

# THE LEARNING CURVE

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Department of Psychology  
Lady Shri Ram College for Women

# The Learning Curve

Department of Psychology

Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi- 110024

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## **Editorial**

### **Insight will be the cure because its not normal yet**

While India was still trying to get back on its feet after the psychological, social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 onset in 2020, March 2021 turned out to be a fatal month in its literal sense. The second wave of corona virus wreaked havoc in the lives of people with visuals of uncountable funeral pyres burning, recovery of (unaccounted for) dead bodies of people from the river Ganges, and with the healthcare system on its knees. On the one hand, where the government was facing criticism for its extreme unpreparedness and callousness in tackling with the tsunami of COVID-19 infected cases, the citizens of the country were struggling to ensure supplies of medicines, oxygen cylinders, ventilators, hospital beds and even a space for cremation!! Now, when the surge appears to be reducing and the unlock has begun, researchers are contemplating the devastation levels of the third wave of COVID-19.

We had seen a false sense of security created by the low COVID -19 cases reported in February, 2021. The unlock seemed to be bringing back the pre COVID times with social functions, marriages, election rallies, celebration of festivals publicly happening every other day, that had been kept on hold for a year (Samarasekera, 2021). Instead of being careful, there was laxity shown by people in following the physical and social distancing norms as well as COVID-19 appropriate behavior. Coupled with the mutations of the corona virus into the delta variant, the second stage came as a shock! The multiple variants of the corona virus may just be indicative of a complex picture of the pandemic. With the humongous population of the country that needs to be vaccinated, the country and its people need to fight the pandemic fatigue and the accompanying unproductive cognitive processes that are finding a way into our lives. Optimism bias is one such process that is going to have a detrimental impact if we are not cautious and conscious about it.

Optimism bias refers to a belief held by people that they themselves are less likely to experience a negative event and more likely to experience a positive event (Weinstein, 1980). It is akin to a positive illusion that helps cope with potentially threatening experiences (Taylor & Brown, 1988). It has correlated in the past as well with various diseases like alcoholism, heart attack (Weinstein, 1993), breast cancer in women, prostate cancer in men (Clarke, Lovegrove, Williams, & Machperson, 2000). In the context of the unexpected corona virus pandemic, optimism bias is going to effect the compliance to regulations concerning social and physical distancing, wearing masks and staying at home. In contrast to the unrealistic pessimism observed during the Chernobyl disaster and some natural calamities, (Burger & Palmer, 1992), the pandemic is witnessing effects of optimism bias. The belief people have of being able to control this viral infection by following appropriate behavior, is resulting in positive bias and leading to a conviction that one is at lesser risk than other (Dolinski, Dolinska, Zmaczynska-Witek, Bnach, & Kulesza, 2020). In the first wave of COVID-19 last year, optimism bias was visible in the age group of 20 and 30+ population since it was the elderly age group which was being significantly impacted by the virus. Now, with the second wave having effected the young and middle adults severely, lack of fear and passivity may be stemming from having successfully recovered from COVID-19 or being vaccinated or not having witnessed the severity of the condition closely or the belief that others are more exposed than oneself.

While India has vaccinated 32.1 crore of its population, there are reports of 17-18% of the citizens who are reluctant to taking the vaccination. This cannot just be attributed to the vaccine being too new, worries about the side effects or lack of trust on the government and the manufacturers, the people seem to be wanting to wait and see its effects on others before getting a jab themselves. The false perception of people regarding the vaccine that it should be preventive in its purpose is also maintaining a sense of optimism bias. It is the complex cognitive, social and affective processes that are shaping our decisions. The role of conspiracy theories, anti-vaccination ideas circulating on social media, mistrust in government as well as pharmaceutical industry and scepticism about efficacy of vaccines is resulting in intensifying the prior negative beliefs concerning vaccines. At the same time, people are adopting a self-serving narrative in the process, for instance, "I do not need to get the vaccine because I probably won't get COVID-19 and, even if I do, it probably won't be as bad as the vaccine side effects anyway" (Saleska& Choi, 2021).

The deaths caused in the second wave is leaving behind traces of survivor's guilt. The compassion fatigue as a defense mechanism to cope with many deaths around is a reflection of societal burnout. There was anger towards the situation and lack of closure when the family members could not witness the last rites of their loved one, hug them and feel them, just one last time in the second wave (Mehta, 2021). We are still struggling with the grief of the second wave at collective level. The situation requires a collective response to the pandemic which is not over yet. Pandemic fatigue, our cognitive biases and distortions need to be consciously fought. Denial is not the right defense mechanism at the moment. It is time that people step up, get themselves vaccinated and don't let their guards down as that only can, if not avoid, but atleast restrict the damage that the third wave is likely to cause.

As we pen our thoughts in this editorial, we hope that the discipline of psychology gets to see the light of the new day very soon with the sacred spaces of the classroom, and the actual research site instead of online forms being given back to us soon as we fight this pandemic together.

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**Editors**

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# The Paradox of Invisibilised Manifestations of Historical Oppression

Saachi Khandpur\*

**Abstract:** Reviewing the past literature in the field of psychology regarding the issue of discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals, this intends to be a secondary research paper. It highlights the statistical figures about the actual incidences of acts of discrimination, as well as the fear experienced by marginalised communities caused by these acts, through an intersectional lens. Following this, the types of microaggressions experienced by such marginalised communities on a daily basis, with some ways of countering these acts of oppression that benefit both marginalised and privileged groups are presented. In this paper, the main argument is that these microaggressions are simply a modern-day manifestation of historical and contemporary patterns of prejudice and oppression. This paper aims to clarify the fact that the prejudice and discrimination experienced by marginalised communities are not always explicit but, in fact, thrive in implicit and subtle manifestations that must be acknowledged and eliminated as far as possible.

**Keywords:** LGBTQ+, homophobia, heterosexism, oppression, invisibilisation.

## Discrimination in the Modern Day

What does discrimination against the LGBTQ+ or non-cisgender community look like? Traditionally, discrimination is perceived as ranging from hate incidents, such as name-calling and slurs, to hate crimes such as “corrective” rape, lynching, and murder. Apart from actual crime rates, how does the knowledge that one could be the target of such forms of discrimination affect the quality of life for vulnerable individuals? Numbers show that about 40% of non-cisgender individuals feel worried about being victimised on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression (Dick, 2016). The latter is included here as it is important to note that such individuals are targeted on the basis of perceived or presumed gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Of these 40%, 11% say that this worry is their main worry in life (Dick, 2016). What about considering intersectionality into the equation, the idea that people that simultaneously belong to multiple marginalised communities experience multiplicative (rather than additive) forms of oppression due to the interaction of multiple systems of oppression (Coaston, 2019)? Do the numbers change, and if so, how?

One in three Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority LGBTQIA+ individuals face hate crimes and incidents, in comparison to their White counterparts, for whom the numbers decrease to one in five (Bulman, 2017). Unfortunately, very few figures are available to shed light on non-Euro-American contexts, which further invisibilises an entire community of people that supposedly only exist in the “Global North.” This raises the question of why is it that, within South Asian contexts, little data is available on hate crimes against non-cisgender people? It is simply because they are legal (and therefore, not a crime) or, if illegal, are perpetrated by the government, police, medical professionals and others meant to care for humanity (Eichert, 2020). The underlying implication here is that some individuals are simply less human than others, and therefore, less deserving of dignity and basic human rights.

It is important to note that although the entire non-cisgender community faces discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression, the manifestations of these forms of discrimination differ through space, time, and geography. For the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on homophobia (mainly because not enough research has been done on biphobia, and this silence is louder than any words could be). In the modern-day, homophobia is looked down upon as the LGBTQ+ community becomes more visible and organises transnationally. However, the aforementioned figures clearly show that homophobia has not been eradicated from society. This presents a paradox: if homophobia is gradually becoming socially unacceptable, why is there no commensurate decrease in hate crime and hate incident rates? (Flores, 2019; Vergani et al., 2020) More importantly, are hate crimes the only manifestations of this dehumanisation? What does homophobia look like in the modern and “liberal” age? In this paper, the main argument is that mundane microaggressions on the basis of sexual orientation are as bad as, and can even contribute to, hate crimes due to the devastating and yet invisibilised impact they have on LGBTQIA+ individuals and that this is simply a modern-day manifestation of historical and contemporary patterns of prejudice and oppression.

## Microaggressions Against Invisible Minorities

LGBTQIA+ individuals experience a unique facet in the discrimination they experience, in that they are an invisible minority (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). What this means is that unlike skin colour (which leads to racism), one's sexual orientation is not usually visible at the surface level, which usually leads to the common assumption of heterosexuality. Therefore, these microaggressions, such as jokes, may take place in the presence of the individuals they deride (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). This often puts LGBTQIA+ individuals in a dilemma where they must choose between silently bearing the adverse impact of such microaggressions or revealing their marginalised identity in a

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degrading atmosphere. But what exactly are microaggressions? They are defined as “brief, commonplace, and daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental slights and indignities directed towards specific groups of people.” (Platt & Lenzen, 2013, p. 1012). It is important to emphasise that as per this definition, they are commonplace and daily indignities. Although hate crimes can lead to death by a single cut, one can argue that such microaggressions can lead to death by a thousand cuts. Is a quick death considered more dignified than a slow (and more painful) death? What do these thousand cuts look like in daily life?

**Types of Microaggressions.** Scholars have identified seven major types of microaggressions against non-heterosexual individuals: endorsement of heteronormative culture, sinfulness, homophobia, heterosexist language and terminology, oversexualisation, undersexualisation, and microaggressions as humour (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). It is also essential to emphasise that all these microaggressions are perpetrated by well-meaning individuals who do not realise the profound impacts such daily forms of dehumanisation can have on the individuals they are targeted towards, even if unconsciously. With the help of a simplified version of intricate life stories from researches reviewed, illustrative examples of these are provided

Endorsement of heteronormative culture can be summarised as the assumption that all people are, or should be, heterosexual. When individuals from the LGBTQ+ community were interviewed, many highlighted how this particular microaggression increases their feelings of invisibility. They also noted that these feelings are exacerbated if the person committing the microaggression is aware of their “non-normative” sexual orientation. For those who are not out yet, this creates an unsafe environment, which further decreases the likelihood of coming out, thus also adversely affecting mental health (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). For example, asking a feminine presenting person if they have a male partner.

Sinfulness is summarised as having an underlying assumption that having a non-heterosexual sexual orientation is morally deviant and sinful (and this microaggression is closely associated with levels of religiosity). For LGBTQIA+ individuals who grew up with certain faiths, this also means an unfair choice between living authentically or living within their faith but shamefully. Microaggressions arising from religiosity that refer to sinfulness can further exacerbate the emotional turmoil caused by having to make such a choice in the first place (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). For example, believing all non-heterosexual people will go to hell or be punished in other ways.

Homophobia is perhaps the most visible form of microaggression against non-heterosexual individuals. Homophobia is the pathologizing of non-heterosexual identities as though they are synonymous with feared, and highly communicable, diseases. This form of microaggression is also most strongly associated with internalised homophobia

(the unconscious adoption of negative attitudes about one's own sexual orientation), although all forms of microaggression contribute to this debilitating phenomenon. Internalised homophobia is also the leading cause of psychological distress and, therefore, lower quality of life among LGBTQIA+ individuals. It can leave such individuals feeling as though they are outcasts, which leads to further marginalisation and separation, thus reinforcing the vicious cycle (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). This homophobia can be seen in avoidant behaviour, such as avoiding sitting close to, or avoiding talking to, non-heterosexual individuals.

Heterosexist language and terminology refers to language that reflects an underlying negative assumption that non-heterosexual identities are deviant and outside the norm. Many of the individuals interviewed in a study referred to the use of the term “gay,” in derogatory contexts. Others highlighted using an individual's sexual orientation as an identifier, which would not usually happen with heterosexual people. This singling out can also lead to making an individual's sexual orientation their focal point, and decrease their individuality to a single factor (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). An example is identifying a friend as a bisexual friend, as opposed to a friend from psychology class, or someone with a mutual friend.

Oversexualisation refers to the negative stereotype that all non-heterosexual people are primarily interested in sexual relations and physical gratification only. Another manifestation of this is the belief that individuals attracted to the same gender are attracted to all people of that gender. This reduces complex non-heterosexual relationships to only sexual intimacy, leaving them devoid of emotional bonds (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). This is the common misperception that straight people have relationships, families, and homes, while non-heterosexual people have “lifestyles” but no families (like children). An example is assuming that a same-gender couple will not have children, or that coming out is akin to publicly announcing one's sex life as a non-heterosexual individual.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, undersexualisation is the acceptance of a non-heterosexual individual only while they are not actively in a relationship. This is modern heterosexism, a “don't ask, don't tell” stance. This leads to increased feelings of anxiety, frustration, and isolation, particularly when an individual feels their loved ones were initially accepting (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). Here, the implicit message and the explicit message are at odds, with the former being the unacceptability of same-gender relationships, while the latter is a message of relative acceptance, under certain unnamed but otherwise obvious conditions. An example is leaving a friend after they get with a same-gender partner, despite being overtly “accepting” initially.

The last, microaggressions as humour, pertains to how microaggressions are communicated to non-heterosexual individuals. Demeaning statements are often delivered with a humorous tone in order to make socially unacceptable content more acceptable. As such, perpetrators often benefit from the

minimising method of delivery, while non-heterosexual individuals are told to lighten up, further devaluing their experiences (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). An example is joking about the very possibility of an individual being LGBTQIA+ in a derogatory manner.

### **The Ambivalence of Homotolerance**

As mentioned earlier, such microaggressions are perpetrated by well-meaning individuals who do not realise the profound impact of what they see as harmless on a historically and contemporarily marginalised community. However, how do people tend to react upon learning that such mundane parts of daily life are comparable to the thousand cuts meant to cause immense suffering, even if this pain is invisible? In a qualitative study conducted by Clarke (2019), the answer seemed to be not too well. In their study, a professor wore a shirt with the slogan, "Some people are gay. Get over it!" Many students in their class, self-proclaimed "allies" found this garment offensive as they felt they were being accused of homophobia (Clarke, 2019). This creates an internal conflict wherein the "non-homophobic" individual uses heterosexist language and cultural heterosexism to justify any negative evaluations and attitudes towards non-heterosexual individuals. In this study, participants often framed homophobia as a thing of the past, and asserted their collective heterosexuality as allying alongside marginalised sexual minorities (Clarke, 2019). It is interesting that even while asserting pro-equality stances, they assumed that everyone belonged to the dominant privileged sexual majority (a microaggression in the form of endorsement of heteronormative culture as discussed earlier). Others often treated the accusation of homophobia worse than a non-heterosexual individual reacted to the actual instance of heterosexism. Still others framed the t-shirt as "aggressive", looking at the professor as irrational due to the fact that homophobia does not exist anymore (Clarke, 2019). Historically, blaming minorities for making a mountain out of a molehill has remained an effective strategy for minimising the responsibility of the perpetrators while downplaying the impact of such discrimination (Clarke, 2019). It is this downplaying that must be visibilised.

Another strategy used by the participants was splitting, or a divide and rule strategy, wherein a contrast was drawn between "bad" non-heterosexuals and "good" non-heterosexuals (Clarke, 2019). In this binary, "good" non-heterosexuals do their best to fit within a heteronormative culture by invisibilising their "deviance" as far as possible (Clarke, 2019). Non heterosexual individuals are expected to tone down their own selves for the comfort of the privileged (and rather fragile) dominant group by ascribing to heterosexism. Unfortunately, this seems to be echoed in every single type of microaggression discussed earlier in this paper. It is important to note that although there has been a shift from overt homophobia to homotolerance, this is still ambivalent and relies on the maintenance of the status quo, in this case, privileging heterosexuality and othering non-heterosexuality, with the

latter clearly inferior and less human.

### **Intolerance of Intolerance**

As mentioned earlier, a "good" non-heterosexual individual is one that most closely tones down their difference to fit into the status quo, in this case, heterosexuality. What happens when entire communities of people, heterosexual or not, are complicit in maintaining this status quo? What does this tolerance of intolerance lead to? Karl Popper, a prominent philosopher of the 20th century, put forward the idea of the paradox of tolerance (in "What is Paradox", 2017). The crux of this concept is that unlimited tolerance, even of oppressive acts, would lead to a condition where intolerance for diversity and human nature itself would thrive. In this case, tolerance would lead to intolerance. In order to sustain society, individuals and communities must be intolerant of intolerance itself ("What is Paradox", 2017). Within the context of this paper, this paradox would mean that tolerating microaggressions against a historically and contemporarily marginalised community would lead to the tolerance of intolerance of humanity. Unless intolerance of facets of humanity is something an individual strives for, something political and psychological theories would argue no rational individual would do, it becomes hard to make a case for tolerating this intolerance.

Intolerance of intolerance refers to acknowledging these mundane forms of intolerance that all individuals are unfortunately socialised to imbibe in a way that becomes second nature. Once this negative second nature is acknowledged, making active efforts to break these habits is an essential step to refusing to participate in the dehumanisation of full and complex individuals who have nothing to be ashamed of. After recognising these socialised oppressive instruments in the self, it is imperative to recognise these in others within the environment and help them acknowledge and break these habits, too.

### **A Double Life**

At this point in the paper, it is important to go back to the sixth microaggression in the typology discussed earlier: undersexualisation, and its "don't ask don't tell" stance (Platt & Lenzen, 2013). Why tell if you are not asked? Very simply put, this stance does not centre on the marginalised population, in this case LGBTQ+ individuals, and instead centres on the rather unfair needs of cis het individuals. This undersexualisation, a microaggression discussed earlier, can, therefore, lead to a lifetime of toning down oneself for the convenience of others.

Self-disclosure is an integral part of human interactions and interpersonal relationships. Research has shown that lack of self-disclosure can lead to patterns of loneliness and self-isolation, which in turn are linked to negative mental health outcomes (Herek, 1996). This "double life" can lead to a host of other complications arising from being inauthentic with oneself.

At the other end of the spectrum, one can argue that this “don't ask don't tell” includes a component of hypersexualisation too. Often, media affirmations of heterosexuality are interpreted as statements about a “normal” life of a couple who loves each other. In contrast, affirmations and assertions of “non-normative” sexual orientations are seen as public statements about sexual conduct and sexual practices which are usually deemed private matters for heterosexual people. For example, if a person comes out of the closet, it is interpreted as a statement about their sexual conduct, whereas it is simply an assertion of being authentic with oneself. Heterosexuals are desexualised (not to be mistaken for undersexualisation), and non-heterosexual individuals are hypersexualised in this context (Herek, 1996). Simply existing for certain marginalised communities is interpreted very differently in comparison to the interpretations made for people privileged in this respect.

### Benefits of the Intolerance of Intolerance.

It can be argued that coming out will challenge both, the hypersexualisation and undersexualisation, experienced by most non-heterosexual individuals through resisting against the “don't ask don't tell” stance. It would also promote better health outcomes, as research has consistently shown that being inauthentic with oneself can lead to serious negative health outcomes that may be durable and chronic unless addressed in a timely manner (Herek, 1996). These are the two salient benefits to the marginalised group upon coming out. But can coming out benefit the privileged group – heterosexuals – as well? As per the Contact Theory, intergroup contact between marginalised and privileged groups can lead to decreased levels of intergroup hostility and prejudice (Herek, 1996). Thus, it can be argued that given the research in this field, coming out of the closet is beneficial for all parties involved, and leads to stronger relationships and better health outcomes. Another question that arises here is how coming out to potentially homophobic and definitively homonegative heterosexual individuals could be beneficial to these members of the privileged group. Research has shown contact with non-heterosexual individuals has an additive effect on attitudes of heterosexual people, in that straight people who know non-straight people generally have more favourable attitudes than straight people who do not know any non-heterosexual individuals (Herek, 1996). According to this research, the act of coming out can lead to decreased levels of homophobia and homonegativity in heterosexual individuals, paradoxical as that may seem.

### Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to show how forms of oppression change over time and space, although the underlying reasons remain the same, with reference to one particular structure of oppression: homophobia. Although homophobia and homonegativity do not always explicitly look like more violent hate crimes and deprivation of fundamental rights (although most LGBTQ+ face both of these overt

manifestations of oppression), they implicitly permeate and structure daily life in ways that make such forms of oppression inescapable. By outlining the various modern and “liberal” forms of homophobia that exist today, and how people tend to react to their acknowledgments (and inadvertently reinforce them), this paper hopes to bring more clarity to this argument. By highlighting what tolerance of intolerance leads to and how to combat such negative outcomes, this paper hopes to show how intolerance of intolerance benefits society at both macro and micro levels. In order to strengthen this argument, this paper highlights benefits borne by both privileged and oppressed groups that arise from refusing to tolerate oppression. It is of paramount importance to recognise that historical forms of oppression and their various manifestations do not remain confined to history. After all, the present is born out of the historical circumstances that act as its foundations. Although times change, the underlying ideas that give rise to such oppression seem to remain durable, and simply change in manifestations to adapt to changing contexts with regard to time and space. These invisibilised manifestations of historical oppression must be visibilised, addressed, acknowledged, and rooted out over time in order to truly be free of the plague of dehumanisation. It is paradoxical that they remain invisibilised despite permeating and structuring daily life.

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# A Study of the Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Organizational Commitment among Employees Working in Private Sector Organizations

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**Abstract:** Work and personal life are two important domains of an individual's life. Disturbance in either of these can damage the work-life balance of a person. This can lead to many negative effects which may affect both, the work and personal life. A vital facet of career life is organizational commitment i.e., an individual's willingness to continue working in the present organization and congruence with the organizational goals and beliefs the current study investigates the relationship between work-life balance and organisational commitment among private-sector employees (N=100). Work-life balance scale and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was used to collect the data from private organizations in Delhi NCR region. The findings of this study indicate that work-life balance and organisational commitment have a significant positive relationship. It was also seen that females score significantly higher on organizational commitment than males. The current study helps us identify the implications and need of a stable work-life balance and highlights the further need to ensure WLB for individual wellbeing and organizational growth.

