

Volume 4 • Issue 2
July 2026



BHUBANESWAR

jim.imibh.edu.in
e-ISSN: 2583-8326

IMIB

Journal of

Innovation and

Management



IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management is published biannually in January and July by IMI Bhubaneswar.

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management is hosted on our web-based online submission and peer review system. Please read the manuscript submission guidelines on the journal website, and then visit <https://peerreview.sagepub.com/jim> to login and submit your article online. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Copyright © 2026 IMI Bhubaneswar. All rights reserved. The views expressed in the articles and other material published in *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management* do not reflect the opinions of the Institute.

Annual Subscription: Individual rate (print only) ₹1,580; institutional rate (print only) ₹2,760. For orders from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives, SAARC rates apply: individuals \$35; institutional rate \$50. Prices include postage. Print subscriptions are available for institutions at a discounted rate. For subscriptions, please write to: customerservicejournals@sagepub.in

Change of Address: Four weeks' advance notice must be given when notifying change of address. Please send the old address label to ensure proper identification. Please specify the name of the journal and send change of address notification to customerservicejournals@sagepub.in

Printed and published by Dr Malaya Malla, Head-Administration, IMI Bhubaneswar, on behalf of IMI Bhubaneswar, IDCO Plot No. 1, Gothapatna, PO: Malipada, Dist.: Khurda, Bhubaneswar 751003, India. Printed at Sai Printo Pack Pvt Ltd, A 102/4 Phase II, Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi, Delhi 110020.

Editor: Sangram Keshari Jena

About the Journal

The journal is born out of IMI Bhubaneswar's emphasis on one of the key pillars of its sustenance—research. IMI Bhubaneswar, a young institution with a rich legacy, has always been at the forefront to push the horizons of research awareness within the academic fraternity. The journal aims to serve as a forum for creation and dissemination of knowledge on innovations and its application to solve challenges in business management. The journal is international and interdisciplinary in nature.

The main focus of the journal is to provide a platform to the academicians and practitioners to discuss innovations and their implications on business management and processes. It focuses on bridging the gap between academia and industry for cross fertilization of ideas leading to effective dissemination of innovative solutions in emerging areas. The journal features research papers across function areas on topics such as customer relationship management (CRM); market segmentation; supply chain management; data mining tools & techniques; block chain; artificial intelligence (AI); internet of things (IoT); customer lifetime value (CLV); economics of information technology; cloud applications; cyber security; mobile computing; geographic information systems (GIS); information systems and ethics; sustainability; green computing; digital marketing; social media; social analytics; supplier relationship management; enterprise solutions; virtualization; cognitive science; governance; entrepreneurship; design thinking; VR or augmented based learning and development; HRMS and HR score card; people analytics; automation in performance management; algorithm trading; RegTech; and FinTech.

The journal is primarily an application-oriented journal and therefore invites research papers that are based on evidence and produce findings that are implementable. The journal is impartial towards methodology used as long as it is robust and relevant.

The journal is open access, and the articles would be published under the Creative Commons licenses.

Aims and Scope

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management offers a platform for interface between emerging business management problems and evolving innovative techno-management solutions. It serves as a platform for seamless integration of methodological, technological and disruptive developments, and their business applications. We publish articles which address research in technology, techniques, processes and applications in business. The journal, therefore, bridges the gap between academia and industry for cross fertilization of ideas leading to effective dissemination of developments in emerging areas.

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management is an interdisciplinary journal in the area of business management which captures developments in technology to facilitate application in business. The journal facilitates dissemination of knowledge on shifting techno-management paradigms and maps its cascading consequences on various facets of business (Marketing, Finance, OB HR, Operations, Strategy, Entrepreneurship, etc.). We encourage research that investigates the impact of innovations on various stakeholders such as customers, vendors, partners, etc. In pursuit of this endeavor, we publish scholarly research as well as practice papers offering unique insights.

Editor

Sangram Keshari Jena, *IMI Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India*

Associate Editors

Aritra Pan, *IMI Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India*

Sunny Bose, *IBS Hyderabad, Telengana State, India*

Daniel Roque Gomes, *School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra Portugal*

Alok Mishra, *Central University Hyderabad, India*

Mario Di Nardo, *University of Naples Federico II in Naples, Italy*

Umer Shahzad, *Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, Czech Republic*

Anjan Swain, *IIT Mandi, India*

Editorial Advisory Board

Arvind Ashta, *Bergundy School of Business, France*

B. K. Mangaraj, *Production, Operations and Decision Sciences, XLRI Jamshedpur, India*

Bharat Bhasker, *IIM Ahmedabad, India*

Biplab Bhattacharjee, *Jindal Global Business School, Sonapat, Haryana, India*

D. P. Goyal, *IIM Shillong, India*

Emmanuel Joel Aikins Abakah, *University of Ghana Business School, Ghana*

Hardik Vachharajani, *Crown Institute of Higher Education, Australia*

P. L. Meena, *College of Charleston School of Business, USA*

Rajagopal, *EGADE Business School, Mexico*

Santanu Chatterjee, *Terry College of Business, University of Georgia, USA*

Sarada Prasad Sarmah, *Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, IIT Kharagpur, India*

Satyam Bhusan Dash, *IIM Lucknow, India*

Sudha Ram, *INSITE: Center for Business Intelligence and Analytics, The University of Arizona, USA*

Sujoy Bhattacharya, *Decision Sciences, VGSOM, IIT Kharagpur, India*

Contents

Original Articles

- Analysing Online Reviews Using NVivo: A Study of e-Tailing 143
Kanika Juneja and Farah S. Choudhary
- A Decade-Long Voyage of Gender Inclusion Research:
A Bibliometric Analysis 167
Nisha Gandhi, Usha Arora and Shabnam Saxena
- Disempowered by Leadership: Tales from the Middle of the
Organisational Pyramid 187
Soumendra Narain Bagchi and Rajeev Sharma
- Synergies Unveiled: Mapping the Intersection of Financial
Well-being and Sustainable Development Goals through
Bibliometric Insights 207
Bappaditya Biswas and Mantosh Sharma
- Role of District Central Cooperative Banks in Financial Inclusion:
A Study on Two Selected Districts of West Bengal 227
Udaybhanu Bhattacharyya, Anupam Nandy and Debendra Nath Dash
- Understanding the Global Awareness of Corporate Social
Responsibility of Multinational Corporations in the
Oil and Gas Sector 248
Sarah Mohabir, Yogesh C. Joshi and Darshana R. Dave

Visit <https://jim.imibh.edu.in/>

Analysing Online Reviews Using NVivo: A Study of e-Tailing

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management
4(2) 143–166, 2026
© The Author(s) 2023
DOI: 10.1177/ijim.231197882
jim.imibh.edu.in



Kanika Juneja¹  and Farah S. Choudhary¹ 

Abstract

Today, online consumers play an important role in the field of marketing. The word of mouth spread by them through online mode helps the marketers in understanding the consumer behaviour. Marketers rely on the information provided by the consumers in the form of online reviews or comments. The purpose of this article is to analyse the online reviews using Nvivo and to validate the scale used for measuring electronic word of mouth. The data were collected from 420 online consumers from Jammu city, who consider online reviews before purchasing. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques, such as NVivo and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), were used. The research showed that the secondary data collected from Amazon India website in the form of online reviews matched the scale that was considered by the researchers from extant literature. The study thus helped in validating the scale for measuring electronic word of mouth communication. This research is of its kind that has been done in India. The present study may be used by the marketers for measuring the electronic word of mouth communication that would further help them in understanding consumer behaviour and, ultimately, knowing about the present and future needs of online consumers.

Keywords

Content, e-Tailing, intensity, online reviews, positive and negative valence

¹The Business School, University of Jammu, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Road, Jammu Tawi, Jammu & Kashmir, India

Corresponding author:

Kanika Juneja, The Business School, University of Jammu, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Road, Jammu Tawi, Jammu & Kashmir 180006, India.

E-mail: kanika.ju@gmail.com



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

Introduction

According to the *United Nations Data*, the total population of India accounts for 1.41 billion (as on 19 December 2022) that amounts to 17.7% of total world population. In the beginning of year 2022, the rate of internet penetration in India stood at 47%, that is, almost 658 million of Indian population uses internet, as per *Digital India Report 2022*. Therefore, with the passage of time, use of internet has increased manifold.

In the last few decades, a great percentage of population of India has started using internet for almost every use. This population includes urban as well as rural areas. According to a report published in *Business Standard* in the year 2022, the internet usage in rural sector is increasing day-by-day in comparison to urban areas in the last two years. The report clearly shows that due to the outbreak of COVID, the rural population started using internet for several uses. Even during the period of COVID, the use of eWOM can be seen in every sector. Nilashi et al. (2022) studied the impact of COVID-19 on travelling decisions using eWOM. The researchers proposed that with the use of internet, travellers have started sharing their travel experiences via eWOM communication on various social media sites, which has reduced the ambiguousness to a great extent. Even during the period of COVID outbreak, eWOM communication has played an important role by influencing traveller's travel decisions.

It can, thus, be clearly mentioned that internet has become an important and integral part of everyone's life. Today, most of the population uses internet for online shopping. The history of online shopping dates back to 1995, when Amazon started the first online shopping site in United States for selling the products online. With the due course of time, almost all the business houses have started using this platform for selling their goods. It is fair to mention that internet has integrated the entire world into a marketplace, where all the buyers and sellers unite to please their demands. This selling of goods by the retailers online is termed as online retailing.

Online Retailing is basically a form of electronic commerce in which sellers sell their products and services with the help of internet. It is also known as e-Retailing or e-Tailing. e-Tailing also includes the business to business (B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) sales of goods and services. In India, the concept of online retailing started in the year 1995 with the introduction of internet, but it established when Amazon started its first website in India in 2012. From then, an implausible growth has been observed in the online retailing sector in India. According to *India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF)*, online retail is expected to reach 10.7% by 2024, in comparison with 4.7% in 2019. Also, the rate of online shoppers is likely to reach 220 million by 2025. As per *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Business-to-Consumer(B2C) E-commerce Index 2020*, India has been ranked 73rd out of 152 countries. This growth is due to the rapid technology adoption led by the increasing use of electronic devices and access to fast internet connection through broadband and 4G, which in turn has increased the online consumer base in India. This change can be seen in marketing communication as well.

In the field of marketing, consumer has always been considered as the king and his reviews and feedback are of prime importance. Since time immemorial, the consumers have been sharing their views and opinions regarding the products and services with each other, which is valuable for the marketers. Such reviews which are shared by the consumers with one another can be termed as Word of Mouth in Marketing. Thus, Word of Mouth (WOM) is the face-to-face communication that takes place between the consumers, through which they express their opinions about the company and its products. Various researchers have explained word of mouth in their own ways. According to Haywood (1989), word of mouth is a continuous communication between the groups of individuals. Also, it is an important form of communication that has an interpersonal impact on consumers. Word of mouth can either be positive or negative. Wee et al. (1995) investigated that negative WOM has a greater impact on consumers, which ultimately leads to negative intentions in them and proposed that marketers should try to boost positive WOM, by providing customer satisfaction.

Now-a-days, the source of communication has changed from traditional advertising of print media to electronic media. In today's scenario, marketing communication not only involves retailers but includes customers as well in order to position a brand (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Such non-marketer information provided by the consumers is increasingly gaining importance, as this information is considered more reliable than the information provided by marketers. All the information which is shared by the consumers by the way of digital platform can be termed as Electronic Word of mouth (eWOM).

eWOM can be explained as the word of mouth, which is shared through internet to different number of consumers, by the way of online reviews or comments and such reviews can be positive or negative. It targets a large set of consumer base, thereby influencing their opinions. According to Litvin et al. (2008), eWOM includes all the informal communication that takes place between the consumers through internet. Such word of mouth can be shared between the producers and consumers and within the consumers as well.

Sardar et al. (2021) studied the impact of information provided by eWOM in online shopping sites on consumer purchase intention. The researchers found that the information provided by the customers in the form of online comments impacts the customers' purchase intention, which is influenced by various factors. The factors are consumer attitude, the quality of eWOM, usefulness and so on. Also, Mahmud et al. (2020) in a study found that online reviews may be positive or negative, depending on one's experience. Negative comments demotivate a consumer from making online purchase of the particular product, affecting the sales of the same. Thus, it can be said that eWOM has a deep effect on the purchase intention of consumers, as positive word of mouth may motivate them to purchase a product and negative ones may discourage them from doing so. To sum up, eWOM can be regarded as an important and upgrowing concept in the field of marketing, which is rapidly gaining the attention of marketers. In this context, the present study aims at studying the impact of eWOM on the consumers and their buying behaviour.

In order to test the research question, the data were collected from the consumers of Jammu city, who consider online reviews before making a purchase.

Review of Literature

Word of Mouth (WOM)

The reviews which are shared by consumers with one another can be termed as Word of Mouth in Marketing. WOM is an oral communication between the consumers, expressing their interest and opinions about company's products and services. WOM is actually the face-to-face communication between the consumers regarding their experiences, post purchase or after availing a service. Consumers usually share their experiences with each other, may be their family, friends, relatives or social groups. They communicate their peer groups regarding the products they use or the services they acquire. Such experiences can be positive or negative, depending on one's perception and personal thinking. According to Gauri et al. (2008), WOM is the information that a person obtains after having face-to-face communication between the friends and family. It does not involve the information which is shared in an online environment. It is actually the informal and interpersonal communication that takes place between the groups of individuals.

Previous researches have proved WOM to be one of the most effective and more commonly accepted ways of communication than TV and radio. Individuals prefer to rely on the information, which they get from their family or friends. Mostly people believe that the views shared by the consumers through television or radio are not reliable and consider them as fake. According to Engel et al. (1969), WOM communication has been receiving a great amount of attention from academics and practitioners and studied that WOM has greater influence than print advertisements, personal selling and radio advertisements. In an early research, Day (1971) proposed that WOM is almost three times more useful than free-sample promotion technique and nine times than any other advertisement for appealing and attracting customer's attention. The WOM shared by the consumers through face-to-face communication is considered more dependable and trustworthy by the peer consumers. Thus, a marketer prefers to give more importance to WOM communication for promoting their products rather than making use of any advertisement technique for attracting the consumers' attention towards the products they offer.

Different researchers have studied the importance of WOM. Haywood (1989) defined word of mouth as a way of continuous communication between the groups of individuals. Consumers tend to spread their views and ideas through WOM. It can be said that WOM is a constant communication between the individuals and can happen at any point of time. Every time an individual purchases a product or avails any service, he prefers to share about it with his/her social groups. The consumers tend to aware the people known to them about the experience they gained after

purchasing a product from a particular seller. Further, Buttle (1998) identified that WOM may be shared by the consumers before or after a purchase, which may act as an important source of pre-purchase information or consumption experience, respectively. In simple words, one can say that the opinions of the consumers are of vital importance for influencing the purchase behaviour of other peer consumers.

Word of mouth may be positive or negative, depending on the choice, experience and perception of consumers. Satisfied consumers spread positive reviews and unhappy ones talk about the negative aspects of products or services. Anderson (1998) studied that unhappy consumers spread more WOM in comparison to those consumers who are happy and satisfied. Thus, efforts should be made to reduce such WOM. In this regard, Wee et al. (1995) suggested that marketers should continuously assess consumer opinions and try to eradicate negative WOM, as it has an important effect on consumers' choices.

According to Ajina (2019), WOM is the most common form of marketing that has been used since the time immemorial by the marketers. With the change in time and technology, the WOM has transformed into online WOM in the global era. Now, WOM has gained attention of various marketers as well as consumers (Kimmel & Kitchen, 2013). Today, WOM has entered the online environment, where consumers can gather information about different products and services from various other online consumers. With the onset of digital era, the way of sharing views and opinions has changed. Now, consumers share their experiences after purchasing that may be good or bad, and for this purpose, they use online stage to share their views, that is, eWOM, which is more efficacious, according to Aydogan and Aktan (2019).

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

With the rise in social media and technology, the scope of traditional WOM has broadened to eWOM. Today, online reviews have emerged as a new field in marketing, thereby eliminating the drawbacks of traditional WOM. The name given to the reviews which are shared via online means are termed as eWOM. eWOM is basically an electronic form of feedback that is shared by the customers to a large extent. In eWOM, online consumers use the technology for sharing their opinions regarding the products they use or the services they acquire. Now-a-days, online shopping is done by all the age groups of the Indian society and most of them constitutes the young generation. Bhattacharya and Anand (2021) studied the attraction of Indian youth towards the online brands. The researchers found that online shopping has brought a huge shift in the choices and preferences of the youth, and thus, marketers should integrate different linkages as social, emotional and economic value in order to boost up the online retail sales.

According to Mishra and Satish (2016), with the wide use of internet, consumers have directly or indirectly started using eWOM for the purchase purpose. The immense usage of internet has transformed the traditional WOM into eWOM. According to Litvin et al. (2008), eWOM is an informal communication, which is shared by the consumers by using the digital platform for sharing their views

regarding the products used; service acquired or may be about the seller. Such communication may take place between the online consumers or between the consumers and the producers.

Online product reviews of the customers affect the psychology and mindset of other peer consumers and sellers as well. In this context, Cheung and Lee (2012) suggested that consumers share their experiences, namely eWOM in the form of online reviews in order to modify company's prestige. The reviews shared by the consumers deeply affect the reputation of a company, as positive reviews prompt the other customers to purchase more, thereby increasing the sales and ultimately resulting in up gradation of goodwill of the company and vice-versa. Furthermore, Farzin and Fattahi (2018) proposed that electronic word affects the brand image of a company in the eyes of consumers. eWOM has a great impact on the consumers who consider the reviews before making a purchase. Most of the online consumers prefer to consider online reviews before making any purchase, because they believe that consulting reviews before making a purchase would protect them from any financial loss.

With the advancement of technology, the pace of online shopping has increased manifold. In order to overcome or avoid any loss or fraud, consumers prefer to consider online reviews before making a purchase, which may or may not affect the reputation of the company in one way or other. In this regard, Amblee and Bui (2014) studied the effect of eWOM or online reviews on a set of e-book readers. The researchers found that the eWOM is a mark of reputation and ultimately acts a driver that boosts up the demand in the consumers, leaving behind the criteria of price consideration. Under the influence of online reviews, consumers do not even consider the prices of online products, thereby increasing the sales. Thus, eWOM acts as a source for building the reputation of the product, the brand and also the complementary products.

Online reviews can be either positive or negative. Some consumers prefer to consider favourable comments, while others prefer the negative ones, which affect the sale of the company also. Recently, Ngarmwongnoi et al. (2020) studied that consumer attitude is affected by eWOM in the entire purchasing process, which may or may not prompt them to purchase or repurchase a product. Favourable WOM may attract a customer to purchase a product or avail a service, which in turn leads to the repurchase of the same. Whereas the negative reviews may discourage a customer on the very beginning of purchasing process, which leads them to make a purchase from other company. Zhang et al. (2009) researched about the convincing power of the online reviews on the consumers. The researchers studied that the consumers do not give same importance to both types of reviews. The consumers have positive valence towards a product, which is associated with promotion consumption goals, whereas they show a negative attitude towards the products which has prevention consumption goals.

