of OERs. Additionally, these findings are consistent with the perspectives of Navarrete et al. (2016), who highlight OERs as a valuable alternative for enhancing access to high-quality educational resources. The presence of advanced technology in various aspects of human endeavours, including education, is not surprising. Higher education in Nigeria is transforming technology-based learning. Students are now required to complete assignments, tests, examinations, and projects online, submitting them electronically to their distance learning lecturers.

This shift reflects the broader trend of integrating technology into education systems. This finding is consistent with Feldstein et al. (2012), who reported in their study that 95% of the students believed that OERs were user-friendly, and 78% believed that OERs offered access to more current content compared to printed textbooks. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of the students expressed a strong preference for OERs materials, considering them more advantageous for their academic work compared to traditional textbooks. This finding indicates a clear inclination towards OERs usage. Furthermore, a study conducted by Pitt et al. (2013) titled "Assessing OERs' Impact across Organisations and Learners in the USA: Experiences from the Bridge to Success Project" discovered that student perceptions of OERs' use played a role in enhancing academic performance.

This also supports the conclusion of Cheung and Hew (2013) in their study. The survey results showed that students extensively utilised OERs in their learning endeavours. This study aligns with the research conducted by Itasanmi (2020), which reported that distance learning students extensively utilise open educational resources for various purposes. According to Itasanmi's study, students use OERs for assignments (56.2%), complementing formal classes (56%), preparing for classes (58.7%), preparing for tests and examinations (54.1%), gaining current information in their field of study (55.6%), updating their knowledge on specific research areas (57.2%), personal study (55.1%), and supplementing their study materials (56.4%). These findings indicate that NOUN students effectively utilise open educational resources to support their learning. This could be attributed to NOUN being the only single-mode distance learning institution that has implemented the use of OERs, thus promoting its utilisation among students. Additionally, a study conducted by Ememe and Modebelu (2019) further corroborated the findings of this current study. Specifically, their results indicated a significant proportion of students in their case study actively utilised OERs materials for completing assignments and supplemented their learning with additional resources provided by their facilitators and e-tutors. This implies that NOUN students, being open-distance learners, are accustomed to utilising e-learning platforms and online learning resources, thus enhancing their familiarity with online learning materials and facilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The NOUN students acknowledged their knowledge of their own accessibility, availability and use of OERs. Notably, the NOUN established its own OERs unit and repository, demonstrating how actively it has embraced the OERs movement. This reveals the university's dedication to offering a variety of OERs that comply

with international standards, followed by other open universities across the globe. As a result, NOUN has the personnel and material resources required to successfully execute distance learning across the nation. By putting strategies like knowledge promotion, technical instruction delivery, converting current course materials into OERs and fostering partnerships with institutions and organisations into practice, NOUN has prioritised continuous learning and understanding of OERs principles to ensure the successful integration of OERs. These efforts are meeting the needs of educators and learners who stand to benefit the most from NOUN's OERs.

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forward:

1) NOUN should aggressively promote OERs to students and emphasise the advantages of using them in its education.
2) To keep students informed about the resources available, staff from the OERs unit and facilitators should regularly promote and advertise NOUN's OERs offerings through a variety of channels.
3) Instructors and online tutors ought to continue giving students online homework in order to encourage them to look into additional open educational resources (OERs) outside of what is available in the school's electronic libraries and repositories.

References

Akomolafe, O. C., & Adegun, O. A. (2014). Utilisation of open educational resources (OERs) and quality assurance in universities in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal, 10*(7). https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/3001

Cheung, W. S., & Hew, K. F. (2013). Use and production of open educational resources (OERs): A pilot study of undergraduate students' perceptions. In *International Conference on Educational Technologies* (pp. 125–128).

Ememe, P. I., & Modebelu, O. J. (2019). Challenges of accessibility and utilisation of open educational resources (OERs) in single and dual mode open and distance education (ODE) institutions in Lagos. *International Journal of Education Research, 6*(1).

Eyisi, J., & Omokhabi, A. A. (2020). National Open University of Nigeria and promotion of digital education. *African Journal of Educational Research, 23*, 40–45.

Feldstein, A., Martin, M., Hudson, A., Warren, K., Hilton III, J., & Wiley, D. (2012). Open textbooks and increased student access and outcomes. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ992490.pdf

Geith, C., & Vignare, K. (2008). Access to education with online learning and open educational resources: Can they close the gap? *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 12*(1), 1–22.

Itasanmi, S. A. (2020). OERs awareness and usage among open and distance learning students in South-Western Nigeria. *International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching, 4*(2). http://journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/ijiet

Jena, S. S. (2012). *OERs for distance learning: Meaning to knowledge empowerment for developing nations*. WikiEducator. http://wikieducator.org

Navarrete, R., Lujan-Mora, S., & Penafiel, M. (2016). *Use of open educational resources in e-learning for higher education*. http://www.disarrolloweb.dlsi.ua.es/OERs

Nwaokolo-Ojo, J. O., Igwe, C. O., & Umar, I. Y. (2016). Impact of e-learning and open educational resources on the teaching and learning of metalwork trades in technical colleges in Benue State, Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 21*(6), 1–6.

Nyamwembe, E. O., Tanui, E., & Wamutitu, J. M. (2018). Relationship between students' awareness and utilization of open educational resources for academic work in private universities in Kenya. *International Journal of Education*.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Giving knowledge for free: The emergence of open educational resources*. OECD Publishing. http://tinyrl.com/62hjx6

Pitt, R., Ebrahimi, N., McAndrew, P., & Coughlan, T. (2013). Assessing OERs impact across organisations and learners: Experiences from the Bridge to Success project. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education, 2013*(3). http://jime.open.ac.uk/article/view/2012-17/501

Raza, R., & Allsop, T. (2006). *Using distance education for skills development*. Department for International Development (DFID). https://developyst.jellyfish.com.pk/app/webroot/files/article/80/Using%20Distance%20Education%20for%20Skills%20Development.pdf

Samzugi, A. S., & Mwinyimbegu, C. M. (2013). Accessibility of open educational resources for distance education learners: The case of the Open University of Tanzania. *Huria: Journal of the Open University of Tanzania, 14*(1).

UNESCO. (2002). *UNESCO promotes new initiative for free educational resources on the internet*. http://www.unesco.org/education/news_en/080702_free_edu_ress.shtml

UNESCO. (2017). *What are open educational resources (OERs)?* http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/open-educational-resources/what-are-open-educational-resources-oers/

Wiley, D. (2007). *Open education license draft: Iterating toward openness*. http://opencontent.org/blog/archives/355

Wiley, D., Caswell, T., Henson, S., & Jensen, M. (2008). *Open educational resources: Enabling universal education*. Faculty Publications, 206.

Yuan, L., MacNeill, S., & Kraan, W. (2008). *Open educational resources: Opportunities and challenges for higher education* (Educational Cybernetics: Reports, Paper 1). http://digitalcommons.bolton.ac.uk/iec_reports/1

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 110-119
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00008.5
ISSN 0019-5006

Assessment of Academic Counsellors' Feedback on the Curriculum, Syllabi, and Delivery of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programs: A Study of IGNOU

• **Amit Kumar Shrivastava**[1] • **Jyoti Srivastava**[2]

Abstract

The present paper attempts to evaluate the feedback from Indira Gandhi National Open University's (IGNOU's) academic counsellors who conduct counselling sessions for various courses on the curriculum and syllabus. We developed this research paper based on the feedback we received from the academic counsellors using a Google form questionnaire. We analysed the academic counsellors' responses on various issues, including content coverage and illustration, conceptual clarity, language, difficulty level, self-check exercises, assignments, and media components in the self-learning material, to arrive at a valuable conclusion. The responses of academic counsellors on various aspects of counselling sessions (theory/practical) and soft copies of self-learning material were also analysed to present an overall view of the curriculum and syllabus of IGNOU courses.

Keywords: *Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Self-Learning Material (SLM), Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Learner Support Centre (LSC).*

Introduction

The academic counsellors are the backbone of open and distance learning systems. The main functions of academic counsellors are informing, advising, and counselling distance learners. In addition to the aforementioned duties, academic counsellors also participate in continuous and terminal evaluations. Academic counsellors primarily carry out the continuous evaluation by assessing and documenting the marginal and global comments on assignments. The marginal and global comments written by academic counsellors provide an opportunity for learners

[1]Additional Director, IGNOU, Delhi. ✉ amit.aks@gmail.com
[2]Research scholar, Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sharda University, Greater Noida. ✉ jyotisri12980@gmail.com

to improve their performance. Term-end examination answer scripts serve as the basis for the terminal evaluation. This allows us to observe that academic counsellors who are engaged in a variety of activities within ODL. The conventional system produces the majority of Indira Gandhi National Open University's (IGNOU's) academic counsellors, who possess minimal understanding of ODL and its methodology. These academic counsellors require rigorous training and orientation on the various aspects of their role and responsibilities in IGNOU. The training and orientation of academic counsellors is required to be a continuous process.

Review of Literature

Self-Learning Material (SLM) is at the core of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), which plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. Face-to-face academic counselling sessions and continuous evaluation through assignments further enhance it. Despite the heavy emphasis on online learning in recent years, print is still an important medium for course delivery in distance education (Fung, 2005). Despite the potential of new information technologies, printed learning materials are still the dominant delivery format. "Embedded Support Devices" (ESDs), such as schemes, illustrations, examples, pre- and post-questions, tasks, and margin texts, enrich printed materials to support the learning process (Martens et al., 1996). Further, research indicates the importance of self-directed learning (SDL) skills in facilitating the achievement of the learning outcome (Song & Hill, 2007).

Face-to-face counselling in a distance education programme plays a major role in connecting learners with the counsellor (teacher) as well as with each other. It serves as a platform for learners to clarify their doubts about their study programme. Studies have identified student concerns about the lack of participation in class discussions and interaction with lecturers (Furlonger & Gencic, 2014; Long & Koehler, 2021). In line with these findings, Furlonger and Gencic (2014)*)* found that 71% of distance education students cited a lack of connection with classmates as a major source of frustration when studying online. We can understand these findings within the framework of Moore (1993) states theory of transactional distance, which outlines the need to overcome differences in 'perception and understandings' caused by geographical distance for successful learning and course satisfaction. Moore (1993) further argues that all education involves some transactional distance issues, and that the significant separation in distance education necessitates stressing key organisational variables such as 'dialogue' and 'structure' to counterbalance the disadvantages of distance education. Additionally, students must master 'autonomy' for the success of DE programmes (Moore, 1993). In distance education and open

learning, tuition and counselling play a crucial role in individualising the mass product, aligning with adult learners' notions of adult status at the micro level and supporting democratic educational practices at the broadest level (Tait, 1988).

The ODL incorporates assignments to facilitate two-way communication between the teacher and the student. Studies by Evans and Saxe (1996) suggested that the time element involved in the communication between teacher and student might be one of the main reasons for loss of interest and, ultimately, dropout (Hanewicz et al., 2017). The majority of the learning process for distance learners was facilitated by assignments that they prepared according to a given schedule. On the other hand, assignments are also a component of the formative assessment process in the assessment of distance learners (Akhter & Ali, 2016).

Methodology of the study

The current study employs a descriptive survey research design, in which a well-structured Google Form questionnaire with closed-ended questions is developed and distributed it to academic counsellors across India. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it covers questions on the general profile of academic counsellors, content coverage and illustration, conceptual clarity, language, difficulty level, self-check exercises, assignments, media components in the self-learning material, various aspects of counselling sessions and e-learning material, etc. 3,456 academic counsellors received the questionnaire, and 736 of them responded. The responses received from academic counsellors were classified, tabulated, and presented in the form of tables with the help of various analytical tools. We collected the secondary data from various published sources.

Analysis and Interpretation

Basic information about academic counsellors:

The analysis of the profile of academic counsellors provides valuable demographic and professional insights. Analysis of the profile of academic counsellors revealed that a majority 75% belonged to the General category, followed by 17% from the OBC category, 5% from SC, and 3% from ST. This clearly shows that academic counsellors of all categories participated in our research.

Regarding gender, 70% of respondents were male, and 30% were female. The age distribution showed that 34% were between 36–45 years, 29% between 46–55

years, 19% in the 25–35 age group, and 18% were 56 years or older. We also observed that academic counsellors across all age groups (25 years and older) showed interest in responding to our questionnaire. More than eighty (80) per cent of academic counsellors are thirty-six (36) years of age and above, which reflects that academic counsellors at IGNOU are experienced teachers.

In terms of experience, more than half (54%) had over five years of experience, while 19% had 1–3 years, 17% had 3–5 years, and about 10% were newcomers with less than a year of experience. This implies that our research will focus on academic counsellors who have more than five years of experience.

Orientation status indicated that 53% had not received orientation training, while 47% had undergone orientation. These findings highlight the need for consistent training and capacity building among counsellors. The aforementioned analysis reveals that approximately fifty-three (53) per cent of academic counsellors lack orientation, while the remaining forty-seven (47) per cent follows orientation. The academic counsellors in IGNOU are normally drawn from conventional education, and therefore, their orientation is a must.

IGNOU is offering student support services to its learners through a strong network of sixty-seven (67) regional centres and more than three thousand (1800) learner support centres spread all over India.

The questionnaire was sent to academic counsellors of all the regional centres, out of which academic counsellors of thirty-four (34) regional centres spread over all the parts of India responded.

Regional Centre (RC)-wise details of respondents:

Expanding on the distribution of responses, Regional Centre-wise responses indicated that nearly 30% of the counsellors were from the Bhubaneshwar Regional Centre. 11% from Delhi-1, 8% each from Kolkata and Khanna, and 6% from Srinagar. Together, these five Regional Centres accounted for around 62% of all responses.

The remaining 38% of responses were distributed across 29 other regional centres, indicating nationwide participation. This wide coverage strengthens the representativeness of the findings and allows recommendations to be applied uniformly across India.

Programme level-wise number of academic counsellors who responded to the questionnaire:

Looking at programme-level engagement, programme-level responses revealed that 29% of academic counsellors were associated with undergraduate programmes and 26% with postgraduate programmes. Around 22% were involved in both UG and PG programmes. Together, this shows that nearly 77% of counsellors were engaged with degree-level programmes. The remaining 23% were linked with certificate, diploma, and PG diploma programmes. This trend reflects IGNOU's greater emphasis on UG and PG programmes and the higher enrolment of counsellors in them.

Different aspects of Self-Learning Material (SLM)

Self-learning material (SLM) plays a vital role in the overall success of learners. Currently, everyone can access a free soft copy of SLM through the E-Gyankosh/ IGNOU e-content app. All learners who opt for it receive the hard copy of SLM.

The analysis of the data reveals that more than ninety-three per cent (93%) of academic counsellors strongly agree/agree that content coverage in the SLM is adequate, whereas around six per cent (6%) of academic counsellors are either neutral or disagree/strongly disagree on this issue. This means overall content coverage in SLM is up to the mark.

More than ninety-one per cent (91%) of academic counsellors strongly agree that examples, figures, and diagrams/charts effectively illustrate the content of SLM. Around seven per cent (7%) of academic counsellors are neutral, whereas two per cent (2%) either disagree or strongly disagree on this issue. The response of academic counsellors clearly reflects that SLM is well illustrated for the better understanding of the learners.

Around ninety-two per cent (92%) of academic counsellors either strongly agree or agree that there is conceptual clarity in the content of the course. The remaining eight per cent (8%) of academic counsellors are either neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree on this issue. This further demonstrates the conceptual clarity of the SLM's content.

About eighteen per cent (18%) of academic counsellors strongly agree, fifty-six per cent (56%) agree, nineteen per cent (19%) are neutral, six per cent (6%) disagree,

and one per cent (1%) strongly disagree that the difficulty level in the course is as per the programme level. This needs attention so that the difficulty level in the course can be reduced to a minimum.

Ninety per cent (90%) of academic counsellors strongly agree or agree that the course units' language is easily comprehensible. Around ten per cent (10%) of academic counsellors are either neutral or disagree/strongly disagree on this issue. The learners enrolled in IGNOU programmes are of diverse backgrounds, and a large number of learners from rural backgrounds take admission to its various programmes. In the above circumstances, the language of SLM is very important.

Around ninety-one per cent (91%) of academic counsellors strongly agree/ agree that self-check exercises provided in the unit facilitate learning. Only about nine per cent (9%) of academic counsellors are neutral or strongly disagree on this aspect. With the help of self-check exercises, learners can evaluate themselves before the term-end examination, and therefore, these exercises provide a chance for learners to improve their performance.

About nineteen per cent (19%) of academic counsellors strongly agree, forty-nine per cent (49%) agree, twenty per cent (20%) are neutral, eleven per cent (11%) disagree, and one per cent (1%) strongly disagree that learners are keen to use the e-learning material for studying the course. Due to the non-availability of a smartphone, laptop, or computer to many of our learners, they are not in a position to use the e-learning material.

More than sixty-seven (67%) academic counsellors strongly agree or agree that learners express difficulties related to course content whenever they interact with them. Around thirty-three per cent (33%) of academic counsellors are either neutral or disagree/strongly disagree on this issue. It seems that there are many learners not expressing difficulties about the course content. These learners are not very serious about completing their programmes in the minimum duration.

Issues related to counselling sessions

IGNOU typically organises counselling sessions at its learners' support centres. Gyanvani Radio Stations and Gyan Darshan Channel, among others, assist in organising the counselling sessions in person. The university also organises the counselling sessions online.

In IGNOU, theory counselling sessions account for 10% of the total study hours. For eight (08) credit courses, a total of ten (10) counselling sessions of two (02) hours are conducted. About fourteen per cent (14%) of academic counsellors strongly agree, forty-two per cent (42%) agree, twelve per cent (12%) are neutral, twenty three percent (23%) disagree, and eight per cent (8%) strongly disagree that the prescribed number of theory counselling sessions is adequate. In order to enhance the performance of ODL learners, it is imperative that the number of theory counselling sessions be increased. This is due to the fact that they receive the most support during these sessions.

On non-print media components, 63% agreed they were available for counselling, while 37% noted challenges such as lack of technical support or power issues at some centres. Overall, the data suggest strong implementation of counselling sessions but also highlight the need to increase their frequency and strengthen technical support.

More than fifty-four per cent (54%) of academic counsellors strongly agree/ agree that the prescribed number of practical counselling sessions is sufficient. Approximately forty-six per cent (46%) of academic counsellors are either neutral or strongly disagree on this matter. It appears that a significant number of students are in favour of increasing the number of practical counselling sessions for a variety of courses.

Approximately twenty-one per cent (21%) of academic counsellors strongly concur, fifty-two per cent (52%) concur, thirteen per cent (13%) are neutral, twelve per cent (12%) disagree, and two per cent (2%) strongly disagree that students' attendance at counselling sessions is generally satisfactory. It appears that approximately two-thirds of the students are dedicated to their studies and consistently attend counselling sessions. This is a favourable sign for ODL in general and IGNOU in particular.

