



# GLOBAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

## ISSUE NUMBER 5

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# WELCOME TO ISSUE 5



**Prof. Dr. Parin Somani**  
Director: London Organisation of Skills Development

Dear Esteemed Readers, on behalf of the entire team at the Global Research Journal (GRJ), I am thrilled to welcome you to Issue 5! This issue's theme, "**DIGITAL FUTURES: ADAPTING TO THE EVOLVING LEARNING LANDSCAPE**", is particularly timely as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of education in our increasingly digital world. Following the resounding success of the Global Research Conferences 2024, held at New College, Oxford University from 23rd – 26th March 2024, we are delighted to share some of the cutting-edge research presented there within the pages of Issue 5. This issue features a selection of thought-provoking articles that explore the impact of digital technologies on E-Commerce, Business, Leadership, Illegal Immigration, Spirituality, Mental Health, Applied Indian Philosophy, Women Empowerment and Artificial Intelligence. Due to the overwhelming response, we are happy to announce that whether you are an educator, researcher, student, or simply someone with a keen interest in the future of learning, I am confident that you will find the content within this issue both informative and stimulating. We encourage you to delve into the research, engage with the ideas presented, and share your own thoughts and perspectives. Together, let's explore the exciting possibilities that digital technologies hold for the future of learning! Warm regards, Prof. Dr. Parin Somani Chief Editor, Global Research Journal You are welcome to find us at [www.globalresearchjournal.info](http://www.globalresearchjournal.info) or Facebook for more information

**Prof. Dr. Parin Somani**

*Chief Editor*

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## This Issue sections

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# STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZED RETAILERS TO COMPETE AGAINST E-COMMERCE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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**Theme of the Article: E-Commerce**



## DR. HARI KRISHNA MARAM

FOUNDER CHAIRMAN

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He has an illustrious career in education and has served as the Governing Council Member at AIMA, Chairperson - the International Facility Management Association (IFMA), and Vice President at AIMS. President Led India Foundation USA, Served in Lions International 20 Years in Different Capacity instrumental in building Lions Super Speciality Hospital of 7 Crore and Chairperson Higher Education Forum –Karnataka amongst many other designations. His efforts in management education have been recognised on numerous occasions by the Government of India. He is also a part of the UGC Committee.

### Bio

Dr. Hari Krishna Maram, Founder Chairman of Global Economic Forum, Digital Brand Ambassador, Chairman of Vision Digital India & Founder Chairman of Imperial College and Vice Chancellor of Global Digital University, USA. Dr. Maram's work in the field of Management and Management Education spans over 28 years. Worked for a decade in leading MNC Novartis Global Pharma.

### Objectives

Explore the strategies employed by organized retailers to capitalize on market opportunities and address challenges within the retail sector.

investigate potential avenues for organized retailers to navigate the retail market successfully. Assess the feasibility of enhancing India's retail landscape by fostering collaboration between organized and unorganized retailers, as well as e-tailers.

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## Abstract

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Growing consumerism calls for all types of retailers to deliver quality product/service offerings and differentiated experiences in line to consumers' needs and preferences. Tech savvy consumers of today are engaged in multichannel buying behaviour and are not loyal to any particular format. Unorganized retailers are redoing their outlets to match competition and organized retailers (including e-tailers) are stretching themselves-all in an effort to offer consumers the 'differential experience'. The Indian retail market poses tremendous challenges for all retailers, so instead of competing with each other it is felt that leveraging integrated efforts would be more beneficial.

However, this will be very challenging with all retailers required to structure their internal and external processes with suitable technological and physical infrastructure so as to be able to understand both clicks (e-tailing) and bricks (physical stores) consumption needs. This paper discusses issues concerning integrating all types of retailers and also proposes a framework to analyse whether the path ahead of Indian retail can be moulded to suit this move.

## Keywords

Organized retailers, Unorganized retailers, E-tailers, Multichannel buying, Leverage integrated efforts.

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## Introduction

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Retailing is defined as the set of business activities that adds value to the products and services sold to consumers for their personal or family use (Levy, Weitz, Pandit, and Beitelspacher, 2012). Although retailing practices have been in vogue for ages,

modern retail in India picked up momentum only for one and half decades mainly due to favourable demographics like the young working population, urbanisation, growing income, media penetration and increasing brand orientation. The tremendous opportunity in an emerging retail market like India has attracted not only global retailers such as Wal-Mart, Metro etc. but also the online/e-tailers.

With technology at their fingertips and easy access to the Internet, customers are comfortable purchasing products/services online. Alongside, they continue to patronize offline (organized and unorganized) retailers too. These customers have high awareness, make selective choices, openly voice their opinions, and expect consistency and 'customer engagement' in all retail transactions. A big challenge for offline retailers and e-tailers is to fortify practices that earn them the loyalty of such multichannel customers. In this paper, we propose to examine whether all retailers can leverage their integrated efforts to cater to diverse customer needs wherein, e-tailers use intelligence tools to provide customer services and the offline retailers provide customers' accessibility

and brand profile so as to deliver a 'real buying experience'. Through discussions this paper will attempt to answer the following questions:

1) How can organized retailers exploit market opportunities?

2) How organized retailers can overcome challenges in the retail market?

3) Is it possible to leverage Indian retail through an interface of organized and unorganized retailers' and e-tailers?

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: the following section gives an over-view of the Indian retail scenario, followed by the type of retailers operating in India, and then there is a discussion on leveraging integrated efforts among retailers, finally conclusions are drawn and then limitations to the study and future research directions suggested and brand profile so as to deliver a 'real buying experience'. Through discussions this paper will attempt to answer the following questions:

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## 2.0 Overview of the Indian Retail Scenario

The early retailing practices in medieval India was a controlled process mandating sale of commodities and products at certain designated markets (Byramjee., 2005). Common practices like "Weekly Haats", 'Melas' and 'Mandis' that have been in vogue since long continue retail operations even today. Popular retailing formats include street carts, wet markets, pavement shops, public distribution system, kiosks, weekly markets, etc.

'Melas' and 'Mandis' that have been in vogue since long continue retail operations even today. Popular retailing formats include street carts, wet markets, pavement shops, public distribution system, kiosks, weekly markets, etc. The current Indian retail sector comprises the co-existence of the unorganized/traditional and organized/modern retailers and e-tailers. Till the 1980s, with limited purchasing power and not much industrialization the retailing scenario was more unorganized, operated by small/medium businessmen who set up stores at popular locations (operating in 500 or less square feet area) and practised the 'counter service concept'. Subsequently, they modified operations by adopting 'self-service format' and calling themselves 'Supermarkets' (Sengupta, 2008). The early steps in organized retailing can be traced to mid 1980's when some of the restrictions were lifted. However, practically the beginning of modern retail can be associated with the opening of the first 'Nilgiris' outlet at Bangalore in 1971. Subsequently,



The early steps in organized retailing can be traced to mid 1980's when some of the restrictions were lifted. However, practically the beginning of modern retail can be associated with the opening of the first 'Nilgiris' outlet at Bangalore in 1971. Subsequently, rapid transformation took place with the entry of big retailers such as Shoppers' Stop, Pantaloon Retail, Viveks amongst others. Indian retail market has been evolving and the current retailing landscape characterised by its twin growth engines-the economic liberalization coupled with the demographic profiles is encouraging all types of retailers (global, organized, unorganized and e-tailers) to be a part of the growth-story.

Retail market growth estimates and evolving consumer behaviour:

The following studies pinpoint the tremendous scope of the Indian retail market growth.

Indian retail is ever expanding, with a 15 percent

yearly growth rate forecasted by 2015 (Nimbekar, Sood, Bachkaniwala, Gupta, Dutta, Rathi, Bangera 2015) and also an expected annual growth of 25 percent worth US\$ 175-200 billion by 2016 (Madan and Sharma, 2012).

As per 'Indian Retail the next growth story' (2014), the overall size of Indian retail sector is estimated to be about INR 31 trillion in the period 2013-14 with a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15 percent over the past five years. Further, an estimation of CAGR 12-13 percent that would be worth about INR 55trillion by the period 2018-19, is expected.

According to ASSOCHAM/Business Standard (2014) study, the overall India retail market is likely to reach Rs 47 lakh crore by 2016-17 from the level of Rs 23 lakh crore in 2011-12, growing at CAGR of 15 per cent.

The Indian retail market is likely to touch a whopping Rs 47 trillion (US\$ 738.71 billion) by 2016-17, opines Yes Bank-Assocham study (Retail industry in India, 2014).

There is a visible growth in the Indian retail industry with an expectation that India will achieve 7.4 percent GDP during the period 2015-2016 (Datta, Nimbekar & Sood, 2016).

All the above studies reiterate the expectation of the tremendous growth potential of the Indian retail industry. The following section will throw light on the various categories of retailers who are aspiring to become a part of the growing retail industry here.

### **3.0 Types of retailers operating in India:**

Technological advances and the advent of e-age have brought about modifications in the way businesses are carried out. For instance, the wifi, internet, social networks, apps, etc., have helped to create new channels for retailers who are attempting to take advantage of these developments and reach out to customers in various ways. E-age technologies have enhanced transactional and communication

capabilities of the organisation through a faster supply chain that lower costs for the consumer. But long term growth calls for focussing on the 'consumption processes' of consumers that goes beyond the purchase process to include customers' services before and after sales (Browne, Durrett and Wetherbe, 2004). This study had attempted to analyze consumer behaviour and investigate consumer beliefs and preferences about shopping on-line and at physical stores. Interestingly, it was found that customers were attracted to online stores because it provided information and enabled purchasing of products and services, whereas, shopping at physical stores provided convenience in terms of the touch-and-feel factor, comfort when shopping in person and interacting with sales persons (Browne, Durrett and Wetherbe, 2004). Western markets having realized the scope of e-tailing, are vying the opportunities in emerging markets especially the BRIC (Brazil, Russia,

India and China) countries. Further, physical store attributes do induce positive buying behaviour among consumers found Mohan, Sivakumaran and Sharma (2013). Moreover, the India retail market has witnessed tremendous structural changes in the recent years mainly owing to the dynamic entry of many international retailers and brands. With the rapid growth of internet retailing in India, based on shopping orientations, three customer segments, namely: value singularity, quality at any price, and reputation/recreation have been identified (Gehrt, Rajan, Shainesh, Czerwinski and O'Brien, 2012). In the past few years e-commerce has made a big changeover especially among India's increasingly young work force with high disposable income, and being socially active find convenience in using smart phones and being engaged in e-tailing (Dutta, Nimbekar and Sood, 2016). On one hand, while e-tailing is expanding the growth of the retail market to reach out to even most remote customers, a large

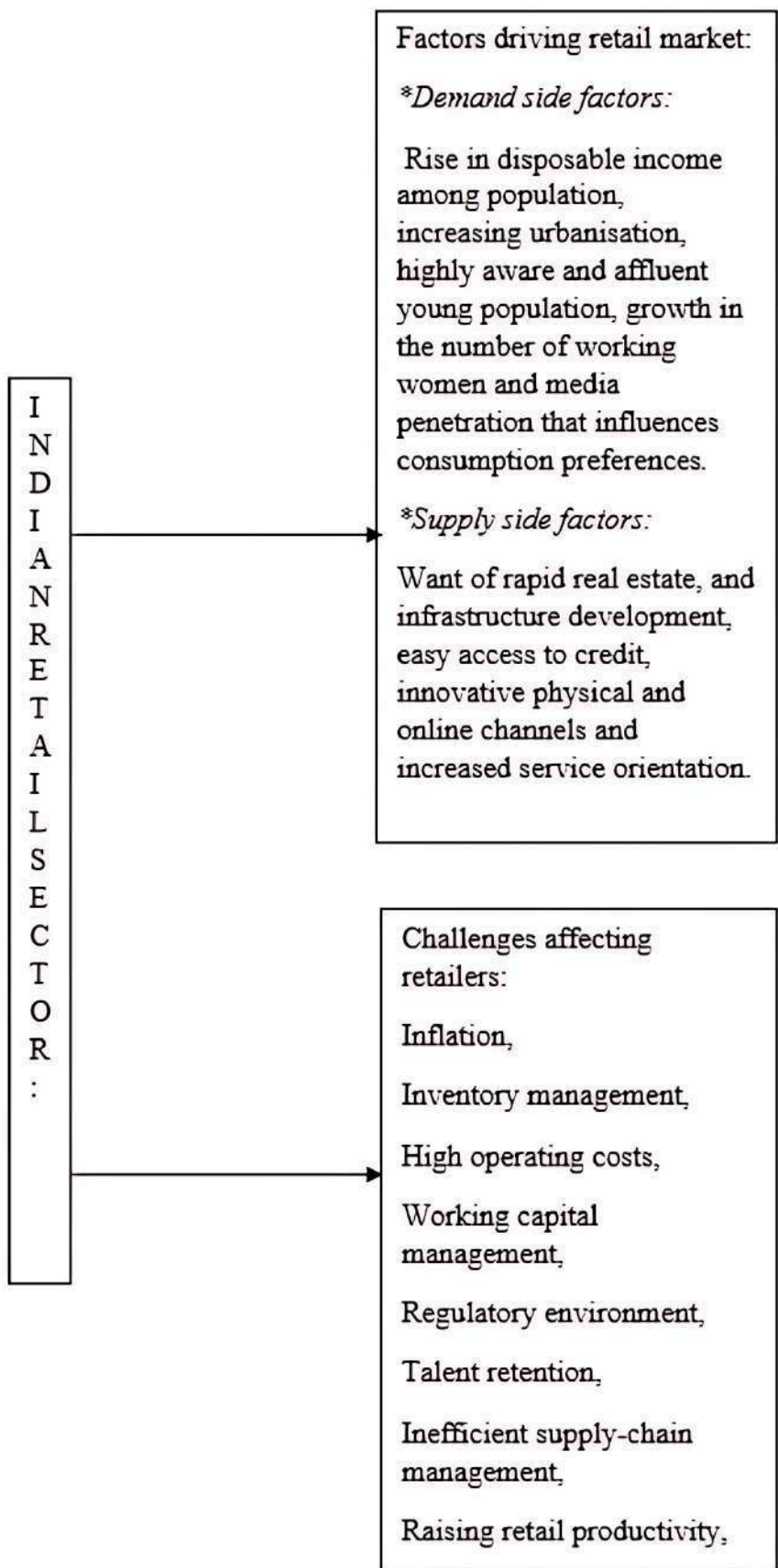
number of traditional brick-and-mortar retailers are redoing their retailing processes in a bid to meet competition, on the other hand. For, as pointed out by the following studies even unorganized retailers and/or e-tailers stand to gain from the retail growth:

The study by Goswami and Mishra (2009) found that if unorganized retailers upgraded their in-store facilities (cleanliness, quality of products, etc.) they could easily earn long term customer patronage. The fact that 92 percent of the Indian retail business comes from the unorganized market speak volumes on the immense potential for growth and consolidation of this sector (Indian Retail the next growth story, 2014). India is expected to have the second largest base of online users globally, ahead of the USA although just behind China (India Special Online Retail Driving Realty, 2015). The face of modern retail changed with the accelerated pace of e-tailing that started from 2010 onwards especially with evolving consumer spending patterns with

increasing disposable income levels, and these are truly re-defining the retail landscape in India (Dutta, Nimbekar and Sood, 2016). With increased usage of advanced technology by retailers, for consumers shopping options are evolving and could even go beyond physical stores and e-tailing. Synergy between ecommerce firms and other category of retailers will be beneficial to all retailers and customers. Some of the e-tailers have attempted this. For instance, Lenskart, Pepperfly, Freecultr and Firstcry opened physical stores to show case their products and service online customers. Leading e-tailer, Flipkart long back had opened physical stores from where customers, according to their convenience could pick up products ordered online. E-wallet firms Paytm, PayU India, MobiKwik and Freecharge, offer services such as mobile recharging, adding bill payment and certain e-commerce products to customers. On the likely consumer behavior trends

impacting the e-tailing market, Shashi Matta (Prof. Marketing, Ohio State University) felt crowd-shaping (meaning- Consumers will join, link, connect, fund as well as give shape to ideas and products/services that reflect their preferences and is based on how they express it), C to C retailing, gamification, hyper-connectivity, sustainability and social responsibility will have a major influence on the form and scope of future Internet retailing. While, "Retailers, branded companies and smaller sales outlets now need to look for new ways to market their products among customers who are more discerning and technically more knowledgeable – and that calls for a new approach, a new means of bringing together the best aspects of digital and traditional shopping", opined Carl Gish, Vice President, (global shipping and logistics), eBay Marketplaces (Global e-tailing 2025, p.9). Tremendous changes have engulfed Indian retail since the past two decades and it is believed that the modern retail

sector will primarily be driven through an integrated approach adopted by e-tailers and modern brick-n-mortar format stores (Dutta, Nimbekar and Sood, 2016). Evolving Indians' shopping behaviour has ushered a revolution in retail, giving rise to assortments of formats to cater to the varying needs of customers. Unorganized retailers have modified in-store display and ambience, offer credit, free home-delivery and try to maintain personal relationship with their customers. The organized retailers (supermarkets, hypermarkets, retail chain outlets, etc.) have outlets at bustling shopping centres, multi-storey malls and huge complexes wherein shopping, entertainment and food courts are available under the same roof. Online retailers are going the extra mile by offering categories of products, discounts and payment on delivery facility to customers. Competition, technology improvements and evolving retailing sector mandates retailers leverage and integrate



**Figure 1: Factors Driving, and Challenges Affecting Indian Retail**

available technologies and concepts to enhance relationships with customers to offer delightful experiences. A combination of demand and supply factors (drivers) and certain challenges are likely to provide the impetus and affect the growth of the Indian consumers and retail market (illustrated in Figure 1).

Retailers to be a part of the industry growth could meet the challenges by revamping their operations through an influx of product variety, new working processes, building brands, re-doing supply chain management and exploring new markets. Building 'Customer Experience': Social networks, smart phones, tablets, etc. have become an integral part of everyone's life changing the way one shops, with customers' looking out for an omni-channel (shopping through various mediums) experience and 24/7 shopping. Earlier, various channels (online, mobile, offline, etc.) were operating in silos. Today customers are socially aware, tech savvy

and yet indecisive on their choice of 'preferred retailer', products to be purchased online vis-a-vis in-store, and so on (PWC Global's Total retail report, 2014). This calls for retailers to exploit market opportunities, work towards customisation (make intelligent usage of analytics to gauge consumers' preferences), offer transparency and access to information on the availability of stock- all in order to provide a real 'customer experience'.

Growth of the online market place has facilitated the emergence of a new channel called consumer to consumer that permits consumers to do business with other consumers through a facilitator who provides a market of exchange, for example, eBay, Yahoo auctions, etc. (Anderson and Zahaf, 2009). This study found customers avoid online shopping due to preference for the services provided by brick-and-mortar retailers, those not using the new channel but buying online are comfortable with the hassle-free experience and those who are using the new channel being price

sensitive, are able to compensate for any perceived risks by researching more on the products to be bought (Anderson and Zahaf, 2009). A major driving force behind retail revolution can be attributed to the dynamism and innovative flair for IT usage by today's customers who are living in a highly digital cultural environment. Such

customers prefer a shopping experience that is convenient, efficient with an assurance of speedy delivery of ordered products. Technology has facilitated marketers to develop consumer profiles by evaluating their search and purchasing patterns. However, the real challenge lies in want of proper infrastructure facilities to ensure timely delivery (i. e. speed and convenience) of products to all customers. Further, consumers are displaying multichannel buying behaviour so as to get the benefit of shopping in every place at all times. This implies that all retailers be they online or offline, need to do away with the old boundaries and look towards

nterlinking so as to give customers the best of the online and offline retail world as will be discussed in the following section.

## 4.0 Towards leveraging integrated efforts among retailers

The current retailing scenario is customer driven with every retailer trying to pamper their customers with attractive product/service offerings. These customers, however, do not patronize any format/channel as they seek functional benefits at unorganized outlets and emotional benefits from organized retail stores (Madan and Sharma, 2012) and typically shop at more than one channel (Multichannel strategy, 2013). India Retail Trends (2014) identified decreasing communication costs, rising Broadband PC penetration and increased usage of credit card and debit card as the key enablers fortifying the growth potential of

organized retailers and e-tailers. The strengths and challenges faced by different types of retailers are indicated in Table 1. Nevertheless, in the current information rich-age the biggest challenge before all types of retailers is to deliver superior products/services through differentiated experiences that will suit the ever-changing consumer needs and preferences.

The following studies highlight ways on inducing positive retail consumption among customers:

Multichannel Strategy (2013) found that multichannel buyers browse the web to gather information on products but prefer to purchase and negotiate returns through any of the channels/outlets. This study opines the need for retailers to maintain the right balance between 'customer experience' and 'contact centre operations' by using a multichannel strategy that caters to all segments of the changing demographics across all geographies. Retail Leadership Summit (2014) suggests tapping emerging consumer segments through using business models that leverage

technology, supply chain innovation and hybrid models adoption that would integrate their online and offline presence and also be able to attract customers from rural, smaller cities and towns. PwC Global's Total retail report (2014) found that 'customer loyalty' in the true sense develops only when retailers are able to build an element of 'trust' that repeatedly attracts customers to their store. The study suggests multichannel and online retailers to leverage their efforts and create business models that would help to expand operations beyond metros, Tier-1, 2 & 3 cities and convert footfalls/browsers to actual consumers. Such moves will facilitate customer's access to new channels and also enhance retailer's flexibility in delivering value to them.

Studies (Mishra and Mathew, 2013; and Gehrt, et al, 2012) found that despite the low penetration levels of the internet users, the online market has got tremendous growth potential.

Indicators (a)	Opportunities in Retail (b)	Strengths of the retailer's	Challenges of the retailer's
Exponential growth and development opportunities	Globally India is the fifth largest preferred retail destination, with ample retail growth & development taking place across metros, major cities as well as in tier 2 and tier 3 cities.	For 'Modern retailer': -Can offer highly personalized services (including store staff's help) to customers.	In e-tailing with consumer demand threatening to overtake the capacity of infrastructure to deliver, e-tailers need to develop the last mile delivery system so as to be able to offer fast and efficient services that meet customers' expectations.
Rural markets potential	With increasing investments in rural infrastructure all retailers are looking forward to having access to high growth potential in rural markets.	-Allows customers to experience the 'touch and feel' factor of product offerings. -Customers can make instant purchases, no waiting time for delivery	Supply chain management is a big challenge for e-tailers, calling for logistics division to make use of the most efficient
Private label strategy	India has only about 6 per cent share in the private label market; growth of modern and online retail is augmenting the growth potential of private label brands in India.	For 'E-tailers': -Online customers can shop any where any time. -Customers can have wider online selection compared to that at physical stores.	cost effective facilities and systems that ensure company stores and end customers receive shipments as per the plan.
Sourcing base	competitiveness is attracting large global retailers such as GAP, Walmart, Tesco, etc. who are slowly moving towards establishing their own wholly-owned/wholly-managed sourcing and buying offices, i. e., making India their sourcing base.	Customers can view other consumers' reviews when engaged in product/brand search. -Price comparisons are very convenient in online shopping.	For all types of retailers-build up a profitable and sustainable business model that will help to manage logistics, pricing and customer loyalty.

(Source: RETAIL IBEF, January 2016; and THINK INDIA THINK RETAIL 2016)  
Table 1: Opportunities, strengths and challenges faced by retailers

While examining the relationship between shopping orientations and a validated scale of web site attribute importance among Indian online shoppers, Gehrt et al (2012) found the patterns of India's pioneer two segments: quality at any price, and recreation/reputation, to be similar in terms of internet usage and online shopping. These researchers suggested e-tailers to rely on diffusion of innovation to build up the value appeal. Mishra and Mathew (2013) found that Indian online buyers perceived a very high level of risk/fear on the delivery of goods bought online. However, quality of information, product range and after online sales service were the most preferred website attributes influencing its usage. Retail Operations Benchmarking and Excellence survey (2014) gave an interesting perspective on the impact of increased access to mobile internet suggesting that with increased access to 3G and 4G mobile internet services in the next five

years, m-commerce can expect to gain about 20 percent share of the country's e-commerce market. Moreover, online retailers are now catering to consumers in more than 3000 postal areas, whereas, even the largest retail store chain (organized retailer) currently covers only around 100 locations in India (ibid, p.3). This is an indication of future growth opportunity with an integrated multichannel approach.

The above discussion advocates leveraging the integrated efforts of unorganized retailers, organized retailers and e-tailers, so as to induce positive retail consumption through a multichannel approach and in the process create a win-win situation for all involved. Keeping in mind the discussions put forth in the paper a framework to this effect has been proposed (illustrated in Figure 2).

As shown in Figure 2, the Indian retail market faces many challenges (inventory management, inefficient supply chain, etc.) that will impact all retailers and could adversely affect their costs and profits.

We propose to leverage the integrated efforts of all retailers towards addressing the challenges. Organized retailers, with the help of analytics etc. can identify target customers' needs, manufacture products, develop interfaces with unorganized retailers (suitably located) and e-tailers (for tech savvy customers), provide them (retailers) the necessary marketing support to display and sell the products to customers through their formats/channels. Today's consumers do not patronize any single type of retailer. They prefer to weigh the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each format and then make a choice. So, integrated efforts between retailers where each one shares with others valuable insights on the target customers will facilitate cost reduction and efficiency in supply chain management. Additionally, such benefits can be passed on to buyers through discounted offers.