Now-a-days, consumers prefer to consider the experience of others before availing any service, as it is associated with a great amount of risk and uncertainty. In a very recent study, Verma and Yadav (2021) identified that consumers also prefer to read online reviews before availing any service, as may be in the case of hotels or aviation, etc. As service has intangible attributes, so the consumers

prefer to rely on eWOM, in order to reduce the risk associated with it. Thus, consumers are risk averse and always prefer to look into all the pros and cons associated with the products or services they wish to acquire. Alhidari et al. (2015) studied the concept of social networking sites in context with eWOM and purchase intentions. The researchers found that social networking sites is the most important tool for the spread of eWOM and increases the purchase intentions of consumers in near future. This study also established that the consumers' characteristics have a great influence on eWOM and its effectiveness. Thus, considering the need to study eWOM, following objectives have been framed to study the effect of dimensions of eWOM on consumer behaviour and to analyse the online reviews using NVivo in e-Tailing sector.

Dimensions of eWOM

eWOM has been studied by various researchers, but only a few has focused on its constructs. Main research work in this area has been done by Harrison-Walker (2001), who gave two scales of measurement, that is, word of mouth (praise) and word of mouth activity. Godes and Mazylin (2004) also considered two constructs, WOM dispersion and volume. The most important eWOM scale is given by Goyette et al. (2010). The researchers introduced a new concept of online WOM by putting forth its various dimensions, WOM intensity, WOM content, positive valence and negative valence. Many researchers have used the dimensions given by Goyette et al. (2010) in their research work in one way or another. Gradually, these dimensions have become popular and are the most used ones for performing research work in the said field of online reviews. These four dimensions study the entire concept of WOM, by including its positive and negative dimensions as well.

WOM Intensity

According to Goyette et al. (2010), WOM intensity is the scope of what is being said about the organisation. The researchers suggested three items to be included in WOM intensity, that is, activity, volume and dispersion.

Research work has been done in this field to understand the concept of WOM intensity. According to Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019), volume means the rate of spreading WOM by consumers. The researchers used two dimensions, that is, volume and valence to study the impact of affective commitment, high-sacrifice commitment and satisfaction on the customers' WOM.

Andreawan (2015) studied effect of dimensions of eWOM, namely intensity, valence and content in social media Kaskus on purchasing intention and proposed that intensity negatively affects the purchase intention.

Word of mouth depends on the experience of customers that may be good or bad. As per the experience, consumers spread their reviews. Anderson (1998) studied that dissatisfied consumers spread larger amount of WOM. However, WOM intensity of satisfied consumers may also be high. Therefore, customers with bad experience usually spread greater amount of WOM. Harris et al. (2016) studied the scope of exaggerated and non-exaggerated word of mouth. For this purpose, the researchers collected the sample from almost 1,000 hospitality consumers. The researchers included WOM activity to measure the WOM intensity.

WOM Content

WOM content means what people say about the organisation. It reflects the views and opinions of customers towards a company, according to Goyette et al. (2010). Any content about an organisation is important, in order to shape its image in the eyes of customers. Marketers should always focus on creating a favourable content type, which would add to company's goodwill.

For studying the impact of dimensions of eWOM in social media Kaskus on purchasing intention, Andreawan (2015) considered content as a construct and proposed that content positively affects the purchase intention. According to Chun and Lee (2016), content is an important element for social networking sites companies, as content type helps people to identify something worth about a social networking site and, thus, subscribe it. Thus, an attempt should be made to create a positive WOM content.

Roy et al. (2018) studied the impact of eWOM content on online purchase intention. The researchers also used content analysis to study the relevance of various factors that affects the online behaviour. The outcome of the research established that content positively affects the online purchase of consumers.

In order to improvise the quality of WOM content, Bu et al. (2020) in a recent study suggested that marketers should focus on quality of content produced about the food tourism products or destination with the help of eWOM, as it would attract the tourists to try such products or visit target places.

Positive Valence

Positive valence highlights the positive attitude of online consumers towards the organisation, according to Goyette et al. (2010). Positive valence includes the praise items and is always beneficial for the company.

Hartman et al. (2019) investigated the impact of eWOM valence using framework of professor and course evaluations that are available online. The findings indicated that positive valence/WOM has a positive effect on the attitude and intentions of consumers towards online course and vice-versa.

Talwar et al. (2020) studied that if consumers believe that m-wallets provide them adequate information (as per their needs), then they consider it as high-quality information. This will create positive feelings among them, and they will be stimulated to spread positive valence or WOM.

Positive valence also affects the brand purchase by the customers. More the positive reviews, more the brand purchase. Positive WOM builds the goodwill of the company that ultimately adds to its reputation. In this context, Casielles et al. (2013) studied that positive WOM positively affects the brand purchase probability and has a stronger effect on the latter, in comparison to negative WOM.

Negative Valence

According to Goyette et al. (2010), negative valence reflects the negative attitude of online consumers towards the organisation that is negative WOM. Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019) studied the impact of eWOM valence on satisfaction, affective commitment, and high sacrifice commitment and proposed that all the factors affect the valence. The research indicated that unsatisfied customers share

more views and opinions, which generally highlights the negative comments and are considered unfavourable. Andreawan (2015) studied the impact of eWOM dimensions on purchase intentions of customers. The research established the valence has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Negative valence can tarnish the image of the company. In case of m-wallets, Talwar et al. (2020) studied that some users condemn m-wallets and advise their friends and peers not to use said services, thereby spreading negative valence or WOM. In such case, service provider should try to demotivate negative WOM, by maintaining a control over m-wallet cost.

Therefore, steps should be taken to reduce negative WOM. In this regard, Cheng et al. (2006) suggested that in order to reduce the negative WOM communication in restaurants, the owners and trade associations should update people about their culture, so that outlook of restaurant gets updated in the eyes of Chinese diners' and this would ultimately discourage negative WOM.

Hence, the hypothesis is proposed as under:

H_1 : There is no significant difference between the factors of eWOM.

For the purpose of study, various articles have been studied by the researchers. A summary Table 1 shows the best articles reviewed by the researchers.

Research Methodology

Further, this research has considered both the quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to determine the reasons as to why the consumers consider the online reviews before purchasing a product.

Analysis

NVIVO Software was used for qualitative-based research. The data collected through questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to check the reliability of the data, Cronbach's Alpha

Table 1. Summary Table.

S.No.	Variables of the Study	Articles Referred
1.	Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	Day (1971); Haywood (1989); Litvin (2008); Amblee & Bui (2014); Hoffman & Novak (1996); Mahmud et al. (2020); Gauri et al. (2008); Engel et al. (1969); Bhattacharya & Anand (2021); Cheung & Lee (2012); Farzin & Fattahi (2018).
2.	Intensity Content Positive valence Negative valence	Harrison-Walker (2001); Godes and Mazylin (2004); Goyette et al. (2010); Anastasiei & Dospinescu (2019); Andreawan (2015); Hartman et al (2019); Cheng et al. (2006); Harris et al. (2016) Andreawan (2015); Chun & lee (2016); Roy et al. (2018); Casielles et al. (2013).

coefficient technique was used. Further, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to authenticate the results.

Sampling Method

A customer-based study was designed to answer the research questions. The data were collected using judgmental sampling techniques from the customers who make purchases after considering online reviews from India's two biggest online shopping sites, that is, Amazon and Flipkart India. A total of 425 questionnaires were given to the respondents in Jammu city. After removing the outliers, 420 questionnaires were considered for the purpose of study. Table 2 shows the individual/demographic characteristics of respondents.

The demographic presentation of the respondents is shown in Table 2.

Further, SPSS software was used to compute the mean values of different factors of eWOM. Initially, the mean value of intensity was computed by applying the desired formula. Likewise, the mean values were calculated for the other three factors, that is, content, positive and negative WOM. Finally, by using the compare means option under Analyse option, the mean comparable means values were obtained.

Table 3 clearly shows the average values of the different factors of eWOM. It depicts that the mean value of intensity factor is the highest, that is 3.6000, followed by content, then by negative valence and finally by positive WOM.

Table 2. Individual Characteristics.

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	195	46.40
	Female	225	53.60
Age	Up to 20 years	71	16.90
	20–40 years	314	74.80
	40–60 years	33	7.90
	Above 60 years	2	0.50
Occupation	Student	300	71.40
	Retired	2	0.50
	Businessman	10	2.40
	Housewife	21	5.00
	Government employee	46	11.00
	Self-employed	27	6.40
	Private employee	14	3.30
Personal annual income	Nil	272	64.80
	Up to 2,00,000	88	21.00
	2,00,000–5,00,000	37	8.80
	5,00,000–10,00,000	20	4.80
	10,00,000 and above	3	0.70

Table 3. Mean Values of Dimensions of eWOM.

	Avg_Intensity	Avg_content	Avg_pwom	Avg_nwom
Mean	3.6000	3.5864	3.3148	3.4489
N	420	420	420	420
Std deviation	0.69276	0.60289	0.75359	0.82621

Source: SPSS Software.

Thus, the marketers should focus on all the items that fall under intensity factor, as, whether the reviews are reliable, honest, genuine or exceptional, etc. This would ultimately help the marketing managers in understanding the consumer behaviour and can learn about their likes or dislikes.

NVivo

NVivo11 was used for used analysing all the extracted data. It is a computer-based qualitative software that helps in both qualitative and mixed methods research. This software is designed by QSR International. For the purpose of analysis, the secondary data were collected by considering the online reviews of the customers who makes online purchase from the world's biggest online shopping site, Amazon. This website is famous for two largest product lines, Electronics and Home and Kitchen. According to *The State of the Amazon Seller Survey (2023)*, there are top 10 category products of Amazon of which Home and Kitchen section constitutes 35% of sales and Electronics constitutes 16%. Thus, the best seller products were chosen from these two product lines, namely, Smart watches with Bluetooth calling feature and water bottles, which included the positive as well as negative reviews. A total of 400 reviews each were considered for the purpose of the study of which only 300 comments each were taken into consideration. Thus, a total of 600 online comments were used for the research purpose.

Word Cloud

A word cloud is used for better visualisation of results. It makes our data looks sizzle and provides significant information at a glance. It shows the important keywords according to their frequencies (Sinclair & Cardew Hall, 2008).

Word cloud or tag clouds are basically the cluster of words shown in different sizes. The bigger and bolder the word, the more frequency it has. Sinclair and Cardew Hall (2008) identified in their research that tag clouds are valuable, as it has some keywords pertaining to the research question. Figure 1 reflects the key pointers from 300 online comments that customers gave after purchasing the smart watches with Bluetooth calling feature of various brands such as boat, Fire-Boltt, Noise Pulse, Zebronics and Fastrack. Figure 2 represents the word cloud from 300 online comments that consumers gave after purchasing the water bottles of different brands as Milton, Cello, Boldfit, Speedex, Prestige, Pigeon, Tupperware, Treo, Oliveware, Borosil and Amazon Solimo from Amazon.

Figure 1 indicates all the important keywords related to eWOM. In Figure 1, the boldest and highlighted word is 'watch', which is related to the content

is surrounded by all the other words related to it. Second term with the greatest frequency is ‘product’, which comes under the intensity or content dimension of eWOM. Similarly, all the surrounding words are related to the four dimensions of eWOM, that is, intensity, content, positive and negative valence.

Tree Map

A tree map is a disgram that shows the graphical representaion of data in form of rectangles of different sizes. It shows the various nodes that help in comparison of different attributes. For the purpose of study, the researchers attempt to use tree map for showing the visual representation of data. Figure 3 represents the tree map of different online comments given by the online consumers on smartwatches with bluetooth calling feature.

And, Figure 4 shows the visualised data in form of tree map depicting the key words from online reviews given on water bottles purchased from Amazon.

The above figure clearly depicts that the most used word by online consumers in their comments is ‘watch’, followed by the word ‘good’, as shown earlier in the word cloud (Figure 1).

The tree map shown in Figure 4 shows the word frequency of the online comments given by the online consumers on water bottles purchasded by them. Here, the most frequent used word is ‘good’, followed by ‘product’. It is similar to as shown in Figure 2. It is thus clear from the word clouds and the tree maps shown above that all the dimensions identified in the study are also reflecting in the reviews collected from the Amazon website that further validates the scale used by the researchers.

Bar Chart

The chart wizard option of NVivo11 helps in graphical representaion of data. With the help of chart option, one can automatically chart the selected sources or nodes by coding or attributes values.

Figure 5 clearly shows the percentage of different dimensions of eWOM (intensity, content, positive and negative valence). The reviews collected from the Amazon website of smart watches with Bluetooth calling feature are distributed under four different heads. The chart is obtained by applying the method of coding by nodes.



Figure 3. Tree Map (Smart Watches With Bluetooth Calling Feature).

Coding	Percentage Coverage
Nodes\\Content	19.82
Nodes\\Intensity	10.92
Nodes\\NWOM	23.34
Nodes\\PWOM	40.49

Figure 6. Percentage of Different Nodes (Smart Watches With Bluetooth Calling Feature).

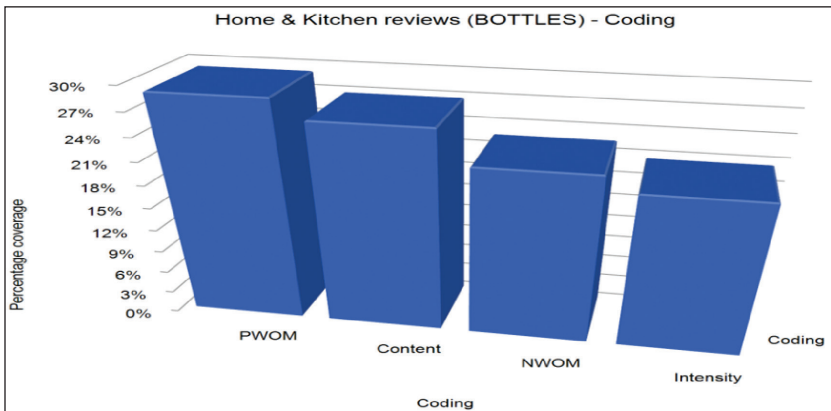


Figure 7. Bar Chart Diagram Showing the Percentage of Dimensions (Water Bottles).

Coding	Percentage Coverage
Nodes\\Content	26.69
Nodes\\Intensity	20.49
Nodes\\NWOM	22.44
Nodes\\PWOM	29.07

Figure 8. Percentage of Different Nodes (Water Bottles).

Five-point Likert scale has been used in the questionnaire, in order to fit into the context. Initially, the questionnaire contained 30 items to measure the variables.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

All the primary data numbering to 103 were collected by the way of survey, which was further analysed, using the quantitative technique EFA. EFA method was used to simplify and lessen the data. This method was used along with the varimax rotation procedure for simplifying the original data. The statements with factor

loading less than 0.4 and Eigen value less than 1.0 were ignored for the data analysis purpose. Cronbach's alpha test was also applied to test the reliability of the scale.

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's test of sphericity were performed. Barlett's test of sphericity showed a Chi-square value of 1,702.491 with 435 degrees of freedom at a significance level of 0.000, which confirms that the population correlation matrix is not an identity matrix (see Table 4). Furthermore, KMO is 0.785, whereas the acceptable value for the same is 0.7. Thus, the value is acceptable for the study. The Barlett's test was also conducted further, which shows the value of 0.000, which is also acceptable to perform the analysis. Table 4 shows the detailed results of KMO and Barlett's tests.

After performing the analysis, it was found that a total of 30 items were grouped into 08 factors. Of these 30 items, 1 factor has loading in more than two items and both had value less than 0.5 and in one factor only one item is there. Thus, the said item was deleted, and remaining items are 28, under 6 factors. The detailed rotated component matrix is shown in Table 5.

Furthermore, in order to validate our scale, different conditions were applied under EFA, namely, Correlation Matrix, Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity, which are shown in Tables 6–8, respectively.

Results and Discussion

The present study attempts to add to the research knowledge of eWOM by taking into consideration the different factors of it. On the basis of the extant literature,

Table 4. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.785
	Approx. Chi-square	1,702.491
Bartlett's test of sphericity	<i>df</i>	435
	Sig.	0.000

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix.^a

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Intensity 6	0.817							
Intensity 4	0.815							
Intensity 8	0.799							
Intensity 5	0.793							
Intensity 3	0.706							

(Table 5 continued)

(Table 5 continued)

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Intensity 2	0.661							
Intensity 1	0.648							
Negative WOM 3		0.838						
Negative WOM 5		0.779						
Negative WOM 4		0.769						
Negative WOM 1		0.768						
Negative WOM 2		0.611		0.494				
Content 8			0.787					
Content 9			0.775					
Content 7			0.688					
Content 6			0.631					
Content 2			0.624					
Content 10			0.584					
Content 12				0.721				
Positive WOM 5				0.658				
Positive WOM 3				0.628	0.545			
Content 11				0.614			0.560	
Positive WOM 1					0.799			
Positive WOM 2					0.748			
Positive WOM 4					0.721			
Content 5						0.823		
Content 3						0.700		
Content 1						0.588		
Intensity 7	0.420						0.476	
Content 4								0.839

Notes: Extraction method: Principal component analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.

^aRotation converged in 16 iterations.

it was found that eWOM can be measured by four different factors. The various factors identified through this are intensity, content, positive and negative valence. The following studies were considered for framing a suitable scale for different constructs: WOM Intensity: Goyette et al. (2010), Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019), Andreawan (2015), Anderson (1998), Harris et al. (2016); WOM Content: Goyette et al. (2010), Andreawan (2015), Chun and Lee (2016), Roy et al. (2018), Bu et al. (2020); Positive valence: Goyette et al. (2010), Hartman et al. (2019), Talwar et al. (2020), Casielles et al. (2013); Negative valence: Goyette et al.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix.

		Avg_Intensity	Avg_Content	Avg_PWOM	Avg_NWOM
Avg_In- tensity	Pearson correlation	1	0.389**	0.530**	0.367**
	Sig. (two-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	103	103	103	103
Avg_ Content	Pearson correlation	0.389**	1	0.442**	0.368**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	103	103	103	103
Avg_ PWOM	Pearson correlation	0.530**	0.442**	1	0.370**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	103	103	103	103
Avg_ NWOM	Pearson correlation	0.367**	0.368**	0.370**	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	103	103	103	103

Source: SPSS Software.

Notes: NWOM: Negative Word of Mouth; PWOM: Positive Word of Mouth.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Table 7. Convergent Validity of Different Factors.

Items	Factor Loadings	Square of Factor Loadings	Sum of Square of Factor Loadings	Convergent Validity or AVE
Intensity	0.817	0.667		
	0.815	0.664		
	0.799	0.638		
	0.793	0.628	3.95	0.564
	0.706	0.498		
NWOM	0.838	0.702		
	0.799	0.638		
	0.769	0.591	2.893	0.579
	0.768	0.589		
	0.611	0.373		
Content I	0.787	0.619		
	0.775	0.601		
	0.688	0.473		
	0.631	0.398	2.822	0.470

(Table 7 continued)

(Table 7 continued)

Items	Factor Loadings	Square of Factor Loadings	Sum of Square of Factor Loadings	Convergent Validity or AVE
	0.624	0.389		
	0.584	0.341		
User experience	0.721	0.520		
	0.658	0.433	1.724	0.431
	0.628	0.394		
	0.614	0.377		
PWOM	0.799	0.638		
	0.748	0.560	1.718	0.573
	0.721	0.520		
Content 2	0.823	0.677		
	0.700	0.490	1.513	0.504
	0.588	0.346		

Note: AVE: Average value extracted.

Table 8. Discriminant Validity.

Correlation Factors	AVE(Average Value Extracted)	Square Root of AVE or Discriminant Validity
Intensity	0.564	0.751
NWOM	0.579	0.761
Content 1	0.470	0.686
User experience	0.431	0.657
PWOM	0.573	0.757
Content 2	0.504	0.701

(2010), Anastasiei and Dospinescu (2019), Andreawan (2015), Talwar et al. (2020), Cheng et al. (2006).