**Keywords:** work-life balance, organizational commitment, private sector organization, sex

Work-life balance (WLB) can be understood as the equilibrium between the amount of effort and time an individual devotes to work and personal activities, in order to maintain an overall sense of harmony in life (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004). Pareek, and Purohit (2010) derived a work-life balance model which consists of six components: Social needs (related to societal requirements such as family ceremonies, religious functions); Personal Needs (taking care of family chores, enjoying the activities of interest, exercising); Time Management (planning time efficiently); Team Work (concerned with the work environment); Compensation and Benefits (monetary aspect and extra perks provided by the company) and Work (includes different aspects of the job such as the work allocated, contribution one's work has in the advancement of the organization, autonomy one has to take important decisions etc.).

Where clearly technological advancements and globalization has made our lives better, it has also played an important role in blurring the lines between work and personal time. People are constantly attached to their job via smartphones and laptops. People who are constantly tied up to their jobs show symptoms of burnout, stress, family conflicts, etc. Thus, it has been very important to draw distinctions between work and private time. In recent years there has been a growing awareness about this issue which has led to many researches relating WLB to organization behavior, absenteeism, gender equality, family and more (Virick, Lilly, & Casper 2007). Empirical evidence proves that individuals who have high WLB are better settled in their daily lives. However, WLB cannot be achieved alone by the individual. The employers, organization, and the state and local communities together have to work in order for the working citizens to achieve a stable work-life balance (COFACE, 2008).

Maintaining a proper WLB leads to many positive consequences in the individual's life. These may be materialistic or non-materialistic in nature (Lockwood, 2003; Dallimore & Mickel, 2006). Reduced work-family conflicts lead to less stress and burnout, more leisure time, improved mental and physical wellbeing, job satisfaction, increased empowerment, control over the work schedule, and increased love for work are all positive outcomes of work-life balance. (Remery & Schippers, 2003; ILO, 2004; Bird, 2006; Littig, 2008; Tariq et al., 2012). Moreover, researches show that stable work-life balance for the employees in turn benefits the employer/organization. (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Dench, Bevan, Tamkin, & Cumings, 2000; Dallimore & Mickel, 2006; Dunne & Teg, 2007; Lockwood, 2003). These benefits include: lower recruiting, induction, and training costs associated with replacing missing workers; attracting high-quality employees and a diverse range of candidates; increased employee efficiency as a result of improved motivation and performance; and attracting high-quality employees and a diverse range of candidates; Employees' work ethics, job satisfaction, job engagement, and job empowerment boost. As a consequence, coordination, collaboration, and interactions are strengthened; innovation and competitive advantage are maintained; and teamwork, connectivity, and relationships within the company hierarchy are enhanced.

Despite a major increase of working women in India, taking care of the household and taking care of the children is still seen as a woman's responsibility. A study of Harvard Business Review found that despite women acquiring high level positions in organizations and major increase in the number of working women, family problems are primarily seen as a female problem (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). The tension between work and family is seen as a woman's problem by both the sexes. Researches have shown that these burdening

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responsibilities lead to unstable WLB which further leads to frustration, unhappiness and anger which results in creating tight boundaries between their work and home life in order to avoid overlap at all times (Burke 2002). Work-life harmony seems to be perceived differently by men and women (Connell 2005; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

For any employee, their workplace is an important aspect of their lives. Therefore, it is natural for one to feel attached and committed to their organization if they feel welcomed and appreciated there. According to Meyer, Allen, and Gellantly (1990) organizational commitment is “an attitude that is characterized by an affective and favorable positive cognitive component about the organization.” Research in this area has stemmed primarily from the need to establish a relationship between antecedents of organizational commitment and organizational outcomes in order to create and sustain a committed workforce, contributing positively towards organizational commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1984) Initially gave a two-dimensional definition of organizational commitment was proposed, which included affective and continuance commitments. Affective commitment was defined as a positive feeling and attachment towards the organization and identification with its goals and beliefs. The second dimension, i.e., continuance commitment was defined as the extent of commitment displayed by the employees depending on the cost that they think is associated with leaving the organization. Later, a third dimension (normative commitment) was added making it a tri-dimensional model (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The third dimension, normative commitment is defined as “the sense of obligation and moral duty to remain with the organization that the employee feels he/she must abide to” (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Members that are committed are usually goal-oriented and innovative, with the overall goal of contributing and enhancing success (Morrow, 1993). Cohen (2003) states that “organizations whose members have higher levels of commitment show higher performance and productivity and lower levels of absenteeism and tardiness”. Members who are affectively and normatively committed are more likely to stay in the organization and contribute to its success than members who are only possess a continuance-commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984).

Low levels of organizational engagement are linked to high employee turnover, absenteeism, and burnout (Huseyin, 2018). It has also been found to be a mediator of role stress and turnover intentions (Rageb, Abd-El-Salam, El-Samadicy, & Farid, 2013). Employee absenteeism, turnover, decreased initiative spending, fraud, workplace frustration, and refusal to relocate according to Cohen (2003), may all be explained by a

lack of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is thought to be a better indicator of employee turnover than the much more widely known predictor, job satisfaction (Miller, 2003). It has also been found to play an important role in predicting organization citizenship behavior (Hung, Lee, & Lee, 2018; Huseyin, 2018)

As per the literature review work-life balance has been found as an important factor of predicting job satisfaction and absenteeism. Similarly, organizational commitment is an important aspect of judging the employee's positive feelings and intent to maintain affiliation with the organization. These two variables have been taken together as they are the leading cause of absenteeism and employee turnover. These days both partners work and most of the parents face difficulties in managing family and work together, which often leads to either work-family interference or family-work interference. These feelings often lead to personal stress and burnout at work which has major effects at both personal and work level.

### Hypotheses

H1: Males and females have significantly different levels of work-life balance.

H2: Males and female have significantly different levels of organisational commitment.

H3: There exists a positive significant relationship between Work-life balance and organisational commitment

### Method

#### Participants

The participants were selected through the process of incidental sampling. All the participants belonged to the private sector organizations having graduation as the minimum qualification. The current research used a sample size of N=100 (50 males and 50 females). All the participants fell within the age group of 25-40 years, average age of the sample being 29 years, and belonging to Delhi NCR region (Urban metropolitan city). The majority of the people in the study were single and didn't have any children (72 percent).

#### Design

A correlational research design was used for the present study.

#### Measures

**Work-life Balance Scale.** Developed by Pareek and Purohit (2011), Work-life Balance scale is a 36 items self-report measure. The scale uses a five-point Likert scale, the participants respond to each item by rating it on the basis of degree of agreeability with the statement following the rating scale as '0' for not true, '1' for a 'little true', '2' for 'somewhat true', 3 for 'mostly true' and '4' for 'definitely true'. The scale

assesses a respondent's work-life balance across six dimensions (Time Management, Social needs, Team Work, Personal needs, Compensation and Benefits, and Work) as well as their total work-life balance. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which was found to be 0.825.

**Organizational Commitment Questionnaire.** The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), constructed by Allen and Meyer (1990), is a self-report scale. The questionnaire tests the respondent's level of commitment in three aspects i.e., affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Each of these three commitments consists of 8 questions each in the OCQ. All the questions are rated using a 5-point Likert scale following the code as: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree

nor disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. The Reliability (Alpha) for the 3 dimensions have been reported as 0.87 for affective, 0.75 for persistent, and 0.79 for normative (Allen and Meyer, 1996).

### Procedure

Keeping the objectives of the current study in mind, measures were identified. Following that, 100 participants who serve in private organizations were chosen. An initial rapport was established with the participants in order to make them comfortable and they were informed about the assessment and its relevance. Data was collected from the various private organizations within Delhi and NCR area. Scoring of each tool was done and the scores were subjected to descriptive, inferential and statistical analysis.

## Results

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics of the Sample*

|                           | Males<br>(N=50) |       | Females<br>(N=50) |       | Totals<br>(N=100) |       |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
|                           | Mean            | SD    | Mean              | SD    | Mean              | SD    |
| Organizational Commitment | 46.62           | 12.17 | 53.96             | 10.21 | 50.29             | 11.77 |
| Work-Life Balance         | 83.74           | 13.91 | 85.88             | 13.19 | 84.81             | 13.53 |
| Affective Commitment      | 15.32           | 6.40  | 19.88             | 5.06  | 17.60             | 6.18  |
| Continuance Commitment    | 15.78           | 4.26  | 16.90             | 3.27  | 16.34             | 3.82  |
| Normative Commitment      | 15.04           | 5.39  | 17.00             | 3.89  | 16.02             | 4.78  |
| Social Needs              | 51.87           | 19.48 | 55.62             | 24.20 | 53.75             | 21.94 |
| Personal Needs            | 60.63           | 11.83 | 54.71             | 18.00 | 57.67             | 15.44 |
| Time Management           | 50.70           | 17.00 | 54.71             | 13.41 | 52.70             | 15.37 |
| Team Work                 | 51.70           | 16.18 | 63.55             | 10.57 | 57.62             | 14.84 |
| Compensation and Benefits | 64.88           | 10.04 | 63.88             | 13.82 | 64.38             | 12.03 |
| Work                      | 62.13           | 16.03 | 63.96             | 16.50 | 63.05             | 16.21 |

Table 1 shows the mean and the S.D of the sample on both the variables and their dimensions for both the sexes and the total population

Table 2

*Sex differences in Organizational commitment and work-life balance*

| Measure                   | Male   |       | Female |       | t      | p    |
|---------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|------|
|                           | Mean   | SD    | Mean   | SD    |        |      |
|                           | (N=50) |       | (N=50) |       |        |      |
| Organizational Commitment | 46.62  | 12.17 | 53.96  | 10.21 | 3.265* | .002 |
| Work-life Balance         | 83.74  | 13.91 | 85.88  | 13.19 | 0.789  | .432 |

Note: \*p<0.05

Table 2 shows independent t test results to assess sex differences. With respect to organizational commitment, a significant difference was found between males ( $M = 46.62$ ,  $S.D = 12.17$ ) and females ( $M = 53.96$ ,  $S.D = 10.21$ ). It also

shows the difference in the work-life balance of males ( $M = 83.74$ ,  $S.D = 13.91$ ) and females ( $M = 85.88$ ,  $S.D = 13.19$ ) but which was found to be non-significant, with t being 3.265 and 0.789 respectively.

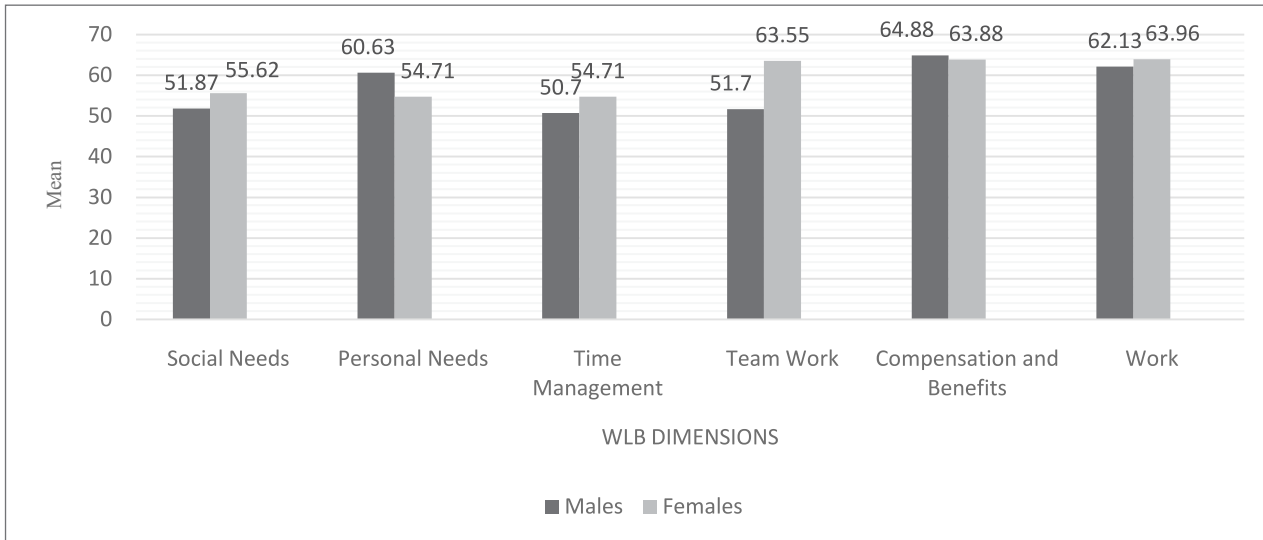


Figure 1

#### Sex Differences On Dimensions of Work-life Balance

Figure 1 shows the differences in means of males and females on the dimensions of work-life balance. Most of the dimension show little differences on the basis of sex. The personal needs dimension shows that the mean of males ( $M = 60.63$ ) is much higher than that of females ( $M = 54.71$ ). The mean of females ( $M = 63.55$ ) is much higher than of males ( $M = 51.7$ ) on the dimension of team work.

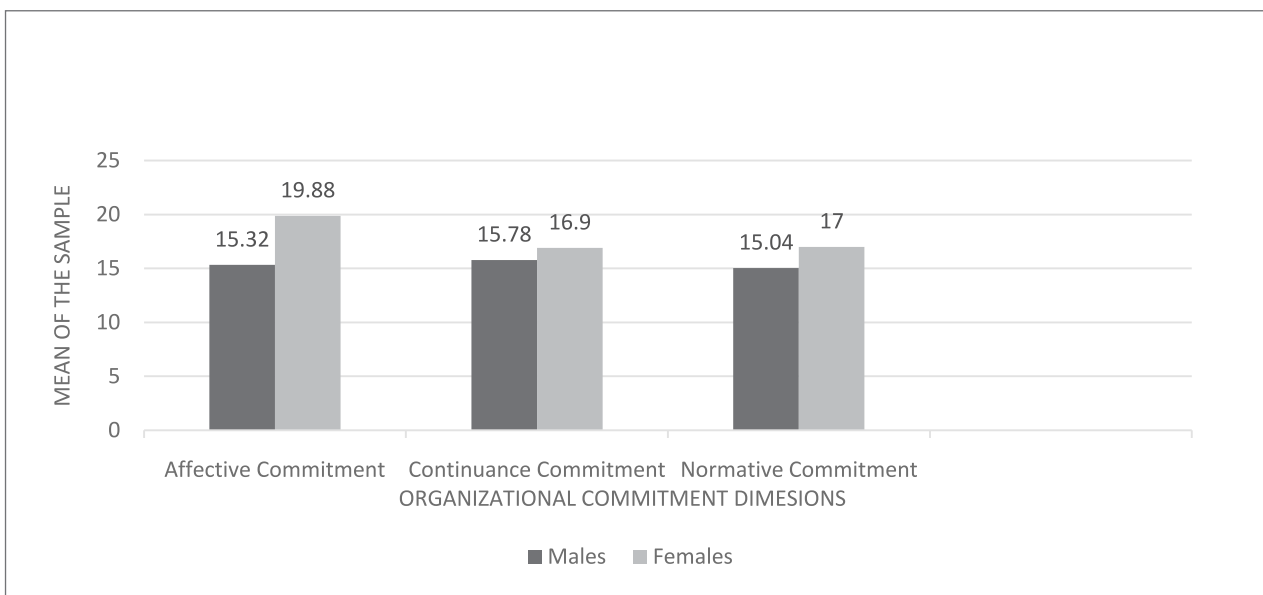


Figure 2

#### Sex Differences on Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

There exists very little difference on the dimension of continuance commitment. There exists high difference in the means of males ( $M = 15.32$ ) and females ( $M = 19.88$ ) on the dimension of affective commitment. The means for males ( $M = 15.04$ ) and females ( $M = 17$ ) on the dimension of normative commitment show little but considerable difference.

Table 3  
*Correlation Between Work-life Balance and Organization Commitment*

| Measures                  | Organizational Commitment | Work-life Balance | p     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Organizational Commitment | 1                         | .266*             | 0.008 |
| Work-life Balance         | .266**                    | 1                 | 0.008 |

Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$

The table shows that there exists a significant positive correlation ( $p < 0.01$ ) between work-life balance and organizational commitment of the sample.

Table 4  
*Correlation between the dimensions of work-life balance and dimensions of organizational commitment.*

|                           | Affective Commitment | Continuance Commitment | Normative Commitment |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Social Needs              | .358**               | -.177                  | .383**               |
| Personal Needs            | .160                 | -.148                  | .128                 |
| Time Management           | .133                 | -.205*                 | .156                 |
| Team Work                 | .228*                | -.035                  | .198*                |
| Compensation and Benefits | .215*                | .088                   | .127                 |
| Work                      | .300**               | .073                   | .352**               |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

Correlation matrix of the dimensions of work-life balance and the dimensions of organizational commitments shows that there exists a significant positive correlation between social needs and affective commitment and between social needs ( $p < 0.01$ ) and normative commitment ( $p < 0.01$ ). The second dimension of work-life balance, personal needs does not show any significant correlation with any of the dimensions of organizational commitment. Time management negatively correlates with continuance commitment ( $p < 0.05$ ). Team work shows a significant positive correlation with affective commitment ( $p < 0.05$ ) and normative commitment ( $p < 0.05$ ). Compensation and benefits offered by the present organization shows a positive correlation with the sample's Affective commitment ( $p < 0.05$ ). The work dimension of work-life balance shows a significant correlation with the sample's affective commitment ( $p < 0.01$ ) and normative commitment ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### Discussion

The present research explores the relationship between work-life balance and organizational commitment, the sex difference in organizational commitment and work-life balance, and the relationship of the dimensions of the two variables using Pearson's correlation and independent t-test.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample based on sex and total sample. The range of the total sample shows that it is above average for almost all the domains except for the individual's total work-life balance (range= 58). Differences in the means of males and females for the dimension of both the variable's dimensions of affective commitment, normative commitment, personal needs and team work can be seen in the descriptive statistics. These differences are further analyzed to evaluate their significance.

Though, the graphical representation of the means for both the sexes on sub-dimension of WLB shows that, there still exists a difference between males and females on the dimensions of team work and personal needs. The overall sex difference on the WLB variable was found to be insignificant.

The Table 2 shows the sex differences in organizational commitment and work-life balance. There were no significant differences found in the work-life balance of the males and females. This is inconsistent with many previous researches as It has been found that despite these policies the work-life balance of males is better than females and house hold chores are normatively viewed as female responsibility (Burke 2002; Smithson and Stokoe 2005; Groyberg and Abrahams, 2014). Delhi being a metropolitan city is a bit advanced as compared to many other states of our country. There is a high

probability that similar to work place environment, men and women share equal roles and responsibilities at home as well. Also, the data set chosen for this sample consisted of mostly young people who are either unmarried or have recently started their families. Thus, the sample shows no significant difference in the work-life balance of males and females.

Table 2 shows that there exists a difference in Organizational Commitment of males and females. This means females are more committed to their organizations as compared to males. A study by Grusky (1966) showed that the differences in organizational commitment between the two sexes could be due to lack of opportunities for women in companies all over India. Some of the researches in India showing sex differences in commitment has been conducted in the field of Teaching. Mishra (2011) found that male and female teachers with respect to organizational commitment showed significant difference. The results revealed that the female teachers possessed a significantly higher level of organizational commitment. One study showed female's organizational commitment was found to be higher than men working in banks (Gupta & Sharma, 2014). These results are accounted to the cultural aspect which focuses less on women advancement at the same time higher managerial post are less for available to women and the accepted glass ceiling may be the reason for the increased organizational commitment. The aspect of females being more emotionally connected and caring is also one of the variables highlighted as a mediating factor.

Figure 2 shows the differences in means of the scores of males and females in different sub-categories of organizational commitment. It can be seen that the females have a higher affective and normative commitment than males. Previous studies and the present research both show that females score higher on the team work aspect of work-life balance than males, which may lead to higher affective commitment in females as researches have proven that a high predictor of affective commitment is perceived co-worker support (Armeli et al., 2001; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Sloan, Newhouse, & Thompson, 2013).

Table 3 shows that there exists a significant positive correlation between WLB and organizational commitment, which implies that increase or decrease in an individual's work-life balance would lead to similar effect in the individual's organizational commitment. Earlier researches by Syed and Akhtar (2014) in the healthcare sector in India have proven that a positive relation between work-life balance and organizational commitment exists. Theoretical evidences such as the Spillover Theory (Mukururi & Ngari, 2014) and the Role Stress Theory (Good, Grovalyn, & James, 1988) further support the obtained results, as stress from one domain of life results in an inability to manage different individual roles affect job satisfaction and commitment attitude.

Table 4 shows the correlation between the dimensions of work-life balance and organizational commitment. It shows

that there exists a significant positive correlation between social need and affective commitment and similarly social needs is also positively correlated to normative commitment. Any individual's social needs are an important aspect of an individual's non-work life. Therefore, if individuals are unable to fulfill their social needs then their personal lives will be negatively impacted. These negative feelings would spill over to the work domain and lead reduced levels of commitment. The normative commitment assumes that the individual feels obliged or feels that they owe the organization their loyalty as the organization has provided them with benefits and employment but if the individual feels that he/she is unable to fulfill his/her social needs due their work then the employees ideas and believes will no longer be incongruence to that of the organization, leading to an earlier stage of organization commitment, i.e., compliance and lower levels of organizational commitment. A positive correlation between time management and affective commitment is obtained. Researches have shown that conflict occurs when work interferes with family and vice versa leading to work-family conflicts (Cole, 2004). Researches have also shown a significant negative correlation between work family conflicts and affective commitment, where weekly work hours act as an important factor influencing work family conflict (Akintayo, 2010). Therefore, it can be inferred that positive time management avoids work-family conflict which leads to increased affective commitment.

Table 4 also depicts that there exists a significant positive correlation between Compensation and benefits and Affective commitment. This implies that the benefits and compensation provided by the organization increases an individual's affective commitment towards the organization. Avari, Amin, Ahmad, Seliman, and Gamasari (2011) studied the relationship between strategic compensation practices and affective organizational commitment. Their findings reveal that there is significant positive relationship between compensation policies and organization commitment. These benefits and compensations are planned and rewarded to the employees in order to increase their job satisfaction, job performance, decrease job turnover and increase organizational commitment. According to Table 4, there is a significant positive correlation between work and, affective and normative commitment. The nature of the work an employee performs at an organization holds great meaning in assessing their organizational commitment. If they feel that the work, they are doing is significant, of their choice and, if one is passionate about it then the employee is more performance oriented, is less likely to be absent than usual and also less likely to leave the organization.