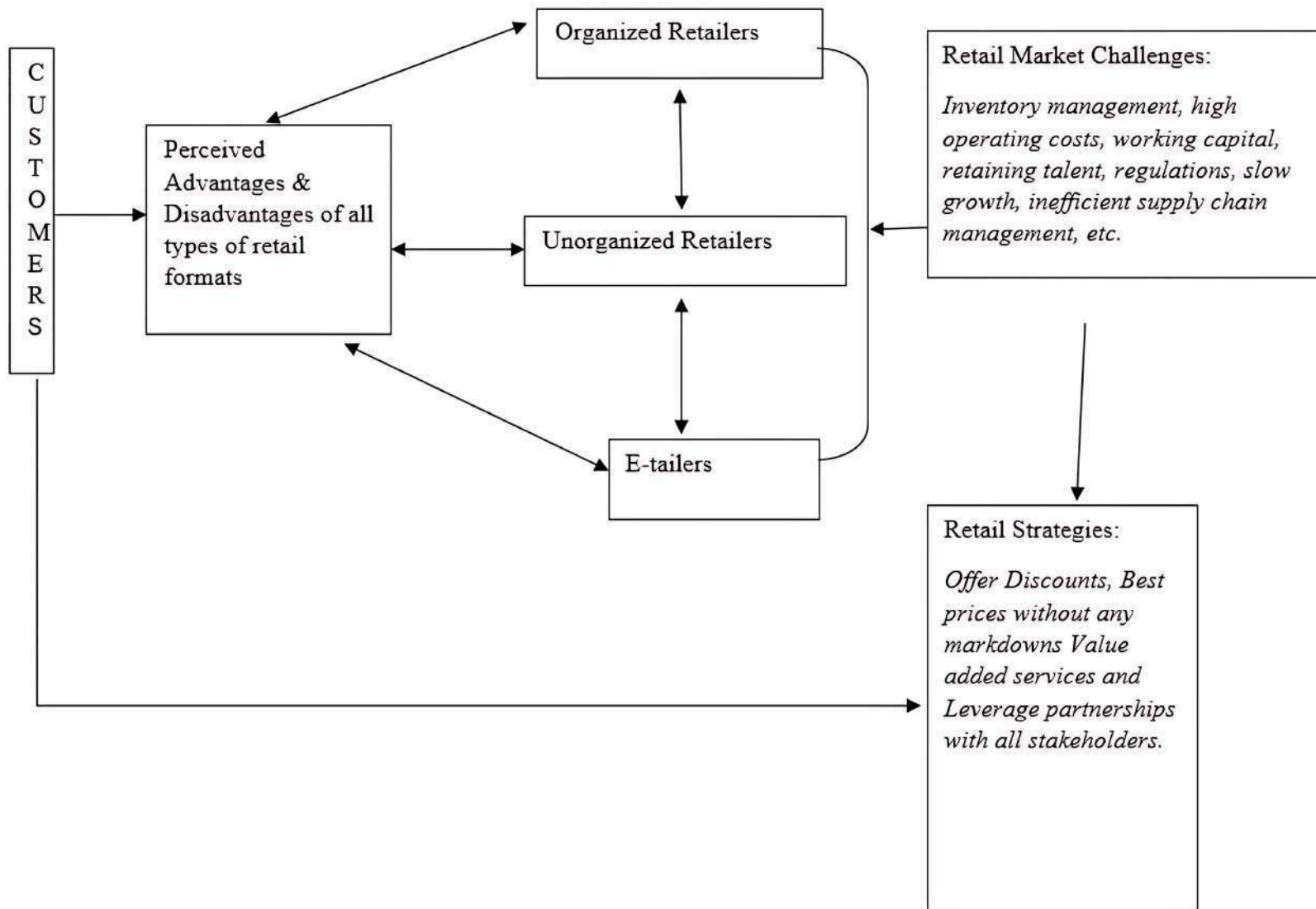


Figure 2: Proposed framework to leverage the integrated efforts of all retailers.

Moreover, such efforts could pave the way to explore retail opportunities through suitable retail strategies in the future. E-commerce leader Amazon India had attempted this when as a pilot study they decided to launch an express delivery platform in partnership with the kirana shops of Bengaluru to cater to the local needs. Of course, only time will tell the outcome of Amazon India's attempt. Nevertheless, with more in stake for the integrated efforts of online and offline retailers to meet customers' expectations of fast and efficient delivery of products/services, there are few challenging questions posed on which they need to reflect, and address:

Do the retailers have the right personnel with the requisite offline & online marketing skills? Have the retailers (offline as well as online) worked out a robust and future-proof data strategy? Have these retailers been able to identify the 'right marketing mix' and communications channels for a wider targeted audience?

## Conclusion

Competitive business scenario along with growing consumerism requires all retailers to intensify efforts at offering differentiated quality products and services to customers. The evolving Indian retail market is currently characterised by twin growth engines-the economic liberalization coupled with the demographic profiles providing the right impetus for growth. Organized retailers are trying to exploit the market with an influx of new work processes, technologies and modern concepts so as to provide delightful customer experiences. Unorganized retailers are re-doing their in-store ambience, offering credit, etc. to woo customers. E-tailers are offering different categories of products, discounts and the payment on delivery facility to customers. Technology has impacted the way tech savvy consumers in this information-age interact with different retail

channels using the multichannel approach and yet they are not loyal to any retail channel. So, instead of competing with each other the authors of the current study feel that leveraging an interface between all categories of retailers would work for the good of all. In spite of the popularity of e-tailing, customers will continue to shop at physical stores (both organized outlets and the traditional brick and mortar stores) mainly because for customers shopping is a recreational activity. At physical stores they get to touch and feel the products and interacting with the sales personnel provides the necessary social appeal. Realising the importance of e-tailing many of the traditional brick and mortar retailers have attempted to go online either through their websites or by tying up with popular e-tailers such as Snapdeal, Myntra, Jabong, etc. The idea is to use and bring technology to stores, provide multiple interacting points and support to the customer. Since the customers have experienced the convenience of e-tailing they will expect more and an integrated collaboration

amongst all retailers in future can work towards a satisfying customer experience. In view of this a framework is proposed (Figure 2), wherein all-organized and unorganized retailers, as well as e-tailers could leverage an integrated business model so as to be able to deliver quality products/services through a multichannel approach and create 'delightful customer experiences. This review paper through discussions has communicated on ways through which organized retailers can exploit market opportunities and overcome challenges in the retail market. Additionally, a collaborated interface between organized, unorganized retailers and e-tailers is felt could help leverage positive consumption behaviour among customers and also pave the way towards creating satisfying shopping experiences.

## Limitation and Future research

Competitive business scenario along with growing consumerism requires all retailers to intensify efforts at offering differentiated quality products and services to customers. The evolving Indian retail market is currently characterised by twin growth engines-the economic liberalization coupled with the demographic profiles providing the right impetus for growth. Organized retailers are trying to exploit the market with an influx of new work processes, technologies and modern concepts so as to provide delightful customer experiences. Unorganized retailers are re-doing their in-store ambience, offering credit, etc. to woo customers. E-tailers are offering different categories of products, discounts and the payment on delivery facility to customers. Technology has impacted the way tech savvy consumers in this information-age interact with different retail

One limitation of this paper is that categorized as a general review paper, inputs have been drawn from secondary sources such as referred journals, reports and reference books, however, to gather practical insight and gain a better understanding on consumer offline versus online shopping behaviour would call for carrying out an empirical survey study. Such a research study would require researchers to administer questionnaires to customers (both online and offline) that gauge their buying behaviour in terms of analyzing attributes that attract them to stores and also determine factors that contribute towards store loyalty. Additionally, although this review paper through discussions has drawn a broad conclusion on the tremendous scope of modern/organized retailing in India, a research study specifically focussing on any product category (say, luxury retailing or perishables like food retailing, etc.) would help to throw up more interesting facts and findings. Such a line of research could be attempted in the future.

E-age has helped to reduce the world to a global village. Entrepreneurial marketers should examine value added strategies that can initiate cross-border initiatives across markets (Nair, 2016). For this purpose, future researchers could carry out primary empirical studies that will examine real time offline versus online retail buying behaviour in countries across borders. For instance, comparative studies between an emerging economy like India and developed economies like USA and UK will help reveal marked differences existing in online and offline retailing buying behaviour between established and emerging markets. Such studies will also provide perspectives on the scope of growth of the retail market both within the domestic market as well as across global markets.

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# FOOD SAFETY PRACTICES AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR HOME-BASED FOOD BUSINESS

Omowunmi Olunloyo

**Theme of the Article: Business**



**OMOWUNMI OLUNLOYO**

OWNER: PURPLE PATCH CEREALS

## Objectives

Investigates the food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses, aiming to enhance understanding and promote best practices in this growing sector.

## Bio

Omowunmi Olunloyo, known as Toks, is a multifaceted professional with over a decade of experience as a busy working mother coach, food technologist, bestselling author, film

producer, and speaker. She has graced the airwaves of Reconcilers Radio, Hope FM, and Premier Christian Radio, and received prestigious accolades like the Courageous Award. As the Owner of Purple Patch Cereals, an award-winning breakfast cereal brand, she fulfills her dream of providing healthy food for health-conscious families. Toks also heads Peacock Omowunmi Production, releasing her debut movie "Hustle" to acclaim. Her journey from personal struggles to empowerment drives her mission to help women find purpose and fulfilment, showcased in her international bestselling books and The Purpose Driven Lady magazine. Respected for her loyalty and inspiration, Toks empowers busy working mothers to achieve their full potential. She resides in Burnham, South Buckinghamshire, with her husband and three children.



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## Abstract

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The emergence of home-based food businesses has transformed the culinary landscape, offering unique and diverse food products to consumers. However, ensuring food safety in these ventures presents significant challenges due to the decentralized nature of production and the absence of stringent regulations. This research paper investigates the food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses, aiming to enhance understanding and promote best practices in this growing sector.

Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of regulatory frameworks, this study identifies key food safety risks associated with home-based food production, including microbial contamination, allergen cross-contact, and improper handling practices.

It examines the regulatory landscape governing home-based food businesses in various jurisdictions, highlighting differences in licensing, permitting, and inspection requirements.

Moreover, the paper explores effective food safety management strategies tailored to the unique needs of home-based food entrepreneurs. It discusses the importance of proper hygiene, sanitation, and storage practices, as well as the implementation of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles. Additionally, the research evaluates the role of food safety training and education in promoting compliance and reducing foodborne illness risks.

Overall, this paper provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between food safety regulations and home-based food production. By fostering awareness and adherence to best practices, it seeks to mitigate risks and promote consumer confidence in the growing market of home-based food businesses.

## Keywords

Home-based food businesses, Food safety regulations, Compliance requirements, Hygiene practices, Food safety management

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## Introduction

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In recent years, the food industry has witnessed a significant shift towards decentralized food production, with a growing number of individuals venturing into home-based food businesses. This trend reflects a desire for culinary creativity, artisanal craftsmanship, and entrepreneurial innovation, as home cooks and food enthusiasts seek to share their passion with the broader community. From homemade preserves and baked goods to specialty condiments and ethnic delicacies, the offerings of home-based food businesses enrich local food markets and cater to diverse consumer preferences. However, amid this culinary renaissance, ensuring food safety remains a paramount concern.

Against this backdrop, this research endeavours to explore the intricate landscape of food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses. The primary objective is to enhance understanding and promote best practices in this growing sector, thereby safeguarding consumer health and confidence. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, regulatory frameworks, and industry standards, this study seeks to address the following key objectives:

1. To examine the regulatory background governing home-based food businesses, including licensing, permitting, and inspection requirements, across different jurisdictions.
2. To identify the primary food safety risks associated with home-based food production, such as microbial contamination, allergen cross-contact, and improper handling practices.
3. To explore effective food safety management strategies tailored to the

unique needs and challenges of home-based food entrepreneurs.<sup>4</sup> To assess the role of food safety training and education in promoting compliance and reducing the incidence of foodborne illness in home-based settings.

5. To provide practical recommendations and guidelines for enhancing food safety practices and regulatory compliance among home-based food businesses.

The scope of this study encompasses a broad range of topics related to food safety in home-based settings, including hygiene practices, hygiene standards, hazard analysis, and critical control points (HACCP), allergen management, and quality assurance. Through a systematic examination of these issues, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on food safety and regulation, offering insights and recommendations to support the sustainable growth and development of home-based food businesses.

According to Department for Business & Trade (2024) “the UK’s food and drink industry are the country’s biggest

manufacturing sector by turnover, valued at £104.4 billion. It is larger than the automotive and aerospace industries combined”.

BBC (2021) pointed out that “about 44% of new food businesses started since the first lockdown are home-based, according to a new centralised online registration system used by 200 local authorities, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has revealed.

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## Methodology

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The research methodology employed in this study aims to investigate food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses through a multi-faceted approach. The methodology encompasses both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather comprehensive data and insights from various sources.

### 1. Literature Review:

The study begins with an extensive review of existing literature on food and policies play a crucial role in shaping food safety practices for home-based businesses.

These documents delineate the legal obligations and responsibilities of home-based food entrepreneurs safety in home-based food businesses. Scholarly articles, academic journals, government regulations, industry reports, and consumer studies are scrutinized to establish a foundational understanding of the subject matter and identify key research gaps. The literature review delves into a wide array of sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses. It synthesizes existing research, regulatory guidelines, industry standards, and best practices to illuminate the covering aspects such as food handling, storage, labelling, and sanitation. Furthermore, industry reports and white papers offer valuable insights into complexities and nuances of this topic. These studies often explore the importance of food safety education and training for entrepreneurs, as well as the challenges

they face in maintaining hygiene standards and preventing foodborne illnesses. Additionally, research articles may analyse the impact of regulatory frameworks on home-based food production and distribution, highlighting gaps in enforcement and areas for improvement. Government regulations emerging trends, technologies, and innovations in food safety management. These resources often provide case studies and practical recommendations for enhancing food safety practices in home-based settings. By analysing industry perspectives and best practices, the literature review identifies strategies for mitigating risks and improving compliance with food safety standards. Finally, the review explores consumer attitudes and behaviours regarding food safety in the home-based food sector. Studies on consumer perceptions, preferences, and trust in homemade food products shed light on the factors influencing purchasing decisions and market demand. Understanding consumer expectations and

concerns is essential for home-based food businesses to build trust and credibility with their target audience. In summary, the literature review synthesizes a diverse range of sources to offer a comprehensive overview of food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses. By examining scholarly research, regulatory guidelines, industry reports, and consumer insights, the review identifies key trends, challenges, and opportunities in this dynamic and evolving field.

## 2. Survey Design:

A structured survey instrument is developed to collect primary data from home-based food entrepreneurs. The survey includes questions designed to assess entrepreneurs' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to food safety practices and compliance requirements. It also explores their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding regulatory compliance and enforcement.

### 3. Sampling Strategy:

A purposive sampling approach is employed to select a diverse sample of home-based food businesses across different geographic locations, product categories, and business sizes. The sample may include participants from various food sectors, such as baked goods, confections, preserved foods, and artisanal products.

### 4. Data Collection:

The survey is administered electronically to participants, allowing for efficient data collection and analysis. Participants are provided with clear instructions and informed consent procedures to ensure ethical research practices. Data collection may also involve semi-structured interviews or focus groups with key stakeholders, such as regulatory officials, industry experts, and consumers.

### 5. Data Analysis:

Quantitative data collected from the survey responses are analysed using statistical methods to identify patterns, trends, and correlations related to food safety practices and compliance levels. Qualitative data from interviews or focus groups are analysed thematically to extract meaningful insights and narratives.

### 6. Triangulation:

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation of data sources and methods is employed. Triangulation involves comparing and contrasting findings from different sources to corroborate evidence and identify converging themes or discrepancies.

### 7. Ethical Considerations:

The research adheres to ethical guidelines and protocols to protect the rights and confidentiality of participants. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and measures

are implemented to ensure data security and privacy.

By employing a rigorous research methodology that combines literature review, survey design, sampling strategy, data collection, analysis, triangulation, and ethical considerations, this study aims to provide valuable insights into food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses.

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## Results and Discussion

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The results section provides a summary of the key findings related to food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses. This may include information on the level of awareness and adherence to food safety regulations among home-based food entrepreneurs, common challenges faced in maintaining food safety standards, and areas for improvement in food safety management practices.

The results of this research provide valuable insights into the regulatory landscape, food safety risks, management strategies, training impact, and practical recommendations for home-based food businesses. Here's an elaboration on the results of each objective:

## 1. Regulatory Background:

The research findings reveal a diverse regulatory background governing home-based food businesses across different jurisdictions. While some regions have stringent licensing and permitting requirements, others may have more lenient regulations. Variations in inspection protocols and enforcement mechanisms are also observed. Overall, the results highlight the need for a comprehensive understanding of regulatory requirements to ensure compliance and mitigate legal risks for home-based food entrepreneurs.

## 2. Food Safety Risks:

The research identifies several primary food safety risks associated with home-based food production, including microbial contamination, allergen cross-contact, and improper handling practices. Microbial contamination may arise from inadequate sanitation, while allergen cross-contact can occur due to insufficient separation of ingredients. Improper handling practices, such as improper storage or inadequate cooking temperatures, also pose significant risks. By delineating these risks, the research underscores the importance of implementing robust food safety measures to prevent foodborne illness.

## 3. Management Strategies:

The research explores effective food safety management strategies tailored to the unique needs of home-based food entrepreneurs. Key strategies include implementing sanitation protocols, developing

allergen management procedures, and maintaining proper temperature controls. Additionally, establishing clear food handling guidelines and implementing hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) plans are recommended. These management strategies aim to minimize food safety risks and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

## 4. Training Impact:

The research assesses the role of food safety training and education in promoting compliance and reducing the incidence of foodborne illness in home-based settings. Findings indicate that comprehensive training programs can significantly improve food safety knowledge and practices among home-based food entrepreneurs. However, access to quality training resources and participation rates may vary. Efforts to enhance training accessibility and effectiveness are warranted to maximize the impact of

education on compliance and public health outcomes.

## 5. Practical Recommendations:

Based on the research findings, practical recommendations and guidelines are provided to enhance food safety practices and regulatory compliance among home-based food businesses. These recommendations include developing standardized food safety training programs, enhancing regulatory transparency, and fostering collaboration between regulatory agencies and home-based food entrepreneurs. By implementing these recommendations, home-based food businesses can strengthen their food safety practices, protect public health, and contribute to a safer food supply chain.

## Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes the key findings of the study and provides a concise overview of the implications and significance of the research. It restates the research objectives and discusses how the study contributes to the existing knowledge base on food safety practices and compliance requirements for home-based food businesses.

The conclusion of this research highlights the significance of addressing regulatory compliance and food safety practices in home-based food businesses to ensure public health and consumer confidence. By examining the regulatory landscape, food safety risks, management strategies, training impact, and practical recommendations, several key insights emerge.

Firstly, it is evident that home-based food businesses operate within a complex regulatory environment characterized by varying licensing, permitting, and inspection requirements across different jurisdictions.

This diversity underscores the need for home-based food entrepreneurs to stay informed about local regulations and proactively engage with regulatory authorities to ensure compliance.

Thirdly, the role of food safety training and education in promoting compliance and reducing the incidence of foodborne illness is underscored. Comprehensive training programs tailored to the unique needs of home-based food entrepreneurs can enhance food safety knowledge and practices, contributing to improved regulatory compliance and consumer safety.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the critical importance of prioritizing food safety and regulatory compliance in home-based food businesses. By adopting proactive measures, such as implementing effective management strategies, investing in quality training programs, and adhering to regulatory requirements, home-based food entrepreneurs can enhance the safety and quality of their products, foster consumer trust, and contribute to the food industry.

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# LEADING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: STRATEGIES, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR 21ST CENTURY LEADERS

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*Theme of the Article: Leadership*

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**PROF. DR. PARIN SOMANI**

DIRECTOR OF LOSD



**ROXANNE BOODHOO**

RESEARCH STUDENT

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## Bio

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Prof. Dr. Parin Somani, Director of LOSD, is a distinguished Academic Scholar, TEDx Speaker, and Author, honoured with the title of Mrs Universe 2022 and crowned by Bollywood Actress Mahek Chahal. With 2 Academic and 6 Honorary Doctorates, she's a multi-award-winner and humanitarian. She is a prolific author of 19 books, and a record-breaker recognized in Guinness World Records and multiple prestigious record books. She was invited to deliver a Keynote Speech at Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford University and many more. In her global travels to 127 countries, Prof. Dr. Parin Somani tirelessly contributes to education, women empowerment, and youth development.

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## Bio

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Roxanne Boodhoo is an accomplished professional with a diverse and versatile background. Her extensive academic training has equipped her with various skills and knowledge, enabling her to excel in multiple roles. Roxanne is known for her strong work ethic, diligence, and commitment to undertaking any responsibilities assigned to her. She is deeply passionate about helping and supporting others, making her a compassionate and empathetic individual. Throughout her career, Roxanne has consistently demonstrated a dedication to making a positive impact through her professional work or community involvement, striving to uplift those around her.

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## Objectives

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To understand the 'digital leadership' model. This model is a theoretical construct which represents the results. It is presented as an ideal type which may be generalisable, acting as a cognitive template for assessing the levels of digital leadership around the individual class and program leaders in pedagogical digital leadership.

## Abstract

Effective leadership in today's business environment demands more precise fine-tuning of functions and work processes, leading to higher levels of both task and people mastery. Business leaders' mobility and control are increasingly shaped in the digital space, which leads to important changes in the requisites for their efficiency. Digital leadership and virtual organisations are necessary constructs supported by the potentials and real-life applications of a spectrum of modern information and communication technologies. The model adopted by organisations is dependent not only on digital strategic importance but also on structure characteristics. The purpose of the digital strategy is also important. In fact, the digital strategy can be system-oriented and oriented to the customer.

As digitization proliferates, digital strategies are tending to become a part of business strategy of the entity, encompassing not only operational and tactical areas but also being an important part of strategic areas at the corporate and business unit levels. The objective of this study is to understand the 'digital leadership' model. This model is a theoretical construct which represents the results. It is presented as an ideal-type which may be generalisable, acting as a cognitive template for assessing the levels of digital leadership around individual class and program leaders in pedagogical digital leadership. The study reports the results of original research about the strategies, models, and management practices in the digital era and indicates possible avenues

## Keywords

Leadership, Digital Age, 21st Century, Communication

One of the common assumptions is that digital transformation is an inevitable process and one of the most important innovations in the current period as it can trigger the development of companies, industries, sectors, and whole economies. Furthermore, there are numerous studies focused on the impact of digitalisation on business and economy, while less emphasis is placed on leadership—the subject of this paper. The objective of the study was to gather and discuss the most significant developments, trends, theories, and strategies of the digital economy. The study summarising the above issues will provide a knowledge map for the development of digital leadership potential (Lokuge & Duan, 2023).

Digital transformation represents a significant focus in the academic and practitioner fields of business studies and management. This area has been increasing in importance since 2015 when digital transformation was first mentioned as a significant

organisation development factor and was highly ranked by the business management community. Although the issue of digital transformation is developing dynamically, few scientific disciplines discuss this matter, particularly from a point of view of business strategy. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of digital transformation itself is undisputed, it should be stressed that most scientific papers concentrate mainly on the detailed analysis of instant digital transformation within industries or companies; there are not many attempts to underpin general or strategic issues. For the purpose of this study, all papers in the domain of business strategy and digital transformation were analysed. There are also few attempts to present a comprehensive model of business strategies in the digital age.

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

The model adopted by organisations is

dependent not only on digital strategic importance but also on structure characteristics. The purpose of the digital strategy is also important. In fact, the digital strategy can be system-oriented and oriented to the customer. As digitisation proliferates, digital strategies are tending to become a part of business strategy of the entity, encompassing not only operational and tactical areas but also being an important part of strategic areas at the corporate and business unit levels. Moreover, in literature few studies exist about the digital governance and lifecycle management of digital strategic resources even if they are mandatory for the success of digital initiatives. New models were developed discussing the importance of various competencies in the organisations, including digital governance resources appropriate for digital transformation being aware about the opportunity of digital and solution that can be developed. These models not only introduce new critical success factors (see for both the attention to strategic level) but are also useful to pose critical

reflection about dynamic requirements that could affect internal competences of organisations (D'Cruz et al., 2016).

The literature about digital transformation is aware of the challenges and benefits that come from it, but it does not often address the role of leaders managing this transformation (Cortellazzo et al., 2019).

Just a few decades ago, the goal of a strategy was the continuous improvement of existing conditions. In our opinion, a digital strategy should be understood as a logical system for differentiating managerial tasks at corporate, business, and functional levels. Strategic tasks solve questions about “what to do” in order to create and develop resources, how to manage them and control the value they should generate. Finally, they solve which approach would lead to a sustainable competitive advantage completely different from traditional ones. Conducting strategically directed activities is not only directed at improving existing areas, but includes a broad search for, and analysis of,

new fields of activities such as processes, products, services, markets, customers, innovation, partnerships, competition etc. If you compare the traditional and the digital strategic approach, you will notice significant differences. Digital strategies should be thought of as the stewardship of digital resources and build on technology knowledge, skills, competences, leadership competences, organisational culture and governance. Moreover, digital strategies can be located at various levels of the enterprise and very often they should, in our opinion, be managed and developed in different structures rather than exploiting existing ones. Four models of deploying digital strategies have been identified by (Türk, 2023) with governance requirements increasing progressively.

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

At the SPD 4.0, smart maintenance units can be enabled

through Industry 4.0 technology to execute maintenance-supporting work independent from, in time with, the scheduled production processes also include repair and retro fit as well as checking and re-evaluation tasks that are autonomous or with abridged machine and of connected production equipment. In connection with the option to store restoration and discrepancy recognition tasks in the course of the necessary digital master data, the SPD 4.0 becomes possible. This results in significant added value in that repair work is reported directly to the master data, which enables digitised process management for all affected production systems and physical components.

### Digital Competence:

The courage to constantly change and further educate oneself. Digital transformation and Industry 4.0 pose new requirements for the design and operation of production systems. Veritable partnership collaboration, new digital services use cases in areas far beyond

circulated technology, and evolving company models need to be looked at in the context of NDE in relation to life cycle stages, life cycle phases, presentation sections, and useful lifetimes. In particular, the control strategy of NDE 1.0 has become outdated and has to be brought in line with digital transformation and Industry 4.0.

## 1.3 Scope and Structure

The paper aims to conceptualise and assess a new form of leadership, that is, digital leadership in 21st century. Specifically, the paper investigates different facets of digital leadership (role definition, characteristics, competencies, and leading factors) and formulates strategies and tactics for the new type of elite leaders who are shouldering radical digital transformation in organisations. This study incorporates different digital leadership characteristics and its influence on organisational culture, strategic orientation and innovation performance.