Further, NVivo11 software was used for identifying whether the scale identified in the extant literature stands true for our study or not. For this purpose, a total of 600 online reviews were considered from Amazon website. After the application of NVivo11 software, it was found that the reviews given by the online consumers too fall under the four different dimensions of eWOM, that is, intensity, content, positive and negative valence.

Thus, it was clear from the application of this qualitative method that the factors identified earlier in the study stand true and the same are corroborated.

Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

The present research has contributed by validation of the scale required for the purpose of study. It has thus helped in validating the scale identified in the previous research work. In addition, the research work contributes the existing field of e-Tailing sector by providing the marketers with the strategies for understanding the consumer behaviour and their purchase intentions.

Theoretical Contributions

This study attempts to find out the relationship between the hypothesised dimensions of eWOM that affect our e-Tailing sector. The study has focused on analysing the impact of four main factors of eWOM (intensity, content, positive and negative word of mouth) on consumer behaviour. All the dimensions were studied in Indian context.

A scale was identified on the basis of the previous studies. It was further validated by collecting the secondary data from Amazon website in the form of online reviews of the customers who have purchased smart watch online and water bottles from Amazon. All the reviews were analysed with the help of Nvivo software. This helped in validating the scale by clarifying that the data collected from Amazon also fall under the four dimensions of eWOM, as identified by the researchers. The results suggest that the online consumers are mostly affected by the quality of products that are offered by the sellers, which means that the online consumers are deeply affected by the content factor of eWOM. Similarly, the factor that affects the consumers is the number of online reviews about the products, as it would help them to categorise the respective reviews into positive or negative ones.

After the application of EFA, it was clear that the factors affect the purchase intention of consumers, but at varying degrees. Different pre-conditions of EFA were applied that further helped in quantitative validation of scale. Thus, it can be said that the results derived also support the extant literature quoted in the present study quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

Practical Implications

This article provides an insight for the marketers by providing a scale on the basis of which they can measure the eWOM communication. The use of mixed methods approach that is qualitative and quantitative methods has helped in enhancing the importance of eWOM. On the one hand, NVivo software validated the scale used by the researchers that helped in analysing the online reviews in e-Tailing sector, while on the other hand, EFA method helped in simplifying the primary data. With the use of Nvivo, the researchers were also able to identify the keywords for the study-intensity, content, positive and negative valence. By EFA method, certain items were deleted and finally the same from the questionnaire.

The marketers can use this scale to study consumer behaviour and understand the present and future needs of consumers. Our study, thus, validates the findings from the previous research done by the authors. It can be, therefore, said that the current research helped in systematically validating the scale to measure eWOM communication.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the present study adds to the knowledge of study of literature, still it is not free from limitations. First, the focus is on the consumers from Jammu city only. First, the study is confined to the online consumers of Jammu city only. However, there are numerous online consumers situated outside Jammu city, as well. Thus, the future study should be based on the larger consumer base, thereby including the consumers from different parts of our country. Also, a sample size of 420 is used, due to the reason the research is still at its infant stage and the researchers are still in the process of collecting data. The future research should include a larger sample size. Future researches shall therefore help in improving the quality of results derived and in testing the relationship between different items of questionnaire.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank our department, The Business School, University of Jammu; our family and friends who supported us in the entire journey. We thank our colleagues and co-scholars who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research. We are grateful to the anonymous referees of the journal for their extremely useful suggestions to improve the quality of the article. Usual disclaimers apply.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iDs

Kanika Juneja  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3063-3928>

Farah S. Choudhary  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5801-0357>

References

- Ajina., A. S. (2019). Predicting customers' online word of mouth intention: The theory of planned behavior applied to understand youth Saudi social media behaviors. *Management Science Letters*, 9(2019), 1553–1566. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.5.030>

- Alhidari, A., Iyer, P., & Paswan, A. (2015). Personal level antecedents of eWOM and purchase intention, on social networking sites. *Journal of Customer Behaviour, 14*(2), 107–125.
- Ambler, N., & Bui, T. (2014). Harnessing the influence of social proof in online shopping: The effect of electronic word of mouth on sales of digital microproducts. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 16*(2), 91–114.
- Anastasei, B., & Dospinescu, N. (2019). Electronic word-of-mouth for online retailers: Predictors of volume and valence. *Journal of Sustainability, 11*(1), 814. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11030814>
- Anderson, E. W. (1998). Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research, 1*(1), 5–17.
- Andreawan, R. A. (2015). Analysis of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) in social media Kaskus on purchasing intention premium player items (study on the Game Line Let's Get Rich). *E-Proceeding of Management, 2*(3), 3517–3524.
- Aydogan, S., & Aktan, M. (2019). Who is engaged in E-Wom? Role of e-Loyalty, demographics, visit frequency and product category (Araştırma). *Journal of Marketing and Marketing Research, 24*(2019), 207–233.
- Bhattacharya, S., & Anand, V. (2021). What makes the Indian youths to engage with online retail brands: An empirical study. *Global Business Review, 22*(6), 1507–1529. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150918822106>
- Bu, Y., Parkinson, J., & Thaichon, P. (2020). Digital content marketing as a catalyst for e-WOM in food tourism. *Australian Marketing Journal, 29*(2), 142–154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2020.01.001>
- Business Standard*. (2022). *Internet usage grows faster in rural India; knowhow still a deterrent*. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/internet-usage-grows-faster-in-rural-india-knowhow-still-a-deterrent-122072801008_1.html
- Buttle, F. A. (1998). Word of mouth: Understanding and managing referral marketing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 6*(3), 241–254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/096525498346658>
- Casielles, R. V., Alvarez, L. S., & del Río-Lanza, A. B. (2013). The word of mouth dynamic: How positive (and negative) WOM drives purchase probability: An analysis of interpersonal and non-interpersonal factors. *Journal of Advertising Research, 43*–60. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-53-1-043-060>
- Cheng, S., Lam, T., & Tsu, C. H. (2006). Negative word of mouth communication intention: An application of theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 30*(1), 95–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348005284269>
- Cheung, C. M., & Lee, M. K. (2012). What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms? *Journal of Decision Support System, 53*(2012), 218–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.01.015>
- Chun, J. W., & Lee, M. J. (2016). Increasing individuals' involvement and WOM intention on social networking sites: Content matters! *Computers in Human Behavior, 60*(2016), 223–232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.02.069>
- Day, G. S. (1971). Attitude change, media and word of mouth. *Journal of Advertising Research, 11*, 31–40.
- Digital India Report (2022). <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-india>
- Engel, J. F., Kegerreis, R. J., & Blackwell, R. D. (1969). Word-of-mouth communication by the innovator. *Journal of Marketing, 33*(1969), 15–19.
- Farzin, M., & Fattahi, M. (2018). eWOM through social networking sites and impact on purchase intention and brand image in Iran. *Journal of Advances in Management Research, 15*(2), 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAMR-05-2017-0062>

- Gauri, D. K., Bhatnagar, A., & Rao, R. (2008). Role of word of mouth in online store loyalty. *Communications of the ACM*, *51*(3), 89–91.
- Godes, D., & Mayzlin, D. (2004). Using online conversations to study word-of-mouth communication. *Journal of Marketing Science*, *23*(4), 545–560. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1040.0071>
- Goyette, I., Ricard, L., Bergeron, J., & Marticotte, F. (2010). e-WOM scale: Word-of-mouth measurement scale for e-Services context. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, *27*(1), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1002/CJAS.129>
- Harris, L. C., Fisk, R. P., & Sysalova, H. (2016). Exposing Pinocchio customers: Investigating exaggerated service stories. *Journal of Service Management*, *27*(2), 63–90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-06-2015-0193>
- Harrison-Walker, L. J. (2001). The measurement of word-of-mouth communication and an investigation of service quality and customer commitment as potential antecedents. *Journal of Service Research*, *4*(1), 60–75.
- Hartman, K. B., Hunt, J. B., & Childers, C. Y. (2019). Effects of eWOM valence: Examining consumer choice using evaluations of teaching. *Journal of Behavioral Studies in Business*.
- Haywood, K. M. (1989). Managing word of mouth communications. *The Journal of Services Marketing*, *3*(2), 55–67.
- Hoffman, D. L., & Novak, T. P. (1996). Marketing in hypermedia computer-mediated environments: Conceptual foundations. *Journal of Marketing*, *60*(1996), 50–68.
- India Brand Equity Foundation Report. (2021). <https://www.ibef.org/industry/ecommerce-presentation>
- Kimmel, A. J., & Kitchen, P. J. (2013). WOM and social media: Presaging future directions for research and practice. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *2013*, 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.797730>
- Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, *29*(2008), 458–468.
- Mahmud, Md. S., Islam, Md. N., Ali, Md. R., & Mehjabin, N. (2020). Impact of electronic word of mouth on customers' buying intention considering trust as a mediator: A SEM approach. *Global Business Review* <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150920976345>
- Mishra, A., & Satish, S. M. (2016). eWOM: Extant research review and future research avenues. *Vikalpa*, *41*(3), 222–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090916650952>
- Ngarmwongnoi, C., Oliveira, J. S., AbedRabbo, M., & Mousavi, S. (2020). The implications of eWOM adoption on the customer journey. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *37*(7), 749–759. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-10-2019-3450>
- Nilashi, M., Abumalloh, R. A., Alrizq, M., Alghamdi, A., Samad, S., Almulihi, A., Althobaiti, M. M., Ismail, M. Y., & Mohd Saidatulakmal, S. (2022). What is the impact of eWOM in social network sites on travel decision-making during the COVID-19 outbreak? A two-stage methodology. *Telematics and Informatics*, *69*(2022), 101795. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2022.101795>.
- Roy, G., Datta, B., & Mukherjee, S. (2018). Role of electronic word-of-mouth content and valence in influencing online purchase behavior. *Journal of Marketing Communication*, *661*–684. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2018.1497681>
- Sardar, A., Manzoor, A., Shaikh, K. A., & Ali, L. (2021). An empirical examination of the impact of eWom information on young consumers' online purchase intention: Mediating role of eWom information adoption. *Sage Open*, *11*(4), 215824402110525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211052547>
- Sinclair, J., & Cardew-Hall, M. (2008). The folksonomy tag cloud: When is it useful? *Journal of Information Science*, *34*(1), 15–29.

- Talwar, M., Talwar, S., Kaur, P., Najmul Islam, A. K. M., & Dhir, A. (2020). Positive and negative word of mouth (WOM) are not necessarily opposites: A reappraisal using the dual factor theory. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 63, 102396. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102396>
- The State of the Amazon Seller Survey. (2023). <https://www.junglescout.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/The-State-of-the-Amazon-Seller-2023-Jungle-Scout.pdf>
- United Nations Data 2022 Report. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/india-population/>
- UNCTAD B2C E-Commerce Index 2020 Report. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tn_unctad_ict4d17_en.pdf
- Verma, S., & Yadav, N. (2021). Past, present, and future of electronic word of mouth (EWOM). *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 53(2021), 111–128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.07.001>
- Wee, C.H., Lim, S. L., & Lwin, M. (1995). Word-of-mouth communication in Singapore: With focus on effects of message-sidedness, source and user-type. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 7(1/2), 5–36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/eb010260>
- Zhang, J. Q., Craciun, G., & Shin, D. (2009). When does electronic word-of-mouth matter? A study of consumer product reviews. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(2010), 1336–1341.

A Decade-Long Voyage of Gender Inclusion Research: A Bibliometric Analysis

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management
4(2) 167–186, 2024
© The Author(s) 2024
DOI: 10.1177/ijim.241235745
jim.imibh.edu.in



Nisha Gandhi¹ , Usha Arora¹ and Shabnam Saxena¹

Abstract

During the past decade, the concept of diversity and inclusion has gained immense scope for the growth of organisations and the development of countries, thus attracting the attention of researchers and academicians. The purpose of this article is to better understand the concept of gender inclusion and provide a comprehensive review of the available literature from the past decade in this domain. The present study followed a bibliometric approach to draw inferences from 206 articles published in English over the time span of 2013–2023, retrieved from Scopus. The research methodology comprises four steps: data collection, data analysis, data visualisation and data interpretation. The research on gender inclusion has significantly increased from 2018 to 2023. The findings show the top contributing authors, prominent journals, significant keywords and dominating sectors in the research area. Despite the growing academic interest, the research in this area is still in its infancy and requires attention from researchers. The key constraint of the study is that it is based on the Scopus database, and the relevant studies that are not published in Scopus are being eliminated. This article provides useful information for managers as well as policymakers to make gender inclusion a key component while framing policies and practices. The article will provide insight on equality and sustainable goals.

Keywords

Gender inclusion, gender equality, women inclusion, systematic literature review, bibliometric analysis, India

¹Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar, Haryana, India

Corresponding author:

Nisha Gandhi, Haryana School of Business, Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar, Haryana 125001, India.

E-mail: Nisha.gandhi93@gmail.com



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

Introduction

Gender inequality has become a well-recognised and irrefutable concept around the world. According to the World Bank's 'Women, Business and the Law 2022' report, approximately 2.4 billion women around the world do not have the same economic rights as men (World Bank, 2022). The facts are even worse for India. India is ranked 135th out of 146 nations in the Global Gender Gap 2022 report for gender parity and 143rd for economic opportunity and participation. The report also maintains that now it will take 132 years to reach gender parity, compared to 100 years earlier (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Gender discrepancies persisted in India for many years. Despite the equality rights guaranteed by the constitution and women having more education and credentials than men, they have consistently faced prejudice (Duppati et al., 2020). Women's ability to experience self-concept fit, goal fit or social fit is undermined by these gender norms (Schmader, 2023). Discrimination, marginalisation, harassment, social exclusion and other forms of social closure are obstacles for women in male-dominated areas. Sadly, it is obscure how these obstacles can be removed (Bridges et al., 2023). The development of a country cannot be achieved while ignoring its large pool of talent. According to the McKinsey report 'Women Matter', even a 10% increase in women's participation could add \$770 to India's GDP (Desvaux et al., 2017). In addition, gender equality is the fifth aim among the 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations to be achieved by 2030 (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). As the gender inclusive environment around the world has developed, this gender disparity has become a growing concern for Indian organisations. Intangible resources are made available by gender inclusion (Ali et al., 2015), and also the organisation's prestige in the public sphere is enhanced (Singh & Pandey, 2019). Despite facts claiming gender inclusion is beneficial for organisations and society, under-representation of women in India is a sad reality. According to the Deloitte 2022 report, only 17.1% of board seats are occupied by Indian women, and only 3.6% are board chairs (Deloitte, 2022). Currently, this 17.1% female representation is essentially the result of a corporate law mandate. Now it is high time organisations voluntarily go beyond numbers and affirmative actions to promote gender inclusion. The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of past studies pertaining to the gender inclusion concept. The authors describe an advanced and up-to-date framework for the area and offer guidance for future study in the domain. The primary objective of this study is to amalgamate the research domain and address specific inquiries.

Historically, literature reviews have been characterised by subjectivity and a qualitative approach. However, the bibliometric method enables scholars to obtain quantitative information regarding authors, journals, countries, citation counts and latest trend. When this information is interconnected and processed effectively, it can facilitate the mapping of the development of any study discipline. To begin, we offer a comprehensive analysis of the current evaluations in order to provide context and justify the importance of conducting this study. The subsequent sections of this document will delve into the methodology, present the findings and conclude the review by providing suggestions for future research endeavours.

Gender Inclusion

Inclusion is the psychological state of feeling like an insider and receiving preferential treatment at work while still maintaining one's individual identity (Shore et al., 2018). Gender inclusion is defined as organisations developing a fair and equitable culture in which women employees contribute their full potential (Khosla, 2014). It is the process of reviewing and restructuring policies and practices to ensure women's participation in organisations. These activities should help the organisations recruit, motivate, retain and develop female talent (Singh, 2012). A workplace considering gender inclusion must protect working mothers' rights by eliminating unconscious bias, providing flexible work hours and ensuring gender-equal laws and practices (Kaur & Arora, 2020). Women employees are unlikely to succeed or retain in organisations that are considered to be less gender inclusive (Kossek et al., 2017). The author suggests that organisations should not only concentrate on hiring more women, but also improve and maintain the quality of their gender inclusion measures (Adamson et al., 2016).

Research on inclusion has mainly focused on visible minorities in terms of race or gender; however, the invisible minorities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender employees are often neglected (Priola et al., 2014). The transgender workers are hiding their sexual identity at workplaces, so they are less prone to discrimination (Alexandra Beauregard et al., 2018).

Even though gender inclusion is frequently discussed in practice, it is still being developed in research (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2021; Perryman et al., 2016). To close this research gap, the present study provides a systematic overview of gender inclusion scholarship that will aid in the advancement of future research directions in subsequent research. This study is not limited to any region or subject field, thus providing wider coverage. The purpose of this study is to accomplish the following research objectives:

RQ1: To gain knowledge about the publication trends in gender inclusion during the last decade.

RQ2: To identify the prolific writers, the most influential journals and the country-wise contribution.

RQ3: To identify the significant subjects, keyword occurrences and hotspot areas of the research field.

RQ4: To identify the sector-wise contribution in the subject field.

To identify and display the most relevant research on the subject, we performed a bibliometric analysis. Literature evaluations are often subjective and qualitative; however, the bibliometric method enables researchers to have access to quantitative information about authors, journals, affiliations, citation counts and country-wise contributions. In the following sections, the methodology is explained, the findings are displayed, the results are shown and future research directions are suggested.

Methodology

An academic technique known as ‘bibliometric analysis’ has been utilised to address the research concerns. Bibliometric analysis is a widely used and rigorous technique for investigating and analysing huge amounts of scientific data. It allows us to explore the evolution of a particular research field and suggests a new research frontier (Donthu et al., 2021). Earlier, bibliometric tools were used in library science only, but now they have become a more prevalent method of analysis in social science as well. The research process endorsed comprises four steps: data collection, data analysis, data visualisation and data interpretation, as described below.

Data Collection

The information was exclusively gathered from the Scopus database, which contains citations and abstracts from more than 20,000 peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences, the humanities and technology (Fahimnia et al., 2015). The keyword used for the database search string was TITLE-ABS-KEY ‘Gender Inclusion’. The bibliographic data selected was saved in BibTex and CSV formats and included information such as the paper’s title, authors, source, affiliations, citations, keywords and references.

Data Analyses and Visualisation

To conduct thorough analyses of the data and accomplish our research objectives, we apply the widely accepted scientific procedures and rationales for systematic literature reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) methodology (Paul et al., 2021), as shown in Figure 1. We have used the R-based tool known as ‘Biblioshiny’ to draw inferences from a database (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and VOSviewer software to visualise the relationship among researchers, publications and countries. VOSviewer is a popular tool for visualising geographic networks that display the number of co-authorship and co-occurrence networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017).

Data Interpretation

Finally, the data extracted were interpreted with the help of the software used and available information. The results are analysed and interpreted in detail in the next section.

Findings and Interpretations

This section presents the required information to answer the above-stated research objectives.