By examining previously globally studied variables in the context of Indian culture, the current study contributes to reducing the research gap. A changing trend in the sex differences on variables such as work-life balance can act as an important information for further recognizing such trends in earlier explored researches. The correlation between WLB and

organizational commitment sheds light on and can serve as a basis for shaping important policy changes that benefit both the employee and the employer, making individual's work and personal life more fulfilling.

### Limitations and directions for future research

The study might not be able to shed light on all the aspects of work-life balance and organizational commitment as the sample size was considerably small. Other aspects and better picture of the relationship between the two variables can be understood if the same study is conducted on a larger sample. Furthermore, due to limitation of time and resources the data was collected from the participants belonging to Delhi and NCR region which narrowed down the study to a restricted area and small population. Other factors which may have an effect on the individual's work-life balance and organizational commitment such as job satisfaction, role conflict, role diffusion and mental health were not taken into account. Taking these factors into account a more holistic view of the relationship between the two variables can be understood. For the present study, only quantitative data was analyzed for understanding the present variables. Conducting a qualitative study along with the quantitative data may elicit more accurate results.

### Conclusion

The present research studies the relationship between work-life balance and organizational commitment and the sex difference for these variables. From this study it can be concluded that there exists a positive relation between work-life balance and organizational commitment. There was no significant sex difference found in work-life balance of the people working in the private sectors. These results could be influenced by the age group taken for the study. On the other hand, it was seen that organizational commitment is higher in females as compared to males in the Indian private sector. Also, there exists a significant positive correlation between work (a dimension of WLB) and, affective and normative commitment. The socio-historical and contextual factors could influence the availability of options and opportunities for women in organizations in India.

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## Social, Emotional and Educational Adjustment of children with Specific Learning Disability and their Parental Attitude

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**Abstract:** Specific learning disability has been a growing area of concern in the past decade for school-going children as it disrupts their social, emotional and educational adjustment. This condition is further affected by the attitude of their parents. The present study was undertaken to assess the areas of adjustment severely affected by the maladaptive parental attitude of failing to understand their condition of SLD. The study assessed a sample of 60 children, both, males and females, along with their parents. The data was collected using random sampling method. ANOVA and correlational analysis revealed that hostility exhibited by the parents affected both emotional and educational adjustment of their children (with SLD). The attitude of over-involvement of the parents resulted in poor adjustment in the emotional and educational sphere of adjustment in the children. Female children were found to be better adjusted in all three domains of adjustment as compared to male children. Lastly, the attitude of acceptance exhibited by parents towards their children had a significant effect on children's overall adjustment. The attitude in congruence with education by the parents, towards children with SLD prominently affected their emotional adjustment.

**Keywords:** Specific Learning Disability, Parental attitude, Social, emotional, educational adjustment

Some children in every class find it difficult to cope with the pressure of the curriculum, despite their requisite intelligence and hard work. The definition of learning disability as per the World Federation of Neurology (1968): "A disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instructions, adequate intelligence and socio-cultural opportunity". Specific learning disability has been divided into the following types, (all neurologically based) (a) Dyslexia: According to the International Dyslexia Association, it is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, poor spelling and decoding abilities, problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (b) Dyscalculia: It is characterized by unusual difficulty in solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts. The most common problem is with "number sense." Students may know what to do in maths class, but do not understand why they are doing it because the logic behind the calculation is missing. (c) Dysgraphia: It is presented as difficulties with spelling, poor handwriting, and trouble putting thoughts on paper. It can be a language-based and/or non-language-based disorder. When it is language-based, a student may have difficulty to convert the sounds of language into written form. When it is non-language based, a student may have difficulty performing the controlled, fine motor skills required to write. Students with dysgraphia may speak more easily and fluently than they write.

Specific learning disabilities (SLD) is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of neurobehavioral disorders manifested by significant unexpected, specific and persistent difficulties in the acquisition and use of efficient reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia) or mathematical (dyscalculia) abilities despite conventional instruction, intact senses, average intelligence, adequate motivation and socio-cultural opportunity (Shapiro and Gallico, 1993). These students have serious problems in educational adjustment since there exists a relationship between self concept and adjustment. Emotional problems arising out of adjustment difficulties stem from academic failures and create a vicious cycle of dysfunction (Awasthi, 2018; Pandey, 2017). Their rate of absence and dropout is significantly higher than their classmates (Cortiella, 2013; Singh et al., 2017; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014; US Department of Education, 2014), found in students who had taken applied STEM courses as well (Plasman & Gottfried, 2018) and they are constantly rejected by their neurotypical classmates (Broomhead, 2019; Passiatore et al., 2017). There is an associated relationship between academic achievement, social and emotional growth. Multiple studies related to these students revealed that they also exhibit socialization, emotional and behavioural problems (Cavioni, Grazzani, & Ormaghi, 2017). A high percentage of students who suffer from emotional problems also exhibit learning disabilities, interpersonal skills problems, mood, depressive and social information processing difficulties disorders. Moreover, high

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level of loneliness and social isolation and maladjustment are observed among these individuals (Tilly, 2019; Yilmaz, Aydin, Bahadir, & Soyer, 2019).

The main hypothesis is that learning disabilities give rise to social, emotional, and academic adjustment problems. It has been seen that children with a specific learning disability develop emotional, social and behavioural problems due to low scores in academics, poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, poor social relations etc.

Previous studies have measured only one aspect of these variables and have not correlated it with the parental attitude of such children. Moreover, in India, not many relevant studies have been conducted regarding the social, emotional and educational adjustment of these children along with their parental standards. Therefore, this study was planned to cater to the need for research in this area.

### Hypotheses

H1: There will be no significant difference between males and females with specific learning disability on social, emotional and educational adjustment

H2: There will be no significant difference in scores on the attitude domain between mothers and fathers of children with specific learning disability

H3: There will be no relationship between adjustment levels of children with specific learning disability and their parental attitudes.

### Method

#### Participants

The study included 60 (Male=30, Female=30) children diagnosed with specific learning disability, below the age of 18 years ( $M = 12.77$  yrs), referred by a professional channel through the experts in OPD to the researcher, and were assessed after taking their written consent. Purposive and convenience sampling method was applied while collecting the data, where the patients approaching RML-OPD were randomly assigned consent forms for this research study.

#### Design

The current study follows a survey based correlational design. Gathering data about adjustment of children with specific learning disability and parental attitudes, the study attempts to understand the relationship between adjustment of the children and parental attitudes. Further, gender differences between the adjustment of children with specific learning disability will also be analysed.

#### Measures

**Malin's Intelligence Scale for Indian Children.** This is an Indian adaptation of Wechsler's Intelligence scale for children,

used to assess the IQ of children by Dr Arthur J. Malin in 1949. MISIC is an intelligence test for children from the ages of 6 to 15 years 11 months. The test comprises 12 subtests divided into two groups, Verbal and Performance. Verbal Scale tests consist of 6 subtests (Information Test, General comprehension Test, Arithmetic Test, Digit span Test, Vocabulary Test, Analogies and Similarities) and Performance Scale tests consist of 5 subtests (Picture completion Test, Block design Test, Object assembly Test, Mazes Test, Coding Test). The MISIC established test-retest reliability is 0.91. Indian adaptation has established concurrent (0.61) as well as congruent validity (0.63).

National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences Battery for Specific Learning Disability. This Battery was developed in the Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore by Kapoor, John, Rozario and Ommen in the year 1991, to screen children with SLD. It consists of tests of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic abilities, to identify children with disabilities in these areas. It consists of two levels: Level I consists of tests of Attention, Visual Discrimination, Visual Memory, Auditory Memory, Speech and Language, Visio-motor skills and Writing Skills; Level II consists of tests of Attention, Language (Reading, Writing, Comprehension), Spelling, Perceptual Motor Abilities, Memory and Arithmetic. Its test retest reliability has been found to be 0.53 and good criterion validity.

**Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS).** AISS was developed by A.K.P Sinha & R.P. Singh in 1993. This 60-item inventory has been designed and developed to determine the students' social, affective, and educational adjustment. Its reliability coefficients for split half, test retest and KR formula - 20 are .95, .93 and .94 respectively and coefficient of criterion validity being .51

**Parental Attitude Scale.** Parents' attitudes towards their children were assessed through the administration of a 3-point, 40-item Parental Attitude Scale by Rangaswamy (1989). The items in the scale spread equally into 8 areas, namely: over-protection, acceptance, rejection, permissiveness, communication, attitudes towards education, home management, and hostility. The scores of the scale ranged from 0-80 with a higher score indicating a stronger negative attitude. The scale has good content validity. The sensitivity of scale has been established by comparing scores of normal children and those with problems. The scale has high test re-test reliability value of 0.91 and is found to be a highly valid tool in measuring the parental attitude towards children with a learning disability. The scale has high test re-test reliability value of 0.91, and has been found to be a valid tool in measuring the parental attitude towards children with learning disability.

### Procedure

The study was conducted at the Department of Clinical Psychology, Centre of Excellence in Mental Health, ABVIMS-Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi, a teaching tertiary case Government hospital in North India from October 2016 to April 2017. Institutional Ethics Committee approval was obtained at outset. After taking the parents' consent, the testing started with the children diagnosed with specific learning disability. Malin's Intelligence Scale for Indian

Children (MISIC) was used to measure the IQ of the child. After that the NIMHANS Battery for SLD was administered for the assessment of specific learning disability. AISS was applied to assess the child's problematic areas of adjustment; simultaneously the parents of the children were given the Parent Attitude Scale to assess the attitude of parents towards their children.

Later, after the testing was finished, the data was segregated with respect to girls and boys.

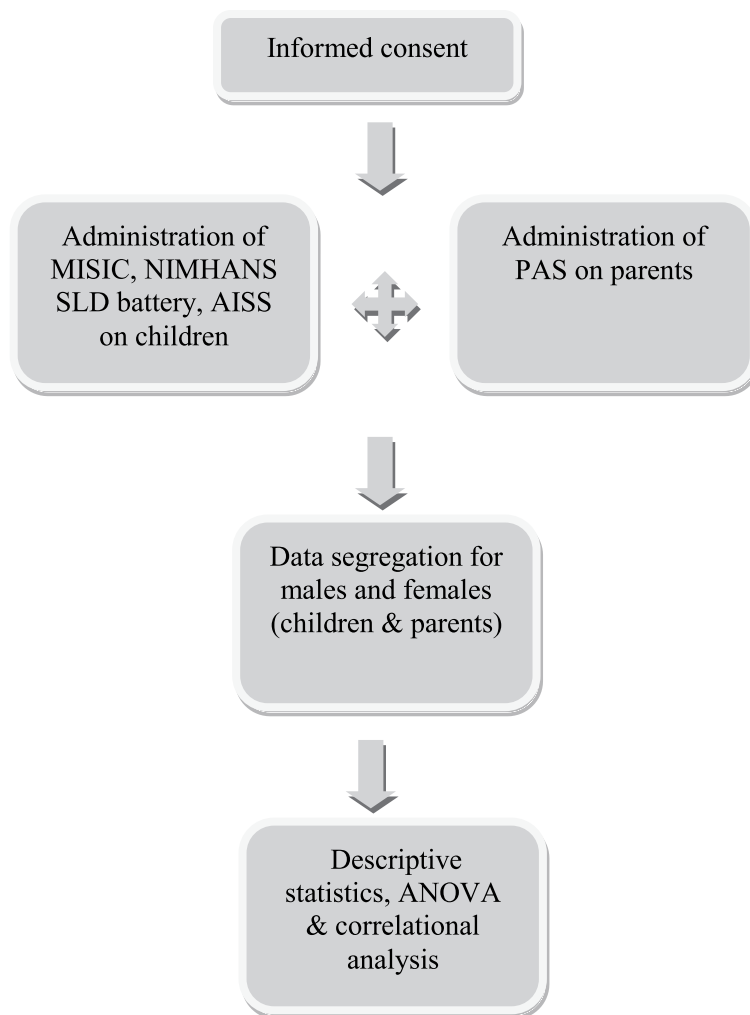


Figure 1

Procedure of conducting the research

Descriptive statistics were computed for the adjustment levels of the children with a specific learning disability. ANOVA was computed to compare the adjustment scores of children with a specific learning disability at all three dimensions (emotional, social and educational adjustment) with that of parental attitude on all eight dimensions (overprotectiveness, acceptance, rejection, permissiveness,

communication, attitude towards education, home management and hostility) separately. And lastly, a correlational analysis was done to check the relationship between adjustment levels of children with a specific learning disability with that of parental attitude at all separate dimensions

## Results

Table 1

*Gender differences in adjustment of children and parental attitudes' dimensions scores*

|                        | Domains                        | Males Mean<br>SD   | Females Mean<br>SD  | 'F' Value     | 'p' Value    |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Children with SLD      | Emotional Adjustment           | 8.36 (4.59)        | 9.76 (4.56)         | 1.28          | 0.26         |
|                        | Social Adjustment              | 10.69 (2.64)       | 11.10 (2.53)        | 0.33          | 0.57         |
|                        | <b>Educational Adjustment</b>  | <b>9.64 (2.64)</b> | <b>11.62 (2.42)</b> | <b>8.11**</b> | <b>0.006</b> |
|                        | AISS                           | 28.69 (8.55)       | 32.48 (8.74)        | 2.63          | 0.11         |
| Parents attitude score | Overprotective                 | 4.13 (2.67)        | 4.62 (3.31)         | 0.39          | 0.54         |
|                        | Acceptance                     | 3.44 (1.65)        | 3.43 (1.80)         | 0.00          | 0.99         |
|                        | Rejection                      | 4.90 (2.23)        | 4.19 (2.14)         | 1.41          | 0.24         |
|                        | Permissiveness                 | 4.87 (2.05)        | 4.95 (2.20)         | 0.02          | 0.89         |
|                        | Communication                  | 5.90 (2.46)        | 6.29 (2.63)         | 0.32          | 0.57         |
|                        | Attitudes towards<br>Education | 4.44 (2.56)        | 4.24 (2.86)         | 0.08          | 0.79         |
|                        | Home Management                | 6.62 (2.72)        | 5.57 (2.75)         | 1.10          | 0.16         |
|                        | Hospitality                    | 6.46 (2.42)        | 5.62 (2.64)         | 1.56          | 0.22         |

Note: \*p&lt;0.05

\*\*p&lt;.01

There were no significant gender differences between males and females on social and emotional adjustment, however, females have significantly higher scores on educational adjustment than the males suggesting females are more well-adjusted than males on the educational domain ( $F=8.11$ ,  $p=0.006$ ). There was no significant difference in any of the attitude domain scores between parents (mothers and fathers) who participated in the study.

Table 2

*Multivariate Analysis showing association of children's adjustment with their parental attitudes*

| Parental Attitude             | Children's adjustment  | M      | F (1, 49) | p    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------|-----------|------|
| Overprotective                | Social Adjustment      | 48.538 | 9.438     | .003 |
|                               | Educational Adjustment | 34.356 | 6.595     | .013 |
| Acceptance                    | Social Adjustment      | 22.534 | 4.382     | .042 |
|                               | AISS Score             | 53.445 | 12.882    | .001 |
| Attitude towards<br>education | Emotional adjustment   | 10.262 | 9.765     | .003 |

Multivariate analysis of variance was carried out to see the effect of parental attitudes on children's adjustment behaviour. Results revealed that overprotective (parental attitude) affected social adjustment ( $F(1, 49)=9.43$ ;  $p=0.013$ ) and educational adjustment ( $F(1, 49)=6.595$ ;  $p=.013$ ) of children with SLD. In other words, it implies that for parents who showed overprotectiveness towards their children with a learning disability, increased problems in the adjustment in social and educational sphere was seen. Furthermore, ( $F(1, 49)=4.38$ ;  $P=0.042$ ) it was also seen that acceptance attitude exhibited by the parents effected overall adjustment levels (AISS) ( $F(1, 49)=12.88$ ;  $P<.005$ ) adjustments scores of children with SLD. On the other hand, it was seen that attitude of parental acceptance also had a significant effect on overall adjustment scores of children with SLD alongside the attitude towards education of the child with SLD had a significant effect on their emotional adjustment domain

Table 3

*Correlation Between Adjustment and Parental Attitude of the Children with Specific Learning Disorder*

| Children with SLD             | Emotional Adjustment | Social Adjustment | Education Adjustment | AISS score          |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Student Scores                | .336 (.768)          | .662(0.000)       | .643(0.000)          | .453(0.919)         |
| Parental score                | —                    | —                 | —                    | —                   |
| Overprotective                | -1.0 (.364)          | -1.0 (0.98)       | .155 (236)           | .224 (0.86)         |
| Acceptance                    | -1.0 (.303)          | .196 (.135)       | .038 (.772)          | <b>-.034 (.007)</b> |
| Rejection                     | -.13 (.921)          | -.102(.436)       | -.174 (.174)         | .034 (.795)         |
| Permissiveness                | -.28 (.831)          | .013 (.924)       | .021 (.874)          | -.071 (.588)        |
| Communication                 | -.57 (.230)          | -.024 (.879)      | -.099(.425)          | .127 (.335)         |
| Attitudes (towards education) | .051 (.701)          | .083 (.527)       | .065 (.621)          | .109 (.408)         |
| Home                          | -1.3 (.318)          | .018 (.829)       | -.120(.316)          | .112 (.393)         |
| Management                    | -.12 (.355)          | -.085(.520)       | -.145(.268)          | .151 (.250)         |
| Hostility                     | .412 (.001)          | .289 (.025)       | .278 (.031)          | .562 (.562)         |
| Parental score                | .259 (.045)          | -.208(.111)       | -.234(.071)          | -.038 (.774)        |
| Parents age                   | -116 (.379)          | -.206(.115)       | -.243(.062)          | -.069 (.601)        |
| Age                           | .004 (.973)          | -.002(.985)       | -.064(.627)          | -.054 (.682)        |
| Parents gender                | -.147(.262)          | .569 (.569)       | -.350(.106)          | .030(.901)          |
| Sex                           | .099 (453)           | .098 (765)        | .87 (-987)           | (.823) .564         |

The above table depicts the computation of correlation between parental attitudes towards children with SLD'S adjustment score

### Discussion

The present study aims to study the relationship and effect of parental attitude with adjustment levels of children suffering from specific learning disability, at three levels, namely emotional, social and educational. It measures parental attitude on eight dimensions, namely: over-protection, acceptance, rejection, permissiveness and communication attitudes towards education, home management and hostility. The finding of the present study is discussed below in the light of researches carried out in this field

Learning Disability entails an extensive range of academic problems and their full perception requires monitoring for the behavioural, emotional and social realms of the child's life.

There were no significant gender differences between males and females on social and emotional adjustment however, females were significantly better adjusted than males on the educational adjustment as can be seen from Table 1. This stands in contrast to the findings of Freilich and Shechtman (2010) where only age was found to be a variable influencing academic achievement and adjustment. Similarly, in a study on college students by Vogel and Walsh (1987) females were attributed with poorer non verbal visuo spatial processing. Ashraf and Najam (2017) explain the difference with the help of writing

disability being significantly more prominent in boys than girls.

The multivariate analysis from Table 2 reveals the role of the dimensions of overprotectiveness, acceptance and attitude towards education as significantly impacting adjustment of children with SLD. Table 3 shows that less accepting the attitude of the parents, poorer the overall adjustment of children with SLD as the correlation is significant and negative. Table 3 also shows how increased hostility is associated with poorer emotional, social and educational adjustment. Previous studies (Higgins, Raskinf, Goldberg, & Herman, 2002; Lahane, Shah, Nagarale, & Kamath, 2013) state that children go through excessive pessimism while receiving hostility, guilt and shame through their parents that then affects their personal and educational adjustment. Also, parents in Indian society tend to show more physical hostility towards the male child because he is perceived to be stronger and is supposed to be the breadwinner than the female child and they have higher expectations from a male child than the female child which could then influence their adjustment in different domains. Greater hostility and overprotectiveness also usually ruins the progress of social adjustment of children because they it does not let children expose themselves to new relations, impacts their self esteem and confidence, effecting their social skills, thereby, hindering the adjustment of children at a social level.

Parental involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance. Teachers in schools may also perceive the children with SLD to be less socially and academically competent which affects their performance in different domains (Juvonen & Bear, 1992; Riddick, 2012). In the context of disabilities, parental involvement, academic achievement, beliefs, expectations and experiences support learning outcomes in children (Afolabi, 2014).

The findings suggest that the overall adjustment of children with a specific learning disability has a strong relationship with acceptance attribute of parental attitude. Also, the attitude of hostility affected the adjustment scores of children in all spheres of functioning. This means that if hostility persisted then children with SLD had poorly adjusted levels at all three levels of emotional, social and educational adjustment. Hence, the above-mentioned points help to understand how at different levels the adjustment of children with a specific learning disability was affected by their parental attitude.

#### Limitations and Directions for future research

The research is limited with respect to the sample since the participants were children and parents who had approached the OPD of a government hospital in an urban city like Delhi. Future researches could focus on other demographics like the socio economic status, professional status of the parents, and other regions of the country. Different age groups may be considered as well. Comparisons may be made with diagnoses at different ages and how that impacts the children's adjustment in different domains.

#### Conclusion

Parental attitude plays a significant role in a child's development and in managing their associated condition of specific learning disability as well. Hence, negative aspects of parental attitude are responsible for bringing about a change in the adjustment levels of the child with a specific learning disability. This condition can be better managed by having a balanced parental attitude, supporting them and helping them cope with this condition.

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# It's all in your 'Head': A Review of the Neuropsychological Underpinnings of Stalking Behaviour

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**Abstract:** Stalking behaviour and tendencies have predominantly been viewed as a social and legal menace, which in turn has resulted in limited focus on the psychological perspectives and roots of such activity. While perpetrators of stalking behaviour often face harsh legal consequences and punishment, rarely is an effort made to provide such individuals with psycho-therapy or medication, which is a much-needed form of intervention to tackle and curb such tendencies. The current paper seeks to introduce the concept of stalking behaviour, what it constitutes and how it impacts victims, along with exploring the neuropsychological underpinnings of the behaviour (specifically the functioning of the central and autonomic nervous system), which has received very little attention by researchers over the years. Further, certain psychotherapeutic interventions and research work pertaining to interventions from a counselling perspective have been discussed. Implications of the study include shedding light on how such behaviour must be remedied by both, psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions, reducing the stigma and shame associated with seeking help for such behaviour by highlighting its biological aetiology, and initiating a discussion pertaining to the need for a multidisciplinary approach when it comes to tackling stalking tendencies.

