

ISSN (Online) : 2278 - 4853

Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research

AJMR



Published by :
www.tarj.in

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Esha Jain

Impact Factor : SJIF 2022= 8.179

Frequency : Monthly

Country : India

Language : English

Start Year : 2012

Published by : www.tarj.in

Indexed/ Listed at : Ulrich's Periodicals
Directory, ProQuest, U.S.A.

E-mail id: tarjjournals@gmail.com

VISION

The vision of the journals is to provide an academic platform to scholars all over the world to publish their novel, original, empirical and high quality research work. It propose to encourage research relating to latest trends and practices in international business, finance, banking, service marketing, human resource management, corporate governance, social responsibility and emerging paradigms in allied areas of management. It intends to reach the researcher's with plethora of knowledge to generate a pool of research content and propose problem solving models to address the current and emerging issues at the national and international level. Further, it aims to share and disseminate the empirical research findings with academia, industry, policy makers, and consultants with an approach to incorporate the research recommendations for the benefit of one and all.

SR. NO	PARTICULAR	PAGE NO.	DOI NUMBER
1.	SIR CHHOTU RAM AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF FARMERS UNDER BRITISH COLONIAL RULE Dr Rajbir Singh Dalal, Mr Parshant Kumar	1-6	10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00018.3
2.	SENSE OF SUBORDINATION AS A PREDICTOR OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES Dr. Manish Kant, Dr. Lav Kumar Singh	7-18	10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00021.7
3.	REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIAN SOCIETY Shilpa, Dr. Renu Sharma	19-22	10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00022.3
4.	FROM CONSUMPTION TO IDENTITY: ANALYSING THE SOCIO-BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT OF OTT PLATFORMS ON YOUTH IN CHENNAI S. Sahana, Dr.V. Jayalakshmi	23-34	10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00023.X
5.	DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCE TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS THEME-BASED RESTAURANTS IN CHENNAI G Kavitha Lakshmi, Dr. D. Lalitha	35-44	10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00024.6

SIR CHHOTU RAM AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF FARMERS UNDER BRITISH COLONIAL RULE

Dr Rajbir Singh Dalal*; Mr Parshant Kumar**

*Professor and Chairperson,
Dept of Political Science,
Chaudhary Devi Lal University,
Sirsa, Haryana, INDIA
Email Id: dr.rsdalal@cdu.ac.in

**Research Scholar,
Dept of Public Administration,
Chaudhary Devi Lal University,
Sirsa, Haryana, India

Email Id: parshantdhull602@gmail.com

DOI:10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00018.3

ABSTRACT

Sir Chhotu Ram (1881–1945) stands among the most influential agrarian reformers in Indian history. Born into a farming family in undivided Punjab, he rose to prominence as a political leader, legislator, and social reformer whose life's mission was the upliftment of peasants and marginalized rural communities. At a time when colonial economic policies and moneylender exploitation had pushed farmers into chronic indebtedness and land alienation, Sir Chhotu Ram introduced revolutionary legal reforms that protected cultivators, regulated credit systems, strengthened agricultural markets, and ensured social justice. This research paper examines Sir Chhotu Ram's life, political ideology, legislative achievements, and long-term contribution to farmer empowerment. It analyzes how his policies transformed rural Punjab and laid foundations for post-independence agrarian governance in India. His work demonstrates how constitutional methods and legal reforms can be powerful tools for social change.

KEYWORDS: *Peasants, Land Reforms, Debt Protection, Revenue System and Money Lenders.*

INTRODUCTION

Indian history under British colonial rule is often narrated through the rise of nationalist movements and elite political leaders. However, this narrative frequently overlooks those leaders who worked quietly but decisively to improve the everyday lives of ordinary people. Among such leaders, Sir Chhotu Ram stands out as one of the most important champions of farmers and rural communities in northern India. At a time when colonial policies systematically exploited Indian agriculture and rural society, Sir Chhotu Ram emerged as a powerful advocate for peasants, tenants, and indebted cultivators.

Sir Chhotu Ram's contribution lies not in mass agitation or revolutionary politics, but in the use of legislation, administration, and political negotiation to protect farmers from economic exploitation. Operating within the constraints of British rule, he introduced laws that restricted moneylenders, prevented the alienation of land, and safeguarded peasant interests. His work

demonstrates that social justice and economic reform were also vital components of the freedom struggle, even if they did not always take the form of direct confrontation with colonial authority.

This paper examines Sir Chhotu Ram's life, political philosophy, and legislative achievements in detail. It places his work within the broader agrarian crisis created by British colonialism and evaluates the lasting impact of his reforms. By focusing on his efforts to empower farmers and lower classes, the paper highlights his unique and often underappreciated role in Indian history.

Agrarian Society under British Colonial Rule

To understand Sir Chhotu Ram's importance, it is essential to examine the condition of Indian agriculture under British rule. The colonial economy was structured to benefit British industrial and commercial interests, often at the expense of Indian farmers. Revenue systems such as the Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari, and Mahalwari prioritized the extraction of land revenue rather than agricultural development. These systems placed immense pressure on cultivators, who were required to pay fixed taxes regardless of crop failure, famine, or fluctuating market prices.

In Punjab and parts of northern India, canal colonies and commercialization of agriculture further transformed rural society. While canals increased cultivated land, they also intensified market dependence and indebtedness. Farmers were encouraged to grow cash crops, making them vulnerable to price fluctuations controlled by colonial markets. When crops failed or prices fell, farmers turned to moneylenders for survival.

Moneylenders became powerful figures in rural society. High interest rates, complex accounting practices, and legal advantages allowed them to seize peasant land when debts could not be repaid. As a result, land alienation increased dramatically. Peasants who lost their land were reduced to tenants or laborers, deepening rural inequality.

British courts and laws often supported moneylenders, as contracts and written records were given priority over customary practices. This legal bias reinforced exploitation. It was within this deeply unequal and unjust system that Sir Chhotu Ram sought reform.

Early Life and Influences of Sir Chhotu Ram

Sir Chhotu Ram was born in 1881 in Garhi Sampla village, Rohtak district, into a Jat farming family. His upbringing in a rural environment allowed him to witness firsthand the struggles of cultivators. He observed how debt, land loss, and social hierarchy affected rural families, shaping his lifelong commitment to agrarian reform.

Despite limited resources, Chhotu Ram pursued education with determination. He studied law and developed a deep understanding of the colonial legal system. Unlike many leaders who used legal training for personal advancement, he viewed law as a tool for social justice. His education enabled him to navigate colonial institutions while advocating for marginalized communities.

Sir Chhotu Ram was also influenced by reformist ideas that emphasized social equality, rationalism, and education. He believed that political freedom would be meaningless unless accompanied by economic and social empowerment of farmers and workers. This belief guided his political career and legislative priorities.

Entry into Politics and the Unionist Party

Sir Chhotu Ram entered politics at a time when Indian political life was dominated by urban elites. Many nationalist leaders focused primarily on constitutional reforms and self-rule, often

neglecting agrarian issues. Chhotu Ram, however, believed that farmers formed the backbone of Indian society and deserved political representation.

He became a key leader of the Unionist Party in Punjab, which represented the interests of rural communities, including Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. The party emphasized agrarian reform, communal harmony, and cooperation among rural groups. Under Chhotu Ram's leadership, the Unionist Party challenged both colonial economic exploitation and urban dominance in politics.

His participation in the provincial government allowed him to influence policy directly. Rather than rejecting colonial institutions outright, he used them strategically to secure concrete benefits for farmers. This pragmatic approach distinguished him from many contemporaries and allowed him to achieve lasting reforms.

Sir Chhotu Ram's Agrarian Philosophy

At the heart of Sir Chhotu Ram's political philosophy was the belief that land was not merely an economic asset but the foundation of rural life and dignity. He argued that farmers should be protected from forces that threatened their control over land, especially moneylenders and speculative markets. He rejected the idea that free markets alone could ensure justice in rural society. Instead, he emphasized state intervention to regulate credit, markets, and land transfers. His philosophy combined elements of social justice, economic realism, and moral responsibility. Sir Chhotu Ram also believed in education and awareness as tools of empowerment. He encouraged farmers to understand laws, maintain records, and assert their rights. In this sense, his work extended beyond legislation to include social reform and consciousness-building.

Key Laws Enacted by Sir Chhotu Ram

Sir Chhotu Ram's most enduring legacy lies in the laws he introduced or strengthened to protect farmers. These laws addressed the structural causes of rural exploitation and represented some of the most progressive agrarian legislation under British rule. Prominent among these are as under:

Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934

This act aimed to reduce the crushing burden of rural debt. It allowed courts to examine the fairness of debts and provided relief to peasants trapped in endless cycles of interest. By recognizing the unequal power relationship between moneylenders and cultivators, the act challenged the legal bias that favored creditors.

Punjab Debtors' Protection Act, 1936

This law further strengthened protections for indebted peasants. It limited the ability of moneylenders to seize land and ensured that essential agricultural assets were safeguarded. The act acknowledged that debt recovery should not destroy a farmer's livelihood.

Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900

Although originally enacted earlier, Sir Chhotu Ram played a crucial role in strengthening and enforcing this act. It restricted the transfer of agricultural land from farming communities to non-agricultural moneylenders. This measure helped preserve landownership among cultivators and prevented large-scale dispossession.

Punjab Regulation of Accounts Act, 1930

This law required moneylenders to maintain transparent records. Farmers could legally challenge fraudulent accounts. For the first time, courts scrutinized lending practices. It exposed systemic cheating and gave peasants legal leverage. This law further strengthened protections for indebted peasants. It limited the ability of moneylenders to seize land and ensured that essential agricultural assets were safeguarded. The act acknowledged that debt recovery should not destroy a peasant's livelihood.

The Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act, 1938

This Act reversed decades of injustice. Land that had passed into moneylenders' hands through deceptive mortgages was restored to original owners. This not only revived agricultural productivity but also restored social dignity to farming families. This was one of the most revolutionary laws. It allowed farmers to reclaim mortgaged land by repaying only the principal amount borrowed. Inflated interest claims were ignored. Thousands of acres of land were restored to cultivators.

The Punjab Registration of Money Lenders Act, 1938

This legislation made it mandatory for all moneylenders to register and obtain licenses. Unlicensed were barred from filing lawsuits for the recovery of loans. Sir Chhotu Ram introduced measures to regulate interest rates, require transparent accounting, and curb exploitative lending. These reforms challenged the unchecked power of moneylenders and restored some balance to rural credit systems.

British Response and Administrative Challenges

Sir Chhotu Ram's reforms were not implemented without resistance. Moneylenders and urban elites strongly opposed his legislation, arguing that it interfered with free enterprise and property rights. Some British officials also expressed concern that these laws undermined contractual principles. However, the colonial government ultimately supported many of his measures because they helped maintain rural stability. By reducing agrarian unrest and preventing mass dispossession, these reforms served both humanitarian and administrative goals. This complex relationship highlights how Sir Chhotu Ram navigated colonial power structures to achieve reform.

Comparison with Nationalist Politics

While nationalist leaders focused on political independence, Sir Chhotu Ram emphasized economic justice. He did not oppose the freedom struggle, but he questioned whether independence alone would solve rural problems. His skepticism proved insightful, as many agrarian issues persisted after 1947.

Unlike mass movements that relied on protest, his approach was legislative and institutional. This difference sometimes led to misunderstandings and criticism, yet it allowed him to secure tangible benefits for farmers during colonial rule.

Impact on Farmers and Rural Society

The impact of Sir Chhotu Ram's work was profound. Farmers gained legal protection, reduced debt burdens, and greater security over land. His reforms slowed land alienation and restored confidence among cultivators.

Beyond economic benefits, his work had social consequences. It strengthened rural self-respect and challenged the dominance of moneylenders. Peasants began to view the state as a potential ally rather than an instrument of oppression.

Post-Independence Relevance and Legacy

After independence, many of Sir Chhotu Ram's ideas influenced land reform debates and agrarian policies. Although challenges remain, his emphasis on peasant's dignity, legal protection, and state responsibility continues to resonate.