## 1.4. Aim of the Research

Pedagogical leaders map out and make these technical, operational, resourcing and HR strategic decisions. Digital technology in education has now reached epidemic proportions in most formal educational institutions of the full range. Detailed research is required to forward more generalisable and effective pedagogical digital orbit interpretations for program leadership. Program leadership research is identified as critical in digital “greenfield sites” where ‘also-ran’ static seminars no longer cut it for student recruitment purposes. This research is important, as the social role and mission of universities are undergoing profound change due to the needs of society and the march of advancing technologies. For university leadership, digital transformation is a major concern. Senior leaders must understand digital trends more deeply in order to offer policy, guidance and HR

responses to these managerial challenges from research (Wang et al., 2022). The objective of this study is to understand the ‘digital leadership’ model. This model is a theoretical construct which represents the results. It is presented as an ideal-type which may be generalisable, acting as a cognitive template for assessing the levels of digital leadership around individual class and program leaders in pedagogical digital leadership. This construct should indicate the levels of ‘digital orbit’ participants traverse between within its design, development, deployment and transformative cycles of bringing all staff digital operating systems online, with all the human resources implications this space station of advanced digital technology and pedagogy might conjure (Ghamrawi & M. Tamim, 2023).

## 2. Methodology

The development of digital technologies, the application of big data analytical methodologies, and the advent of artificial intelligence increasingly allow enterprises reach business strategic objectives

through a path of exploratory innovation to afford dynamically capabilities of organisational adaptation, which replaces the traditional path of exploitative innovation supporting defensive mechanisms (Grigoriou, Doumpa, & Carre, 2013). As evidenced in related works, exploratory innovation is positioned as a part of an important diagnosis of the reasonable performance range to afford dynamic capabilities, especially in a constant need to respond to novel, radically or incremental technological advancements then apply learning mechanisms to internalise their uncertain impact with only scarce and uncertain cues (Romanelli & Tushman, 1994, 1996). This distinguishes the characteristic knowledge, and capabilities held by exploratory innovators are broader in scope to detect, develop, absorb, assimilate, and reconfigure into winning capabilities (Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006). Thinking about the special resource accumulation process with respect to exploratory innovation strategy, to survive this reinforcing environmental

turbulence will require executives lead and cultivate loyalty among personnel performing new ideas exploration, not simply reducing Florence nightingales related to Dynasties and so on. (Wang et al., 2022) In Jimenez (2019)'s viewpoint with respect to the first question, the development of digital technologies has produced several changes inside organisations, reshaping also the leadership roles. Some authors argue that these changes involve a simple transposition of past behaviours and competencies to the digital environment, whereas others anticipate a more radical remodelling of the concept of leadership. Some of the main impacts of digitalisation on leadership theory regard leaders' tasks, the selection of leadership styles, and the required competencies. Recently, the scholars underscored the necessity of updating leadership development, outlining a shift from leaders to leaderships (Munir, 2018; Boccafurni & Del Giudice, 2019; Gilmore & Reilly, 2019).

In this new context, leadership becomes an attitude of exploration promoting connection, inclusion, cooperation, empowerment, communication, and learning (Day, 2001; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), and virtual leadership is a competencies-based approach to leading people across places, tasks acquiring through knowledge, skills, and attitude development (Avolio, Kahai, & Dundon, 2014).

In recent decades, the digital revolution has been radically reshaping the ways people operate in many aspects. This revolution has challenged leaders and forced them to shift their distinctive competencies to the digital context. The "leader-centric" approach might not be recognised and acceptable in the digital age.

## 2.1 Selection Criteria for Literature

Key themes related with the conceptualisation and operationalisation of digital leadership strategies,

challenges and opportunities for the 21st century leaders, the impact on leadership, performance and resource pooling for success, digital leaders readiness indicator for the HR supply assurance and long-term success and finally the digital leader competencies and skill requirement such as tactical agility, strategic foresights, resistance to change, digital readiness and entrepreneurial behaviour were identified (Wang et al., 2022). The review background research identified certain research gaps including lack of comprehensive theoretical explanations of the positive and negative impacts of digital leaders on changes towards digital innovations, absence of empirical follow-up studies, lack of long-term studies, studies on digital leadership to develop measurement scales for transformational digital leaders, lack of theoretical supports and empirical studies for the development of transformational measures for digitalised mature and not-an organisations, lack of longitudinal studies and the inability to understand the digital leaders' dynamic

impacts in times of risks and crisis situations, lack of empirical follow-up cross-industry observation studies on the long-term effects of digital leadership in connection to its cultural predictive models that are to be explicitly derived from the companies business model logic (Ciampi et al., 2021). Transform knowledge related to technology, digital business trends, drivers, and uncertainties into strategic and operational insights and thoughtful assessments that help organisations and their stakeholders understand what their shared future may hold, what could limit their possibilities and what actions they can take to mitigate future threats (visioning).

- Anticipate and internalise the new rules of business enabled by digital technology – through building and executing comprehensive digital business and technology strategy that aim to create valuable new digital concepts, business models, products, and services, while still fulfilling the Enterprise's present strategies and operations.

Create options for fast responses in reaction to unforeseen opportunities, or competitive or market changes without compromising Enterprise's long-term strategic initiatives (cultural flexibility).

- Execute the fit-to-purpose soft capabilities model that is ubiquitous across digital leadership and considers the ability to network (globally), with the objective of sharing industry specific standards and practices, knowledge and expertise (brain ware).

## 2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

This research study fed into the academic literature on strategy formation in the digital era by: firstly, providing new knowledge on digital strategies and their consequences, and secondly, closing a gap in understanding through addressing the qualitative, contextual and phenomenological aspects of the pursuit of digital strategies. This study provides a significant contribution to the academic discourse on strategic thinking and

extends the knowledge 'on the ground' with individual perceptions and insights. Furthermore, it enriches the extant body of literature by questioning the established views through the specific phenomenon of digital strategies and contributes to a better understanding of digital strategies in practice (D'Cruz et al., 2016) (Khadpe et al., 2024).

## 3. Results and Discussion

Leaders need to be able to not only deploy technology and digital tools and systems to operate more effectively, but also understand how to facilitate authentic human connections in digitally mediated interactions. Presently, individuals rely in massive ways on both technology for formal agreements and processes and human interaction for important informal decisions and logistical planning. The result data might better help guide government, business, and educational decision makers who have an immediate influence on the direction of leadership



development and training programs in the areas of leadership that staff report as underprepared in the digital world.

Leaders were defined as individuals who report being in mid to high-level positions in organisations, having the responsibilities of leadership over staff, and possessing supervisory powers. Leaders were surveyed about the skills and strategies that are crucial to motivating and retaining their employees in the digital age. With feedback from approximately 1500 data points, the researchers were able to identify various strategies and examine differences in responses across diverse sectors (service, utilities, healthcare, and education government). This research found different strategies and skillsets that leaders report as necessary commensurate with higher levels of leadership and discovered a growth in new and increased importance of a select set of leadership strategies and skills in these digital times. Data findings revealed how individuals in

the lower two levels responded differently in importance to several items when compared to senior leaders from these corporations. Furthermore, this presentation will discuss the items such that differences can lead to a better understanding of ways to train and develop leaders who need to become more proficient in these high prevalence skill areas.

### 3.1 Emerging Strategies for Digital Leadership

Not many respondents say their organisation's leadership practices keep pace with industry instability, motivation, and innovation, although most companies say their organisations are undertaking major transitions. Are business outcomes of their IT Ventures dependent on digital leadership for these leaders? We link replenishing and distributing the talent with posturing to reward and driving prosperity, as well as integrating IT and the organisation in various scenarios.

We find that IT experts who function in a powerful digital environment with replenishing and distributing skills could prevent the expertise and leadership qualities needed. Organisations that create talents provide a context in relation to a clear path to innovate and adjust. Companies utilising much of these mechanisms had wellness soon.

Digital leaders use innovative ideas and advanced authorisation tools, coupled with fresh team abilities, to remain competitive. They develop a digital leadership style and deal with fragmented, user-driven companies. They initiate and support organisational alterations using experiences and analysis focused on digital leadership. They understand the required capabilities and utilise advanced authorisation mechanisms and skills to encourage digital alterations executed by a new generation of employees. Digital leaders build the digital capital of their organisations by assimilating the business side and collaborating to innovate with IT experts.

They steer in an implementation style of the next-gen control in which the digital network becomes the driving force, dynamically changing their leadership design for various scenarios. Although centuries of excellent leadership principles continue to have their place, leaders must produce innovative versions of these (and invent entirely new concepts and techniques) to keep pace with market disruption.

## **3.2 Key Challenges Faced by 21st Century Leaders**

By complex leadership, we refer to a wide variety of situational, weather-sensitive, models and definitions. We suggest that leadership in this matter means delivering thoughtful, systematic, directed, and differentiated rewards that maximise everyone's advances and guarantee a great team that followthrough to its total capacity.

In the face of several unexplained institutional challenges all over the globe, the key purpose of FCCE is to take a unique perspective toward establishing alliance relationships with "competent" employees in critical homeowner relationships, who realise and participate together with the SPL in the creation and distribution of critical knowledge. The distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable outputs, or the subjective skill in various roles, is underpinned by the identified community configuration. SPLs are a source of support, career advancements, and productivity profits, and FCCE is implemented. Today's 21st century leaders are experiencing unparalleled waves of novelty, opposition, preparedness, and unanticipated problems than those at any time previously. In response, they seek out places of knowledge and experience relationships that allow them to examine and build upon their contributions as individuals, setting aside plans to lead their institutions to new degrees of development and economic influence.

This new set of leadership problems necessitates a new set of competencies and characteristics that will be difficult to demonstrate. The expanded pace and complexity of global developments have shattered the traditional divisions of work in which leaders operated, divided between a limited number of organisations. In our opinion, the leadership that overcomes limits, drives innovation and transformation forward, and maintains stability in complex dynamic professional environments is crucial. The process that revolves around the interests of SPLs in the context of the twenty-first century is being called cultivating FCCE.

## **3.3 Opportunities for Growth and Innovation**

The key opportunities have arisen out of the complex and dynamically changing environment and falling prices for technological breakthroughs. In particular, through the continuously revolutionising

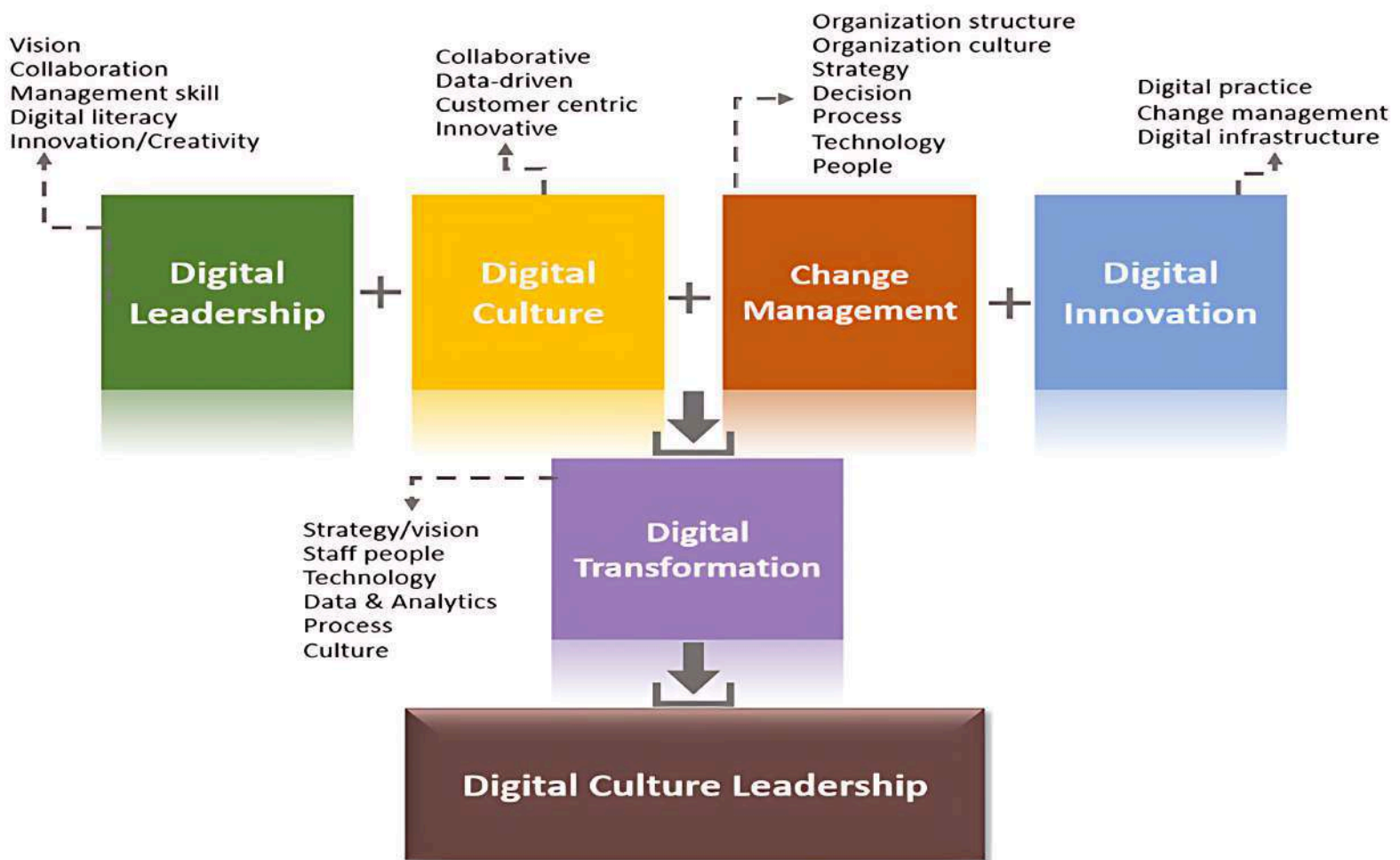


Fig 1. (Chompoowong, P., et al. 2022)

and renewing digital technologies, whether it is through the development of artificial intelligence, the improvement of wireless broadband, of mobile devices, and the development of social networks, big data, cloud computing, and the Internet of things, people find that the new technology is able to take

asks that have traditionally relied on human judgment and automate them faster, more effectively, and with better quality. As the costs of deploying and integrating information technology into all aspects of business and daily life are driven down, more people are able to take advantage of technology and have the means to experiment with many new

innovations and innovations in how we do things. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework factors of digital culture leadership for elementary education. The research concept includes the following primary elements and processes: (1) Digital Leadership, (2) Digital Culture, (3) Change Management, and (4) Digital Innovation.

Organisations should utilise these components to achieve digital transformation, fostering digital culture leadership necessary for managing organisations in the digital age.

As the emerging digital age ushers in a new era and reshapes our world, we not only face new challenges but also enjoy previously unattainable opportunities. The main opportunities witnessed in today's more connected and digitised environment are, in particular, the following aspects: opportunities for growth and innovation, opportunities for women to participate in major roles, opportunities for mobile workers, opportunities for organisational agility, opportunities for democratised information, and opportunities for the "Green" movement. They make our life more enjoyable and help to better address a variety of 21st-century challenges. By collaborating and benefiting from such opportunities, people feel empowered and attain more satisfaction

with enhanced quality of work and life.

## Conclusion

Through a systematic review of literature and subsequent analysis, several findings from the study have been obtained. The important finding of the paper is that existing digital leaders are more capable of strategising, innovating, and exploiting digital technologies in the organisations, rather than leading only through a traditional style. This paper is based on review of related studies which are all about digital leadership, as the focused review of related literature has provided future direction as well. Many organisations in the digital age are profoundly investing their efforts to compete with others, thereby requiring digital leadership capabilities. The other findings indicate that digital leaders have significant roles in business strategy, organisational change and development (Türk, 2023).

Exploring the 21st century leadership strategies, challenges, and opportunities such as digital leadership and distributed leadership in organisations, this paper has systematically reviewed literature from scholars and practitioners over a 15-year period. The purpose of this paper is to acquaint the literature on digital leadership with the theoretical and practical approaches of leading through a digital lens in the organisations. In the traditional organisations, "top down" leadership was a dominant style which was changed to distributed leadership by scholars Sue Roffey, Lucy Knox, Leithwood and Montacute who have closely examined the conceptual dimensions of distributed leadership (World English Journal & Bilgin, 2024).

### 4.1 Summary of Key Findings

In industry 4.0 and 5.0 skills and talents distinguished by self-responsibility and self-organisation will be in increasingly high demand. But individualistic self-assertion to have own

interests in focus can be more or less counter-productive in collaborative work environments. In such cases competencies to effectively navigate social structures and to facilitate their change by engaging adaptive collective action for supporting emergence should receive greater credit. As an aspired overarching strategic imperative we recommend to find and apply orchestrative leadership styles. This has been the main inspiration to launch the leadership requirement engineering approach in the ManAI project with intention as a methodical base to develop and systematically assess a portfolio of pragmatically feasible leadership competences. (Paul Tiwari, 2022)

Groups in every organisation seek to have more flexibility and the freedom to operate more autonomously.

## 4.2 Implications for Leadership Practice and Research

Moreover, a challenge is to determine which digital strategy business differentiation, tabletop, business transformation or fundamental has been deployed by whom and has been assessed in what way, either cognitively or intuitively. The challenge could be fruitful for future managerial studies. A first step for future research is to ascertain the feasibility of empirical support. The second and a more sophisticated step are to empirically ascertain the character of actual digital strategies. Future work might also present a deeper operational model for the deployment of digital strategies. Additionally, proceeds can be achieved by differentiating levels of the deployed strategies. Then, it remains to be seen whether the strategies operate in accomplishment or failing to attain critical objectives, within some serious sectors of the economy, such as industries and services.

A more intellectual challenge is the research into sub concepts and organisational implications and ramifications, up to the construal of a comprehensive and scientifically underpinned base-concept of digital leadership (D'Cruz et al., 2016).

Leadership in a Digitally Transformed World: A Typology for Digital Leadership in Turbulent Times and Beyond is an article that makes recommendations for leadership practice. Digital leaders are advised to embrace a strategic digital mindset by using digital technologies to transform internal and external organisational processes and to develop digital capabilities that enable efficient digital leadership (Ghamrawi & M. Tamim, 2023). Both a blurred focus and an ambiguity upon the digital mindset components (e.g. process orientation, external orientation, innovation, resource efficiency, value creation), as well as the lack of an instrumental-how-to perspective on the development of digital capabilities contribute to the theoretical

void in relation to digital strategies and leadership. The task of this research was to provide analytical intuitions and informed by the literature to build a conceptual framework that future empirical research and practical observations can learn from. The modern digital world has changed the context of organisational action and environmental rationalities. In our case, we dealt with four schools and four governance frameworks. Conversely, our sample seems not to have adhering with the digital leader mandate because a blurred operationalisation and understanding of digital leaders.

### 4.3

## Recommendations for Future Research

In order to measure the effects of digital leadership on digital innovation and exploration, a comprehensive indicator system needs to take into account multiple levels. At the subsystem level, enterprises

must implement methods that are able to measure how well the company manages digital activities and innovation processes and how effective they are (Wang et al., 2022). A second point of interest is innovation in a broader context. Beyond the limits of digital innovation, future research should explore how other leadership behaviours can significantly impact exploratory innovation performance. Furthermore, how to achieve a strategic orientation towards exploration and innovation is an interesting research question. Finally, it seems appropriate to imagine the possible relationships between digital leadership, organisational culture towards digital and also strategic orientation towards exploration and innovation. A model including all this elements could be very interesting to measure dynamic capabilities of digital organisation and its framework.

The paper identifies that leadership in digital organisations is evolving and its impact is becoming increasingly significant. Nevertheless, there is still lack of high-quality research in the field of

digital leadership and there is also a lack of indicators measuring company management on digital innovation and exploration. Such indicators should incorporate the digital capability of ecosystems, competences suitable for leading people in the digital age, and the combination of vision, confidence, and strategy. Beyond these gaps, additional areas for future research are indicated in three major aspects.

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# TACKLING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN INDIA: CAUSES, IMPLICATIONS, AND SOLUTIONS

*Dr. Leena Dhankhar*

*Chief Correspondent, Hindustan Times, India*

***Theme of the Article: Illegal Immigration***



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## Bio

Dr Leena Dhankhar serves as the Chief Correspondent at Hindustan Times in Gurugram, where she has been a dedicated member since 2011. Specialising in crime coverage, Leena has amassed invaluable knowledge in this area, contributing extensively to the newspaper's investigative journalism. Currently, she oversees special investigations, excise matters, court proceedings, civic issues, district administration, jails, and child rights concerns. With a meticulous attention to detail, Leena's investigative stories on topics such as gangsters, child rights, juvenile issues, and weapons have been particularly impactful. Over the past 13 years, she has played a pivotal role in addressing social issues and raising awareness about ground realities in the city through her insightful articles. Leena's enthusiasm and determination shine through in her work, setting her apart as a standout journalist in her field.

## Objectives

Examine the causes, implications, and potential solutions to address pressing issues pertaining to illegal immigration in India.

## Abstract

Illegal immigration poses significant challenges for India, impacting its economy, society, and security. This paper aims to examine the causes, implications, and potential solutions to address this pressing issue. Various factors, including economic disparities, political instability, and porous borders, contribute to the influx of illegal immigrants into India. To investigate these issues, a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative analysis was employed. Data was gathered through literature and experts in the field. The results revealed that illegal immigration has far-reaching implications, ranging from strain on resources and infrastructure to heightened social tensions and security threats. To tackle this issue effectively, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. This includes strengthening border security measures, improving diplomatic

relations with neighbouring countries, enhancing intelligence sharing and cooperation, implementing stricter immigration policies and enforcement mechanisms, promoting socio-economic development in source countries, and facilitating legal pathways for migration. Additionally, addressing root causes such as poverty, unemployment, and conflict is essential to mitigate the drivers of illegal immigration. Through the adoption of comprehensive strategies and fostering international cooperation, India can better manage and mitigate the challenges posed by illegal immigration, thereby safeguarding its interests and promoting sustainable development.

### *Keywords*

Illegal immigration, India, Border security, Conflict mitigation, International cooperation

## Introduction

Illegal immigration poses significant challenges for India, impacting its socio-economic fabric, security, and diplomatic relations.

With porous borders and diverse socio-economic conditions, India faces complex dynamics that contribute to the phenomenon of illegal immigration.

Understanding the causes, implications, and potential solutions is imperative for effective policy formulation and implementation.

This paper explores the multifaceted nature of illegal immigration in India, shedding light on the socio-economic drivers, security concerns, and diplomatic ramifications. By analysing the root causes and exploring the implications across various sectors, including economy, security, and social cohesion, this study aims to provide insights into the gravity of the issue.

Moreover, this paper examines potential solutions, ranging from enhanced border security measures to socio-economic development initiatives. It also emphasises the importance of international cooperation and diplomatic engagements in addressing illegal immigration comprehensively.

By delving into these aspects, this study seeks to contribute to the discourse on tackling illegal immigration in India, offering actionable recommendations for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders.

This research paper focuses on six questions that could facilitate tackling illegal immigration in India:

1. What are the primary push and pull factors driving illegal immigration into India, and how do they vary across different regions and demographics?
2. What are the socio-economic implications of illegal immigration on Indian communities, labour markets, and public services, and how do these impacts differ between urban and rural areas?
3. How does illegal immigration affect national security concerns, including border management, terrorism, and transnational crime, and what measures can be implemented to mitigate these risks?
4. What diplomatic challenges does India face

in addressing illegal immigration, particularly in relation to neighbouring countries and international migration flows?

5. What policy interventions and institutional reforms are needed to enhance border security, streamline immigration processes, and address the root causes of illegal immigration effectively?
6. How can India foster international cooperation and partnerships to tackle illegal immigration, including sharing best practices, intelligence-sharing, and collaborative initiatives with other countries and international organisations?

## **2.0 Overview of the illegal immigration in India for the USA and Canada**

Illegal immigration in India presents multifaceted challenges, impacting not only India but also neighbouring countries and regions. While the majority of illegal immigrants from India primarily seek opportunities in countries

like the USA and Canada, there are various push and pull factors driving this phenomenon.

Push factors include economic disparities, lack of employment opportunities, poverty, and social unrest in India. Pull factors in destination countries like the USA and Canada include the promise of better economic prospects, higher wages, social welfare benefits, and opportunities for family reunification.

Illegal immigration poses significant socio-economic, security, and political challenges for both India and destination countries. In India, it strains public resources, affects job markets, and contributes to social tensions. Additionally, porous borders and inadequate immigration controls raise concerns about national security and facilitate transnational crime and terrorism.

For destination countries like the USA and Canada, illegal immigration creates pressures on social services, strains infrastructure, and raises questions about national identity and cultural assimilation. Moreover, undocumented migrants often work in sectors such as agriculture,

construction, and hospitality, leading to debates about labour rights, wages, and job competition among native workers.

Addressing illegal immigration requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing border security measures, immigration reforms, diplomatic cooperation, and efforts to address root causes such as poverty, inequality, and political instability. Collaborative initiatives between India, the USA, and Canada are essential to manage migration flows, enhance information sharing, and promote legal pathways for migration while combating human trafficking and smuggling networks.

Historically, factors such as economic disparities, political instability, social unrest, and regional conflicts have been primary drivers of illegal immigration from India. These factors have prompted individuals and families to seek better opportunities and living conditions abroad, often resorting to irregular means due to limited legal pathways for migration.

During the mid-20th century, events such as the partition of India in 1947 and subsequent communal tensions led to population movements within the Indian subcontinent. Additionally, economic hardships in post-independence India prompted some individuals to seek opportunities in other countries, including those in Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

In more recent decades, globalisation, advancements in transportation and communication technology, and increasing interconnectedness have facilitated greater mobility and migration from India to various parts of the world. However, alongside legal channels of migration, there has also been a continued flow of illegal migrants seeking better economic prospects, employment opportunities, and social welfare benefits in destination countries. While illegal immigration from India is not a recent phenomenon, its scale and dynamics have evolved over time in response to changing socio-economic and geopolitical conditions both within India and in destination countries.