**Keywords:** stalking, neuropsychology, victims, stigma, psychotherapy

Stalking behaviour, as a psychologically deviant and arguably 'pathological' activity has begun receiving substantial attention from academia over the past few years (Meloy, 2007). Despite various (and ongoing) legal and social attempts to help curb the behaviour, it continues to be a widespread and frequent occurrence in most regions of the world. The term 'stalking' may be defined as "the willful, malicious, and repeated following and harassing of another person that threatens his or her safety" (Meloy&Gothard, 1995, pg. 258). While literature has proposed numerous definitions of the construct, there are certain elements that are seen as widely agreed upon components of the behaviour, including it being credible and recurrent, unwanted, and legitimately threatening and fear-inducing for the victim (Marazziti, Falaschi, Lombardi, Mungai, & Dell'Osso, 2015; Meloy, 2007; Meloy& Fisher, 2005; Palermo, 2013; Westrup&Fremouw, 1998). A literary review by Sheridan, Blaauw, & Davies (2003) discusses the characteristics of stalking victims and highlights that most victims are female, between the age of 18-30 years, single, highly educated, having highly visible jobs, living alone, and have a reported history of domestic violence and abuse. Aside from this, it discusses that various studies have found that

perpetrators of stalking behaviour commonly use repeated telephone calls, surveillance, following, assault, physical intimidation, spying, taking of photographs, and loitering near the targets' home/workplace as means of initiating contact with the victim. With respect to the time-span of this behaviour, the paper reports its occurrence as ranging from an average of 13 months, to 52 or 58 months. Certain victims report having been stalked for as long as 10-12 years. Existing research also states that most perpetrators of stalking behaviour have been found to be men; this may be explained by the fact that males are less likely than females to perceive stalking behaviour as legitimately harmful and as occurring frequently, and further, tend to assume that victims of such behaviour are at least partly at fault (i.e., resort to 'victim-blaming') (Lambert, Smith, Geistman, Cluse-Tolar, & Jiang, 2013). Studies also link high levels of testosterone to aggressive behaviours, which are commonly displayed by stalking offenders (Meloy& Fisher, 2005). Further, Boon & Sheridan (2001) have proposed four major 'stalker typologies' on the basis of 124 case studies, and have highlighted the approximate frequency as well as traits of the perpetrators of such behaviour, on the basis of the same, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Stalker Typologies, as proposed by Boon & Sheridan (2001)*

| Typology                       | Characteristics of the Stalker                                                                                                                                                                      | Approximate |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Ex-partner harassment/stalking | Hatred/anger/hostility directed towards history of relationship, impulsive as well as 'pre-planned' stalking, overt threats, custody/finance/power/control serve as motivating factors.             | 50%         |
| Infatuation harassment         | Victim is seen as 'beloved', perpetual intrusive/fantastical thoughts about the victim, romantic obsession, yearning and a 'hopeful' future serve as motivating factors; lack of malicious intents. | 18.5%       |

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| Typology                     | Characteristics of the Stalker                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Approximate |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Delusional fixation stalking | Victims at risk for physical/sexual assault, the offender may have a criminal past/history of mental illness, irregular and unexpected manifestation of stalking behaviour, victims may be bombarded with inappropriate messages and means of contact. | 15.3%       |
| Sadistic stalking            | Victim is a 'good'/happy/stable individual and viewed as 'prey', offender derives pleasure from ruining/taking control of the victim, overt and real threats present, offender enjoys being sadistic and aims to instil fear in the victim.            | 12.9%       |

Victims of stalking behaviour experience significantly distressing mental, social and behavioural outcomes, including anxiety, depression, disruptions in sleep/appetite levels, intrusive thoughts and flashbacks, suicidal ideation, compelling desires to switch/change their place of residence or work, social dysfunction, somatic symptoms etc. (Blaauw, Winkel, Arensman, Sheridan, & Freeve, 2002; Pathe & Mullen, 1997). While the aforementioned impacts are considered to be relatively chronic and long-term, some victims experience and report an overall 'personality change' - which manifests in terms of them becoming increasingly hyper-vigilant, aggressive, paranoid, socially withdrawn, easily frightened and extra cautious (Hall, 1998, as cited in Blaauw et al., 2002).

The rationale of the present study involved exploring the neuropsychological underpinnings of stalking behaviour, and highlighting existing psychotherapeutic interventions aimed at remedying such tendencies. While stalking behaviour is viewed and treated as a legal menace, there exists little awareness on its neurobiological roots, and scientific interventions that are useful to address such tendencies. The paper sought to shed light on how such activity is, in fact, influenced by biological factors, which are not always in the individual's control, and further, intends to increase awareness pertaining to the available counselling interventions that have been developed to help curb and tackle such behaviour. Hence, by presenting factual and evidence-based arguments relevant to the biological aetiology of stalking behaviour, as well as psychotherapeutic interventions to deal with the same, the study aims to de-stigmatize and raise awareness regarding this issue, so that perpetrators are encouraged to seek help when faced with urges compelling them to engage in stalking behaviour. The theories and data discussed earlier highlight how stalking is a widely prevalent and complex behaviour, often manifesting in various forms and having debilitating consequences for victims; hence, understanding the biological bases of the same will enable individuals to not only gain better insight into such activity, but also provides them with hope to overcome such urges/tendencies.

### Method

The review involved searching online databases including Google Scholar, CORE, and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Keywords used for the review search

included: “stalking”, “neurobiological underpinnings of stalking”, “brain mechanisms involved in stalking perpetration”, “psychotherapy for stalkers”, and “counselling interventions for stalking”.

### Inclusion criteria

- Studies and research work carried out in the area of stalking behaviour and the neurobiological mechanisms involved in the same.
- Studies and research work exploring the therapeutic techniques applicable to treating stalking behaviour, in counselling settings.
- Work published in scientific peer-reviewed journals, or academic books, written or translated in the English language.
- Published in the last thirty years, i.e., between 1990-2020.

### Exclusion criteria

- Research work and studies looking at the basis and interventions for stalking behaviour from a legal, sociological or any other perspective with little to no emphasis on neuropsychology/psychotherapy.
- Work looking at virtual, social media, or other kinds of stalking which does not fit with the definition proposed by Meloy & Gothard (1995), discussed above.

Articles were first judged to see if they fit the above met criteria, and in case of fulfilment of all criteria, were further analysed and studied to obtain material and data relevant to this study. The data gathered was divided into two broad sub-sections- work looking at the neuropsychological underpinnings of stalking behaviour, and psychotherapeutic interventions relevant to the same, that could be implemented in a counselling setting.

### Results

Following were the main researches made use of, to draft and write this particular paper. Table 2 looks at the existing works that have explored the neuropsychological roots of stalking behaviour, and Table 3 highlights existing studies that discuss counselling interventions suitable to remedy the same.

Table 2

*Research studies in the context of the neuropsychological underpinnings of stalking behaviour*

| Author(s) and year of publication                              | Major findings of the study                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Meloy and Fisher (2005)                                        | Role of the amygdala, and dopamine and serotonin pathways in stalking tendencies.                                                     |
| Soliman, Haque, and George (2007)                              | Role of Basal Ganglia dysfunction and pathology in case of stalking behaviour, via a case study on a woman with Huntington's disease. |
| Boisvert, Wells, Armstrong, Lewis, Matthias, and Nobles (2020) | Implications of low resting heart rate as contributing to anti-social behaviours, including stalking perpetration.                    |

Table 3

*Research studies in the context of the counselling interventions suitable to be implemented with perpetrators of stalking behaviour*

| Author(s) and year of publication                                                                | Major findings of the study                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Meloy (1997)                                                                                     | Need for psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic intervention; focus on other biological bases of co-morbid disorders.                                                                              |
| Graham-Kevan and Ashton-Wigman (2009)                                                            | Overcoming social stigma/labels associated with seeking help for stalking behaviours.                                                                                                                   |
| Maran, Loera, and D'Argenio (2019), Storey (2016)                                                | Need for therapists/mental health professionals to be equipped with psychotherapeutic techniques to manage stalking behaviour.                                                                          |
| MacKenzie and James (2011)                                                                       | Use of DBT and psychodynamic therapy; Use of the Trans-theoretical Model of Intentional Behavioural Change.                                                                                             |
| Kropp, Hart, Lyon, and LePard(2002)                                                              | Steps and procedures involved in assessing and treating stalking perpetrators, from a psycho-legal point of view.                                                                                       |
| Mullen, MacKenzie, Ogloff, Pathe, McEwan, and Purcell, (2006)                                    | Use of the 'Stalking Risk Profile' in treatment, which assesses the psychological realities of the perpetrator and victim, relationship between them, and legal/mental health context of the behaviour. |
| Rosenfeld, Galietta, Foellmi, Coupland, Turner, Stern, Wijetunga, Gerbrandij, and Ivanoff (2019) | Comparison of efficacy of DBT and CBT anger management interventions implemented with perpetrators.                                                                                                     |

Each of these findings and themes have been discussed in greater depth below, and the following section of the study aims to provide a comprehensive review of the most prominent works done in this area, till date.

### Discussion

While research concerning the roots of stalking behaviour has focused on the perpetrators' cognitive states, attachment patterns and emotional/affective behaviour, the role of neurobiology and physiological phenomenon has only recently started gaining prominence. Following are various neurobiological factors that have been studied to play a role with respect to stalking behaviour, and researched interventions from a counselling perspective that can be applied in the case of perpetrators.

#### Neuropsychological Bases of Stalking

**Dopaminergic pathways and Serotonin activity.** Meloy & Fisher (2005) explored the link between the working of the sub-cortical dopamine pathways and the tendency to

engage in stalking behaviour. The dopaminergic reward system (specifically in the right ventral tegmental area) has been associated with a variety of goal-directed, hyper-attentive and motivational behaviours among human beings (Schultz, 2000). Interestingly, the working of this particular mechanism is also involved in certain experiences and physiological reactions experienced by individuals who claim to be in an intense form of romantic love- such as that of sleeplessness, hyperactivity, a heightened state of awareness and exhilaration (Wise & Rompre, 1989). It has been suggested that it is the activation of the subcortical dopaminergic pathways, which results in certain specific behaviours which are highly characteristic of the perpetrator of stalking behaviour, including hyper-motivation directed towards pursuing the victim, intense cognitive attentive processes and a rush of energy and enthusiasm. Further, there exists a negative feedback loop

between the dopaminergic and serotonin systems which implies that with heightened activity of the central dopamine system, there exists suppressed activity of central serotonin, and alternatively, with elevated activity of the serotonin systems, there exists suppression of the central dopamine system (Luciana, Collins & Depue, 1998). Hence, when perpetrators of stalking behaviour experience heightened activity of dopamine systems, there is also consequently a suppression of their central serotonin system resulting in reduced serotonin levels. Implications of low serotonin levels include similar obsessional behaviours, heightened impulsivity and an inhibited sense of cognitive and behavioural control which are prototypical characteristics of stalking offenders (who often cannot control their intrusive thoughts about the victim, and cannot refrain from impulsively following and pursuing them)(Fisher, 1998). Therefore, perpetrators of stalking behaviour experience both- heightened dopamine levels resulting in increased motivation and focus to pursue their victim, as well as lowered serotonin levels, which consequently manifests in terms of obsessive overt, and intrusive cognitive behaviour pertaining to the individual being stalked (Meloy& Fisher, 2005).

**Basal Ganglia Pathology.** In a popular study exploring the case of a female offender engaging in stalking behaviour presenting with Huntington's disease, Soliman et al. (2007) explored the role of the caudate dysfunction and basal ganglia pathology. As discussed previously, behaviours involving obsessive and compulsive components are commonly present among stalking perpetrators, and research demonstrates the link between basal ganglia pathology and obsessive compulsive disorder symptomatology (Rapoport, 1990). In the particular case study undertaken by Soliman et al. (2007), the researchers looked at the co-morbid manifestation of the woman's stalking behaviour, with the occurrence of Huntington's disease, known to result in the degeneration of the caudate nucleus and basal ganglia dysfunction. Treatment of the basal ganglia pathology was followed by a remission in the stalking symptoms.

**Low Resting Heart Rate (Autonomic Nervous System functioning).** Boisvert et al. (2020) sought to explore whether having a low resting heart rate, i.e. LRHR, (seen as an indicator of ANS functioning) was linked with stalking tendencies and behaviour patterns. Previous research highlights that LRHR is associated with a broad spectrum of anti-social behavioural tendencies, such as violence, risky socially deviant behaviour, aggression and disruptive activities (Hammerton et al., 2018). In an experiment, Boisvert and colleagues (2020) conducted an experiment on 519 participants exploring previous attempts to engage in stalking behaviour, and measured the individuals' heart rate using a finger pulse oximeter. Consistent with the literature reviewed, they found a significant relationship between LRHR and stalking perpetration.

**Amygdala dysfunction.** The amygdala, which is involved in the processing of negative emotions, aggression and fear, has also found to play a role in the perpetration of stalking behaviour. Studies have highlighted the presence of the deactivation of the right amygdala in individuals who experience strong and intense forms of romantic love (Bartels & Zeki, 2003). Meloy& Fisher (2005) note that similar physiological mechanisms are linked to stalking behaviour, where perpetrators are likely to be unable to recognise potential dangers and threats associated with their ownbehaviour, and experience a sense of behavioural disinhibition which drives them to the pursuit of their victims.

Aside from the specific neurobiological phenomenon discussed above, individuals with certain psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia, mood disorders, personality disorders and drug abuse/dependence disorders have been found to be at an elevated risk of displaying stalking behaviours (Meloy, 1999). Each of these disorders has their own neurobiological underpinnings, which often promote or perpetuate stalking tendencies.

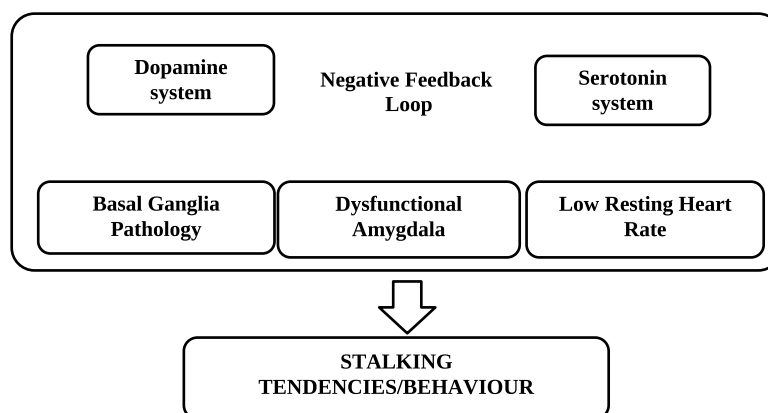


Figure 1

Summary of the Neurobiological Underpinnings of Stalking Behaviour

### Interventions from a Counselling Perspective

According to Meloy (1997), “individuals who stalk should be responded to with both social condemnation and humane psychiatric and psychological treatment” (Meloy, 1997, pg. 181). Along with being a legal and social problem, stalking behaviour is also a manifestation of underlying dysfunctional psychological issues, which requires psychotherapeutic interventions. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of social stigma attached to stalking behaviour, which may prevent perpetrators of such behaviour from actively reaching out for help- for instance, Graham-Kevan & Ashton-Wigman (2009) have found that perpetrators of such behaviour tend to instantly be labelled as “stalkers”, instead of being perceived as individuals who carry out behaviours which indicate stalking tendencies. They argue that by labelling a person as a 'stalker', that particular individual is reduced to just that single trait/behaviour, which then seems to characterise their entire identity and state of being. This very reductionist manner of viewing perpetrators of stalking behaviour adds to the social stigma of reaching out and seeking professional psychiatric and psychological help for the same.

Research highlights that the biological aetiology of stalking behaviour must be suitably dealt with by psychiatrists/physicians, through the use of pharmaceutical drugs to regulate the functioning of the neurological and nervous system. As discussed above, a number of stalking perpetrators suffer from mental illnesses such as personality disorders, schizophrenia, mood and substance disorders- in such cases, illness appropriate psychological intervention is recommended. For example, in case the stalking behaviour is fuelled by underlying irrational and fixed delusions, treatment plans directed at the modification of those cognitions leads to a successful remission of the stalking symptoms (Meloy, 1997). Further, studies have also found that it is not uncommon for clients to stalk mental health professionals (including nurses, psychiatrists, general practitioners), especially their counsellors and therapists (Maran, Loera, & D'Argenio, 2019; Storey, 2016). This highlights the importance for interventions for the same from a counselling perspective, where therapists are equipped with the knowledge and skills to prevent, as well as deal with stalking behaviours elicited by not just the general public, but their clients, as well.

It may be noted that there is a scientific and practical dearth of psychotherapeutic treatment research and application in the case of stalking perpetrators. Research does highlight the possibility of using Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (which seeks to help with impulse control and behavioural regulation) and Psychodynamic therapy (which focuses on emotional, attachment and psychological issues) as potential schools of therapeutic intervention in the case of stalking perpetrators (MacKenzie & James, 2011). According to Kropp et al. (2002), the process and procedure involved in counselling stalking

perpetrators should consist of adequate risk assessment, attempts to improve the perpetrator's psychosocial adjustment levels and must necessarily include victim safety planning, as well. Risk assessment would consist of assessing and analysing the nature, extent and severity of the risk associated with the stalking behaviour. Psychosocial adjustment and therapy work must focus on reduction of violent, aggressive and impulsive tendencies, psycho-education directed towards changing risky and maladaptive attitudes, training to increase interpersonal and vocational skills etc. The researchers consider victim safety and 'target hardening' as essential components as well, and argue that if the stalking behaviour were to resume, the victims ought to be well protected, and minimally impacted by the stalking offender's behaviour (Kropp, Hart, Lyon, & LePard, 2002).

Another psychotherapeutic approach suggested by Mullen et al. (2006) concerns the formulation and application of treatment process on the basis of the 'Stalking Risk Profile', which includes numerous specific domains, including the motivations of the stalking perpetrator, his/her social/psychological/psychopathological realities, the nature of relationship shared between the stalking offender and victim, the nature of the victim's social/psychological vulnerabilities and the legal and mental health context within which the behaviour takes place. On the basis of evaluation in the aforementioned five domains, CBT and psychotherapeutic interventions can be directed towards rectifying faulty assumptions held by the stalking offender, increasing empathy (especially for the victim), accepting loss and working through past abandonment and relational pathologies, confronting the perpetrators with legal consequences (i.e. making use of negative reinforcement and punishment strategies), overcoming compulsions and increasing motivation to take up other vocational/productive behaviours, among others (Mullen et al., 2006). MacKenzie and James (2011) also discuss the application of the Trans-theoretical Model of Intentional Behavioural Change (proposed by DiClemente and Prochaska, 1998), to stalking behaviour, and highlight the necessity of the stalking offender's desire to change, in the therapeutic process. According to the model, behavioural change occurs via a series of stages, and treatment plans (or in this case, psycho-therapeutic interventions for stalking perpetrators) must be adapted and suited to the level of readiness to change, the individual is at.

It may be noted that there exists little to no research regarding the effectiveness of the various psycho-therapeutic interventions designed for stalking behaviour, that have been discussed above. A notable exception is Rosenfeld et al. (2019), who sought to compare the efficacy of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy and Cognitive-Behavioural anger management interventions with perpetrators of stalking behaviour, by carrying out a randomized control trial where offenders were subjected to either forms of intervention. The

researchers concluded that there were no significant differences between both forms of interventions, and that the psychotherapeutic treatment for stalking behaviour may be effective irrespective of the modality of treatment.

### Conclusion

The current paper seeks to provide a brief, yet comprehensive overview of stalking behaviour, and discusses the focal elements of such activity, along with the characteristics of stalking perpetrators, victims and impacts of the behaviour on individuals. With respect to the neurobiological underpinnings of the behaviour, existing research suggests the involvement of the dopaminergic and serotonin pathways, the amygdala, basal ganglia and low heart rate levels. Finally, even though work on counselling and psychotherapeutic interventions for stalking perpetrators is limited, studies do highlight the implementation of specific risk assessment and treatment models, along with certain kinds of therapeutic approaches targeting core problematic behaviours, cognitions and affective states. This study has numerous implications, as follows. First, it sheds light on how such behaviour must be remedied by both- psychopharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions, instead of solely resorting to legal proceedings and trials. Second, it aims to reduce the stigma and shame associated with seeking help for such behaviour by highlighting its biological aetiology, so that individuals can recognise, and reach out for professional help when they experience impulses, obsessions, and desires to engage in such activity. Third, it could facilitate the initiation of a discussion pertaining to the need for a multidisciplinary approach to tackle stalking tendencies- while there is no denying that stalking is a heinous crime, the perpetrators will not benefit from just a legal repercussion. To adequately curb and put a halt to such behaviours, both, legal and mental health professions must take a joint stance, and develop a comprehensive outcome plan to deal with individuals engaging in such behaviour.

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# A Study on the Relationship Between Skin Colour Satisfaction and Self Esteem among Undergraduate Students

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**Abstract:** Skin colour is an important component of an individual's physical appearance that influences the perception of attractiveness, marital prospects, job prospects, social status, and earning potential due to the established preference for the lighter skin tone. The internalization of this ideal can lead to dissatisfaction with skin colour and related consequences. The present study intended to find out if satisfaction with skin colour has a relationship with a person's self-esteem. The Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale (SCSS; Falconer & Neville, 2000) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RES; Rosenberg, 1965) were used to collect data from (n=180) college students between the ages of 18 to 22 who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate course in Aryabhatta College, University of Delhi. The data was analyzed using Pearson coefficient correlation in IBM SPSS 16.0. The results showed a significant positive correlation between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem ( $r=.152, p \leq .05$ ) implying that satisfaction with skin colour does influence self-esteem. The study however is unable to go in depth into people's experiences and further research going forward can focus on the lived experiences of different demographics.