IGNOU supplements the majority of its courses with non-print e-media components in the form of audio/video. Approximately 63% of academic counsellors highly agree/agree that non-print e-media components in the course are available for counselling. The remaining 37% of academic counsellors are neutral or strongly disagree on this issue. It is possible that some learner support centres are unable to display e-media components during counselling sessions owing to poor technical assistance or power outages. Finally, the majority of academic counsellors provided positive feedback on the IGNOU-organised counselling session.

Response of academic counsellors on the effectiveness of assignments

Assignments in open and distance learning function as an excellent conduit for bi-directional communication between academic counsellors and learners. The academic counsellors provide marginal and tutor remarks on the assessed assignments. Students can enhance their performance through constructive feedback provided on their assessed assignments.

Finally, regarding assignments, assignments were viewed very positively, with more than 90% of academic counsellors agreeing that they serve the dual purpose of teaching-learning and continuous assessment. Only about 10% were neutral or disagreed.

Analysis of the data indicates that over ninety per cent (90%) of academic counsellors strongly agree or agree that the tasks in the course effectively fulfil the dual objectives of teaching and continual assessment. Approximately seven per cent (7%) of academic counsellors are indifferent, whereas three per cent (3%) disagree or strongly disagree regarding the aforementioned element.

The above analysis demonstrates that assignments effectively serve the dual function of facilitating teaching-learning and continuous evaluation, as over ninety per cent (90%) of academic counsellors expressed support for this assertion.

Suggestion of academic counsellors for bringing desired improvement in the system

a) The self-learning material of all the programmes is required to be available in regional languages as far as possible.
b) All the study centres are required to be equipped with digital resources.
c) Most of the academic counsellors have requested a revision of SLM periodically so as to incorporate the latest changes.
d) The number of academic counselling sessions, both for theory and practical, is required to be increased.
e) Many academic counsellors had suggested the organisation of online counselling sessions with the help of the best available teacher. By doing this, we can save a lot of money and provide the experience of the best available teacher to a large number of learners.
f) A mechanism is also required to be developed to take the feedback of the learners at the end of each counselling session.

g) The self-learning material, both in the form of a hard copy as well as PDF, is required to be made available to the learners before the start of the counselling session.
h) All the academic counsellors are required to be orientated and re-orientated from time to time.
i) Assignment questions are required to be a mix of both objective and subjective.
j) The remuneration of counselling sessions is required to be enhanced to attract the best available teachers.

Conclusion

This research analyses the input of academic counsellors regarding various parts of self-learning materials, counselling sessions, and assignments. Their feedback was utilised to enhance the system, thereby benefiting the learners. The majority of academic counsellors expressed satisfaction with the diverse elements of SLM. They recommended the prompt provision of SLM to the learners in both PDF and hard copy formats.

The academic counsellors commended IGNOU's efforts in organising the counselling sessions. The majority of academic counsellors recommended augmenting the frequency of counselling sessions. They proposed the facilitation of online counselling sessions, enabling academic counselors to assist numerous learners distributed across India.

Many academic counsellors concur that assignments fulfil both educational and evaluative functions. The academic counsellors advised the oversight of feedback provided on assessed work. It assists learners in enhancing their performance in the Term End Examination (TEE).

A significant number of academic advisors advocated for the establishment of robust technology infrastructure at both the Regional Centres and Learner Support Centres (LSCs). They proposed the gradual digitalisation of all learner support activities.

References

Akhter, N., & Ali, A. (2016). *Analysis of assignments' assessment for distance learners in single vs. dual mode institution*. Bulletin of Education and Research, 38(2), 15–35.

Evans, R. W., & Saxe, D. W. (Eds.). (1996). *Handbook on teaching social issues* (NCSS Bulletin No. 93). National Council for the Social Studies.

Fung, Y. (2005). *Teachers' views on and use of printed materials in a distance learning teacher education course*. Open Learning: The Journal of Open and Distance Learning, 20(2), 175–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680510500094231

Furlonger, B., & Gencic, E. (2014). *Comparing satisfaction, life-stress, coping and academic performance of counselling students in on-campus and distance education learning environments*. Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 24(1), 76–89.

Hanewicz, C., Platt, A., & Arendt, A. (2017). *Creating a learner-centered teaching environment using student choice in assignment*. Distance Education, 38(3), 273–287. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2017.1369349

Long, Y., & Koehler, A. (2021). *Student participation and interaction in online case-based discussions: Comparing expert and novice facilitation*. Online Learning, 25(4). https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v25i4.2901

Moore, M. G. (1993). *Theory of transactional distance*. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 22–29). Routledge.

Martens, R., Valcke, M., Poelmans, P., & Daal, M. (1996). *Functions, use and effects of embedded support devices in printed distance learning materials*. Learning and Instruction, 6(1), 77–93. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(96)80005-3

Song, L., & Hill, J. R. (2007). *A conceptual model for understanding self-directed learning in online environments*. Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 6(1).

Tait, A. (1988). *Democracy in distance education and the role of tutorial and counselling services*. Journal of Distance Education, 3(1), 95–99.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 120-129
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00009.7
ISSN 0019-5006

Coping Strategies and Life Challenges among Older Adults in Uttarakhand: A Gender and Socio-Economic Analysis

• **Chetna Thapa**[1] • **Narendra Singh Rana**[2]

Abstract

This study examines the coping strategies employed by older adults aged 55 years and above in navigating the complex challenges of later life, with particular attention to the roles of gender and socio-economic status. Conducted across the districts of Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, and Chamoli in Uttarakhand, the research engaged a purposive sample of 150 participants, equally stratified by gender and socio-economic background. Data were collected using the Coping Strategies Scale and the Adult Challenges Scale within a descriptive–correlational design. Analysis revealed that women experienced greater emotional, health-related, and interpersonal difficulties, while men predominantly adopted problem-focused coping strategies. Middle socio-economic groups displayed higher use of adaptive coping methods, whereas lower socio-economic participants encountered more severe financial and health-related challenges and relied less on problem-focused strategies. A significant positive correlation between adaptive coping and effective challenge management underscored the critical role of coping mechanisms in promoting resilience and psychological well-being. The findings highlight the necessity of gender-sensitive, socio-economically inclusive, and regionally tailored interventions to foster dignified and healthy ageing among Uttarakhand's older population.

Keywords: *coping strategies, ageing, challenges, gender, socio-economic status, Uttarakhand.*

Introduction

Late adulthood, which begins around the age of 55, represents a critical stage of human development, often accompanied by profound physical, psychological, and

[1]Assistant Professor (B.Ed.), Dayanand Women's Training College, Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248001.
✉ chetna.ch@gmail.com
[2]Assistant Professor (B.Ed.), T.S.R Govt. Degree College Nainidanda, Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand.
✉ narendrarana001@gmail.com

social changes. Individuals at this stage face multiple challenges such as deteriorating health, economic dependency, retirement-related adjustments, shrinking social networks, and shifting family responsibilities. Effective coping, conceptualised by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage stress, plays a vital role in sustaining psychological well-being and resilience during this period.

Coping strategies are generally categorised as problem-focused, directed toward addressing the source of stress, and emotion-focused, which regulate the emotional consequences of stress. Research indicates that coping patterns are strongly influenced by gender and socio-economic status. Men are more likely to employ problem-solving strategies, whereas women often rely on emotion-focused and support-seeking mechanisms (Matud, 2019; Kim & Park, 2021). Similarly, socio-economic status shapes coping efficacy, with middle- and higher-income groups showing greater reliance on proactive strategies compared to lower-income groups who face heightened economic and psychosocial pressures (Chen et al., 2020; Singh & Verma, 2022).

In Uttarakhand, the experiences of older adults vary across regions. Dehradun, the state's capital, offers a largely urban environment with access to healthcare and services but faces the challenges of diminishing traditional support systems. Tehri Garhwal, with its semi-rural profile, reflects transitional lifestyles where modern influences intersect with cultural traditions. Chamoli, a largely rural and hilly district, presents unique geographical and economic constraints that often intensify the challenges faced by the elderly. Together, these districts provide a meaningful context to study how older adults navigate late-life challenges within diverse socio-cultural and economic settings.

Against this background, the present study examines the coping strategies of adults aged 55 years and above in Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, and Chamoli, focusing on gender and socio-economic variations. The study also explores the link between coping strategies and the effective management of challenges, offering insights for developing regionally relevant, gender-sensitive, and socio-economically inclusive interventions.

Review of Related Literature

Coping in late adulthood has been widely examined, yet contextual differences remain important. Matud (2019) highlighted that women predominantly adopt emotion-

focused strategies, while men favour problem-focused approaches. Kim and Park (2021) confirmed similar patterns among Indian elders, noting that women often rely on emotional support systems, whereas men pursue problem-solving strategies shaped by societal expectations.

Chen et al. (2020) observed that higher Socio-Economic Status (SES) groups employ more proactive coping due to greater financial and healthcare access. Singh and Verma (2022) found that lower SES elders in Northern India encountered more interpersonal and economic stressors, limiting coping flexibility.

In India, modernisation has reshaped family structures, reducing the protective role of joint families. Sharma and Bhasin (2022) reported that urban elders, such as those in Dehradun, face heightened vulnerability due to nuclear family arrangements. Mehra and Kapoor (2023) noted that in semi-rural areas like Tehri Garhwal, older adults struggle to reconcile traditional values with rising independence. Recent findings by Rawat and Joshi (2024) in Chamoli emphasised that geographic isolation and economic dependence exacerbate emotional and financial challenges for rural elders.

Adaptive coping has a strong association with psychological health. Patel and Gupta (2023) showed that problem-focused coping enhanced life satisfaction among elders, while Roy and Malhotra (2024) linked adaptive coping strategies with resilience and functional independence.

Although research on coping in late adulthood is expanding, significant gaps remain. Few studies specifically focus on Uttarakhand, and even fewer examine the diverse settings of Dehradun (urban), Tehri Garhwal (semi-rural), and Chamoli (rural). The combined influence of gender and socio-economic status on coping remains underexplored in the Indian context. Limited research has addressed how coping strategies among the elderly have evolved in the aftermath of COVID-19. Existing studies often generalise coping styles without linking them to health, economic, or interpersonal domains. This study addresses these gaps by examining coping strategies of older adults in Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, and Chamoli, thereby contributing regionally grounded insights into the gendered and socio-economic dimensions of coping in late adulthood.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the differences in challenges among older adults on the basis of gender.

2. To find out the differences in challenges among older adults on the basis of socio-economic status.
3. To find out the differences in coping strategies among older adults on the basis of gender.
4. To find out the differences in coping strategies among older adults on the basis of socio-economic status.
5. To find out the relationship between coping strategies and challenges of older adults.

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in challenges among older adults on the basis of gender.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in challenges among older adults on the basis of socio-economic status.

H_{03}: There is no significant difference in coping strategies among older adults on the basis of gender.

H_{04}: There is no significant difference in coping strategies among older adults on the basis of socio-economic status.

H_{05}: There is no significant relationship between challenges of adults and their coping strategies.

Research Design

The present study employed a descriptive–correlational research design, considered appropriate for investigating both the nature of coping strategies and their association with the challenges experienced by older adults. This design enabled the systematic description of coping patterns while also facilitating the analysis of relationships between coping mechanisms and life challenges without manipulating variables.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised older adults aged 55 years and above, residing in the districts of Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, and Chamoli in Uttarakhand. A sample of 150 participants was selected, with 50 respondents from each district, ensuring balanced representation of both urban and semi-rural contexts. To achieve adequate subgroup analysis, equal emphasis was placed on gender (75 males and 75 females) and socio-economic status (lower and middle strata).

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was adopted. The population was stratified by gender (male, female) and socio-economic status (lower, middle). Within each stratum, participants were randomly drawn to ensure representativeness and to minimise selection bias.

Research Instruments

1. Coping Strategies Scale : Assesses the use of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies among older adults.
2. Adult Challenges Scale : Measures the extent and intensity of challenges across emotional, health-related, financial, and interpersonal domains.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through personal administration of standardised questionnaires in the participants' familiar languages, including Hindi and Garhwali, to enhance comprehension and accuracy of responses. Prior to participation, respondents were briefed about the study's objectives and assured of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Statistical Techniques

Collected data were analysed using both **descriptive** and **inferential statistics**:

- **Descriptive Analysis:** Mean, Standard Deviation, and Percentage distributions to profile coping strategies and challenges.
- **Inferential Analysis:**
  - *t*-tests to examine differences in coping strategies and challenges across gender and socio-economic groups.
  - Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to assess the relationship between coping strategies and the life challenges.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in challenges among older adults on the basis of gender.

Table 1: *t*-test Results for Challenges by Gender.

Gender	N	Mean (M)	SD	t	p
Male	75	42.86	5.94	-2.31	0.023*
Female	75	45.12	6.15		

Note. $p < .05$ indicates statistical significance.

The findings indicate a significant difference in the challenges experienced by older adults on the basis of gender, with women reporting a higher level of challenges than men. Women, particularly in the semi-rural and rural districts of Tehri Garhwal and Chamoli, reported greater emotional strain, heightened financial dependency, and more health-related concerns. These results align with Matud (2019), who noted that women tend to face compounded stress due to social roles and reduced financial independence. In the Uttarakhand context, cultural expectations of caregiving, coupled with limited economic autonomy, may exacerbate the challenges faced by older women. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in challenges among older adults on the basis of socio-economic status.

Table 2: *t*-test Results for Challenges by Socio-Economic Status.

SES Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t	p
Lower SES	75	47.02	6.84	3.14	0.002**
Middle SES	75	43.15	5.72		

Note. $p < .01$ indicates high statistical significance.

The results clearly show that lower socio-economic status (SES) participants face significantly greater challenges compared to those in the middle SES category. Respondents from lower SES groups, particularly in Chamoli, reported acute difficulties in meeting medical expenses, securing stable nutrition, and maintaining independent living. These findings support Chen et al. (2020) and Singh and Verma (2022), who found that financial instability magnifies stress and restricts access to coping resources. Conversely, participants from middle SES families, especially in Dehradun, benefited from comparatively better healthcare, financial savings, and social support, which reduced the severity of their challenges. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in coping strategies among older adults on the basis of gender.

Table 3: *t*-test Results for Coping Strategies by Gender.

Gender	N	Mean (M)	SD	t	p
Male	75	48.21	6.11	2.17	0.032*
Female	75	45.72	5.89		

Note. $p < .05$ indicates statistical significance.

The data reveal a significant gender-based variation in coping approaches. Male respondents exhibited stronger use of problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking practical solutions, financial planning, and decision-making. Females, on the other hand, relied more heavily on emotion-focused coping, including prayer, seeking emotional support, and cognitive reappraisal. This pattern resonates with Kim and Park (2021), who emphasised that women are more likely to lean on emotional networks, while men take a more solution-oriented approach. In the cultural setting of Uttarakhand, these differences may stem from traditional gender roles, where men are expected to manage external affairs, while women handle emotional and relational domains. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in coping strategies among older adults on the basis of socio-economic status.

Table 4: *t*-test Results for Coping Strategies by Socio-Economic Status.

SES Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t	p
Lower SES	75	44.38	6.75	-3.29	0.001**
Middle SES	75	49.05	5.88		

Note. $p < .01$ indicates high statistical significance.

The results underscore a clear socio-economic divide in coping strategies. Middle SES participants, particularly in Dehradun, demonstrated greater reliance on adaptive problem-focused coping, such as seeking medical assistance, engaging in community activities, and adopting healthier routines. By contrast, lower SES participants, especially in Chamoli and parts of Tehri Garhwal, reported limited use of such strategies, often defaulting to passive or emotion-focused coping due to restricted access to healthcare, financial constraints, and reduced social mobility. This supports Singh and Verma (2022), who argued that economic stability enhances coping adaptability. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant relationship between challenges of adults and their coping strategies.

Table 5: Correlation between Coping Strategies and Challenges.

Variables	r	p
Coping Strategies × Challenges	0.61	0.000**

Note. $p < .01$ indicates strong significance.

A strong positive correlation was observed between coping strategies and the effective management of challenges. Older adults who actively employed adaptive coping methods—particularly problem-focused approaches—were significantly better able to mitigate the impact of emotional, economic, and health-related difficulties. The correlation was particularly evident among middle SES respondents in Dehradun, who had more access to healthcare and social support systems. However, lower SES respondents in Chamoli, despite facing greater challenges, showed reduced reliance on adaptive coping, highlighting a need for targeted interventions. These findings corroborate Patel and Gupta (2023) and Roy and Malhotra (2024), who found that adaptive coping enhances resilience and life satisfaction. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Overall Findings

- **Gender differences** were evident, with women experiencing more emotional and financial challenges, while men demonstrated greater reliance on problem-focused coping.
- **Socio-economic disparities** significantly shaped both challenges and coping, with lower SES groups facing greater hardships and reduced coping flexibility.
- **Coping–challenge relationship** was strong, confirming that adaptive coping serves as a protective mechanism in navigating the complexities of late adulthood.
- The findings highlight the importance of **regionally tailored interventions** in districts such as Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, and Chamoli, where cultural and economic contexts strongly influence the ageing experience.

Conclusion

This study examined the coping strategies of older adults aged 55 years and above in relation to the challenges they face, with a particular emphasis on gender and socio-economic differences across the districts of Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, and Chamoli in Uttarakhand. The analysis revealed significant disparities in both the magnitude of challenges and the strategies adopted to address them.

Findings demonstrated that older women encounter a broader spectrum of difficulties—particularly emotional, health-related, and interpersonal—than their male counterparts, reflecting the enduring influence of gendered expectations, limited economic independence, and caregiving responsibilities. Conversely, men were more inclined towards problem-focused coping mechanisms, engaging in solution-oriented behaviours such as structured planning and proactive problem-solving.

Socio-economic status further emerged as a critical determinant of late-life adaptation. Participants from lower SES backgrounds, especially in the semi-rural and rural settings of Tehri Garhwal and Chamoli, reported heightened financial strain, limited access to quality healthcare, and greater social vulnerability. Their reliance on less adaptive, emotion-focused coping methods contrasted with the more resourceful, problem-focused strategies of middle SES groups, particularly in urban Dehradun, where better infrastructure and social support networks facilitated resilience.

The significant positive correlation between adaptive coping and the effective management of challenges underscores the protective function of coping mechanisms in safeguarding psychological well-being, resilience, and overall quality of life. Importantly, the comparative analysis across districts revealed that while urban elders in Dehradun benefit from institutional and community resources, those in Chamoli and Tehri Garhwal remain disproportionately disadvantaged by economic and geographic barriers.

In essence, the study establishes that coping in late adulthood is not a uniform process but rather a complex interaction of gender roles, socio-economic realities, and regional contexts. It highlights the urgent need for gender-responsive, socio-economically inclusive, and regionally contextualised interventions, including community-based support structures, accessible healthcare services, and financial empowerment initiatives, to promote healthy and dignified ageing among older adults in Uttarakhand.