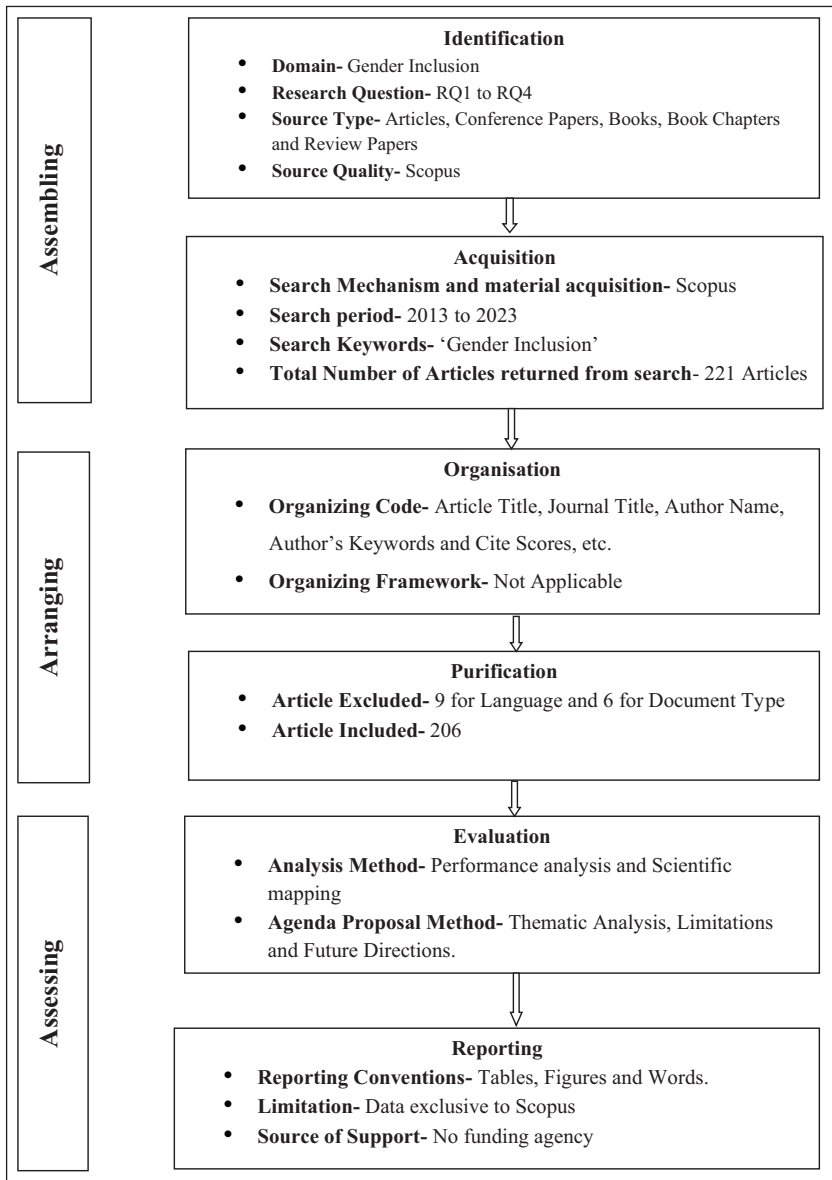


Figure 1. The SPAR-4-SLR Protocol.

Source: Based on the SPAR-4-SLR protocol introduced by Paul et al. (2021).

Trend Analysis

Descriptive analysis (see Table 1) presents the main information about the number of documents, sources and authors. The data reveals that between 2013 and 2023, the search yielded 206 documents from 653 authors published in English. The document comprises 125 articles, 25 conference papers, 6 books and 13 review papers published in 184 journals.

Table 1. Key Details Regarding the Documents Extracted from Scopus.

Description	Results
Main information about data	
Timespan	2013–2023
Sources (journals, books and so on)	184
Documents	206
Annual growth rate (%)	33.51
Document types	
Article	125
Book	06
Book chapter	36
Conference paper	25
Review	14
Authors	
Authors	653

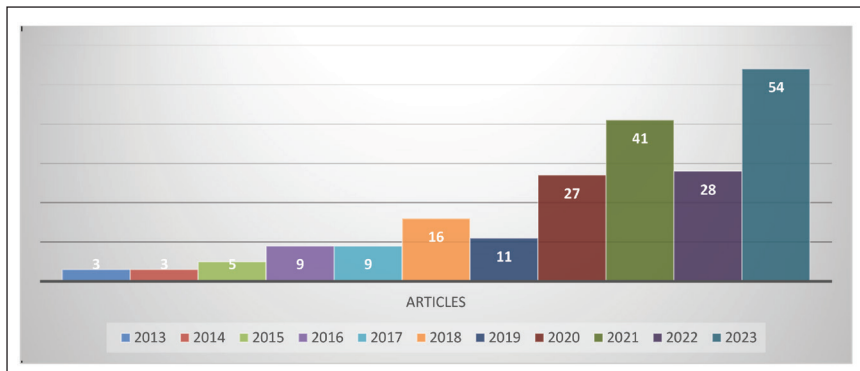
**Figure 2.** Publication Trend.

Figure 2 shows the publication trend over the years on the topic ‘Gender Inclusion’. It is evident from the figure that there has been a significant increase in the number of articles published from the year 2019 ($n = 11$) to 2023 ($n = 54$).

Sources

This section explores the second research question concerning the most prominent journals contributing to the field of gender inclusion. Figure 3 describes the 10 most impactful sources. After analysing the figure, it is observed that *Gender, Work and Organization*, *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, *Gender and Education* and *Sustainability* were among the top five productive journals contributing to this research area.

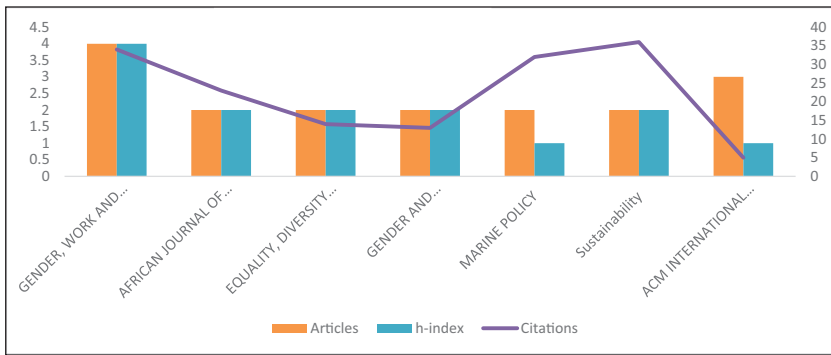


Figure 3. Most Productive Journals.



Figure 4. Source Dynamics of Gender Inclusion.

The h-index is a quantitative statistic that uses publications and citations to analyse publishing data to generate ‘an estimate of the importance, significance, and broad impact of a scientist’s cumulative research contributions’ (Hirsch, 2005). Also, it is evident from Figure 3 that the Journal of *Gender, Work and Organization* is the most influential one, having h-index of 4, 34 citations and producing the maximum number of articles on gender inclusion. Figure 4 displays the source dynamics of gender inclusion research. It is evident from the figure that *Gender and Education* is the consistent journal contributing to the field of gender inclusion research from 2013 to 2023, while *Gender, Work and Organization* and *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* publishing from 2018 onwards shows positive trends.

Most Impactful Authors

This section provides information regarding the most impactful authors in the research area of gender inclusion. From Figure 5, it is evident that S. A. Asongu, D. Bridges, S. B. Marine and N. M. Odhiambo are the most leading authors in gender inclusion research area.

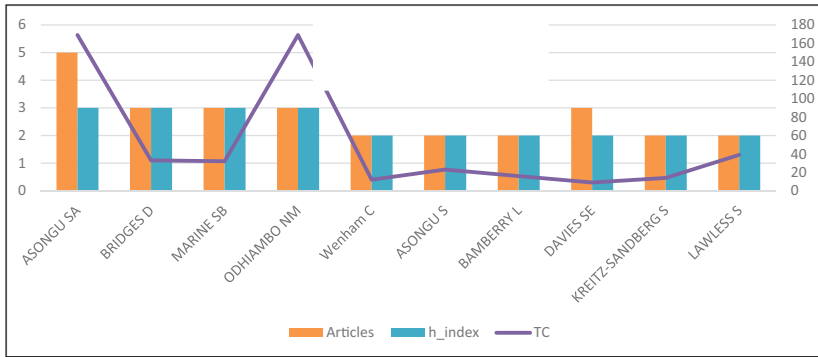


Figure 5. Top Influential Authors.

Table 2 presents findings from the most frequently cited documents. The results indicate that the article authored by Kossek in the *Journal of Management* has the highest number of citations. The author described the factors contributing to women's career equality and explained the situations in which women opt for or are pushed out of leadership positions in organisations. In addition to this, articles by Kang (2019), Asongu (2018) and Festing (2015) are the most cited articles that have contributed to this field.

Country-Wise Contribution

This segment explores the country-wise production of research articles on gender inclusion research. It is evident from Figure 6 that the USA has contributed the maximum number of articles, followed by Australia, the UK, Canada and India. In addition to this, Figure 7 shows the most cited countries. It is clear from the figure that the USA has received the most citations overall in this scenario as well. Thus, it can be interpreted that the USA has placed a greater emphasis on gender inclusion research.

International Collaboration

Using VOSviewer software, a full-counting co-authorship network of countries has been calculated based on the data. Figure 8 illustrates the network of cooperation between nations that publish more than five publications. The largest group of linked nations consists of 14 countries organised into 3 clusters. Colour-coordinated nations constitute a group. The cluster 1 formed by Australia, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK, represents authors from these nations is connected by the red colour. Cluster 2 (green colour) represents collaboration between Canada, Japan, Nigeria and South Africa, and cluster 3 (blue colour) represents collaboration between Netherlands, India and the USA.

Affiliation Analysis

Table 3 displays the top 10 organisations that publish articles on gender inclusion based on the affiliation of the authors. It shows that 'University of Texas' from the

Table 2. Depicting High Impact Documents.

Title	Author's Name	Journal	Country	Total Citations	TC per Year
'Opting out' or 'pushed out'? Integrating perspectives on women's career equality for gender inclusion and interventions	Kossek, 2017	<i>Journal of Management</i>	United States	173	24.71
'Working toward gender diversity and inclusion in medicine: Myths and solutions'	Kang, 2019	<i>The Lancet</i>	Canada	119	23.80
'ICT, financial access and gender inclusion in the formal economic sector: Evidence from Africa	Asongu, 2018	<i>African Finance Journal</i>	South Africa	73	12.17
'Think talent—think male? A comparative case study analysis of gender inclusion in talent management practices in the german media industry'	Festing, 2015	<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	Germany	51	5.67
'Inequality and gender inclusion: Minimum ICT policy thresholds for promoting female employment in sub-Saharan Africa'	Asongu, 2020	<i>Telecommunications Policy</i>	South Africa	54	13.5
'How enhancing gender inclusion affects inequality: thresholds of complementary policies for sustainable development'	Asongu, 2020	<i>Sustainable Development</i>	South Africa	42	10.50
'Inclusive management through gender consideration in small-scale fisheries: The why and the how'	de la Torre-Castro, 2019	<i>Frontiers in Marine Science</i>	Sweden	34	6.80
'Exploring gender inclusion in small-scale fisheries management and development in Melanesia'	Mangubha, 2021	<i>Mar Policy</i>	Fiji	32	10.67
'Culture of safety and gender inclusion in cardiothoracic surgery'	Backhus, 2018	<i>Annals of Thoracic Surgery</i>	United States	27	4.50

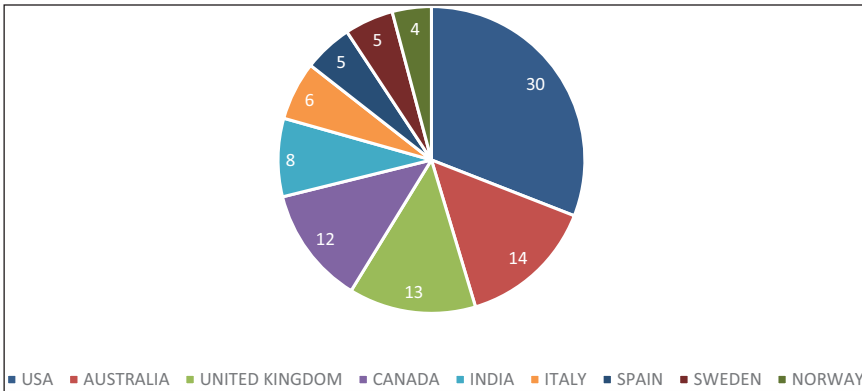


Figure 6. Top Contributing Countries.

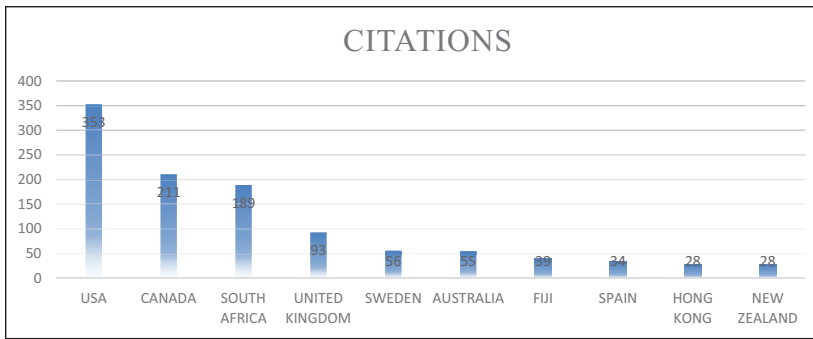


Figure 7. Citations per Countries.

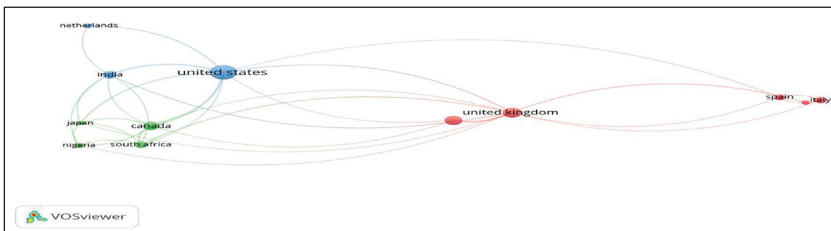


Figure 8. Country-Wise Collaboration.

USA has published the highest number of articles, that is, 11, followed by ‘Charles Sturt University’ from Australia with 8, ‘University of South Africa’ from Africa with 8 and ‘Academic Medical Center’ from the Netherlands with 7 articles, which are the four leading institutions contributing to research on gender inclusion.

Author’s Keyword Analysis

This section provides details to answer our third objective regarding significant or related words in the research field. In the 206 documents, researchers have

Table 3. Most Contributing Organisations.

Affiliation	Country	Articles
University of Texas	United States	11
Charles Sturt University	Australia	8
University of South Africa	South Africa	8
Academic Medical Center	Netherlands	7
Athens	Greece	6
Oslo University Hospital	Norway	6
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	United Kingdom	6

incorporated 694 keywords identified with the help of VOSviewer software. Keyword analysis shows the hotspot themes in this research domain. It is necessary to conduct an analysis of these keywords to understand the connection among them to identify any gaps and observe future research directions. Figure 9 shows the tree map of these keywords created with the help of Biblioshiny software to see the relative frequency. From the relative frequency, ‘gender’ is the most occurring keyword with a density of 30% and 19% utilisation in all articles, followed by ‘inclusion’, ‘gender inclusion’, ‘diversity’ and ‘gender equality’. Figure 10 depicts the WordCloud to see the available combinations of these keywords. The connection among the most repetitive keywords confirms that our research is going in the right direction.

A reliable method of determining the degree of relationship between keywords is density visualisation (Bahuguna et al., 2021). VOSviewer software was used to build a density map since it provides a strong graphical user interface (Cobo & Herrera, 2011). The keyword co-occurrence heat map of gender inclusion (see Figure 11) uses various colours to represent various densities. The topic or keyword that is used most frequently is indicated by a higher density of yellow colour. For example, gender is the main keyword in the highest yellow density colour. Intriguingly, relative to this term, the higher density yellow colour is also found in the terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘gender inclusion’.

The keyword co-occurrence networks can be used to determine the knowledge structure and research themes. Using a co-occurrence network, publications can be characterised according to their keyword contents. Figure 12 shows the co-occurrence data for the author’s keywords in VOSviewer to identify the hotspots in the gender inclusion research field. Out of the 694 identified keywords, the researcher set a minimum threshold of five occurrences to produce systematic results. The researcher identified 13 keywords as per the limit. From the figure, four clusters emerge prominently. The first cluster in red includes ‘Diversity’, ‘Equity’, ‘Inclusion’ and ‘Leadership’. The second cluster (green) comprises the keywords ‘Africa’, ‘Gender Equality’, ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ and ‘Sustainable Development’. In the third cluster (blue), ‘COVID-19’, ‘Gender’ and ‘Women’ are the emerging themes. Finally, in the fourth cluster (yellow), themes are ‘Gender Inclusion’ and ‘Transgender’.

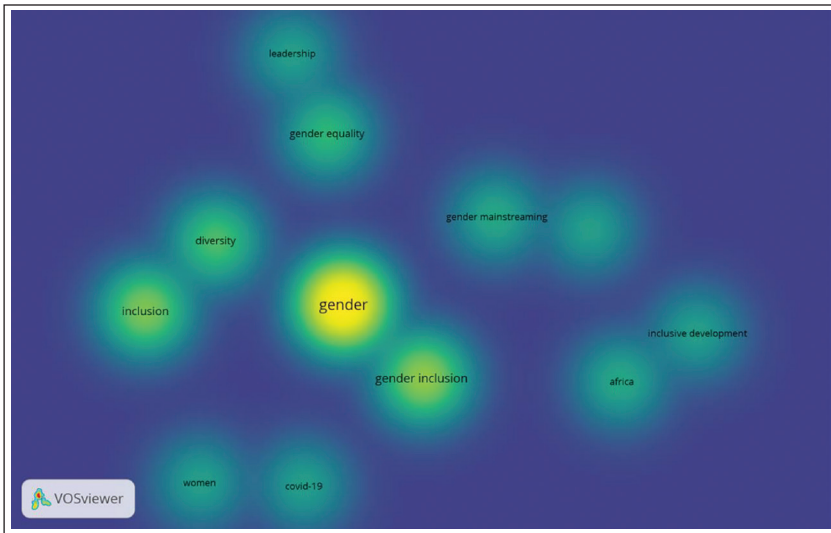


Figure 11. Density Visualisation.

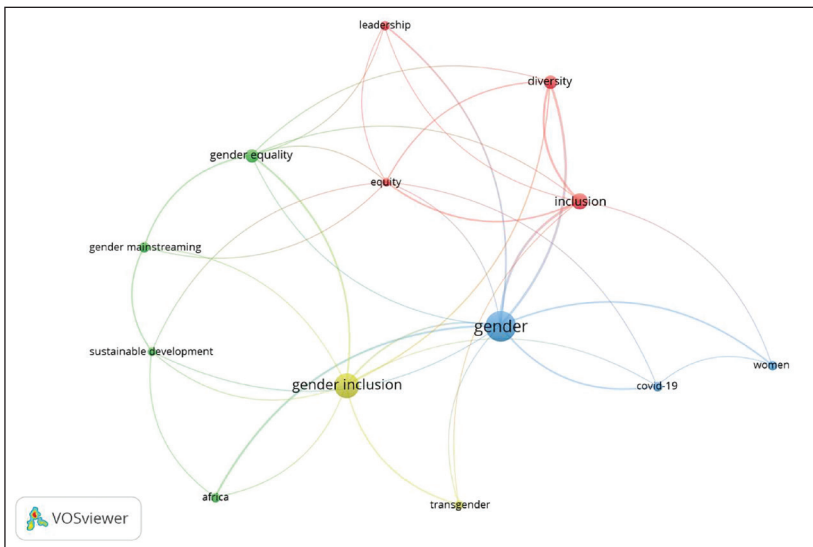


Figure 12. Keyword Co-occurrence Network of Gender Inclusion.