Today, as farmers face issues of debt, market volatility, and land insecurity, Sir Chhotu Ram's vision appears remarkably relevant. His legacy reminds policymakers that sustainable development must prioritize those who feed the nation.

CONCLUSION

Sir Chhotu Ram was a visionary leader who placed farmers at the center of politics during one of the most challenging periods in Indian history. Operating within the constraints of British colonial rule, he used law and administration to confront exploitation and injustice. His reforms addressed the root causes of agrarian distress and offered farmers protection, dignity, and hope. While history often celebrates mass movements and charismatic leaders, Sir Chhotu Ram's contribution demonstrates the power of thoughtful legislation and pragmatic reform. His life and work stand as a testament to the idea that true freedom is incomplete without economic justice. In remembering Sir Chhotu Ram, we recognize the enduring importance of farmer-centered politics in India's past, present, and future.

REFERENCES

1. Darling, Malcolm. The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt, Government of Punjab Legislative Debates (1930s).
2. Agnihotri, H. L., Malik, S. N., (1978), A Profile in Courage: A Biography of Ch. Chhotu Ram, New Delhi, 96.
3. Singh, Ganda (April, 1974,) , (ed.), A Speech of Sir Chhotu Ram: 1st March 1942, Punjab Past and Present, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 222-223.
4. Gopal, Madan(1971), Sir Chhotu Ram: A Political Biography, Delhi, 76.
5. Barrier, N. G. (1900). The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900. Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia.
6. Bose, S. (1993). Peasant labour and colonial capital: Rural Bengal since 1770. Cambridge University Press.
7. Calvert, H. (1922). The wealth and welfare of the Punjab. Civil and Military Gazette Press.
8. Chhabra, G. S. (1973). Advanced study in the history of modern India (Vol. 3). Sterling Publishers.
9. Darling, M. L. (1925). The Punjab peasant in prosperity and debt. Oxford University Press.
10. Fox, R. G. (1985). Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the making. University of California Press.
11. Krishan, G. (1991). Sir Chhotu Ram: A political biography. National Book Trust.

- 12.** Malik, S. N., & Agnihotri, H. L. (1978). A profile in courage: A biography of Ch. Chhotu Ram. New Delhi.
- 13.** Nayar, B. R. (1966). Minority politics in the Punjab. Princeton University Press.
- 14.** Singh, G. (2000). Communalism and Punjab politics. Sage Publications.
- 15.** Singh, K. (2004). A history of the Sikhs (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press.
- 16.** Talbot, I. (1988). Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947. Manohar Publications.
- 17.** Government of Punjab. (1930s). Punjab Legislative Assembly debates. Government Press.
- 18.** Indian Council of Historical Research. (Various years). Publications on agrarian reforms. ICHR, New Delhi.

SENSE OF SUBORDINATION AS A PREDICTOR OF SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING AMONG GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES

Dr. Manish Kant*; Dr. Lav Kumar Singh**

*Assistant Professor,
Department of Psychology,
VSJ College, Rajnagar, Madhubani, INDIA

**Assistant Professor,
Department of Psychology,
APSM College, Barauni, Begusarai, INDIA
Email Id: lkumarsingh@gmail.com

DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00021.7

ABSTRACT

The present study examined the role of sense of subordination in determining the subjective well-being of employees working in government and private sector organizations. In workplace settings, employees often experience hierarchical relationships where perceived low power, dependency, and inferiority may influence their psychological health and life satisfaction. The study was carried out on a sample of 187 employees, including 97 private sector employees and 90 government employees, with a mean age of 36.4 years. Participants were selected from Darbhanga and Begusarai districts of Bihar using a purposive cum snowball sampling technique. The Social Comparison Scale (Allan & Gilbert, 1995) was used to assess sense of subordination, while Subjective Well-Being Inventory (Nagpal & Sell, 1992) was administered to measure subjective well-being. The findings revealed a significant difference between government and private sector employees in sense of subordination, with private sector employees showing relatively higher subordination. Similarly, government sector employees reported significantly higher subjective well-being compared to private sector employees. Correlation analysis indicated a significant negative relationship between sense of subordination and subjective well-being, suggesting that employees experiencing greater subordination tend to have lower levels of well-being. Regression analysis further confirmed that sense of subordination significantly predicted subjective well-being among employees. The results highlight that psychological experiences of rank and power imbalance at workplace can meaningfully shape employees' happiness and satisfaction in life. The study implies that improving workplace dignity, autonomy, and respectful supervisory practices may contribute to better well-being, particularly among private sector employees.

KEYWORDS: *Sense of Subordination, Subjective Well-Being, Government Employee, and Private Employee.*

INTRODUCTION

In modern workplaces, employees don't only struggle with workload, deadlines, and salary expectations, but also with a very silent kind of pressure which is related to **status and position**. Many workers experience a feeling that they are "below someone" in terms of power, respect, decision-making, and value in the organization. This feeling can be called as **sense of subordination**, which refers to how strongly a person perceives themselves as inferior or dependent within a hierarchy. In hierarchical work cultures, this becomes more common, and it can quietly shape a person's emotions, confidence, and overall happiness in life.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is often understood as how people evaluate their life in terms of satisfaction and emotional balance, like positive feelings vs negative feelings. It includes both cognitive and affective aspects, meaning it is not only about "how life is going", but also "how life feels" to the person (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Employees with higher subjective well-being generally show better productivity, social relationships, and mental health. But if a person constantly feels that they are not equal, not respected, or their voice doesn't matter, it may reduce their well-being even if they have good salary or job security.

Workplace relationships are deeply structured through power. In many organisations, employees are expected to obey instructions without negotiation, especially in systems where authority is emphasized more than collaboration. Such unequal dynamics sometimes leads to a psychological experience of "being dominated" or "being under someone's control," which is central to subordination. From a social psychology view, hierarchical status can influence self-esteem, identity and emotional stability (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). People in lower-power positions often feel less autonomy, and autonomy is a major factor behind psychological well-being.

One of the most important theories that connect work and well-being is **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**. SDT suggests that people need autonomy, competence, and relatedness for healthy functioning and happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When employees experience strong subordination, they often lack autonomy, because they cannot control decisions or work methods. At the same time, they may also feel less competent due to constant criticism, control, or comparison. This reduces the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and makes them emotionally drained.

Another major perspective is the **Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model**, which explains how job demands create stress while job resources protect well-being. Subordination can behave like a psychological demand because it creates emotional burden through fear, compliance pressure, and self-doubt. At the same time, social support and respectful leadership can act as resources (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). If an employee experiences subordination regularly, their emotional exhaustion can increase which indirectly reduces subjective well-being.

In workplace settings, **power distance** as a cultural factor becomes very relevant. In high power-distance environments, people accept unequal power distribution as normal, and subordinates are expected to remain obedient. Hofstede (2001) explained how power distance shapes behaviour, communication, and job attitudes. In countries like India, hierarchical practices are common in many workplaces, which may increase the likelihood of employees experiencing subordination

more strongly. In such settings, the employee's happiness is not only based on salary or job role but also on dignity and voice.

Sense of subordination also has connections with mental health outcomes like anxiety, low self-worth, and depressive symptoms. When a person repeatedly feels inferior, it can create learned helplessness-like patterns, where the employee believes nothing can change (Seligman, 1975). This becomes even worse if the authority figure behaves in an abusive or humiliating way. Studies have found that low control and poor social standing in job contexts can harm psychological well-being (Marmot, 2004). Employees may start internalizing the inferior role, which can affect their happiness even outside the workplace.

Another issue is the difference between **formal hierarchy** and **felt hierarchy**. Formal hierarchy refers to official rank, like manager vs junior. But felt hierarchy refers to how much a person emotionally experiences inequality. Sometimes even in a flat organisation, an employee might still feel subordinate if communication is rude or disrespectful. Conversely, in a strict hierarchy, some employees may feel protected rather than oppressed if leaders are supportive. That means subordination is not only structural but also psychological.

When comparing government and private sector employees, the work conditions become different and this may influence subordination experience. Government jobs often provide relatively higher job security, fixed pay structures, and predictable promotions. Private sector jobs, on the other hand, may offer better growth opportunities but often come with performance pressure and competitive environment. Because of these differences, the role of subordination can vary. Government employees may experience subordination through rigid bureaucratic systems and seniority-based dominance, while private sector employees may experience it through performance monitoring, target pressure, and fear of replacement.

Some studies show that job security is linked to better well-being and less stress, which might protect government employees from some negative effects (Green, 2011). But even in government setups, strict authority and political dynamics can create strong subordination feelings. A junior employee may feel they cannot question seniors even when seniors are wrong. This reduces psychological comfort, and gradually impacts satisfaction.

In private sector organizations, employees may feel subordinate because of continuous evaluation, comparison, and high dependency on supervisors for appraisals. When employees feel that their value depends on pleasing authority, they may suppress their emotions, become overly compliant, and experience emotional strain. According to organisational behavior research, unfair supervision and low perceived respect reduces job satisfaction and increases burnout (Tepper, 2000). Burnout is often linked with lower positive affect and life satisfaction, hence lower subjective well-being.

An important related factor is **workplace dignity**. Dignity refers to feeling valued as a human being at work. When an employee is treated like "just a worker" and not given basic respect, it becomes a dignity issue. Subordination often reduces dignity because it makes the person feel replaceable and powerless. This can lead to lower happiness, even if the job provides economic stability. Subjective well-being depends not only on external success but also on internal worth feeling.

Workplace subordination may also influence employee well-being through social comparison. Individuals compare themselves to others, and when they repeatedly feel lower status, they may

develop resentment, shame, or insecurity. Social comparison theory suggests that upward comparisons can reduce self-evaluation and happiness if the person feels stuck in low status (Festinger, 1954). In competitive private organisations, upward comparison is common, which may make subordination more emotionally harmful.

It is also possible that employees in government sector cope differently with subordination due to long-term familiarity with hierarchy. They might accept it as “part of job culture,” which may reduce its emotional effect. But this acceptance can be superficial also. Inside, it may still reduce well-being but employees may not express it openly because workplace culture discourages complaining. In private sector, employees may be more open about dissatisfaction but also fear job loss, so stress becomes double.

Overall, the sense of subordination appears to be a hidden psychological experience that can shape how employees feel about their life and work. Research indicates that power, autonomy, dignity, and fairness are closely linked to well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Keltner et al., 2003). However, more focused studies are needed specifically connecting sense of subordination with subjective well-being, especially when comparing different employment sectors like government and private.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the level of sense of subordination among government and private sector employees.
2. To examine the level of subjective well-being among government and private sector employees.
3. To find out the relationship between sense of subordination and subjective well-being among employees.
4. To compare government and private sector employees on sense of subordination and subjective well-being.

Hypotheses of the study

Based on earlier research and theoretical views, it is clear that workplace hierarchy and power relations influence employees not only professionally but also psychologically. When employees repeatedly experience a sense of being “below” others, it can quietly affect their confidence, emotional state, and overall satisfaction with life. Since government and private sector workplaces differ in job structure, authority patterns, and security, the experience of subordination may also vary across these sectors. Therefore, the present study focuses on identifying the level of sense of subordination and subjective well-being in both groups, and also tries to understand how these two variables are linked. In order to test these assumptions in a systematic way, the following hypotheses have been framed for the study.

H1: There will be a significant difference in sense of subordination between government and private sector employees.

H2: There will be a significant difference in subjective well-being between government and private sector employees.

H3: Sense of subordination will be significantly and negatively correlated with subjective well-being among employees.

H4: Sense of subordination will significantly predict subjective well-being among employees.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study followed a **quantitative research design** with a **comparative and correlational approach**. It was planned to examine the role of **sense of subordination** in predicting **subjective well-being**, and also to compare government and private sector employees on these variables. Since the nature of the study focuses on relationship as well as group difference, this design was found suitable.