## 2.0 Data of migrants that illegally crossed borders

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) last year in December 2023 disclosed in Parliament that US authorities encountered more than 200,000 illegal Indian immigrants over the past five years (EconomicTimes, 2023). The data presented by Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan revealed a significant increase, with the highest number of cases, 96,917, reported in 2022-23 (Dieterich, 2023). The figures indicate a notable rise from previous years, with 8,027 encounters in 2018-19, 1,227 in 2019-20, and a substantial surge to 30,662 in 2020-21. The number in 2021-22 was 63,927 while 96,917 cases were reported in 2022-23 (Patel, 2024). The total number of illegal Indian immigrants encountered by the American authorities comes to 200,760 (EconomicTimes, 2023). Figure 1 illustrates the number of migrant deaths in the Americas in 2022,

marking it as the deadliest year on record since the inception of IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP) in 2014. On 21st December 2023 a Legend Airlines flight departed from Dubai with 303 Indian passengers headed for Nicaragua in Central America. However, the journey took an unexpected turn when the flight made a technical stop at Vatry airport in France, about 160 km from Paris.

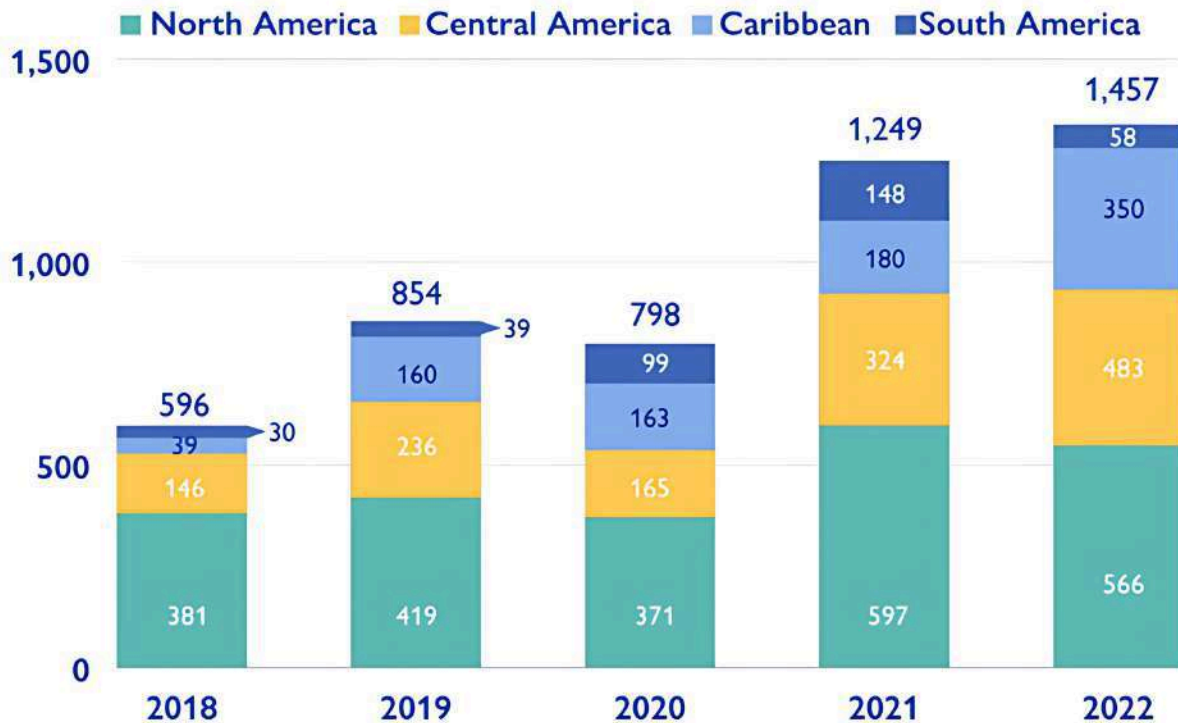
French authorities, acting on information suggesting possible human trafficking, intervened upon the flight's arrival (Ernst, 2024). The airport was quickly transformed into a makeshift tribunal, with judges and lawyers summoned for emergency hearings. All 303 passengers, Indian citizens who boarded the flight in the UAE, were called before a judge. Liliana Bakayoko, the airline's lawyer, confirmed the seriousness

with which French authorities treated the situation but did not disclose the source of the tip-off regarding possible trafficking activity.

### 3.0 The Plight of Illegal Immigration

In the heart of Gujarat's Mehsana district the Chaudhary family, comprising Praveenbhai, Dakshaben,

## Migrant deaths in the Americas in 2022 by sub-region



Source: Missing Migrants Project, 2023.

Figure 1. (IOM, 2023)

Meet, and Vidhi, embarked on a journey that was supposed to lead them to greener pastures. However, their quest for a better life took a tragic turn when they attempted to cross the border into the United States from Canada, only to meet their untimely demise in the icy waters of the St. Lawrence River.

Their story is just one among many in a string of incidents highlighting the perils of illegal immigration. For the Chaudharys, like countless others, the promise of a brighter future lured them into the clutches of human traffickers who promised to facilitate their passage to the US. With tourist visas in hand and hope in their hearts, they set out on a perilous journey that would ultimately end in tragedy.

But theirs is not an isolated case. The Dingucha incident, which shocked the nation in January 2022, saw another family freeze to death while attempting a similar journey. The harsh realities of illegal immigration came to the forefront once again, as Jagdish Patel, Vaishali, Vihanga, and Dharmik

succumbed to the unforgiving cold in a desolate field in Canada. The pursuit of better opportunities abroad has driven many to take desperate measures, risking life and limb in search of a brighter tomorrow. Brijkumar Yadav's fatal fall from the US-Mexico border wall, while carrying his young son, serves as a grim reminder of the dangers that await those who dare to tread the path of illegal immigration.

Yet, behind these tragedies lies a network of exploitation and deceit where individuals face death (India, 2022). Masterminds of illegal immigration rackets, prey on the hopes and aspirations of vulnerable individuals, charging exorbitant fees for passage to foreign lands. Despite crackdowns by law enforcement agencies, the allure of a better life overseas continues to drive many to pursue illegal immigration routes, often with devastating consequences. As Gujarat grapples with the aftermath of yet another tragedy, questions abound about the efficacy of measures to curb illegal immigration and the role of human traffickers in perpetuating this cycle of

despair.

Illegal immigration routes to the United States and Canada vary depending on geographic proximity and the tactics employed by human traffickers. Some of the common routes include:

### **Southern Border (US-Mexico):**

This is one of the most well-known routes for illegal immigration into the United States. Migrants from Central and South America, as well as other regions, often attempt to cross the US-Mexico border on foot or by other means, sometimes with the assistance of human smugglers.

### **St. Lawrence River (US-Canada):**

In recent years, there have been incidents of migrants attempting to cross the St. Lawrence River from Canada into the United States. This route poses significant dangers, especially during colder months when the water is icy.

## Central and South America:

Some migrants from countries outside the Americas may travel to Central or South American countries before attempting to enter the United States or Canada. This may involve multiple stages of travel, including flights, land crossings, and possibly sea routes.

## Caribbean Islands:

Some migrants may travel to Caribbean islands before attempting to reach the United States or Canada. This could involve travel by boat or other means to nearby countries with closer proximity to the target destination.

## Europe and South America:

The "donkey route," as it is sometimes called, involves a multi-hop journey through Europe and South American countries before reaching the United States or Canada (Dhankhar, Paid 1st tranche in 2020 to embark on donkey route, 2024).

This route may include stops in countries such as France, Nicaragua, and Mexico, often with the assistance of human traffickers who provide fake documents and other support (Dhankhar, Donkey route flyers knew of risks, pitfalls, 2022).

These are just a few examples of the routes used by migrants attempting to enter the United States and Canada illegally. The choice of route may depend on factors such as geographic proximity, ease of access, and the tactics employed by human traffickers.

## 3.1 Families of Missing Individuals Still Grappling in Pain

The families of victims who are still missing continue to grapple with profound pain and uncertainty. Their anguish is palpable as they endure the agonising wait for news, clinging to hope while fearing the worst. Each passing day brings a relentless cycle of despair, as they struggle to come to terms with the absence of their loved ones.

The emotional toll of not knowing the fate of their family members weighs heavily on these grieving families. Every unanswered phone call, every knock on the door, fills them with a sense of dread, amplifying their sense of helplessness and despair. They yearn for closure, for any shred of information that might offer them solace and a semblance of peace.

Amidst their pain, these families cling to hope, drawing strength from each other and from the unwavering support of their communities. They rally together, united in their quest for answers and justice, refusing to let their loved ones fade into oblivion. Their resilience in the face of adversity serves as a beacon of light in the darkness, a testament to the power of love and solidarity in the face of unimaginable loss.

In the quiet village of Vaghpur, Bharat Desai, a hardworking farmer with dreams as vast as the endless skies above his land, embarked on a journey one fateful January morning in 2022. Like so many others before him, Bharat's aspirations carried him far beyond the borders

of his homeland, fueled by the promise of opportunity and prosperity that seemed to beckon from distant shores. But the path to a better life was fraught with deception and betrayal, as Bharat fell victim to the machinations of unscrupulous agents who promised him the world and delivered only heartache. Sold to the highest bidder, his dreams were dashed against the jagged rocks of exploitation, leaving behind a trail of broken promises and shattered lives. For Bharat's wife, the pain of separation cuts deep, as she grapples with the silence that has enveloped her once vibrant home. Each day brings with it a renewed sense of anguish, as she waits for news of her husband, lost in a sea of uncertainty and despair. The story is not unique to the Desai family alone, as eight other families from Gujarat share in their anguish and despair. Yet, amidst the darkness, there is a glimmer of hope, as these families unite in their quest for justice and closure. Their voices, though muffled by grief, rise in defiance against the

forces that seek to silence them, as they demand answers and accountability from those who preyed upon their hopes and dreams (Portal, 2024). Their journey is far from over, but their resolve remains unbroken, as they continue to fight for the truth and for the closure they so desperately seek.

In India, particularly from states like Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, and others, individuals often pay exorbitant sums to take illegal routes to reach the United States or Canada. These illegal immigration routes involve complex networks of agents and smugglers who exploit aspirations of desperate individuals seeking better opportunities abroad. Here's an overview of how the process works:

## Document Forging:

Agents assist individuals in obtaining forged documents like passports, visas, educational certificates, job papers, and sponsor letters (Dhankhar, Forged papers, long route: Rush of FIRs reveal tip of immigration racket iceberg, 2024). These documents are

often fabricated to make it appear as though the individual meets the legal requirements for entry into the destination country.

## Visa Acquisition:

For individuals lacking the necessary qualifications or documentation, agents arrange for visas through illicit means. This may involve obtaining visas for transit countries that have agreements allowing visa-on-arrival for certain passport holders. For example, Mexico and Nicaragua allow Indians to obtain visas on arrival if they have valid visas for other countries like the UK or Schengen area countries.

**Illegal Transportation:** Once the necessary documents are acquired, individuals are transported through various countries using irregular methods. This may include air travel with multiple stopovers in different countries to avoid detection, or even land or sea routes that circumvent official border checkpoints. Figure 2 highlights the access of illegal migrants to road freight transport units.



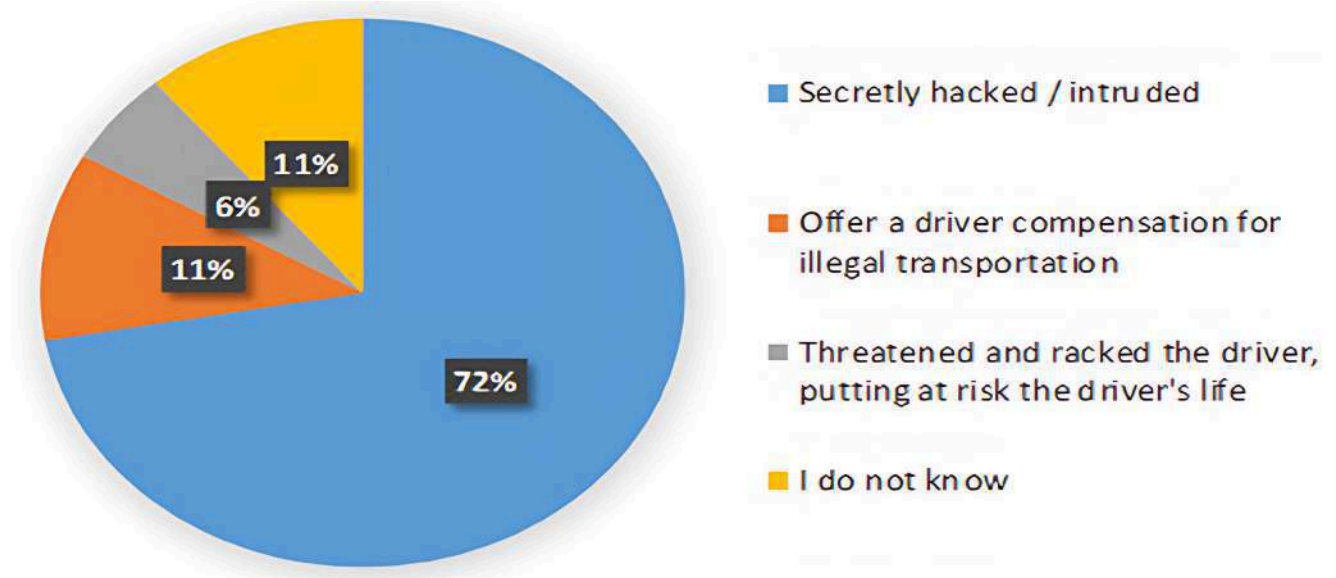


Figure 2. (Lietuvnikė, Vasilis Vasiliauskas, Vasilienė-Vasiliauskienė, & Sabaitytė, 2018)

## Transit and Rented Accommodations:

During transit, individuals are often housed in rented apartments in cities like Dubai or Istanbul. These locations serve as temporary holding areas where migrants await further instructions or transportation to their final destination.

## Crossing Borders:

The final leg of the journey typically involves crossing the US-Mexico border or entering Canada through illicit means. This may entail dangerous border crossings through remote areas or maritime routes that evade official surveillance (Malkin, 2022).

**Exploitation and Debt:** Individuals who undertake these illegal journeys often accrue significant debts to the agents and smugglers facilitating their travel. These debts can amount to lakhs of rupees, placing immense

financial strain on the migrants and their families. Moreover, migrants may become vulnerable to exploitation and abuse during their journey, with little recourse to legal protection.

Overall, the illegal immigration process from India to the US or Canada is characterized by deception, exploitation, and high levels of risk. Despite the potential dangers and legal consequences, many individuals are willing to pay substantial sums and endure hardships in pursuit of the elusive promise of a better life abroad (Landa, 2023).

## 3.2 Why Do people risk their lives despite knowing the risks

People risk their lives and pursue illegal routes to cross borders and enter countries like the US and Canada due to a combination of push and pull factors. Here are some reasons why individuals take such risks:

### Economic Opportunities:

Many individuals from countries like India see migrating to countries like the US and Canada as a means to access better economic opportunities. They believe that by moving to these countries, they can secure higher-paying jobs, improve their standard of living, and provide a better future for their families.

### Social Pressures:

In some cases, societal pressures play a significant role in driving individuals

to migrate illegally. Families may face pressure from their communities to send a member abroad in pursuit of better prospects, especially if they see others around them benefiting from such moves.

### Lack of Legal Avenues:

Limited access to legal pathways for migration can lead individuals to resort to illegal means. Stringent immigration policies, long wait times for visas, and high costs associated with legal migration channels can push people towards undocumented routes as a quicker alternative.

### Deception by Traffickers:

Individuals may fall victim to false promises made by human traffickers or agents who exploit their dreams of a better life abroad (Gupta, 2022). Traffickers lure vulnerable migrants with assurances of smooth passage, job opportunities, and a comfortable life in destination countries, only to exploit them for financial gain.

### Desperation:

Some migrants may feel desperate due to dire circumstances in their home countries, such as poverty, political instability, or conflict. They may see illegal migration as their only option for escaping these challenging conditions and seeking a better future elsewhere.

### Family Obligations:

Family members already residing in countries like the US or Canada may encourage or pressure their relatives back home to join them, promising support and assistance upon arrival. This familial obligation can motivate individuals to undertake risky journeys despite the dangers involved.

Despite knowing the risks and the potential consequences, individuals often choose to take the illegal route in the hope of achieving their aspirations for a better life for themselves and their families.

## **Combating Illegal Immigration: Society and Government Unite to Address Migration Challenges**

Controlling illegal immigration requires a multi-faceted approach involving both societal and governmental efforts. Here are some ways in which society and the government can collaborate to address this issue:

### **Public Awareness Campaigns:**

Educate the public about the risks and consequences of illegal immigration through targeted awareness campaigns. Provide information about legal migration pathways, including visa programs and immigration policies, to empower individuals to make informed decisions.

### **Crackdown on Trafficking Networks:**

Strengthen law enforcement efforts to dismantle human trafficking networks and prosecute individuals involved in smuggling migrants. Increase cooperation between national and international law enforcement agencies to disrupt illegal migration routes and apprehend traffickers.

### **Support for Vulnerable Communities:**

Provide support and assistance to vulnerable communities that are susceptible to exploitation by traffickers. Offer economic opportunities, social services, and educational programs to address the root causes of migration and reduce reliance on illegal pathways.

### **Enhanced Border Security:**

Invest in technology, infrastructure, and personnel to enhance border security measures and prevent unauthorized entry into the country. Implement stricter border controls, surveillance systems, and patrols to deter illegal crossings and apprehend individuals attempting to enter illegally.

### **Addressing Push Factors:**

Address the underlying push factors driving individuals to migrate illegally, such as poverty, unemployment, political instability, and lack of economic opportunities. Invest in economic development, job creation, and poverty alleviation initiatives in source countries to reduce the incentive for illegal migration.

### **Streamlined Immigration Processes:**

Simplify and streamline legal immigration processes to make them more accessible and efficient for migrants.

Reduce bureaucratic barriers, processing times, and visa fees to encourage individuals to pursue legal migration pathways instead of resorting to illegal means.

## International Cooperation:

Foster international cooperation and collaboration to combat illegal immigration on a global scale. Strengthen diplomatic relations, share intelligence and information, and coordinate efforts with other countries to address transnational migration challenges effectively.

## Conclusion

By implementing a comprehensive approach that combines prevention, enforcement, and support measures, society and the government can work together to control illegal immigration and protect vulnerable migrants from exploitation and harm. The countries experiencing higher levels of illegal immigration often include those with economic disparities, political

## Crackdown on Trafficking Networks:

instability, or armed conflicts, as individuals seek better living conditions or safety. Some countries known for facing challenges related to illegal immigration include:

### United States:

**Border Issues:** The U.S.-Mexico border is a focal point of discussions on illegal immigration. Migrants often attempt to cross the border without proper documentation, leading to concerns about border security.

**Diverse Causes:** Economic opportunities, family reunification, and fleeing violence or persecution are common reasons for individuals seeking to enter the U.S. illegally.

**Policy Changes:** Changes in U.S. immigration policies can impact the patterns of illegal immigration. Shifts in administrations often bring adjustments to border control measures and immigration regulations.

### European Union Countries:

**Mediterranean Routes:** Countries like Greece, Italy, and Spain face challenges related to migrants attempting perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea.

**Refugee Crisis:** The EU experienced a significant influx of refugees and migrants, especially during the Syrian refugee crisis. Addressing humanitarian needs while managing immigration has been a complex task.

### Mexico:

**Transit Country:** Mexico serves as a transit country for individuals from Central America en route to the United States. The country faces challenges in managing and regulating this migration flow.

### Greece, Italy, Spain:

**Geographic Challenges:** Being geographically positioned at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, these countries are often entry points for migrants attempting to reach European soil.

**Asylum Seekers:** Many individuals arriving

irregularly seek asylum, posing challenges in processing claims and addressing humanitarian needs.

## **Australia:**

**Boat Arrivals:** Australia has faced issues related to individuals arriving by boat, often making dangerous journeys. The country has implemented strict border control measures to deter such arrivals.

The challenges associated with illegal immigration include humanitarian concerns, strained resources, and debates over immigration policies. Countries affected often grapple with balancing border security and humanitarian obligations, seeking comprehensive and sustainable solutions. International cooperation is crucial in addressing the root causes of migration and managing the global impact of illegal immigration. The "way forward" refers to the recommended actions or strategies to address the challenges discussed in the paper. In the context of tackling illegal

immigration in India, here are some potential "way forward" strategies:

## **Enhanced Border Surveillance:**

Implement advanced technologies such as drones and sensors for more effective border monitoring. Increase personnel, patrols, and checkpoints at vulnerable border areas. Utilize satellite technology and real-time data analytics to improve situational awareness.

## **Strengthened Law Enforcement Measures:**

Provide specialized training to law enforcement agencies to combat human trafficking and illegal immigration. Establish dedicated task forces to investigate and dismantle smuggling networks. Increase penalties for individuals involved in human trafficking and those hiring undocumented workers.

## **Promoting Economic Development:**

Focus on economic

development initiatives in regions with high emigration rates to create job opportunities. Encourage foreign investment and entrepreneurship to stimulate local economies. Implement skill development programs to enhance employability in vulnerable regions.

## **International Cooperation:**

Engage in diplomatic efforts with countries of origin to address root causes of migration, such as economic instability and violence. Strengthen international cooperation on border control and information sharing. Collaborate with neighboring nations to develop regional strategies for managing migration flows.

## **Policy and Legal Reforms:**

Review and update immigration laws to make them more effective and responsive to current challenges. Simplify legal immigration processes to encourage people to choose legal avenues.

Ensure that existing laws are consistently enforced and consider amendments where necessary.

## **Media's Role in Raising Awareness:**

Collaborate with the media to raise public awareness about the risks and consequences of illegal immigration. Disseminate information about legal immigration channels and available support services. Encourage responsible reporting that highlights

the complexities of the issue and promotes informed public discourse.

## **Community Engagement and Outreach:**

Establish community outreach programs to build trust and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities. Involve community leaders in spreading awareness and advocating for legal immigration channels. Provide support services for families affected by

illegal immigration.

## **Investment in Technology:**

Utilize digital systems for visa processing and immigration management to streamline procedures. Invest in research and development of technology solutions to enhance border security. Explore collaborations with technology companies for innovative solutions.

## **Humanitarian Measures:**

Address humanitarian concerns by providing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. Streamline asylum processes to ensure timely and fair assessments. Collaborate with international organizations to ensure a coordinated humanitarian response.

## **Pathways to Legalisation:**

Implement pathways for undocumented immigrants to legalize their status, subject to certain criteria. Consider amnesty or regularization programs for long-term undocumented residents.

Implementing a combination of these strategies, tailored to the specific context of India, can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to addressing the challenges of illegal immigration. Addressing illegal immigration requires collaborative efforts on an international scale. Here are ways in which countries can come together to fight against illegal immigration:

## **Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements:**

Establish bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries to cooperate on immigration issues. Define common protocols for border control, information sharing, and joint operations.

## **Information Sharing:**

Create platforms for sharing intelligence and information related to illegal immigration. Enhance collaboration between law enforcement agencies to track and

apprehend human traffickers and criminal networks.

## Regional Cooperation:

Form regional alliances or organizations to address immigration challenges collectively. Share best practices and resources among neighbouring countries facing similar issues.

## Joint Border Control Operations:

Conduct joint border control operations to enhance security and deter illegal crossings. Pool resources for the development of technology and infrastructure to secure shared borders.

## Humanitarian Initiatives:

Develop joint humanitarian initiatives to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, violence, and political instability. Collaborate on providing aid and support to regions.

## Asylum and Refugee Policies:

Develop standardised asylum and refugee policies to ensure fair and consistent treatment. Share the responsibility of hosting and supporting refugees through international cooperation.

## Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution:

Engage in diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of conflicts that contribute to migration. Promote peaceful resolutions to political and social issues that drive people to flee their home countries.

International Organisations: Collaborate with international organisations such as the United Nations and Interpol to coordinate efforts. Participate in forums and conferences focused on global migration issues to share insights and strategies.

## Public Awareness Campaigns:

Conduct joint public awareness campaigns to inform potential migrants about legal avenues and the risks of illegal migration. Foster understanding among the public about the

complexities of migration and the need for collective solutions. By working together on these fronts, countries can create a more coordinated and effective response to the challenges posed by illegal immigration. It requires a combination of diplomatic, legal, humanitarian, and security measures to address the complex and multifaceted nature of migration.

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# DAS MAHAVIDYAS- RISE OF THE DIVINE FEMININE

*Dr Manmeet Kumar*

*Spiritual Master, Founder & CEO: Soul Miracles*

**Theme of the Article: Spirituality**



**Dr Manmeet Kumar**

SPIRITUAL MASTER,  
FOUNDER & CEO: SOUL MIRACLES

## Bio

Dr Manmit is a Spiritual Master, a gifted Psychic Medium. She pioneered Automatic Writing and Akashic Records in India. She works with international police agencies to find missing children. She is currently working on creating an online Spiritual School to promote energy work. Her passion is bringing Divine Feminine Consciousness through workshops on Maa Kaali and the Das Mahavidyas. She is the founder of Soul Miracles- a platform for empowerment.

## Objectives

Understand the need of unleashing the secret tantric tool- the Das Mahavidyas as a solution to today's global societal crisis. It attempts to cover the need of the Divine Feminine energy in the world today.

## Abstract

In the context of Kali Yuga, the age characterized by spiritual decline, chaos, and moral degradation according to Hindu cosmology, the energy of Maa Kali holds profound significance in overcoming the pervasive darkness and challenges of this era. Maa Kali is revered as the fierce and compassionate aspect of the divine mother, embodying the power to destroy ignorance, ego, and negativity while nurturing the seeds of spiritual awakening and transformation.