References

Chen, L., Zhou, Y., & Wang, H. (2020). Socioeconomic status and coping strategies among older adults: A comparative study. *Journal of Gerontology and Social Sciences, 75*(4), 742–751.

Kim, H., & Park, S. (2021). Gender differences in coping and psychological well-being among elderly populations. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 92*(1), 45–62.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.

Matud, M. P. (2019). Gender and health-related quality of life in later adulthood: The role of coping styles. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes, 17*(1), 76–86.

Mehra, R., & Kapoor, V. (2023). Aging in semi-rural India: Coping strategies and cultural transitions. *Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry, 39*(2), 112–121.

Patel, N., & Gupta, A. (2023). Adaptive coping and life satisfaction among the elderly: Evidence from India. *Journal of Positive Psychology and Aging, 5*(1), 33–44.

Rawat, S., & Joshi, R. (2024). Coping with aging in rural Uttarakhand: Challenges and resilience among older adults in Chamoli. *Journal of Rural Development Studies, 41*(1), 89–102.

Roy, P., & Malhotra, D. (2024). Coping mechanisms and resilience in late adulthood: An empirical study. *Psychology and Developing Societies, 36*(1), 57–75.

Sharma, K., & Bhasin, A. (2022). Changing family structures and their impact on the elderly in urban India. *Indian Journal of Gerontology, 36*(3), 410–426.

Singh, R., & Verma, P. (2022). Socio-economic disparities and mental health challenges in old age: A North Indian perspective. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 63*(2), 215–229.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 130-142
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00010.3
ISSN 0019-5006

Understanding Educational Mobility: An In-depth Analysis of Higher Education Migration Among Tribal Students in Ladakh

• **Bashir Ahmad**[1] • **Geeta Rai**[2]

Abstract

Migration and its processes are not new phenomena. It is a product of both nature and human activities. Recently, student migration has been a topic of discussion among educationists and social scientists, impacting the region from which students migrate, either temporarily or permanently. The present study attempts to understand why students migrate from Ladakh and what causes such movements. For this purpose, a descriptive study was conducted on 240 college-going students who were seeking admission to other cities to pursue advanced higher education degrees. The 'Lee Theory of Migration' was used as a theoretical framework, and the findings suggest that issues such as the unavailability of higher education institutions within students' vicinity, along with harsh terrain and inadequate human and material resources, such as no heating facilities in college during extreme temperatures, are contributing factors leading to migration.

Keywords: *higher education, student migration, regional disparity, Ladakh.*

Introduction and Rationale

Migration has been a subject of study for social scientists (Cwerner, 2001), traditionally understood as human movement driven by natural factors such as famine, plagues, and other catastrophes (Thomson, 1999; King, 2012). Over the years, non-natural factors have increasingly influenced migration, with people relocating for better opportunities and an improved lifestyle. Among these man-made reasons, access to education (Dustmann & Glitz, 2011; Smith et al., 2014) has emerged as a significant driver, prompting individuals to move from their hometowns to areas with quality educational facilities. This trend has risen sharply (Brezis & Soueri, 2011), with growth rates doubling in certain regions. In India, large disparities in the

[1]PhD Research Scholar, Room No 115, Department of Education, Chattra Marg, Near Vishwavidyalaya Metro Station, Delhi University North Campus, Delhi-110007. ✉ bahmad@cie.du.ac.in
[2]Assistant Professor, Room No 115, Department of Education, Chattra Marg, Near Vishwavidyalaya Metro Station, Delhi University North Campus, Delhi-110007. ✉ dr.geetarai@gmail.com

distribution of higher education institutions are one of the main causes of student migration (Varghese & Panigrahi, 2019). Certain states and union territories also face multi-layered marginalisation in accessing higher education, furthering this disparity.

This study focuses on Ladakh, a relatively newly formed Union Territory that has long struggled with disconnected curricula and the quality of education (Suri, 2016; Goswami, 1999; Norberg, 1991). The formal education system in Ladakh began expanding only in the 1990s, following government initiatives to establish primary schools in remote villages. However, Norberg (1991) and Rizvi (1999) highlight that language barriers and unsuitable curricula designed by outsiders posed significant challenges. English and Urdu, being foreign languages for Ladakhi children, made it difficult for them to grasp the content. Consequently, 95 per cent of students failed the Class X board examinations (Rehman, 2013). Through community initiatives like *Operation New Hope* (Dawa, 2007) and the efforts of the *Mutahhary Educational Society* (Gupta, 2023), along with policy interventions in both Leh and Kargil districts, significant improvements were observed in board examination results. This led to the pass percentage increasing from 5 per cent in 1998 to 50 per cent in 2005 (Ranganathan et al., 2017). As the number of secondary students grew, the demand for higher education in Ladakh surged abruptly. This resulted in a 90 per cent increase in migration patterns among students seeking quality higher education (Wangchuk, 2019; Ahmad, 2018).

The objective of this study is to highlight to policymakers and stakeholders in Ladakh the importance of reforming the current higher education system to tackle the issue of student migration, retain talent and combat the ageing population.

Theoretical Framework

The literature synthesis suggests that migration is not a modern phenomenon but has existed since time immemorial. However, the nature and intensity of migration have changed across different periods. This is the reason that, at the end of the 19th century, Ravenstein (1885) identified eight laws of migration that later became a framework and foundation for scholars who explored and studied migration behaviours. Educational migration then became a subject of study among social scientists as it emerged as a new form of migration that intensified largely in the 20th century and is now observed across the globe.

Ever since globalisation and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) came into force, flexible and favourable policies have further increased the number

of student migrants across continents (Arar, 2021). However, there is a significant gap between international and intra-national migration patterns in theoretical understanding. For example, Riaño and Piguet (2016) suggest that the theories of migration pertaining to students in the international context have been primarily formulated by British scholars who focused on the context of the United Kingdom (UK). This raises questions about the empirical validity of these theories outside the UK, increasing the complexity of understanding student mobility in the international context.

Meanwhile, the theorisation of interstate migration further becomes complex due to its multidimensional methodology. For instance, Prafula and Jadhav (2016) state that students migrate to upgrade their skills in advanced cities. Similarly, the rise of middle-income families and the availability of education loans are identified as factors by Pande & Yan (2016). Mistri and Sardar (2022) inform that the number of internal student migrants is 5.5 million in India. However, the nature of these migrations differs significantly. Chandrasekhar and Sharma (2014) report that some students migrate within districts, some within states, and others across states. Such diversity in student mobility makes it difficult for the state to maintain empirical data on all these migrating students, further intensifying the challenges for social scientists in framing a concrete framework or theory to understand the migratory phenomenon. Based on this understanding among the various frameworks and theories proposed by scholars to understand migration, the present study adopts Lee's (1966) 'push-pull theory'. This theory provides a structural framework for examining the economic, social, and natural factors that motivate individuals to migrate from or return to urban areas. It is comprehensive, offering multiple dimensions for analysing migration and its underlying factors. For example, the theory identifies key parameters such as factors associated with the place of origin and destination, intervening obstacles, and personal factors. These serve as potential variables for understanding the complexities of migration.

The present study aims to explore the motivations behind the migration of students by analysing the relationship between the place of origin and destination. It will specifically highlight factors that push students to migrate to other cities. These include deficiencies in infrastructure, inadequate human resources in the colleges in which they are enrolled, physiographical impacts, and other challenges at the point of origin that act as triggers for migration. Thus, the study utilises Lee's (1966) theoretical framework to investigate the dynamics of student migration. The rationale and concepts outlined in the push-pull theory have been applied to trace and construct the factors influencing student migration in the present research context.

Research Methodology

To conduct the study, the researchers adopted a descriptive research design. As the primary focus was on individuals intending to migrate outside Ladakh for higher studies, observing and interacting with them in their natural setting was essential. This approach aligns with the theoretical understanding of tracing populations within their natural environments to obtain first-hand information from respondents.

Additionally, a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) was employed to collect and analyse data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The total sample size was 262, comprising 240 students, 8 parents, 10 teachers, and 4 college principals. The samples were selected using the 'convenience sampling' technique to address the research questions effectively. The sampling technique 'convenience' was employed due to the high absence of students in the colleges as a result of harsh weather conditions during data collection.

To gather data, the researchers administered a questionnaire that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions for students, an interview schedule for administrators and parents, and an information schedule to collect the human and material status of the colleges. These tools ensured the collection of diverse and relevant data, allowing the study to capture a holistic view of the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Results and Discussions

The data highlights that Ladakh currently has six undergraduate colleges, of which four are operational, while two remain non-functional despite being announced in 2018. The colleges located in urban areas, specifically in Leh and Kargil districts, were established in 1994 and 1995, respectively. The rural colleges, situated in Zanskar and Nubra, were established later, in 2011.

The colleges located in urban areas offer a range of undergraduate courses, including Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc), and Bachelor of Commerce (BCom). In contrast, those in rural areas offer only a Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme, indicating a disparity in academic opportunities between urban and rural areas.

During field visits, students expressed frustration over the lack of a dedicated university in the region. In 2018, the state government announced the establishment

of a cluster university for Ladakh. However, the existing colleges fail to meet several basic eligibility criteria required to form a cluster university, particularly under Component 2 and Sub-criterion 2.0 of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

At present, all colleges in Ladakh are affiliated with the University of Kashmir, which has introduced additional challenges. Frequent civil unrest in the Kashmir Valley often disrupts academic schedules, delaying the timely completion of courses. This was mentioned by one of the college principals, who shared his concerns about the impact of such disruptions on students' academic progress and overall morale.

"The affiliation with the University of Kashmir and their insensitivity towards far-flung colleges of Ladakh kills the motivation of students."

-Personal interaction

The statement reflects the fragile ecosystem of higher education in Ladakh. It highlights the numerous challenges faced by higher education in the region, particularly the administrative disconnect. Being geographically distant from Kashmir, Ladakh experiences delays in resolving disputes or addressing challenges in higher education due to the absence of university officials in the area. These logistical challenges disrupt the smooth functioning of colleges in Ladakh. Additionally, the statement underscores the failure of the University of Kashmir to develop an academic framework that meets the specific needs of colleges situated in far-flung and inaccessible areas.

The statement also points to the insensitivity of the host university, which has not provided adequate services or taken proactive measures to address the pressing issues faced by students and teachers. This neglect fosters feelings of marginalisation and disengagement among the students.

The systemic failure of higher education explains the strong demand for a dedicated university in Ladakh. Studies further reveal that the absence of local higher education institutions often forces students out of the system (Rai, 2022). In areas heavily dependent on government institutions, this results in lower gross enrolment rates and reduced participation in higher education (Varghese & Panigrahi, 2019). Despite these administrative failures, the aspiration for further studies is high among the students, as depicted in Fig. 1.

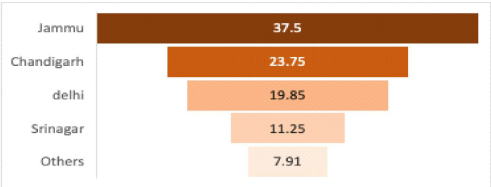
Fig. 1. Percentage of Students who would like to seek further education.

Source: Field Visit in Ladakh

The data reveal that, despite challenges, a significant majority (79.50 per cent) of students across all colleges in Ladakh expressed a willingness to continue their education. Notably, in the Kargil district, the highest percentage of students (86.50 per cent) indicated their intention to pursue further studies, compared to 72.50 per cent in the Leh district. However, a significant shift is observed in Degree College Nubra, where only 60 per cent of students expressed interest in further education, while 40 per cent showed disinterest. It is interesting to note that these students have no option to continue their higher education within Ladakh. This compels them to migrate to other cities in India or abroad, as the region lacks institutions offering educational opportunities beyond graduation. According to Lee's theory, every location is characterised by a combination of positive and negative factors that influence migration decisions. In this context, the lack of advanced educational institutions in Ladakh acts as a significant negative factor, driving students to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Additionally, the researchers investigated the destination preferences of migrating students. The findings underline how the absence of local higher education infrastructure not only limits educational aspirations but also perpetuates a cycle of migration for academic and professional advancement. The following figure (Fig. 2) depicts the trends and preferences of students who intend to migrate and the cities they prefer as migration destinations.

Fig. 2. Preference given for migration.



Source: Field Visit in Ladakh

The selection of migration locations aligns with the challenges highlighted in the previous analysis. Among the cities, the sister region of Ladakh, Jammu, is chosen by the majority of students (37.50 per cent). The choice of city is not random; rather, it is influenced by the students' prior experiences and available information about the location. In this context, Smith & Gergan (2015) suggest that many Ladakhi students prefer Jammu due to its proximity to Ladakh. Moreover, given Ladakh's harsh winters, several families migrate temporarily to Jammu during the cold season, making the city a familiar and accessible destination for students.

Prior knowledge and connections significantly influence the selection process, as illustrated by a student's narration during a personal interaction:

"Most of my friends are in Jammu. They are studying in different universities, and I have visited Jammu twice. I found it safer, and the locals maintain good relationships with Ladakhis."

Personal interaction

This analysis indicates that peer networks and earlier exposure to potential destinations influence migration decisions. Following Jammu, the other preferred cities are Chandigarh (23.75 per cent), Delhi (19.85 per cent), Srinagar (11.25 per cent), and other states and Union Territories (7.91 per cent). It is noteworthy that despite being geographically closest to Ladakh, Srinagar ranks fourth among the preferred migration destinations. This is linked to the civil unrest, academic disruptions, and disturbances in the valley, which demotivate students from seeking admission to universities affiliated with the University of Kashmir. Additionally, students' dissatisfaction with the University of Kashmir further deters them from choosing Srinagar.

The analysis reveals that factors such as accessibility, quality of education, socio-economic conditions, and past experiences heavily influence migration choices. These findings align with Lee's migration theory, which emphasises the role of "push factors", such as the lack of local opportunities, in driving migration. The absence of higher educational institutions in Ladakh serves as a critical push factor, compelling students to seek education in other regions.

Limited Courses to Study

Both colleges situated in urban areas offer three undergraduate courses, whereas only one undergraduate course is offered in the colleges located in rural areas. This further intensifies the absence of professional and technical courses within Ladakh.

All these factors are major reasons for pushing students outside Ladakh for better course opportunities. The following figure indicates the percentage of students who are satisfied and dissatisfied with the courses offered in their respective colleges.

Fig. 3. Percentage of Students showing satisfaction/dissatisfaction with courses.

Source: Field Visit in Ladakh

The figure reveals that students in GDC Kargil were highly satisfied, with 70 per cent expressing satisfaction, while the least satisfied respondents were respondents from GDC Nubra. It further indicates that satisfaction decreases progressively from GDC Kargil to GDC Nubra, while dissatisfaction shows the opposite trend. The data suggests that GDC Zanskar and GDC Nubra need to evaluate their courses or other contributing factors to address the high levels of dissatisfaction.

In addition to limited course options, the distance of colleges from far-flung areas has been identified as another major factor driving migration. Students from Drass and Suru Valley have to cover 100-120 kilometres (to and fro) daily to reach the nearest college. Moreover, the hefty transportation fares and the absence of a subsidised transport system further discourage students and parents from choosing colleges within Ladakh.

Mismanagement of the affiliated University

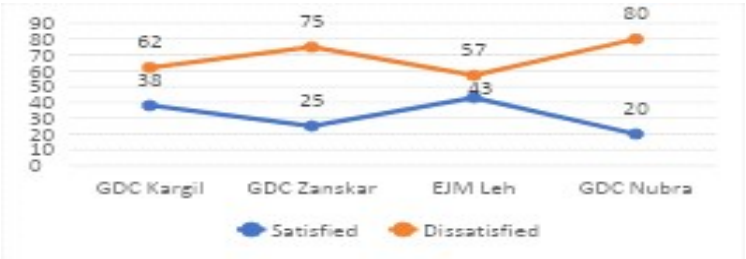
The colleges in Ladakh are affiliated with the University of Kashmir, which is located 225 km from Kargil, 423 km from Leh, 448 km from Zanskar, and 582 km from Nubra. The university remains inaccessible to the colleges in Ladakh during the entire winter. Moreover, due to negligence, students face several serious issues related to their academic degrees and examinations. Moreover, the absence of proper management and autonomy in the colleges further complicates the process, as every single dispute arising in the colleges needs to be resolved in Kashmir. This mismanagement and casual attitude of the university are summarised by a student in these words

"We raised our concerns genuinely many times regarding delays in the exam and result process with the college authority, but they were unable to solve our problems... I want to suggest to all my friends not to be admitted to the colleges of Ladakh; it spoils both time and energy."

Personal Interaction

This statement reflects a student's deep frustration and dissatisfaction with the academic and administrative inefficiencies in Ladakh's colleges. The narration is further supported by empirical evidence, as the following figure shows the attitude of students regarding the functioning and management.

Fig. 4: Attitude towards the affiliated University.



Source: Field Visit in Ladakh

The above figure details students' satisfaction levels versus dissatisfaction regarding the affiliated university's functioning. Figure 4 highlights that dissatisfaction rates are alarmingly high across all colleges, with Nubra (80 per cent) and Zanskar (75 per cent) being the most affected. The reasons for dissatisfaction vary, including feelings of resentment and exhaustion with the university's management system, as reflected in the narration given above.

The data reveals systemic issues in the university's functioning, leaving students disillusioned. Addressing management inefficiencies and student grievances is critical to restoring trust and ensuring better academic and professional outcomes for Ladakh's students.

Topographical features of the region

Ladakh is an arid and harsh region, landlocked with the highest and mightiest mountains of the Himalayan and Zanskar ranges. This creates a hurdle in making

Ladakh accessible to all year-round by road. This is the reason why Ladakh remains cut off from the rest of the world for more than 3 to 4 months in winter. Heavy snow causes the motorable roads to be closed at Zojila, and all road communications are severed.

Although the enrolment of students at Degree College, Kargil, showed 2,337 students across different courses, during the field visit, less than 50 per cent of students were present in their classes. Technically, the colleges in Ladakh remain closed for only two months in winter (January and February), but after September, most students prefer to attend coaching in other parts of the country instead of attending college due to the harsh winter and unbearable cold. They prefer to return only after winter, as the winter season is the most challenging period for both students and teachers. Commenting on the difficulties posed by the weather, a college teacher remarked:

"The cold weather and the unavailability of any heating arrangement in winter are the biggest challenges I have faced to date."

Personal Interaction

During the data collection process, it was observed that villages in distant valleys and barren mountains remain cut off from the district headquarters. Only villages within a 40-kilometre radius remain connected to the district headquarters. The temperature drops to below -35°C to -40°C. Ladakh is also known as the home of the world's second coldest inhabited place (Ahmad, 2018). A parent recorded his response as follows:

"Winter is the most challenging period for Ladakhis as most of the livelihood stocks stored during summer finish during the winter season..." Further adding to his conversation, he lamented the tyranny of the harsh season… "Since winter lasts from October to March, half of the year in Ladakh is experienced as winter."