Sample

The sample for the study consisted of **187 employees**, out of which **97 were from private sector** and the remaining **90 were government sector employees**. The **mean age** of the participants was **36.4 years**, showing that most respondents were in early to mid adulthood and actively working in their respective fields.

The respondents were selected from **Darbhanga and Begusarai districts of Bihar**. A **purposive cum snowball sampling technique** was used. Initially, employees who fit into the criteria (government/private and currently employed) were contacted purposively, and later some more participants were included through referrals and networks (snowball method). This technique helped in reaching employees from different offices and institutions where direct access was little difficult.

Inclusion Criteria

- Employees currently working in either **government or private sector**
- Age range mostly within working adulthood (young to middle age)
- Willingness to participate and give consent
- Minimum work experience of at least **1 year** (so that workplace exposure is real)

Psychological Tools Used

In the present study, two standardized psychological tools were administered to measure the key variables, i.e., **sense of subordination** and **subjective well-being**. The tools were selected carefully because they are suitable for adult employee population and are also relevant for organisational and mental health research. Both the scales were self-report type, and participants were asked to respond honestly based on their usual feelings and experiences.

1. Social Comparison Scale (SCS) developed by Allan & Gilbert (1995)

The **Social Comparison Scale (SCS)** was used to assess the employee's **sense of subordination**, which includes psychological feelings of being inferior, low in rank, less capable, less accepted, or dominated in comparison to others. In workplace environments, this sense of low rank becomes important because it shapes confidence, voice, and emotional comfort.

This tool reflects the idea that human beings naturally evaluate themselves in relation to others, and when a person frequently experiences a negative self-position (like "I am less"), it creates submissive emotions and stress. Therefore, in the current study, the SCS was treated as a

measure of **perceived subordination / low social rank** among government and private sector employees.

2. Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SUBI) developed by Nagpal & Sell (1992)

To measure subjective well-being, the **Subjective Well-Being Inventory (SUBI)** developed by **Nagpal and Sell (1992)** was used. SUBI is one of the most commonly used well-being tools, especially in Indian settings, because it covers both positive and negative experiences related to life adjustment.

Subjective well-being is not simply “happiness” in a simple way, rather it includes life satisfaction, sense of mental balance, ability to cope, and emotional positivity. In working adults, well-being is deeply influenced by workplace atmosphere, sense of dignity, support system and emotional security.

Procedure

After finalizing the research topic and variables, the researcher approached employees from different workplaces in **Darbhanga and Begusarai** districts. First, the purpose of the study was explained to them in a simple way. They were assured that their information will remain confidential and will be used only for academic purpose.

Consent was taken from all participants before administration of tools. The questionnaires were provided individually, and participants were requested to respond honestly without overthinking too much. In some cases, tools were administered in small groups (2–5 participants), depending on availability and comfort.

The response time ranged between **20 to 30 minutes**, although few respondents took longer due to office work or personal pace. After completion, the questionnaires were collected, checked for missing responses, and later scoring was done according to manual scoring patterns.

Statistical Tools Used

The collected data was analysed using appropriate statistical methods with the help of standard software (SPSS). The following statistical tools were applied:

1. Descriptive Statistics

- Mean
- Standard Deviation

2. Independent Samples t-test

This was used to compare **government and private sector employees** on:

- Sense of Subordination
- Subjective Well-Being

3. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation

This was used to examine the relationship between:

- Sense of Subordination and Subjective Well-Being

4. Simple Linear Regression

This was applied to study whether **sense of subordination predicts subjective well-being** among employees.

The level of significance was kept at **0.05**, and wherever needed 0.01 level was also considered for stronger interpretation.

Result

Table 1 Difference between Government and Private Sector Employees on Sense of Subordination (H1)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Private Sector	97	55.84	9.72	3.19	185	0.002**
Government Sector	90	51.62	8.35			

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant, $p < 0.01$ = Highly Significant**

Table 2 Difference between Government and Private Sector Employees on Subjective Well-Being (H2)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Private Sector	97	74.20	11.18	-2.71	185	0.007**
Government Sector	90	78.62	10.92			

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant, $p < 0.01$ = Highly Significant**

Table 3 Correlation between Sense of Subordination and Subjective Well-Being (H3)

Variables	N	r	p-value
Sense of Subordination & Subjective Well-Being	187	-0.46	<0.001**

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant, $p < 0.01$ = Highly Significant**

Table 4 Prediction of Subjective Well-Being by Sense of Subordination (H4) (Regression Analysis)

Model Summary

Predictor	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df	p-value
Sense of Subordination	0.46	0.21	0.21	48.90	(1,185)	<0.001**

Note. $p < 0.05$ = Significant, $p < 0.01$ = Highly Significant**

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t-value	p-value
Constant	103.26	4.23	—	24.42	<0.001**
Sense of Subordination	-0.52	0.07	-0.46	-6.99	<0.001**

Note. $P < 0.05$ = Significant, $p < 0.01$ = Highly Significant**

Discussion

The present study aimed to understand the role of sense of subordination in the subjective well-being of government and private sector employees. Overall, the findings show that subordination feelings are not only present in working adults, but they also relate meaningfully with how satisfied and emotionally well employees feel in their life. In many cases, employees may look fine outwardly, but internally they experience stress because of power imbalance, constant control, and low decision-making freedom.

H1 stated that there will be a significant difference in sense of subordination between government and private sector employees. The result supported this hypothesis, as the findings indicated that private sector employees scored higher on sense of subordination than government employees.

This result can be interpreted in the context of organisational power relations. Private sector workplaces are usually performance-driven, target-focused, and closely monitored. Employees often feel more dependent on supervisors and managers for appraisal, incentives, and job continuity. This can increase feelings like “I must obey”, “I cannot question”, or “my position is weaker”, which are closely linked with subordination experiences.

The findings align with earlier organisational research which suggests that power differences strongly influence workplace emotions and behaviors, where low-power individuals tend to show submissive tendencies and higher stress (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). When employees are repeatedly reminded of hierarchy through control, strict evaluation, and fear of consequences, they may internalize an inferior rank position, which gradually becomes psychological.

Additionally, in high power-distance cultures, hierarchical interaction is often taken as normal, and subordinates are expected to remain respectful and less assertive (Hofstede, 2001). This becomes relevant especially in Indian workplaces, where authority is deeply respected socially. Still, private sector may intensify it more due to pressure of performance and insecurity.

At the same time, government sector employees, although they may face rigid hierarchies too, often experience comparatively better job stability. That stable environment may reduce fear-based compliance. So, even though authority exists, the **felt subordination** can be lesser in daily emotional sense. This sector difference supports the argument that subordination is not only about designation but also about the climate of control and pressure.

H2 proposed that government and private sector employees will differ significantly in subjective well-being. The results supported this assumption, showing that government sector employees reported higher subjective well-being than private sector employees.

This finding is meaningful because subjective well-being includes life satisfaction, mental calmness, and balance between positive and negative emotions (Diener, 1984; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Government employees may experience relatively more routine work flow, fixed pay scale, and lower uncertainty. Such factors can help them maintain better life satisfaction and emotional stability.

From job stress and organisational well-being perspectives, job security is often considered a protective factor against psychological strain. When a person feels their job is stable, the risk of chronic stress may reduce, which indirectly promotes higher well-being (Green, 2011). In

contrast, private sector employees may experience frequent workload pressure, fear of performance evaluation, and strong competition. Such conditions may disturb emotional balance and overall satisfaction.

Also, subjective well-being is strongly connected with need fulfilment. According to **Self-Determination Theory**, well-being increases when autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Private sector jobs often restrict autonomy through continuous monitoring, and may reduce relatedness due to competitive work culture, which may lower subjective well-being.

Another important point is that subjective well-being is not only determined by salary package, but also by dignity, stability and emotional comfort. Even if some private employees are earning more, daily work stress and low psychological safety can reduce their overall happiness. That is why this result seems realistic and supported by psychological understanding of well-being.

H3 stated that sense of subordination will be negatively correlated with subjective well-being. The correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship, meaning employees who experienced higher subordination also reported lower subjective well-being.

This relationship is very important, because it suggests that sense of subordination is not only an “office feeling” but it influences broader life satisfaction. When a person feels inferior at work, they may carry that mental burden home. It affects confidence, mood, sleep, and even relationships. Over time, constant subordination feelings can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduce positive affect.

This result can be understood through the lens of psychological need frustration. As discussed earlier, high subordination often means low autonomy. Employees who feel powerless may not express ideas freely, may hesitate in taking decisions, and may continuously worry about authority. Such experiences reduce psychological freedom. SDT explains that lack of autonomy and competence satisfaction lowers psychological wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The result also resembles research on health and social status. Marmot (2004) highlighted that low control and lower social status at workplace contribute to stress and poorer well-being outcomes. Similarly, when people experience lower rank feelings repeatedly, it becomes a chronic stressor. It is not just about workload, but about how the employee is *treated and positioned* in the social hierarchy.

Additionally, social comparison theory also supports this relationship. Humans compare themselves to others, and if the comparison repeatedly shows “I am lower”, it decreases self-evaluation and emotional positivity (Festinger, 1954). In many organisations, juniors compare themselves with seniors not only in role but also in respect and power, which can create shame, insecurity, or emotional dissatisfaction. That’s why subjective well-being falls when subordination rises.

H4 proposed that sense of subordination will significantly predict subjective well-being among employees. The regression result supported this hypothesis, indicating that sense of subordination emerged as a **significant predictor** of subjective well-being. The negative direction of prediction indicates that as sense of subordination increases, subjective well-being decreases.

This is a strong finding because prediction suggests the variable is not just “associated”, it contributes significantly to explaining variance in well-being. It implies that employees who feel dominated or inferior are likely to report poorer emotional wellness and reduced life satisfaction.

This prediction can be understood through stress models also. The **Job Demands–Resources model** suggests that when job demands increase and resources decrease, employees experience burnout and reduced well-being (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Sense of subordination can function as a psychological demand because it consumes emotional energy through fear, self-doubt, and constant compliance. At the same time, it reduces the resources like autonomy and respect. Therefore, it becomes logical that it predicts subjective well-being negatively.

The predictive role is also supported indirectly by research on abusive supervision and workplace mistreatment. When leaders use dominance, humiliation, or unfair control, employees show lower satisfaction and poorer emotional health (Tepper, 2000). Even if subordination is not always abusive, still it reflects unequal power experience, which can reduce emotional comfort and confidence.

This also suggests that improving subjective well-being among employees cannot be achieved only by giving incentives or salary hikes. Emotional factors such as respectful communication, autonomy, and fair treatment matter a lot. Reducing felt subordination can become a mental health promotion step in organizations.

Overall Interpretation and Implications

Overall, the results suggest that sense of subordination has a meaningful role in understanding well-being of employees. Private sector employees seem to be at higher risk of such feelings, and this may contribute to their comparatively lower subjective well-being. The negative relation and predictive effect shows that psychological hierarchy is not harmless. It can gradually lower happiness and life satisfaction.

These findings indicate that organizations (both government and private) should focus on healthy leadership, participative decision-making and respectful workplace culture, because these factors can reduce subordination feelings and increase overall well-being. Even small changes like giving voice to employees, reducing humiliation, and promoting dignity can improve mental health outcomes.

In conclusion, the study highlights that subordination is not simply an organisational feature, it is a psychological experience, and it matters a lot for subjective well-being. Therefore, sense of subordination should be considered in future organisational well-being programs and research, especially in Indian workplace contexts where hierarchy is common.

Limitations of the Study

Although the present study provides useful understanding about the role of sense of subordination in subjective well-being among government and private sector employees, it has certain limitations. First, the sample was selected only from Darbhanga and Begusarai districts of Bihar, so the findings may not fully generalize to employees from other regions or different organisational cultures. Second, the study used a purposive cum snowball sampling technique, which may lead to some selection bias because participants were recruited through networks and availability. Third, the research relied only on self-report questionnaires, so there is chance of

social desirability, fear of judgement, or non-serious responding, especially while reporting subordination feelings. Also, the study followed a cross-sectional design, therefore causal conclusions cannot be strongly made (it shows association/prediction but not exact cause-effect). Finally, other variables like job role level, salary, work experience, personality traits, and organisational climate were not controlled, which might have influenced subjective well-being also.