**Keywords:** skin colour, skin colour satisfaction, colourism, self esteem, beauty, college students.

Physical appearance in terms of traits like height, weight, skin colour etc., are associated with certain characteristics and used to make judgements about people (Lennon & Miller, 1984; Miller, 1970) in the 10th of a second impacting our interaction with them (Willis & Todorov, 2006). Some of these characteristics are judged to be more attractive and beautiful than others and people possessing them are assumed to have other attractive qualities like being kind, friendly, intelligent, and healthy. This is known as the 'attractiveness halo' or the "beautiful is good" effect (Lorenzo, Biesanz & Human, 2010; Miller, 1970). This association is often delivered to us through media, social learning or interpreting people's behavior towards us.

Skin colour is an important components of an individual's physical appearance because of its direct visibility and its implication about race or class. There's a widely seen preference for a whiter or 'lighter' skin colour across the world. Studies have found that skin lightness can affect perceptions of a woman's beauty, marital prospects, job prospects, social status, and earning potential (Goon & Craven, 2003; Wade, Romano & Blue, 2006).

In the West, skin colour is often associated with race. However, in an Indian context, its relation to racism is less valid as white and black are not dichotomous categories of skin-colour. Instead, skin-colour can be viewed as a dimension of social comparison on which people rate themselves as relatively fairer/darker than others. Malhotra (2004) called this "whiteness spectrum," defined as "a social ladder with 'pure' whiteness on the top exercising control and superiority over those lower on the spectrum".

In Indian culture, dark skin colour is linked with low-income field laborers or lower castes while white skin is associated with the powerful superior class or caste (Goon &

Craven, 2003; Thappa & Malathi, 2014). Hence, skin-colour came to signify position within the social hierarchy in India with fair skin considered as the mark of higher social standing.

Mishra (2015) instead attributes this desire for lighter skin to British influence. The British with their fair skin considered themselves the superior race born to rule over the inferior, 'black coloured' Indians. Influenced by this belief, the lighter skin Indians were again given preference over their darker counterparts and hired more frequently giving them a higher status (Mishra, 2015).

According to Parameswaran & Cardoza (2009), this "racist construction of 'dark native' by the British seems to have become a part of our unconscious and is often projected as a strong dislike for the 'dark other'". History has attached status and power to people with fairer skin and has led to this internalisation of westernized standards of beauty and also desire for it.

Hence, there's a collective influence of the caste system, class factors, British imperialism, and a global established beauty standard that emphasizes whiteness leading to the preference for lighter skin.

Through socio-cultural information delivered throughout childhood, this beauty standard can be internalized leading to the construction of an 'ideal self' image in people's minds. People rely on social comparisons with others to seek feedback about their characteristics and to maintain a stable and accurate self-view (Festinger, 1954). Hence, People might compare their skin colour with others perceived as more ideal. If their real self does not match up to the ideal self, the self-ideal discrepancy causes distress and motivates them to attain a match between the real and the internalised ideal self (Higgins, 1987).

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According to Hall (2003), There may be a cyclical relationship between internalisation and social comparisons. As people make changes or efforts to reduce the discrepancy between the real and ideal self, they continue to make social comparisons to see if they've been successful further strengthening their internalised beliefs.

Adbi et al., (2016) notes that a feeling of disempowerment can be positively associated with preference for the strong and risky skin whitening products. For example, the use of harmful chemicals to bleach the skin and achieve a lighter skin tone (Shroff et al., 2018). According to Harper and Choma (2018), internalisation predicts the dissatisfaction they have with their skin colour as well as skin bleaching behavior and is mediated by skin surveillance. Lower satisfaction with skin tone is also related to greater adoption of societal norms about beauty (Falconer and Neville, 2000). Thus, further acceptance of these societal norms of beauty creates more dissatisfaction among women of various ethnicities.

Even when women don't see fairness as a predominant indicator of beauty, they are still aware of the culturally determined advantages of being fair which can lead to efforts to look fair (Karan, 2008). Ismail, Loya and Hussain (2015) found that most people used fairness creams because they believed fair skinned people were more liked and had more friends.

Studies on colourism show that this preference for a lighter skin exists and impacts people's lives. Colourism is a process that privileges light-skinned people over dark in areas such as income, hiring for jobs, education, and the marriage market (Hunter, 2007; Harrison and Thomas, 2009).

In India, Skin colour preference in marriage has been found in studies by Jha and Adelman (2009) who found an overwhelming bias among males for brides lighter-skinned than themselves and Nagar (2018) who found that fair-skinned highly attractive people received higher ratings than dark-skinned highly attractive people.

Chattopadhyay and Chattopadhyay (2019) found that 84% of matrimonial advertisements in print mentioned the woman's skin complexion, advertising her as very fair. Even when matrimonial ads were posted online by the younger generation, colourism was present subtly as people often chose to mention their skin complexion when they had an option not to showing that perhaps people are aware of the desirability associated with it and by mentioning it, they choose to use the inherent colourism for their benefit when possible.

Bakhshi and Baker (2011) found that male and female British Indian adults felt women aimed to look more physically attractive, which predominantly included having fair skin, followed by other factors. Female participants associated beauty with skin colour and believed that a fair woman would be considered more beautiful, desirable and have better chances of getting married.

Some researchers have found that satisfaction with skin tone is associated with higher self-esteem and body satisfaction (Bond & Cash, 1992; Hall, 1995). Generally, women who do not like their skin tone were also not as satisfied with their bodies (Thompson-Leonardelli, 2003). A study by Ismail et al. (2015), in Pakistan, found that an obsession for Fair Skin Colour was positively linked with an inferiority complex, social pressure and advertising.

### Self Esteem

Self-esteem is a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of one's attributes influenced by our awareness of our abilities and attributes and the feedback received from the society (Rosenberg, 1965). The attributes that the 'ideal self' should possess are influenced by the cues received from our environment about what is considered desirable, while the 'real self' involves the attributes we currently possess.

If there is congruence between the 'ideal self' and 'real self', we experience high self-esteem (Rogers, 1961). However, incongruence leads to low self-esteem where self is viewed as lacking worth.

There may be internalisation of an ideal version of beauty which includes a lighter skin tone that may not match the person's real self, creating a discrepancy and influencing their self-esteem. The study tries to establish if satisfaction with skin colour does impact self-esteem.

When the individual thinks that their real and ideal selves are incompatible, they try to reduce the discrepancy through the use of skin whitening creams or skin bleaching behaviour. A chronic perception of discrepancy is associated with frustration, inferiority and depression. Choma and Prusaczyk (2018) found that greater skin tone surveillance is linked to higher depression and lower life satisfaction among Indian women. The more people realize the value in being light skinned, the more they internalize and create an ideal that they make efforts to meet and this gap between the ideal and the real self can impact their self-esteem. Hence, self-esteem was selected as the other variable in the study to understand if such a relationship exists.

### Hypothesis

There is no relationship between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem.

### Method

#### Participants

A sample of 180 undergraduate college students from a University of Delhi college were selected for the study which included 55 males and 125 females between the ages of 18 to 23 years. A convenience sampling technique was used to find the participants.

## Design

The present study is a correlational study intending to find out the relationship between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem. Skin colour satisfaction was measured using the Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale (Falconer & Neville, 2000), while self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

## Measures

**Demographic Form.** The form was used to obtain information about the gender, age and course of study to understand the distribution of the population and participants.

**Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale (SCSS).** The SCSS was developed by Falconer and Neville (2000) based on the 3-item Skin Colour Questionnaire Scale (SCQ; Bond & Cash, 1992). It is a 7-item scale that collects data on the participant's perception and satisfaction of his/her personal skin tone/colour. The items are rated on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Items (e) and (f) are reverse scored. Higher scores indicate more satisfaction with skin colour.

The scale was developed for African-american population hence, items (b) and (g) of the scale were modified to suit the current sample by switching the words 'African-american' to 'Indian'. Reliability estimates for SCSS are reported as .71 by the authors.

**Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).** Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is measured on a ten-item Likert scale with items designed to assess global self-esteem. Responses were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) with a higher score indicating greater self-esteem.

It has a Gutman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92 indicating good internal consistency. Two studies of 2-week test-retest reliability showed correlations of .85 and .88. It correlates significantly with other self-esteem measures, like the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory indicating an overall valid measure (Simmons, Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1973).

## Procedure

The study began with a review of literature to help identify research gaps and tools. The sample for the study were subsequently decided and contacted using a message which contained a Google Form link. They were informed about the nature of the study and asked to fill out both scales. The present study is a correlational study intending to find out the relationship between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem that were measured using the Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale (Falconer & Neville, 2000) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) respectively. Hence, The obtained data was processed and analysed using Pearson coefficient

correlation in IBM SPSS 16.0.

## Results

The Pearson correlation was computed to ascertain the strength of the relationship between self-esteem and skin colour satisfaction. The Pearson's coefficient obtained has been presented below.

Table 1

*Correlation between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem.*

| Variable    | Skin Color<br>Satisfaction<br>Scores | p    |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|------|
| Self Esteem | 0152*                                | .041 |

Note: \* $p \leq .05$

The analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem  $\{r(180) = .152, p = .041\}$ .

## Discussion

The results found a significant positive correlation between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem at a correlation coefficient of  $r = .152$  at  $p < .05$ . The correlation shows that if satisfaction with skin colour increases, so does self-esteem and if skin colour satisfaction decreases, self-esteem decreases as well.

Similar results have been found in other studies done on African American, Hispanic women (Telzer & Vazquez, 2009). A study by Mucherah and Frazier (2013), found a correlation of  $r = .153$  between skin colour satisfaction and self-esteem. This significant relationship could be due to an increased preoccupation with fair skin colour that creates dissatisfaction and further leads to an inferiority complex showing in the form of a decreased self-esteem. This preoccupation can happen due to social pressure, advertising and media portrayals that indicate what the desirable skin tone is. (Ismail et al., 2015; Karan, 2008).

Once these social standards are established; people internalise these ideas and develop schemas for what the ideal is. People then make comparisons between their actual selves and ideal selves. If they perceive a discrepancy, it can lead to emotional and motivational consequences and increased susceptibility to negative emotional states (Higgins, 1987). They may develop an inferiority complex perceiving themselves as unattractive or undesirable ultimately affecting their self-esteem (Ismail et al., 2015).

Self-esteem is influenced by our awareness of our attributes and the feedback received from the society. In this case, the feedback informs us that our traits are undesirable and need to change.

The desire for fairer skin whether influenced by beauty standards or desire for better opportunities can lead to riskier behavior related to skin bleaching as found in a study by Falconer and Neville (2000) who saw that lower satisfaction with skin tone is also related to greater adoption of societal norms about beauty. If these societal norms involve dangerous behaviors like skin bleaching, people with lower satisfaction will be more likely to engage in them and spend money on these procedures, cosmetics, and makeup. The further acceptance of these societal norms of beauty creates more dissatisfaction among women of various ethnicities and perpetuates the cycle.

The impact of Colourism on dark-skinned individuals can also be seen in the rise and popularity of skin fairness creams which are common in Asian and African countries (Shevde, 2008). Nadeem (2014) argues that often skin lightening creams present themselves as “alchemic agents of self-transformation”. According to Venkataswamy (2013, p. 136), the “advertisements reinforce 'fairness' as a quality that enhances marriage prospects, career progress and confidence in oneself” further creating an association between light skin and success. The characters are often rewarded with their desires after they attain a lighter skin through the use of the product. In subtler advertisements, the same is implied as they are shown to have a lighter skin in the happier part of their life even when they don't directly use the product (Mukherjee, 2020).

However, the relationship between the variables as found in the study is low which can suggest that other factors come into play that influences a person's self-esteem. There is a possibility that the ideals of beauty may be changing with an increased emphasis on dark-skinned women's beauty with various social media movements and more representation of dark-skinned women in fashion and film industries.

Chattopadhyay and Chattopadhyay (2019) note that in many instances, women chose to mention their complexion is wheatish or dark in online matrimonial advertisements, which they argued was challenging the social norms. They also found a lack of mention of a woman's skin complexion or body type in the main text of these advertisements implying a shift in thinking.

Women also may not consider fairness to be an important indicator of beauty compared to factors like body weight, proportions, and facial features (Karan, 2008). Despite not seeing fairness as a predominant indicator of beauty, women are still aware of the culturally determined advantages of being fair and have themselves made efforts to look fair (Karan, 2008). According to Dhillon-Jamerson (2019), fair skin serves as a bargaining chip while dark skin is a liability. Hence, the desire for lighter skin can stem from the desire to access these cultural advantages rather than the desire to look beautiful.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The sample included 18 to 22-year-old undergraduate students from a University of Delhi college. Hence, the results may not apply to everyone. Going forward, the differences in different demographics like rural areas, and different age groups can be explored.

The study had a disproportionate number of females over males which reflects the population structure in Aryabhatta College with the general education schedule involving male and female students and the NCWEB structure which included all female students skewing the sample. Hence, the study couldn't explore the difference between males and females in terms of their skin colour satisfaction viably.

The study is correlational in nature and a correlation does not imply causation. The use of self-report scales creates the possibility that the participants can lie or respond in a socially acceptable way in their responses. It also establishes only a small but significant relationship between the two variables. Hence, there may be other factors involved in the relationship.

The study also doesn't go in-depth into the experiences of the participants, exploring the causes behind the dissatisfaction and the behavior resulting from it preventing us from exploring the other influencing factors. In future studies, the qualitative experiences of people with high skin colour dissatisfaction can be explored along with the causes behind it. Studies can also be conducted to understand how skin colour dissatisfaction relates to body dissatisfaction, confidence, etc. and its implications on people's lives.

### Conclusion

The study was conducted to understand the relationship between skin colour dissatisfaction and self-esteem among undergraduate students using the Skin Colour Satisfaction Scale and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. The data was obtained from 180 students between the ages of 18 to 23 and analyzed using Pearson Correlation. The results show that there is a significant positive relationship implying that a decrease in satisfaction with skin color can also be related to a decrease in self-esteem. This emphasizes the need to look at the colorism in Indian culture and the possible impact on people who compare themselves to the light skin color ideal. Future studies can explore the relationship in different demographics, explore the lived experience of people and look at other possible factors in the relationship.

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## Correlates and Predictors of Relational Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships

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**Abstract:** Romantic relationships are a central aspect of most adolescent and adult social worlds. Romantic experiences not only play a pivotal role in the mutual development of both partners, but also in the development of each partner's sense of self. Hence, the study of the dynamics of a romantic relationship is imperative. The present study aims to examine the various predictors and correlates of a relational satisfaction for young adults. For this purpose, standardized scales assessing relational satisfaction, emotional intimacy, jealousy, and phubbing were administered to 141 participants (F=87, M=54) in the age range of 18-30 years and are currently involved in a romantic relationship for over 3 months. The data obtained was analyzed using regression and correlation through SPSS version 21. A significant positive correlation was found between emotional intimacy and satisfaction in a relationship and a significant negative correlation was found between emotional intimacy and phubbing. Regression analysis revealed that relational satisfaction was found to be predicted by emotional intimacy and cognitive jealousy. The contemporary view about relationships offers a promising opportunity to study the various correlates that define the success, failure, satisfaction and dissatisfaction in a relationship.

**Keywords:** emotional intimacy, jealousy, phubbing, relational satisfaction, romantic relationships

Romantic relationships are a central aspect of most adolescent and adult social worlds. “Romantic relationships” can be referred to as the mutually acknowledged ongoing voluntary interactions. These relationships have a discrete intensity, generally identified by expressions of affection and current or anticipated sexual behaviour. This can be applied to individuals of the same gender, as well as mixed-gender relationships. (Furman, Welsh, & Collins, 2009). The essence of romance is characterized by physical attraction, strong emotional attachment between the partners and a desire to idealize each other (Kephart, 1981; Waller & Hill, 1951).

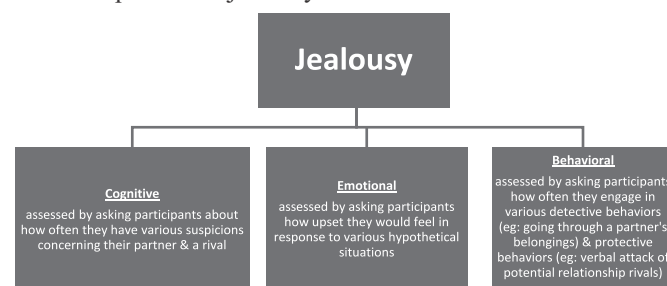
The development of romantic relationships is viewed as a central developmental task for young adults (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Tolman and McClelland (2011) contend that the two important developmental phases for discovering romantic relationships are adolescence and young adulthood. Prior studies often conceptualized romantic relationship quality during young adulthood as a single global construct (Fincham & Cui, 2011). Relationships that are characterized by love, commitment, and mutual engagement are more stable over time, are less likely to end in separation, and promote better psychological and physical well-being (Le et al., 2010). Romantic relationship between two individuals is characterized by dominance of feeling of strong attraction, personal attachment and sexual desire for each other (Baron & Misra, 2002).

The quality of a romantic relationship rests on various tenets like emotional intimacy, jealousy, phubbing and degree of satisfaction in a relationship.

Bringle and Buunk (1986) defined jealousy as “an aversive emotional reaction to a companion's imagined, actual or

potential fascination for another person”. Romantic jealousy can be defined as a blend of thoughts, feelings, and actions which follows threats to the existence or the quality of the relationship when those threats are caused due to perception of an actual or potential chemistry amongst one's partner and a made-up enemy (White, 1981).

The general term “jealousy” can be split into two different categories. These categories have been labelled as cognitive and behavioural jealousy (Guerrero & Eloy 1992). White (1981) has expanded the concept of jealousy by introducing three components of jealousy:



**Figure 1**  
Components of jealousy (White, 1981)

Studies indicate that jealousy has a negative impact on relationship satisfaction. For instance, Elphinston, Feeney, Noller, Connor and Fitzgerald (2013) studied ninety-nine couples who were dating, cohabiting, and married; and it was denoted that behavioral jealousy and surveillance behaviors were directly related with relationship dissatisfaction; and behavioral responses to jealousy were also associated with relationship dissatisfaction. Elphinston et al. (2013) also found that cognitive jealousy was directly related to relationship dissatisfaction and indirectly related to rumination.

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In a study by Himawan (2017) on Jealousy and relationship satisfaction among Indonesian dating adults, it was found that, the more the individuals suspiciously think that their partners will cheat on them, the more they are unsatisfied with their relationship. On the contrary, the more the individuals communicate emotional responses to perceived threats of their partners, the more likely they are to be satisfied with their current relationship.

Emotional intimacy involves an experience of affection towards another which enables them to share personal sentiments, along with hopes of understanding, assertion, and expression of caring. Couple intimacy is often understood in the context of relationship processes between partners. Research has exhibited that communication is a core element that can smoothen or hamper intimacy in romantic relationships. Partners' positive communication experiences are generally associated with high levels of intimacy. For example, discussing vulnerabilities and mutually acknowledging each other's self-disclosure can lead to partners being more intimate with each other.

Veit, Štulhofer, and Hald (2017) found that higher Sexually Explicit Media (SEM) use was found to be significantly associated with lower relationship satisfaction only among men who reported lower levels of emotional intimacy with their partner. In a study involving 335 married couples, Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day and Gangamma (2014) found that emotional intimacy and sexual satisfaction mediated the association between spouses' appraisal of their partners' communication and their own relationship satisfaction. Developing and maintaining emotional intimacy is an important couple resource and may help to effectively and constructively solve relationship-related conflicts (Sanderson & Karetzky, 2002) and increase relationship satisfaction. As suggested by several studies (Štulhofer, Ferreira, & Landripet, 2014; Carvalheira, Træen, & Štulhofer, 2014), emotional intimacy can be equally important for both men's and women's sexual and relationship satisfaction. Several studies mentioned about the pivotal role of emotional closeness to one's partner in a relationship. (Ferreira, Narciso, & Novo, 2012; Ferreira, Narciso, Novo, & Pereira, 2014; Sanderson & Karetzky, 2002; Yoo et al., 2013). In the clinical setting, couple and relationship therapy has identified emotional intimacy to be a "couple resource" of essential importance in dealing with sexual and non-sexual challenges encountered in long-term relationships (e.g. Crowe, 1997; Garfield, 2010; Nezhad & Goodarzi, 2011).

The amalgamation of two terms – phone and snubbing form the word 'phubbing', which refers to "the act of snubbing someone in a social setting using one's phone instead of talking to the person directly in one's company" (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas 2016). Phubbing is considered by the scientific literature as a new form of addiction, a compulsive behaviour realized in order to temporarily escape and avoid a particularly stressful situation or negative thoughts and emotions

(Guazzini, Duradoni, Capelli & Meringolo, 2019). The phenomenon where one of the partners in a relationship uses a smartphone which acts as a distraction while being in the company of their significant other is called partner phubbing (Roberts & David, 2016). Wang, Zhao & Lei (2019) found that for adults with high levels of self-esteem, partner phubbing is negatively associated with their relationship satisfaction.

Given the rise in usage of smartphones, phubbing too has become a primary psychological concern as the act of ignoring others during social events and hours by using smartphones, whether it is checking Facebook, using WhatsApp, or using other chatting applications has become commonplace (Nazir & Piskin, 2016). Ang, Chong, and Lau (2019) studied the predictors of phubbing behaviour among undergraduates in Malaysia and found that loneliness and Fear of Missing out (FoMO) significantly predicted phubbing behaviour.

Previous studies have suggested that time spent on smartphones may displace or reduce meaningful interactions with one's partner, which in turn undermine her/his relationship satisfaction (Roberts and David 2016; Wang et al. 2017). When technology is used by couples to spend quality time together, it improves the relationship (Henline, 2006). When the couple makes use of the technology separately, studies suggest that relationship satisfaction decreases. (Abeeel, Schouten, & Antheunis, 2016; Krasnova, Abramova, Notter, & Baumann, 2016; Roberts & David, 2016). Some studies (McDaniel & Drouin, 2019; Nazir & Pişkin, 2016; Roberts & David, 2016) specifically found that phubbing behaviour damages romantic relationships in terms of causing conflicts, decreasing relationship satisfaction, and individual well-being. Studies reveal that constant disruptions from mobiles causes phubbing that may act as a precursor to fights over cell phone use (González-Rivera & Hernández-Gato, 2019) and lower romantic relationship satisfaction. In a research by McDaniel and Coyne (2014), it was found that disturbances from technological devices e.g., tablets, laptops, draws a parallel between conflict in the relationship and lower relationship satisfaction among females.