In Kali Yuga, where materialism, selfishness, and spiritual ignorance abound, the energy of Maa Kali serves as a potent force for liberation and renewal. Her fierce form represents the destruction of all that hinders spiritual evolution, including attachment, delusion, and egoism. By invoking the energy of Maa Kali, individuals are empowered to confront and transcend the darkness within themselves and in the

world around them, paving the way for spiritual growth and enlightenment.

Moreover, Maa Kali's compassionate nature ensures that even in the darkest of times, she remains a source of refuge and guidance for seekers on the path of righteousness. Her loving embrace provides solace and protection amidst the tumult of Kali Yuga, instilling hope and courage in the hearts of devotees as they navigate through life's trials and tribulations.

In essence, the energy of Maa Kali is indispensable in overcoming the darkness of Kali Yuga, as she embodies the transformative power of divine grace and unconditional love. Through her fierce yet compassionate presence, individuals are inspired to confront their shadows, cultivate virtues such as courage and compassion, and ultimately transcend the limitations of the material world, attaining liberation and union with the divine.

## Keywords

Kali Yuga, Divine, Feminine, Consciousness

## Introduction

The paper emphasizes on the need of unleashing the secret tantric tool- the Das Mahavidyas as a solution to today's global societal crisis. It attempts to cover the need of the Divine Feminine energy in the world today. It explains how we need to shift our consciousness towards balance by elevating our feminine qualities and how the worship of the Das Mahavidyas is instrumental in this shift. It covers the correct way of practice and encourages the reader to explore their own role as a Lightworker, in the war between darkness and Light. It also covers the correct way of invoking them and the right deity to pray to.

The Das Mahavidyas, originating from the rich spiritual tapestry of India, embody profound universal truths and transformative energies that are relevant globally, especially in today's complex world. These ten aspects of the divine feminine offer powerful tools for personal and collective healing, promoting balance, and confronting modern

challenges with wisdom and strength. In an era marked by rapid change and global crises, the teachings and practices associated with the Mahavidyas could provide much-needed insight and resilience. By introducing these concepts onto the

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world stage, we can foster a greater understanding of inner transformation as a catalyst for external change, making them a vital resource for global spiritual and cultural enrichment. Their universal appeal and relevance can help address the spiritual void often felt in contemporary society, bridging diverse cultures through shared spiritual wisdom.

## **1.1 Why are the Das Mahavidyas the biggest tantric secret that has been kept away from the world?**

The Das Mahavidyas, as central figures in Tantric practices, have historically been shrouded in secrecy, and there are profound reasons why these powerful forms of the divine feminine are not easily accessible to all. One significant reason is the intrinsic nature of Tantric knowledge itself, which delves deeply into the realms of mysticism, esoteric energies, and the transformation of consciousness. Such knowledge demands a high degree of spiritual maturity and preparation, as it involves techniques and insights that could be misunderstood or misused if not approached with the right intent and guidance. Thus, the guardians of this wisdom have traditionally kept these teachings somewhat concealed to protect both the integrity of the practices and the practitioners. Adding to the complexity, there is a thematic "war" between the forces of light and darkness, which is a recurrent motif in many spiritual traditions, including those that venerate the Das Mahavidyas. This metaphorical battle represents the ongoing

struggle between knowledge and ignorance, creation and destruction, and elevation versus degradation within the cosmic order. It is suggested that dark forces, representing ignorance and chaos, resist the dissemination of profound spiritual knowledge like that of the Mahavidyas because such wisdom has the power to liberate individuals and transform societies by illuminating the darkness with the light of awareness and understanding. By keeping such powerful transformative knowledge obscured, these dark forces maintain a kind of status quo that favors disarray and spiritual stagnation. Therefore, the relative obscurity of the Das Mahavidyas is not just a matter of tradition or the complexities of their worship but also a reflection of this larger cosmic battle between enlightenment and ignorance. Those who seek to engage with the Mahavidyas must not only be prepared to face these spiritual challenges but also contribute positively to the cosmic balance, using the profound energies and insights gained to foster light, knowledge,

and harmony in a world often veiled in spiritual darkness. This dynamic ensures that the teachings of the Das Mahavidyas remain both sacred and potent, accessible only to those who are ready to undertake such significant spiritual responsibility.

### **1.1.1 The need for rise of The Divine Feminine:**

In today's global society, there's a marked predominance of masculine energies characterized by competition, aggression, and individualism. This imbalance contributes significantly to various forms of conflict, environmental degradation, and a pervasive sense of disconnection among communities. The masculine qualities, while essential in certain contexts for progress and protection, have overshadowed the nurturing and cooperative spirit that is equally vital for the sustainability of our world. The resultant imbalance has led to a skewed approach to development and problem-

solving, often at the expense of holistic well-being and environmental health. This underscores the necessity for reintegrating the feminine principle, which emphasizes care, empathy, and interconnectedness.

The need for the divine feminine is more pronounced now as the world faces complex challenges that cannot be resolved through force or competition alone. Qualities traditionally associated with the feminine, such as intuition, inclusivity, and collaboration, are crucial for creating solutions that are sustainable and equitable. Rebalancing with the divine feminine allows for a more comprehensive approach to global issues, where the focus shifts from merely exploiting resources to nurturing them, and from dominating others to understanding and supporting them. This shift is not about replacing one with the other but about harmonizing the masculine and feminine energies within societies to foster a more resilient and compassionate world.

### **1.1.2 Shiva and Shakti- the Divine Balance**

In the Hindu Tantric system, Shiva and Shakti epitomize the cosmic dance of masculine and feminine energies, integral to the universe's dynamic equilibrium. An evocative story that illustrates their union is the tale of the Ardhanarishvara, the composite form of Shiva and Shakti. This form symbolizes the perfect synthesis of male and female, where Shiva, the embodiment of consciousness and passivity, and Shakti, the personification of energy and action, merge into a single entity. This confluence of energies teaches that neither force is effective without the other, mirroring the essential balance needed for creation and destruction, demonstrating the universe's profound interconnectedness and dual nature. Another compelling narrative is that of Shiva's deep meditation and how Shakti comes to awaken him, necessary for the creation of the world. Shakti, in the form of Sati, wins Shiva's affection and

construction, and hospitality, leading to debates about labour rights, wages, and job competition among native workers.

Addressing illegal immigration requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing border security measures, immigration reforms, diplomatic cooperation, and efforts to address root causes such as poverty, inequality, and political instability. Collaborative initiatives between India, the USA, and Canada are essential to manage migration flows, enhance information sharing, and promote legal pathways for migration while combating human trafficking and smuggling networks.

Historically, factors such as economic disparities, political instability, social unrest, and regional conflicts have been primary drivers of illegal immigration from India. These factors have prompted individuals and families to seek better opportunities and living conditions abroad, often resorting to irregular means due to limited legal pathways for migration.

During the mid-20th century, events such as the partition of India in 1947 and subsequent communal tensions led to population movements within the Indian subcontinent. Additionally, economic hardships in post-independence India prompted some individuals to seek opportunities in other countries, including those in Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

In more recent decades, globalisation, advancements in transportation and communication technology, and increasing interconnectedness have facilitated greater mobility and migration from India to various parts of the world. However, alongside legal channels of migration, there has also been a continued flow of illegal migrants seeking better economic prospects, employment opportunities, and social welfare benefits in destination countries. While illegal immigration from India is not a recent phenomenon, its scale and dynamics have evolved over time in response to changing socio-economic and geopolitical conditions both within India and in destination countries.

## 2.0 Data of migrants that illegally crossed borders

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) last year in December 2023 disclosed in Parliament that US authorities encountered more than 200,000 illegal Indian immigrants over the past five years (EconomicTimes, 2023). The data presented by Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan revealed a significant increase, with the highest number of cases, 96,917, reported in 2022-23 (Dieterich, 2023). The figures indicate a notable rise from previous years, with 8,027 encounters in 2018-19, 1,227 in 2019-20, and a substantial surge to 30,662 in 2020-21. The number in 2021-22 was 63,927 while 96,917 cases were reported in 2022-23 (Patel, 2024). The total number of illegal Indian immigrants encountered by the American authorities comes to 200,760 (EconomicTimes, 2023). Figure 1 illustrates the number of migrant deaths in the Americas in 2022,

rouses him from his deep yogic trance. Their marriage symbolizes the union necessary for the universe's cyclical processes, such as creation, preservation, and destruction. This story not only highlights the dependence of passive elements (Shiva) on dynamic forces (Shakti) to bring balance and activity into existence but also underlines the concept that the divine feminine is indispensable in prompting action within the sphere of divine consciousness.

## The Das Mahavidyas

All "Names" And Forms Are of The Divine Mother. 'I Am Alone Here In the world. Who Else Is There Besides Me? Behold, o vile one! These Are but Projections Of My Own Power, Now Entering Back Into Me.' (Jewel, 2023)

Top of Form  
The Das Mahavidyas represents a profound and essential pathway to invoke the divine feminine consciousness, encapsulating

the multifaceted nature of Shakti within Tantric practices. Each goddess in this group embodies a distinct aspect of the divine feminine, offering unique insights and transformative powers that are pivotal for spiritual awakening. These deities challenge the practitioner to engage with aspects of the self and the universe that are often overlooked or suppressed in more orthodox spiritual practices. Through rituals, meditation, and mantra chanting associated with each Mahavidya, devotees not only honor these divine figures but also tap into deep reservoirs of feminine energy. This process is not merely about seeking blessings but involves an experiential understanding and integration of these energies into one's spiritual journey, thereby enhancing one's consciousness and encouraging a holistic embrace of both the material and spiritual realms. Moreover, the worship of the Das Mahavidyas in Tantra is not just a religious practice but a dynamic engagement with the living forces of the universe, seen as manifestations of the divine feminine.

This engagement is characterized by an acceptance and celebration of the complexity of life, including its darker and more mysterious aspects. Each Mahavidya, from the ferocity of Kali to the serene bounty of Kamala, provides a specific lens through which the divine is realized and internalized, making the abstract intensely personal and experientially accessible. In doing so, these ten goddesses facilitate a deeper communion with the divine feminine, unlocking layers of consciousness that foster a profound understanding of existence itself. This transformative process is crucial for those on the Tantric path, as it empowers individuals to transcend traditional boundaries, harness inner spiritual forces, and ultimately achieve a state of unity with the cosmos.

## 2.1 Tantra and the Das Mahavidyas:

Tantra is deeply linked to the Das Mahavidyas in several profound ways, reflecting a symbiotic relationship between the esoteric practices of Tantra and the



worship of these ten powerful goddesses.

## 1. Integral Part of Tantric Practice:

The Das Mahavidyas are central to many Tantric rituals and practices. They are often invoked through specific mantras, yantras (mystical diagrams), and rituals which are intrinsic to Tantric methodology. Each Mahavidya has a specific set of practices that are used to invoke her energy and blessings, often involving complex rituals that include offerings, meditations, and the recitation of specific verses.

## 2. Embodiment of Transcendent Wisdom:

Each of the Mahavidyas represents a particular aspect of cosmic wisdom that challenges conventional perceptions of reality. Tantra, with its emphasis on seeing beyond the surface to the deeper truths of existence, utilizes the Mahavidyas as

embodiments of these transformative insights. For instance, Kali represents time and the inevitable decay all beings face, encouraging devotees to look beyond their fears of mortality.

## 3. Pathways to Liberation:

In Tantra, the ultimate goal is moksha (liberation) or spiritual enlightenment, achieved by transcending the ego and the dualities of existence. Each Mahavidya offers a unique path to this enlightenment, embodying both the challenges and the spiritual tools necessary for overcoming them. For example, Chhinnamasta's act of self-decapitation symbolizes the ego's surrender, a crucial step in achieving spiritual awakening.

## 4. Integration of the Feminine Divine:

Tantra significantly emphasizes the divine feminine or Shakti as a fundamental cosmic force. The Mahavidyas, as ten aspects of the divine

feminine, represent various dimensions of Shakti's power and wisdom. Their worship in Tantra underscores the importance of acknowledging and venerating the feminine as integral to spiritual development.

## 5. Challenge to Orthodox Practices:

Both Tantra and the worship of the Mahavidyas often challenge conventional religious practices and societal norms. The Mahavidyas, with their sometimes fierce and untamed forms, encourage practitioners to question and transcend traditional boundaries and limitations, much like Tantric practices do.

## 6. Esoteric Knowledge and Secrets:

Tantric texts often detail secretive and esoteric practices associated with each Mahavidya, accessible only to initiated practitioners. These practices are believed to unlock

profound spiritual powers and insights, offering direct encounters with deep truths about the universe and one's own consciousness. In essence, the Das Mahavidyas are not just worshiped within Tantric traditions; they are integral to understanding and practicing Tantra itself, providing a structured yet profound approach to engaging with the spiritual and material complexities of life.

## **7. Dhumavati - Despair:**

Often depicted as an old widow, Dhumavati embodies the principle of overcoming despair and hopelessness. Her solitary state teaches the resilience and inner strength required to face life's challenges and adversities.

## **8.**

## **BAGALAMUKHI - DECEIT:**

1. Bagalamukhi, known for her power to paralyze enemies, symbolically combats the vice of deceit.

She freezes negative speech and actions, promoting transparency and honesty in interactions and dealings.

## **9. Matangi - Pollution:**

Matangi, who is associated with the outcast and the polluted, teaches purification from spiritual and physical pollution. Her domain over the marginalized aspects of society challenges norms and purifies devotees through acceptance and integration.

## **10. Kamala - Greed:**

Kamala, a form of Lakshmi and associated with wealth and prosperity, helps devotees overcome greed by fostering a sense of contentment and generosity. Her nurturing presence encourages the sharing of wealth and the recognition of abundance in all forms of life. These Mahavidyas exist within our consciousness, and through awareness, we can shift between them, depending on what we are facing.

## **Story of the Das Mahavidyas**

Here's a brief look at the story or the symbolic significance behind each Mahavidya:

### **1. Kali:**

Kali is about the darker aspects of nature and our own human nature, yet she also speaks to us of love, for she became the consort of Shiva, adopted by tantric practitioners of the Kaula path (Odier, 2016). Kali first appeared from the brow of Goddess Durga during a battle with the demons. In a fierce form, she defeated the demon Raktabija by consuming his blood, preventing him from replicating. Kali's untamed energy and wild demeanor symbolize the ultimate reality of time and the transformative power of destruction, which clears the path for new creation.

## 2. Tara:

Similar to Kali, Tara is believed to have emerged during a cosmic crisis. When Shiva drank the poison Halahala, which emerged from the ocean during the churning of the Milky Ocean, he fell unconscious. Tara then appeared and took Shiva on her lap, sucking the poison from his body and saving the universe. She represents compassion and offers guidance and protection to her devotees.

## 3. Tripura Sundari:

Also known as Sodashi, Tripura Sundari is considered the most beautiful in all three worlds. Her beauty and grace seduce all creation to unify with her divine essence. She represents the perfected or idealized beauty in nature and the arts, encompassing the truth that lies beyond the cosmic illusion (Maya).

## 4. Bhuvaneshvari:

Bhuvaneshvari means the ruler of the world. According to mythology, she is the divine spatial aspect of the universe and represents the infinite space in which all creation happens. Her worship implies a realization of one's own potential and power as being infinite.

## 5. Chhinnamasta:

The self-decapitated goddess, Chhinnamasta stands for the immediate and direct perception of reality, which is beyond the dualities of life, such as sex, death, and creation. The legend has it that while bathing with her attendants, she decapitated herself to feed them with her own blood, symbolizing the self-sacrifice and the cycle of life.

## 6. Bhairavi:

As per legends, Bhairavi is the fierce and terrifying aspect of the Goddess who guards the boundaries of the universe. Her story revolves around her role as the protector of the realm and the leader in times of cosmic instability. She teaches resilience and the transformation through trials.

## 7. Dhumavati:

She is depicted as an old and ugly widow, and her story is associated with loss and inauspiciousness. Dhumavati is said to have manifested from the smoke when Sati, the consort of Shiva, immolated herself. She represents the unavoidable and harsh realities of life, such as isolation and poverty.

## 8. Bagalamukhi:

The legend goes that during a cosmic storm that threatened creation, Bagalamukhi emerged from a cosmic yellow lake, and calmed the storm by gripping the demon's tongue who was causing it. She symbolizes the power to control and paralyze enemies, representing dominance over our foes, whether external or internal dialogues.

## 9. Matangi:

Matangi is said to be born from the thoughts of Lord Shiva. She is considered an outcaste or the "Chandalini",

symbolizing the breaking of societal norms and purity laws. She represents inner thought and wisdom, and her worship is particularly favored by those who seek supernatural powers.

## 10. Kamala:

Kamala is essentially a form of Lakshmi and emerged from the churning of the ocean, symbolizing wealth, prosperity, and fertility. Her story teaches about the importance of material and spiritual wealth and the cleansing of spiritual impurities.

According to Kinsley (1997), "The Mahavidyas might be also understood as symbols of the stages of consciousness experienced by aspirants in their spiritual development. Each goddess confers a certain type of perfections, blessing of awareness. These perfections might be understood as progressive, some pre supposing or being more inclusive than others."

These stories and symbols of the Das Mahavidyas not only depict their divine functions and powers but also reflect deeper philosophical and existential insights into life, making them central figures in Tantric worship.

This also depicts that divinity incorporates both creation and destruction, gentleness and fierceness. By embracing these paradoxes, devotees are encouraged to transcend dualistic thinking and perceive the underlying unity in all aspects of life (Rashinker, 2023)

## INVOCATION OF THE GODDESSES

The Das Mahavidyas are each associated with specific mantras that are used in rituals and meditation to invoke their energies and blessings. The ten Goddesses can be categorized as below in terms of their energy (Rashinker, 2023):

Soumya (docile)- Lalita Tripurasundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Matangi, Kamalatmika  
Ugra (ferocious)- Kali, Chinnamastika, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi  
Soumya-Ugra (docile-fierce)- Tara, Bhairavi

Below is a brief description of each goddess and her corresponding mantra:

1.Kali: Known for her power over time and transformation, Kali's mantra is often chanted to seek protection and the strength to overcome obstacles and negativity. Mantra: Om Krim Kalikayai Namah

2.Tara: Tara is considered a source of compassion and a provider of salvation. Her mantra is used to gain wisdom and understanding.

Mantra: Om Hrim Strim Hum Phat

3.Tripura Sundari: As the goddess of beauty and truth, her mantra is used to attract all types of good fortune and to realize divine truth.

◦ Mantra: Om Aim Hreem Shreem Sri Lalita Tripurasundari Padukam Poojayami Namah

4.Bhuvaneshvari: Governing the material world, her mantra is chanted for harmony and spiritual growth.

◦ Mantra: Om Hreem Bhuvaneshwaryai Namah

5.Chhinnamasta: Her mantra is used to cut through

obstacles and personal limitations, representing self-sacrifice and transformation.

- Mantra: Om Shrim Hrim Klim Aim Vajra Vairochaniye Hum Hum Phat Swaha

6.Bhairavi: Bhairavi's mantra invokes her protective energies and is used to conquer fear and negative influences.

- Mantra: Om Hrim Bhairavayai Namah

7.Dhumavati: Invoked for overcoming sadness, conflicts, and quarrels, her mantra is also used for protection from all sorts of adversities.

- Mantra: Om Dhum Dhum Dhumavati Swaha

8.Bagalamukhi: Known for her power to paralyze enemies and manage difficult situations, her mantra is chanted for dominance over adversaries.

Mantra: Om Hleem Bagalamukhi Sarvadustanam Vacham Mukham Padam Stambhaya

Jivham Kilaya Buddhim Vinashaya Hleem Om Swaha

9.Matangi: The goddess of the spoken word and arts, her mantra is used to attract and charm others, enhancing the devotee's communication skills.

- Mantra: Om Hreem Aim Shreem Namo Bhagavati Ucchishta Chandalini Saraswataye Hreem Swaha

10.Kamala: As a form of Lakshmi, Kamala's mantra is chanted for prosperity, purity, and elevation in life.

- Mantra: Om Shrim Hrim Shrim Kamalatmika Mahalakshmyai Namah

These mantras should be used with respect and proper guidance, ideally under the supervision of a knowledgeable practitioner, as they are powerful spiritual tools and form an integral part of Tantric worship.

## 4.1 Can anyone worship the Das Mahavidyas?

Yes, anyone can worship the Das Mahavidyas, but there are several important considerations and preparations that should be taken into account due to the complex and powerful nature of these deities within the Tantric tradition:

### 1.Guidance from a Qualified Guru:

It is highly recommended that worship of the Das Mahavidyas be undertaken under the guidance of a knowledgeable and experienced guru. These deities represent profound and often intense aspects of the divine feminine, and their energies are not only powerful but can be difficult to understand and integrate without proper guidance.

### 2.Understanding and Respect:

Before beginning worship, one should seek to understand the significance, symbolism, and stories

associated with each of the Mahavidyas. Respect for their distinct characteristics and what they represent is crucial. This respect also involves recognizing the cultural and religious context from which these deities emerge.

### **3.Preparatory Practices:**

Engaging in preparatory practices such as purification rituals, regular meditation, and study of Tantric texts can help prepare the mind and body for worship. These practices help in developing the spiritual maturity necessary to engage with such powerful energies.

### **4.Ethical Living and Intent:**

Tantra emphasizes ethical living as a foundation for spiritual growth. The intent behind worship should align with principles of selflessness, compassion, and spiritual enlightenment, rather than selfish gains. A pure intention is crucial when

dealing with the potent energies of the Mahavidyas.

### **5.Ritual Adherence:**

There are specific rituals and offerings associated with each Mahavidya, and these should be followed carefully. Deviations or incorrect practices not only reduce the effectiveness of the worship but can also lead to undesirable outcomes.

### **6.Psychological Readiness:**

The path of Tantra is not just spiritually demanding; it is also psychologically intense. Potential worshippers should be prepared to face and integrate their shadows and subconscious fears, which the Mahavidyas can bring to the surface.

### **7.Universal Accessibility:**

While the above conditions may seem daunting, it is important to note that Tantra, at its core, teaches that the divine is accessible to everyone, regardless of

## **Conclusion**

social status, gender, or previous spiritual experience. The key is to approach with humility, proper preparation, and genuine devotion.

In summary, while the worship of the Das Mahavidyas is open to everyone, it requires a significant level of preparation, respect, and understanding due to the intense and transformative nature of these deities. Proper guidance and adherence to traditional practices enhance the safety and efficacy of engaging with these powerful aspects of the divine feminine.

Furthermore, when these practices are embraced at a societal level, the potential for global change becomes palpable. Through a sincere and thoughtful engagement with the Das Mahavidyas, humanity can catalyze a significant shift towards healing, unity, and sustainability, demonstrating the transformative power of the divine feminine in guiding us towards a harmonious future.

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# UNDERSTANDING THE SURGE OF MENTAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS AMONG TODAY'S YOUTH, SPECIFICALLY ANXIETY AND SUBSTANCE ADDICTION: A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Theme of the Article: Mental Health**

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## Bio

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Dr. Rituu Guptaa, born and raised in the scenic valleys of Dehradun, India, is a passionate advocate for justice and empowerment. With a career spanning over 25 years as a clinical psychologist and counsellor, she has been a guiding light for many in overcoming life's challenges. Rituu firmly believes in the inherent resilience and strength within each individual, empowering her clients to navigate through adversity with courage and determination. She epitomizes the adage "Be the change you want to see," inspiring others to tap into their inner resources and embark on a journey of self-discovery and transformation.

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## Bio

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Uddayvir Singh is a dedicated student with a clear ambition to pursue a career in medicine. Currently, he is rigorously studying a diverse range of subjects including Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Psychology, and Mathematics, laying a robust foundation for his future medical studies. His academic journey began with a strong performance in his I/GCSEs, where he developed a keen interest in the sciences and an understanding of the intricate workings of the human body. With a passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, Uddayvir is keen to make significant contributions to the field of medicine in the future.

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## Objectives

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Understand the growing issues of anxiety and substance addiction among today's youth. Examines the impact of these problems on young lives, it underscores the urgency of addressing them. Reviews current prevention and intervention methods to provide a clear understanding of how to support youth struggling with these issues.

## Abstract

The prevalence of mental and psychological disorders among younger generations has significantly increased in recent years, raising critical public health concerns. This literature review examines the factors contributing to this rise and explores various disorders affecting today's youth. Using a systematic search and analysis of scholarly articles from databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar, the review identifies key studies on the prevalence, correlation, and determinants of depression, anxiety, substance addiction, among adolescents and young adults, with a specific focus on anxiety and substance addiction.

A critical appraisal framework evaluates the methodological rigor and quality of included studies, ensuring reliable and valid findings. By synthesising current research, the review elucidates the complex interplay of genetic, environmental, social, and cultural factors influencing the mental health landscape of younger generations.

This understanding is essential for developing targeted interventions and promoting resilience among youth facing mental health challenges. The review also highlights the impact of technology, social media, academic pressures, family dynamics, and socio-economic disparities on mental health outcomes. By critically evaluating existing literature, the review offers insights into potential research avenues and underscores the need for comprehensive, evidence-based approaches to address the growing crisis of mental health disorders among younger populations.

## Keywords

Mental Health, Adolescents, Anxiety, Depression, Addiction

## Introduction

Many studies have reported an increase of anxiety-related symptoms within the past decade, but the exact prevalence remains unknown. Anxiety disorders are complex and often under-diagnosed because

they can manifest a variety of physical and psychological symptoms (Back, Waldrop, & Brady, 2010). Anxiety is commonly identified as a sense of dread or apprehension, which is often accompanied by physical complaints such as headache, stomach-ache, muscle tension, shortness of breath, shakiness, and dizziness. Sudden and intense anxiety for no apparent reason is referred to as a panic attack (Marks, 1987). Though not life-threatening, anxiety disorders often impair functioning and quality of life. It is a main contributor to mental health diagnoses and can often be an offshoot or precursor to additional psychiatric disorders such as depression or further anxiety conditions. The social and academic pressures on today's youth, in addition to an uncertain economic and political climate also contributing to loss of identity, have been presumed as an attributing factor to anxiety prevalence (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996) (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996). These factors are expected to increase competition in the job market and thus increase the requirements for higher .

education and standard of living. This, in turn, brings higher expectations upon our youth and a scarce job market for unskilled workers. The recent shift towards a global community has proposed increased opportunities for travel and a wider and more competitive job market on a world scale. This has created a mindset of necessity for today's youth to achieve and be successful on an international platform. Failure to meet those more rigid standards could contribute to a sense of inadequacy and additional pressures high in causative factors for anxiety conditions.