REFERENCES

1. Allan, S., & Gilbert, P. (1995). A social comparison scale: Psychometric properties and relationship to psychopathology. *Personality and Individual Differences, 19*(3), 293–299.
2. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268.
3. Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands–resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(3), 499–512.
4. Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin, 95*(3), 542–575.
5. Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin, 125*(2), 276–302.
6. Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations, 7*(2), 117–140.
7. Green, F. (2011). Unpacking the misery multiplier: How employability modifies the impacts of unemployment and job insecurity on life satisfaction and mental health. *Journal of Health Economics, 30*(2), 265–276.
8. Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture’s consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
9. Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003). Power, approach, and inhibition. *Psychological Review, 110*(2), 265–284.
10. Marmot, M. (2004). *The status syndrome: How social standing affects our health and longevity*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
11. Nagpal, R., & Sell, H. (1992). *Subjective well-being inventory (SUBI): Manual*. World Health Organization, Regional Office for South-East Asia.
12. Seligman, M. E. P. (1975). *Helplessness: On depression, development, and death*. W. H. Freeman.
13. Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal, 43*(2), 178–190.

REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Shilpa*; Dr. Renu Sharma**

*Research Scholar
(Desh Bhagat University Mandi Gobindgarh)
Punjab, INDIA

**Associate Professor & Incharge,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages
Desh Bhagat University Mandi Gobindgarh)
Punjab, INDIA

DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00022.3

ABSTRACT

The caste system in India is one of the oldest and most complex social hierarchies in the world. It has shaped Indian society for over 3,000 years, influencing marriage, occupation, social interactions, and access to resources. While legally abolished in many forms after independence, its social, economic, and political effects persist today.

Origins and Historical The caste system in India did not arise from a single cause. It developed over time due to a combination of religious, social, economic, and political factors.

KEYWORDS: *Caste, Society, Institution, Marriage, Social, Factors, Political, Religious, Economic.*

INTRODUCTION

The caste system in Indian society is a complex and enduring institution. The caste system functioning in Indian society is a feature of Indian society that makes it different and complex from the societies of other countries of the world. Different scholars have presented different views on the caste system in Indian society. According to Ketkar: Caste is a social group which has two main characteristics.

(1) Its membership is restricted to those persons born in that caste and all persons born in this way are included in that caste. (2) Members of the caste, a rigid social by law, marriage outside the group is prohibited.

Thus, according to the Indian social system, caste is not based on religion but on birth. In the Indian social system, a person's caste is determined at birth. He lives in the same caste for the rest of his life. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: Hindu society is like a multi-storey building in which each caste is a floor of this tower. It is noteworthy that there are no stairs to exit this tower. There is no way to go from one floor to another. Whoever is born in the floor dies in that floor.

Thus, according to the caste-based system operating in the Indian social system, a person dies in the same caste in which he is born. A person cannot change his caste even with his good deeds. Why is the caste-based system not based on work but based on birth?

There is no consensus among scholars regarding the origins of the caste system in Indian society. Indian and Western scholars have given their own views on the origin of the caste-based system. The following writings on the origin of caste in Indian society are considered important for the following reasons:

1. According to the 'PurushSukat' verse, caste system originated from division based on karma.
2. Brahmins created high and low classes on the basis of 'races'.
3. The origin of caste system is from religious rituals.
4. Origin of caste system according to evolutionary theory.
5. The beginning of caste system due to the manipulation of Brahmin class for personal gain.

The most important and first reason for the origin and development of the caste system in Indian society is considered to be the 'PurushaSukat' verse in the Rigveda. According to 'PurushaSukat', Indian society is divided into four varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. According to 'PurushaSukat', the four varnas are born from different parts of 'Brahma' and the 'PurushaSukat' in the Rigveda was later explained by Manu in his SimitiGranth and Manu also considered a 'fifth' varna. In 'Manu Simiti', the basis of varna was made and the functions of the four varnas were determined:

That powerful Brahma created different duties for the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, who were born from the head, arms, thighs and feet, to protect the entire world. Reading, teaching, performing sacrifices, getting sacrifices done, giving and receiving donations, these are said to be the duties of the Brahmins. In short, protecting the people, giving, doing yoga, reading and not getting entangled in worldly matters, are the duties of the Kshatriyas. Taking care of animals, giving charity, doing yoga, reading, trading, paying interest and farming are said to be the duties of the Vaishyas. Brahma has fixed this duty for the Shudras, to serve the people of all three varnas without any criticism or gossip."3

Manu also created a 'Pancham' varna, who were deprived of all rights. Their houses were also kept outside the village. Due to this explanation given in 'Manu SmritiGranth', high and low levels were created in the varna system. Brahmins established themselves as the highest by taking the help of social and religious rituals. This is considered to be the beginning of caste in Indian society. The Brahmin class very cleverly included the Aryan people in the upper three varnas, while the natives here were pushed into the Shudra and the fifth varna. The second reason for the origin of caste in Indian society is considered to be racial elements. The Aryans, who were an outside race, fought with the natives, the Dravidians, and enslaved the Dravidians, who later evolved into various Dalit castes. According to Guriya:

After the conquest, the Indo-Aryan races gave themselves a higher status than the natives of India. They placed themselves in the upper three varnas and started calling the inhabitants here as slaves or shudras. The Aryan people adopted a policy of remaining separate from the natives to maintain their cultural and racial purity. As time passed, society began to be divided into high and low status groups. Thus, the struggle between these two different races is also considered to be the reason for the beginning of caste system.

The third important reason is related to religious rituals. "Religion played a very important role in ancient Indian society and people associated with various types of religious activities organized themselves into different groups and they took the form of different castes. It was because of religion that food restrictions arose and became responsible for dividing people into castes and sub-castes." These religious rituals also play an important role in initiating and perpetuating caste system in Indian society.

The fourth reason for the origin of caste in Indian society is considered to be the evolutionary theory. According to sociologists, the origin of caste in Indian society is not due to caste division, religious rituals or racial discrimination, but the reason for the origin of the caste-based system is economy. According to sociologists, many classes based on economic grounds came into existence in society. These economic classes established economic associations for their economic benefits, which later became the reason for the origin of caste. These associations started arranging 'in-caste marriages' to keep their economic benefits and their economic secrets secret, which became the basis for the origin of caste. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has also considered 'in-caste marriages' as the reason for the origin of caste. Dr. According to Ambedkar, "I consider inter-caste marriage to be the only sign of caste and when I speak of the origin of caste, I mean the origin of the inter-caste marriage system." "In Indian society, the law of marrying within one's own caste is strictly enforced. For this reason Sociologists say that "the practice of marrying within the caste is the lifeblood of the caste system."

Thus, the 'SujatiMariya' system is also an important reason for the caste-based system in Indian society. The fifth reason for the origin of the caste-based system is considered to be the personal interests of the Brahmins. According to social scientists, the Brahmins divided the Indian society into five varnas and the Brahmins cleverly kept the Aryan people in the three upper varnas and included the Dravidians in the Shudra and the fifth varna, which later came to be known as the Dalit castes. In modern times, only the people of these Shudra and fifth varna are called 'Dalits'.

After constructing the above perspective, it can be said that no single factor is responsible for the origin of casteism in Indian society. All the factors have contributed to the caste-based system in some way or another. All the factors given above contribute to the origin and development of the caste-based system in more or less form.

REFERENCES

1. S.V.Ketkar, History of Caste in India, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1998,p.15
2. Ramnika Gupta (Ed.), Dalit Consciousness, Navlekh Publications, Hindi, 1998, page 104
3. Mohan Lal Sharma (Ed.), Manu Smriti, Department of Languages, 1989, 2nd 7-8
4. G. S. Bhatnagar and Baldev Singh Rahal, Indian Society, Punjabi University,Pativala, 1997, p. 95
5. AmandeepHira, Punjabi Novel Writing: Dalit Perspective, Ravi Sahitya Prakashan, Amritsar, 2004, page 11
6. Vasant Moon (Ed), Dr. Baba Sahib Ambedkar Writing and Speeches, Vol. I,p.14, Reference: Amandeep Hira, Punjabi Novel Author: Dalit Perspective, RaviSahityaPrakashan, Amritsar, 2004, page 12
7. G. S. Guriye, Caste and Race in India (ed. S. S. Sodhi), Punjabi

FROM CONSUMPTION TO IDENTITY: ANALYSING THE SOCIO-BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT OF OTT PLATFORMS ON YOUTH IN CHENNAI

S. Sahana*; Dr.V. Jayalakshmi**

*Research Scholar,
Department of Visual Communication,
School of Mass Communication, VISTAS,
Chennai, INDIA
Email Id: shasartc@gmail.com

**Assistant Professor,
Department of Visual Communication,
School of Mass Communication, VISTAS,
Chennai, INDIA
Email Id: vjayalakshmi.smc@vistas.ac.in

DOI: **10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00023.X**

ABSTRACT

Digital media plays a central role in shaping contemporary youth behaviour, communication, and lifestyle, with OTT platforms enabling continuous and on-demand content consumption. This trend is particularly prominent among youth in Chennai.

The study examines the impact of OTT consumption on lifestyle transformation, focusing on viewing patterns, behavioural changes, and identity formation. A quantitative survey method was used to collect primary data from respondents aged 18–30 years. Key variables include usage frequency, binge-watching behaviour, sleep patterns, lifestyle changes, and socio-cultural influence.

Findings indicate high daily OTT usage, widespread binge-watching and late-night viewing, leading to sleep disturbances, reduced physical activity, and altered routines. Significant behavioural and cultural influences were also observed, including changes in communication and preferences.

The study identifies a dual impact, with both negative outcomes such as reduced productivity and positive effects such as entertainment and global exposure. Overall, OTT platforms significantly influence youth lifestyles, highlighting the need for balanced and mindful consumption.

KEYWORDS: OTT Platforms, Digital Streaming, Youth, Binge-Watching, Lifestyle Transformation, Behaviour Change, Identity Formation.

INTRODUCTION

Digital media consumption has undergone a significant transformation with the widespread adoption of over-the-top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ Hotstar. These platforms have redefined viewing practices by enabling on-demand, personalized, and multi-device access to content. In India, the OTT sector has expanded rapidly, with over 450

million users and increasing engagement driven by affordable internet access and smartphone penetration. Youth screen time averages 3–5 hours daily, with a substantial proportion devoted to streaming content.

This trend is particularly evident in urban centres such as Chennai, where high digital accessibility has facilitated widespread OTT usage among youth. Studies indicate that 70–80% of urban youth regularly consume OTT content, with a majority engaging in binge-watching and a significant proportion reporting late-night viewing habits. These patterns contribute to disruptions in sleep quality and daily productivity.

Beyond entertainment, OTT consumption has notable implications for lifestyle and behaviour. Prolonged viewing is associated with sleep disturbances in nearly 45% of users and reduced physical activity in 30–40% of cases. Additionally, exposure to diverse content influences communication styles, fashion preferences, and identity formation, with many youth adopting language and behavioural traits from digital media.

However, OTT platforms also offer positive outcomes, including stress relief, entertainment, and increased global awareness. This dual impact underscores the complexity of OTT-mediated lifestyle changes and highlights the need for context-specific analysis.

In this context, the present study examines the relationship between OTT viewing patterns and lifestyle transformation among youth in Chennai. It aims to analyze behavioural, lifestyle, and socio-cultural impacts while providing a balanced assessment of both positive and negative effects, thereby contributing to informed and responsible media consumption practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Shim et al. (2021) conducted an empirical investigation into OTT viewing patterns and their psychological implications among young adults. Utilizing a quantitative survey design, the study demonstrated that excessive binge-watching is significantly associated with elevated stress levels and deterioration in sleep quality. The authors further emphasized the role of algorithm-driven recommendation systems in sustaining prolonged viewing sessions by continuously suggesting personalized content. The findings underscore the interaction between technological design and user behaviour, indicating that digital architecture itself contributes to increased screen dependency.