Personal Interaction

The majority of students reported that the harsh cold weather severely affects their studies. Those who can afford the expenses of coaching send their children outside the region for winter coaching classes, while the financially weaker sections suffer.

A similar statement was given by the college Principal:

"The months from December to the end of February are too cold for the study environment. Many times, we cancelled summer vacations to compensate for the

lost time. We are considering increasing the working hours from 6 hours daily to 7 hours and 30 minutes. To boost enrolment, hostel facilities for both boys and girls with maximum amenities could help."

Personal Interaction

Based on the interviews, it can be stated that the harsh cold weather during winter and the problems faced by the people of Ladakh are unimaginable. Such extreme weather, with temperatures as low as -30°C, makes it difficult for students to attend classes, especially when there is no heating arrangement. These factors are a strong reason for student migration from Ladakh to other parts of India.

Conclusion

Students in Ladakh face several challenges, primarily due to the region's geographical, academic, administrative, and climatic factors. The absence of a local university, along with difficulties arising from affiliation with the University of Kashmir, has caused significant dissatisfaction among students. Harsh winters, coupled with a lack of heating facilities in the classrooms, make studying during the colder months extremely difficult, prompting many students to seek education elsewhere. Additionally, rural colleges offer limited course options, and the disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of educational infrastructure further pushes students out of Ladakh. The inefficient management of colleges only adds to this frustration. As a result, many students migrate to cities like Jammu, Chandigarh, and Delhi for better educational opportunities. These ongoing issues make it clear that policymakers and stakeholders need to reform Ladakh's higher education system to support its students effectively, to retain talent and prevent students from migrating out of Ladakh to tackle the ageing population.

References

Ahmad, B. (2018, December 25). Cluster University for Ladakh: A romanticized decision. *Voice of Ladakh*, p. 9. http://voiceofladakh.blogspot.com

Arar, K., Kondakci, Y., Streitwieser, B., & Saiti, A. (2021). *Higher education in the era of migration, displacement and internationalization*. Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780429345180

Brezis, E., & Soueri, A. (2011). *Why do Students Migrate? Where do they Migrate to?* (No. 25).

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2005). Mixed methods research: Developments, debates, and dilemmas. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton III (Eds.), *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry* (pp. 315–326). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Cwerner, S. B. (2001). The times of migration. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, *27*(1), 7-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830125283

Dawa, S. (2007). Building a culture of peace in Ladakh. *Peace Review*, *19*(3), 427-434. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402650701525045

Dustmann, C., & Glitz, A. (2011). Migration and education. In E. A. Hanushek, S. Machin, & L. Woessmann (Eds.), *Handbook of the economics of education* (Vol. 4, pp. 327–439). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-444-53444-6.00004-3

Goswami, D. (1999). *An ethnographic study of a government school in Leh* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi.

Gupta, R. (2023). *Freedom in Captivity. Negotiations of Belonging along Kashmir's Frontier.* Cambridge University Press.

King, R. (2012). Geography and migration studies: Retrospect and Prospect. *Population, Space and Place*, *18*(2), 134-153. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.685

Lee, E. S. (1966). A Theory of Migration. *Demography*, *3*(1), 47–57. https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063

Mistri, A., & Sardar, S. S. (2022). Student Migration from North-East India: Level, Trend, Pattern and Challenges. *Demography India*, *51*(1), 40-62.

Norberg-Hodge, H. (1991). *Ancient futures: learning from Ladakh*. (Ist ed). Random publishing house.

Pande, A., & Yan, Y. (2016). Migration of students from India and China: A comparative view. *South Asian Survey*, *23*(1), 69-92. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971523118764971

Prafula Sr, J. C., & Jadhav, R. K. (2016). Migration and immigration of students in Karnataka. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, *5*(11), 61-74.

Rai, G. (2022). Barriers in Higher Education in Ladakh. *Education India Journal: A Quarterly Refereed Journal of Dialogues on Education*. *11(3).*

Ranganathan, R., Pongener, Y., & Kancharla, R. (2017). SECMOL (A): Envisioning Radical Change in Ladakh. *Indian Institute of Management Bangalore -WP N0. 558.*

Ravenstein, E. G. (1885). The laws of migration. *Royal Statistical Society*. 167–227

Rehman, S. (2013). *Contemporary Ladakh: Evolving indigenous & quality education* (pp. 1–8). Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS). https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/168064/IB236-LadakhFiles-Samina-Education.pdf

Riaño, Y., & Piguet, E. (2016). International student migration. In B. Warf (Ed.), *Oxford bibliographies in geography* (pp. 1–24). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199874002-0141

Rizvi, J. (1999). *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Smith, D. P., Rérat, P., & Sage, J. (2014). Youth migration and spaces of education. *Children's Geographies*, *12*(1), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2013.871801

Smith, S. H., & Gergan, M. (2015). The diaspora within: Himalayan youth, education-driven migration, and future aspirations in India. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *33*(1), 119-135. https://doi.org/10.1068/d13152p

Suri, K. (2016, September 10). Educational Challenges in Leh, *Daily Excelsior,* https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/educational-challenges-in-leh/

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2003). Major issues and controversies in the use of mixed methods in the social and behavioral sciences. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 13–50). SAGE Publications.

Thomson, A. (1999). Moving stories: oral history and migration studies. *Oral History*, *27*(1), 24-37. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40179591

Varghese, N., & Panigrahi, J. (2019). Concentration of Institutions and Urban Bias in India. *International Higher Education, 99,* 20-21. https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.99.11661

Wangchuk, N. R. (2019, February 6). Ladakh's first university: How this will be a game changer for Ladakhi students. *The Better India*. https://thebetterindia.com/171690/ladakh-first-university-education-degree/

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 143-154
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00011.5
ISSN 0019-5006

Role of Environment in Adult Learning: Understanding Interactions within the Nested Social System

• **Fouzia Khursheed Ahmad**[1]

Abstract

Development is a broad phenomenon, serving the dual purpose of the evolution of the individual within society and the consequent transformation of the society of which they are a part. 'Development' in an individual implies certain positive changes in different domains that lead to qualitative reorganisations in the structure of their behaviour, skills or abilities, which eventually serve in shaping the collective landscape. Since adult learners fall into different groups depending upon their age, experience, occupation, socio-cultural situation, aspirations and their individual differences, these differences naturally affect their learning needs and, in turn, their choice of learning programmes. The learning environment, therefore, has a significant role in adult learning in potentially influencing their motivation to learn, engagement, and the overall learning outcomes. It is hence crucial to understand the nested social system in which adult learners operate in order to design effective learning experiences. The present paper examines and discusses how the multiple environmental contexts (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) interact to shape adult learning experiences and outcomes.

Keywords: *adult learning, development, learning needs, learning experiences, teaching-learning process, social system.*

Introduction

Education has a significant role in enriching the development of an individual, and being literate has significantly proved to be the currency to a better quality of life. While on one hand, education helps in widening the consciousness to help one realise their inherent potential for self-development and empowerment and exploring the multiple points of view and the larger good beyond personal ambition

[1]Faculty, Department of Adult and Continuing Education & Extension (DACEE), Jamia Millia Islamia Central University, New Delhi – 110025. ✉ fouziajnu.research@gmail.com

to work harmoniously for the transformation of the society; on the other hand, it concerns training the mind and equipping it with the requisite skills to eventually contribute positively to the development of the society. Both the interlinked dimensions can together synergise the development of the 'individual' within society and eventually the 'society' that they are part of. Since adult learners fall into different groups depending upon their age, experience, occupations, socio-cultural situation, aspirations and their individual differences, these differences therefore naturally affect their learning needs and, in turn, their choice of learning programmes (National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education: Report of the Expert Committee, 2011). Acknowledging the individual learning needs in the implementation of adult education programmes as the key to transformation can therefore help in transforming the mind and removing obstacles that prevent the resolution of conflicts during the change process, so that education, which is embedded in a socio-cultural context, can be imparted and its quality raised through cooperation and suitable linkages. This eventually can help in creating an ecosystem with equitable access to meaningful learning experiences that raise the consciousness for sustainable development in a diverse society.

Adult Learning and Development (*Concept and Context)*

Development is a broad phenomenon, serving the dual purpose of the evolution of the individual in society and the consequent transformation of the society that they are part of. 'Development' in an individual implies certain positive changes in different domains: the biological changes *(changes in body/physical being)*, social changes *(social ties/relationships and affiliations)*, emotional changes *(self-concept, emotional understanding and experiences)*, and cognitive changes *(changes in the thought processes) that* lead to qualitative reorganisations in the structure of their behaviour, skills or abilities, which eventually serve in shaping the collective landscape (Ahmad, 2024; Crain, 2000). Adult development can therefore be holistically understood as being biological, contextual, social, and systematic, wherein these aspects together contribute to the overall development process.

Learning is an ongoing process, where an individual continues to learn and develop (Ahmad 2024, 2021, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2014; Ahmad and Paul, 2017; Baltes, 1987; Lemme, 2006), advancing and declining in different psychological and social aspects, at different points of time, depending upon the interplay of various life situations and the many factors present in the 'layers' of their environment. During the course of evolution and the various stages in human development, individuals are structured and shaped by biological processes that result in growth

and aging, wherein their brain's cognitive abilities and their psychological self-concept are detrimental to the roles they take and the opportunities they avail or are denied, including the beliefs and expectations about whether they have the ability to successfully complete or accomplish a particular task (Ahmad 2024, 2021, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2014; Lemme, 2006).

Adult development being 'contextual'; individuals continuously influence and are influenced by their immediate environment as active participants in the development of themselves and of the environment that they are part of. In the process, their behaviour is guided, shaped, and propelled and also often confined by a number of factors, like their awareness, perception, life experiences, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and religion, besides others, in how they interact with the world and how they are influenced by it as a result of the interaction. It is widely acknowledged that it is difficult to break loose from one's social address and one's status groupings, and if one does, despite individual initiative, initiatives are constructed within the structures of the resources available (Hendricks and Hatch, 2008). Since humans are inherently 'social', there is an innate human need and tendency in individuals to affiliate and form critical dyads which influence them and change over time in the constant interplay of their relationships with family, friends, co-workers, neighbours, and ethnic or religious group members who promote or detract from their well-being and sense of self. Individuals, as social beings, are continuously shaped by the relationships they develop with those around them, and since relationships 'do not exist in isolation' but are 'embedded in and influenced by various layers of the environment' (Lemme, 2006), they also, in turn, are influenced by the context in which they take place. These 'systematic' and contextual influences on individuals in the course of their development can be understood within the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986), which offers a unified view of human development that accounts for the biological, contextual, and social forces underlying adult development, through a four-level system of nested 'microsystems' – the activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing individual in a given setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Within a systems approach to development, the developing individual is viewed as a growing, dynamic entity moving progressively into and restructuring the milieu in which it resides, while there is also considerable influence from the environment that calls for mutual accommodation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The contextual influences of a single setting in this way are linked through interconnections to other settings and to influences from the larger environment of shared values, laws, or customs, and the different levels in the system act with

greater or lesser influence at different points of time. Although the process is subject to great variability across individuals depending upon their individual differences and different life situations, during the course of development, as individuals develop and pass through various stages across the lifespan, they are known to be confronted with similar life challenges.

The ecological systems theory encompasses these contextual interactions between individuals and their environment into a model that views these influences as 'ongoing' and 'transactional' such that changes at one level can influence other levels. As a result, in an ecosystem, "identities can change across contexts, vary within a family system, and change throughout the life course" of an individual (Renn, 2003; Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2002; Root, 1998), affecting their life experience and their quality of life (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005).

Within environmental contexts, families, extended families, friends, neighbourhoods, and learning situations may have a great impact on the development of an individual, especially on their mental health, self-esteem, academic performance, and risk behaviours (Ahmad, 2015a, 2015c, 2015e); while in a developing community, influence from peers and friends is known to be a significant factor that either enhances or hinders the growth of a secured 'mixed-race identity' (Ahmad, 2015c, 2024). While racism and discrimination and the adaptive culture context may synergistically impact family and ultimately the development of individuals (Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2004), particularly from minority communities within their social environment, such as neighbourhoods and educational settings (Ahmad, 2015e; Garcia et al., 1996), a supportive family and experience with peers from diverse communities and mixed races can significantly mitigate the effects of marginalisation (Root, 1990). Moreover, social support from family and exposure to diversity have been found to have a great influence on an individual's choice in identifying themselves "as part of the minority or majority group" (Poston, 1990; Root, 2003); and the resolution of multiple heritages and various identity choices, including inherited influences (e.g., phenotype, language, and name), traits (e.g., social and coping skills and temperament), and social interactions inside the community (e.g., school/work, peers, and community) (Root, 1999, 2003), cannot be understood without considering family and community influences, socio-historical factors, and the political context (Root, 1992).

The different environments and the structure within the environments, hence, do not have an influence on the development of an individual independently (Bronfenbrenner and Crouter, 1983), but instead, there exists a consistent interaction between the environments and structures that have an influence on the development

of the individual (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998). This implies that in understanding the contextual effects on an individual in a system, it is essential to consider the entire ecological system in which development takes place as well as the proximal processes within the interconnected systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998, 2006); since, for development to occur, an individual must engage in an activity that continues long enough to become increasingly more complex in place of mere repetition.

The developmentally effective proximal processes require that they are not unidirectional but should have influence in both directions, with "some degree of reciprocity" in the exchange. The 'proximal processes' should essentially not be confined only to interactions with people but may also involve interaction with objects and symbols in the immediate environment, which should be such that they invite attention to explore, manipulate, elaborate, and imagine for the reciprocal interaction to take place (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). This understanding of adult learning processes within the learning setup and within the community as a result of these interactions essentially requires the learning support, therefore, be implemented at different levels for adult learning to be effective since the outcome of the support implemented is dependent on the interaction between 'learners' and the 'context' they are exposed to and the 'processes' that underlie the interaction. Also, the perception of educators regarding the adult learners (including those experiencing certain barriers to learning) and their eventual provision of support to these learners may influence the individual development of the learners.

Adult Learner and the Environment (*Understanding interactions within the nested social system)*

Considering education, according to the ecological systems theory, an individual (adult learner) exists within layers of social relationships, including the educator *(microsystem)*, the learning environment *(mesosystem)*, family (parents, peers, or colleagues) *(exosystem)* and culture and society *(macrosystem)*; these help support and guide individual growth. The 'microsystem' constitutes the relationship between a developing individual and their immediate environment, like the learning setup and the family, whereas the 'macrosystem' implies institutional patterns of culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In situations where the learners' prior learning experiences, especially negative learning experiences that could have led to their eventual dropout, can further add to the complexity of the issue and may be detrimental to their further choice in learning, they should hence be seen within this 'nested' social system.

The 'microsystem', which includes the immediate environment of the developing individual, including their immediate family, learning setup, and peer group, is considered to be the most important level since the majority of the proximal processes that shape development occur at this level (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

The larger the microsystem with more enduring relationships, the more enhanced will be an individual's development in a positive way (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), since caring relationships between an individual and parents or other close carers are known to help promote healthy personality development in individuals into adulthood (Swick, 2004). The microsystem, therefore, serves as a blueprint of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by a developing individual in a given context or setting with particular physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and can be understood as:

"A pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Since an educational setting is not a world existing in isolation but a 'microcosm' that is a part of a 'macrocosm' (Passasung, 2003), adult learners coming to the learning centre are therefore also members of a wider community outside the learning set-up, besides being members of a learning community, simultaneously.

The 'classroom behaviours' of adult learners may hence be affected by the wider community's culture. Also, as a result, in the teaching-learning process, the adult learners and also the educators may transfer some of their experiences from the wider outside classroom context into the new context, that is, the classroom (Ahmad, 2024, 2015e; De Corte, 1999). This implies the understanding of the classroom culture, within its wider cultural context, underlying the social discourse in adult education; that is, understanding the classroom as a part of the wider world and the classroom as a world of its own.

In an adult learning centre, considering the classroom context, there are other aspects in addition to the physical infrastructure that contribute to the classroom culture – the adult learners, the adult educators, the content/subject matter, and the methodology for instructional delivery (Ahmad 2015d). Within the relationship established in the classroom interactions, between the classroom context and the

wider context, the adult learners as well as the educators both enter the learning setup with certain 'attached social identities' (Ahmad, 2024; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Katz, 1996). While the educator, in the microsystem, may be influenced by their knowledge and competence, training, and classroom experiences, the adult learners are members of the 'classroom community' as well as the wider community simultaneously; it is likely that their classroom behaviour may be affected by the culture of the wider community. Understanding a classroom culture in its wider cultural context is imperative, since aspects of the macro-culture of a society are observed to impinge upon classroom culture (Ahmad, 2015e; Ahmad and Paul 2017; Coleman, 1987; Nunan, 1996; Shamim, 1996; Passasung, 2003); although not much is known of "what happens between people in the classroom" or also for the wide range of social settings in education (Canagarajah, 2001; Chick, 2001; Holliday, 1994).

The interactions taking place in the learning setup are very much a reflection of the concept of education that a particular society holds, and the way a teacher teaches, and a learner learns is influenced by a conventional agreement between learners and teachers and their beliefs, which are derived from the wider society's concept about teaching and learning interactions. While different societies may hold different views on what learners and educators are "expected to do in a lesson or the learning" (Coleman, 1996), this may affect the classroom processes (Ahmad, 2015e).

The 'mesosystem', being a system of microsystems, consists of the linkages and processes occurring between two or more settings, including the individual learner, such as the relations between home and educational setting and the educational setting and workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Since the interpersonal interactions between a number of overlapping ecosystems impact a developing individual significantly (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), the most crucial influence of mesosystems is that they help connect two or more systems in the context in which the developing individual 'actively participates' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

In a learning situation, the educator comes in contact with adult learners in the learning setup, including the learners who have experienced certain barriers to learning in their individual life situations and prior learning experiences, and a teaching-learning relationship is established in the learning environment. While the effective management of the learning setup is known to promote a feeling of mastery and achievement with regards to teaching and learning (Ahmad, 2024, 2015b, 2015c,

2015d; 2014), lack of support can result in inefficient support provision in addressing individual learning needs and the barriers to learning affecting participation (Ahmad 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e; Ahmad and Paul 2017). In the 'exosystem', two or more settings interact and do not necessarily involve the individual directly, but the individual is affected by what happens within the settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therein, the institutional head, peers, colleagues, and parents or significant others can influence the micro- and mesosystems, where institutional support to educators in terms of in-service training, assistance through support staff to minimise their workload, and opportunities for professional development can have a positive influence on the meso- and microsystems, while parental involvement of learners or inclusion of a support system can help ensure support strategies are monitored and extended even beyond the learning setup into the learners' significant reach to minimise barriers and promote effective learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The 'macrosystem' that is the larger cultural context in the system includes issues of cultural values and expectations that have been put in place through social institutions, including the community, wherein changes occurring at one level may have a potential effect on the entire system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). It can therefore be understood as 'the overarching ideology' that underlies the form and content of interactions within more proximal settings (Ahmad, 2015e; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

The 'chronosystem', the fifth sub-system, which implies the change or consistency over time, concerns not only in the characteristics of the developing individual but also of the environment that the individual is part of, such as the "changes over the life course in the family structure, the place of residence, the socio-economic status" or the status of employment, cross-generation relationships, "or the degree of an individual's ability in handling their everyday life situations" (Ahmad 2024, 2015e; Ahmad and Paul 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).