Keeping the reviewed literature in mind, the objective of the present study was to identify and describe the various correlates/predictors of a romantic relationship in young adults. The variables assessed in the study were phubbing, jealousy, relational satisfaction, emotional intimacy. The participants ranged in age from 18-30 years and had been in a romantic relationship for about 3 months.

### Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between relational satisfaction and emotional intimacy.

H2: There will be a significant negative relationship between relational satisfaction and multidimensional jealousy.

H3: There will be a significant negative relationship

between relational satisfaction and phubbing

H4: There will be a significant negative relationship between emotional intimacy and multidimensional jealousy.

H5: There will be a significant negative relationship between emotional intimacy and phubbing

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the sample (n=141)*

| Age                                                       | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| 18                                                        | 3    | 14     | 17    |
| 19                                                        | 4    | 28     | 32    |
| 20                                                        | 14   | 14     | 28    |
| 21                                                        | 10   | 14     | 24    |
| 22                                                        | 7    | 4      | 11    |
| 23                                                        | 2    | 5      | 7     |
| 24                                                        | 6    | 3      | 9     |
| 25                                                        | 2    | 3      | 5     |
| 26                                                        | 1    |        | 1     |
| 27                                                        | 1    |        | 1     |
| 28                                                        |      | 2      | 2     |
| 29                                                        | 4    |        | 4     |
| <b>Social Media Usage per day</b>                         |      |        |       |
| 4-5 hours                                                 |      |        | 68    |
| 6-7 hours                                                 |      |        | 47    |
| 8-9 hours                                                 |      |        | 21    |
| 10 hours or more                                          |      |        | 5     |
| <b>Duration of current relationship</b>                   |      |        |       |
| 1-4 months                                                |      |        | 14    |
| 4-8 months                                                |      |        | 15    |
| 8-12 months                                               |      |        | 20    |
| 1-2 years                                                 |      |        | 22    |
| 2-3 years                                                 |      |        | 36    |
| 4 years and above                                         |      |        | 34    |
| <b>Social media app used to approach the participants</b> |      |        |       |
| WhatsApp                                                  |      |        | 71    |
| Instagram                                                 |      |        | 70    |

## Method

### Participants

The participants of the study were between the age group of 18-30 years, both males and females, involved in romantic relationships and had the comfort and ability to read and understand English (Mean age= 20 years). The total sample size was 141 (F=87, M=54). Convenient, purposive snowball sampling was used to recruit the sample. The participants were approached through various social media sites.

## Design

A within subjects quasi-experimental design was used for the present study. The independent variables were phubbing, emotional intimacy, multidimensional jealousy whereas the dependent variable was relational satisfaction.

## Measures

**Demographic sheet.** After taking the informed consent of the participants, they were asked to indicate their age, gender, dating duration with the current partner and daily cell phone usage was gauged.

**Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MJS).** Created by Pfeiffer & Wong (1989) to assess three components of jealousy - cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. The respondents were asked to think of a person with whom they have a strong romantic/love relationship. This person was referred to as X in this questionnaire. The respondents were asked to rate their response to the questions by circling the appropriate number beside each item. A 7-point scale was provided for each item. The cognitive and behavioural subscales range from 1 (never) to 7 (all the time) while the emotional subscales range from 1 (very pleased) to 7 (very upset). As instructed in the survey, the scoring was done by reversing the score of the cognitive component in order to control for the response acquiescence bias. For emotional and behavioural dimension, the scores were added as it is. The reliability of the multidimensional jealousy scale using the means of Cronbach's Alpha for the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural subscale was 0.92, 0.85 and 0.89, respectively. (Pfeiffer, Susan & Wong, Paul, 1989)

**Relationship Assessment Scale.** This 7-item scale was developed by Hendrick (1988). Respondents answer each item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). The items 4 and 7 were reverse-scored and the scoring was kept continuous. Greater the relationship assessment score, the more contented the participant was with his/her relationship. Internal consistency of RAS is high ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ) and best represented by one-factor model (Hendrick, 1988).

**Emotional intimacy Scale (EIS).** Developed by Sinclair & Dowdy (2005), it assesses emotional intimacy. It contains five items and is scored on a five-point scale Likert from 1 = Rarely 2 = A little bit of the time 3 = A moderate amount of the time 4 = Quite a bit of the time 5 = A great deal of the time. Possible scores range from 5 to 25 and higher scores indicate greater perceptions of emotional intimacy. Inter-item reliability was calculated at  $\alpha = .84$  indicating strong scale reliability.

**Generic Scale of Phubbing.** This scale was originally developed by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2018). This scale encompasses 15 questions and is evaluated using a seven-point Likert scale (1: Never, 7: Always). It comprises of 4 subscales: Interpersonal Conflict (IC), Nomophobia (NP), Problem Acknowledgment (PA) & Self-Isolation (SI). The

scoring was done by adding the scores of all items. The measurement has good Internal Reliability (IR) from 0.85 to 0.92 and convergent validity.

## Procedure

The study began with an intensive review of different variables that are believed to affect the quality of romantic relationships. After reviewing the literature, the variables to be studied were finalized and relevant hypotheses were formulated. After the scales were discussed and finalized, a google form of the questionnaires was created. Along with the scales, other aspects like age of the sample, dating duration and phone usage as well as an informed consent form were included in the google form. The participants were approached using various social media platforms and word of mouth. Once the participants agreed, they were ensured about the confidentiality of data and the right to withdraw at any point of time in the research. The data for the total number of participants was pooled and analyzed using the SPSS (statistical package for the social sciences). The scores were analyzed on inferential measures like correlation and multiple regression.

## Results

Table 2 demonstrates the correlations between the variables. A significant positive correlation is found between relational satisfaction and emotional intimacy ( $r = .590$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Relational satisfaction has significant negative correlations with cognitive jealousy ( $r = -0.278$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and total jealousy ( $r = -0.195$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Insignificant negative correlation has been found between phubbing and relational satisfaction ( $r = -0.126$ ,  $p = .14$ ). A significant negative correlation was found between emotional intimacy and behavioral jealousy ( $r = -.236$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), cognitive jealousy ( $r = -.171$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and total jealousy ( $r = -.214$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). A significant negative correlation was found between emotional intimacy and phubbing ( $r = -.236$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if phubbing, emotional intimacy, and multidimensional jealousy (i.e., cognitive, emotional and behavioural) significantly predicted participants' relational satisfaction. Table 3 suggests that emotional intimacy ( $\beta = 0.59$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and cognitive jealousy ( $\beta = -0.183$ ,  $p = .01$ ) demonstrated significant effects on relational satisfaction. Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that cognitive jealousy and emotional intimacy predicted 38.1% of the variance in scores of relational satisfaction. ( $R^2 = 0.381$ ) which was highly significant  $F(2, 138) = 42.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 2  
Correlation between the variables studied (n=141)

|                             | 1      | 2      | 3     | 4     | 5    | 6      | 7 |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|---|
| 1 Phubbing                  | —      |        |       |       |      |        |   |
| 2 Emotional intimacy        | -.24** |        |       |       |      |        |   |
| 3 Jealousy (total)          | .18*   | .21*   |       |       |      |        |   |
| 4 Behavioral jealousy       | .12    | -.24** | .83** |       |      |        |   |
| 5 Emotional jealousy        | .15    | -.08   | .78** | .38** |      |        |   |
| 6 Cognitive jealousy        | .13    | -.17*  | .52** | .32** | .16  |        |   |
| 7 Relationship satisfaction | -.13   | .59**  | -.19* | -.14  | -.09 | -.28** |   |

Note: \* $p \leq .05$

\*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 3  
Regression analysis showing contribution of predictor variables to relational satisfaction (n=141)

|                    |       |      |      |        |      |
|--------------------|-------|------|------|--------|------|
| Emotional intimacy | .59   | .348 | .348 | 8.616  | .000 |
| Cognitive jealousy | -.183 | .381 | .033 | -2.692 | .008 |

## Discussion

The present study sought to identify and describe the various correlates and predictors of relational satisfaction in young adults. Participants falling in the age range of 18-30 years, which involved both males and females who were in a relationship, filled an online survey which consisted of questions related to romantic relationships. The sampling techniques used were purposive convenience and snowball sampling.

A significant positive correlation was found between relational satisfaction and emotional intimacy. When a person expresses his/her feelings and emotions to his partner, it could perhaps lead to a better understanding and emotional connection between them. This could contribute to enhancing overall relational satisfaction. This finding is supported through a study by Yoo, Bartle-Haring, Day, & Gangamma (2014), where it was found that when a spouse felt emotionally close to his or her partner, the partner was more likely to be satisfied with the relationship. Since a significant positive correlation was found between relational satisfaction and emotional intimacy, hypothesis 1 was retained.

The significant negative correlations between relational satisfaction with cognitive jealousy and total jealousy suggests that higher the score on jealousy lower will be the satisfaction in the relationship. A recent study by DiBello and colleagues (2015) suggested that cognitive jealousy, which consists of ruminative worry about potential infidelity in one's relationship, led to the association between negative relationship-related emotions and problematic alcohol use.

Since a significant negative correlation was found between relational satisfaction and components of jealousy, hypothesis 2 was retained.

The insignificant negative correlation between relational satisfaction and phubbing indicates that although phubbing leads to a decline in relational satisfaction, this decline is not so significant. This can be attributed to the fact that since this generation is so 'tech-savvy' that even if one partner is spending more time on a cell phone rather than engaging in a face-to-face conversation with his/her romantic counterpart, the latter might not get affected to a great extent, thus leading to only a slight decline in relational satisfaction. The present study results are contrary to what has been found in previous researches. Two cross-sectional studies by Ahlstrom et al (2012) and Roberts & David (2016) have also shown that partner's playing game and partner phubbing are negatively associated with relationship and marital satisfaction. Since an insignificant negative correlation was found between relational satisfaction and phubbing, hypothesis 3 is rejected.

The significant negative correlations between emotional intimacy and behavioral jealousy, cognitive jealousy and total jealousy implies that if a partner has a high degree of emotional closeness in his relationship with his partner, then there might be a minimal presence of jealousy reflected in his behavioural actions. The person perhaps feels emotionally content with the dynamics of his relationship which leaves no room for jealousy. Moreover, the relational length could also act as a predictor of the degree of emotional intimacy and consequent behavioural jealousy. If the extent of emotional

intimacy between the romantic partners reduces with time, due to factors like lack of trust, miscommunication, loss of interest in the partner etc, the partners might show disregard towards each other. This can be supported by a study on jealousy and relationship closeness. Cognitive jealousy had negative correlations with the secure romantic attachment style, experiencing positive emotions frequently in the relationship, love for the partner & being in-love with the partner (Attridge, 2013). Since a significant negative correlation was found between emotional intimacy and components of jealousy, hypothesis 4 is retained.

The significant negative correlation between emotional intimacy and phubbing indicates that the person being phubbed by his/her partner may feel emotionally distant from their partner and might not receive the care and affection expected from his/her partner. This results in a decrease in emotional intimacy among the couple. Moreover, stress can also be considered as a potential predictor of the act of phubbing among couples. Nowadays, people often prefer to use their smartphones as a 'stress reliever' instead of engaging in a conversation with their romantic counterparts about their personal feelings, by confining to their social media handles whenever they desire to divert their minds from a stressful situation (e.g., work, family etc.). This lack of communication between the couple perhaps results in decreased emotional intimacy. Since a significant negative correlation was found between emotional intimacy and phubbing, hypothesis 5 is retained.

Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that emotional intimacy ( $\beta=0.59$ ,  $p=.01$ ) and cognitive jealousy ( $\beta=-0.183$ ,  $p=.01$ ) demonstrated significant effects on relational satisfaction. Emotional intimacy predicted 34.8% of variance in the scores of relational satisfaction suggesting that an increase in emotional intimacy will lead to an increase in relational satisfaction. On the other hand, an increase in the scores of cognitive jealousy leads to decrease in the scores of relational satisfaction by accounting for 3.3% of variance.

The results highlight that people who experience a sense of closeness towards their partner and expect to be understood and to be cared for are more satisfied in their relationship. Partners in a relationship who tend to be suspicious and worry about their partner's interest in people of the opposite sex tend to have negative feelings for one another and lose interest in their relationship. Elphinston et al (2013) proposed that cognitive jealousy and surveillance behaviors were associated with relationship dissatisfaction via rumination, and cognitive jealousy was also directly associated with relationship dissatisfaction. Cognitive jealousy relates with feeling less loved toward one's partner (Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989), lower levels of intimacy (Knobloch, Solomon, & Cruz, 2001), and relationship dissatisfaction among couples (Elphinston et al, 2013). A phenomenon similar to cognitive jealousy termed anxious jealousy has a negative relationship phenomenon

which results in relationship distress. (Elphinston et al, 2013)

A plethora of research has been conducted on romantic relationships during recent times. The study has highlighted that the nature and quality of romantic experiences in young adults can be influenced with higher levels of emotional intimacy and lower levels of the cognitive component of jealousy between the partners. However, contrary to the findings of previous researches conducted, phubbing was found to have an insignificant effect on relational satisfaction.

This research offers huge scope for discovering various tenets of a relationship. Given the increased phone usage and technological advancement, this study provides important insights into dynamic romantic relationships in a technological world.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In the present study, the questionnaire was built using standardized scales used in English language, therefore barring the inclusion of only Hindi speaking participants. As the study has exclusively relied on questionnaires, in future studies, it would be important to include other methods of assessment such as interviews that will provide a deeper insight into subjective experiences of romantic partners.

Further research is needed to shed light on factors such as love and trust that are important factors in defining the quality of a romantic relationship. This research can be carried forward to understand the factors that can lead to satisfaction and dissatisfaction between the partners. There could be an equal number of male and female participants in the data collected, preferably couples. Comparative analysis of both the partners could also be done.

### Conclusion

The dynamics in a romantic relationship at the present times are particularly influenced by various factors, which may either lead to an increase in complexities in a relationship or make the relationship even more strong and meaningful. The present study has highlighted that romantic relationships can be strongly influenced by phubbing, jealousy, emotional intimacy, and relational satisfaction. Through regression analysis, it can be concluded that relationship satisfaction was found to be predicted by emotional intimacy and cognitive jealousy. Moreover, significant negative correlation was found between emotional intimacy and phubbing and a significant positive correlation between emotional intimacy and satisfaction in a relationship.

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# Reducing Stress Levels during COVID-19: A Laughter Yoga Intervention

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**Abstract:** As the joint family structure crumbles and youngsters steer away from parents, senior citizens find themselves alone either in caged care facilities or old-age homes. They are prone to frequent bouts of negative emotions that often lead to debilitating feelings of stress and anxiety which are bound to become more pronounced when they find themselves on their own during a global pandemic. It is essential therefore to equip the geriatric population with useful coping mechanisms during these difficult times and one such mechanism that is being practiced across the globe is, 'Laughter Yoga'. Hence the purpose of the present research is to study the positive influence of practicing laughter yoga in terms of reducing the stress levels of aged people. The study was conducted on 51 men in the age range of 65-80 years who started practicing laughter yoga right after the lockdown period ended in India for the duration of one month. Results indicate that there was a significant difference in their perceived stress and COVID related stress as measured by the Perceived Stress Scale and COVID Stress Scale respectively before and after practicing laughter yoga for a period of one month.

**Keywords:** Laughter yoga, Stress, Aging, COVID-19 pandemic, intervention

Even though COVID -19 has been declared as a global public health emergency which has affected every strata of the society, the geriatric population has been found to be especially vulnerable due to their distinct psycho-social, physical and environmental characteristics. This has been attributed to physical frailty, overall susceptibility to the physiological decline and psycho-social attributes associated with age (Banerjee, 2020). In addition to a weakened immune system and deteriorating health, cognitive and sensory deficits make it difficult for them to comprehend and follow precautions. Many of them are institutionalized, which further exposes them to the risk of overcrowding, poor hygiene, and lack of adequate supervision. Proper testing is also hampered due to neglect and that increases the risk of them being asymptomatic carriers (Banerjee, 2020). World Health Organization in its guidelines has recommended strict social isolation in the geriatric population to control the deaths in heavily affected countries. With increase in vulnerability, there is also rise in fear, panic, and stress in the older adults.

Several studies elucidate the importance of laughter for a better health and a better life. Laughter, in its basic form, is a psycho-physiological response to a stimulus that leads to the production of muscle contractions, facial expressions, and other neurophysiologic processes (Bennett & Lengacher 2008; Mora-Ripoll, 2010; Ripoll, Ramon, & Roderia, 2008). Laughter as a form of exercise or yoga was popularized by Dr. Kataria, an Indian physician who propagated laughter therapy and laughter clubs through his book called *Laugh for no reason* (Kataria, 2002). As long as laughter is done purposely, fake laughter and real laughter promote the same benefits because the body cannot differentiate between the two. However, while at first the laughter is an effort, after a while the laughter becomes a Duchene laugh, at which point the laugh becomes spontaneous and even contagious. The purpose of laughter yoga is to rekindle the childlike playfulness that will ultimately

provide its benefits through unconditional Duchene laughter. This joyous unconditional type of laughter in a positive social setting where everyone else is also Duchene laughing, is the kind of laughter that produces physiological and biochemical changes that include the stimulation of oxytocin, thus promoting wellbeing and reduces stress levels (Keltner & Bonnano.,1997).

Populations like the elderly which are already at a risk due to age related health concerns and deteriorating immunity need specialized attention and a robust Public Health Policy which is substantiated through research-based intervention programs for the benefit of such groups (Koff & Williams, 2020). Therefore, studies exploring the impact of varied and unique intervention techniques such as laughter yoga on the health, well-being and stress experienced by older adults especially during a global pandemic have become the need of the hour.

## Hypotheses

H1: There would be a significant difference in the levels of perceived stress before and after practicing Laughter Yoga intervention.

H2: There would be a significant difference in the levels of COVID-19 related stress before and after practicing Laughter Yoga intervention.

## Method

### Participants

The present study was conducted on a sample of 51 elderly men between the age ranges of 65-80 years. Only men were included in the study because the number of women living in the old age home was not enough to be incorporated in the study. Mean age of the participants was 73. The modal qualification of the participants was an undergraduation. The participants were fluent in both English and Hindi languages.

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They currently live in an old age home in central Delhi. Out of the total sample 24% of the participants were separated, 27% were married, 4 % were divorced, and 45% were widowed. They were approached using purposive and convenient sampling techniques.

#### **Inclusion criteria**

- Participants belonging to the same old age home.
- Only individuals who had not been practicing laughter yoga previously

#### **Exclusion criteria**

- Individuals with any serious mental or physical health condition were excluded.

#### **Design**

The present study was a cross-sectional study, conducted using the before and after design in which the data from the participants on the two scales Perceived Stress Scale and COVID Stress Scales before practicing laughter yoga and after doing laughter yoga for a duration of one month was collected.

#### **Measures**

**Perceived Stress Scale.** Developed by Cohen, Kamarch, & Mermelstein, 1984, Perceived Stress Scale is one of the more popular tools for measuring psychological stress. It is a self-report questionnaire that was designed to measure “the degree to which individuals appraise situations in their lives as stressful” (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983, p. 385). The PSS items evaluate the degree to which individuals believe their life has been unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded during the previous month. Several versions of the PSS exist, for the purpose of the present study, PSS-10 (Cohen & Williamson 1991) was used which consists of 10 items. There are 4 negative and 6 positively worded items for which the participants were required to choose from a scale of 5 alternatives 'never' 'almost never' 'sometimes' 'fairly often' 'very often' relating to their feeling of being stressed on a 0-4 Likert scale. Co-efficient alpha reliability for PSS was 0.84 among college student population with a test-retest correlation of 0.85 (Cohen et al., 1983) and robust factorial and convergent validity.

**COVID Stress Scales:** The COVID Stress Scales were developed by Taylor et al. (2020). The scales consist of a total of 36 items to measure the stress and anxiety related psychopathology in the times of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The scale examines major areas such as stress and anxiety related psychopathology such as fear of getting infected, fear of coming in contact of infected persons and contaminated objects, fear of socio-economic repercussions of the pandemic and traumatic experiences related to the fear of pandemic including obsessive and intrusive thoughts, nightmares and feelings of intense panic. The scales offer an understanding of

the distress associated with COVID-19 and for identifying people who require the attention of mental health services. The internal consistency of all the scales of CSS as measured by Cronbach alpha has been found to be  $> .80$ . The scales also showed excellent convergent validity as the correlations of the scales of CSS with the pre-COVID trait measures of health anxiety and obsessive-compulsive (OC) contamination and checking systems were found to be significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The scales also have good discriminate validity (Taylor et al., 2020).

**Informational Questionnaire.** A small questionnaire was prepared in order to seek information about the demographic details (such as age, marital status and medical history) of the participants and obtain information about their daily routine, general mental and physical health, and their previous experience with laughter yoga to exclude those who were already practicing laughter yoga previously.

#### **Procedure**

The study was conducted on 51 participants between the ages of 65-80 years living in an old age home in central Delhi for at least 3 years. The participants were approached through purposive and convenient sampling. Informed consent was taken. The study was divided into two phases:

**Phase I :** In phase I which lasted for two days, first rapport was established with the participants by carrying out a simple conversation about the day to day activities at the old age home, concerns regarding the ongoing pandemic and their likes and dislikes to make them feel comfortable. The participants were informed about the process of laughter yoga therapy and were shown YouTube videos of elderly performing laughter yoga in different parts of the country to make them acquainted with the practice of laughter yoga. On the second day prior to administering the two questionnaires i.e. Perceived Stress Scale and COVID Stress Scales among the participants before the one month long Laughter Yoga intervention (pretest) a pilot study was conducted with 10 participants to ensure that the language and meaning of the items of both the scales was clear to the participants. The participants of the pilot study reported no issues with respect to the language and the meaning of items of both the scales and the data collected through the pilot study was not included in the final analysis as it was conducted to ensure that the participants understood the language of the scales and were comfortable with the modality of testing. After the pilot study both the scales were administered on all the participants to collect the data before the laughter yoga intervention was initiated.