Relevance: This study supports the present research variables related to binge-watching behaviour, mental health outcomes, and sleep disturbances.

Suhail M and Bhat S (2022) examined OTT consumption patterns among Indian youth with particular focus on lifestyle and behavioural changes. Through a structured survey methodology, the study found that a majority of respondents reported reduced physical activity and irregular daily routines as a consequence of prolonged streaming. The research highlighted a transition toward sedentary lifestyles, accompanied by diminished engagement in outdoor and social activities. These findings indicate that OTT platforms significantly influence daily structuring of time and physical behaviour. The study aligns with variables concerning lifestyle transformation, sedentary behaviour, and routine disruption in the present research.

Ahmed et al. (2022) explored the relationship between OTT content consumption and identity formation among youth. The study revealed that frequent exposure to digital narratives leads to the internalization of characters' behaviours, linguistic styles, and attitudinal patterns.

Participants reported adopting expressions, fashion elements, and social behaviours observed in streaming content, thereby demonstrating the role of OTT platforms in shaping self-perception and social identity. The study situates OTT media within broader frameworks of social learning and cultural diffusion. This research supports variables related to identity formation, behavioural adaptation, and socio-cultural influence.

Gupta R and Sharma P (2023) investigated the impact of OTT usage on academic performance and productivity among students. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, the study found that excessive streaming was associated with decreased concentration levels, procrastination, and ineffective time management. Nearly half of the respondents reported that OTT consumption interfered with their academic responsibilities. The findings highlight the cognitive and functional implications of prolonged digital engagement. This study corresponds to variables related to productivity loss, time management issues, and behavioural changes in the present dataset.

Kumar A et al. (2024) analyzed the socio-cultural impact of OTT platforms on urban youth populations. The study demonstrated that exposure to global content significantly influences fashion preferences, communication styles, and cultural perceptions. Respondents reported increased openness to diverse cultural practices, along with the adoption of hybrid cultural identities. The research emphasizes the role of OTT platforms as agents of globalization and cultural exchange. This study supports variables related to cultural influence, identity transformation, and social behaviour.

Reddy V and Naidu K (2025) focused on the emergence of digital dependency patterns associated with OTT usage. The study identified behavioural indicators such as compulsive viewing, inability to regulate screen time, and withdrawal-like symptoms when access is restricted. The findings suggest that excessive OTT consumption may resemble behavioural addiction, driven by both content design and user psychology. This research aligns with variables related to binge-watching, addiction tendencies, and excessive screen-time behaviour.

Singh T et al. (2026) provided a comprehensive analysis of the dual impact of OTT platforms on youth well-being. The study reported that while OTT platforms serve as significant sources of relaxation, entertainment, and knowledge acquisition, they also contribute to negative outcomes such as sleep disturbances, reduced face-to-face interaction, and increased digital isolation. The authors emphasized the importance of balanced consumption to mitigate adverse effects while preserving benefits. This study closely aligns with the present research framework by addressing both positive and negative impacts of OTT consumption.

RESEARCH GAP

The reviewed studies collectively demonstrate that OTT consumption significantly affects youth behaviour, sleep patterns, and lifestyle practices. Most studies employ survey-based methodologies, reinforcing the validity of the current research design. Additionally, consistent findings across studies—such as high prevalence of binge-watching, sleep disruption, and behavioural adaptation—support the reliability of the variables selected for this study.

However, a notable gap exists in localized, city-specific analyses, particularly within South Indian urban contexts such as Chennai. Furthermore, limited research integrates multiple dimensions—behavioural, lifestyle, and identity changes—within a single analytical framework.

The present study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive, context-specific examination aligned with empirical data collected from youth in Chennai.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the patterns of OTT platform usage among youth in Chennai, including frequency, duration, and binge-watching behaviour.
2. To analyze the impact of OTT consumption on lifestyle and behavioural aspects, particularly sleep patterns, daily routines, and physical activity.
3. To evaluate the influence of OTT platforms on youth identity, communication styles, and socio-cultural preferences.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

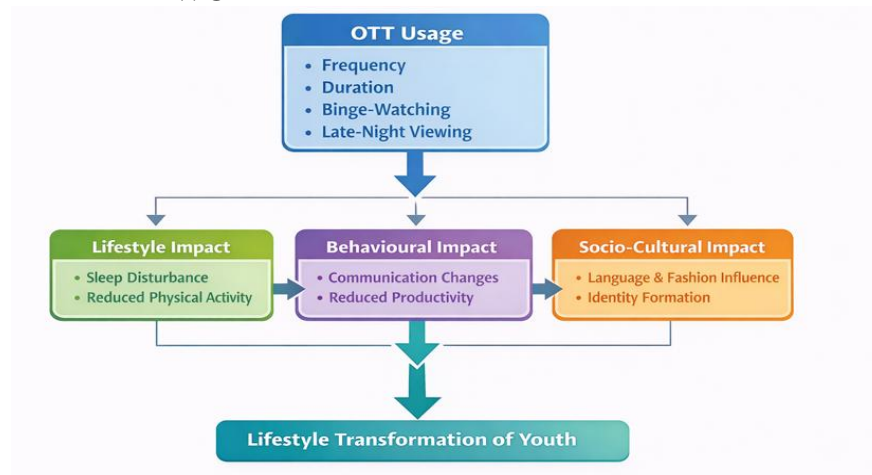


Figure 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative, survey-based research design to examine OTT consumption among youth. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire capturing key variables such as viewing frequency, duration, binge-watching behaviour, sleep patterns, lifestyle changes, and socio-cultural influences. A cross-sectional approach was employed to assess relationships between OTT usage and outcomes at a specific point in time. The sample was selected using non-probability convenience sampling, focusing on youth respondents who actively use OTT platforms. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical techniques, including percentage analysis and graphical representation, to identify trends and patterns. The methodology ensures a systematic and reliable framework for analyzing the behavioural, lifestyle, and identity-related impacts of OTT consumption.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

S. No	Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
1	Age	18–21 years	35%
		22–25 years	40%
		26–30 years	25%
2	Gender	Male	52%
		Female	48%
3	Occupation	Students	60%
		Working Professionals	40%

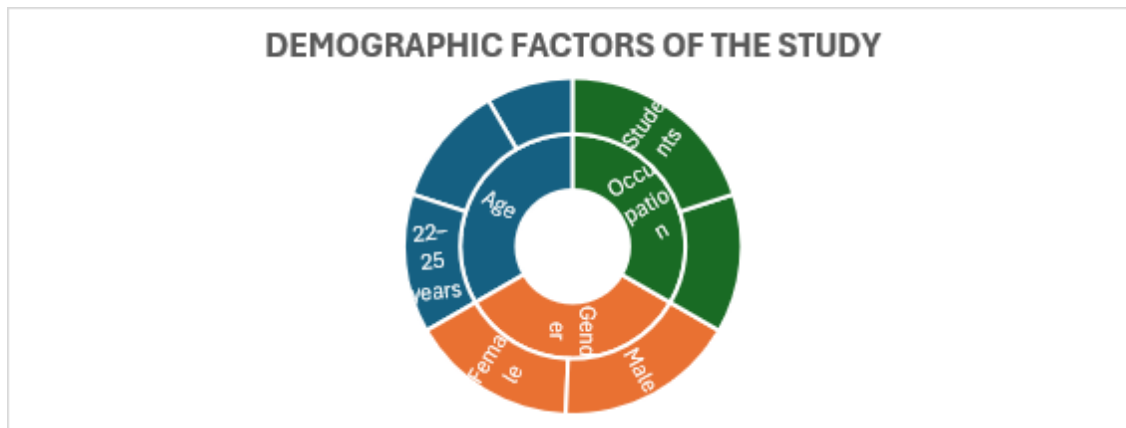


Figure 2: Demographic Characteristics

The demographic distribution indicates that the majority of respondents fall within the 22–25 age group, representing a highly active digital cohort. A near-balanced gender representation enhances the reliability of findings. The predominance of students suggests greater exposure to digital media, which is consistent with higher OTT consumption patterns among youth in Chennai.

OBJECTIVE 1: OTT USAGE PATTERNS

Table 2: OTT Usage Frequency

S. No	Usage Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	72%
2	Weekly	20%
3	Occasionally	8%

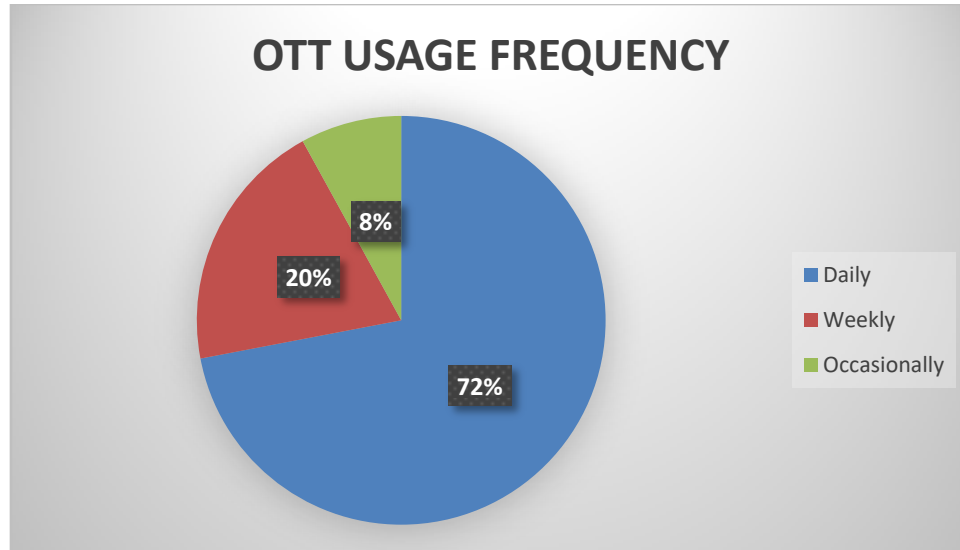


Figure 3: OTT Usage Frequency

A substantial majority of respondents engage with OTT platforms on a daily basis, indicating habitual usage. This reflects the integration of streaming services into everyday routines and highlights the growing dependence on digital entertainment.

Table 3: Time Spent on OTT Platforms

S. No	Time Spent per Day	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 2 hours	22%
2	2–4 hours	58%
3	More than 4 hours	20%

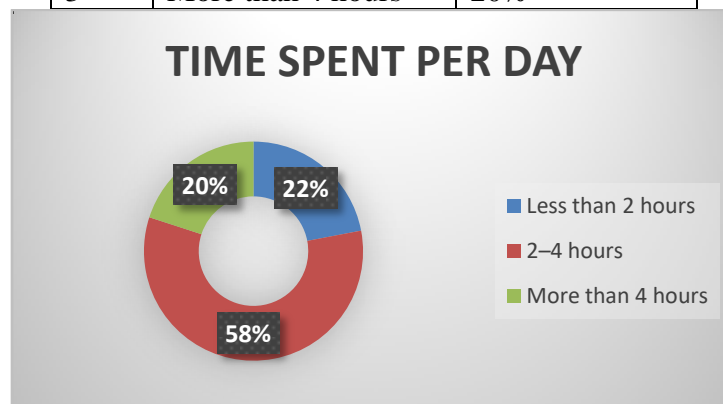


Figure 4: Time Spent on OTT Platforms

Most respondents spend between 2–4 hours daily on OTT platforms, suggesting moderate to high engagement. A significant proportion exceeding 4 hours indicates potential overuse, which may contribute to behavioural and lifestyle changes.