2021; Cabeza-García et al., 2018; Shabir & Ali, 2022), army, defence and military with 5% (Munshi, 2018; Woodruff & Kelty, 2017), sustainable development (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020; Khalikova et al., 2021), media and consultancy with 3% and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) with 2% (Asongu et al., 2018; Festing & Knappert, 2014). The data have some miscellaneous research areas like gender inclusiveness in climate change policy, gender equality,

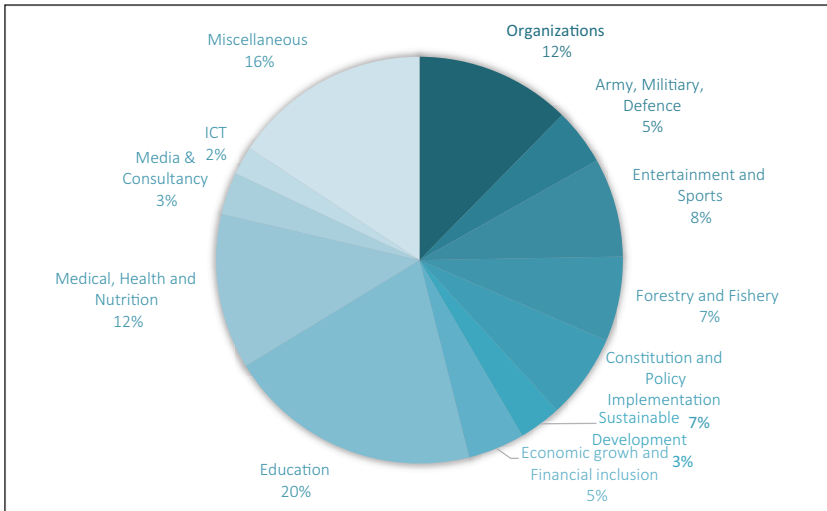


Figure 13. Sector-Wise Contribution in Gender Inclusion.

COVID-19, mining, conflict resolution, civil war peace agreements and so on (Bridges et al., 2021; Iftakhar, 2022; Kansake et al., 2021; Olson Lounsbury et al., 2024; Rai et al., 2021). This information was useful to identify under-researched areas of the field and to suggest possibilities for future research directions.

Findings

The research adds to and improves gender inclusion literature by highlighting the current research trends, promising sources, influential authors and country-wise contributions. Regarding to RQ1, the authors discovered that research on gender inclusion gained momentum from 2016 onwards, marking the year 2023 with the highest number of publications. This is possible because of growing concern about gender parity and initiatives taken by different countries. Findings from RQ2 reveal that S. A. Asongu, D. Bridges, S. B. Marine and N. Odhiambo are the most impactful authors, whereas articles published by Ernest Kossek have received maximum citations. Also, the most productive journals in this field are *Gender, Work and Organization*; *African Journal of Management*; *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*; *Gender and Education* and *Sustainability*. An analysis of affiliations and countries' productions reveals that the University of Texas, Austin, has published the highest number of articles, and country-wise, the USA secures the first position by producing 30 articles and 353 citations. About RQ3, the existing literature shows that Gender Inclusion, Inclusion and Gender are the most occurring keywords in this domain. The findings of RQ4, that is, sector-wise contribution to gender inclusion research, reveal that the topic has been explored more in the education and medical fields. The findings of the data helped us frame some future research directions in this research domain.

Contributions and Implications

The article enhances the existing literature available on gender inclusion by providing information on the most valuable authors, prominent journals, significant keywords, core countries and dominant sectors. In addition to this, the article will provide insight for the top management and managers to frame gender-inclusive practices. An atmosphere that promotes gender progressiveness in the workplace, together with a more inclusive approach to problem-solving, can complement the study of gender issues by introducing new methods to promote gender equality. The topic holds significance as it aids firms in cultivating and safeguarding their competitive edge while simultaneously empowering women. Gender inequality remains a persistent obstacle preventing women from attaining the highest leadership positions in the economic realm. Owing to the existence of this phenomenon, Indian women in the workforce are at a higher risk of experiencing a decline in their career progression, missing out on decision-making roles and facing barriers to advancement in the corporate hierarchy.

The article offers valuable insights for managers and policymakers to enhance their comprehension of the gender issue and the challenges that women encounter in the professional environment. Consequently, it is important to prioritise the workplace, gender, transgender, gender identity, discrimination and a variety of gender differences in order to address these issues effectively. Additionally, these results can serve as a guide for the researchers as they examine gender inclusion in more detail. In the next section, the article will also provide future research directions for the researchers.

Future Directions

The author may suggest the following future study objectives after carefully reviewing the available databases:

1. The idea of gender inclusion is still in its infancy, as there were only 221 articles in the database; hence, more studies are required to support appealing literature.
2. From the selective database, it can be inferred that there are few studies on the effect of HR practices on gender inclusion related to retention, recruitment and talent management (Dutta & Mishra, 2021; Scholten & Witmer, 2017; Shore et al., 2018), while more research can be done considering other HR practices.
3. While underscoring the advantages of gender inclusion, authors have found only eight articles from India in the selective database. This shows most of the research has been done in western countries. Future researchers can explore this field in India to get different perspectives.
4. Finally, the sector-specific contribution shows that the manufacturing industry needs more research. There are not many studies in the corporate sector either; hence, additional work on organisational dynamics can be done.

Limitations

This section reminds me of Stephen Hawking saying, 'exist'. First off, despite being extensive, this analysis is not exhaustive. Authors have studied the Scopus database only, while researchers can explore the same while using different databases. In addition, the author has identified the sector-wise contributions in a broad manner. A thorough analysis is advised, looking into the manufacturing and service sectors. The authors conducted a thorough and exact search on the topic, omitting a range of other possible keywords used by different authors.

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to the anonymous referees of the journal for their extremely useful suggestions to improve the quality of the article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Nisha Gandhi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1493-8908>

References

- Adamson, M., Kelan, E. K., Lewis, P., Rumens, N., & Sliwa, M. (2016). The quality of equality: Thinking differently about gender inclusion in organizations. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 24(7), 8–11. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HRMID-04-2016-0060>
- Alexandra Beaugard, T., Arevshatian, L., Booth, J. E., & Whittle, S. (2018). Listen carefully: Transgender voices in the workplace. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(5), 857–884. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1234503>
- Ali, M., Metz, I., & Kulik, C. T. (2015). Retaining a diverse workforce: The impact of gender-focused human resource management. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 25(4), 580–599. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12079>
- Aria, M., & Cuccurullo, C. (2017). Bibliometrix: An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis. *Journal of Informetrics*, 11(4), 959–975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joi.2017.08.007>
- Ashe, F. (2022). Gendering constitutional change in Northern Ireland: Participation, processes and power. *Political Studies*, 72(2), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217221122372>
- Asongu, S., Governance, A., & Odhiambo, N. M. (2018). ICT, financial access and gender inclusion in the formal economic sector: Evidence from Africa. *African Finance Journal*, 20(2), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3305000>

- Asongu, S., & Nting, R. (2021). The comparative economics of financial access in gender economic inclusion. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 12(2), 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJEMS-06-2020-0268>
- Asongu, S., & Odhiambo, N. (2020). How enhancing gender inclusion affects inequality: Thresholds of complementary policies for sustainable development. *Sustainable Development*, 28, 132–142. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1977>
- Bahuguna, P. C., Srivastava, R., & Tiwari, S. (2021). Two-decade journey of green human resource management research: A bibliometric analysis. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 30(2), 585–602. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-10-2021-0619>
- Bradshaw, S., Linneker, B., & Sanders-McDonagh, E. (2019). It's gender Jim, but not as we know it. A critical review of constructions of gendered knowledge of the Global South. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 27(2), 128–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506819847233>
- Bridges, D., Wulff, E., & Bamberry, L. (2021). Resilience for gender inclusion: Developing a model for women in male-dominated occupations. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 30, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12672>
- Bridges, D., Wulff, E., & Bamberry, L. (2023). Resilience for gender inclusion: Developing a model for women in male-dominated occupations. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 30(1), 263–279. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12672>
- Cabeza-García, L., Del Brio, E. B., & Oscanoa-Victorio, M. L. (2018). Gender factors and inclusive economic growth: The silent revolution. *Sustainability*, 10(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10010121>
- Castro-Aldrete, L., Moser, M. V., Putignano, G., Ferretti, M. T., Schumacher Dimech, A., & Santucciono Chadha, A. (2023). Sex and gender considerations in Alzheimer's disease: The Women's Brain Project contribution. *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, 15, 1105620. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnagi.2023.1105620>
- Cobo, M. J., & Herrera, F. (2011). Science mapping software tools: Review, analysis, and cooperative study among tools. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(7), 1382–1402. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21525>
- Davies, S. E. (2018). Gender empowerment in the health aid sector: Locating best practice in the Australian context practice in the Australian context. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 72(6), 520–534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2018.1534938>
- Deloitte. (2022). *Data-driven change women in the boardroom a global perspective*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/my/Documents/risk/my-risk-sdg5-women-in-the-boardroom-a-global-perspective.pdf>
- Desvaux, G., Devillard, S., Zelicourt, A., Kossoff, C., Labaye, E., & Sancier-Sultan, S. (2017). Women Matter: Time to accelerate - Ten years of insights on gender diversity. In *Women Matter* (Issue October). <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-matter-ten-years-of-insights-on-gender-diversity>. Accessed on 4th March 2024.
- Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., & Marc, W. (2021). How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 133(5), 285–296. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.070>
- Duppatti, G., Rao, N. V., Matlani, N., Scrimgeour, F., & Patnaik, D. (2020). Gender diversity and firm performance: Evidence from India and Singapore. *Applied Economics*, 52(14), 1553–1565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2019.1676872>

- Dutta, D., & Mishra, S. (2021). Are women from Venus? A mixed-method study determining important predictors of job pursuit intention across gender groups. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 40(6), 708–736. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-03-2020-0059>
- Fahimnia, B., Sarkis, J., & Davarzani, H. (2015). Green Supply Chain Management: A Review and Bibliometric Analysis. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 162(C), 101–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2015.01.003>
- Festing, M., & Knappert, A. (2014). Gender-specific preferences in global performance management: An empirical study on male and female managers in a multi-national context. *Human Resource Management*, 54(1), 55–79.
- George, T. O., Onwumah, A. C., Ozoya, M. I., & Olonade, O. Y. (2021). Good governance, social order, and development in Nigeria: The critical role of gender inclusion. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 25(5), 202–209. <https://doi.org/10.29063/ajrh2021/v25i5s.18>
- Hirsch, J. E. (2005). An index to quantify an individual's scientific research output. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, 102(46), 16569–16572. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0507655102>
- Iftakhar, N. (2022). Gender inclusive nuclear regulatory body of Pakistan. *International Journal of Nuclear Security*, 7(2), 12.
- James, E., & Salahou, A. (2021). Medical students and issues of social change: Gender inclusion in student organizations. *Medical Science Educator*, 31(2), 315–316. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40670-021-01261-7>
- Kansake, B., Barnes-Sakyi-Addo, G., & Dumakor-Dupey, N. (2021). Creating a gender-inclusive mining industry: Uncovering the challenges of female mining stakeholders. *Resources Policy*, 70, 101962. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2020.101962>
- Kaur, N., & Arora, P. (2020). Acknowledging gender diversity and inclusion as key to organizational growth: A review and trends. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7(6), 125–131. <https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.06.25>
- Khalikova, V. R., Jin, M., & Chopra, S. S. (2021). Gender in sustainability research Inclusion, intersectionality, and patterns of knowledge production. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 25(4), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jieec.13095>
- Khosla, R. (2014). An inclusive workplace: A case study of Infosys. *Review of HRM*, 3, 119–128.
- Kossek, E. E., & Buzzanell, P. M. (2018). Women's career equality and leadership in organizations: Creating an evidence-based positive change. *Human Resource Management*, 57(4), 813–822. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21936>
- Kossek, E. E., Su, R., & Wu, L. (2017). 'Opting out' or 'pushed out'? Integrating perspectives on women's career equality for gender inclusion and interventions. *Journal of Management*, 43(1), 228–254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316671582>
- Kuknor, S., & Bhattacharya, S. (2021). Organizational inclusion and leadership in times of global crisis. *Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal*, 15(1), 93–112. <https://doi.org/10.14453/aabfj.v15i1.7>
- Kulkarni, V. (2018). Walking the tightrope: Gender inclusion as organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 34(1), 106–120. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-05-2017-0197>
- Mangubhai, S., & Lawless, S. (2021). Exploring gender inclusion in small-scale fisheries management and development in Melanesia exploring gender inclusion in small-scale fisheries management and development in Melanesia. *Marine Policy*, 123, 104287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2020.104287>

- McConarty, K., & Rose, H. (2017). Beyond the 22%: Gender inequity in regional theatres' show selections. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 40(2), 212–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2017.1295410>
- Mozelius, P., & Humble, N. (2023). *Design Factors for an Educational Game Where Girls and Boys Play Together to Learn Fundamental Programming* (pp. 134–148). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-28993-4_10
- Munshi, A. (2018). Impact of HR policies on gender inclusion in Indian army: An empirical study. *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, 6(1), 9–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2322093718796311>
- Olson Lounsbury, M., Gerring, N., & Rose, K. (2024). Civil war peace agreements and gender inclusion. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 35(1), 86–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2022.2114058>
- Pandey, H. P., & Pokhrel, N. P. (2021). Formation trend analysis and gender inclusion in community forests of Nepa. *Trees, Forests and People*, 5, 100106.
- Paul, J., Lim, W. M., O'Cass, A., Hao, A. W., & Bresciani, S. (2021). Scientific procedures and rationales for systematic literature reviews (SPAR-4-SLR). *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 1–16 45(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12695>
- Perryman, A. A., Fernando, G. D., & Tripathy, A. (2016). Do gender differences persist? An examination of gender diversity on firm performance, risk, and executive compensation. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(2), 579–586. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.05.013>
- Priola, V., Lasio, D., De Simone, S., & Serri, F. (2014). The sound of silence. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender discrimination in 'inclusive organizations'. *British Journal of Management*, 25(3), 488–502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12043>
- Rai, A., Ayadi, D. P., Shrestha, B., & Mishra, A. (2021). On the realities of gender inclusion in climate change policies in Nepal. *Policy Design and Practice*, 4(4), 501–516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2021.1935643>
- Schmader, T. (2023). Gender inclusion and fit in STEM. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 74, 219–243. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-032720-043052>
- Scholten, C., & Witmer, H. (2017). The opaque gendered lens: Barriers to recruitment and career development. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 32(1), 47–65. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-09-2015-0082>
- Shabir, S., & Ali, J. (2022). Determinants of financial inclusion across gender in Saudi Arabia: Evidence from the World Bank's Global Financial Inclusion survey. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 49(5), 780–800. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-07-2021-0384>
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N., & Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 28(2), 176–189. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003>
- Singh, M. (2012). Gender inclusivity in corporate India: A business imperatives based framework. In A. Kaul & M. Singh (Eds), *New Paradigms of Gender Inclusivity: Theory and Best Practices* (pp.120–136). PHI Learning.
- Singh, S., & Pandey, M. (2019). Women-friendly policies disclosure by companies in India. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 38(8), 857–869. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2017-0291>
- Van Beekum, S. (2020). Statement of removal: Hard talk: Gender inclusion in a corporate setting statement of removal. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 50(4), 271–284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03621537.2020.1807109>

- Van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2017). Citation-based clustering of publications using CitNetExplorer and VOSviewer. *Scientometrics*, *111*(2), 1053–1070. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-017-2300-7>
- Warren, M., Bordoloi, S., & Warren, M. (2021). Good for the goose and good for the gander: Examining positive psychological benefits of male allyship for men and women. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, *22*(4), 723–731.
- Woodruff, T., & Kelty, R. (2017). Gender and deployment effects on pro-organizational behaviors of U.S. soldiers. *Armed Forces and Society*, *43*(2), 280–299. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X16687068>
- World Bank. (2022). *Women, business and the law 2022*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36945>. License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.
- World Economic Forum. (2019). *Global gender gap report 2020: Insight report*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119085621.wbef350>
- Zanin, A. C., LeMaster, L., Niess, L. C., & Lucero, H. (2023). Storying the gender binary in sport: Narrative motifs among transgender, gender non-conforming athletes. *Communication & Sport*, *11*(5), 879–904. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795221148159>

Disempowered by Leadership: Tales from the Middle of the Organisational Pyramid

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management
4(2) 187–206, 2026
© The Author(s) 2024
DOI: 10.1177/ijim.241245799
jim.imibh.edu.in



Soumendra Narain Bagchi¹  and Rajeev Sharma¹

Abstract

In this article we explore middle-level managers' stories of their experiences in which they were either empowered or disempowered by organisational leadership. An exploration of the stories reveals how leaders can, inadvertently, erode the power and the authority of middle-level managers. An unintended consequence of leadership's involvement in decisions that are middle managers' domain, disempowerment at the middle management level in an organisation arising out of leadership decisions offers an alternate way to explore and understand leadership and middle-management disempowerment in organisations.

Keywords

Disempowerment, middle management, dysfunctional leadership, cynicism, engagement, decision-making, qualitative research

Introduction

Middle-level managers often have a difficult existence in organisations. Often caught between frontline problems, which often require immediate intervention, and the top management, which seldom delegates sufficient authority down the hierarchy, their dilemmas are commonly misinterpreted as middle-management

¹XLRI Xavier School of Management, C. H. Area (East), Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India

Corresponding author:

Soumendra Narain Bagchi, XLRI Xavier School of Management, C. H. Area (East), Jamshedpur, Jharkhand 831001, India.

E-mail: s_bagchi@xlri.ac.in



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

incompetence or resistance (Fenton-O’Creevy, 1998, 2001). Negative perceptions towards middle management have led to widespread predictions of a utopian future down the corner when organisations would rely on self-managed employees and do away with middle managers (e.g., see Batt, 2004). This discourse exists despite significant literature highlighting the role of managers both in normal times and in times of organisational renewal (e.g., Battilana et al., 2022; Foss & Klein, 2022), including situations where the middle managers represent the public face of the organisation (Cioffi et al., 2024). While that future has yet to materialise, middle management continues to remain the common target in cost cutting and downsizing during troubled times (Balogun & Johnson, 2004). While there has been no complete replacement of the role of middle managers in a significant manner since the role is crucial in the implementation of an organisation’s strategic and operational goals, the middle managers remain, in most cases, underappreciated and unacknowledged in both academic and mainstream publications with few notable exceptions (e.g., Prado, 2022). In this article, we present our research findings on disempowerment amongst middle managers due to leadership styles/interventions using managers’ stories. The ensuing segments of this scholarly work will undertake an exhaustive examination of the subject matter, encapsulating a multitude of facets to furnish a comprehensive understanding. The ‘Review of Literature’ section will probe into extant research pertinent to dysfunctional leadership, disengagement and disempowerment. After this, the ‘Objectives’ section will delineate the explicit goals and objectives of the study, elucidating the anticipated outcomes.

The ‘Theoretical Framework’ will lay down the conceptual foundations steering the research, while the section on ‘Methodology’ will expound on the research design, data-gathering methods and analytical strategies employed in the study. Following this, the ‘Analysis’ section will exhibit the findings and interpretations derived from the data, transitioning into the ‘Discussion’ section, where these results will be critically scrutinised and contextualised.