**Phase II :** In Phase II which lasted for a month, the participants attended an hour-long session of laughter yoga, from 7 to 8 AM every morning, in the compound of the old age home, abiding by the norms of social distancing, 6 days a week for the duration of one month. An experienced yoga trainer was arranged through the personal contacts of one of the researchers in order to better acquaint the participants with the techniques

of laughter yoga and conduct the first 3-4 sessions. The trainer has completed masters in yoga science from Maharishi Dayanand University and has an experience of over 7 years in teaching yoga, meditation and other forms of relaxation exercises to adults and older adults across Delhi. She has also been working with several Delhi-based NGOs that work for the welfare of elderly. The trainer initiated the sessions with 10-15 minutes of warm up exercises that included stretching, jogging at one place, and clapping hands together loudly to the rhythm of 1,2,3 and 3,2,1. These warm-up exercises were conducted in order to energize the participants, improve their blood circulation, enhance coordination, and generate the mood for laughing and smiling among the participants. Followed by these exercises the general framework for laughter yoga followed by the trainer included three simple steps; the participants were asked to stand in a circle and slowly bend to touch their knees while practicing deep breathing, then they were required to slowly stand straight up while producing artificial laughter as loudly as possible and as the third and final step they were asked to raise both their hands in the air while continuing to generate fake laughter as loudly as possible. This process was usually repeated continuously till one of the participants started laughing naturally followed by the others while performing the same physical exercise for about an hour. The trainer instructed the participants to avoid talking or

getting distracted during the sessions in order to ensure that the flow of the activity is not broken. After the first few sessions the participants became accustomed to the routine and conducted the sessions on their own every morning.

The laughter yoga sessions over the course of one month were carefully monitored through silent observation by one of the researchers in order to ensure that each participant attends the one-hour long exercise. On the last day of the laughter yoga intervention a debriefing session was conducted. First, rapport was again established with the participants by carrying out a light hearted conversation about their experiences of the laughter yoga sessions and their feedback was carefully recorded. Following this, the Perceived Stress Scale and COVID Stress Scales were again administered in order to collect data after the laughter yoga intervention (posttest). Then the participants were informed about the objectives of the study and were assured regarding the confidentiality of their responses and results again. They were then thanked for their participation in the study.

The scores obtained on the both the questionnaires before and after the intervention were carefully recorded and subsequently analyzed using appropriate statistical measures. The collected data was analyzed by carrying out the dependent samples t-test on the SPSS software, version 21.

## Results

Table 1

*Mean, Modal qualification and Marital status of the of the participants*

| Mean age | Modal Educational Qualification | Married % | Separated % | Divorced % | Widowed % |
|----------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| 73       | Undergraduate                   | 27%       | 24%         | 4%         | 45%       |

Table 2

*Mean scores, Standard Deviation and t value of participants on the COVID Stress Scales and Perceived Stress Scale before and after the laughter yoga intervention*

| Variables              | Baseline<br>M (SD) | Post intervention<br>M (SD) | t (df=50) | p     |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-------|
| COVID Stress Scales    | 118.4 (38.6)       | 45.9 (25.8)                 | 16.76**   | 0.032 |
| Perceived Stress Scale | 28.4 (8.3)         | 14 (5.3)                    | 9.82*     | 0.028 |

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to assess the stress levels of elderly males (65-80 years) living in an old age home in central Delhi during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by using the Perceived Stress Scale and COVID Stress Scales, before and after a month-long laughter yoga intervention.

The first objective of the study to measure the levels of

Perceived Stress of elderly males before and after practicing Laughter Yoga for a duration of one month using the Perceived Stress Scale. The mean score and standard deviation of elderly participants on the Perceived Stress Scale (M = 28.4, S.D = 8.3) in the pre intervention condition, that is before practicing laughter yoga was found to be significantly higher than the mean score in the post intervention condition (M = 14, S.D = 5.3). The second objective of the study to measure the levels of

COVID related stress of elderly males before and after practicing Laughter Yoga for the duration of one month using the COVID Stress Scales. The mean score and standard deviation of elderly participants on the COVID Stress Scales ( $M = 118.4$ ,  $S.D = 38.6$ ) in the pre intervention condition, that is before practicing laughter yoga was found to be significantly higher than the mean score in the post intervention condition ( $CSS$ ,  $M = 45.9$ ,  $S.D = 25.8$ ).

The first hypothesis of the study was that there would be a significant difference in the levels of Perceived Stress experienced by elderly males before and after practicing Laughter Yoga for duration of one month. The obtained t-value on comparing the pre intervention and post intervention conditions for the Perceived Stress Scale was found to be 9.82 ( $p = .032$ ). Therefore the first hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was retained. The second hypothesis of the present study was that there would be a significant difference in the levels of COVID-19 related stress experienced by elderly males before and after practicing Laughter Yoga for duration of one month. The obtained t-value on comparing the pre intervention and post intervention conditions for the COVID Stress Scales was found to be 16.76 ( $p = .028$ ). Therefore the second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) was also retained.

These results indicate that practicing laughter yoga reduces the perceived stress level experienced by elderly in old age homes. According to a number of studies laughter is the most cost-efficient method of reducing stress levels and improving the general health and well-being of the elderly (Mora-Ropoll, 2010; Shahidi et al., 2012). Kaur (2014) also assessed the role of laughter therapy as a stress buster remedy among the geriatric population living in old age homes and reported a positive impact of laughter yoga intervention. Varghese et al. (2020) also found similar results in an old age home of Uttar Pradesh. These results can be supplemented and explained through the well-established efficacy of laughter in reducing stress and improving the general health of individuals, especially the immunologically vulnerable geriatric population (Ghodsbin et al., 2015). The act of laughing regularly has been found to significantly lower the levels of stress hormones- like Cortisol and adrenaline. (Behzadi, 2010; Erdman, 1994). Similarly, Yoshikawa et al., (2018) also concluded that laughter therapy or interventions have several therapeutic benefits such as lowering the systolic blood pressure, reducing stress levels significantly and improving the overall quality of life of elderly people living in an old age facility.

Humour and laughter are also linked to anxiety and stress. In times of stress, humor enables an individual to perceive the stress from a positive point of view which in turn leads to its appraisal as a challenge instead of a threat, thereby substantially lowering the experience of stress and its associated negative effects (Skinner & Brewer, 2002). A significant difference in the COVID-19 related stress before and after the laughter yoga intervention as shown by the results of the present study, is in line with the above mentioned

proposition that laughter and humour makes a stressful event such as a pandemic less threatening and stressful. Several other studies are consistent with the findings that laughter interventions significantly reduce anxiety and stress levels in the geriatric population (Arrick & Mayhan, 2010; Bennett et al., 2003; Bhagat & Vallance, 1987).

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The sample chosen for the present study was small, comprising of men only and from a geographically restricted area due to a dearth of time and resources. The design used for the present study was cross-sectional in nature. More in-depth information regarding the impact of laughter yoga on the stress levels in the elderly can be achieved through a longitudinal study because it enables the researcher to observe changes over a period of time during follow-up investigations. Another limitation of the present study is that the design did not include comparing the stress levels of the intervention group with those of a control group majorly because the restrictions to ensure social distancing made it difficult to access elderly participants to include in the control group. Future studies can conduct a comparative analysis between the control and intervention groups in order to obtain more robust results.

### Conclusion

In the present study, it was hypothesised that there will be a significant difference in the perceived stress and COVID-19 related stress levels of elderly males living in an old age facility, before and after a laughter yoga intervention. Results revealed that the mean score of the participants on both the Perceived Stress Scale and COVID Stress Scales was significantly higher before practicing laughter yoga for a period of one month than the mean score of the participants on both the measures after practicing laughter yoga. Owing to the growing population of elderly living in old age homes and their increasing vulnerability, findings such as those obtained from the present study have significant implications for health policy makers and health intervention planners for the geriatric population in India.

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## Popular Media's Portrayal of Romance and its Impact on Young Adults' Romantic Relationship

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**Abstract:** This quantitative study aims at exploring the impact of media portrayal of romance and its consumption on the perception of beliefs about romantic relationship and relationship satisfaction among young adults. A sample of 108 young adults between the ages of 18-25 years who were currently in a relationship for a minimum of 6 months was administered a survey comprising Eidelson & Epstein Relationship Beliefs Scale (1982), modified Rubin's Perceived Realism Scale (1985), Hendricks Eros Love Style Subscale Idealistic Intimacy Expectations (1986), Ronald D Rogge Couple Satisfaction Index (2007) and Media Consumption scale. The data was analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation method. The findings revealed that media consumption is positively related to relationship satisfaction and idealistic intimacy expectation amongst young adults. Additionally, it was found that the higher the perceived realism higher will be the dysfunctional beliefs and the lower will be relationship satisfaction. Thus, this research concludes that media portrayal of romance has a significant relationship with the perceptions of beliefs about romantic relationships and relationship satisfaction.

**Keywords:** media, relationship satisfaction, perceived realism, intimacy, expectations

Psychologists have looked into the media for ages as a highly impactful tool to affect individuals across generations irrespective of age and gender. As the prevalence of the internet rises in our daily lives, research regarding its impact has become increasingly important. With over 560 million internet users, India is the second-largest online market in the world (Keelery, 2020). Through the media and other online viewing platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, etc., we have access to a plethora of information & entertainment. Along with the increase in popularity of social networking sites, India's on-demand digital streaming industry has also seen a staggering 240% increase in viewership in just 3 years post 2016. Over the Top (OTT) platforms have been cited as the most popular source of entertainment for the GenZ and Millennials (aged 25-39 years) of urban India, with a 70% rate of consumption. Such high consumption patterns have led to a binge-watching culture to develop. In a survey, it was found that 5% of the population consume between 6-12 hours of daily content on OTT platforms (Mehra & Bhasin, 2020).

The media plays a large role in shaping modern culture, values, and norms, especially for the youth today. Therefore, the media, sometimes consciously or unconsciously, heavily impacts the beliefs that young adults have related to romantic relationships. Lippman, Ward, and Seabrook (2014) state that the way the media portrays romantic relationships gives people a certain understanding of romantic norms and expectations. Therefore, determining the impact of media on romantic relationships is beneficial, as it has been found to affect overall well-being and life satisfaction.

Romantic relationships are defined as mutually acknowledged ongoing voluntary interactions, which are

characterized by a particular intensity, specific expressions of affection, and initiation in erotic sexual encounters (Collins, 2003). Such relationships and experiences are important sources of emotional bonding and contribute to the development of a positive self-concept, greater social integration, identity development and self-confidence (Meier & Allen, 2009). Researches revealed that romantic relationships have a significant impact on both males' and females' quality of life, increasing happiness and reducing anger and sadness (Gala & Kapadia, 2013). Diener and Seligman (2002) showed that strong personal relationships were ubiquitous in extremely happy people, thus indicating that relationships are an integral part of an individual's life.

In spite of having a significant contribution in a couple's lives, somehow the trend of maintaining and nurturing these romantic relationships is shaking amongst youth, therefore it is imperative to find out the contributing mechanisms so that the overall growth, well-being, and productivity in every sphere of life can be improved.

Now, as previously seen, mass media consumption forms a basic part of young people's lives. Hence, it becomes important to discuss how the media is influencing young adults in forming unrealistic idealistic expectations that can hamper their satisfaction levels. Specifically, people falling in the age gap of 18-25 years have been taken into account because by middle adolescence, most boys and girls have been involved in at least one romantic relationship (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003). As adolescents approach emerging adulthood, the time they devote to their romantic partners' increases (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Zimmer-Gembeck, 1999), and they use these relationships to look for a company, emotional security,

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intimacy, and the feeling of love, until they reach a stage when they are ready to take decisions over questions of long-term commitment, such as cohabitation and marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2011; Simon & Barrett, 2010).

Idealistic films influence people's perceptions, and shape their beliefs of norms in terms of love (Hefner, 2011), so much that it has been researched by various studies (mostly in the Western Context) that with the increased consumption of various media platforms, people tend to set up high idealistic expectations in a relationship. A study by Anderegg, Dale and Jesse (2014) investigated how relational maintenance behaviors are portrayed on prime-time television, wherein they ascertained the nature of romantic relationship maintenance and identified the type of behaviors being modeled for viewers. They posited that according to Social Cognitive theory, individuals learn behaviors as a result of viewing mediated models (Bandura, 2001). Observers then tend to enact these learned behaviors in their own relationships. Additionally, qualitative studies have explored the impact of Bollywood films and have found that people understood love through watching Bollywood films and strived to have such relationships in reality (Banaji, 2006). The present study aims to gauge the impact of media on Indian young adults' relationships because it is necessary to explore the context of the influence of the media on idealistic expectations about romantic relationships of young adults in India. Therefore, the research question is, 'What is the relationship between popular media consumption and perception of beliefs about romantic relationships and the relationship satisfaction among young adults?'

### Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between Media Consumption and Perceived Realism.

H2: There will be a significant relationship between Media Consumption and Relationship Belief.

H3: There will be a significant relationship between Media Consumption and Idealistic Intimacy Expectations.

H4: There will be a significant relationship between Media Consumption and Relationship Satisfaction.

H5: There will be a significant relationship between Perceived Realism and Idealistic Intimacy Expectation.

H6: There will be a significant relationship between Perceived Realism and Relationship Satisfaction.

H7: There will be a significant relationship between Perceived Realism and Relationship Belief.

H8: There will be a significant relationship between Relationship Belief and Idealistic Intimacy Expectations.

H9: There will be a significant relationship between Relationship Belief and Relationship Satisfaction.

H10: There will be a significant relationship between Idealistic Intimacy Expectations and Relationship Satisfaction.

### Method

#### Participants

The sample constituted of 108 cis males and females between 18-25 years of age; who have been or are in a committed relationship for a minimum span of 6 months. The present research employed convenient, purposive, and snowball sampling. Demographic details are given in Table 1

Table 1

*Demographic details of participants*

| Demographics          | Groups           | n= 108 |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------|
| Age                   | 18 years         | 4      |
|                       | 19 years         | 20     |
|                       | >20 years        | 24     |
| Gender                | Cis- Male        | 30     |
|                       | Cis- Female      | 78     |
| Relationship Duration | Minimum 6 months | 33     |
|                       | 1 year           | 10     |
|                       | >1 year          | 65     |

Furthermore, 70.4% of the participants preferred watching various OTT platforms (79.6% consumed Hollywood and 50.9% consumed Bollywood). The two most prevalent genres were Romantic Comedy (67.6%) and Romantic Drama (56.5%) amongst several other genres.

#### Design

A correlational survey research design was used. An online survey was used to collect data, by using google form.

#### Measures

**Media consumption scale (MC).** With a thorough review of literature, 9 items were finalized by the researchers to assess the amount, the kind of media consumed by young adults on various social networking sites and other OTT platforms, and the most frequently viewed media genre. For example, 'Please indicate the extent to which you regularly watch movies/ series/ shows on television/OTT platforms.' Its Cronbach alpha was computed to be .30.

**Perceived TV Realism (PR).** The scale developed by Rubin (1994) was used as a screening tool, to understand the perception of reality as shown in the media. Items were modified according to the need of the current research. For instance, the question in the original scale, "Television presents things as they really are in life" was now modified into "To what extent do you think Media/Television presents things as they really are in life?" This 5-item scale was measured on a 5-point Likert scale & had a reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .82$ .

**Relationship Beliefs Inventory (RBI).** Dysfunctional beliefs pertaining to romantic relationships were assessed using the Relationship Beliefs Inventory (RBI) having 3 sub-dimensions (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982). Twenty four items measured respondents' agreement with beliefs that disagreement is destructive in relationships (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ ), mind-reading is expected (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ), and sexual relations are supposed to be perfect (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .64$ ). All items used 5-point Likert scales.

**Idealistic Intimacy Expectation (IIE).** The Eros love style, a subscale (5-point Likert scale) taken from Hendricks love attitude scales (1986) measured the unrealistic expectation of sexual perfection. Since, the target population was unmarried, therefore out of seven, three items related to married couples were dropped, and four items were used to assess expectations having reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .82$ .

Table 2

*Means and standard deviations (SD) of MC, CSI, PR, RBI & IIE*

| Variables                        | Mean   | SD    |
|----------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Media Consumption                | 7.35   | 1.55  |
| Couple Satisfaction              | 123.03 | 19.14 |
| Perceived Realism                | 6.35   | 2.71  |
| Relationship Belief              | 123.93 | 16.36 |
| Idealistic Intimacy Expectations | 12.33  | 4.14  |

Pearson's product-moment correlation method was used to find out the relationship amongst Media Consumption, Perceived Realism, Relationship Belief Inventory, Idealistic Intimacy Expectations, and Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 3

*Correlation matrix of MC, CRS, PR, RBI & IIE*

|                                  | 1     | 2       | 3      | 4    | 5 |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------|--------|------|---|
| Media Consumption                | —     |         |        |      |   |
| Perceived Realism                | .179  | —       |        |      |   |
| Relationship Belief Inventory    | .003  | .199*   | —      |      |   |
| Idealistic Intimacy Expectations | -.057 | .032    | .321** | —    |   |
| Relationship Satisfaction        | .193* | -.268** | .288** | .180 | — |

Note: \* $p < .05$ ,

\*\* $p < .01$

The correlation between Media Consumption and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be positively significant ( $r = .193$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This shows that the higher the media consumption, the higher the relationship satisfaction though the association is not very strong. The correlation between Perceived Realism and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be negatively significant and moderately low ( $r = -.268$ ,  $p < .01$ ),

**Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI).** A 32-item, psychometrically optimized, self-report questionnaire on relationship satisfaction (Rogge, 2007) was used. The scale has good alternate form reliability,  $\alpha = .91$ , and high construct validity.

### Procedure

A questionnaire was prepared on Google forms and disseminated online. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Pearson product-moment correlation was carried out to study the objectives of the study.

### Results

The data was analysed using descriptive and correlational analysis.

Table 2 some of the descriptive features of the data.

implying higher the media perceived realism, the lower will be the relationship satisfaction. The correlation between Perceived Realism and Relationship Belief was found to be significant, positive, and low ( $r = .199$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating the higher the media perceived realism, the higher will be the dysfunctional beliefs regarding romantic relationships. The correlation between Relationship Belief and Idealistic

Intimacy Expectations was found to be significant, positive, and low though highest among all the correlation coefficients found in the current study ( $r=.321, p<.01$ ). This shows that the higher the dysfunctional beliefs (perfect sexual intimacy, love at first sight, mind reading, etc.) higher will be the idealistic intimacy expectations. Lastly, the correlation between Relationship Belief and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be significant, positive, and moderately low ( $r=.288, p<.01$ ), indicating higher the cultivation of dysfunctional beliefs, the higher will be the relationship satisfaction levels among couples in romantic relationships.

### Discussion

The study aimed to understand the nature of relationship between popular media consumption and perception of beliefs about romantic relationships and the relationship satisfaction among young adults. The results showed that increased media consumption leads to positive relationship satisfaction and an increased idealistic intimacy expectation amongst young adults. Additionally, the higher the perceived realism higher will be the dysfunctional beliefs and the lower will be the relationship satisfaction. The reasons for such findings may lie in the fact that the present study mainly focuses on the consumption of popular media such as TV shows, web series, etc. In the modern era, with the development of information technology, a person's immersion in the field of mass media is steadily increasing. A significant portion of consumed media products is occupied by TV shows and OTT platforms. Media may have an impact on multiple domains of an individual's life, the primary one being the beliefs that one has about their romantic relationships.

Research supports that romantic beliefs predict the quality of future relationships and outcomes associated with increased as well as decreased relationship quality (Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Where on one hand, idealistic romantic beliefs may lead to several adverse outcomes, such as negative emotional and behavioral responses to relationship problems (Baucom et al., 1996), on the other hand, such beliefs may also positively affect feelings about a relationship. For instance, Sprecher and Metts (1999) found that individuals who endorsed romantic ideals more strongly experienced feelings of love in their present relationship more intensely and were more committed to their relationship. In addition, individuals who score high on romantic beliefs tend to love and like their partner more strongly. Hence, it can be said that the endorsement of idealized romantic standards has important consequences for real-life relationships.

Prior research has shown that these beliefs are influenced by several factors, such as romantic relationship experience (Frazier & Esterly, 1990) and media use (Bachen & Illouz, 1996).

Media Consumption, in the present study, showed a positive significant relationship with Relationship Satisfaction. It was

indicated that the amount of media consumption isn't as good a predictor as the genre of media. A positive relationship was shown for those who watched romantic comedies (67.9%). Most of the unrealistic expectations came from those who viewed romantic comedies or paid more attention to love reality shows, as supported by Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) which rests on basic assumptions that people learn through vicarious learning. This leads us to the idea that individuals may learn about norms and ideals regarding romance from the media (Holmes, 2007).

Perceived realism, a concept introduced by Lipmann (1922), assumes that peoples' realities are influenced by indirect experiences, such as images presented in the media. Galician (2007) found that mass media images in television, movies, that are internalised by the audience as mimicking reality, reinforce unrealistic ideas about romantic relationships.

The present study showed that the greater the perception of realism in media, the lower will be the relationship satisfaction. Web series like *Bridgerton* reveal fantasy lives filled with high-octane intimacy which appeals to many people. This reveals that the more the people perceive the media to be depicting reality, the more they tend to compare and measure up the factors of their own relationship against the content shown in the romantic genre (Social Media Comparison Theory; Festinger, 1954). Those who seem to be high on this construct believe the media to be a credible source to regulate their behaviour in a relationship leading to feelings of lower relationship satisfaction.

The present findings also suggest that faulty judgments may lead one to develop dysfunctional beliefs. Bachen and Illouz (1996) noted that from watching the media, people associated romance with grandiose expectations about relationships. Thus, mass media may influence romantic partners to have negative perceptions about their relationships, possibly to the point of terminating them (Galician, 2007). It seems consistent with another area of research that posits that it's not the mere exposure to the amount of romance depicted in media, but the reason that people have for seeking such forms of display, which influence their relationship beliefs. Perceived realism also works by the principle of availability heuristics (Perse, 1986). The more people come to believe in the media's projections of love and romance, the more readily these instances are available when they are confronted with real-life situations that require quick decisions and judgments. Those who internalise what is portrayed onscreen by the media develop schemas about romantic relationships that are in line with the cliché plot of the movies but not with reality.