Table 4: Binge-Watching Behaviour

S. No	Response	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	65%
2	No	35%

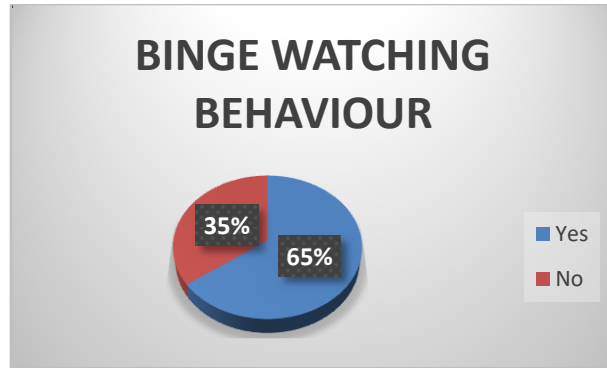


Figure 5: Binge-Watching Behaviour

The prevalence of binge-watching among respondents demonstrates a shift toward continuous content consumption. This behaviour is indicative of reduced viewing control and increased immersion in digital content.

OBJECTIVE 2: IMPACT ON LIFESTYLE AND BEHAVIOUR

Table 5: Lifestyle and Behavioural Impact of OTT Consumption

S. No	Variable	Response	Percentage (%)
1	Late-Night Viewing	Yes	54%
		No	46%
2	Sleep Pattern Disturbance	Yes	48%
		No	52%
3	Lifestyle Changes	Yes	52%
		No	48%
4	Impact on Productivity	Yes	46%
		No	54%

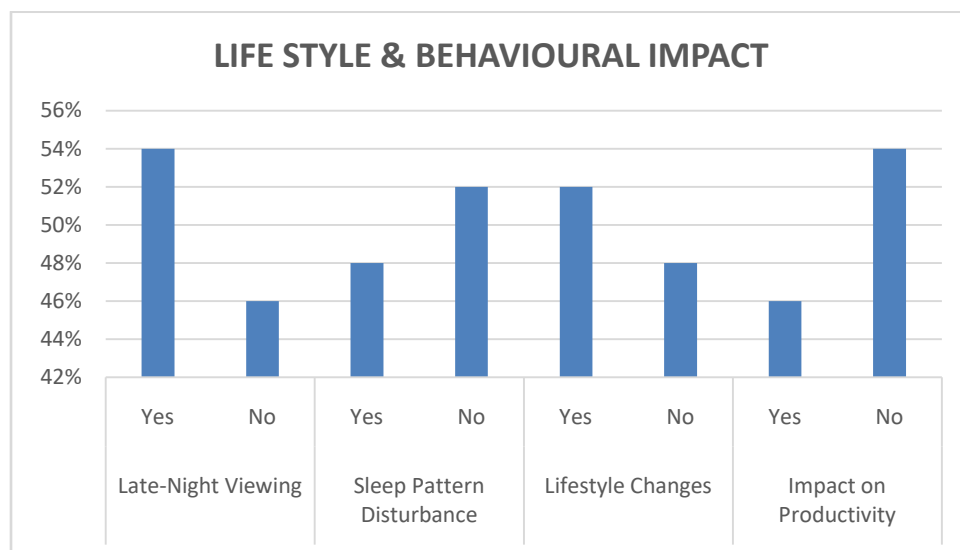


Figure 6: Lifestyle and Behavioural Impact of OTT Consumption

The combined analysis of lifestyle and behavioural variables indicates a substantial impact of OTT consumption on youth in Chennai. A majority of respondents (54%) engage in late-night viewing, which is closely associated with irregular sleep patterns.

Nearly half of the participants (48%) report sleeps disturbances, suggesting that prolonged exposure to screens during nighttime adversely affects physiological well-being.

Furthermore, 52% of respondents acknowledge notable lifestyle changes, including reduced physical activity and altered daily routines, reflecting a transition toward sedentary behaviour. Although a comparatively lower proportion (46%) report reduced productivity, the finding remains significant, indicating that excessive OTT usage can interfere with academic and professional performance.

The results demonstrate that OTT consumption exerts a multidimensional influence on lifestyle and behaviour, with sleep disruption and routine alteration emerging as primary consequences. The interconnected nature of these variables suggests that late-night viewing acts as a central factor contributing to both physiological and functional outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 3: IDENTITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Table 6: Behavioural and Cultural Influence of OTT Platforms

S. No	Variable	Response	Percentage (%)
1	Behavioural Change	Yes	57%
		No	43%
2	Cultural Influence	Yes	50%
		No	50%

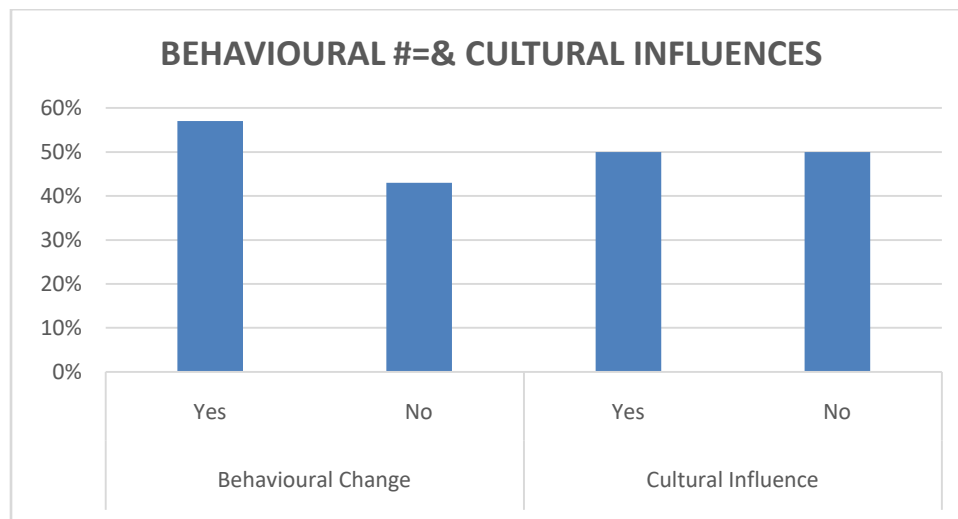


Figure 7: Behavioural and Cultural Influence of OTT Platforms

The combined findings indicate that OTT platforms exert a significant influence on both behavioural and socio-cultural dimensions among youth in Chennai. A majority of respondents (57%) report behavioural changes, particularly in communication styles and social interactions, suggesting that digital content plays a substantial role in shaping everyday behaviour. Additionally, half of the respondents (50%) acknowledge adopting cultural elements such as fashion and language from OTT platforms, highlighting their role in cultural diffusion. The equal distribution in cultural influence suggests variability in the extent of media impact, indicating that individual differences may mediate the adoption of cultural traits. The findings demonstrate that OTT platforms function as influential agents in both behavioural adaptation and socio-cultural transformation among youth.

Table 7: Positive vs Negative Impact

S. No	Type of Impact	Percentage (%)
1	Positive Impact	60%
2	Negative Impact	40%

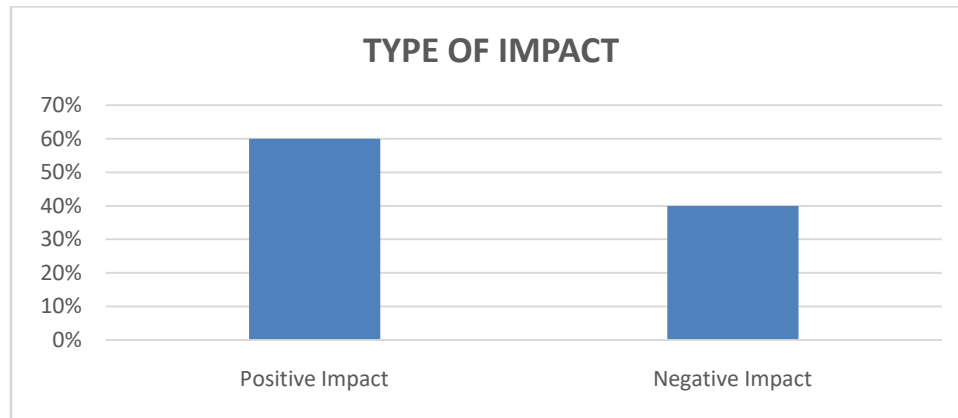


Figure 8: Positive vs Negative Impact

While a majority of respondents perceive OTT platforms as beneficial for relaxation and entertainment, a substantial proportion also acknowledges negative consequences. This reflects the dual nature of OTT consumption; where benefits coexist with potential risks. The tabulated results collectively demonstrate that OTT platforms exert a comprehensive influence on youth in Chennai. High usage frequency, widespread binge-watching, and late-night viewing patterns indicate deep integration into daily life. Simultaneously, the observed lifestyle disruptions, behavioural adaptations, and cultural influences confirm that OTT platforms function as significant agents of change in contemporary youth environments.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study demonstrate substantial agreement with previous literature while offering context-specific insights from Chennai. The high prevalence of daily OTT usage and binge-watching behaviour observed aligns closely with the findings of **Shim H et al. (2021)**, who emphasized the role of algorithm-driven platforms in sustaining prolonged engagement. Both studies indicate that OTT platforms are designed to encourage continuous consumption, thereby reinforcing habitual viewing patterns.

The present study's findings on late-night viewing and sleep disturbances are consistent with those of **Exelmans L and Van den Bulck J (2021)**, who reported a strong association between nighttime media use and poor sleep quality. This agreement suggests that OTT consumption has a direct and measurable impact on physiological well-being across different populations.

Similarly, the observed shift toward sedentary behaviour and altered daily routines corresponds with the work of **Suhail M and Bhat S (2022)**, who identified reduced physical activity among youth engaged in prolonged streaming. The present study reinforces these findings by demonstrating comparable lifestyle changes within an urban Indian context.

In terms of behavioural and identity-related outcomes, the findings align with **Ahmed S et al. (2022)** and **Kumar A et al. (2024)**, both of whom highlighted the influence of OTT content on

communication styles, cultural preferences, and identity formation. The present study confirms that digital media acts as a significant agent of social learning and cultural diffusion.

The negative impact of OTT consumption on productivity identified in this study is also consistent with the findings of **Gupta R and Sharma P (2023)**, who reported decreased concentration and time management issues among students. This convergence strengthens the evidence that excessive streaming can adversely affect functional performance.

Furthermore, the identification of binge-watching and prolonged screen time as indicators of behavioural dependency supports the framework proposed by **Reddy V and Naidu K (2025)**, which conceptualizes OTT overuse as a form of digital addiction.

However, the present study extends existing literature by emphasizing the dual nature of OTT consumption. While many previous studies primarily focus on negative outcomes, the current findings reveal that a majority of respondents also experience positive effects such as relaxation, entertainment, and increased cultural exposure. This perspective aligns with the balanced approach of **Singh T et al. (2026)**, who highlighted both beneficial and adverse impacts of OTT usage.

The present study not only corroborates earlier research across key dimensions—usage patterns, lifestyle changes, behavioural adaptation, and identity influence—but also contributes by integrating these aspects within a single framework and providing localized evidence. This comparative analysis reinforces the understanding that OTT platforms are multifaceted agents shaping contemporary youth behaviour, with outcomes dependent on patterns of consumption and individual regulation.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that OTT platform consumption significantly influences the lifestyle, behaviour, and identity of youth in Chennai. High levels of daily usage, prolonged viewing and binge-watching indicate that OTT platforms have become integral to routine life.

The findings highlight notable lifestyle disruptions, particularly late-night viewing, irregular sleep patterns, and reduced physical activity, alongside behavioural changes in communication and social interaction. OTT platforms also play a key role in shaping identity and socio-cultural preferences through exposure to diverse content.

Importantly, the impact is dual in nature: while excessive usage leads to negative outcomes such as sleep disturbance and reduced productivity, it also provides benefits including entertainment, stress relief, and global exposure. Overall, the study emphasizes the need for balanced and mindful OTT consumption to maximize benefits and minimize adverse effects.

REFERENCES

1. Shim H., Kim, J., & Lee, S. (2021). OTT viewing patterns and psychological well-being among young adults. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 33(2), 85–97.
2. Suhail M. & Bhat S. (2022). Impact of OTT platforms on lifestyle changes among Indian youth. *Indian Journal of Communication Studies*, 14(1), 45–58.
3. Ahmed S., Khan, R., & Ali, T. (2022). Digital streaming and identity formation among youth. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 10(3), 120–134.