Subsequently, the ‘Conclusion’ section will give a recapitulation of the principal findings. In addition, the article will delve into the ‘Managerial Implications’ of the research findings, including practical applications for organisational leadership. Finally, the ‘Limitations’ section will address the constraints or challenges encountered during the research process, offering transparency to the study’s scope and potential limitations.

Review of Literature

Officers in the middle of the pyramids are a vital link between organisational apex and the frontline employees, crucial towards implementation of strategies (Tarakci et al., 2023) and drivers of leadership’s ambidexterity (Fernández-Mesa et al., 2023). Driven towards organisational goals and yet dependent on top management leadership for direction and support, middle managers often face a tough situation. They are people with limited sanctioned authority, yet they are the frontline defence for the top management against the daily hassles of managing customers,

workers, powerful stakeholders like worker unions as well as other external stakeholders, creating vital communication bridges for vertical and horizontal interactions across organisational structures (Tarakci et al., 2023). Middle managers also create the current narrative for the frontline employees (Sasaki et al., 2024), influencing the frontline employees. Despite their demanding roles and the stressful nature of their work, there is not much love for the middle-level managers and they are often labelled as obstructions to successful organisational effectiveness and efficiency via high-level employee involvement practices (e.g., Fenton-O’Creevy, 2001; Martela, 2023).

Despite the negative perspective, there have been studies indicating positive impact as well. Yang et al. (2010) in their study on Chinese organisations obtained support for middle-level transformational leadership styles impacting frontline employees’ job performance, including value creation via creativity (Faix, 2023), which is dependent on creating a supporting ecosystem for employees located down the organisational pyramid. Similar appeals to investigate middle managers’ stressful existence have been made by other scholars (Schlesinger & Oshry, 1984).

Objectives

This study aims to investigate dysfunctional leadership, a pervasive issue in many organisations, that has the potential to significantly erode the internal dynamics of an organisation. This erosion manifests itself in various ways, most notably through the disengagement and disempowerment of middle managers. These individuals, who are crucial to the smooth operation of any organisation, find themselves marginalised and stripped of their power and influence. This disempowerment can lead to a lack of motivation and commitment, resulting in a decline in their performance and productivity.

The costs associated with this disengagement, while not explicitly calculated, are substantial and far reaching. They can have a direct impact on an organisation’s bottom line, affecting revenues and profitability. Moreover, the efficiency of the organisation as a whole can be compromised. This is because disengaged employees are less likely to put in the extra effort that often leads to innovation (Faix, 2023) and improved operational efficiency. They are also more likely to leave the organisation, resulting in high turnover costs and a loss of valuable skills and experience.

Understanding the dynamics of disempowerment is therefore key to improving leadership within an organisation. By recognising the signs of disempowerment and taking steps to address them, leaders can foster a more positive and productive work environment. This involves promoting open communication, encouraging participation in decision-making processes and providing opportunities for professional growth and development. By doing so, they can empower their middle managers, leading to increased engagement, improved performance and, ultimately, a more successful organisation.

Theoretical Framework

The inception of this model is rooted in negative leadership behaviour, a multifaceted issue that can take on various forms. These forms can range from arrogance and abrasiveness to a lack of information flow, all of which contribute to a hostile work environment. This environment can lead to middle managers feeling excluded from decision-making processes, a critical aspect of their roles and responsibilities. This exclusion can engender feelings of disempowerment among middle managers, leaving them unable to influence decisions that directly impact their roles and responsibilities.

When middle managers are subjected to such disempowerment, they may become disengaged from their work. This disengagement is not a monolithic state but can manifest in various forms, including cognitive, emotional, or behavioural disengagement. When managers are disengaged, their performance may suffer, and they may not execute their duties to the best of their abilities. This decline in performance can have an effect on the organisation's overall performance, leading to reduced revenues, profitability and operational efficiency.

Therefore, it is of paramount importance for organisations to address negative leadership behaviours proactively. By doing so, they can prevent the negative outcomes, fostering a more positive and productive work environment. This approach will not only benefit the individual employees but can also contribute to the overall health and success of the organisation.

Methodology

Data and Participants

Middle-level managers of HR departments attending a leadership development programme for a duration of 12 days spread over a six-month period with multiple interactive sessions were participants in this research. Participants were required to develop stories as part of a learning exercise regarding problems faced by them. The written submissions had to be about problem situations they had faced or had personally witnessed. The details of the people involved in the stories were to be anonymised and the document submitted directly to the faculty organising the training programme. This was to instil faith among the participants that the stories would not go back to the organisation and cause a potential backlash. This was ensured rigorously since the first author was part of the training programme. The assumption in this approach for collecting data was that individuals would like to talk about those themes which were at the top of their mind due to the impact on them.

Analysis

A qualitative analysis (Sharma et al., 2023) of the submitted stories was done to understand the problems documented. For the analysis of these narratives, we followed the following stages:

1. Reading of the stories in their entirety and trying to narrow down on the broad themes the stories convey
2. Reading the stories paragraph by paragraph, looking at the themes within the stories

We focussed on unearthing theoretical concepts (Glaser, 2002), which would allow us to capture the essence of what was happening in the organisation, as perceived through the eyes of the managers. For coding, most qualitative researchers often engage multiple researchers independently coding and then analysing inter-coding reliability quantitatively as a way to demonstrate the rigour of the research process. This, we viewed as an unnecessary quantification of a process which by nature is imaginative and unconstrained (Weick, 1989). In this research, we have adopted the consensus approach, with joint discussions before and during the coding process.

Data Description

The participants belonged to a single organisation and were from the human resource department. The participants worked in varying locations ranging from plant, regional offices and corporate office. All participants had more than 15 years of experience at the time of the research. From 22 participants, 18 valid stories were obtained in a written format and directly submitted to the faculty. The details of the data along with key initial findings generated from the cases are given in Table 1.

Analysis

The stories revealed instances of empowerment and positive reinforcement of authority of middle management as well as episodes of disempowerment and dysfunctional leadership. In this article, while we have mentioned the positive episodes, we have focused on the narratives of disempowerment. The same is presented thematically as follows with the thematic map presented in Figure 1.

Successful Conflict Management

Managing conflicts emerges as a significant challenge for the middle managers. These conflicts emerge due to deviant employees, power struggles between unions and the top management and enforcement of policies. These conflicts, for managers, are like moments of truth, episodes wherein they evaluate themselves versus a challenge as well as understand how the top management reacts. Few stories had successful conclusions to conflicts. For example, as illustrated below, a conflict between a supervisor and his subordinate was resolved successfully.

The job [of sales] was not to his liking and nor was of his choice. He had requested [supervisor] for change in role as per his qualifications. But his line manager paid no heed to his request and informed him that the posting was as per the corporation's requirement.

Table I. Description of Data and Initial Themes.

Sl.No.	Respondent	Gender	Length of the Story(in Pages)	Does It Reflect a Leadership Issue?	Possible Impact on Employees	Business Strategy(0/1)	Dept. Focused(0/1)	Worker-union Issues(0/1)	Interpersonal Issues(0/1)
1	2	M	2,500	Inconsistent application of policy, cave in to pressure from unions and well-connected employees	Cynicism towards top management, disengagement of employee, lack of effort beyond the requirement	0	1	1	0
2	3	M	3,000	Handling of a status change of employees	Lack of foresight, lack of faith in top management's capability to think ahead of time	0	1	0	1
3	4	F	350	Workforce planning issues, job allocation	Success in resolving the problem	0	1	0	1
4	5	M	4,500	Organisational injustice	Lack of faith in top management, disengagement, cynicism towards top management		1	0	1
5	6	M	1,500	Political strategies to control union leader	Faith in top management to be innovative in order to keep things under control	1	1	1	1
6	7	F	3,200	Policy implementation, transparency	Political behaviours in organisation, lack of faith in top leadership	0	1	0	1
7	9	M	1,500	Issue of bribe demanded from regulatory bodies	Need for guidance from top leadership, resolving problems on one's own	1	1	0	0

(Table I continued)

(Table 1 continued)

Sl. No.	Respondent	Gender	Length of the Story(in Pages)	Does It Reflect a Leadership Issue?	Possible Impact on Employees	Business Strategy(0/1)	Dept. Focused(0/1)	Worker-union Issues(0/1)	Interpersonal Issues(0/1)
8	10	F	2,000	Yes, top management transfers an officer due to union pressure	Disengagement of officers, lack of trust in top leadership, playing safe and not taking risks	0	1	1	0
9	11	M	2,200	Strong leadership in implementing change	Successfully confronted the union, faith in leadership, ability to resolve issues	1	1	1	0
10	13	M	3,750	Lack of systems and processes, fire during leave	Procedural injustice in organisations, lack of faith in top management, cynicism towards leaders	1	1	1	1
11	14	F	2,000	Reactive behaviours of leadership towards fire and safety	Lack of vision of top leaders, lack of faith in top management to have foresight	1	1	0	0
12	15	F	1,650	Lack of transparency in policy implementation and processes	Negative political environment, lack of faith in top management to have foresight	1	0	0	0
13	16	M	1,650	Success in self-initiatives	Increase in self-worth due to being able to get things done	1	1	1	1
14	17	M	1,750	Fundamental errors by leadership in conducting a disciplinary proceeding against a workman	Lack of faith in leadership's capability due to publicly displayed incompetence	0	1	1	1

(Table 1 continued)

(Table 1 continued)

Sl. No.	Respondent	Gender	Length of the Story(in Pages)	Does It Reflect a Leadership Issue?	Possible Impact on Employees	Business Strategy(0/1)	Dept. Focused(0/1)	Worker-union Issues(0/1)	Interpersonal Issues(0/1)
15	18	F	2,000	Inconsistent implementation of policies	Employee demotivation, lack of faith in top management, disengagement due to injustice	0	1	0	0
16	20	M	1,750	Leave policy during festivals not resolved, cave-in by top management, overruling the HR managers' decision	Demotivation among managers, lack of trust in top leaders to stand by their officers	1	0	1	0
17	21	M	1,100	Workforce planning failure, leadership failure	Lack of faith in top management's people skills and administrative skills	1	0	1	1
18	22	M	1,650	Workforce planning failure, leadership failure	Lack of faith in top management's competence in understanding problems	1	0	1	0

Notes:

1. Designations of the managers, along with details of their location were deleted to ensure anonymity.
2. Invalid submissions were eliminated from the analysis.
3. The column with the heading 'Possible Impact on Employees' records the researchers' code to the question as to the likely impact of the employees if the details of the case were known to them.
4. The columns 'Business Strategy', 'Dept. Focused', 'Worker-union Issues' and 'Interpersonal Issues' were coded as 1 or 0 depending on whether implications for the respective topics were present (1) or absent (0) in the stories.

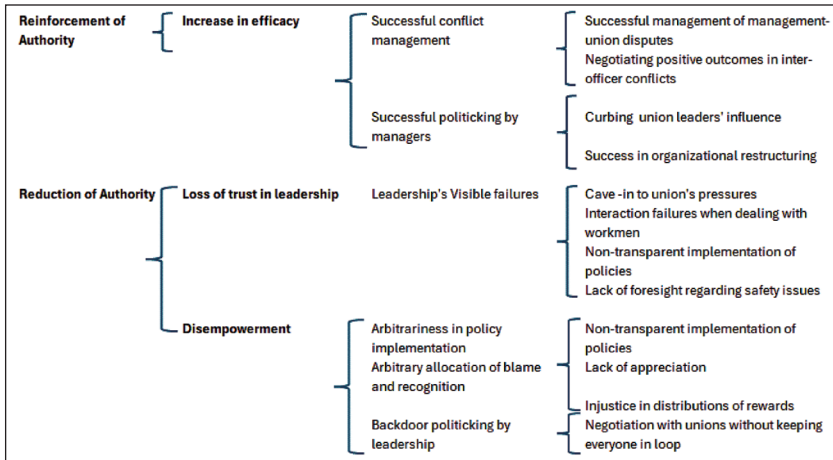


Figure 1. Thematic Map of Themes Reflected in the Managers' Narratives.

[the subordinate] used to have frequent arguments and disagreements ... he was rated poorly on his performance. Hence, he started losing confidence and interest in his job and decided to put in his resignation.

At this juncture Sr. Officials and HR personnel intervened. They had detailed discussions with him ... he disclosed that his line manager was an arrogant, rude person and was not an effective team leader. He did not get any support or guidance from him.... Finally, considering [his] aptitude and educational qualification, it was decided to post him in operations, i.e., plant job.

[The subordinate] was relaxed and stress free with the changed role. The output in his performance could be noticed within 2 months.... His engineering knowledge has helped him to bring about new ideas in operations in the plant. (Respondent 4)

Successful management of conflicts is essential for middle managers to be recognised as capable managers within the organisation, but is also part of their well-being in terms of increasing their self-worth and self-efficacy. As the story by Respondent 4 illustrated, being able to intervene successfully implied being able to have influence. In bigger conflicts where consequences of a badly handled situation could hamper the entire plant, for example, when unions threatened the operations of the plant, the behaviour of the top managers exposed their leadership style. Certain managers narrated with pride how they had overcome such threats.

Few of the workmen threatened and nearly assaulted the security men in the plant premises ... we also filed a civil suit seeking an injunction to restrain the unions from resorting to strike. Civil court in its order stated that 'the strike was illegal, and remedies were available within Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 as the proceedings in conciliation were pending'.

Consequent to the implementation of increased work time of 25 minutes by a set of employees, a process of change in mind set of employees has begun and more employees are inclined to come forward and accept the increase in work time on same terms. (Respondent 11)

Backdoor Politicking by Leadership

Along with success stories, there were narratives illustrating cave-ins by top management or explicit bargaining with individuals.

General Secretary of [the union] had a closed-door discussion with GM (HR) ... staff [violating the no mobile phone rule] included the son of a family friend of GM (Operations) (Respondent 2)

Rules framed without looking into requirements of the organisation create another set of conflicts. Workers take leaves during the festival season, thus potentially bringing the operations to a halt. A manager's effort to prevent that was undone by the top management.

All four workmen represented the case to DGM (HR). Each of them explained their position. DGM(HR) called DGM (MFG) and also [HR officer] discussed with them and suggested that their leave may be sanctioned as a special case by taking individual letter from each staff mentioning their reasons and also stating that it shall not be repeated in future.

[HR officer's protest] 'if we accede to their request, it would become difficult for the officers to operate plant on festival days' [was] ignored and bypassed. (Respondent 20)

Successful Politicking by Managers

A story about the top management engaging in a political strategy to control the union leader was written with an apparent sense of accomplishment.

Manager has unofficially guided technical staff on how to form a separate Union. The manager knew that an additional union will reduce the power of the existing union leader...later on, the existing union leader was suspended, and an enquiry initiated against him for physical assault on an officer. Before serving the notice to the union leader, plant manager had informed the local police. (Respondent 6)

A similar story of organisational restructuring conducted in past, over the resistance of union leaders, was narrated with a sense of self-satisfaction, even though there was no personal involvement of the manager.

In spite of the negative reactions from the unions and the old guard of management, the structure was put in place. The new organisation structure [implemented at the shopfloor] was leaner with lesser levels, which gave authority to its staff and independent decision-making. (Respondent 3)

As illustrated in the above vignettes, leadership demonstrated by the top management manifested itself in all the stories in varying degrees. Reflecting good leadership, these narratives indicate something which middle managers looked up to as guidance from the top.

Arbitrariness in Policy Implementation

Dysfunctional leadership manifested itself in multiple ways—cave-in and pressuring subordinates to take decisions counter to what the subordinate considered appropriate (e.g., respondent 20), leading to feelings of disempowerment or cynical views about top management. Such a feeling emerges and is reinforced by a perceived lack of transparency in the implementation of policies or idiosyncratic interpretation and implementation.

Managing equilibrium amongst all the roles of secretaries while arriving the bell-curve was a challenging task for the Moderation Committee. No one could explain to secretaries the reasons for their being labelled as average or underperforming secretaries. (Respondent 7)

The Company has number of HR initiatives, but it is found that the basics of staff motivations are missing as it is perceived there is no transparency in the processes. (Respondent 14)

There was no deduction of Standard Rent Recovery being deducted from [an employee] (Respondent 17)

These along with pressures from connected employees wherein top management give in, or succumb to pressures, creates a situation wherein top management failures become the failures of the HR middle managers, a kind of reflected ignominy.

Leadership's Visible Failures

Apart from these high-stake conflict situations, top management's failure in certain routine administrative tasks is another reason for loss of faith among middle managers.

As the above acts of misconduct committed by [an employee] were very grave and serious in nature and also involved misappropriation of cash, he was issued a charge-sheet ... [the employee] claimed that since despite his request to record the enquiry

proceedings in Hindi, the proceedings have been recorded in English,... In his reply on the findings of Enquiry Officer's report, [the employee] once again denied the charges levelled against him.

In the labour court it was held that the enquiry proceedings were not fair and were not conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the established law ... despite his request to record the enquiry proceedings in Hindi, the proceedings have been recorded in English, he was unable to understand English properly.

Thereafter, no action has been taken by the Management on the nature and quantum of punishment to be awarded to [employee]. (Respondent 17)

Despite leadership failures, certain self-driven initiatives tried out by managers and with successful outcomes were part of managers' stories.

I have taken so many initiatives like providing cold drinking water, fans, clean toilets facilities and organised health check-up for the contract labour staffs. Also organised football and cricket match between BPCL officials vs. contract labour-staff to build friendly relationship. (Respondent 16)

While the aforementioned vignettes reflected lack of sensitivity and of proactive thinking on behalf of top leaders, certain stories provided concrete examples.

One of operators passed away after a prolonged illness. All the employees wanted to stop production for half a day & attend the funeral. When the message reached Production Manager, he was incredibly angry & in a harsh tone said that production could never be stopped because of year end closing & target to be met.

This immediately infuriated the workers and they gheraoed the office. Ultimately local police were informed to defuse the situation.

He could have managed the situation more diplomatically. Other managers often allow workers to go in batches without disrupting the production. (Respondent 21)

An episode of fire accident in one of the plants provided a glimpse of lack of foresight among top managers.

After the fire episode [fire and safety in-charge] called an urgent meeting of all the officers of his department to discuss performance-related issues ... [it was found] that the [previous fire and safety in-charge] had sent a request to HR Department for filling up vacant positions of fire operators.... After a month, HR [had] informed him that their proposal for filling up the [posts] was shot down. (Respondent 14)

The general norm is to rotate staff after a period of 3 years in a particular posting.... There are staff who have completed even more than a decade in their current postings.... a distant relative of General Manager (Operations) continued to be in the procurement department for the last 21 years. (Respondent 10)

Arbitrary Allocation of Blame and Recognition

Stories also reflected the general feeling about justice in the organisation, particularly when it came to fault finding and the need to hold someone accountable.

He [subordinate] narrated the incident to [his reporting officer] that there was a flash fire in on Friday when he [subordinate] was on leave, where a contract worker was injured ... [reporting officer] informed that the committee had made some reference regarding him in the report. He said that a caution letter is only a piece of paper and has nothing to do with his performance. But these consolations could not pacify [the subordinate] and he [subordinate] decided to quit the job. (Respondent 13)

A feeling of being neglected and unappreciated was observed in certain stories. Along with these there were stories of certain employees being more privileged than others.