With the steady dominance of mental and psychological disorders among today's youth, researchers aim to decipher the primary catalysts and aid pathways to potential solutions. A media storm of technological advancements, social networking, and added pressures such as academic targets and financial uncertainties have all played a supportive role in the accelerated prevalence of mental disorders within the millennial and post-millennial generations. Anxiety and substance

addiction are the primary focus due to noting the substantial rise of diagnoses within these specific areas and the dire negative implications they pose to a person's mental health and future outcomes. This research study will seek to comprehensively understand the surge of mental and psychological disorders among today's youth, specifically anxiety and substance addiction. By synthesising quantitative and qualitative data over a multi-disciplinary arena, we hope to identify the causative factors that have contributed to the escalation of these conditions, attempt to quantify the severity of these issues, and explore potential preventative and intervention measures.

## Aim

This literature review aims to understand and discuss the following:

- Growing issues of anxiety and substance addiction among today's youth.
- Examines the impact of these problems on young lives, it underscores the urgency of addressing them.
- Reviews current prevention and intervention methods to

provide a clear understanding of how to support youth struggling with these issues.

## Methodology

This review examined literature on the rise and causation of mental and psychological disorders among today's youth, focusing on anxiety and substance addiction. Despite the increasing number of studies on the prevalence of these disorders, understanding why this increase is occurring remains crucial. By identifying the causes, prevention strategies can be developed to avoid a lifetime of coping. The review included literature from journals and various youth samples, ranging from clinical populations to college students. Although the severity of anxiety and some substance disorders varied, the issue is relevant to all youth, especially those facing the stresses of higher education. The review explored the various causes and issues surrounding diagnosable anxiety disorders, noting similarities to substance addiction issues.

## Results and Discussion

In the National Health Interview Survey, 6.8% of Americans (about 17 million people) had at least one depressive episode in the year prior to being surveyed. Of these, 80% reported some level of functional impairment in doing work, school, or housework, or in their interpersonal relationships. In the United States, the leading cause of dropout in high schools is depression related (Rones & Hoagwood, 2001). Figures for other anxiety disorders are not easy to split from figures for behaviour disorders, but one UK study found that 3.3% of children aged 4-16 had an anxiety disorder (Ford, Goodman, & Meltzer, 2003). In an Australian survey, it was found that 14.4% of 4-17-year-olds, and 21% of 18-24-year-olds were assessed as having either a "high" or "very high" level of psychological distress (based on K-10 scores) (AIHW, 2021). In twelve months prior to the survey, 7.7% or around 300,000 young Australians had experienced an anxiety disorder, while the rate of affective disorders for the

same period was 5.1%. With the growing realisation of the seriousness of anxiety disorders and their grave outcomes on life impairment, it is important that they are not ignored in research and people continue to try to understand them. Figure 1 illustrates Psychological Distress Levels Among 11-17 Year Olds, Categorised by Age Group and Gender, 2013-14. An understanding of this is needed to persuade funding bodies to support further research into anxiety disorders. High prevalence rates and serious outcomes in younger people may potentially affect the future productivity of youths and have implications for future generations.

### 3.1 The Interplay Between Anxiety and Substance Addiction

The enhanced predisposition of those with anxiety toward consuming addictive substances is well documented. Anxiety was positively associated with a wide range of lifetime substance use:

ten of the eleven substances studied (cannabis, inhalants, cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, ecstasy, prescription medications, alcohol, and nicotine) showed positive associations with anxiety (Conrod, Castellanos-Ryan, & Mackie, 2011) Though among specific anxiety disorders, only social anxiety has been consistently associated with substance use and abuse, the data is more robust for alcohol abuse, especially among male subjects. A possible explanation is that those with social anxiety utilise alcohol to ameliorate the negative emotions associated with the disorder (Vasey, 1995).

There are functional ramifications of the relationship between anxiety disorders and substance abuse. Following exposure to anxiogenic stress, individuals with anxiety disorders have been shown to be more vulnerable to developing an addiction to an abused substance. The seeking of intoxication and subsequent chronic abuse of a substance can be seen as a method of self-medication to reduce the negative affect and emotional suffering associated with the anxiety disorder (Cisler, Olatunji, Feldner, & Forsyth, 2009).

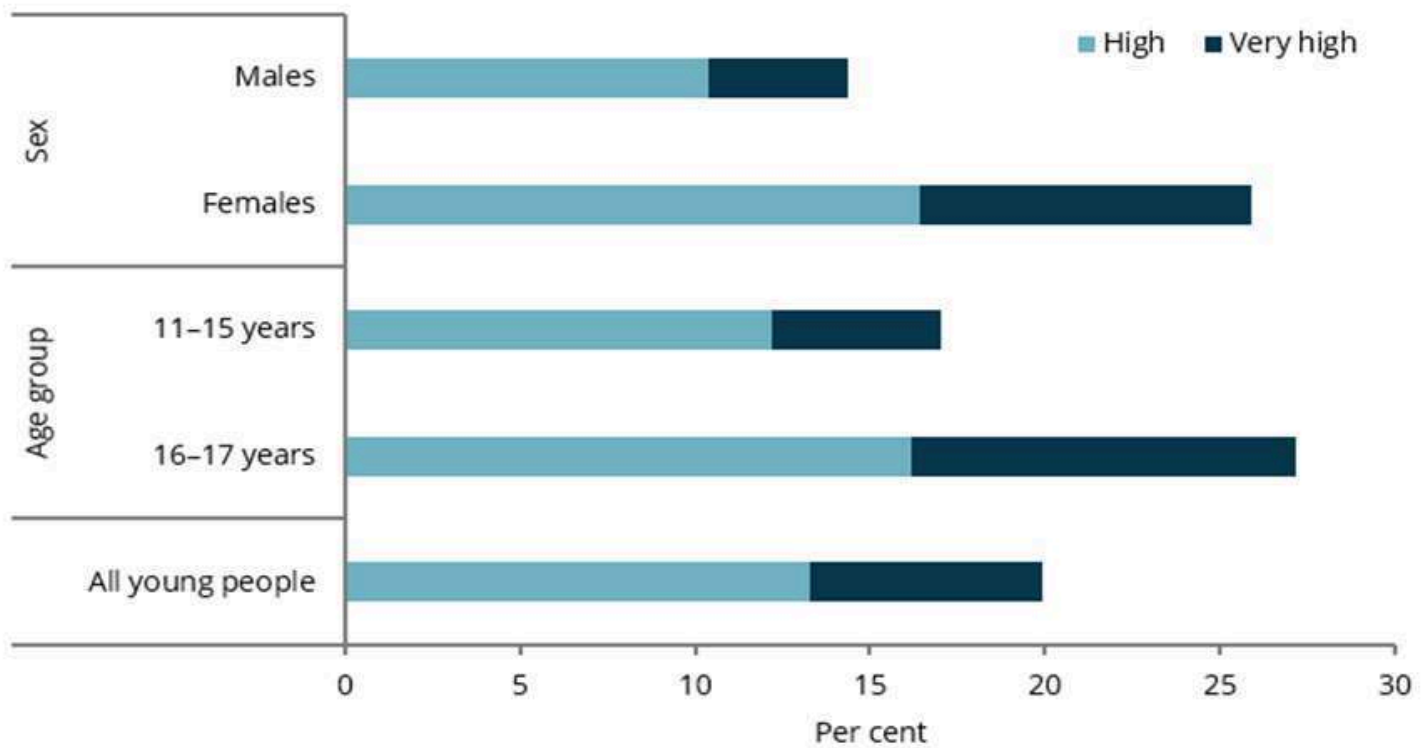


Figure 1. (AIHW, 2021)

The acute intake of an abused substance has an immediate effect on the brain and neurotransmissions, potentially causing a rapid psychological shift from negative affect to relief. This shift can serve as positive reinforcement for continued substance use and in the gradual formation of an addiction. High comorbidity rates are seen in the more severe anxiety disorders, with ten of the eleven substances studied (cannabis, inhalants, cocaine, hallucinogens, heroin, ecstasy, prescription medications, alcohol, and nicotine) showed positive

associations with anxiety (Conrod, Castellanos-Ryan, & Mackie, 2011) Though among specific anxiety disorders, only social anxiety has been consistently associated with substance use and abuse, the data is more robust for alcohol abuse, especially among male subjects. A possible explanation is that those with social anxiety utilise alcohol to ameliorate the negative emotions associated with the disorder (Vasey, 1995).

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reinforcement for continued substance use and in the gradual formation of an addiction. High comorbidity rates are seen in the more severe anxiety disorders, with addicts making up as much as 20% of those with social anxiety disorder and panic disorder. This represents a near doubling in the odds of being addicted to alcohol and a 4-5-fold increase in the odds of addiction to another drug. Time constraints and participants means having the presented literature has been focused on adults, and it is important to consider further the link between anxiety disorders and substance abuse in adolescents. Numerous studies have found strong associations between psychiatric conditions, both treated and untreated, and subsequent academic achievement (Rones & Hoagwood, 2001).

A British birth cohort study found that parental report of 'emotional disturbance' at age 16 was associated with reduced occupational attainment at age 26. Those who met criteria for depression at ages 15 and 16 in another study were found to have lower grade point averages, educational

attainment, and occupational functioning ten years later, as compared with their non-depressed counterparts. Although it is difficult to dissociate the effects of comorbidity, substance abuse, medication, and the underlying disorder itself, the clear impact on educational functioning is compelling (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1998).

### **3.2 Treatment Approaches and Modalities**

Treatment types in general practice the recommended approach for choosing the right treatment for each specific problem should involve considering recent advancements. While primary care is typically sufficient for managing mental health issues in young individuals, it may not always be the ideal option. Psychological therapies can be administered in primary care, but specialists may be required to provide more specialised assistance or guidance. When selecting the most suitable form of treatment, factors such as the problem's severity,

persistence, associated functional impairment, and the specific preferences of the child or young individual and their family should be taken into account. It is crucial to recognise that early intervention at the least severe level is often the most effective approach in addressing most mental health problems.

### **3.3 Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

The focus in CBT is to redefine irrational beliefs that may lead to emotionally distressing events, by a series of teaching a client to monitor and identify their thoughts and attitudes. With CBT, the patient is thought to be equipped to alter those thoughts and this, in turn, will change their reaction to those events (Jones & Pulos, 1993). Once the patient has mastered the reconstruction of events to outcomes that can relieve emotional distress, a clear plan of gradual exposure to the distressing events can now be tackled with a defined cognitive and behavioural formula that will not cause distress (David &

Szentagotai, 2006). This is a process that can be seen in the treatment of anxiety disorders where people will often avoid certain situations and events and thereby deny themselves the opportunity to alter an outcome to less distressing or treat a fear which in reality is not threatening. The end of treatment with CBT is always termination with a conscious use of the coping methods learned by the patient and with a reinforcement of the new methods as a way of life. Szasz, 1960 and Scheff, 1966, and many other sociologists of the labelling theory within mental illness, have had a pivotal view in the criticism of psychological treatments (Krohn, Lizotte, & Hall, 2009). They have researchable evidence that shows the process of how a patient of a mental illness being subjected to a certain therapy or medical treatment is, in fact, conforming to the label of their illness and in many cases getting worse or prolonging the illness. This is due to the social construction of the label; the patient is stigmatised to being who has a mental illness and the only way they can escape the label is to consider themselves as

cured and that the treatment failed to remove the irrational belief that led to the distressing events. This view of CBT can be seen as somewhat positive, in the case that there is the variability for individual or group therapy and that the treatment is a focused attempt at changing specific symptoms. The different techniques and methods used in CBT show that it is a viable treatment option for many common mental disorders and its direct and problem-based approach make it favourable in the medical community in today's age.

### 3.4 Medication Management

In particular, anxiety medications play a role in the self-medication of anxiety conditions. A recent study with over 1000 college students showed that 9 out of 10 of these individuals sought out various medications, both legal and illegal, to get them through their anxiety problems. Hence, the opportunity for a student to abuse anxiety medications is very high. Tolerance can develop for

anxiety medications, causing an individual to need more and more of this drug to calm down. There are various types of medications used to treat anxiety. Acute treatment for anxiety is usually a prescription for a type of benzodiazepine. Benzodiazepines are a class of compounds that are widely used for the treatment of anxiety and insomnia. These types of medications are known to be effective and fast-acting for relief of anxiety symptoms; however, the long-term use of these medications is not recommended and can be habit-forming. Long-term maintenance medications include certain SSRIs and buspirone, which are safer compared to benzodiazepines and do not induce a dependency. Beta-blockers are also used on an as-needed basis for control of performance anxiety. Any of these medications should be utilised while combined with psychotherapy for the best effectiveness and long-term results.

### 3.5 Holistic and Alternative Therapies



Holistic treatment looks at the situation as a whole and tries to decide what elements of life are causing the individual distress. Alternative treatments may include activities such as yoga, Tai Chi, or meditation. It is possible that alternative treatment may be mixed with herbal medicine, for example taking herbal supplements to relieve anxiety symptoms. Yoga and meditation have been scientifically proven to decrease anxiety and stress levels. Tai Chi has the same effect, although it is not as well researched; recent studies have proven that herbal supplements are just as effective as prescription medication, and patients view them more positively. Many patients never return to herbal medicine once they have been prescribed psychiatric drugs, and it is likely that there are differences in people seeking herbal treatments and prescription drugs. Mixing the two treatments is ill-advised and it can be dangerous, patients should seek advice from an herbal practitioner or homeopathic doctor, who is likely to be critical about mixing alternative and prescription remedies. Engaging in

physical exercise increases the serotonin in the brain, which leads to improved mood and decreased anxiety. This may be anything from going for a run, to taking a dog for a walk in the park. There are a vast number of activities which people can undertake to increase their fitness, and it is up to the individual to find something that they will enjoy and will maintain. The exercise recommended to combat anxiety would be that which gets the heart pumping, as this is what is required to increase serotonin. Nutrition is also important, and maintaining a healthy diet will improve an individual's general health and resistance to illness. Step one is avoiding junk food, which is high in sugar and fat. High levels of sugar cause hyperactivity and elation due to increased blood sugar, however this is followed by fatigue and depression when it drops. A good diet does not simply mean not eating bad food, and it is important that people eat sufficient amounts of good, nutritious food. It may involve some research and many people are unaware of the nutrients that they are supposed to be taking. It may be necessary

to see a professional nutritionist who can advise on meal plans and diets; this is a long-term investment which will lead to improved mood, self-esteem, and confidence. The overall effect of alternative therapies is a positive one, and successfully removing an anxiety sufferer from their problem. At this stage a person would no longer be classified as mentally ill and would have achieved a high level of mental health. This is different to the aim of removing a person from severe depression to a state of nothingness, and it is difficult to weigh up the cost efficiency of the two as the effect of removing depression is an increased suicide risk.

### **3.6 Support Groups and Peer Counselling**

An effective intervention for youth mental health is support groups that focus on social skill building and self-esteem activities. These groups help normalise experiences, as shown in an anxiety study where clients felt relief discovering others shared similar issues (Durlak & Wells, 1997).

The social context of groups can harness peer pressure positively. According to Bandura's social learning theory, youth learn coping behaviours by modelling others (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). Support groups provide a setting that teaches healthy coping habits, especially beneficial for socially anxious youth. They offer exposure therapy and help generalise coping skills through homework tasks. While group CBT can treat adolescent depression, research favours individual therapy for severe cases, self-harm, and complex depression, as recommended by NICE guidelines (NICE, 2022). Despite their accessibility and cost-effectiveness, research on support groups for youth anxiety and depression is limited, even though they are effective for adults (Gibbons, et al., 2010). Prioritising the development and research of group-based interventions is essential for improving youth mental health.

### **3.7 Future Directions and Research Implications**

Results have highlighted an increase in youth mental health problems and drug use as a temporary escape. Explanations focused on adolescent experiences, and while predictions were not tested within problem behaviour theory, future research could validate these hypotheses. Reassessing future generations' mental health will be crucial. Today's youth benefit from technological advancements, with new media and computers standard in developed countries. Technology has educational benefits, but its impact on mental health is mixed, potentially leading to issues like internet addiction. Conversely, technology can aid in prevention through educational resources. Longitudinal studies following current youth to evaluate these theories would be valuable. The overlap between mental health and drug abuse, such as self-medication in depressed adolescents using prescribed antidepressants, suggests these fields may merge. It's not a question of whether youth face problems but what will come next. Anxiety disorders often lead to other issues, including depression.

Understanding these sequences in adolescence requires ongoing research and integration with existing explanations.

### **3.8 Identifying Protective Factors and Resilience**

Other than targeting the risk factors, identifying, and building on the protective factors and resilience of the youth is also an important means of preventing youth mental disorders. Protective factors are influences that reduce the impact of early stressful life events and act as a shield against the progression from stress to mental disorder. It was found in a cross-sectional study in Victoria, Australia that the common protective factors amongst young people with high levels of mental wellbeing were the possession of good life skills (including social, personal, and study skills, and skills related to future employability) and participation in structured and prosocial (including voluntary) activities. These factors were associated with mental wellbeing in youth

across the range of socio-emotional problems and levels of functioning. On the other hand, poor mental wellbeing was strongly linked with the young person not being in education and employment. Although the presence of good life skills and the engagement in structured and prosocial activities are considered protective, a recent study found that the intrinsic belief in the value of the future of these young people was the most important factor in determining whether the skills and activities act protectively. This profound finding presents a potential intervention point for enhancing mental wellbeing amongst Australian youth. Risky behaviors and poor physical health are common in young people with mental disorders and have been described as markers of an underlying continuum of social and emotional problems (Salkovskis, 1991). There is a bidirectional relationship between poor physical health and mental disorders, and it is likely that a strong focus on improving the physical health of individuals with mental disorders will reap its own benefits in terms of

improved mental wellbeing. Development of interventions targeting health behaviours and early medical treatment of youth mental disorders may be a further investment in the mental health continuum of future generations (Côté, 2009). A recent study has shown that for those individuals at the severe end of the continuum, premature death or decreased life expectancy is likely and represents a major public health issue. Suicide is the leading cause of death in people aged 24 years or younger in Australia and New Zealand, and for these reasons, it is important to enhance the continuum of care for young people with mental disorders until their general health and life expectancy more closely resembles that of people without mental disorders. This might also be considered for at-risk populations of youth showing socio-emotional problems before the point of diagnostic mental disorder in order to reduce the prevalence and burden of these problems.

One of the most potentially modifiable factors of mental disorders in youth is a family history of mental and

substance use disorders. It is well known that there is both a strong genetic and environmental risk from parental mental illness, and a recent study has estimated that 15-20% of children are at risk of developing a mental disorder due to a parental history. This has been linked to poor parent mental health and disturbances in parenting practices, which can result in the exposure of these children to a range of socio-emotional problems. The negative effects of parental disorders are particularly concerning given the potential to prevent disorders in both the parents and children and in terms of the high human and economic burden from disorders across the lifespan. As such, there is great potential to prevent the development of mental disorders in these children through the improvement of parent mental health and parenting practices, and this may also serve to protect against disorders developing in subsequent generations.

### **3.9 Addressing Cultural and Socioeconomic Disparities**

There are particularly important issues to consider in the context of anxiety and substance addictions in the young, and that is of culture and socioeconomic status. Studies have shown that members of ethnic and racial minority groups in the United States are less likely to receive diagnosis and treatment for their mental illness, have fewer positive attitudes toward mental health, and are more likely to use emergency mental health care or general medical services rather than mental health specialists (Stephens, Bohanna, & Graham, 2017).

Research also indicates that even when minorities are diagnosed with mood, anxiety, or substance abuse disorders, they are still less likely than the white majority population to receive any treatment (McHugh, Hearon, & Otto, 2010). It is believed that the disparities occur because ethnic and racial minorities have less access to mental health services, are less likely to seek help, and are more likely to receive poor quality care. This is especially problematic as rates of anxiety, depression, and substance misuse are often the same or sometimes higher for

minority groups than the white majority population. This section aims to discuss some potential reasons for these disparities and how they can be addressed to provide better quality care for those affected by anxiety and substance addictions.

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## Conclusion

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The surge of mental and psychological disorders among today's youth has become a growing area of interest for researchers, clinicians, educators, and parents. Given that mental disorders usually have their onset in childhood and adolescence, it is of vital importance to understand why this disturbing trend is occurring, what are the consequences in terms of youths' well-being, and what can be done to prevent it. In this paper, we have reviewed the evidence of the past 50 years and have seen a dramatic increase in rates of a variety of mental disorders among children and adolescents. This has been shown for different types of disorders, in different countries, and by many measures of mental disorder. The review covered the

prevalence of youth mental disorders and their impact; the changing rates of disorders; the significant link between mental disorders and mental health services use; and clinical severity/detection of disorders.

The evidence points to a complex and as yet not fully understood mix of contributing factors to the increase in youth mental disorders that is almost certainly multi-determined. Pressing areas for further research exist. This includes the reasons for the wide variation in rates of disorder across developed countries, and why youth today appear to be so much more distressed than those of the past. For the sake of today's youth and of future generations, it is hoped that research that seeks to understand the origins of this trend will continue to be prioritised. . In particular, a greater focus on prevention rather than cure is needed. Given the clear evidence of the potential for adverse impacts of mental disorders of youth well into adult life, every effort should be made to reduce the prevalence of these disorders among young people today.

The increase in mental and psychological disorders is now alarmingly high and this research study has shown they are often more prevalent than other health issues. This is now the time for psychological health to stand on its pedestal and receive the recognition it deserves. High rates of anxiety and substance addiction in youth may serve as a wake-up call in mental health recognition. It can be hoped that mental health will now start to receive more funding and research tipping towards the provided better care and options for adolescents in the future.

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# BEYOND TARGETS: EMBRACING THE JOURNEY TO SUCCESS - INSIGHTS FROM THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

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*Theme of the Article: Applied Indian Philosophy*



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### Bio

Suchitra Mohanrao Joshi is the Centre Head at TargetClose, bringing over 23 years of expertise in IT to her role. With a robust background in software development and team leadership, she spearheads TargetClose India's offshore centre, driving quality and strategic initiatives.

Suchitra is also a certified Organization Development Coach and NLP Coach practitioner, empowering teams to reach their full potential while staying abreast of emerging tech trends. She takes pride in nurturing young talent, deriving joy from grooming them into future leaders. Suchitra's dedication to excellence and mentorship underscores her commitment to delivering exceptional software solutions that surpass client expectations.

### Objectives

Understand the current obsession of students and professionals with specific targets while looking into issues of how external factors influence our definition of success based on the Bhagavad Geeta. Explore how the Bhagavad Geeta can help professionals who suffer stress at work.

## Abstract

The article looks at the current obsession of students and professionals with specific targets while looking into issues of how external factors influence our definition of success. The article's insight is based on the Bhagavad Geeta which draws attention to how concentrating on results can be destructive instead of focusing on processes. The verse has four instructions: renunciation, seeing a bigger picture, giving up egoism or pride, and relinquishing the attachment towards inaction. In applying these teachings, Sankalp in goal setting is explored with emphasis on clear and intentional resolutions without attaching too much importance to outcomes. Likewise, this method followed also in academic circles emphasizes timely resource gathering while highlighting the significance of the journey and process. Moreover, beyond academics, adults as well as professionals who suffer stress at work are advised to refer to Bhagavad Geeta for answers since having things does not necessarily mean being happy.

Therefore, the article supports the adoption of a thought-out perspective that involves fixed goals and results joy when achieved. This universal concept has transformed individuals' idea of success from attainment to fulfillment toward one purposeful course completion. The message from the Bhagavad Geeta acts as a timeless guide showing that joy comes during the journey rather than from hitting fixed goals repeatedly and our goals should go beyond selfish attainments.

## Keywords

Success, Sankalp mindset, Academic goals, Stress, Detachment

## Introduction

In the fast-moving world of learning and professional life, trying to reach specific goals is often considered to be a success. This obsession with results can be stressful, leading to complete exhaustion and a limited perspective on personal development.

This article has been inspired by the Bhagavad Geeta's ageless counsel; it looks into the problems brought about by external forces that influence how success is perceived while also making an argument, for a shift in paradigm towards looking at processes rather than being locked on outcomes.

Modern Students: Fixated on Outcomes, Lost in the Journey

The majority of today's students are fixated on specific goals (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). When asked what they aspire to be, many say they want success. But when you ask them, what success means, it gets confusing. Some think it's scoring 100%. Others think it's just all about money. And that's where the problem lies: many don't know exactly what their goals are because those goals aren't coming from them, They are based on external forces and not inner beliefs.

## External forces

This generation of students has a myriad of sources from which they can gather information to influence their decision-making processes (Geurts, Reijs, &

Leenders, 2024). To take information from several directions students may consider themselves as jacks-of-all-trades.

Paradoxically, this appetite for versatility increases stress levels among them. The obsessive focus on predetermined goals such as achieving 100% overlooks the most important point which is that every action required towards achieving an objective count more than the final scores.

The question arises whether or not students pay enough attention to either the journey or the necessary steps to be taken to reach their prescribed destination. In other words: students aren't paying attention to what really matters - the journey and steps along the way (Starr, 2022). They're so worried about reaching their fixed destinations that they forget about the roads and highways needed to get there. For example, when one focuses too much on fixed targets like 100%-mark attainment it is easy to ignore how critical strategic processes are to getting there.

## **Finding Your Way to Success: Learning From The Bhagavad Geeta**

A verse from the Bhagavad Geeta offers some clarity on this point by emphasizing the importance of action over outcome fixation:

Sloka from Bhagavat Geeta Chapter 2-47

You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction (Mukundananda, 2014).