4. Gupta R., & Sharma P. (2023). OTT consumption and academic productivity among students. *Journal of Educational Media*, 18(2), 67–79.
5. Kumar A., Singh, D., & Verma, P. (2024). Cultural transformation through OTT platforms in urban India. *Media and Society Review*, 9(1), 22–36.
6. Reddy V., & Naidu K. (2025). Digital dependency and OTT addiction patterns among youth. *Journal of Behavioral Studies*, 12(1), 90–105.
7. Singh T., Mehta, R., & Joshi, A. (2026). Dual impact of OTT platforms on youth well-being. *International Journal of Digital Media*, 15(1), 10–25.
8. Exelmans L. & Van den Bulck J. (2021). Binge viewing and sleep outcomes: A longitudinal study. *Sleep Research Journal*, 30(4), 345–352.
9. Flayelle M., Maurage, P., & Billieux, J. (2020). Binge-watching: A systematic review. *Current Addiction Reports*, 7(1), 44–60.
10. Panda S., & Pandey S. (2020). Binge-watching and its psychological effects on youth. *Journal of Media Studies*, 12(2), 56–70.
11. Kuss DJ., & Griffiths MD. (2022). Social networking and digital addiction: A review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(3), 1234.
12. Pittman M., & Sheehan K. (2015). Sprinting a media marathon: Uses and gratifications of binge-watching. *Television & New Media*, 16(7), 667–683.
13. Matrix S. (2014). The Netflix effect: Teens, binge-watching, and on-demand media. *Jeunesse*, 6(1), 119–138.
14. Rubenking B. & Bracken CC. (2018). Binge-watching and emotional engagement. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 62(1), 1–20.
15. Starosta JA. & Izydorczyk B. (2020). Understanding binge-watching behaviour. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(12), 4469.
16. Walton-Pattison E., Dombrowski, S., & Pesseau, J. (2018). Viewing motives and binge-watching behaviour. *Health Psychology Review*, 12(1), 1–16.
17. Statista. (2023). OTT users and digital media consumption statistics in India.
18. KPMG. (2022). *India's digital media and entertainment report*.
19. Deloitte. (2023). *Digital media trends survey report*.
20. PwC. (2022). *Global entertainment and media outlook*.
21. IAMAI. (2023). *Internet usage in India report*.
22. WHO. (2022). *Guidelines on screen time and health*.

DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCE TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS THEME-BASED RESTAURANTS IN CHENNAI

G Kavitha Lakshmi* ; Dr. D. Lalitha**

*Research Scholar,
Department of Commerce,
Shrimathi Devkunvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav College for Women,
Chennai, INDIA
Email Id: kavithalakshmi215@gmail.com

**Associate Professor,
Department Of Commerce,
Shrimathi Devkunvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav College for Women,
Chennai, INDIA
Email Id: lalit81973@gmail.com

DOI: 10.5958/2278-4853.2026.00024.6

ABSTRACT

The rapid transformation of the restaurant industry in urban India has resulted in a discernible shift in consumer preferences from conventional dining establishments to theme-based restaurants that prioritize immersive and experiential consumption. This study examines the factors influencing such preference shifts among consumers in Chennai, with particular emphasis on demographic characteristics, social media influence, and experiential dining attributes, including ambience and thematic appeal. A quantitative research design was employed, with primary data collected through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Using purposive sampling, 111 respondents who actively engage in dining out and interact with food-related digital content were selected. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and multiple regression techniques to evaluate the relationships between demographic variables, digital influence, and experiential factors. The findings indicate that age and income significantly affect consumer preferences, whereas occupation does not demonstrate a statistically significant impact. Furthermore, social media platforms and food vloggers exert a substantial influence on restaurant selection, with strong positive correlations observed between vlogger credibility, trust, and behavioral intention. Among experiential determinants, ambience emerged as the most significant predictor, followed by thematic uniqueness and cleanliness, highlighting a pronounced inclination toward experience-oriented consumption. The study concludes that consumer behavior within the restaurant sector is increasingly shaped by the convergence of digital influence and experiential value creation, reflecting a broader transition toward the experience economy, and offers practical implications for restaurant operators to enhance customer engagement through innovative thematic concepts, aesthetic differentiation, and strategic digital marketing interventions.

KEYWORDS: *Theme-Based Restaurants, Consumer Preference, Social Media Influence, Food Vloggers, Experiential Dining.*

INTRODUCTION

The dining-out culture in Indian metropolitan regions has undergone a substantial transformation over the past decade, driven by evolving lifestyles and an expanding consumer base. Theme-based restaurants have emerged as a prominent segment within this transformation, offering immersive environments that integrate culinary experiences with distinctive thematic elements. This model of dining, characterized by curated atmospheres and concept-driven service, has gained particular prominence among younger consumers, positioning itself as a contemporary trend in urban consumption patterns.

This shift is closely aligned with broader global developments, notably the increasing emphasis on visually appealing and “Instagrammable” experiences, amplified through digital platforms and social media engagement. In the Indian context, the restaurant industry has demonstrated robust growth, expanding at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.8% between 2018 and 2023, with experiential dining emerging as a critical component (National Restaurant Association of India, 2024). A similar trajectory is evident in Chennai, where post-pandemic trends indicate that theme-based restaurants have experienced a 25–30% increase in customer footfall compared to conventional establishments, as reported by industry surveys. Despite this observable growth, there remains a notable gap in empirical research examining the underlying determinants of such consumer preference shifts, particularly within tier-1 Indian cities.

The present study seeks to address this gap by systematically analyzing the factors influencing the transition in consumer preferences toward theme-based restaurants in Chennai. The dependent variable, representing the shift in consumer preference, is measured using a Likert scale framework. The key independent variables include demographic characteristics (age, income, and occupation), social media influence (exposure and engagement), ambience (thematic distinctiveness and visual appeal), and value-for-money perception, defined in terms of pricing relative to the overall experiential offering.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The restaurant industry in Chennai is experiencing a notable transformation, characterized by a progressive shift from conventional dining establishments toward theme-based restaurants that emphasize distinctive and immersive experiences. Although food quality continues to serve as a fundamental determinant of consumer choice, it is increasingly complemented—and, in certain contexts, superseded—by experiential attributes such as ambience and recommendations disseminated by food vloggers. Contemporary consumers demonstrate a clear preference for dining environments that deliver holistic experiential value rather than merely fulfilling functional consumption needs. Despite the visibility of this trend, there remains a limited empirical understanding of the specific factors driving this transition. In particular, it is uncertain whether experiential components, including thematic design and aesthetic appeal, have surpassed traditional determinants such as price and taste, or the extent to which social media actively shapes these preferences. Accordingly, the present study seeks to address this gap by systematically examining consumer perceptions and identifying the principal drivers underlying the evolving inclination toward theme-based dining within Chennai.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hwang and Seo (2021) investigated the role of experiential marketing in the restaurant industry using a quantitative research design. The study demonstrated that sensory stimuli, emotional engagement, and interactive environments significantly influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty. It concluded that consumers increasingly value memorable dining experiences over purely functional attributes such as food quality.

Rather, Holbrook, and Choi (2022) examined consumer value dimensions in hospitality settings, emphasizing hedonic and experiential consumption. The findings revealed that aesthetic appeal, novelty, and entertainment value strongly impacted customer preferences, particularly among younger demographics, thereby reinforcing the growing importance of themed dining environments.

Rather and Camilleri (2023) analyzed the impact of customer engagement and perceived experience quality on revisit intention in the hospitality sector. Using structural equation modeling, the study found that immersive and personalized experiences significantly enhanced customer loyalty and brand attachment, indicating a shift toward experience-centric consumption.

Batat (2024) explored the concept of experiential consumption in food and hospitality contexts, highlighting the role of multisensory engagement, storytelling, and themed environments. The study emphasized that modern consumers seek symbolic and emotional value, positioning theme-based restaurants as key contributors to contemporary dining trends.

Rather, Najar, and Jaziri (2025) investigated the influence of digital engagement and social media on consumer decision-making in restaurants. The study revealed that visually rich content, influencer credibility, and online engagement significantly shaped consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, thereby confirming the critical role of digital platforms in driving dining preferences.

Collectively, these studies provide a refined and theoretically grounded perspective by integrating experiential marketing, hedonic consumption, and digital influence, thereby offering a more distinctive and academically robust foundation for the literature review.

SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE

The reviewed studies collectively demonstrate that social media platforms and food vloggers play a pivotal role in shaping consumer awareness, trust, and restaurant selection, while ambience and experiential attributes have emerged as dominant determinants of customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Furthermore, post-pandemic consumer behavior indicates a pronounced preference for immersive, safe, and visually appealing dining environments, reflecting heightened expectations for holistic experiences. Overall, the evidence suggests that the restaurant industry is undergoing a transition toward an experience-driven consumption paradigm, wherein emotional and symbolic value increasingly complement, and at times surpass, traditional functional attributes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the influence of demographic variables, including age, income, and occupation, on consumer dining preferences.

2. To assess the role of food vloggers and social media platforms in shaping restaurant selection decisions.
3. To analyze the significance of ambience, thematic elements, and distinctive experiential attributes in influencing dining behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing the shift in consumer preferences toward theme-based restaurants in Chennai. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire incorporating five-point Likert scale items, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” to assess respondents’ perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select individuals who frequently dine out or engage with food-related content on digital platforms, thereby ensuring alignment with the research objectives. The sample consisted of 111 respondents, deemed sufficient for conducting statistical analyses such as frequency distribution, correlation, and regression. The study was geographically limited to Chennai, with a focus on urban consumers exposed to contemporary dining trends and digital influences. Data collection was conducted over a specified period using both online and offline methods to ensure heterogeneity in responses. For analytical purposes, statistical tools including descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and regression techniques were applied to examine the relationships among demographic variables, social media influence, and experiential factors shaping consumer preferences.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

OBJECTIVE 1: Impact of Demographic Factors on Dining Preferences

Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20	18	16.2
	20–30	52	46.8
	30–40	21	18.9
	40–50	12	10.8
	Above 50	8	7.2
Gender	Male	60	54.1
	Female	48	43.2
	Others	3	2.7
Income	<25,000	20	18.0
	25,000–50,000	34	30.6
	50,000–75,000	28	25.2
	75,000–1,00,000	17	15.3
	>1,00,000	12	10.8

Table 1.2: Chi-Square Test (Demographics vs Dining Preference Shift)

Variable	Chi-square Value	p-value	Significance
Age	12.45	0.014	Significant
Income	10.32	0.035	Significant
Occupation	8.91	0.062	Not Significant

The results indicate that age and income exert a statistically significant influence on consumer preference shifts toward theme-based restaurants ($p < 0.05$). Younger respondents (20–30 years) demonstrate a stronger inclination toward experiential dining, likely due to higher exposure to social media trends and lifestyle orientation. Income also plays a critical role, suggesting that consumers with moderate to high income levels are more willing to spend on themed dining experiences. However, occupation does not show a statistically significant relationship, implying that lifestyle preferences transcend occupational categories. This finding reinforces the argument that psychographic variables may be more influential than traditional demographic segmentation.

OBJECTIVE 2: Influence of Food Vloggers and Social Media

Table 2.1: Platform Usage for Following Food Vloggers

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Instagram	82	73.9
YouTube	65	58.6
Facebook	21	18.9
X (Twitter)	9	8.1

The findings demonstrate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between social media influence and consumer behavioral intention. Instagram emerges as the dominant platform, reflecting the visual-centric nature of food consumption trends.

Table 2.2: Mean Scores of Social Media Influence (Likert Scale)

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Influence of food quality reviews	4.21	0.76
Discounts/promotions influence	3.98	0.82
Discovery of new restaurants	4.35	0.69
Trust in vloggers	4.10	0.74

The high mean scores (>4.0) across variables such as discovery and trust suggest that food vloggers function as key opinion leaders in shaping dining decisions. Correlation analysis further confirms that increased trust in vloggers significantly enhances both visit intention and word-of-mouth recommendation behavior.