Environmental changes across historical time are known to potentially produce significant developmental changes in either direction; where, on one hand, they can disrupt the timing and duration of normative transitions during the life course of an individual, thus interrupting the sequence of learning experiences that are essential for meeting societal expectations as an individual gets older; on the other hand, they can offer an individual a more stable and more challenging opportunity for psychological growth or even reverse a previously downward course.

The role of the environment in adult learning can hence be seen as being multifaceted, encompassing social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. To foster

an inclusive and effective learning environment, it is therefore essential to understand how these factors, including the physical learning space and interactions, influence the learning experience and outcomes for adult learners. In understanding adult learning, it is therefore essential to understand the entire system in which it takes place. Since adult learners often bring their experiences and a sense of purpose to learning, it is crucial to ensure a stimulating and motivating environment that caters to their individual needs. Understanding the interconnectedness between the different sub-systems, including the processes and the interaction between an individual's development and the systems within their social context, can help support all learners and effectively address the potential barriers in learning. Promoting effective participation in adult learning, therefore, requires an understanding of the classroom processes, the learning setup, and families as being 'systems' in themselves, which in the course of their development can have a positive or negative impact on the academic experiences and achievement of adult learners.

References

Ahmad, F. K. (2024). *An exploratory study on the learning strategies and use of audio-visual aids in adult education in Delhi* (Doctoral dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University).

Ahmad, F. K. (2021). Assistive technology. In A. Hynds (Ed.), *Oxford bibliographies in education*. Oxford University Press.

Ahmad, F. K., & Paul, M. C. (2017). Learning strategies and audio-visual aids used in adult education in India: A historical overview. *Transcience: A Journal of Global Studies, 8*(2), 11–39.

Ahmad, F. K. (2015a). Exploring the invisible: Issues in identification and assessment of students with learning disabilities in India. *Transcience: A Journal of Global Studies, 6*(1), 91–107.

Ahmad, F. K. (2015b). Use of assistive technology in inclusive education: Making room for diverse learning needs. *Transcience: A Journal of Global Studies, 6*(2), 62–77.

Ahmad, F. K. (2015c). Challenging exclusion: Issues and concerns in inclusive education in India. *Researchpaedia, 2*(1), 15–32.

Ahmad, F. K. (2015d). Teaching strategies and effective educational interventions for students with learning disabilities. *Transcendence, 1*(1), 45–66.

Ahmad, F. K. (2015e). Gender inequality in education in the scheduled castes. In D. Karbhari & L. Kumar (Eds.), *Status of scheduled castes' higher education in India* (pp. 71–94). Shree Parasmani Publication.

Ahmad, F. K. (2014). Assistive provisions for the education of students with learning disabilities in Delhi schools. *International Journal of Fundamental and Applied Research, 2*(9), 9–16.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology* (pp. 993–1028). Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). Developmental ecology through space and time: A future perspective. In P. Moen & G. H. Elder Jr. (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (pp. 619–647). American Psychological Association.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In T. Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 1643–1647). Elsevier.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology, 22*, 723–742.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Crouter, A. C. (1983). The evolution of environmental models in developmental research. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (4th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 357–414). Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology* (pp. 793–828). Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 1). Wiley.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2001). Critical ethnography of a Sri Lankan classroom: Ambiguities in student opposition to reproduction through ESOL. In C. N. Candlin & N. Mercer (Eds.), *English language teaching in its social context: A reader* (pp. 208–226). Routledge.

Chick, J. K. (2001). Safe-talk: Collusion in apartheid education. In C. N. Candlin & N. Mercer (Eds.), *English language teaching in its social context: A reader*. Routledge.

Coleman, H. (1987). Teaching spectacles and learning festivals. *ELT Journal, 41*(2), 97–103.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1996). Cultures of learning: Language classroom in China. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the language classroom* (pp. 169–204). Cambridge University Press.

Crain, W. (2000). *Theories of development: Concepts and applications* (6th ed.). Prentice Hall.

De Corte, E. (1999). On the road to transfer: An introduction. *International Journal of Educational Research, 31*.

Garcia Coll, C., Lamberty, G., Jenkins, R., Pipes-McAdoo, H., Crnic, K., Wasik, B. H., & Vazquez Garcia, H. (1996). An integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development, 67*.

Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge University Press.

Katz, A. (1996). Teaching style: A way to understand instruction in language classrooms. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom* (pp. 57–87). Cambridge University Press.

Lemme, B. H. (2006). *Development in adulthood*. Pearson Education.

National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education. (2011). *Report of the expert committee*. Government of India.

Nunan, D. (1996). Hidden voices: Insiders' perspectives on classroom interaction. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom* (pp. 41–56). Cambridge University Press.

Pasassung, N. (2003). *Teaching English in an acquisition-poor environment: An ethnographic example of a remote Indonesian EFL classroom* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sydney).

Poston, W. S. C. (1990). The biracial identity development model: A needed addition. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 69*.

Renn, K. A. (2003). Understanding the identities of mixed-race college students through a developmental ecology lens. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*.

Rockquemore, K. A., & Brunsma, D. L. (2004). Negotiating racial identity: Biracial women and interactional validation. *Women & Therapy, 27*(1–2).

Rockquemore, K. A., & Brunsma, D. L. (2002). *Beyond Black: Biracial identity in America*. Sage.

Rockquemore, K. A., & Laszloffy, T. (2005). *Raising biracial children*. AltaMira Press.

Root, M. P. P. (2003). Multiracial families and children: Implications for educational research and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. Jossey-Bass.

Root, M. P. P. (1999). The biracial baby boom: Understanding ecological constructions of racial identity in the 21st century. In R. H. Sheets & E. R. Hollins (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity in school practices*. Erlbaum.

Root, M. P. P. (1998). Experiences and processes affecting racial identity development: Preliminary results from the Biracial Sibling Project. *Cultural Diversity & Mental Health, 4*, 237–247.

Root, M. P. P. (Ed.). (1992). *Racially mixed people in America*. Sage.

Root, M. P. P. (1990). Resolving "other" status: Identity development of biracial individuals. *Women & Therapy, 9*.

Shamim, F. (1996). In or out of the action zone: Location as a feature of interaction in large ESL classes in Pakistan. In K. M. Bailey & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Voices from the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

Swick, K. (2004). *Empowering parents, families, schools, and communities during the early childhood years*. Stipes.

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 155-164
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00012.7
ISSN 0019-5006

The National Service Scheme (NSS) – State of Voluntary Labour (shramdan) and University Extension Services

• **Letkhogin Mate**[1] • **Kottu Sekhar**[2]

Abstract

The National Service Scheme (NSS), established in 1969, is the largest government-sponsored student youth organisation in the world. With an enrolment of over 4 million student volunteers, the scheme engages them in a range of service activities that benefit the community and enhance the social perception of the volunteers. Although it is a part of the higher education system in the country, it shuns 'elitism' and promotes voluntary labour (*shramdan*) to uphold the principle of 'dignity of labour'. This article analyses the role of the NSS in connecting the campus to the community and the social work component in it and seeks to find out the reasons for the decline of *shramdan* activities in its scheme. It shall also be the endeavour of the paper to visualise the future of the programme in the wake of changed priorities and far-reaching changes. This article draws on research articles, government reports and documents, and a vast number of NSS annual reports of colleges and universities.

Keywords: *shramdan, voluntary labour, extension, social work education, student volunteer.*

Introduction

The National Service Scheme (NSS) was introduced in 1969, the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. Its stated objective is to involve the student youth in working with and among the people to initiate social projects and thus enhance their knowledge and skills through a confrontation with reality (Hasan, 1976). In other words, it was started with the goal of creating integration between the academic environment and society to make the student learn from society and, in turn, give something to society (Mate, 2025). The voluntary programme not only

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Mizoram University, Mizoram.
✉ mateletkhogin90@gmail.com
[2]Professor, Department of Social Work, Mizoram University, Mizoram. ✉sekharjvbc@gmail.com

serves as a potent extension tool of the higher education system and operates on the lofty principles of austerity, group living, and empathy but is also implemented by low-cost structures to fetch high social returns (NSS Manual, 1986).

The cardinal principle of the scheme is that it is organised by the students themselves, and both students and teachers, through their combined participation in social service, get a sense of involvement in the tasks of national development. The Ministry of Education, Government of India (then the NSS was under this ministry), entrusted the Delhi School of Social Work and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) with the task of devising the operational guidelines and delivery mechanism of the scheme in 1967–68. Thus, the scheme is visibly social work-oriented with emphasis on field-based activities, especially voluntary labour (*shramdan*). While serving as a template of civic learning, the NSS builds civic competencies among the volunteers and facilitates 'twinning' of students and the non-student youth in the urban and rural communities (Sekhar et al., 2022). As an effective trope of university community engagement, it eases the student youth into citizenship and, at the same time, consciously shuns boisterous advocacy or activism (Sekhar et al., 2022). The very participation in the scheme's activities confers on the students the membership of a huge collective (Sekhar et al., 2022).

Overview of literature

The authors reviewed a corpus of literature related to the National Service Scheme. It contains articles, unpublished dissertations and theses, policy documents of the Government of India and the annual reports of the colleges and universities about their NSS activities. Most of the literature throws light on the philosophy, historical evolution and implementation of the scheme. Very few studies have dealt with *shramdan,* one of the most important activities of the scheme. This article seeks to fill this conspicuous gap in addition to presenting a descriptive and analytical account of the present state of the programme. While critiquing the overall functioning of the programme, this article probes into the reasons for the decline in *shramdan* and the creation of durable community assets.

Grounding in Gandhian Philosophy

Mahatma Gandhi accepted the necessity of the division of labour but rejected the idea that bodily labour should be confined to one class and intellectual labour to another. He believed that all individuals, regardless of their social or economic status, should engage in bodily labour as a form of contribution to society and self-purification.

For Gandhi, voluntary idleness had to be eliminated, and labour, both physical and intellectual, should be integrated into daily life. He argued that bodily labour, or *shareer shrama*, was essential for cultivating equality and breaking hierarchical distinctions. Gandhi viewed labour as a form of *yajna* (sacrifice), where working for others constituted desireless action, contributing to the greater good. This perspective challenged societal norms that segregated labour based on class and caste, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable approach to work. For Gandhi, voluntary idleness had to be eliminated, and labour, both physical and intellectual, should be integrated into daily life.

Based on the Gandhian precepts of self-help, service and participation, the scheme, during its initial years, concentrated mainly on *shramdan* (literally meaning 'donation of labour') and, from a social angle, voluntary work for public good as a tool for student engagement. In other words, the volunteers were often seen engaged in physical work. Under the broad rubric of *shramdan,* cleaning of the campus, roads, and public places in the adopted villages or urban communities; planting of saplings; digging of soak pits; construction of makeshift houses after disasters; removal of the blockades in drains; desilting of the ponds and tanks; repair of the public buildings; and harvesting of rainwater were among the micro-level projects on which the volunteers embarked. It was during the drought in 1972-73 that the NSS organisation swung into action by engaging itself in the aforementioned activities, thus adding lustre to the very idea of voluntary labour (NSS Manual, 1997). In addition to the voluntary labour, the NSS organisation also involved its volunteers in awareness building on crucial areas like human rights, gender equity, immunisation, nutrition, disaster mitigation and management, communicable diseases, hygienic practices, HIV/AIDS, old age problems, girl child education and the preservation of heritage structures. The NSS intervention in these areas had helped the volunteers gain first-hand experience of the tough realities, though on a moderate scale.

Decline in *Shramdan* Activity

From 1969 onwards, the NSS has travelled a long way. The global situation since then has changed substantially, especially with the onset of globalisation, which ostensibly resulted in the structural adjustment programme and consequent economic reforms. Policy formulation is guided by the new shifts and priorities. Though the NSS continues with its core agenda, it is compelled to adopt new practices and intervention methods. The digital revolution, the explosion of the entertainment industry and online shopping have radically altered the lives of young people. Social media platforms not only keep the young glued to their mobiles but also update them with

information and provide them with an opportunity for online activism (Sekhar et al., 2022). It is not uncommon to see educated, enthusiastic and conscientious youth taking up causes, pooling resources online in no time and making it reach the beneficiary. Information technology has made activism much easier and proactive. The International Institute of Population Studies and Population Council (2010), in their study conducted in six Indian states, found that only 30 per cent of the youth participated in civic and social causes. Though the percentage of youth in civic engagement is low, Bhangaokar (2021) argues that the NSS facilitates some kind of engagement nationwide by being a part of the formal education sector. In this backdrop, it is acknowledged that programmes like NSS have lost their sheen to a great extent. Yet they have not lost their relevance totally. Quite naturally and predictably, the NSS needs to change its strategy and modus operandi.

Since the advent of the new millennium, *shramdan* has been sidelined in favour of sensitisation exercises and awareness-building activities. A perusal of around two hundred annual NSS reports of colleges and universities reveals that programmes like plantation, cleaning the campus, and blood donation are the most preferred activities. Extension activities have shifted from labour-intensive *Shramdan* to organised, skill-based social work, such as digital literacy drives, health campaigns and environmental awareness programmes, among others (Mate, 2025). The integration of technology has also reshaped NSS's approach (Mate, 2025). Social media campaigns, workshops, and mobile apps for disaster coordination have replaced physical labour in many instances. While these methods increase outreach, they often lack the personal touch and empathy (Mate, 2025).

New figures from the 2022-23 NSS Annual Report reveal that the programme has over 4.2 million student participants/volunteers on its rolls in more than 42,000 institutions, representing a 68% increase in engagement since 2015 (NSS, 2023). But this expansion has happened at a time when there is a perceptible decline in the type of programme orientation, from labour-intensive rural area programmes to skill-based urban area programmes. This shift mirrors wider socio-political changes, notably the increasing urbanisation of India, which reached 35% of the population by 2023, compared to 17% in 1951, and the professionalisation of volunteering (Chandrasekhar, 2023). The NSS organisation did remarkable work during disasters like the cyclone in Andhra Pradesh (1977), the earthquake in Latur (1993), and the super cyclone in Odisha (1999) – to name a few. Of late, the advancement in technology, speedy delivery of services, the emergence of a huge corpus of highly trained personnel in the domain of disaster management, and the vastly expanded voluntary sector have reduced the importance and visibility of the NSS. In the north-eastern region, every

state has powerful NGO networks based on ethnic identities, which are proactive and participate in a variety of developmental and service activities. A strong civil society presence may not accord space for *shramdan* by organisations like the NSS or NCC in the community.

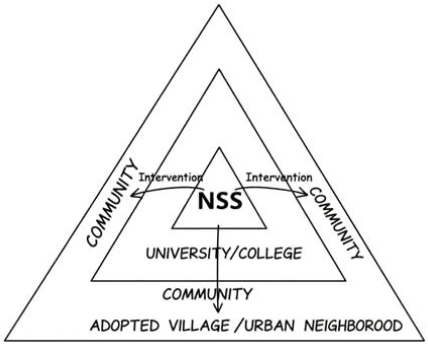
The increase in government spending on roads and infrastructure, and the availability of automated machinery, also contributed to the decline in self-help projects. Added to all these factors is the possible disinterest of the young people in straining themselves in the field.

The world is steadily going digital. The mobile phone facilitates everything from entertainment to financial transactions, thus making lives much easier. A massive skill development programme, 'Skill India', was launched to impart necessary skills to the youth for preparing them to make use of the opportunities in India as well as abroad (Government of India, 2014). Several initiatives, including the 'Smart Cities Project', have been launched for the development of infrastructure. 'Swachh Bharat Mission' and 'Clean Ganga Mission' have been launched for building a 'clean and green India'. The NSS, no doubt, is an intelligent blend of social work education, youth development, civic engagement and extension components of the higher education system. Its role in sensitising and organising the youth into a potent force for decades is worth emulating and undeniable. Yet it is time the planners attempted to reformulate the objectives and the modus operandi of the NSS in tune with the changing priorities, prescriptions of the National Youth Policy (2020), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The University Extension Service in India and NSS

The figure below shows the 'triad' of the three components of the university extension services, i.e., the NSS, the university/college and the community. The figure also represents the intervention of the NSS as an important arm of the extension wing in the community. In other words, it shows how the NSS forges an organic link between the higher education institutions and the community. In 1977, the University Grants Commission recognised extension as the third dimension of higher education, in addition to the two-fold dimensions of teaching and research (Saldhana and Velaskar, 1993). Though the structure of the extension services of the university system has not been successful. The NSS served as a fulcrum of the extension wing and forged a meaningful link between the campus and community or neighbourhood (Sekhar, 2002).

Figure -1



A university functions through three core components: academic teaching (knowledge dissemination), research (knowledge creation), and extension (community engagement). The National Service Scheme (NSS) operates under the extension component, acting as a bridge between higher education institutions and society (University Grants Commission, 2021). This component encompasses the university's engagement with the broader community, including public services, community development, and partnerships with external organisations.

The NSS acts as a bridge, forming a constructive link between the higher education institution (HEI) and the larger communities surrounding the university. The NSS is an integral part of the university/college extension programme, which enables the institution to engage with the larger community, share its knowledge and resources, and work together towards sustainable development. It involves the volunteers in community service activities in the adopted village or neighbourhood that are part of the whole called 'community'.

The above figure exemplifies/clearly demonstrates how the NSS intervenes in the community and forges a constructive link between the higher education institutions (HEIs) and the larger community. By engaging in participatory activities (e.g., awareness campaigns, skill development), students apply academic learning practically, fostering empathy and civic responsibility. Simultaneously, communities gain access to resources and expertise, promoting sustainable development. This symbiotic linkage exemplifies experiential education, where theory meets practice, enriching both the curriculum and societal well-being (Tilak, 2018). NSS thus

strengthens democracy by nurturing engaged citizens and reinforcing the university's role in national development.

The University Extension Service in India refers to outreach programmes originating from the British model. These services aim to bridge the gap between academia and society and foster socio-economic development. In India, they encompass activities like adult education, agricultural training, and community health initiatives, aligning with national goals such as those in the National Education Policy (2020). Conceptualised as a third dimension of academia, alongside teaching and research, its mandate is to disseminate knowledge and technological innovations to the wider community, particularly rural and marginalised populations. It plays a pivotal role in bridging academic knowledge and rural community development, particularly in agriculture and allied sectors, thereby fostering socio-economic development and enhancing agricultural productivity.

Figure 2 below shows a layered hexagonal diagram with the NSS ensconced in the centre. It conveys a slew of community-focused activities. The hexagonal stacking visually communicates interconnected endeavours and domains, the most arduous one being 'creation of durable assets' for the community. This visual representation effectively mirrors the multifaceted nature of the National Service Scheme and its commitment to diverse areas of social welfare and intervention.