During the presentations to top management of [the department], he was appreciated for his efforts towards resolving all pending separation cases, a few of them pending for more than 6 to 10 years. Despite of working hard, even stretching himself, to ensure that he delivered more than what is expected of him, his incentive payment was far less than expectations. He was also not satisfied with marks given to him and the explanation given for it by management. (Respondent 5)

Discussion

Disempowered as a manager implies that an employee designated as a manager would not be conducting the job as signified by the designation. Such disempowered existence is not a happy situation for individuals, as it implies an undignified existence in the organisation and can lead to negative work-related attitudes and behavioural outcomes (Kane & Montgomery, 1998). Negative leadership behaviours such as arrogance and abrasiveness along with lack of information flow and non-involvement in decisions (Singh, 2006) have been related to employee disempowerment and lack of trust in supervisors. Disempowerment, apart from effects on individuals, has been posited to lead to negative consequences for organisational social capital (Singh, 2006).

Disempowerment, if prevalent in an organisation, would reflect strongly on the quality of the leadership in an organisation. Empowerment has been strongly correlated with top management leadership (Ugboro & Obeng, 2000). Factors like power sharing or refusing the union leaders to cross over the middle managers in decision-making are significant (Bowen & Lawler, 1995), which indicates that despite espoused power sharing, the top management may be interested in status quo. Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan's (1998) views regarding adopting a Foucauldian perspective to understand the complexity and ambiguity of organisational power and interventions by top management possibly interested in perpetuating status quo by using top management discretion and authority provide new research avenues in

the meaning of empowerment (power over resources, power over decision-making, power over the meaning given to different situations). Such perspective would identify organisational procedures, hierarchies and reward structures, all of which are designed and maintained by the top management, as impediments of employee empowerment (Psoinos & Smithson, 2002), and thus un-do a manager.

Low autonomy, when manifested in disempowered employees would lead to cynicism and exit among employees (Naus et al., 2007). When employees are bypassed in decision-making, such an organisation would encourage negative political behaviour, which will lead to organisational cynicism (Davis & Gardner, 2004), and lack of involvement in routine tasks as well as organisational citizenship behaviour (Andersson, 1996; Saks, 2006).

This would be in stark contrast to researchers focusing on employees with espoused values of empowerment, which is designed to enable employees to participate in decision-making to minimise employee dissatisfaction and disruptive behaviour within the organisation (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2005). While there has been substantiation talk about self-managed teams wherein many of the functions traditionally reserved for managers become the responsibility of subordinates, including monitoring performance, taking corrective action and seeking necessary guidance or resources (Manz & Sims, 1984), the reality of managers being un-done by the top leadership should temper such ambitious plans. Disempowered managers are likely to be disengaged employees, reflected as cognitive disengagement, emotional disengagement or behavioural disengagement (Andersson & Bateman, 1997), and employees experiencing negative emotions often limit their focus on daily survival (Wollard, 2011). Managerial indifference (Pech, 2009), if widespread, could be a drag on organisational performance, a factor that increases the gap between potential and reality.

‘Distrust in management is pervasive’ is a statement echoed by many scholars (e.g., Pfeffer, 2007). This is, as suggested by our research, due to the multiple instances in which managers are un-done—in front of their peers, subordinates and other corporate witnesses. When their decisions are overturned, or suggestions neglected, they are in a way subject to public humiliation, creating a lack of trust in certain cases and strong cynicism or hostility towards the leaders in other cases. Such lack of trust or cynicism is directed towards both individual leaders (Hall et al., 2004) and organisations. Dean et al. (1998) focus on ‘beliefs, attitudes and behavioural tendencies’ towards an organisation; however, we conjecture that such a negatively oriented energy directed towards specific individual in top management and middle management will not err in painting everyone with the same brush, despite their personality cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008). Cynicism along with justice is related to employee commitments towards organisational change (Bernerth et al., 2007), which may be a survival issue in highly dynamic environments.

Dysfunctional leadership has been observed to erode the internal dynamics of an organisation (Dandira, 2012; Rubin et al., 2009). This, as obtained by our research, is the cause. The effect is middle managers who end up disengaged and disempowered, as manifestations of dysfunctional leadership. While the costs of such a phenomenon, which results in disengaged and disempowered employees,

have not been calculated (Wollard, 2011), it is easy to understand how disengaged employees cost organisations in revenues and profitability, not just by failing to go above and beyond in their productivity but by slow response to managerial situations. Such phenomenon, as it becomes increasingly widespread, creates a high base rate for managerial incompetence (Hogan & Hogan, 2001), leading to deficits in operating efficiency and effectiveness (Balthazard et al., 2006).

Conclusions

The consequences of dysfunctional leadership can have far-reaching and detrimental effects on an organisation's health, impacting both internal dynamics and overall performance. The specific consequences are not limited to a few dissatisfied employees. Dysfunctional leadership has multifaceted consequences that extend beyond individual employees, influencing the overall performance, financial health and organisational culture. Recognising and addressing dysfunctional leadership is crucial for organisations to foster a positive work environment and ensure sustained success.

Dysfunctional leadership contributes to a negative work environment, leading to disengagement and disempowerment among middle managers (Dandira, 2012; Rubin et al., 2009). Disengaged employees are likely to exhibit reduced commitment, motivation and involvement in their roles, negatively affecting the overall organisational culture. The direct impact of disengagement and disempowerment on organisational performance is significant. While the exact costs have not been quantified (Wollard, 2011), it is evident that these factors can impede an organisation's ability to achieve its goals and objectives.

Dysfunctional leadership can foster a negative organisational culture characterised by low morale, high turnover rates and a lack of trust among employees. This can create a challenging work environment that hinders collaboration, innovation and the overall well-being of the workforce. Dysfunctional leadership contributes to a high base rate for managerial incompetence (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). Disengagement and disempowerment contribute to a decline in employee commitment, negatively impacting their dedication to organisational goals and values. This erosion of commitment may lead to increased turnover rates and difficulties in attracting and retaining talent. This increased incompetence and talent reduction can cause decline in operating efficiency and effectiveness (Balthazard et al., 2006). Incompetent leadership may lead to poor decision-making, inefficiencies in processes and a lack of strategic direction, further compromising the organisation's success. This can have direct financial implications, as sluggish responses to managerial situations and reduced initiative may lead to missed opportunities and decreased revenues.

Theoretical Implications

While organisational cynicism has been observed to impact exchange relationship between employees and supervisors (Neves, 2012), we hypothesise that a

possibility of cynicism towards organisational leaders would translate into organisational cynicism. Lack of supervisory support would imply employees feeling less motivated to take decisions and engage proactively with problems, merely being content to passing on the problems upwards.

Self-management does not operate in vacuum; it is bounded by multiple external variables (Pech & Slade, 2006). Possibilities of conflict between officers' concerns regarding their ability to engage productively and authoritatively with deviant employees as well as unions could well clash with the top management's concern to maintain stability in operations, even at the cost of sacrificing their own officers concerned. Similarly, research in leadership has looked at the leader–member exchange relationship in a narrow perspective (e.g., Gómez & Rosen, 2001) as compared to what we claim here is the broader concern—do the leaders allow their managers to be? Similarly, issues such as employee engagement and organisational support need to be looked at broadly from a manager's perspective as compared to a limited view (e.g., Ram & Prabhakar, 2011).

Managerial Implications

'Corporate planners and executives are rarely aware of the deep ideational currents that are continuously at work to constitute the world in which their careers unfold' (Kilduff & Kelemen, 2001). Is it possible that such a disempowerment is happening unconsciously? We hypothesise that such a possibility may exist, as remnants of older generation managers or of older management styles. What is of danger is to what extent the older style has an influence on organisational policies, reward systems and working styles of employee—if the influence is pervasive, then the efforts towards leadership development down the ranks might have to be initiated by examining the policies, systems and working styles. Training programmes would be lower down the list of things to be done.

For career movement, there is a school of thought which links dysfunctional leadership with personality disorders. Personality disorders are hypothesised to be a source of a highly toxic and dysfunctional organisational behaviour (Goldman, 2006; Kahn, 1990), and it would be beneficial for assessing potential leaders on personality disorders before putting on a career track within an organisation. In an organisation which has a compulsory transfer policy, such a policy could be influential in spreading dysfunctional leaders, in a way spreading the disease around.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted on a sample of middle-level managers working in the human resources department. Managers working in production departments or sales departments where the performance of managers are represented in tangible outcomes might have different episodes to discuss, which could have led to

additional codes to further enrich the emergent theory of disempowered by leadership.

Despite substantial research which has looked at employee disengagements, employee empowerment/disempowerment, cynicism in organisations and dysfunctional leadership and their relationships with different variables of interest, we think that from a middle manager's perspective, these are all part of one complete world—a world where their existence as a manager is being denied either totally or eroded away bit by bit by top managers' leadership style. This might be quite a surprise to most top managers who espouse employee empowerment, leadership development in the ranks and self-managed teams as their very acts are un-doing what they want to have in their organisation.

While organisational cynicism has been observed to impact exchange relationship between employees and supervisors (Neves, 2012), we hypothesise that a possibility of cynicism towards organisational leaders would translate into organisational cynicism. Lack of supervisory support would imply employees feeling less motivated to take decisions and engage proactively with problems, merely being content to passing on the problems upwards.

Self-management does not operate in vacuum; it is bounded by multiple external variables (Pech & Slade, 2006). Possibilities of conflict between officers' concerns regarding their ability to engage productively and authoritatively with deviant employees as well as unions could well clash with the top management's concern to maintain stability in operations, even at the cost of sacrificing their own officers concerned. Similarly, research in leadership has looked at the leader–member exchange relationship in a narrow perspective (e.g., Gómez & Rosen, 2001) as compared to what we claim here is the broader concern—do the leaders allow their managers to be? Similarly, issues such as employee engagement and organisational support need to be looked at broadly from a manager's perspective as compared to a limited view (e.g., Ram & Prabhakar, 2011).

Further research would like to investigate the cost implications of such un-doing. Certain departments like production would be easy to research. It would be of interest to explore the supporting departments such as HR and marketing where there is no tangible output and both dysfunctional leaders and the managers who are in different stages of being un-done can co-exist without raising many concerns.

Persistence of disempowerment is another area of research. What happens when there is change of leadership, from a dysfunctional leader to a positive and genuine leader? How do the leader–member exchanges happen after an episode of horrid leadership style and what is the nature of such exchanges are interesting questions. One would also look at the situation from the new leaders' perspective—what style or strategy they would have to adopt to get the employees to believe in them? How does that influence the performance of the new leader in a dynamic competitive world—these questions would be of great significance for leaders who seek new challenges in different organisations.

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful to the anonymous referees of the journal for their extremely useful suggestions to improve the quality of the article. The authors assume the final responsibility for the theoretical appropriateness of the content and the interpretation of the data.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Soumendra Narain Bagchi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3992-2657>

References

- Andersson, L. M. (1996). Employee cynicism: An examination using a contract violation framework. *Human Relations, 49*, 1395–1418.
- Andersson, L. M., & Bateman, T. S. (1997). Cynicism in the workplace: Some causes and effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 18*, 449–460.
- Balogun, J., & Johnson, G. (2004). Organizational restructuring and middle manager sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal, 47*(4), 523–549.
- Balthazard, P. A., Cooke, R. A., & Potter, R. E. (2006). Dysfunctional culture, dysfunctional organization: Capturing the behavioral norms that form organizational culture and drive performance. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21*(8), 709–732.
- Batt, R. (2004). Who benefits from teams? Comparing workers, supervisors, and managers. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society, 43*(1), 183–212.
- Battilana, J., Yen, J., Ferreras, I., & Ramarajan, L. (2022). Democratizing work: Redistributing power in organizations for a democratic and sustainable future. *Organization Theory, 3*(1), 26317877221084714.
- Bernerth, J. B., Armenakis, A. A., Feild, H. S., & Walker, H. J. (2007). Justice, cynicism, and commitment: A study of important organizational change variables. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 43*(3), 303–326.
- Bowen, D. E., & Lawler, E. E. 1995. Empowering service employees. *Sloan Management Review, 36*(4), 73–85.
- Byrne, Z. S., & Hochwarter, W. A. (2008). Perceived organizational support and performance: Relationships across levels of organizational cynicism. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23*(1), 54–72.
- Cioffi, D., Tiller, N., Warnock, L., & Watterston, B. (2024). Learning about and leading from the middle: Stories from three women middle leaders. In E. Benson, P. Duignan & B. Watterston (Eds), *Middle leadership in schools: Ideas and strategies for navigating the muddy waters of leading from the middle* (pp. 29–41). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Dandira, M. (2012). Dysfunctional leadership: Organizational cancer. *Business Strategy Series, 13*(4), 187–192.
- Davis, W. D., & Gardner, W. L. (2004). Perceptions of politics and organizational cynicism: An attributional and leader–member exchange perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly, 15*(4), 439–465.

- Dean, J. W., Brandes, P., & Dharwadkar, R. (1998). Organizational cynicism. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(2), 341–352.
- Faix, A. (2023). Qualitative innovation in the light of the normative: A minimal approach to promoting and measuring successful innovation in business. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 1(1), 11–24.
- Fenton-O’Creevy, M. (1998). Employee involvement and the middle manager: Evidence from a survey of organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19(1), 67–84.
- Fenton-O’Creevy, M. (2001). Employee involvement and the middle manager: Saboteur or scapegoat? *Human Resource Management Journal*, 11(1), 24–40.
- Fernández-Mesa, A., Clarke, R., García-Granero, A., Herrera, J., & Jansen, J. J. (2023). Knowledge network structure and middle management involvement as determinants of TMT members’ ambidexterity: A multilevel analysis. *Long Range Planning*, 56(3), 102318.
- Foss, N. J., & Klein, P. G. (2022). Why managers still matter as applied organization (design) theory. *Journal of Organization Design*, 1–12. SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4289193orhttp://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4289193>
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 23–38.
- Goldman, A. (2006). High toxicity leadership: Borderline personality disorder and the dysfunctional organization. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(8), 733–746.
- Gómez, C., & Rosen, B. (2001). The leader-member exchange as a link between managerial trust and employee empowerment. *Group & Organization Management*, 26(1), 53–69.
- Hall, A. T., Blass, F. R., Ferris, G. R., & Massengale, R. (2004). Leader reputation and accountability in organizations: Implications for dysfunctional leader behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(4), 515–536.
- Hardy, C., & Leiba-O’Sullivan, S. (1998). The power behind empowerment: Implications for research and practice. *Human Relations*, 51(4), 451–483.
- Hogan, R., & Hogan, J. (2001). Assessing leadership: A view from the dark side. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 9(1–2), 40–51.
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692–724.
- Kane, K., & Montgomery, K. (1998). A framework for understanding dysempowerment in organizations. *Human Resource Management*, 37(3–4), 263–275.
- Kilduff, M., & Kelemen, M. (2001). The consolations of organization theory. *British Journal of Management*, 12(Suppl 1), S55–S59.
- Manz, C., & Sims Jr, H. P. (1984). Searching for the ‘unleader’: Organizational member views on leading self-managed groups. *Human Relations*, 37(5), 409–424.
- Martela, F. (2023). Managers matter less than we think: How can organizations function without any middle management? *Journal of Organization Design*, 12(1), 19–25.
- Naus, F., Van Iterson, A., & Roe, R. (2007). Organizational cynicism: Extending the exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect model of employees’ responses to adverse conditions in the workplace. *Human Relations*, 60(5), 683–718.
- Neves, P. (2012). Organizational cynicism: Spillover effects on supervisor–subordinate relationships and performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(5), 965–976.
- Pech, R. J. (2009). Delegating and devolving power: A case study of engaged employees. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 30(1), 27–32.
- Pech, R., & Slade, B. (2006). Employee disengagement: Is there evidence of a growing problem? *Handbook of Business Strategy*, 7(1), 21–25.
- Pfeffer, J. (2007). Human resources from an organizational behavior perspective: Some paradoxes explained. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(4), 115–134.

- Prado, M. C. (2022). *The glass jaw: The presence of incivility, conflict, and bullying in disempowering workplaces: A study of middle-level managers in HEIs* (Paper 536). [Digital Commons @ ACU, Electronic theses and dissertations]. <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/etd/536>
- Psoinos, A., & Smithson, S. (2002). Employee empowerment in manufacturing: A study of organisations in the UK. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 17(2), 132–148.
- Ram, P., & Prabhakar, G. V. (2011). The role of employee engagement in work-related outcomes. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research in Business*, 1(3), 47–61.
- Rubin, R. S., Dierdorff, E. C., Bommer, W. H., & Baldwin, T. T. (2009). Do leaders reap what they sow? Leader and employee outcomes of leader organizational cynicism about change. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(5), 680–688.
- Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(7), 600–619.
- Sasaki, I., Kotosaka, M., & De Massis, A. (2024). When top managers' temporal orientations collide: Middle managers and the strategic use of the past. *Organization Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084062412366>
- Schlesinger, L. A., & Oshry, B. (1984). Quality of work life and the manager: Muddle in the middle. *Organizational Dynamics*, 13(1), 5–19.
- Sharma, R., Mishra, N., & Sharma, G. (2023). India's frugal innovations: Jugaad and unconventional innovation strategies. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 1(1), 25–45.
- Singh, J. (2006). Employee disempowerment in a small firm (SME): Implications for organizational social capital. *Organization Development Journal*, 24(1), 76.
- Spreitzer, G. M., & Doneson, D. (2005). Musings on the past and future of employee empowerment. In G. T. Cummings (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational development*. Sage Publications.
- Tarakci, M., Heyden, M. L., Rouleau, L., Raes, A., & Floyd, S. W. (2023). Heroes or villains? Recasting middle management roles, processes, and behaviours. *Journal of Management Studies*, 60(7), 1663–1683.
- Ugboro, I. O., & Obeng, K. (2000). Top management leadership, employee empowerment, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction in TQM organizations: An empirical study. *Journal of Quality Management*, 5(2), 247–272.
- Weetman, R. (2009). Emergence is not always 'good'. *Emergence: Complexity and Organization*, 11(2), 87–91.
- Weick, K. E. (1989). Theory construction as disciplined imagination. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 516–531.
- Wollard, K. K. (2011). Quiet desperation another perspective on employee engagement. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 13(4), 526–537.
- Yang, J., Zhang, Z. X., & Tsui, A. S. (2010). Middle manager leadership and front-line employee performance: Bypass, cascading, and moderating effects. *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(4), 654–678.

Synergies Unveiled: Mapping the Intersection of Financial Well-being and Sustainable Development Goals through Bibliometric Insights

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management
4(2) 207–226, 2024
© The Author(s) 2024
DOI: 10.1177/ijim.241277307
jim.imibh.edu.in



Bappaditya Biswas¹ and Mantosh Sharma² 

Abstract

Financial well-being is a state of being financially healthy and happy. Financial well-being plays an important role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Increasing financial well-being helps to promote SDGs 1, 3, 10 and 16. SDGs and financial well-being are interconnected in several ways. This article presents a systematic review of the literature on financial well-being and tries to link it with some important SDGs. The study included the research article from the Web of Science and Scopus index database. The article suggests an organising framework to identify significant research gaps and suggests future research directions by critically analysing the existing findings and providing a comprehensive, up-to-date overview of financial well-being and its relationship with SDGs that scholars or researchers from different areas can use to position and design future research. Researchers used R Studio software for the bibliometric analysis.

Keywords

Financial well-being, sustainable development goals, poverty, R studio, inequalities, strong institutions and health, systematic literature review

Introduction

On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with a new set of development goals that are collectively called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

¹Department of Commerce, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal, India

²Department of Commerce, Raja Rammohun Roy Mahavidyalaya, Khanakul, West Bengal, India

Corresponding author:

Mantosh Sharma, Department of Commerce, Raja Rammohun Roy Mahavidyalaya, Khanakul, West Bengal 712418, India.