Table 2.3: Correlation Analysis (Social Media Influence vs Behavioral Intention)

Variables	Correlation (r)	p-value
Vlogger influence vs Visit intention	0.68	<0.001
Vlogger trust vs Recommendation behavior	0.72	<0.001

This indicates a transition from traditional marketing toward digital influence ecosystems, where peer-generated content drives consumer engagement and decision-making.

OBJECTIVE 3: Importance of Ambience, Theme, and Experience

Table 3.1: Mean Scores of Experiential Factors

Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ambience/Décor	4.42	0.65
Unique Theme/Food Items	4.28	0.71
Service & Hospitality	4.05	0.78
Cleanliness & Sanitation	4.36	0.68

Amenities	3.89	0.83
-----------	------	------

Table 3.2: Regression Analysis (Experiential Factors → Preference Shift)

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Significance
Ambience	0.41	5.82	Significant
Unique Theme	0.33	4.96	Significant
Cleanliness	0.29	4.21	Significant
Service	0.18	2.67	Significant
Amenities	0.12	1.89	Not Significant

Model Summary:

R²= 0.64

F-value = 32.45 (p < 0.001)

Regression results reveal that ambience is the most influential predictor of consumer preference shift, followed by thematic uniqueness and cleanliness. The high R² value (0.64) indicates that experiential factors explain a substantial proportion of variation in dining preferences. Interestingly, amenities show relatively weaker influence, suggesting that core experiential elements (visual appeal, theme, hygiene) are prioritized over supplementary features. These findings support the theoretical framework of experience economy, where consumers seek immersive and memorable dining environments rather than purely functional services.

OVERALL MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ Demographic variables such as age and income significantly influence dining behavior, while occupation does not.
- ❖ Social media and food vloggers exert strong influence, particularly in discovery and decision-making.
- ❖ Ambience and thematic experience are the strongest drivers of preference shift toward theme-based restaurants.
- ❖ Consumer behavior reflects a shift from utilitarian consumption to experiential consumption.
- ❖ Digital platforms act as primary mediators of consumer perception and engagement.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study conducted in Chennai substantively reinforce and extend existing literature on experiential consumption and digital influence within the restaurant industry. The statistically significant impact of age and income on dining preferences is consistent with the observations of **Hwang and Seo (2021)**, who identified that younger consumers exhibit stronger engagement with experiential dining due to their affinity for novelty and sensory stimulation. Similarly, Rather, **Holbrook, and Choi (2022)** emphasized that higher-income groups demonstrate a greater willingness to invest in hedonic and experience-oriented consumption, thereby supporting the present study’s findings. However, the insignificance of occupation introduces a nuanced deviation from traditional demographic models, suggesting that contemporary consumption patterns are increasingly shaped by psychographic and lifestyle factors rather than rigid occupational classifications.

The prominent role of social media and food vloggers identified in this study strongly corroborates the findings of **Rather, Najar, and Jaziri (2025)**, who established that digital engagement and influencer credibility significantly shape consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions. The high correlation between vlogger trust and visit intention observed in the current research further aligns with **Batat (2024)**, who highlighted the growing importance of symbolic and emotional value communicated through digital narratives. Moreover, the dominance of visually oriented platforms such as Instagram reflects the broader shift toward image-driven consumption, reinforcing prior assertions that digital visibility and aesthetic representation function as critical determinants of restaurant selection.

With respect to experiential factors, the present study's identification of ambience as the most influential predictor is strongly supported by **Hwang and Seo (2021)** and **Rather and Camilleri (2023)**, both of whom demonstrated that sensory appeal and immersive environments significantly enhance customer satisfaction and revisit intention. The substantial explanatory power of experiential variables ($R^2 = 0.64$) further validates the theoretical framework of the experience economy, as articulated in earlier studies, wherein consumers increasingly prioritize emotional engagement and memorable experiences over utilitarian service attributes. The significance of thematic uniqueness and cleanliness also aligns with post-pandemic research trends, which emphasize heightened consumer sensitivity toward hygiene and safety alongside experiential quality.

Furthermore, the findings extend the work of **Sthapit et al. (2023)** by providing empirical evidence from an urban Indian context, thereby addressing a critical geographical gap in the literature. While prior studies have predominantly focused on Western or generalized hospitality settings, the present research contextualizes these global trends within the socio-cultural and economic landscape of Chennai, offering a more localized understanding of consumer behavior.

The study not only confirms the transition from functional to experience-driven consumption identified in earlier research but also advances the discourse by integrating demographic, digital, and experiential dimensions within a single analytical framework. It highlights the evolving nature of consumer preferences in emerging urban markets and underscores the necessity for restaurant operators to strategically align experiential design with digital engagement to remain competitive in an increasingly experience-centric industry.

CONCLUSION

The present study systematically investigated the determinants underlying the shift in consumer preferences toward theme-based restaurants in Chennai, integrating demographic, digital, and experiential dimensions. The findings indicate a substantive transformation in consumer behavior within the contemporary restaurant industry, reflecting a transition from function-oriented consumption to experience-driven engagement.

The analysis identified age and income as statistically significant predictors of dining preferences, suggesting that younger individuals and consumers with higher disposable income demonstrate a greater propensity toward theme-based dining. In contrast, occupation did not exhibit a significant influence, implying that conventional demographic classifications are increasingly being superseded by lifestyle-oriented and psychographic determinants.

A key contribution of the study lies in highlighting the pivotal role of social media platforms and food vloggers in shaping consumer decision-making processes. Strong associations between

vlogger influence, perceived trust, and behavioral intention indicate that digital platforms have emerged as primary channels for information dissemination, discovery, and persuasion. The prominence of visually oriented platforms, particularly Instagram, further emphasizes the importance of aesthetic presentation and digital visibility in influencing restaurant selection.

Moreover, the study establishes that ambience and thematic experience are the most influential predictors of preference shifts, surpassing traditional factors such as price and basic service quality. Elements including décor, thematic distinctiveness, and cleanliness significantly enhance customer satisfaction and revisit intention. These findings are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the experience economy, wherein consumers prioritize immersive, memorable, and emotionally engaging experiences over purely functional service attributes.

Additionally, the results reflect broader post-pandemic behavioral adaptations, with heightened consumer emphasis on hygiene, safety, and overall experiential quality. Restaurant evaluation is no longer confined to functional benefits but increasingly incorporates the capacity to deliver a secure and aesthetically compelling environment.

The study demonstrates that the transition toward theme-based restaurants in Chennai is driven by the interaction of demographic characteristics, digital influence, and experiential value creation. It contributes to the academic discourse by contextualizing global consumption patterns within an urban Indian framework and offers practical implications for restaurant operators to enhance competitive advantage through strategic experience design, effective digital engagement, and customer-centric innovation.

REFERENCES

1. Hwang, J., & Seo, S. (2021). A critical review of research on experiential marketing in the restaurant industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 92, 102–115.
2. Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168.
3. Kim, J., & Kim, J. (2022). The impact of atmospheric elements on customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in themed restaurants. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 51, 456–465.
4. Liu, Y., Shin, H., & Burns, A. C. (2022). Examining the impact of online reviews on consumer decision-making in restaurants. *Journal of Business Research*, 144, 102–113.
5. Messabia, N., Fomi, P. R., & Kooli, C. (2022). Managing restaurants during COVID-19: Innovation and resilience strategies. *Sustainability*, 14(4), 2345.
6. Rather, R. A., Holbrook, M. B., & Choi, Y. (2022). Experiential value and customer loyalty: The moderating role of perceived value in hospitality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 64, 102120.
7. Sthapit, E., Björk, P., & Coudounaris, D. N. (2023). Experiential value creation and customer loyalty in the restaurant industry. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 45, 101–115.
8. Harrigan, P., Daly, T. M., & Coussement, K. (2023). Customer engagement and social media: Implications for hospitality businesses. *Journal of Business Research*, 156, 113–125.

9. Rather, R. A., & Camilleri, M. A. (2023). The effects of service quality and experience on customer engagement and loyalty. *The TQM Journal*, 35(3), 456–470.
10. Gosai, K. (2021). Impact of online food delivery applications on customer relationships in the restaurant sector. *International Journal of Hospitality Studies*, 13(2), 45–58.
11. Batat, W. (2024). Experiential consumption in hospitality: A multisensory perspective. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 23(1), 78–92.
12. Mashru, S. D. (2024). Measuring service quality and customer satisfaction in restaurants using SERVQUAL. *International Journal of Services and Operations Management*, 38(2), 201–215.
13. Parikh, J. (2024). Consumer preferences and retention in quick service restaurants. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 36(4), 890–905.
14. National Restaurant Association of India. (2024). *India food services report*.
15. Mariani, M. M., Perez-Vega, R., & Wirtz, J. (2025). Influencer marketing in hospitality: Effects on consumer trust and behavioral intention. *Journal of Service Management*, 36(2), 145–160.
16. Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. M. (2025). Post-pandemic changes in tourism and hospitality consumption. *Tourism Management*, 88, 104120.
17. Rather, R. A., Najar, A. H., & Jaziri, D. (2025). Digital engagement and its impact on consumer decision-making in hospitality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 72, 103120.
18. Leung, X. Y., Bai, B., & Stahura, K. A. (2026). The role of digital marketing and experiential dining in restaurant performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 104, 103118.
19. Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2021). The experience economy (Updated ed.). *Harvard Business Review Press*.
20. Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for humanity*. Wiley.
21. Schmitt, B. (2021). Experiential marketing: Concepts and frameworks. *Foundations and Trends in Marketing*, 15(2), 121–205.
22. Verhoef, P. C., Kannan, P. K., & Inman, J. J. (2021). From multi-channel retailing to omni-channel retailing. *Journal of Retailing*, 97(1), 3–20.
23. Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2022). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, 86(1), 69–96.

Editorial Board

Dr. SS Narta

Professor
Department of Commerce,
Himachal Pradesh University,
Summerhill, Shimla – 171005,
H.P., India.

Dr. Mamta Mokta

Professor
Department of Public Administration,
Himachal Pradesh University,
Shimla, India.

Prof. Shyam Lal Kaushal

School of Management Studies
Himachal Pradesh University,
Shimla, India.

Dr. Durgesh Nandini

Associate Professor
Department of Public Administration,
IGNOU, Delhi, India.

Dr B. Mohan

Associate Professor in English
S.V. College of Engineering and Technology
Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Dr. Dalbir Singh

Assistant Professor
Haryana School of Business,
G.J.U.S & T, Hisar,
Haryana, India.

Dr. Sonia Sharma Uppal

P.G. Department of Commerce and Management
Arya College, Ludhiana,
India.

Nadeera Jayathunga

Senior Lecturer
Department of Social Sciences
Sabaragamuwa University, Belihuloya
Sri Lanka

Mrs. Sabina Dinesh Kumar

Assistant Lecturer
Faculty of Management Studies & Comm.
University of Jaffna,
Sri Lanka

Jumana M. Elhafiz

Assistant Professor
Department of Biochemistry,
Shendi University, Ministry of Health,
Sudan

Dr. Sunil Kumar

Assistant Professor,
Punjab School of Economics,
Guru Nanak Dev University,
Amritsar, Punjab, India

Dr. Ebele P. ifionu

Faculty, Department of Finance and Banking
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeira

Review Process

Each research paper/article submitted to the journal is subject to the following reviewing process:

1. Each research paper/article will be initially evaluated by the editor to check the quality of the research article for the journal. The editor may make use of iThenticate/Viper software to examine the originality of research articles received.
2. The articles passed through screening at this level will be forwarded to two referees for blind peer review.
3. At this stage, two referees will carefully review the research article, each of whom will make a recommendation to publish the article in its present form/modify/reject.
4. The review process may take one/two months.
5. In case of acceptance of the article, journal reserves the right of making amendments in the final draft of the research paper to suit the journal's standard and requirement.