Figure -2

The NSS, being essentially an 'outreach' programme, enables student volunteers to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world problems. For instance, NSS volunteers, guided by university extension protocols, are most likely to engage in literacy drives

in rural areas, health awareness campaigns, environmental conservation projects, or skill development workshops for underprivileged communities. The synergy between the university's outreach mandate and the NSS's volunteer framework ensures that both academic institutions and the broader society benefit from a proactive and engaged youth population, contributing to sustainable development and social uplift. Evidence suggests that the NSS acts as a pivot in linking higher education to the social environment. Under the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) launched in 1978, out of 165,000 students, 145,000 were NSS volunteers and taught 150,000 people in 1987 (University Grants Commission, 1986-7). A huge number of 500,102 people were made literate by 474,006 NSS volunteers who had taught functional literacy to 855,213 illiterates up till March 1992 under the National Literacy Mission (NLM) launched in 1988 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1992-3). In view of this training potential of the NSS, Baxi (1976) called the volunteers *ipso facto educators* much earlier.

Conclusion

The National Service Scheme (NSS), since its inception in 1969, has played a pivotal role in redefining the relationship between higher education institutions and society by showcasing the extension dimension of universities. Rooted in Gandhian values of self-help, service, and participation, the NSS has historically emphasised *shramdan* and direct community involvement while, over time, adapting to new social, technological, and economic realities. Its evolution from labour-intensive rural programmes to awareness-driven and skill-based urban initiatives mirrors India's broader transformation, including urbanisation, digitisation, and professionalisation of volunteering. Despite concerns of declining visibility and reduced emphasis on physical labour, the NSS continues to remain relevant by integrating modern tools such as digital literacy drives, disaster coordination apps, and social media campaigns. Importantly, the NSS provides a vital experiential learning platform through which student volunteers can mainstream classroom knowledge into the exploration of alternatives concerning turf realities. They can also address challenges, cultivate empathy, and develop civic responsibility and democratic values. By linking higher education institutions with communities, the NSS not only strengthens societal development but also reinforces the university's role in national progress. As India redefines its commitment to youth development and formulates policy accordingly, and aligns it with the Sustainable Development Goals, the reconfiguration and revitalisation of the NSS will be essential to ensure its transformation into a more dynamic force for social change and inclusive development.

References

Baxi, U. (1976). National Service Scheme and law studies: Some random thoughts. In K. D. Gangrade & R. R. Singh (Eds.), *Integration of NSS with the curriculum* (NSS Publication No. 9, pp. 47–52). NSS Unit, Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi.

Bhangaokar, R. (2021). Gandhian philosophy and youth civic engagement in India. *Gandhi Marg Quarterly, 43*, 339–354.

Chandrasekhar, S. (2023). Changing paradigms of youth engagement in India. *Journal of Social Development Studies, 45*(2), 112–121.

Education Commission. (1990). *Education Commission report No. 4*.

Gallant, K., Smale, B., & Arai, S. (2010). Civic engagement through mandatory community service: Implications of serious leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research, 42*(2), 181–201. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2010.11950201

George, A. (1982). A history of social work field instruction: Apprenticeship to instruction. In *Quality field instruction in social work* (pp. 37–59).

Government of India. (2014). *Demand responsive vocational training*. Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Government of India. (2022). *National Service Scheme (NSS).* Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. https://nss.gov.in/

International Institute for Population Sciences, & Population Council. (2010). Youth participation in civil society and political life in India. In *Youth in India: Situation and needs (2006–2007)* (Policy Brief No. 30).

Mabud, H. (1976). National Service Scheme as an intra-curricular stream of activities in higher education. In K. D. Gangrade & R. R. Singh (Eds.), *Integration of NSS with the curriculum* (pp. 1–19). NSS Unit, Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi.

Mate, L. (2025). Connecting campus and community: The role of National Service Scheme (NSS) in promoting social synergy with emphasis on Shramdan (voluntary labour). *Contemporary Social Scientist, 17*(1).

Mohammed, P. K., & Soman, I. V. (2000). *National Service Scheme and change in social perception*. NSS Training and Orientation Centre, Rajagiri College of Social Sciences.

Ministry of Human Resource Development. (1992–1993). *Annual report*. Government of India.

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. (2023). *NSS annual report 2022–23*. Government of India.

National Service Scheme. (2006). *NSS manual* (Rev. ed.). Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India.

National Service Scheme. (2023). *Five-year evaluation report (2018–2023).* NSS Directorate.

National Service Scheme. (2024). *NSS programme guidelines.* https://nss.gov.in

National Service Scheme. (1986). *NSS manual.* Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Parel, A. (Ed.). (2000). *Gandhi, freedom, and self-rule*. Lexington Books.

Parker, E. A., Myers, N., Higgins, H. C., Oddsson, T., Price, M., & Gould, T. (2009). More than experiential learning or volunteering: A case study of community service learning within the Australian context. *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(6), 585–596.

Roy, S. S. (2021). National Service Scheme (NSS): A youth development programme in higher education.

Sekhar, K. (2002). Three decades of the National Service Scheme: The social work component and development issues. *International Social Work, 45*(1), 99–114.

Sekhar, K., Sharma, S., Thockchom, R. S., & Thakur, A. (n.d.). Civic engagement of student youth in India through National Service Scheme (NSS). *Journal of Social Work & Social Development.*

Saldhana, D., & Velaskar, P. (1993). Institutions in higher education and extension: The case of adult education. In P. Altbach & S. Chitnis (Eds.), *Higher education reform in India: Experience and perspectives* (pp. 276–308). Sage.

Tilak, J. B. G. (2018). *Education and development in India: Critical issues in public policy and development* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0250-3

University Grants Commission. (2021). *Guidelines for NSS.*

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 165-180
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00013.9
ISSN 0019-5006

Women Empowerment - Analysis of Government Policies and the Way Forward

• **Prachi Sinha**[1]

Abstract

Women comprise approximately half of the world's population. Even today, in our society, women are not given prime decision-making roles in most of the professions and in households. In the past, there have been numerous articles on women's empowerment which have focused upon social, economic and political realms. However, this article sheds light on women's empowerment with reference to the Economic Survey 2023-24 and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (July,2023 – June,2024). This study analyses the gender-wise sectoral trends with a comparative analysis of the rural and urban areas and the status of employment in India. It examines the main factors leading to the under-representation of women in the main workforce and concludes by giving some suggestions for overcoming the obstacles to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Keywords: *empowerment, education, government policies, entrepreneurs, Self-Help Groups, Sustainable Development Goals, Economic Survey.*

Introduction

We have all been there and experienced it in our lives, but have just accepted the reality of our patriarchal society. We have read numerous research articles and blogs about gendered roles, gender inequality, breaking gender stereotypes, gender in workplaces, and the list goes on, but we have never given importance to education as a medium to break these gendered lines of our society.

[1]Independent Researcher, Texas, USA. ✉ sinhaprachi87@gmail.com/prachisinha.7278@gmail.com

Education plays a crucial role in empowering citizens to participate and reap the benefits of economic growth. On an individual level, education promotes employment, income generation, health benefits and poverty reduction, just to name a few of its benefits. Whereas, on the societal level, it drives long-term economic growth, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion (World Bank, 2024). Investing in education and empowering women should be one of the priorities for countries such as India, which is facing a demographic dividend.

There is a direct link between education and empowerment, i.e., education equips people to meet the challenges of development. According to the World Bank, empowerment is "the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" (Ghosh et al., 2015). Developing countries, like India, have formulated and implemented many policies and have made significant progress in attracting children to formal education and empowering adults, especially women, to develop skills, but still barriers exist.

For Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher known for his work 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', the development of humans is through education for social transformation (Ghosh et al., 2015). He has introduced the method "conscientisation", which indicates the development of critical consciousness in the education of adults (Ghosh et al., 2015). This method aids in the termination of the "culture of silence" and gives a voice to the socially dispossessed. It is necessary to empower women so that they are able to voice their opinions and climb the social ladder.

In this article, I would like to focus on the analysis of Indian policies on women's education and empowerment with reference to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to what extent they have been successful in achieving the goal. According to UNESCO's Delors (1996) report "Learning: The Treasures Within", education is based on 4 pillars throughout life – learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. Education is one of the prime factors which would assist in achieving other sustainable development goals, as it empowers learners to make informed decisions and act responsibly for environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations (UNESCO, 2017). Education for sustainable development is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education (UNESCO, 2024).

India is a country which is dominated by a service-led economy. Over the years, its policies shifted from the agrarian economy to a service-led economy. In the past decade, it can be seen that there has been growth in services related to information technology (IT) and banking and insurance. There has been an increase in the national income, but in contrast, the per capita income and rate of employment among women have been considerably low (Kumar, 2024). There has been an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but there has been a growing pressure of unemployment amongst women (Kumar, 2024). It may be due to:

1. Slow structural transformation in India.
2. Inequality in the labour market in terms of region, social groups, gender and occupation.
3. Regional disparity: Some Indian states have a large, highly educated youth population, but are relatively underdeveloped.
4. Mismatch of education and relevant skills for employability.
5. Developing technology and climate change: an important issue to think about as technology keeps changing, and climate change affects the workers in the informal sector, as they work in extreme weather conditions (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2024).

Appreciating the role of the industrial sector for sustainable growth, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, introduced various policies and programmes for empowering women. He had a vision for India to be recognised as a manufacturing hub.

Policies and programmes introduced by the Indian government and their outcomes

There are certain provisions provided by the Constitution of India that emphasise women's empowerment and prohibit discrimination against women in society. For instance, Article 14 informs about the equality before the law, and Article 15 authorises the states to make special provisions for women (Muniraju & Attri, 2022). In India, adult education has been part of the government plans since the First Five-Year Plan (1951–56) (Kumar, 2023). In each plan, crores of rupees have always been sanctioned for women's literacy and empowerment. There has been some progress since then, but still a lot of work needs to be done on this front. In the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-12), '*Saakshar Bharat*' was launched with the aim of achieving an eighty per cent literacy rate and reducing the gender divide by ten per cent in literacy, with a focus on minorities and rural women (Kumar, 2023). India's sex ratio

was not in favour of the females, and therefore, this scheme was launched to save the girl child and educate her. Consequently, the Indian government pioneered the Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child (*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Andolan*), the flagship scheme (Muniraju & Attri, 2022). Schemes such as *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* (for affordable housing in urban & rural areas), the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), *Pradhan Mantri Vyay Vandana Yojana* (PMVVY – a pension scheme for the senior citizens in India) and the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) were initiated to support females to be socially secure. Whereas, initiatives such as, *Samagra Shiksha* (integrated scheme for school education from pre-school to class XII), Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship, *Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna* (scheme for the construction of hostels for students belonging to Scheduled Castes), and *Swacch Vidyalaya Mission* (a national initiative to ensure all schools have access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities) were executed to guarantee girl-friendly educational institutions, especially for vulnerable sections of society, and have sufficient provisions to fulfil their requirements (Ministry of Women and Child Development [MWCD], 2021).

Besides this, in support, there have been numerous other programmes, such as the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) and the National Literacy Mission, for those who had missed their right to education in their primary years. The NAEP was launched with the aim of promoting literacy skills among the socially and economically deprived sections of society so that they are self-reliant and empowered (Kumar, 2023). Subsequently, the Government of India introduced a new scheme, the 'New India Literacy Programme', under 'Education for All' (earlier known as 'Adult Education') with emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, critical life skills, basic education (equivalency), vocational skills development and continuing education for the 2022-27 plan (Karwal, 2022). This scheme is proposed to cover all the aspects of adult education to align with the National Education Policy 2020 and the Union Budget of 2021-22 (Karwal, 2022). The scheme was to be implemented through volunteerism in an online mode, where all the necessary training and materials would be provided.

There are schemes like the Working Women Hostel, initiated by the Government of India, to look after the safety of women who are eager to work in non-conventional sectors such as fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force, Commandos, Central Police Forces, admission in Sainik school, and so on. (MWCD, 2021) This scheme aims at providing safe and convenient accommodation to all working women without any discrimination, whose income is less than Rupees 50,000 per month in metropolitan cities and less than Rupees 35,000 in small cities (Muniraju & Attri, 2022). The

Indian government has recognised and validated the 'the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The CEDAW launched an international bill of rights for women, in which Article 10 states the right to education for women (Muniraju & Attri, 2022). Additionally, the government has decided to implement an umbrella scheme catering to the safety, security and empowerment of women under the name '*Mission Shakti*'. This scheme would employ a participatory approach to address the issues of women and make them equal partners in nation-building through convergence at different levels of governance. (MWCD, 2021).

Gradually over the years, the Government of India's focus shifted from women's development to women-led development. While advocating for women-centric development, it had been noted that most women were not able to continue their jobs after childbirth. Thereafter, the government passed the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017, which increased the maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks (Muniraju & Attri, 2022). This amendment stimulated women-centric development initiatives. To enhance this, women have been endowed with training through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes (MWCD, 2021). With a lot of policies and programme implementation for education and skill development of women by the Indian government, it is noticed that there has been significant progress. According to the Economic Survey 2023-24, there has been increased access to education and skill development initiatives for women's empowerment, which has elevated their participation in India's development and progress (Ministry of Finance, Government of India [MoF], 2024). It has been observed that the female labour force participation rate in rural India has increased from 23.3 per cent in 2017-18 to 37 per cent in 2022-23 (MoF, 2024). The Self-Help Groups programme, the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM, covers more than 89 million women in 8.3 million Self-Help Groups (MoF, 2024). They concentrate on women's empowerment, self-esteem enhancement, personality development, reducing social evils, and medium impacts on better education, higher participation in village institutions, and better access to government schemes. The Indian government has launched initiatives such as Start-Up and Stand-Up India, which can be a stepping stone for women entrepreneurs. Through these initiatives, 68 per cent of the loans have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs under the *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana* (PMMY-a scheme to provide loans to small and micro enterprises) (MoF, 2024). As of May 2024, there are 77.7 per cent women beneficiaries under the Stand-Up India initiative (MoF, 2024). Recognising the vision of Digital India, till July 2023, there have been more than 53 per cent women beneficiaries for the Prime Minister Rural Digital Literacy Campaign (PMGDISHA).

• According to the annual report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) (July 2023-June 2024) published by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, the total Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in India is 45.1 per cent, where 35.5 per cent and 22.3 percent of women were from rural and urban areas, respectively (National Sample Survey Office, 2024).

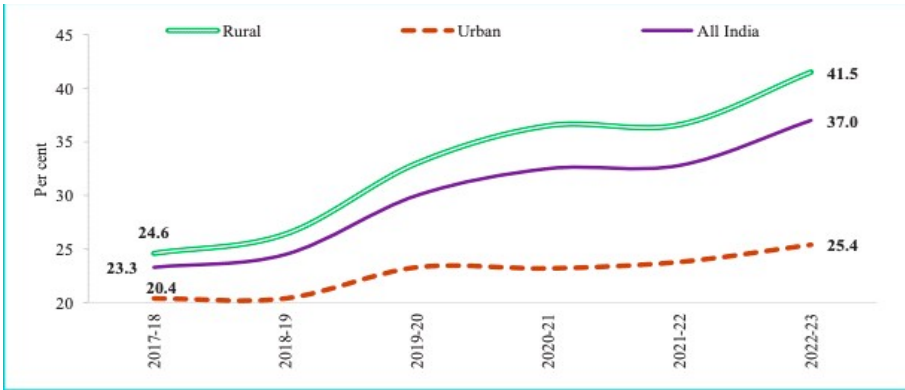
Table 1: Labour force participation rates (in per cent) estimated from PLFS (2022–23) and PLFS (2023–24).

All-India

Age Group	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
PLFS (2023-24)									
15-29 years	65.1	30.8	48.1	59.9	23.8	42.6	63.5	28.8	46.5
15 years and Above	80.2	47.6	63.7	75.6	28.0	52.0	78.8	41.7	60.1
All Ages	57.9	35.5	46.8	59.0	22.3	41.0	58.2	31.7	45.1
PLFS (2022-23)									
15-29 years	65.5	25.8	45.9	58.4	20.8	40.7	63.5	24.5	44.5
15 years and Above	80.2	41.5	60.8	74.5	25.4	50.4	78.5	37.0	57.9
All Ages	55.5	30.5	43.4	58.3	20.2	39.8	56.2	27.8	42.4

Source: Annual Report, PLFS, 2023-24

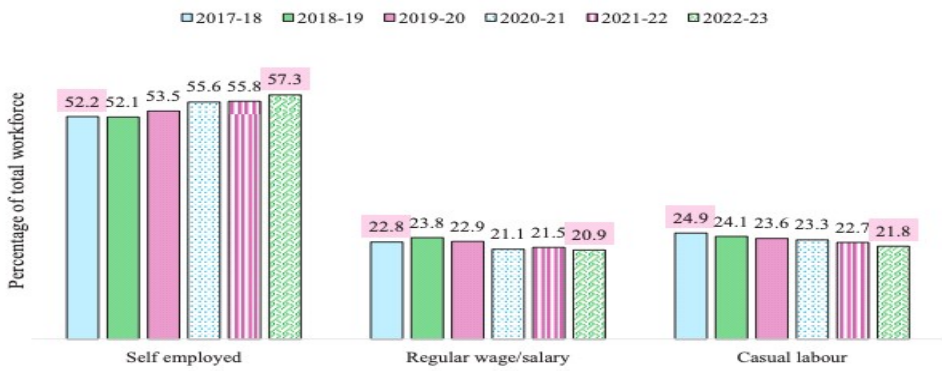
Graph 1: Female Labour Force Participation Rate (2017-2023).



Source: PLFS reports, NSO
Note: for usual status, 15 years and above

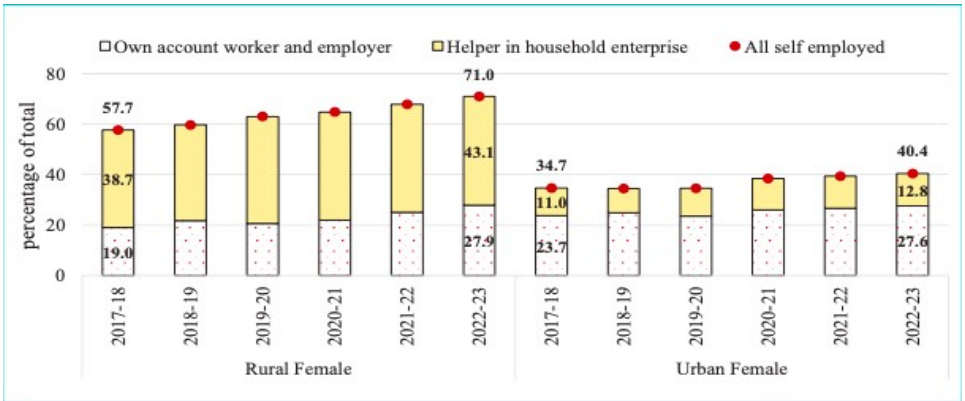
It can be seen in the above table and graph that in the past decade, India has witnessed a remarkable change in its female employment, leading to a positive inclination in economic growth and social development. This positive inclination is due to factors such as economic reforms, technological development and prioritising skill development and women's empowerment. A large proportion of the total workforce (men and women) (see Graph 2) can be seen in the self-employed category, followed by 21.8 per cent in casual labour and 20.9 per cent in regular work.