Romantic love is closely related to sexual attraction (Fisher, 2004; Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007), which is different from mere needs driven by sexual desire, or lust (Ellis, 1960; Fromm, 1956; Jankowiak, 1995). Romantic love generally involves a mix of emotional and sexual desire. Therefore, the present study aims to understand the impact of media on

idealistic expectations in relation to relationship intimacy. Since IIE is one component of RBI, hence it was found that the higher the cultivation of dysfunctional beliefs, the higher the IIE.

Romantic comedy (reported to be watched by 67.9% of participants) is a genre that frequently depicts exaggerated plot lines and unrealistic outcomes, thereby leading to the formation of idealistic expectations in the minds of people. This is in line with 'the differential cultivation effects' which argues that specific media messages may produce content-specific effects. Perse, Ferguson, and McLeod (1994) argue that the cultivation of specific attitudes appears to be related to the consumption of specific genres, rather than undifferentiated media consumption. Likewise, increased exposure to rom-coms may have influenced similar attitudes in peoples' minds.

The present findings indicate that the higher the dysfunctional beliefs developed due to media, the higher the relationship satisfaction, which is in contrast to the plethora of existing literature. It has been seen that often the media portrays that aversion to disagreement has a stronger detrimental effect on relationship satisfaction. Popular shows like 'This is Us', 'Friends', etc. truly portray this aspect by showing that disagreements are a normal part of couples' lives.

It is imperative for couples to solve these differences together. An important message is that struggling couples might need to be taught to accept the basic fact that disagreement in relationships is "normal." The items in RBI supported this fact. The item like "If your partner expresses disagreement with your ideas, s/he probably does not think highly of you", showed that 56.9%, i.e. 62/108 individuals strongly disagreed with this statement. This indicates that the participants are open to disagreements and hence have a positive relationship satisfaction.

Movies often show the perfect 'couple goals' and when individuals extend these to their real lives, they may or may not be satisfied with their own relationship. The current finding shows that people are indeed satisfied with their relationship. This may be because they might have acted out in accordance with the 'script theory', which proposes that exposure to media content initiates the retrieval of existing, related scripts in the memory. The activated script serves as an interpretative frame for subsequent judgments (Hansen & Hansen, 1988). For example, media exposure can activate a romantic script that functions as a reference framework for a media user to evaluate his/her relationship or partner. In addition, research has shown that long-term media exposure can render thoughts and beliefs consistent with the media content more accessible in the audience's mind (Shrum, 1996). Moreover, a media stimulus may activate similar thoughts or related scripts immediately after the exposure through the process of priming. Such activation leads to a stronger endorsement of the promoted meanings and ideas (Hansen & Hansen, 1988). The latter priming effect is the focus of this study. Hence, it may be argued

that if an individual recently watched any rom-com, then that person may be focusing on the healthy aspects of the relationship portrayed in the show. Therefore, the participant might score high in the domain of relationship satisfaction. An important implication for relationship therapists in providing couples' therapy is that struggling couples should accept that disagreement in relationships is normal.

It has been seen that the problem with romantic comedies, especially in Bollywood, starts when people start to normalize what is actually lecherous behavior (SahityaDTU, 2019). This means that as long as people are responsible consumers of media and know how to draw a distinction between what's real and unreal, they may be safe. Hence, this also implies for the media a need to start aligning the reality with the stories they create, so as to produce more socially responsible content.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Due to the pandemic and everything happening in an online setting, it may get overwhelming for the participants to engage in surveys. There are also chances of survey fatigue due to the complexity of the questions. In the online questionnaires, participants can't clear any doubts. Due to the self-report method, there is a possibility of social desirability bias or subjective interpretation of the questions interfering. Since the present study was trying to assess the impact of media on people's relationships, many times such impacts are more subtle or operate on an unconscious level, hence the participants may not be aware of the real impact that the content has. This may have affected their responses to some extent.

This topic can be further explored through Focus Group discussions, or interviews wherein participants can give their inputs regarding the research question. Future research could delve into studying the LGBTQIA+ community for broader understanding of the impact of media on their romantic relationships. Since factors like situational factors and personality dimensions may influence an individual's relationship, they can be explored further. Comparisons between couples and singles should be studied to see how much and to what extent they are impacted by the content shown in the media.

### Conclusion

The correlation between Media Consumption and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be significant; this shows that the higher the media consumption, the higher the relationship satisfaction though the association is not very strong. The correlation between Perceived Realism and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be significant and negative implying the higher the media perceived realism, the lower will be the relationship satisfaction. The correlation between Perceived Realism and Relationship Belief was found to be significant and positive indicating higher the media perceived realism, the higher will be the dysfunctional beliefs regarding romantic relationships. The correlation between

Relationship Beliefs and Idealistic Intimacy Expectations was found to be significant and positive; this shows that the higher the dysfunctional beliefs higher will be the idealistic intimacy expectations. Lastly, the correlation between Relationship Belief and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be significant and positive, indicating higher the cultivation of dysfunctional beliefs, the higher will be the relationship satisfaction levels among couples in romantic relationships. Hence, it becomes imperative both for the producers as well as the consumers to understand the impact of the media on the romantic relationships that form an integral part of people's lives.

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# Hope and Gratitude: A Comparison Between College Students With and Without Disability

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to compare the levels of hope and gratitude between students with and without disability using a mixed method approach. 90 undergraduate female students ranging between the ages of 17-22 years participated in the study (45 with and 45 without disability). The Adult hope scale (Snyder, et al., 1991) and the Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation test (S-GRAT; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003) were administered following which the quantitative data was analyzed using t-test. The results showed no significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) indicating that the two groups were not statistically different from each other in the manifestation of these two variables. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted on 30 participants (15 from each group) to better understand the sources of hope and gratitude in both groups, which were then analyzed using content analysis. Finally, limitations and future directions were discussed.

**Keywords:** hope, gratitude, physical disability, undergraduate students, Indian-context

Hope, as an area of research within Positive Psychology, has recently started to grasp considerable interest of researchers from all around the world. While over the years it has been defined in various ways, the most widely accepted definition is that given by Snyder in 2000 who in his multidimensional model of hope described it as “the ability to plan paths; to achieve the goal that the individual desires in spite of obstacles, and a motivation source to utilize these paths.” Agency is described as the driving force of hope and is referred to as the commitment that an individual might have towards goal fulfilment. Whereas pathways, refers to the individual's perceived ability to come up with effective ways to reach or attain their goals and the perceived capability to develop alternative plans of action if faced with any obstacle. According to Snyder (2000), both agency and pathways are necessary, be it in varying degrees, for the operation of hope.

Even though various past researches have studied hope in relation to variables such as maladjustment (Cramer & Dyrkacz, 1998), suicidal ideation (Range & Penton, 1994), and depression (Chang, 2003), studies exploring the relationship between the construct of hope with respect to persons with disability have been far and few. The literature that does exist however, help highlight the ways in which agency and pathways components of hope enable greater integration of persons with disabilities into the society. Dorsett (2010) and Elliot, Kurylo, & Rivera (2002), for instance, discussed the notion of the agency component providing palliative effects soon after the onset of disability. The pathways component similarly enabled the patient to find meaning and resume social roles. Another study showed that hope plays a significant role as a mediator, between learning disabilities (LD) and loneliness as well as LD and academic self-efficacy (Feldman, Davidson, Ben-Naim, Maza, & Margalit, 2016). Similarly, a study done by Shogren, Lopez, Wehmeyer, Little, & Pressgrove in 2006 sheds light upon the positive influence of hope in the lives of persons with and without cognitive disabilities. They studied the

relationship between hope, optimism, life satisfaction, self-determination, and locus of control in these two groups of adolescents. Their results showed that hope significantly predicted life satisfaction in both groups regardless of the presence or absence of disability.

Research done in different cultural contexts has further studied hope in relation to disability. One such study done in Israel, for instance, compared students with learning disabilities to their non-learning disability peers (LackayeMargalit, Ziv, & Ziman, 2006) and found lower levels of hope and lower academic and social self-efficacy among the former group. The reasons proposed for their findings were speculative in nature and claimed that the daily struggles and past difficulties experienced by persons with disability lead them to be less hopeful in life, relative to their peers without LD. While there is a considerable body of research studying the construct of hope, on the whole, there remains a limited understanding of the role that hope plays in the lives of young adults with disabilities as is evident from these contrasting findings in the existing literature. This further remains particularly true for a nation like India which is home to about 26.8 million people with disability (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, 2011). Psychological research on the experiences of such a population is sparse and tremendously needed.

Alongside hope, the construct of gratitude has gained widespread popularity in Positive Psychology literature. Emmons and McCullough (2003) define gratitude as a two-step process: a) recognising that one has obtained a positive outcome and b) recognising that there is an external source for this positive outcome. Rosenberg (1998) has classified the study of gratitude further into different types of categories including gratitude as a trait/disposition, as a mood, and as an emotion. For the purpose of this study, the focus is upon gratitude as an affective trait or disposition.

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As a trait, gratitude implies an easy identification of gifts, a tendency to recognise the value and appreciate the gift, within an individual, quick realisation of the goodness of the giver, and feeling less entitled to benefits from others (Warren & Donaldson, 2017). Various explanations surround the development of trait gratitude, for instance, Wood, Maltby, Stewart, & Joseph (2008), proposed a schematic hypothesis suggesting that grateful people have characteristic schemas providing them with a particular interpretive lens that allows them to appraise help as more costly, valuable, and altruistic. Dispositional gratitude is further believed to be affected by parenting and attachment styles that an individual might experience (Rothenberg et al., 2017).

Research done on gratitude has consistently found it to be positively correlated with well-being and life satisfaction indicators across cultures and samples (e.g., Chen and Kee 2008; Flinchbaugh, Moore, Chang, & May, 2012). However, in terms of its relation with disability, studies have found results pointing in various and also contrasting directions. For example, a study conducted in Indonesia found that gratitude had a significant positive effect on the life satisfaction of students with disabilities. Hence, identifying a positive role for gratitude in the lives of disabled individuals (Rizkiana & Santoso, 2019). On the contrary, Galvin (2004) found that while gratitude was a comfortable response to kindness for able-bodied people, that was not the case for people with disabilities. Among those with disabilities who did not have access to formal care arrangements and had to be dependent on others' goodwill, gratitude was a necessary means to gain social support, and often left the individual feeling ashamed. An analysis of literature, thus, highlights a clear scarcity of researches exploring the impact of disability on the manifestation of gratitude within individuals.

Research on people with disabilities, throughout the years, has focused on the deficits and the problems they face due to their disabilities (Shogren et al., 2006). There is little to no research on well-being or positive traits and characteristics among people with disabilities. Moreover, all major research in this field has been done in the Western context (which limits generalizability of the findings to the Indian context) and the research that does exist, provides contrasting findings. This research, hence, tries to understand the constructs of Hope and Gratitude amongst female undergraduate students with and without physical disabilities within the Indian cultural context.

### Hypotheses

With reference to the above literature, the following hypotheses were adopted and put to test:

H1: There will be a significant difference among levels of hope between female undergraduate students with and without disability.

H2: There will be a significant difference among levels of

gratitude between female undergraduate students with and without disability.

### Method

#### Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 90 female participants within the age group of 18 to 21 years. All participants were college-going and pursuing undergraduate degrees from Delhi University. The participants belonged to middle-or-high income families and at the time of data collection were residing in Delhi. Half the participants (N=45) were persons with physical disability. The types of disabilities included were visual and locomotor. While the remaining half was constituted by persons without disability. All participants were recruited through non-probability, convenient and purposive sampling.

#### Design

The research uses an ex-post facto design to analyze the hope and gratitude scores of the two groups. Such a design characterizes that the "investigation starts after the fact has occurred without interference from the researcher" (Salkind, 2010).

#### Measures

The Adult Hope Scale. Developed by Snyder et al. (1991), this questionnaire measures hope according to Snyder's Multidimensional Model of hope. It contains 12 items of which four measure pathways thinking, four measure agency thinking and four items are fillers. All items are rated on an 8-point scale where 1 = definitely false and 8 = definitely true. The scale is suitably reliable with Cronbach's Alphas ranging from 0.74 to 0.84 with a higher score on the scale indicating a higher magnitude of hope in the individual.

**The Revised Short Gratitude, Resentment and Appreciation test (S-GRAT).** Developed by Watkins et al. (2003), this questionnaire is a shorter adaptation of the Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT) which measures an individual's dispositional gratitude by measuring 3 different factors, Lack of Sense of Deprivation, Simple Appreciation and Appreciation for Others. It consists of 16 items that measure these characteristics and is rated on a 9-point scale, with 1 = strongly agree and 9 = strongly disagree. S-GRAT total scores have been found to be highly correlated to GRAT scores ( $r = 0.96$ ). Factor analysis of the S-GRAT supported the original 3 factor structure of the GRAT scale. Higher scores on this scale indicate a higher level of grateful disposition.

**Semi-structured Telephonic Interview.** Five open-ended questions were asked to 15 randomly selected participants from each group (N=30), to help better understand the sources of hope and gratitude within the sample's life. Some of these were: "Do you think you're hopeful and grateful as a person?", "What gives you hope in life?", "Name five things you're grateful for

in your life”, and so on. The interview was taken both in Hindi and English depending upon the convenience of the participant, and was audio recorded for further analysis.

### Procedure

To gather quantitative data, tools were administered offline and data obtained was analysed by calculating scores for individual questionnaires using the guidelines provided by the

respective authors. Means and standard deviations were then calculated for both groups for hope and gratitude, which were then statistically compared using t-test for independent samples for which SPSS version 21.0 was used. For the purpose of semi-structured interview, 15 participants were randomly selected from both groups under study, and the data obtained was analysed through content analysis (using frequency and percentage variables).

## Results

### Quantitative Results

Table 1

*Comparison of hope between participants with and without disability on descriptive measures*

|      | Persons with Disability | Persons without Disabilities | t-value | p-value |
|------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Mean | 48.4                    | 47.24                        | 0.67    | .50     |
| SD   | 9.20                    | 6.89                         |         |         |

Note: \* $p < .05$

Table 2

*Comparison of gratitude between participants with and without disability on descriptive measures*

|      | Persons with Disability | Persons without Disabilities | t-value | p-value |
|------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Mean | 102.22                  | 100.76                       | 0.527   | .59     |
| SD   | 11.08                   | 14.99                        |         |         |

Note: \* $p < .05$

As is shown in Table 1 and Table 2, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between the hope and gratitude levels of persons with and without disabilities. Thus, both hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected.

### Qualitative Results

For semi-structured interviews, the initial questions explored whether participants perceived themselves to be hopeful and grateful individuals.

The results for the same indicated that 12 of 15 participants (80%) without disability felt hopeful in their lives as compared

to 10 out of 15 people with disability (66.6%). With respect to gratitude, 9 out of 15 people without disability (60%) stated that they practiced being grateful frequently as compared to 11 out of 15 people with disability (73.33%). Further questions were aimed at exploring the sources of hope and gratitude within participants, the results for which are given below.

Table 3

*Sources of hope in both groups*

|                           | Optimistic Outlook | Past Experiences | Future Possibilities | God/Religious Beliefs | Transient Nature |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| People without disability | 46.6% (7)          | 20% (3)          | 26.6% (4)            | 20% (3)               | 26.6% (4)        |
| People with disability    | 20% (3)            | 33.3% (5)        | 26.6% (4)            | 0% (0)                | 0% (0)           |

Among participants without disability, an optimistic outlook allowed them to feel hope (46.6%). This belief, however, was expressed only by 20% of the participants with disability (PWD). Further, God and the perceived transient nature of bad times was mentioned only by a small number of participants in the group without disability (20% and 26.6% respectively). Among the PWD, the most commonly mentioned source of hope was past experiences (33.3%) whereas only a small number of participants without disability mentioned the same (20%). 26.6% of participants from both groups mentioned that future possibilities were one of their sources of hope in life.

Table 4

*Sources of gratitude in both groups*

|                           | Family    | Friends    | Education | Health    | Privileges and Amenities | Teachers | Myself  |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|----------|---------|
| People without disability | 100% (15) | 73.3% (11) | 53.3% (8) | 53.3% (8) | 46.6% (7)                | 20% (3)  | 20% (3) |
| People with disability    | 100% (15) | 66.6% (10) | 46.6% (7) | 0% (0)    | 20% (3)                  | 40% (6)  | 40% (6) |

A striking similarity in responses can be observed in the sources of gratitude of both groups. For instance, most people from both groups felt grateful for family, friends, and their education. In contrast, however, while 53.3% of participants without disability expressed gratitude for their health, none of the PWD felt so. Similarly, those without disability expressed greater gratitude towards the privileges and amenities they had (46.6%) than PWD (20%). PWD were also more likely to express gratitude towards teachers (40% respondents) than participants without disability (20%).

### Discussion

The present study analysed the levels of hope and gratitude between 90 undergraduate female students with and without disability using t-test. The results showed that there was no significant difference observed between the groups with respect to both variables and thus, the hypotheses were rejected. While these results contradict certain previous researches, it has to be noted that neither of these variables has been studied entirely in relation to disability and the existing ones yield contradictory findings. There is further a clear scarcity of researches on the concerned topic within the Indian context.

Findings such as these, help contradict stereotypes and may be considered surprising due to researches that have found college particularly, to be a difficult experience for students with disabilities (Price & Field, 2003). This is because they may struggle to access services and facilities in their colleges and thus, might be in need for constant assistance (Wisbey & Kalivoda, 2011). Further, it may also not be easy for students with disabilities to bond with peers as in most cases groups of such students do not share one common characteristic like other minority groups (i.e. race or ethnicity) because the type and level of severity of disability varies with each individual (Wisbey & Kalivoda, 2011). These challenges elucidate why, in comparison to students without disability, those with disability are more likely to drop out of college (Horn & Berkold, 1999). Even though these researches were conducted in foreign contexts, students with disabilities in India face difficulties too due to stigmatization and poor infrastructure. The present study's findings, however, indicate that despite these difficulties, students with disabilities can

retain levels of hope and gratitude that are comparable to their non-disabled peers.

To better understand these results, one must look deeper into how disability is constructed and understood by those who experience it. In 2001, WHO defined disability as a functional mismatch between a person's capabilities and the situation in which they function. This definition highlights a completely different perspective to view disability, where the social situations in which an individual operates becomes a limiting factor rather than the disability itself. In line with this definition, if we assess the broad life circumstances of people who participated in this study, we observe that all the participants belonged to families that had adequate economic resources. They were further pursuing higher education from a well-established educational institution, which meant that they could envision a stable future for themselves. Through an analysis of the interviews conducted, it was observed that both groups were grateful for a good education (53.3% without disability and 46.6% with disability respectively). This factor becomes significant within the Indian context as education in India unlike the developed countries of the Western world, is not freely accessible to all and a good higher education, especially, is perceived as a privilege (Desai & Thorat, 2012). This is likely to be one reason as to why both groups were highly grateful for education.

Another thing that was evident from the interview results was that members from both groups were nearly equally grateful for their families and friends. Research has shown that a greater tendency to feel social support from the people around an individual, be it friends or family, contributes to an increase in levels of gratitude and life satisfaction (Kong, Ding, & Zhao, 2014). This presence of social support may have also allowed for both groups to remain hopeful. Further, teachers play an essential role in the lives of students with disability by ensuring their inclusion and representation in classrooms (Janney & Snell, 1997). This might be an addition to social support experienced by students with disability, and hence, enhances their feeling of gratitude towards their teachers. It is likely due to this reason that 40% of the interviewed participants with disability/disabilities reported that they were grateful for their teachers, whereas only 20% participants from the other group reported the same.

One inference that can be made by analyzing interview responses is that even though both groups have an underlying disposition for both variables, they might manifest differently depending upon different life circumstances.

In accordance with this idea, one aspect of looking at our results, which can be further explored by future researches, is in terms of the role that parenting styles and religious beliefs play in the development of hope and gratitude as dispositional constructs within individuals. Research, for instance, has shown that grateful parents lead to grateful children (Rothenberg et al., 2017) and that parent's socialization acts are associated with the expression of gratitude in their children (Hussong et al. 2019). Hope similarly, is greatly influenced by caregivers who help in forming linkages between items in the child's environment and provide them with a sense of security and comfort, all of which allows for hope to flourish (Snyder, 2000). Similarly, religion too has been found to play an important role in the development of both hope and gratitude (Emmons & Kneezel, 2005; Idler & Kasl, 1997), and this becomes particularly significant within the Indian culture wherein religion is likely to be deeply assimilated into upbringing practices (Tuli, 2008).

While it is necessary to note that everything postulated in this discussion should in no way be considered as an exhaustive list of factors influencing the development and manifestation of hope and gratitude, our study aims to provide a perspective that would help break stereotypical notions associated with disability. It further, tries to understand the development of these variables within the Indian context and pave-way for future research.

#### Limitations & Directions for future research

Certain limitations of this study include a small sample, absence of randomized sampling technique, and gendered uniformity of the sample. All these factors limit the generalizability of the findings. Further, due to paucity of time, in-depth interviews of participants were not conducted and, instead, a limiting semi-structured interview schedule was used. This limited the amount of data that emerged and the depth of understanding of the participants' life contexts.

Both psychological variables in this study have enormous scope for future research, especially within the Indian cultural context. As mentioned above, one research avenue recommended by this study is the exploration of religious influences and parenting styles necessary for the development of dispositional hope and gratitude. Further research can be undertaken to study the relationship hope and gratitude might have with different types of disabilities, gender identities, and to ascertain the replicability of the results of this study for different samples.

#### Conclusion

This study used a mixed method approach to compare the levels and sources of hope and gratitude between students with and without disability. No significant difference was found between the two groups in relation to both the variables, resulting in a rejection of the hypotheses.

Factors such as education and social support as well as the impact of parental and religious influences are necessary to further understand and explain the results obtained. Future studies are needed to explore the impact of these factors in more detail and in relation to other disabilities.

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