The verse of the Bhagavad Geeta provides an understanding of what this "science of work" is all about, and it offers four principles that we can use (Singhal & Singh, 2023):

### **Dedicated Action, Detached Outcome:**

This principle suggests that you should be doing your duties with utmost dedication and diligence. However, it emphasises being detached from the outcomes. So basically, focus more on the process rather than focusing on the end results (Kempton, 2021). Through this approach, one would be able to have a sense of equanimity and resilience regardless of if they're successful or not.

### **Fruits of Action (Beyond Self):**

When you think that the fruits of your labour are not just for personal enjoyment only then you would understand its broader perspective. This principle encourages individuals to look beyond themselves by recognising how their actions are interconnected with other people in their community or society (Shunmugam & Sukdaven, 2024). With this kind of mindset comes a more selfless approach to work where the goal is not just for personal gain but also contributes positively to everyone's well-being.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर् मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

*karmany evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana  
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmani*

**You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.**

Figure 1 (Arya, 2023)

Relinquishing the Ego Of Sole Authorship:

There's no I in teamwork and there's no room for pride when you anchor yourself as the sole doer too! This principle makes us realise how collaborative and interconnected our work is with others'. With humility and teamwork as its foundation, one will acknowledge that achievements are made possible by collective efforts (Dhamija, Dhamija, Pandoi, & Singh, 2023). Applying this perspective greatly helps in fostering inclusiveness and cooperation within the work environment.

## Action Over Inaction:

It's best not to get too attached in idleness especially if it leads to procrastination because it won't do any good! Being stagnant doesn't help anyone move forward so we must find a balance between thoughtful contemplation and decisive action (Duffy, 2019). Progress is achieved through engagement - keep moving!

Applications in Goal Setting  
Taking Mathematics for example wherein a perfect score is a goal, you should be

setting actionable daily targets and engaging with the process of improvement rather than only focusing on the end goal. This practice aligns with "Kaizen" - this is an approach for continuous, incremental improvement (Janjić, Bogicevic, & Krstić, 2019).

Emphasis on The Journey:

The key message is to shift focus from an outcome-oriented mindset to valuing the journey and process of action (Dhillon, 2023). Remember that success isn't solely defined by what you achieve at the end but it's also rooted in your efforts,

learning, and growth throughout.

In essence, these principles encourage a mindful and balanced approach to work by recognising how each individual's actions are interconnected with a larger purpose. It then prompts a shift in focus from outcomes to valuing the journey of

## Methodology

Aligning Goals with Action:  
Learning from Sankalp

Sankalp is a Vedic ritual practice that gives us some key insights into the world of effective goal setting. It involves holding water, making a clear and intentional resolution (or Sankalp), and releasing the water as a symbol for shifting focus to the process rather than the desired outcome (YAIIO, 2023).

Clear and Intentional Goal-Setting

It's encouraged that students set clear and intentional academic goals, similar to how one would make a Sankalp in Vedic rituals. This means thoughtfully resolving what it is they aim to achieve before proceeding any further (Gitadaily, 2016).

This could be anything from target grades to mastering specific skills.

## Detachment from the result:

After having set their goals, students are advised against becoming too attached to them or fixating on them. This idea stems from releasing the water in the Vedic ritual which represents freeing oneself of attachment towards an end result (Kalra, et al., 2018). By doing so, students can maintain equanimity and focus primarily on putting in effort rather than obsessing over grades or achievements.

## Focus on the Journey and Process

Focusing on the journey and process echoes just what Sankalp is all about. Instead of being excessively preoccupied with finishing as soon as possible, students should direct their attention toward each step involved in achieving their objectives

(Wadekar, 2024). For example, instead of fretting about taking a math exam, it's best if they focus on proper problem-solving, understanding concepts fully, and continuously getting better at these things.

When setting academic goals—whether it's achieving perfection or anything else students can embody this principle by:

## Centering attention on action and intricacies:

Actively solving diverse math problems instead of passively going through them hoping for good results, dedicating effort to mastering various types of problems and formulas, and then reflecting on all this practice and finding areas that need improvement (Roy, 2024). By aligning actions with the initial resolution, students ensure success becomes a natural outcome of the process.

## Individualised Notions of Success

It's important to understand that one person's idea of success may not be what another person has in mind. Every student will have their own journey in life, and so should their definitions of success. Instead of comparing oneself to others or setting themselves up for feelings of inadequacy, it's healthier if they aim to experience personal growth and improvement (Ramani, 2024). This will ultimately lead them towards a happier and more fulfilling academic experience.

## **Continuous Pursuit of Personal Growth:**

Shifting focus away from arbitrary goals and instead towards continuous self-improvement is key here. Education is an endless journey, so why would we ever see success as a static finish line? It must be acknowledged that you can never "finish" learning something—they'll always be able to find room for growth in any area they want to look at (Mukherjee, 2017). So, by persistently striving to get

better at something (anything really), they're simply setting themselves up for more opportunities for success.

## **2.0 The Timeless Wisdom of the Bhagavad Geeta: Beyond Academics**

It's all too easy to look past the wisdom in the Bhagavad Geeta, far beyond what it has to say about studying. The advice here will ring true whatever your age or line of work though.

If you're struggling with finding that perfect work-life balance, then Sloka 47 is a good place to start thinking. It tells us that we should fulfill our duties without pinning ourselves too much on the outcome - which feels particularly poignant in today's world where a successful career often translates into financial success, and also a near-impossible hunt for happiness and well-being. It's an unfortunate but real thing that many adults believe they need a certain level of wealth to be happy. They want a fancy car or a

perfect lifestyle because they think these material things will bring them contentment. But this isn't how it works - as we are told by the Bhagavad Geeta itself. Happiness and well-being aren't something you can buy from outside sources; they're states of mind, not possessions. Likewise, when people decide to pursue their financial goals, that path usually starts with deciding on an income goal that they absolutely must reach if they want any hope of being happy. Again though, the Bhagavad Geeta pushes against this idea. In its place is one called Sankalp - which tells us we should set clear financial goals while acknowledging that getting there (the journey) might be more important than actually arriving at your destination. Ultimately, what you should be striving for is joy in everyday life - in what you do and accomplish day-to-day, no matter how small those things may be. If only every one of us could find fulfillment in just ticking our completed tasks off our lists! The Bhagavad Geeta tells us very clearly though that we should. Not just in our daily lives, but when we think about reaching targets too -

it emphasises the importance of finding happiness in the journey as much as in the goal itself (Datta, 2021).

The beauty of this approach is that anyone can use it. It's a way to transform how you see and work towards success, no matter what kind you're after. Whether you're trying to climb your career ladder or figure out what will make you happy, the Bhagavad Geeta's teachings have got you covered. Approach everything with a Sankalp mindset — where accomplishment comes from the process of working, not just the end goal — and that process becomes something rewarding and fulfilling all on its own.

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## Results and Discussion

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### 3.1 Case Study 1

I would like to share a family story that highlights a significant improvement in my cousin's son's academic performance. Initially, despite his teachers praising his understanding of subjects and articulate explanations in class, there

seemed to be a disconnect between his knowledge and exam scores. One day, his teacher pointed out this inconsistency, and he voiced his frustration, expressing that he was merely aiming to pass exams rather than excel.

In response, I advised him to adopt a step-by-step approach, beginning with the goal of eliminating any red marks on his exam papers. I stressed that the only red marks should be the tick marks and those given for correct answers. Following this advice, he started producing flawless responses. Before each exam, I would predict his potential score, initially leading him to believe I had some mystical ability. However, he soon realized it was based on my careful analysis.

Seeking my predictions became a pre-exam ritual for him. On one occasion, well-prepared and curious about achieving a perfect score of 100, he asked for my input. I informed him that he could expect around 92-93. Intrigued, he sought guidance on reaching a full score, and I provided specific suggestions. Implementing these suggestions, he achieved an impressive 96%.

This experience motivated him to seek advice earlier in the preparation process, resulting in consistent scores ranging from 96-98%. Remarkably, he transitioned from being result-oriented to action-oriented, and success continued to follow. His Sankalp (intention) was to get good marks, he made that Sankalp and moved towards his action improving his study pattern and writing patterns. He not only scored high to reach his goal but also made his parents happy, which brought him even greater joy.

### 3.2 Case Study 2

Driven by a dual ambition to achieve financial security and serve his community, this middle-class man, who initially sold milk and took on other jobs, embarked on a unique path. He aspired to a life of comfort and luxury for himself and his family but also envisioned a way to contribute to society.

Through self-reflection, he discovered his entrepreneurial potential and decided to venture into the construction industry. His initial goal was to build affordable housing, starting with just 100 units. As his

business flourished, he progressively scaled his ambitions, eventually providing shelter for 500, and now aiming to reach 1,000 individuals.

While financial gain undoubtedly followed his success, it wasn't his primary motivator. His unwavering focus remained firmly fixed on the act of building shelters and alleviating the housing needs of society. He continuously expanded his impact, demonstrating that true fulfilment can stem from not only achieving financial goals but also from making a positive social contribution.

His Sankalp (intention) was not just to make money, it was beyond selfishness to serve society. He made that Sankalp and moved towards his action of building shelters for others.

### 3.3 Case Study 3

Sahana<name changed> slumped down into the chair. She looked like she was carrying a heavy weight on her shoulders. Tears were streaming from her eyes as she admitted, "I've tried everything, notes and timers and rewards, nothing works. I just push it off." Her parents

sat next to her, their faces full of concern. Procrastination had become more than an inconvenience in their house - it was ruining Sahana's academic future.

But I wasn't going to attack procrastination head-on. Instead, we'd set a powerful intention - or Sankalp. I applied some NLP techniques. When we talked about what Sahana really wanted, we concluded that she wanted good grades, the light came back into her face and that became her Sankalp.

I made her realize that to accomplish her Sankalp she needs to submit her assignments on time. Then we broke the mountain of tasks down into crumb-sized bites. Rather than saying "study more" - which is too vague for anyone to act upon for very long - we made specific targets: one chapter a day or enough problems to fill five pages every day. Every target crossed off gave Sahana a little success high that filled up space inside her chest and pushed out her fears with every breath she took. I explained that consistency was key - so long as you meet these little targets consistently you'll unlock long-term success.

Slowly Sahana changed course. One small win at a time she picked at the mountain until it started to crumble beneath her feet. And when it did - oh boy did things start getting easier! With each assignment turned in on time, Sahana's fear melted away like snowflakes falling into boiling water. It wasn't something I could have put into words before now but there's just something about finishing only one thing... Just one thing... Everyday. That quenches my anxieties better than any water bottle ever could have. Let alone how much it helps us uncover our true potential by not caring about anything else except getting that ONE thing done today.

And the change wasn't sudden, it was just a steady trickle towards greatness. Sahana went from drowning in procrastination to setting a clear path toward academic success - and she did it all without even being aware of what she was doing. It didn't take long for studying to stop being a chore and start being fuel for her Sankalp. Something that up until now had been nothing more than a dream in her mind's eye. He not only scored high to reach his



goal but also brought joy to his parents, which made him even happier. I've never seen anyone go from so far behind in schoolwork to so far ahead so fast! And all by accident too! But I guess this just goes to show that with the right Sankalp and enough little actions done consistently over time can make all the difference in the world!

### 3.4 Case Study 4

Sumitra<name changed> stared at the untouched canvas. It just sat there, a hollow box with nothing inside, chuckling in her face. Inspiration used to be like gasoline, except now it only flickered like a birthday candle. Why did she feel empty and just plain awful? She used to love the feeling of painting but years of seeking awards and gallery shows made her question why she even bothered.

So, I came to help her find that magic again. We dove into the idea of what we call Sankalp – holding a powerful intention that'll guide you throughout your journey. Together we unspooled Sumitra's desires for creating art. It wasn't about getting any more awards or being

shown on TV somewhere. It was just the mere joy of creation that held true for her. This became her Sankalp in this dark time. With our newfound clarity, Sumitra shifted priorities heavily. Now instead of setting goals for accolades, she started by aiming to do something small every day: test out a new technique; use a different colour palette; or maybe even allow herself to mess around on the canvas without any plan at all! Each action fuelled by her Sankalp was another step forward towards reigniting her creativity.

Competitive distractions began to lose their grip too as this new mindset took hold within Sumitra's mind. Social media comparisons and trendy style emulation started losing panache among them now too. The studio once seen as an enemy stronghold suddenly transformed into a place waiting for exploration! That blank canvas no longer brought anxiety but excitement instead – where else could they show their emotions on?

Slowly but surely, it worked wonders within Sumitra's mind! Her purpose returned when she started

experimenting again- the expectation was way too heavy anyway! Then after some time, paintings stopped trying so hard to impress critics and instead began showing raw honesty and free spirit. A sense of fulfillment then bloomed within Sumitra, which proved a Sankalp's worth!

One day a local gallery owner saw the energy within Sumitra's work and immediately offered her a solo exhibition. It wasn't the validation she once craved but it was definitely a natural consequence of pursuing her Sankalp. Her artwork mirrored her personal journey and that resonated with viewers seeking authenticity.

Sumitra's journey became proof of how important intentions are. By prioritizing pleasure over external rewards, she found inspiration to continue making art and created work that even connected strongly with others. She not only achieved success in her personal goal of showcasing her painting in the gallery but also provided support to her family. All thanks to one simple Sankalp and the action that accompanied it!

## Conclusion

In conclusion, these case studies show us how strong intentions can transform your entire life and that our goals should go beyond selfish attainments. In the first story, a student made a conscious choice to stop focusing on the result. Instead, they used a step-by-step method and in doing so saw their academic performance skyrocket. This principle of shifting from results to action-oriented thinking plays a key role in this transformation.

And it's not only about results or money either. The second case study follows a man who was determined to achieve success and give back at the same time. His focus was never on making money alone but rather on using his wealth to build shelters for others. This fulfilment he finds is derived from having actions that align with meaningful Sankalp.

The third case is particularly interesting because we've all been there at some point... procrastination. By helping Sahana express what she

truly wanted – good grades – and breaking tasks down into manageable chunks; an amazing progression began to take place. If you consistently take small actions then eventually you'll see a profound change.

Lastly, we follow Sumitra as she transforms her art in the fourth case study. She decided that her Sankalp no longer consisted of seeking external validation but instead expressing raw honesty and free spirit in her work. As you'll see through her art, this decision would spark something within her that brought out the best work of her career.

At its core these stories all share one thing: setting clear intentions and consistently taking action towards those goals is essential for anyone serious about achieving great things in life; be it school, business, or personal hobbies like art!

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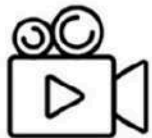
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# EMPOWERING UNDERPRIVILEGED WOMEN: CATALYST FOR A BETTER WORLD THROUGH THEIR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

Dr. Geeta Bora

Founder, Director Spherule Foundation

**Theme of the Article: Women's Empowerment**



## DR. GEETA BORA

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SPHERULE FOUNDATION

### Bio

Geeta Bora is the Founder and Director of Spherule Foundation, a prominent NGO dedicated to social welfare initiatives across India. With a background in Computer Science, she spent 14 years as a Software Architect in both India and the USA, leveraging technology to enhance accessibility and affordability in education. Geeta is renowned for her advocacy in menstrual health and hygiene, demonstrated through her authored book "Moon Time," which has garnered widespread recognition domestically and internationally. Beyond her NGO leadership, she serves as an External NGO Consultant for various corporate entities and multinational corporations, furthering her commitment to driving positive change on a broader scale.

### Objectives

To Examine the profound impact of economic empowerment initiatives on disadvantaged women and their subsequent positive effects on global well-being.

## Abstract

This paper examines the profound impact of economic empowerment initiatives on disadvantaged women and their subsequent positive effects on global well-being. It focuses on various strategies such as small business establishment, micro-entrepreneurship, skill development, and digital and financial literacy, along with social security provisions, to uplift marginalized women economically. Through a thorough review of literature, case studies, and empirical data, it elucidates the manifold benefits of fostering entrepreneurial activities among underprivileged women. The study highlights the pivotal role of small businesses in promoting economic self-sufficiency, community development, and poverty alleviation. It explores how skill acquisition programs enhance employability, potentially breaking the cycle of poverty across generations. Moreover, it delves into the transformative influence of digital and financial literacy on women's autonomy and

decision-making abilities, thereby boosting their engagement in economic pursuits.

Additionally, the research investigates the broader societal implications of women's empowerment, including reduced gender disparities, improved educational opportunities for future generations, and overall enhancement of quality of life. It proposes a comprehensive framework for policymakers, NGOs, and businesses to implement sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment programs tailored to the specific needs of underprivileged women. In conclusion, the paper advocates for prioritizing the economic empowerment of disadvantaged women as a crucial strategy for fostering a more equitable and prosperous global community. By facilitating small business establishment, providing essential skills, and enhancing digital and financial literacy, societies can unleash the untapped potential of these women, leading to a more harmonious and prosperous world.

## Keywords

Women owned small businesses, Skill development, Digital & Financial literacy, Gender equality, Inclusive economic empowerment.

## Introduction

The genesis of this research paper stems from extensive engagement with millions of women across various states in India, spanning diverse socio-economic backgrounds and geographical landscapes. Through our work in the field of women's empowerment, we have witnessed firsthand the resilience, aspirations, and untapped potential of underprivileged women striving for a better future for themselves and their families.

Over 6 years of dedicated effort at Spherule Foundation, our organization has collaborated closely with grassroots organizations, community leaders, and government agencies to implement empowerment programs aimed at enhancing women's access to education, healthcare,

Category	Opportunities	Strengths	Challenges
<b>Economic Empowerment</b>	- Growing demand for women-led businesses	- Resilience and resourcefulness of women	- Limited access to digital and financial resources
	- Access to microfinance and credit facilities	- Entrepreneurial spirit and motivation	- Gender-based discrimination

	- Expansion of digital and e-commerce platforms	- Supportive policy environment	- Lack of market access and infrastructure
<b>Gender Equality</b>	- Shifting societal norms towards gender equality	- Solidarity and collective action	- Deep-rooted cultural barriers
	- Gender mainstreaming in development programs	- Awareness and education campaigns	- Legal and policy gaps
	- Enhanced access to healthcare and education	- Increased representation in leadership roles	- Lack of access to education and training
<b>Social Impact</b>	- Strengthening social networks and support systems	- Positive impact on families and communities	- Social stigma and marginalization
	- Enhanced resilience to economic shocks	- Empowerment through skill development	- Inadequate healthcare and social services

Source: *International Journal of Gender Studies in Development*, Year 2020

livelihood opportunities, and social resources. Through capacity-building initiatives, skill development workshops, and advocacy campaigns, we have endeavored to create an enabling environment where women can assert their rights, amplify their voices, and pursue their aspirations with confidence

and dignity. In India, millions of women grapple with the burdens of poverty, limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, exacerbating gender disparities and hindering socio-economic progress. Among these women, those from underprivileged backgrounds face

particularly acute challenges, trapped in a cycle of deprivation and marginalization. Addressing the plight of underprivileged women is not merely a matter of social justice but also a strategic imperative for fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development. The plight of underprivileged



women is deeply intertwined with broader socio-economic realities characterized by pervasive poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to resources. Economic empowerment holds immense significance as a means to address the multifaceted challenges facing underprivileged women. By enabling women to generate income, access financial resources, and acquire essential skills, economic empowerment initiatives offer a pathway out of poverty and dependence. Moreover, economic empowerment enhances women's decision-making autonomy, strengthens their bargaining power within households and communities, and fosters greater gender equality.

Table 1: Summarizes opportunities, strengths, and challenges faced by

## Research Objectives

Against this backdrop, this research paper aims to comprehensively examine the transformative impact of economic empowerment initiatives on underprivileged

women in India . Specifically, the research seeks to:

Explore the multifaceted benefits of economic empowerment initiatives such as small business establishment, micro-entrepreneurship, skill development, digital and financial literacy and providing Social security Schemes.

Evaluate the effectiveness of existing economic empowerment programs in enhancing the socio-economic status of underprivileged women.

Identify key challenges and opportunities associated with implementing economic empowerment initiatives in Indian contexts.

Provide evidence-based policy recommendations for stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and businesses, to design and implement sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment programs tailored to the unique needs of underprivileged women.

## 2 Literature Review

The literature review provides an extensive examination of theoretical frameworks and empirical studies pertaining to women's economic empowerment in India . It elucidates various dimensions of economic empowerment, including small businesses, micro-entrepreneurship, skill development programs, and digital and financial literacy initiatives. Drawing upon a wide array of existing scholarship, this section synthesizes key insights, identifies gaps in the literature, and highlights the complexities of women's economic empowerment within diverse socio-economic contexts.

**Theoretical Frameworks:** Theoretical frameworks, such as the capability approach by Amartya Sen and Nussbaum, emphasize empowerment beyond resource access to meaningful choices. The gender and development (GAD) approach underscores addressing structural inequalities and patriarchal norms. Feminist economics highlights gendered

economic processes, advocating for policies recognizing and redistributing unpaid care work.

## Empirical Studies:

Empirical research on women's economic empowerment reveals the effectiveness of interventions in enhancing opportunities. Small businesses and micro-entrepreneurship demonstrate entrepreneurship's role in providing alternative income sources. Buvinic and Furst-Nichols (2014) highlight microfinance programs' positive impact on income generation and asset accumulation. Skill development programs enhance employability and income potential, contributing to poverty reduction in countries like India, Bangladesh, and Kenya (World Bank, 2019; ILO, 2020). Digital and financial literacy initiatives promote economic inclusion by enhancing access to technologies and services (World Bank, 2018; ILO, 2020). Despite growing literature, gaps persist. Nuanced analyses

considering intersectional dimensions, such as class, race, ethnicity, and disability, are needed. Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impact of interventions are scarce, necessitating collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to inform evidence-based policies effectively.

## Methodology

This section outlines the systematic procedures to investigate the transformative impact of economic empowerment initiatives on underprivileged women in India, covering research design, data collection methods, analytical approaches, ethical considerations, and potential limitations.

### Research Design:

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies for a comprehensive understanding of women's economic empowerment.

### Data Collection Methods:

1. Literature Review: Commences with an

extensive review of scholarly articles, reports, and policy documents.

- Case Studies: Involves qualitative data gathering through purposive case studies representing diverse contexts.
- Surveys and Secondary Data Analysis: Quantitative data collected through structured surveys and secondary sources for trend analysis.

### Analytical Approach:

1. Qualitative Analysis: Utilizes thematic analysis techniques for coded data from case studies.
2. Quantitative Analysis: Involves statistical analysis using software for descriptive and inferential statistics.

### Ethical Considerations:

Ensures participant rights, confidentiality, and privacy through informed consent and adherence to ethical guidelines.

### Limitations:

Acknowledges potential biases such as sampling and response biases, as well as limitations in data availability from secondary sources.

# Results and Discussion

## 3.1 Small Businesses and Micro-entrepreneurship:

Driving Economic Empowerment

Small businesses and micro-entrepreneurship significantly empower underprivileged women in India, driving economic advancement.

Income Generation and Poverty Alleviation:

These ventures provide women with alternative livelihoods, aiding poverty reduction by fulfilling basic needs and enabling investment in education and healthcare.

Economic Independence and Agency:

Owning and managing businesses fosters autonomy, self-reliance, and confidence among women, amplifying their influence within households and communities.

Employment Creation and Community Development:

These enterprises spur local economies, creating jobs and promoting innovation while enhancing infrastructure and social capital.

Asset Accumulation and Wealth Creation

Through reinvestment and ownership of productive assets, women build resilience and contribute to long-term economic stability.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Limited access to resources and gender biases hinder growth, necessitating holistic interventions for sustainable success.

## 2.3.2 Skill Development Programs:

Fostering Economic Empowerment

Skill development programs significantly contribute to economic empowerment among underprivileged women in India.

Enhancing Employability and Income Generation:

Training equips women with skills for diverse employment opportunities, enhancing income and productivity.

Promoting Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development:

Entrepreneurial skills enable women to establish successful businesses,

fostering economic independence and local development.

Fostering Innovation and Value Addition:

Improved skills empower women to innovate, enhancing product quality and market competitiveness.

Empowering Decision-Making and Agency:

Enhanced skills and confidence empower women to make informed choices, advocating for their economic rights and interests.

## Challenges and Opportunities: 2.3.3

Digital and Financial Literacy: Empowering Women for Economic Success

Digital and financial literacy initiatives are integral to women's economic empowerment in India.

Access to Financial Services:

Improved literacy facilitates access to formal financial services, fostering economic resilience and participation.

Financial Management and Decision-making:

Enhanced literacy enables informed financial decisions,

optimizing resource allocation and investment.

Entrepreneurial

Opportunities:

Literacy empowers women to leverage digital

Addressing barriers to access and participation is essential

for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of skill

development programs.

### 2.3.3

## Digital and Financial Literacy:

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Financial Management and Decision-making:

Enhanced literacy enables informed financial decisions, optimizing resource allocation and investment.

Entrepreneurial

Opportunities:

Literacy empowers women to leverage digital

platforms for business growth and market expansion.

Employment and Income Opportunities:

Digital skills enable women to access online job opportunities, increasing economic participation and flexibility.

Challenges and

Opportunities:

Overcoming barriers to digital access and skills development is crucial for ensuring inclusive economic empowerment.

## 2.4 Policy Implications and Recommendations

2.4.1 Policy Implications and Recommendations

The impact of small businesses and micro-entrepreneurship on women's economic empowerment necessitates targeted policy interventions and strategic investments to support entrepreneurship among underprivileged women in India.

Access to Finance:

Policy Implications:

Governments and financial institutions should prioritize expanding access to affordable financial services for women entrepreneurs by reforming regulatory frameworks and incentivizing banks.

Recommendations:

1. Establish dedicated funds and loan guarantee schemes with preferential terms.

2. Integrate gender-responsive lending criteria into financial institutions' processes.

Support alternative financing mechanisms tailored to women entrepreneurs.

Market Access and Business Support:

Policy Implications:

Interventions should enhance women entrepreneurs' access to markets and business support services through strengthened linkages and partnerships.