Graph 2: Trend in broad category-wise employment status (2017-2023).



Source: Annual PLFS reports, MoSPI

Graph 3: Share of female workforce in self-employment (2017-2023).



Source: Annual PLFS reports, MoSPI

Among the female workforce in self-employment (see Graph 3), the majority of the rural women are helpers in household enterprises (43.1 per cent), and urban women are their own-account workers and employers (27.6 per cent).

From the above table and graphs, it can be seen that the female labour participation rate has tremendously increased in the past decade. While the percentage of urban women's contribution in the workforce has been increasing, the rural women's contribution has witnessed a steep rise. This has been possible with the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA), which endorses that one-third of the jobs generated under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) should be given to women (MWCD, 2021). Other factors that equally play a crucial role in this result, such as disengaging them from their time in basic household chores by giving them access to basic amenities such as piped drinking water (*Jal Jeevan Mission*), clean cooking fuel (*Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana*), sanitation (*Swachh Bharat*), etc (MoF, 2024).

The Government of India has implemented a series of measures for enhancing employment generation, such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for strengthening the country's manufacturing capabilities, increasing capital expenditure and improving worker welfare (MoF, 2024).Along with this, promoting self-employment through ease of access to credit and other process reforms has been taken care of. Some of the initiatives implemented by the government include the

National Career Service Portal for employment and career services, e-Shram portal for assisting in job search, *Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana* (ABRY) for promoting employment with security benefits after COVID-19 job losses, *Atal Pension Yojana* (APY) and *Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan* (PM-SYM) scheme for ensuring a minimum pension for all workers, *PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi* (PM SVANidhi), One Nation One Ration Card programme, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) for assisting entrepreneurs setting up their businesses, *Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana* – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), and *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana* (PMMY) for assisting self-employment, among others (MoF, 2024).

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2022 report, India's female labour force participation rate is 23.5 per cent, compared to the male labour force participation rate of 57.5 per cent. Even though there have been many programme implementations by the government, the majority of the women are still not economically empowered, which may be due to factors such as a lack of women-demand jobs and the unavailability of jobs that satisfy the women's domestic work timings. India has been gradually transitioning from an agrarian economy to a service-led economy, which does not take women along. Also, about 39 per cent of women in urban areas and around 68 per cent of women in rural areas identify themselves as self-employed. For the women at the grassroots, small businesses have not grown, as they lack internet access (digitalisation), market promotion, training, skilling, finance and networking (Asian Development Bank Institute [ADBI], 2023). According to the data provided by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), around 50 per cent of the candidates enrolled for short-term skill training by the *PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana* were women. Thereafter, they remained out of the technology-based sectors, but their numbers prevailed in the traditionally feminised industries such as beauty, clothing and healthcare. This trend intensifies the gender gap in high-tech and STEM jobs (ADBI, 2023). This may be because, according to the recent media reports, India is still unsafe for women, and they lack internet access. Most women prefer to have their jobs near or at their homes. Also, with limited access to technology, they are not able to know their true potential for the job advertised and limit their ability to make transactions and be users of their own money. These make a huge impact on the participation and freedom of women in the workforce.

The possible way forward

India, with its vast demographic dividend and young population, is placed in an advantageous position in the global market. Tapping this demographic advantage

depends on India's ability to recognise its young population's aspirations, channel their productive potential and help them construct a successful economic path. (ILO, 2024) But it needs to keep its young working population updated on the technological advancements and skills required in the market so that it can compete in the global economy. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the term 'skill' in its World Employment Report (1998) as 'an acquired and practised ability or a qualification needed to perform a job or certain task competently'. But, in the current scenario, the term has evolved to mean "any skill, expertise or ability that has market value or the potential of being utilised for generating income and employment, irrespective of whether it is acquired formally or not" (ILO, 2024). Generally, individuals master the skills through informal channels (through hereditary occupation). However, the general education system, which includes foundational and cognitive skills as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), should be considered, as it links to specific trades and occupations. There is a need to constantly skill, unskill and reskill for the development of oneself. With growing global competition, changing labour market demand, and technology immersed in a new knowledge system, there is a change in labour demand with specific skills while giving significant weightage to basic, soft, foundational and transferable skills. (ILO, 2024) The Indian government needs to constantly work with its vast young population to make them adaptable to the emerging artificial intelligence (AI) in the global economy. There is a need to introduce and implement measures so that India does not lag behind this revolution. Such measures can put India as the key player in the AI age by engaging the "employees or job seekers in skills beyond communication, collaboration, and presentation, such as analytical thinking and innovation; complex problem-solving; critical thinking; learning and self-development; technology design and programming; and resilience and adaptability, to face the AI challenge" (MoF, 2024). Considering this measure, the National Education Policy (2020) strives to connect humanities and arts with science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This policy stresses student exchange programmes with foreign educational institutions, which would help them to develop innovative and critical thinking, transforming the educational system of India as per the international standard (ILO, 2024).

In recent years, it has been noticed that the gig economy has remarkably emerged in the global economy, in which India is not far behind (MoF, 2024).This type of economy has been a great success among the developing countries, such as India. This has been predominated by freelancers, the self-employed, online workers and creative tech talent. In India, most of these jobs have been occupied by deliveries, ride-sharing, mini tasks, care and wellness. These jobs are in great demand, as they have flexibility and are entry-level jobs for students, stay-at-home mothers, and people temporarily unemployed in small cities.

In order to utilise the growing young demographic dividend of the Indian population, it is extremely crucial to facilitate the workforce, especially the women, with essential employable skills and knowledge to meet the requirements and standards of the global labour market and industry. The government has taken measures to cater to these demands by empowering the Indian youth with job and entrepreneurial opportunities. There have been initiatives undertaken by others, such as the corporate sector through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), which work at the grass-root level of our society, which the government is not efficiently able to reach (MoF, 2024).

India is known for its rich cultural heritage. There are many artisans and craftsmen, the majority of them women, whose talent needs to be preserved before they are lost in the technological era. Many women work with traditional tools and methods, such as basket weavers, potters, carpenters, masons, cobblers, barbers, etc., to earn their income. The *PM Vishwakarma Programme*, launched in September 2023, validates its recognition, upgradation of skills, collateral-free credit and marketing support to these traditional artisans and craftsmen (MoF, 2024).But recent statistics reveal that women lack access to relevant assets, tools and financial information. Access to finance and financial literacy are really important for the economic empowerment of women. Over the years, the financial awareness of women has improved, but still needs to be worked upon. For example, NGOs have assisted in providing financial awareness about the government interventions for women's small enterprises. SEWA has also reached out to women at the grassroots level to share the care burden of working women and provide livelihood opportunities to women under the care economy (ADBI, 2023).

Although the Indian government has introduced various measures and implemented programmes and policies for empowering women on the basis of the 4 pillars of education, introduced in UNESCO's 1996 Delors Report, there are still some challenges which the government has to strive to overcome. We all know that patriarchal and social customs, such as early marriage and childbirth, are prevalent and limit women's economic participation in the Indian subcontinent (Asadullah et al., 2024). But there have been improvements in the social norms and personal beliefs, such as an increase in the marriageable age of women, which has led to a notable increase in the female labour force participation rate (Asadullah et al., 2024).

However, the question that still remains is, even though there has been significant improvement in female education, why, in general, is there not a significant gain in

the employment of women in India? Globally, women are educated and empowered, but why does it not show the same trend? There are many reasons associated with this question. For instance, educational qualification, marriageable age, fertility rate, urbanisation, economic growth, and social norms play a significant role in defining the role of women in the public and private realms. Firstly, there has been progress in access to education among young women. Second, jobs were created in the economy which could not readily employ women, especially in the rural areas. Third, in spite of inadequate job creation, the household income increased, further reducing the rate of women's participation in the labour force (Verick, 2014). Fourth, in India, most of the women contribute to the economy in some way or another, but their work is undocumented. The majority of women are involved in unpaid domestic duties. Also, the Indian education system is not efficiently linked with employment opportunities and the gender biases taught in textbooks. In our families, schools and society, the traditional roles are imbibed in the young minds, which are unconsciously followed throughout their lives. From birth, we, as individuals, are taught gender-specific roles and job opportunities. But with changing times, these gendered roles are diminishing, and both men and women collaboratively manage household chores. Overall, Indians are less supportive of female employment as their preference for homemakers is still prevalent in Indian cities (Evans, 2022). These women are basically stay-at-home, do household chores and look after their children and the elderly. This hinders their active participation in the economic sphere of society. But there are still some homemakers who are ambitious and overcome all obstacles to earn for themselves.

Sociological perspective

From a sociological perspective, discrimination and inequality emanate from power differences held by the privileged and the unprivileged groups in our society. Likewise, economics considers wage inequality as the differences in bargaining power between employers and across groups. Over a period of time, the workers may lose their bargaining power with their employers, but the question remains: why is it more prevalent amongst women? The outcome of governmental policies and programmes is now sociologically analysed with attributes beyond class, caste, gender, linguistics and regions. There is a strong association of social inequality with economic outcome, that is, social inequality and the path to economic development. Other than distributive inequality (which has always been the focus of research), there needs to be a shift towards relational inequality. It is grounded on socially determined hierarchies, such as the group inequalities approved by the laws, norms, habits, and people who relate to one another as superiors or inferiors (Ghosh, 2024). This implies

that power and its dynamics shape human behaviour, social and economic processes, and their outcome. There are many types of hierarchy, and when these hierarchies overlap with one another, it gives rise to relational inequality. Relational inequalities generally derive from the traditions that may be cultural, religious or social norms that have been followed since the beginning. Subsequently, they interact with economic forces and market relations, giving rise to unequal power, multidimensional poverty and deprivation (Ghosh, 2024). It further develops complex dynamics between relational inequalities, distributional inequalities and patterns of accumulation. The socio-economic system of capitalism assimilates and exploits the traditional norms and institutions (Ghosh, 2024).

Gender inequality is one of the unique forms of relational inequality. The majority of sociological theories identify societal norms as the underlying reason for institutions. Social norms play an important role in gender inequality, as they specify the modes of behaviour that are compatible with the gendered division of labour and power. For instance, approaches from conflict theory stress subordination, and approaches from stratification theory focus upon the variety of outcomes that differ in parallel to wages and labour market status (Tyrowicz & van der Velde, 2021).

The 'social construction of gender' exists in all societies in some form. It can be understood with reference to the family. In the family, gender plays an influential role in the distribution of labour, which also affects the economy and society. It conditions the amount of power and autonomy women should have compared to men in decision-making, access to income, and control of wealth and assets. Also, it influences their development of capability, education and rights as citizens (Ghosh, 2024; Tyrowicz & van der Velde, 2021). Hence, the economic outcome of those sections is quite low. Further, the feminist theory goes on to include that in some of the sections of our society, women are allowed to work but in lower-status occupations compared to men.

In the changing time period, there have been changes in the social norms which have allowed women to actively participate in the labour market when compared to previous time periods. As the norms change towards gender equality, the relative position of women in the market also changes (Tyrowicz & van der Velde, 2021).

Conclusion

Women need to be conscientised through education. Education is not just about literacy, but it is also about awareness of social injustice and discrimination that

women face in their day-to-day lives. To be educated is to be empowered with the tools of decoding the structures of patriarchy and seeking to remove its ill practices, which deter the progress of the nation (Ghosh et al., 2015). Education is also essential for the overall development of the nation. The government of India has implemented policies and programmes for women's empowerment to meet the statistics of UN Development Goals and others, but ignores such factors which are quite challenging. Even though the government has introduced changes in the educational, training and skill development system, there is a growing demand and supply gap as the present system is unresponsive to new skill demand resulting from globalisation and technology-induced growth of the economy (ILO, 2024). Steps need to be taken to overcome such challenges so that Indian women feel empowered enough to want to break the traditional and patriarchal barriers imposed on them by society. This will enable them to contribute to uplifting their lives and, in turn, participate as a major force in boosting the Indian economy. Some suggestions that may be taken into consideration:

1. Updated educational policies should be more inclusive to ensure the right to education of girls without any discrimination within the educational institutions.
2. Implementation of regional policies which address the issues of female employment and promote more balanced opportunities.
3. Girls from economically weaker sections should be given financial incentives till class 12 to decrease their school dropout rate.
4. Villages/districts should be rewarded for securing an equal child sex ratio through education, information and communication.
5. To decrease the gender divide, there should be implementation of short-term schemes (about six weeks) for the promotion of digital literacy and awareness, along with access to digital devices by the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), the polytechnics and other technical institutions, business schools and the Enterprise Facilitation Centres.
6. Online platforms such as Digital India should be used to promote education and skill development among women and establish a link between businesses, the market, and the consumer.
7. Bridging NGOs, SEWA, and other institutions should be more active in providing access to digital devices, employable skills and training to women, financial literacy and awareness, such that they lead a respectable life.
8. Companies should be rewarded for employing 30 per cent of women in their total workforce.
9. Regular re-orientation of the skill development curriculum such that it meets the demand of the industry and available job opportunities.

10. The private sector should play an active role in providing on-the-job training, internships and apprenticeships for women, as it can overcome the challenges from the global economy.
11. With the booming digital economy, it is crucial to include the digitally illiterate sections of society, especially women, in the employment platform. This would also strengthen entrepreneurship and start-ups.

References

Asadullah, M. N., Webb, A., & Islam, K. M. M. (2024). SDG 4 mid-point challenge: Fixing the broken interlinkages between education and gender equality. *International Journal of Educational Development, 106*, 1–4. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0738059324000373

Asian Development Bank Institute. (2023). *Policy brief: Women's economic empowerment as a pathway toward sustainable and inclusive development in India*. https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/917246/adbi-women-s-economic-empowerment-pathway-toward-sustainable-and-inclusive-development-india.pdf

Delors, J. (1996). *Learning: The treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. UNESCO Publishing.

Evans, A. (2022). *Why has female labor force participation risen in Bangladesh but fallen in India?* Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-has-female-labor-force-participation-risen-in-bangladesh-but-fallen-in-india/

Ghosh, J. (2024). Relational inequality and economic outcomes: A consideration of the Indian experience. *Review of Political Economy, 36*(2), 444–455. https://doi.org/10.1080/09538259.2023.2242210

Ghosh, R., Chakravarti, P., & Mansi, K. (2015). Women's empowerment and education: Panchayats and women's self-help groups in India. *Policy Futures in Education, 13*(3), 294–314. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1478210315571214

International Labour Organization. (2024). *India employment report 2024: Youth employment, education and skills*. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/India%20Employment%20-%20web_8%20April.pdf

International Labour Organization. (1998). *World employment report 1998–99: Employability in the global economy—How training matters*. International Labour Office.

Karwal, A. (2022). *Guidelines of New India Literacy Programme (A centrally sponsored scheme) financial years 2022–27*. Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India. https://dsel.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-01/Draft_Guidelines_of_NILP.pdf

Kumar, B. (2023). Expand access to adult education. *Deccan Herald*. https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/expand-access-to-adult-education-1194285.html

Kumar, R. (2024). Economic growth, structural changes and employment linkages in India. *Review of Economics and Political Science, 9*(4), 346–357. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/reps-07-2022-0051/full/pdf

Ministry of Finance, Government of India. (2024). *Chapter 08: Employment and skill development: Towards quality*. In *Economic Survey 2023–24*. https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/doc/eschapter/echap08.pdf

Ministry of Finance (2024): "Press Release", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, New Delhi. Date Accessed: 31-10-2024. URL: https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetail.aspx?PRID=2034928&reg=3&lang=1

Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2021). *Policy to promote women empowerment*. Press Information Bureau, Government of India. https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1776873

Muniraju, S. B., & Attri, U. (2022). *Empowerment of women through education, skilling & micro-financing*. NITI Aayog. https://www.niti.gov.in/empowerment-women-through-education-skilling-micro-financing

National Sample Survey Office. (2024). *Annual report: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), July 2023–June 2024*. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/AnnualReport_PLFS2023-24L2.pdf

Tyrowicz, J., & van der Velde, L. A. (2021). When opportunity knocks: Confronting theory and empirics about dynamics of gender wage inequality. *Social Indicators Research, 155*, 837–864. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11205-021-02620-y.pdf

UNESCO. (2017). *Education for sustainable development goals: Learning objectives*. UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/education-sustainable-development-goals-learning-objectives

UNESCO. (2024). *What you need to know about education for sustainable development*. https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/education/need-know?hub=72522

Verick, S. (2014). *Women's labour force participation in India: Why is it so low?* International Labour Organization.

World Bank. (2024). *Education: Overview*. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/overview

Indian Journal of Adult Education 87 (1) 2026, 181-187
https://www.iaea-india.com DOI: 10.5958/0019-5006.2026.00014.0
ISSN 0019-5006

The Impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT on Adult Education

• **Meeti Chowdhry**[1] • **Indu Sharma**[2]

Abstract

Artificial intelligence has shown tremendous promise in fostering educational transformation as a result of the quick advancement of information technology. The launch of the artificial intelligence tool "ChatGPT" in November 2022 garnered a lot of interest, especially in the education sector. Although ChatGPT has many useful features, it also has some drawbacks that need to be fixed, including the accuracy of question-answers, data pollution issues, ethical and safety concerns, and the possibility of knowledge plagiarism. ChatGPT can also answer user questions, complete user-specified tasks, and even continuously optimise task performance. The use of ChatGPT presents both potential and difficulties in the process of advocating for adult education reform. Additionally, the rise of ChatGPT gives educators a chance to consider their professional worth and raises expectations for them. This article seeks to shed light on adult educators' opinions regarding generative artificial intelligence use while also highlighting education technology features and tools that can help adults better address the requirements of a variety of learners and hone their instructional design abilities.

Keywords: *ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, adult education, teacher literacy, educational transformation.*

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the classroom has attracted a lot of interest in the ever-evolving field of modern education. Among these

[1]Vice-Principal, Tulsi College of Education, Hissar Road, Ambala City, Haryana - 134003.
✉ meeti@tulsiambala.com
[2]Assistant Professor, Tulsi College of Education, Ambala City, Haryana - 134003.
✉ sharmaindu081@gmail.com

resources, ChatGPT stands out as a noteworthy AI model with possible applications in the fields of education and learning. Despite a number of studies, such as Rueda's comprehensive review, that have examined ChatGPT's effects on education, there is still a noticeable lack of clarity regarding its exact worth to teachers and its usefulness in the classroom. Previous studies have mostly focused on the general use of ChatGPT in classrooms, with some highlighting its growing popularity among adult teachers. The term "the production of entirely new creative works, such as text, pictures, music, or poetry, in response to simple prompts" refers to generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) (Cacicio & Riggs, 2023). ChatGPT, Midjourney, DALL-E, Synthesia, Bard, and Stable Diffusion are well-known instances of GenAI that can help teachers automate tasks (Cacicio & Riggs, 2023. GenAI tools offer the ability to accelerate the quick generation of high-quality, individualised, and engaging materials for instruction and evaluation in any given learning situation, which is particularly useful in adult education where teacher capacity and resources are constrained (Cacicio & Riggs, 2023). Nevertheless, despite the excitement around the revolutionary possibilities of GenAI technologies (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Bard, and Bing Chat) in the realm of education, there have been dire forecasts regarding their application by educators and learners (Rudolph et al., 2023). Regarding the effects of GenAI tools on teacher practice, teacher education, and student learning, educators have been given conflicting information and are quite unsure (Mishra et al., 2023). Given a number of considerations, including their accuracy, response quality, perceived utility, ethical concerns, etc., it is advised to deploy GenAI tools for teaching and learning with caution (Adarkwah et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). To help educators use GenAI as an instructional tool in adult learning, the "GenAI adult learning ecology" framework (GenAI-ALE) has been presented. The suggested framework is thought to encourage the proper and safe application of GenAI technologies in adult education. Improving adults' competencies and giving them the fundamental skills they need to handle problems in the real world is one of the main goals of education. According to a survey, 71% of adults with postgraduate degrees and higher education degrees think AI chatbots will affect their jobs (Hsu & Ching, 2023). Therefore, it is extremely valuable to provide a framework to direct the creation, development, and application of GenAI solutions for adult learners.

Generative AI's Potential for Adult Education

The population of adult learners is varied and complex, with a range of educational paths and socioeconomic origins (Hollander et al., 2023). By encouraging independence and improving educational results, the application of GenAI presents a special chance to customise their educational experiences (Hsu & Ching, 2023).

The following are particular instances of the use of generative AI in adult education:

1. **Personalised Learning:** AI-powered adaptive learning systems may evaluate student performance and modify the level of difficulty and learning speed.
2. **AI-Generated Content**: AI is able to produce learning resources that are specifically suited to a given skill level and area of development, including case studies, study guides, and practice exercises for each learner's needs.
3. **Virtual Tutors:** AI-driven chatbots are available around-the-clock to help, answering enquiries, offering clarifications, and offering guidance whenever needed.
4. **Interactive Learning**: AI is capable of producing games, simulations, and other interactive learning materials that increase student interest.
5. **Visual Aids:** AI can produce pictures, charts, and films to improve education, especially for those who learn best visually.
6. **Visual Aids:** AI can create videos, charts, and images to enhance learning, particularly for those who learn best visually.
7. **Language Learning:** AI is able to produce interactive language exercises, virtual language teachers, and conversational practice scenarios.
8. **Automated Grading:** Teachers can concentrate on student interaction and tailored feedback by using AI to grade assignments automatically.
9. **Virtual assistants:** AI-driven chatbots can assist students with administrative procedures, remind them of deadlines, and respond to frequently asked inquiries.
10. **Effective Lesson Planning:** Teachers can save time and effort by using AI to create lesson plans, teaching resources, and assessment activities.
11. **ChatGPT: It** is a comprehensive language model that may be used for writing, summarising, and responding to enquiries, among other things.
12. **Bing AI:** An information-gathering and research chatbot powered by Microsoft.
13. **Midjourney:** An application that uses word prompts to create graphics.
14. **QuillBot:** A tool for better writing and paraphrasing.

Generative Artificial Intelligence in a Common Education Technology Instrument: Teachers, marketers, and artists all utilise Canva, a free design tool. 2023 saw the introduction of Canva Magic Design, Magic Write, and Magic Edit, which are among the GenAI-powered Magic features (Adams, 2023). Like a number of well-known tech firms, such as Google, Adobe, and OpenAI, Canva also includes a text-to-image function. Teachers can enter any text prompt in real time and for

free. The applications of GenAI are wide-ranging, from text generation to image, video, and music generation. AI has the potential to support complex learning experiences with multiple people and resources and augment human abilities in a variety of learning contexts. As with any new and emerging technology, educators need to prioritise learning goals over tools and ensure that the use of GenAI tools and features supports learners in meeting their unique and diverse learning needs and aspirations. GenAI has many uses, including the creation of text as well as images, videos, and music. AI could help enhance human capabilities in a range of learning scenarios and provide intricate learning experiences involving several individuals and resources. Like with any new and developing technology, educators must put learning objectives ahead of tools and make sure that using GenAI capabilities and features helps students achieve their various and distinct learning needs and goals. Furthermore, considering the obvious disparities in access to technology and digital literacy skills, digital learning programmes and experiences need to be created via a trauma-informed lens for various communities of adult learners (Housel, 2023). While assessing and minimising significant hazards to the participating instructors and students, efforts to use GenAI technology in adult education should further educational objectives (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2023).

Generative Artificial Intelligence and AI Human-Centred Andragogy: This refers to implementing instructional strategies that give adult learners' needs and preferences top priority. This involves utilising GenAI to offer individualised learning routes, feedback, and support based on the unique profiles of each student. In contrast to pedagogy, which places greater emphasis on the education of children and teenagers, andragogy merely refers to the education of adults (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). One learner-centred approach to adult education is human-centred andragogy (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). The human-centred approach, which emphasises the development of human capabilities and agency for successful human-machine collaboration in learning, life, and work, is UNESCO's (2023b) guideline for integrating GenAI into education. The adult learner is given greater weight than GenAI technology in a human-centred andragogy.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Literacy: This discusses using GenAI tools to improve the knowledge and abilities of adult learners. GenAI literacy "includes the ability to understand how Large Language Models (LLMs) are trained, to appreciate the differences between AI tools designed for specialised tasks as opposed to an all-purpose… as well as to understand what types of problems current GenAI tools are good at solving." Building AI-literate citizens is necessary, given

that GenAI will transform education, the workplace, and society (Adarkwah et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Chiu, 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). In order for adult learners to effectively utilise GenAI tools for both work and education, it is necessary to provide them with opportunities to learn about GenAI and reflect on their personal connections to it (Chen et al., 2023). For instance, creating powerful prompts is a necessary ability to fully utilise GenAI's capabilities (Robertson et al., 2024). Building AI-literate citizens is necessary given that GenAI will transform education, the workplace, and society (Adarkwah et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Chiu, 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). In order for adult learners to effectively utilise GenAI tools for both work and education, it is necessary to provide them with opportunities to learn about GenAI and reflect on their personal connections to it (Chen et al., 2023). For instance, creating powerful prompts is a necessary ability to fully utilise GenAI's capabilities (Robertson et al., 2024).

Building AI-literate citizens is necessary given that GenAI will transform education, the workplace, and society (Adarkwah et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Chiu, 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). In order for adult learners to effectively utilise GenAI tools for both work and education, it is necessary to provide them with opportunities to learn about GenAI and reflect on their personal connections to it (Chen et al., 2023). For instance, creating powerful prompts is a necessary ability to fully utilise GenAI's capabilities (Robertson et al., 2024). This suggests supporting online learning environments that incorporate GenAI technologies to offer adaptable and easily accessible learning opportunities. It involves supporting remote and part-time learners by leveraging AI-enhanced platforms for virtual classrooms, conversations, and assessments. GenAI technologies can make education more accessible to all students and support virtual learning practices (Leiker et al., 2023), leading to a more inclusive and equitable education. Adult learners actively participate in distance education; they are frequently part-time students or working professionals (Pozdnyakova & Pozdnyakov, 2017). GenAI solutions can be easily integrated into learning management systems and are now available as add-ons in virtual meeting platforms for educational reasons.

This suggests supporting online learning environments that incorporate GenAI technologies to offer adaptable and easily accessible learning opportunities. It involves supporting remote and part-time learners by leveraging AI-enhanced platforms for virtual classrooms, conversations, and assessments. GenAI technologies can make education more accessible to all students and support virtual learning practices (Leiker et al., 2023), leading to a more inclusive and equitable education. Adult learners actively participate in distance education; they are frequently part-time students or working professionals (Pozdnyakova & Pozdnyakov, 2017).

Conclusion

GenAI solutions can be easily integrated into learning management systems and are now available as add-ons in virtual meeting platforms for educational reasons. Generative AI has the potential to revolutionise adult education by facilitating problem-based, individualised, and self-directed learning. But it also brings up significant issues about its moral application, certain biases, and the requirement for thorough integration with conventional teaching methods.

References

Adams, C. (2023, March 23). How we're infusing AI into Canva. *Canva News*. https://www.canva.com/

Adarkwah, M. A., Amponsah, S., Wyk, M. M., Huang, R., Tlili, A., Shehata, B., Metwally, A. H. S., & Wang, H. (2023). Awareness and acceptance of ChatGPT as a generative conversational AI for transforming education by Ghanaian academics: A two-phase study. *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching, 6*(2), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.2.26

Cacicio, S. & Riggs, R. (2023). Bridging resource gaps in adult education: The role of generative AI. *Adult Literacy Education, 5(3),* 80–86. https://doi.org/10.35847/SCacicio.RRiggs.5.3.80

Chen, B., Zhu, X., & Díaz del Castillo, H. F. (2023). Integrating generative AI in knowledge building. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 5*, Article 100184. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100184

Chiu, T. K. F. (2023). The impact of generative AI (GenAI) on practices, policies and research direction in education: A case of ChatGPT and Midjourney. *Interactive Learning Environments*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2023.2253861

Forrest, S. P., & Peterson, T. O. (2006). It's called andragogy. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 5*(1), 113–122. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2006.20388390

Hollander, J., Sabatini, J., Graesser, A., Greenberg, D., O'Reilly, T., & Frijters, J. (2023). Importance of learner characteristics in intelligent tutoring for adult literacy. *Discourse Processes, 60*(4–5), 397–409. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2023.2203543

Housel, D. A. (2023). A trauma-informed inquiry of COVID-19's initial impact on adult education program administrators and instructors in the United States. *Adult Learning, 34*(2), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/10451595211073724

Hsu, Y.-C., & Ching, Y.-H. (2023). Generative artificial intelligence in education, Part Two: International perspectives. *TechTrends, 67*(6), 885–890. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-023-00913-2

Leiker, D., Gyllen, A. R., Eldesouky, I., & Cukurova, M. (2023). Generative AI for learning: Investigating the potential of learning videos with synthetic virtual instructors. In N. Wang, G. Rebolledo-Mendez, V. Dimitrova, N. Matsuda, & O. C. Santos (Eds.), *Artificial*

intelligence in education: Posters and late breaking results, workshops and tutorials, industry and innovation tracks, practitioners, doctoral consortium and blue sky (pp. 523–529).

Mishra, P., Warr, M., & Islam, R. (2023). TPACK in the age of ChatGPT and generative AI. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education, 39*(4), 235–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/21532974.2023.2247480

Pozdnyakova, O., & Pozdnyakov, A. (2017). Adult students' problems in the distance learning. *Procedia Engineering, 178*, 243–248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2017.01.105

Robertson, J., Ferreira, C., Botha, E., & Oosthuizen, K. (2024). Game changers: A generative AI prompt protocol to enhance human-AI knowledge co-construction. *Business Horizons*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2024.04.008

Rudolph, J., Tan, S., & Tan, S. (2023). ChatGPT: Bullshit spewer or the end of traditional assessments in higher education? *Journal of Applied Learning and Teaching, 6*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.1.9

Tlili, A., Shehata, B., Adarkwah, M. A., Bozkurt, A., Hickey, D. T., Huang, R., & Agyemang, B. (2023). What if the devil is my guardian angel: ChatGPT as a case study of using chatbots in education. *Smart Learning Environments, 10*(1), 15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00237-x

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. (2023). *Artificial intelligence and the future of teaching and learning: Insights and recommendations*. https://tech.ed.gov/ai-future-of-teaching-and-learning/

INDIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT EDUCATION

FORM - IV

1. Place of Publication	Indian Adult Education Association 17-B, Indraprastha Estate New Delhi – 110002
2. Periodicity of Publication	Half Yearly
3. Printer's Name	Shri Suresh Khandelwal
Nationality	Indian
Address	17-B, Indraprastha Estate New Delhi – 110002
4. Publisher's Name	Shri Suresh Khandelwal
Nationality	Indian
Address	17-B, Indraprastha Estate New Delhi – 110002
5. Editor's Name	Shri Suresh Khandelwal
Nationality	Indian
Address	17-B, Indraprastha Estate New Delhi - 110002
6. Name and Address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders, holding more than one per cent of the total capital.	Indian Adult Education Association 17-B, Indraprastha Estate New Delhi - 110002

I, Suresh Khandelwal, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 25-06-2026
New Delhi

(Sd/-)
Suresh Khandelwal
Signature of Publisher

Guidelines for Authors - Indian Journal of Adult Education (IJAE)*

Please read and follow these instructions carefully, doing so will ensure that the publication of your manuscript is as rapid and efficient as possible. Indian Adult Education Association (IAEA), New Delhi reserves the right to return manuscripts that are not prepared in accordance with the below guidelines.

Submission of Manuscript
Authors should submit their manuscripts in Microsoft Word (.doc/.docx) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) electronically via email to Ms. Neha Gupta, Editorial Coordinator at ijae1939@gmail.com or ijae.iaea@iaea-india.com, with a copy to the Director I/c at directoriaea@gmail.com. Receipt of manuscripts will be acknowledged within 30 days of submission and the decision regarding acceptance will be communicated to the author within 3-6 months of receipt. The accepted article will be published within 6-12 months.

Peer Review Process
All submitted manuscripts will undergo a double-blind peer review process. Manuscripts will be evaluated based on originality, academic rigor, methodological soundness and relevance to the journal's scope.

Cover Letter
Each submission must be accompanied by a cover letter that includes a brief overview of the manuscript and its significance, full contact details of the corresponding author (name, e-mail, phone number and mailing address), the number of figures/tables along with total attachments (main text, figures, supplementary materials if any) and their corresponding formats.

Preparation of the Manuscript
All manuscripts must be typed in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, on A4-size paper (210 × 297 mm), with 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins on all sides. The prescribed word limits are as follows –
Research Article/Review Article - 3,000 to 5,000 words and Book Review - 700 to 800 words.

Article Types and Structure
A. Research Articles: Should include Title Page, Author Information, Present Address, Abstract (up to 250 words), Keywords (4-6 words), Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgments, References, Tables and Figures.
B. Review Articles: Should include Title Page, Author Information, Present Address, Abstract (up to 250 words), Keywords (4-6 words), Main Text, Acknowledgments, References, Tables and Figures.
C. Book Reviews: Should include Book Title and Author(s), Publication Details, Reviewer's Name and Affiliation, Main Text and References (if any).

Tables & Figures
Number tables consecutively using Arabic numerals, include a brief descriptive title above each table and footnotes below as necessary. Avoid duplication of data presented in text. Submit tables as part of the main Word document, not as embedded or linked files. Figures should be numbered consecutively with captions placed below. Ensure legibility and publication-ready quality of all tables and figures.

References
List all references alphabetically by the first author's surname using the APA 7th edition citation style, following the detailed formatting guidelines provided in the APA Style Manual (7th Edition) available at https://apastyle.apa.org.

For Example:
- **Journal Article**
  Shah, S. Y., & Choudhary, K. C. (2016). Adult education and lifelong learning: A critical analysis of emerging trends in India. International Journal of Adult Education and Development, 43(2), 115–130. https://doi.org/xxxxx
- **Book**
  Shah, S. Y., & Choudhary, K. C. (2016). Perspectives on adult education in India: Policy, practice, and prospects. New Delhi: Indian Adult Education Association.
- **Edited Book Chapter**
  Shah, S. Y., & Choudhary, K. C. (2016). Lifelong learning and community development in India. In P. Kumar (Ed.), Adult education and social transformation in Asia (pp. 45–62). Springer.
- **Online Sources**
  Shah, S. Y. (2026). My Experiences in Adult and Lifelong Learning in India and Abroad (1984-2024): An Autoethnography. Indian Adult Education Association. https://www.iaea-india.com

Ethical and Originality Statement
Authors must confirm that the manuscript is original (not plagiarized) and not under review elsewhere. Data, figures and tables must be accurate and ethical approvals must be obtained for research involving human or animal subjects. Manuscripts not following these guidelines may be returned prior to peer-review. Authors must maintain consistent formatting and citation style throughout.

**In alignment with Scopus journal standards*

Registration No. 896/57

ISSN 0019-5006

Indian Adult Education Association, 1939

Patron
Prof. S.Y. Shah

President
Prof. L. Raja

Vice Presidents
Ajmat Hussain Khan
Prof. Asoke Bhattacharya
Prof. P. A. Reddy
Prof. Saroj Garg
Prof. V. Reghu

General Secretary
Suresh Khandelwal

Joint Secretary
Mrinal Pant

Treasurer
Prof. Rajesh

Associate Secretaries
Dr. Asha Verma
Dr. D. Uma Devi
Rajendra Joshi
Y.N. Shankare Gowda

Members
Dr. Chayanika Uniyal
Dr. G. N. Kamble
Dr. Nitish Anand
Durlabh Chetia
Nishat Farooq
Reetu Trivedi
Sudhakar Mansingh Sengar
V. Ummer Koya

Co-opted Members
Dr. Ajay Kumar
Dr. Manoj Kumar Behera
Dr. S.V.A. Prakash

The Indian Adult Education Association founded in 1939, aims at improving the quality of life through education, which it visualizes as a continuous and lifelong process. It directs its efforts towards accelerating adult education as a process, a programme and a movement.

The Association co-ordinates activities of various agencies – governmental and voluntary, national and international – engaged in similar pursuits. It organizes conferences and seminars along with undertaking surveys and research projects. It endeavours to update and sharpen the awareness of its members by bringing to them expert views and experiences in adult education from all over the world. In pursuit of the policy, the Association has instituted the Nehru Literacy Award and Tagore Literacy Award for outstanding contribution to the promotion of Adult Education and Women's Literacy in the country, respectively. It has also instituted Dr. Zakir Husain Memorial Lecture, which is delivered every year by an educationist of eminence.

The Association has brought out many publications on themes related to adult education, including hindi editions of several UNESCO publications. It brings out the Indian Journal of Adult Education, Proudh Shiksha and IAEA Newsletter.

The Association acts as the Indian arm of the International Council for Adult Education, International Literacy Association and the Asian-South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). Its membership is open to all individuals and institutions who believe in the aims and objectives of the Association.

Its headquarters is located in Shafiq Memorial, IAEA House at 17-B, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi - 110 002.

Edited, Printed and Published by Suresh Khandelwal, General Secretary for and on behalf of Indian Adult Education Association, 17-B, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi - 110002, printed at M/s Graphic World, 1686, Kucha Dakhni Rai, Darya Ganj, New Delhi -110 002.