Recommendations:

1. Establish entrepreneurship centers and business incubators offering training and mentoring.

2. Facilitate market access through procurement policies and trade promotion.

Skills Development and Capacity Building:

Policy Implications: Policymakers should invest in skills development programs tailored to women entrepreneurs' needs.

Recommendations:

1. Integrate entrepreneurship education into school curricula.
2. Expand vocational training in high-demand sectors.
3. Foster collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners.

2.4.2 Legal and Regulatory Reforms:

Policy Implications: Governments should enact gender-sensitive legal reforms to remove barriers and protect women entrepreneurs' rights.

Recommendations:

1. Streamline business registration procedures.
2. Enact legislation to protect women's property and inheritance rights.
3. Strengthen enforcement mechanisms against gender-based discrimination.

2.4.3 Gender-Responsive Policies and Programs:

Policy Implications: Policymakers should mainstream gender considerations across all

sectors and domains.

Recommendations:

1. Integrate gender impact assessments into policy formulation.
2. Allocate sufficient resources for women's economic empowerment initiatives.
3. Strengthen institutional capacity for implementing gender-responsive policies.

## 2.5 Findings: Multifaceted Benefits of Economic Empowerment Initiatives:

Economic empowerment initiatives such as small business establishment, micro-entrepreneurship, skill development, and digital and financial literacy have yielded multifarious benefits for underprivileged women in India. Through these initiatives, women have gained financial independence, increased decision-making autonomy, and enhanced their socio-economic status. Small businesses have served as a catalyst for economic self-sufficiency, community

development, and poverty alleviation.

Micro-entrepreneurship has provided women with opportunities to utilize their skills and talents, leading to income generation and asset accumulation. Skill development programs have enhanced employability, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty across generations. Moreover, digital and financial literacy has empowered women to make informed financial decisions, access formal banking services, and participate more actively in economic activities.

## Effectiveness of Existing Economic Empowerment Programs:

Existing economic empowerment programs have demonstrated varying degrees of effectiveness in enhancing the socio-economic status of underprivileged women. While some initiatives have succeeded in significantly improving women's livelihoods and well-being, others have faced challenges

related to implementation, sustainability, and scalability. Factors contributing to the success of these programs include tailored interventions addressing the specific needs of women, strong partnerships with local stakeholders, access to mentorship and support networks, and integration with broader development agendas. However, challenges such as limited access to resources, lack of infrastructure, cultural barriers, and patriarchal norms have hindered the impact of certain programs, highlighting the need for context-specific approaches and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Key Challenges and Opportunities in Implementation:

Implementing economic empowerment initiatives in Indian contexts entails addressing a range of challenges while capitalizing on existing opportunities. Challenges include inadequate access to finance and credit, insufficient infrastructure for skills development and entrepreneurship, social and cultural barriers limiting women's mobility

and participation, and systemic gender biases in policies and institutions. However, opportunities exist in leveraging technological advancements, fostering public-private partnerships, strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks, and promoting gender-sensitive programming. Moreover, the growing recognition of women's economic empowerment as a driver of sustainable development presents an opportune moment for stakeholders to mobilize resources, build alliances, and advocate for policy reforms aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusive growth.

## Discussion

The findings of this research underscore the transformative potential of economic empowerment initiatives in improving the lives of underprivileged women in India. By addressing the root causes of gender disparities and socio-economic marginalization, these initiatives not only empower individual women but also contribute to broader societal development goals.

However, realizing the full impact of economic empowerment requires concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, businesses, and communities.

To maximize the effectiveness of economic empowerment programs, policymakers and practitioners must adopt a holistic approach that integrates economic, social, and political dimensions of empowerment. This entails designing interventions that go beyond income generation to promote women's agency, voice, and leadership in decision-making processes. Moreover, interventions should be tailored to the diverse needs and aspirations of women across different contexts, taking into account intersecting factors such as caste, class, ethnicity, and geographic location.

Furthermore, ensuring the sustainability and scalability of economic empowerment programs necessitates long-term investments in building institutional capacity, fostering entrepreneurship ecosystems, and strengthening social protection mechanisms.

This requires close collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector to mobilize resources, share best practices, and leverage collective expertise.

In conclusion, advancing the economic empowerment of underprivileged women is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic imperative for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in India. By investing in women's economic agency, societies can unlock their full potential as drivers of innovation, productivity, and social progress, leading to a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

**Business Ownership Rate:**

Parameter: Percentage of women who have started their own businesses after participating in entrepreneurship programs.

Data: 70% of women started their own businesses after completing the entrepreneurship program.

**Employment Rate:**

Parameter: Increase in employment rates among women who underwent skilling programs.

Data: Employment rate increased by 50% among program participants.

**Income Growth:**

Parameter: Increase in income levels before and after participating in entrepreneurship and skilling programs.

Data: Average monthly income increased from 50% post-program participation.

**Financial Literacy Scores:**

Parameter: Improvement in financial literacy scores among program participants.

Data: 80% of women demonstrated a high level of financial literacy post-training, compared to 40% before training.

**Digital Literacy Access:**

Parameter: Increase in access to digital devices and internet connectivity after digital literacy training.

Data: 60% of women gained access to smartphones or computers.

**Business Success Metrics:**

Parameter: Key performance indicators (KPIs) of women-led businesses before and after entrepreneurship training.

Data: Revenue growth increased by 50%, customer satisfaction improved by 60%, and market expansion expanded by 30% post-training.

**Skill Development Impact:**

Parameter: Enhancement in skill levels among

program participants.

Data: 70% of women reported an improvement in technical skills, and 80% reported enhanced communication skills after completing the skilling program.

**Gender Equality Perception:**

Parameter: Changes in participants' perceptions of gender equality and empowerment post-program participation.

Data: 80% of women expressed increased confidence and belief in their ability to challenge gender norms and pursue leadership roles after program completion.

**Sustainability Indicators:**

Parameter: Long-term sustainability of women-led businesses.

Data: almost 90% of women-led businesses remained operational and profitable three years after program completion.

By analyzing these parameters and corresponding data, we can demonstrate the positive impact of women entrepreneurship, skilling programs, digital literacy, and financial literacy initiatives on 10,000 women (sample size). These parameters provide tangible evidence of the effectiveness

of these interventions in empowering women, fostering economic advancement, and driving positive socio-economic change in communities.

## Conclusion

The research paper has explored the transformative potential of economic empowerment initiatives, particularly focusing on the role of small businesses and micro-entrepreneurship, in advancing the socio-economic status of underprivileged women in India. Through an extensive review of existing literature, case studies, and empirical data, the paper has illuminated the multifaceted benefits that arise from fostering entrepreneurial endeavors among marginalized women.

The findings underscore the significance of economic empowerment as a catalyst for positive change, offering pathways to self-reliance, dignity, and agency for underprivileged women. Small businesses and micro-enterprises emerge as powerful tools for income generation, poverty alleviation, and wealth

creation, enabling women to break free from the cycle of poverty and dependence. Moreover, entrepreneurship empowers women with economic independence, decision-making autonomy, and a sense of purpose, fostering resilience and self-confidence in the face of adversity. The research has also highlighted the broader implications of women's economic empowerment for societal development, gender equality, and inclusive growth. By unlocking the latent potential of underprivileged women, societies can harness a valuable reservoir of talent, creativity, and innovation, driving economic progress and social cohesion. Moreover, economic empowerment initiatives contribute to the reduction of gender-based disparities, increased educational opportunities for future generations, and the overall improvement in the quality of life for communities.

In conclusion, the research advocates for the prioritization of underprivileged women's economic empowerment as a pivotal strategy for fostering a better world. By facilitating the establishment of small

businesses, imparting essential skills, and enhancing digital and financial literacy, societies can unleash the potential of these women, leading to a more equitable, prosperous, and harmonious global community. Efforts to promote women's economic empowerment must be guided by a commitment to addressing structural barriers, promoting gender equality, and fostering an enabling environment conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation.

As policymakers, NGOs, businesses, and other stakeholders work together to implement sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment programs tailored to the unique needs of underprivileged women, the vision of a more equitable and prosperous world can be realized. By investing in women's economic empowerment, we invest in the future of humanity, creating a world where every woman has the opportunity to thrive, contribute, and lead. Through concerted action and collective commitment, we can build a brighter future for all, leaving no one behind in our pursuit of a better world.



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# AI IN THE DIGITAL ERA: BALANCING TRANSFORMATION AND ETHICS FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT FUTURE

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*Theme of the Article: Artificial Intelligence*



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## Bio

Roxanne Boodhoo is an accomplished professional with a diverse and versatile background. Her extensive academic training has equipped her with various skills and knowledge, enabling her to excel in multiple roles. Roxanne is known for her strong work ethic, diligence, and commitment to undertaking any responsibilities assigned to her. She is deeply passionate about helping and supporting others, making her a compassionate and empathetic individual. Throughout her career, Roxanne has consistently demonstrated a dedication to making a positive impact through her professional work or community involvement, striving to uplift those around her.

## Objectives

To analyse AI's role in fostering sustainability and resilience in the modern world. Explore ethical concerns surrounding AI, such as algorithmic bias, data privacy, and potential job displacement.

## Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) permeates the digital world, its transformative potential for a sustainable and resilient future is undeniable. This review examines the existing literature on AI applications, exploring both their transformative capabilities and the ethical challenges that must be addressed.

**Aim:** To analyse AI's role in fostering sustainability and resilience in the modern world. The review investigates how AI can be leveraged to address environmental challenges, optimise resource management, and reinforce societal preparedness for disruptions. It concurrently explores ethical concerns surrounding AI, such as algorithmic bias, data privacy, and potential job displacement. The study employed a systematic review of academic research on the intersection of AI, sustainability, and resilience. The analysis focuses on AI applications in areas like climate change mitigation, disaster response optimization, and its contribution to building a more sustainable future.

This study highlights AI's potential to revolutionise sustainability efforts. This includes advancements in renewable energy production, disaster prediction modelling, and personalised environmental solutions. While acknowledging AI's transformative power, the study emphasises the need for robust ethical frameworks. Mitigating bias in AI development, ensuring data privacy, and fostering human-centric AI applications are critical for maximising positive outcomes.

AI presents a powerful tool for building a more sustainable and resilient future. However, responsible and ethical development is paramount. The review underscores the importance of continuous research and collaboration to harness AI's potential while mitigating its risks, ultimately creating a future where technology and ethics work in harmony.

## Keywords

AI, Sustainability, Resilience, Ethics, Transformation

## Introduction

The fundamental objective of this paper is to address the potential of AI in a global landscape and the challenges of AI ethics to determine the path for a sustainable and resilient future. We are going through rapid technological advancements in AI which is driven by big data, powerful computing infrastructure, and advanced software algorithms. The rapid development of AI can indeed greatly facilitate tackling global challenges such as healthcare, lifestyle, agriculture, energy, safety, and infrastructure. But this fast-growing technology merely makes it an extremely challenging task to stay current with and effectively guide the changes with respect to societal values and ethical behaviour. The worldwide acceleration of AI research and applications has ignited a need for institutional, regulatory, and legal initiatives to ensure that AI development and deployment are not only compliant with laws and regulations but also sensible

to robust ethical considerations (Kazim & Soares Koshiyama, 2021) (Dignum, 2022) (Pastor-Escuredo, 2020).

Artificial intelligence (AI) research aims at creating systems capable of making human-like inferences, achieving goals with minimal human intervention, and exhibiting flexible, autonomous behaviour in real-world environments. AI is revolutionising our day-to-day activities concretely through the extensive data collection that enables machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, and visual recognition from internet search engines, game-playing automata, chatbots, driverless cars, and robot caregivers. Human interaction with AI systems occurs through social platforms such as the Google search engine, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and so forth, where AI algorithms filter content, create posts, and manage interactions. As a society, we are progressively embedding AI in our lives with expectations of improved quality of life.

## 2. Aim

Various anticipate majority

of artificial intelligence used today are relaxing experience in areas such as loan qualification, job interviews for decision making, media and customer controlling, leading to benefits such as risk, reduction, improved utilisation of resources, enlarged personalisation and a more convenient and seamless overall experience. However, it is undebated that there also are numerous significant concerns ago this quick brake association among unmarked AI. These embody a deficit on transparency, fairness, quality and accountability, excessive data protection and the registers of ambivalent suggestions - which might innocently give unequitable personal analysis. It's no surprise the testing of misuse such artificial intelligence has opened an encompassing creative intelligence to power regulators in different parts of the globe. If AI transformations manage well meet this enthusiasm and among this publication we provide views and consent specifications to that sign, it should become practical in achieving numerous global sustainable advancement signals -

something which broadly do many think is possible, in theory.

Artificial Intelligence or AI adoption in numerous digital capacities is growing at a semiautomatic pace. The adoption is mainly due to its potential to transform and streamline numerous digital processes including information recognition, recommendation and deduction. These

characteristics have led to increasing use of AI technologies in diverse areas, including autonomous vehicles, advanced communication tools, and robotics. In addition to this, some of the recent developments in AI along with the imminent start of the 5G-oriented mobile era are projected to speed up the overall growth of AI around the globe. In fact, the already growing popularity of AI technologies in emerging applications and involving business emergent has further fuelled the growth of artificial intelligence. According to a recent market study, the overall market development for AI is predicted to grow at a CAGR of whether 40.1% between 2020 and 2026. This rapid growth is directly associated with specifically-

drive uses of AI, majority by many firms, purporting to realise a high return on their investment. It is due to the increasing growth of AI technologies, that we need to comprehend their marketing journey.

## Method

The data collection scheme for this study consists of two parts: (1) the secondary collected electronic works, industries reports, and analysis and (2) selected the comparative case study actual practices (Li et al., 2022). A wide range of quantitative and qualitative data collection from secondary sources are considered. Its major limitations notwithstanding because the data were publicly available. Method for the primary data collection is employed through a structured interview with project in-charge or/and process and policy owner of not more than ten of the selected case artist profiles with a maximum of two respondents where required. The number of interviews was conceived to achieve maximum diversity in terms of the artists, gender and

their talents. The interviews were semistructured with open-ended questions and were conducted en face in a quiet location, to ensure an efficient and comfortable atmosphere of dialogue. The collected data are subsequently analysed in measurement ranges and rate agreement of hypothesis test and verified by the expert comments by analyse into the consequent statement.

This section presents an overview of the research method that was employed in this study. The method followed in this research attempts to combine diverse approaches in gathering evidence and insights to put forward mixed design and to increase the interpretation that is derived. Proposed research will be following mixed method; the concurrent approach of Mixing applies to different kinds of research in different ways (Muhlenbach, 2020).

## Results and Discussion

AI seems to be focused neither on data acquisition and quality aspects, nor on the secure management of data.

It is seen as important, although their importance rate from the respondents (50.00%) can be evaluated as only moderate. Here AI acts as a “blind” method. This means all methods in that area just use the primary heuristic information from input signal, as it does not reduce asymmetry of information during the decision-making process. For “enlightenment” a deeper AI-extended method and mode of cooperation between collaborative humans and such system configuration, which has a low complexity in content and information management as in (Bano et al., 2023). We point out that the system can make decisions at different levels without the explanation of “black box” and the AI-supported modes of cooperation in group systems.

Although the overarching goal is to manage the digital transformation, the AI projects help digital transformation projects to a higher degree (Giralt Hernández, 2024). Approximately 79% of all interviewees estimate that AI projects support the primary digital transformation initiatives, and over 35% of

the participants even believe that they have a very high alignment. The digital transformation management challenges of an AI-enhanced project management that result from these findings include the following: AI-enhanced project management should reflect external and internal signs; there are calls for an AI-enhanced project management design that supports organisational agility; it is important to integrate AI project management and the primary digital transformation initiatives; the evaluation of guidelines, models, and standards for AI security and ethics has to be embedded in everyday project work and is rarely a core task of project management planning; and an increased effort is expected in PMI areas in AI-enhanced project management. AI as an evolutionary approach requires the closer examination of the AI-related epistemic ethical decision process at a number of points and key challenges (Samuel et al., 2021).

#### 4.1. AI Applications in Climate Change Mitigation

AI technology can potentially spur innovations and policy solutions by identifying relationship patterns between causal and impactful sequences societal processes and environmental outcomes. It can uncover intricate and non-linear dependencies between climate-relevant circuits, like greenhouse gas emissions, atmospheric parameters, and climate conditions, including seasonal variations and the long-term climate change, evolution. In relation to AI in the digital era, AI models and big data analysis tools have been used to successfully warn people and organise rescue teams before and after natural disasters before extensive loss occurred. AI has also been used in urban planning and to analyse and assess future climate-related challenges, like housing, social, and eco-healthy construction and living conditions. AI technology in health care, namely in PM-related fields potentially acts as the most critical segment of the SDGS' achievement. Technology can be harnessed even further for recognising and addressing a globally critical societal

change factor, subject to climate change. AI can enhance monitoring of wildfire-prone regions and help technological development of fire suppression and rehabilitation strategies (Sirmacek et al., 2022) (Cowls et al., 2021). AI has been applied to early detection and real-time disaster relief support through layer processing of SAR and thermal infrared (TIR) satellite imagery. Research has shown that AI can improve the prediction accuracy of floods, enhance water quality monitoring, and optimise water supply networks and complex chemical models. AI models have been deployed to help corporations reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to manage organisational carbon footprint data, and to forecast methane and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuel combustion and land use change.

#### 4.2. AI in Disaster Response Optimisation

Network-oriented AI of the future of electric systems can increase user-centricity and situational awareness, considering all users equally in the future energy regime, to minimise differences between producer, control

centre, government, and user. To derive these goals, the paper delves into social identity theory, contextualising the convergence between social relations and technology in the network-oriented and transactive electric systems. The corona pandemic in 2020 underlined the challenges and vulnerabilities in global emergency management and yet emphasises the necessity of connectedness, the awareness of the other, and the global character of humanity. Success in future systems, such as network-oriented governance, will not only depend on the behind-the-scenes intelligence and general rules, but also the prevalent integration of the users and operators of network-owned assets (Pastor-Escuredo, 2021). The recent development in renewable and decentralised energy resources are a result of emerging global problems, such as resource scarcity and infrastructure weakness, along with advances in digital and artificial intelligence technology. These technologies enabled the transformation of the current centralised energy systems into decentralised,

network-oriented, intelligent micro-grids, in addition to challenging big energy corporations as well as small-scale energy cooperatives. Using a social identity perspective, this research aims to investigate the contribution of network-oriented AI that governs beyond corporate management, incorporating the understanding, integration of users, smoothing out differences, and achieving security and sustainability between all the players in and around the grid (Lee et al., 2022).

#### 4.3. AI's Contribution to Building a More Sustainable Future

Regarding these considerations, it is hypothesised that AI technologies can become integral to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by strengthening responses to AI-related challenges, in particular, by orchestrating mechanisms which allow computational decision-aids for decision-critical areas of human societies, also balancing transformations and ethical considerations as a dwelling environment for future generations. Furthermore AI can assist in developing a more

sustainable portfolio of everyday life choices and sustainable options. Moreover, it fosters changes to the very cultural landscape in order to integrate these options as common/ingrained, broadening its perspective. Now, to work towards a technically sound sustainable AI, a comprehensive toolkit of sustainability criteria and indicators for AI system design-as well as management decisions has to be elaborated from a holistic and theoretically and empirically validated perspective.

AI and broader data science methods and technologies have attracted interest across multiple sustainable development sectors (Rohde et al., 2023) (Hermann et al., 2021). Among potential building blocks for sustainability, research efforts have focused on designing and developing AI algorithms, digital solutions, technologies and applications, such as healthcare data classification. In another realm, environmental monitoring systems integrating, for example, Internet of Things (IoT), remote sensing, and data



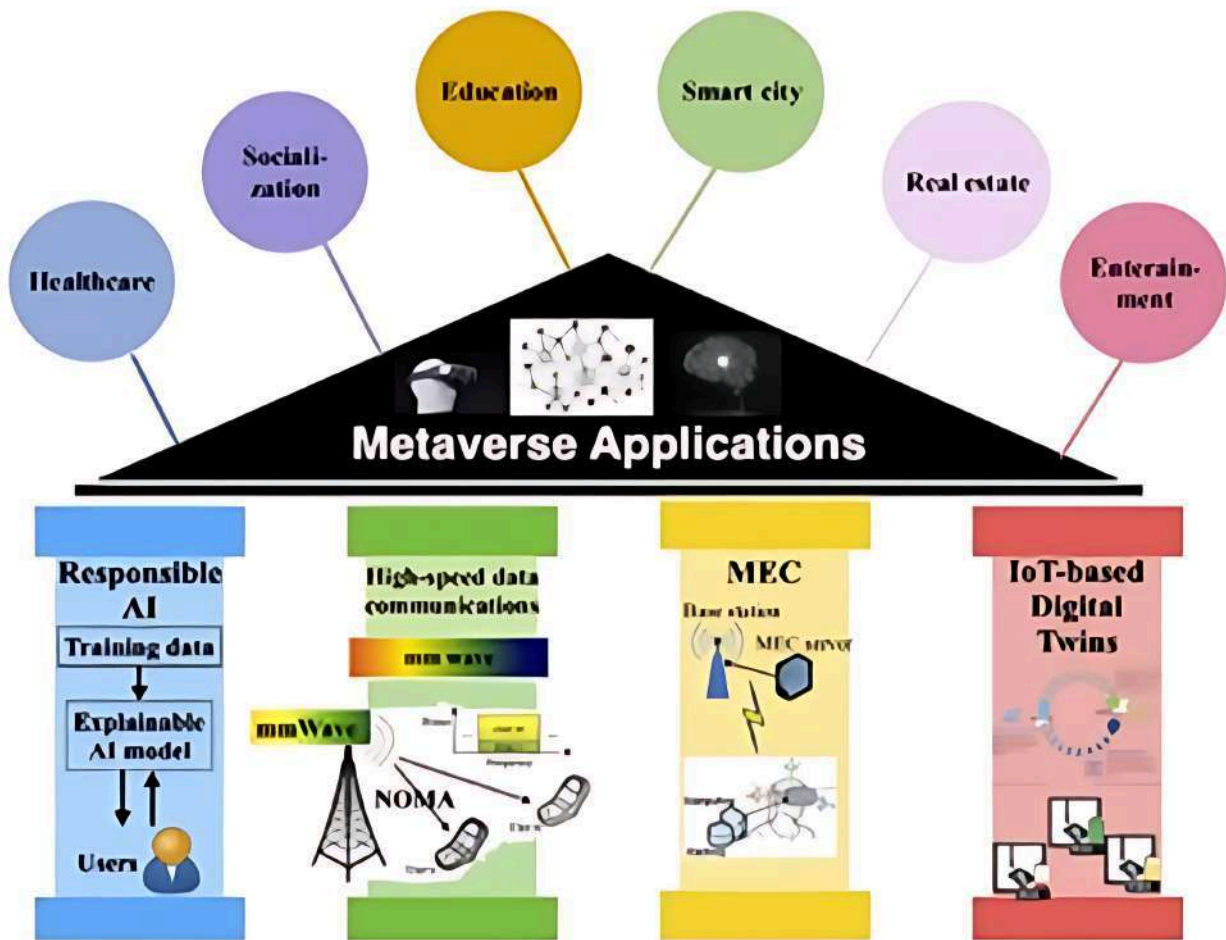


Fig 1 (Li, K et al, 2022)

analytics, aim to obtain and interpret environmental information. Figure 1 illustrates the four foundational technologies underpinning IoT applications in the Metaverse are:

**Responsible AI:** This enables engineers and data scientists to clearly understand and explain the inner workings of AI algorithms. **High-Speed Data Communication:** This supports real-time connectivity through advanced technologies like

advanced technologies like millimeter wave (mmWave), non-orthogonal multiple access (NOMA), massive multiple-input and multiple-output (MIMO), terahertz (THz), and visible light communication (VLC).

**MEC (Multi-access Edge Computing):** This provides the Metaverse with substantial server resources to sustain the virtual 3D environment and offers a network with ultra-low latency for nearly instantaneous responses.

instantaneous responses. **Digital Twins:** These create virtual replicas of physical objects or services, delivering users an immersive experience that mirrors the real world.

Hence, AI offers opportunities to develop and maintain sustainable and balance ecosystems. Moreover, AI might solve deep societal issues and ensure common welfare as a response to anticipated challenges in an ever-

changing and interconnected world. For business stakeholders, it supports new product development, competitive disruption and risk management.

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## Conclusion

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AI, if properly harnessed and combined with human compassion and communication, will drive a monumental leap forward for cancer care in the UK and beyond. It is however possible that the speed of technological development has overtaken the pace of professional moral and ethical education, as society has not evolved at such a tempo (LaCroix & J. D. Prince, 2023). Consequently, the balance of technological development with the cultural, moral, and ethical complexity of our world is at risk of falling into disarray. The Allen Fairbairn Vision for Ethics Series Paper took the opportunity to consider the ethical implications across a range of healthcare settings for AI using the Stackelberg Anticipative Game formalism with a mean field approach. Key perspectives from international contributors

are used to explore ethical considerations in oncology. Suitable definitions, and argument, are advanced for the necessity of a robust prioritisation framework that adapts to evolving data. Ethical frameworks necessitating observing the basic tenets of responsible AI, addressing biases, highlighting the ethical need for the translation of a “trust understanding” and Ability conditions are considered. The integration of AI in various domains, including healthcare, brings unprecedented potential for human advancement, pioneering new treatment modalities, supporting prioritisation and management of patient care, as well as enabling operational efficiencies and cost savings (Fabrice Djete, 2023). The value has been considerably recognised as solutions have been used to save lives, particularly during the COVID-19 response, and are potentially pivotal for delivering care during future pandemics. It opens up exciting possibilities for translation of AI system / technology integration and will require further queries into safe and effective

deployment of advanced digital applications in “routine” practice from an efficiency, economic and ethical standpoint. Amongst the key ethical considerations are organisational responsibility for maintaining standards to safeguard informed consent, ensuring human oversight of AI decisions, transparency in AI decision-making, and addressing biases and impact on workforce (Zhu et al., 2021).

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