E-mail: mantoshsharma2@gmail.com



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

According to the United Nations, the SDGs are a ‘blueprint to build a brighter and more sustainable future for all’. The objectives are interrelated and address a variety of issues, such as poverty, inequality, climate change and environmental degradation. The SDGs are a worldwide call to action to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and secure peace and prosperity for all. By doing this, SDGs increase the economic well-being of the country (Singh et al., 2022).

Financial well-being is a combination of two words: ‘finance’ and ‘well-being’. Well-being means the state of being happy and healthy. Financial well-being is thus a state of being financially healthy and happy. If people feel financially secure and independent for the present and future, then they will have achieved financial well-being (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019). There are different scales developed by different researchers worldwide to measure financial well-being in an appropriate manner. People can increase their financial well-being score by getting a financial education (Singh et al., 2022), saving regularly, evaluating debt advice and planning for current and later life.

The SDGs consist of 17 goals, but they do not target the financial well-being directly despite financial well-being being a key enabler for some of them. The SDGs and financial well-being are interconnected in several ways. First, financial well-being is a key determinant of the overall well-being of the individual and it is essential for achieving many of the SDGs. For example, overall life satisfaction, and greater capacity to absorb financial shocks, can help individuals and households to escape from poverty and build resilience to economic shocks. This, in turn, contributes to the achievement of SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages). It is possible to operationalise financial well-being in a variety of socioeconomic and geographic circumstances. As a result, it might be a helpful outcome metric for governments and financial service providers to track progress on goals like ‘eliminating extreme poverty (SDG 1)’, ‘good health and well-being (SDG 3)’, ‘reducing inequalities within and across countries (SDG 10)’ and ‘effective institutions (SDG 16)’ (Fu, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follow:

1. To discuss the current state of research on financial well-being in the context of SDGs using bibliometric analysis.
2. To find out the relationship between different goals of SDGs and financial well-being.
3. To provide the future research scope on financial well-being in the context of SDGs.

Methodology

To achieve a thorough systematic review of the literature (SLR) on link between financial well-being and SDGs, this article follows the methods and processes

used for bibliometrics analysis discussed by Bashir and Qureshi (2023), Kreutz et al. (2021), Kumar et al. (2022), Nolan and Garavan (2016) and Zahoor et al. (2020). This is a four-step literature review process. By removing the subjectivity in data collecting and analysis seen in conventional literature reviews, the four-step iterative method ensures stability and clarity of the study. These four steps are identifying the review questions; defining the review's scope and boundaries; screening and selecting the studies; and analysis and synthesis.

Defining the Review Questions or Objectives

The worldwide research on financial well-being started before independence, and related research that describes financial well-being in the context of poverty, health and well-being, inequality, peace, justice and strong institutions started almost 25 years ago. Since this is a huge timespan and the literatures are still fragmented, there are few systematic literature reviews available (Farid, 2019; Kreutz et al., 2021) on financial well-being, but these literature give an overall view of financial well-being and do not link with the SDGs or any goals related to the SDGs. So, a summary of the literature is need of the situation to provide a clear picture and current status. All over the world, countries are trying to meet the SDGs goals, and if financial well-being has any role or link with the SDGs, then it should be discussed. Therefore, this SLR and bibliometrics seeks to identify, categorise and analyse relevant and important layers of the existing literature in this SLR, highlighting the key elements, potentials and unmet needs, and the relationship between financial well-being and SDGs. To find the solution for this, the article has three key question:

1. What is the current status of research on linking SDGs and financial well-being?
2. What is the relationship between different goals of SDGs and financial well-being?
3. What is the scope for future research on financial well-being in context of SDGs?

Establishing the Scope and Boundaries of the Review

This article established a variety of distinct criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of research in order to create a complete database of financial well-being and SDGs literature. We set our timeframe to include articles published between 1955 and 2022, choosing 1955 as our starting year because the first article discussing financial well-being and SDGs was published in the year 1995 (Boisjoly et al., 1995; Markham & Bonjean, 1995).

Next, this article defines the conceptual boundaries of financial well-being and SDGs by selecting only those articles that either cover SDGs directly or cover some specific goals of SDGs with financial well-being. Bashir and Qureshi (2023), Fu (2020) and Le Blanc (2015) discuss the relationship of financial well-being with poverty, inequality, health and well-being, and peace, justice and strong institutions. So, this article just tries to find out the relationship between these goals of SDGs and financial well-being.

Table 1. Keywords Search Strategy Grid.

Financial Well-being	SDGs	SDG-1: Eliminating Extreme Poverty	SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being	SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities Within and Across Countries	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
'Financial well-being' OR 'Financial well-being' OR 'Economic well-being' OR 'Financial wellness' OR 'Personal Financial well-being' OR 'Perceived Financial well-being'	Sustainable development goals OR SDGs OR SDG	Poverty OR poor OR vulnerable OR Poorness	Health OR Mortality OR Diseases OR Drug OR Medicines OR deaths OR vaccines OR tobacco OR alcohol OR illnesses	OR inequalities OR Equality OR 'social Inclusion' OR 'Political inclusion' OR 'Economical inclusion' OR 'Equal opportunity' OR Discriminatory OR Discrimination OR 'Bottom 40 per cent' OR 'Bottom 40%'	Justice OR Abuse OR Exploitation OR trafficking OR torture OR Corruption OR Bribery OR Bribe OR Transparent institutions OR Terrorism OR Crime

After establishing our conceptual boundaries, we created several keywords. It was important to integrate a corresponding variance in search words due to the diversity in the wording used to describe the concepts. After a brainstorming session and a preliminary article search, we identified 46 keywords related to financial well-being and SDGs, which we mentioned in Table 1.

Two electronic database sources were used for conducting the SLR: Scopus and Web of Science. For searching the relevant literature, we have done some keyword research (mentioned in Table 1) and developed a group of keywords for finding articles that are relevant to this review. We conducted research on how financial well-being is linked to SDGs or how many literatures discuss both financial well-being and SDGs. However, there are very few articles exist that talk about both, so we decided to consider the keywords for the goals of the SDGs.

These keywords have been used in both Scopus and Web of Science databases, and we searched for them in the title, abstract and author's keywords. The search area for our literature review is not only limited to management, finance, business, accounting and economics but it also includes social science and family studies health and policy service, and so on for identifying the links with SGD-1, 3, 10 and 16 (Bashir & Qureshi, 2023; Fu, 2020; Le Blanc, 2015).

Study Identification and the Screening and Selecting Process

This process tries to find, evaluate and choose appropriate articles to support our review questions. The initial search was first carried out in several databases and

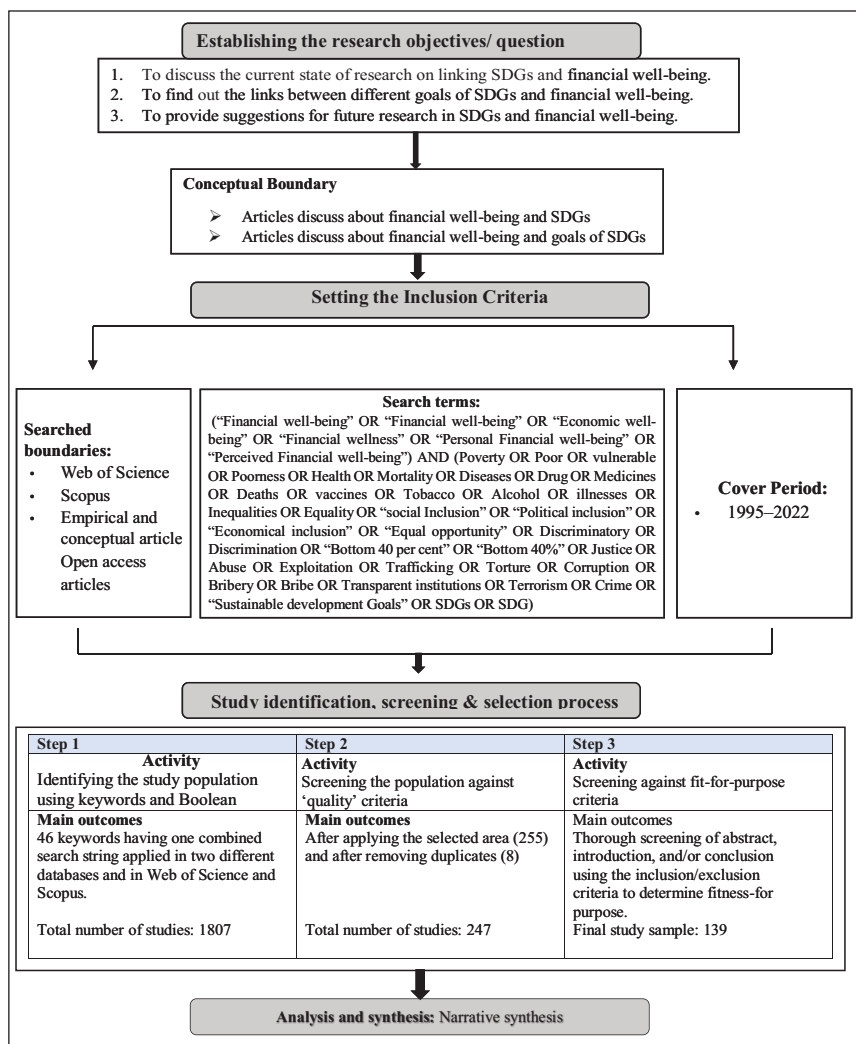


Figure 1. Summary of the Systematic Review Methodology.

by using the Scopus and the Web of Science search engines with the keyword combinations, as indicated in Figure 1, to find potential publications published between 1995 and 2022. This process identifies 1,807 articles.

As shown in Table 2, the top 20 journals contributing to the systematic literature review (SLR) on financial well-being and SDGs are listed, with Journal of Family and Economic Issues contributing the highest number of articles.

Second, only peer-reviewed articles and review articles were filtered and, after merging them into one file by using R studio software, eight duplicates were removed and the final articles were reduced to 247.

Table 2. Top 20 List of Journals Used in the SLR, Journal Ranking and Articles per Journal.

Sources	Articles	Percentage	Scimago Journal Ranking (SJR)
<i>Journal of Family and Economic Issues</i>	9	6.5	Q2
<i>Journal of Marriage and Family Sustainability</i>	7	5.0	Q1
	5	3.6	Q1
<i>Review of Income and Wealth</i>	4	2.9	Q1
<i>Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance</i>	3	2.2	Q1
<i>Journal of Consumer Affairs</i>	3	2.2	Q1
<i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>	3	2.2	Q1
<i>Journal of Population Economics</i>	3	2.2	Q1
<i>American Economic Review</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Canadian Public Policy-Analyse De Politiques</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Health & Social Care in the Community</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Journal of Development Studies</i>	2	1.4	Q2
<i>Journal of Economic Inequality</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Journal of Family Issues</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Social Forces</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Social Indicators Research</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>Social Policy & Administration</i>	2	1.4	Q1
<i>South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences</i>	2	1.4	Q2
<i>American Economic Journal-Economic Policy</i>	1	0.7	Q1
<i>American Journal of Community Psychology</i>	1	0.7	Q1

Lastly, we looked over the study abstracts. To identify the relevancy of the articles, all 247 articles had to go through the fit-for-purpose test in which the researcher has to go through the title, the abstract and, in some cases, the introductions or conclusions (or both) of these studies and analyse them. This procedure ultimately resulted in the selection of 139 publications that made up our final sample. This quantity is sufficient for the systematic review, and other earlier investigations employed comparable quantities of publications (Duhoon & Singh, 2023; Nolan & Garavan, 2016; Zahoor et al., 2020).

Analysis and Synthesis

Analysis was done using R studio programmes. With the help of this programme, researchers can find out the trends and can do some thematic analysis, which can be very helpful for future researchers.

Current Status of Research on Financial Well-being and SDGs

To know the current status of research on financial well-being and SDGs, this article has examined a number of bibliometric data, including those related to corpus, article, author, country and journal performance, as revealed by the performance analysis and intellectual structure, which encapsulate financial well-being in the context of SDGs knowledge foundation (past) and knowledge production (present), unpacked through science mapping via co-citation and keyword co-occurrence analysis.

In this corpus, a total of 139 articles from 100 different sources with 7,364 references have been selected for the analysis. Wherein there are 135 research articles and 4 review articles. The annual growth rate of research in financial well-being in the context of SDGs has reached 11.06%, but there are still very few articles on financial well-being that directly discuss the SDGs. In the selected 139 articles, almost 29% of their authors are from a foreign country. From Table 3, it can be seen that the number of review articles in comparison to normal research articles is very low. So, there is a scope for future researchers to write review articles in this area.

Corpus Performance

This review analysed a total of 139 articles on financial well-being in the context of SDGs that were published between 1955 and 2022. The growing trend and research interest in the field are shown in Figure 2. For ease of understating the trends in this area, the review period has been divided into three parts (1995–2004, 2005–2013 and 2014–2022).

The first 10 years (1995–2004) witnessed only 10 articles being published, with an average total citation per article of 25, indicating that the field of financial well-being had a very slow growth in the early years because, at that

Table 3. Basic Information About Our Research Data Used for Bibliometrics Analysis.

Description	Results
Timespan	1995–2022
Sources (journals, books and so on)	100
Documents	139
Annual growth rate (%)	11.06
Document average age	6.46
Average citations per doc	24.16
References	7364
International co-authorships (%)	28.78
Document types	
Article	135
Review	4

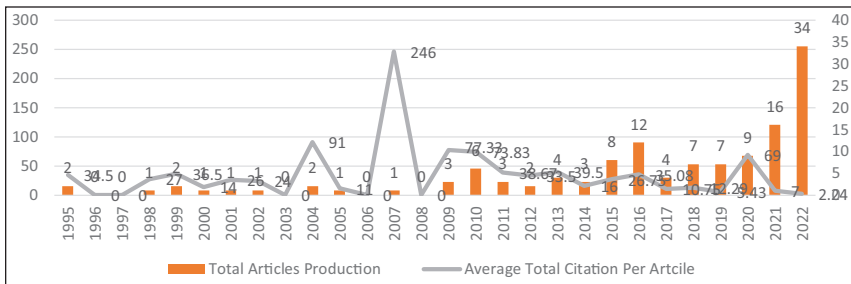


Figure 2. Production of Article Over the Time Horizon and Average Total Citation per Article.

time, the concept of financial well-being was not as popular in finance or business areas but it was popular in other domains such as health and psychology. The next nine years (2005–2013), however, saw a decent growth in the publication of articles ($n = 20$), which is double that of the earlier period, with an average total citation per article was 26—almost same as earlier period citations. After an article published by Reynolds et al. (2007) in 2007, the research in this area became popular, and in 2007, the average citation per article rose to 246, which was the highest till that point. The recent nine years (2014–2022) have been the most fruitful for research on financial well-being in the SDGs, with a minimum of three publications published each year and a total of 100 published throughout this time. During this period, the popularity of financial well-being shifted from other streams to the streams of finance and management streams. Another reason for the increasing popularity of financial well-being in SDGs is that SDGs came into existence from the United Nations. Before the declaration of SDGs, there were very little research done on poverty and health, well-being, inequality and strong institutions, and peace and justice, but after the declaration of the SDGs, the number of articles in these areas increasing in a very fast manner. We can see that in 2022, the highest number of were articles published ($n = 34$), far better than any other year.

Article Performance

A global citation analysis was conducted to identify the top 10 articles that have been most cited globally, which enables more accurate tracking of the performance of financial well-being in the context of SDGs.

Brown et al. (2020) was the most cited article globally (507 citations). Their articles analyse the effects of parental stress and child abuse in COVID-19, which can destroy the economic well-being of the child. This article concludes that a greater amount of stress and child abuse can cause a serious amount of financial distress and lower economic well-being.

Currie and Widom (2010) is the second most cited article globally (385 citations). In this article, the authors try to discuss the relationship of education, financial well-being, employment and earning capacity with child abuse and neglect.

They conducted a study with a sample of 807 individuals and found that compared to the matched control children, people with histories of childhood abuse and/or neglect had lower levels of education, employment, incomes and assets.

Reynolds et al. (2007) is the third highest-cited article globally (246 citations). It discussed the Child-Parent Centre (CPC) programme and its effects on education, financial well-being, employment, crime rates, health status, behaviours and mental health. This article found that there is a positive relation between the CPC programme at primary level and education, financial well-being, employment and health status and negative relation between the programme and mental health and crime rates.

McGarry (2004) is the fourth highest-cited article globally (160 citations). It explains the importance of retirement dates in the financial well-being of an individual. Retirement date is a very crucial decision for the individual because it can affect the economic well-being for the rest of their life.

Nannicini et al. (2013) is the fifth highest cited article globally. This article described that the country or region that has lower social capital has to face higher crime rates, political misbehaviour and so on because the voters' elected representatives will have lower incentives to achieve social welfare if they are unable to coordinate in punishing political wrongdoing. Additionally, it is less probable that candidates for political office will be chosen based on their general honesty and competency.

Overall, the top 10 most cited articles globally in this corpus collectively had a total of 1,731 citations, which means that each article in the corpus had an average of 173 citations.

Country Performance

According to Table 4, the top 10 most cited documents related to financial well-being and SDGs are presented, highlighting the most influential works in this domain.

Authors from 34 different nations contributed to the articles in the context of financial well-being and SDGs in the review corpus. Table 5 presents the ranks of countries on the basis of their total citation in this area of research. The top 10 nations account for 95% of the total number of citations in this corpus.

The USA, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany are the top four countries that have contributed more than 3,000 citations, out of which the USA accounts for 2,411 citations, which is 71% of total citations. It can be observed that the USA is dominating research in this area. But on the basis of average citations per article, Italy has 62 citations per article while the USA has only 41 citations per article. Since the USA has been working in this area from the very beginning, they have the highest number of citations and number of documents in this context.

Word Cloud Analysis

A co-word analysis states the importance of the research topic by providing the most occurred keywords. The size of the words shows the comparative number of

Table 4. Top 10 Most Cited Documents in Selected Articles and their Total Citations.

Title of the Article	Author	Total Citations	Total Citation Per Year
Stress and parenting during the global COVID-19 pandemic	Brown et al. (2020)	507	126.75
Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect on adult economic well-being	Currie and Widom (2010)	385	27.50
Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being	Reynolds et al. (2007)	246	14.47
Health and retirement do changes in health affect retirement expectations	McGarry (2004)	160	8.00
Social capital and political accountability	Nannicini et al. (2013)	124	11.27
Consumption inequality	Attanasio and Pistaferri (2016)	80	10.00
Income and employment effects of health shocks A test case for the German welfare state	Riphahn (1999)	65	2.60
Measuring well-being and progress	D'Acci (2011)	60	4.62
Household wealth and the measurement of economic well-being in the United States	Wolff and Zacharias (2009)	57	3.80
An analysis of well-being in retirement: The role of pensions, health, and 'voluntariness' of retirement	Palomäki (2019)	47	3.92

Table 5. Top 10 Country in the Selected Articles.

S. No.	Country	Total Citations	Average Article Citations
1	USA	2,411	41.6
2	Italy	186	62
3	United Kingdom	171	14.2
4	Germany	119	19.8
5	Canada	79	19.8
6	Australia	64	9.1
7	India	46	23
8	Czech Republic	42	42
9	Sweden	35	5.8
10	South Africa	33	8.2

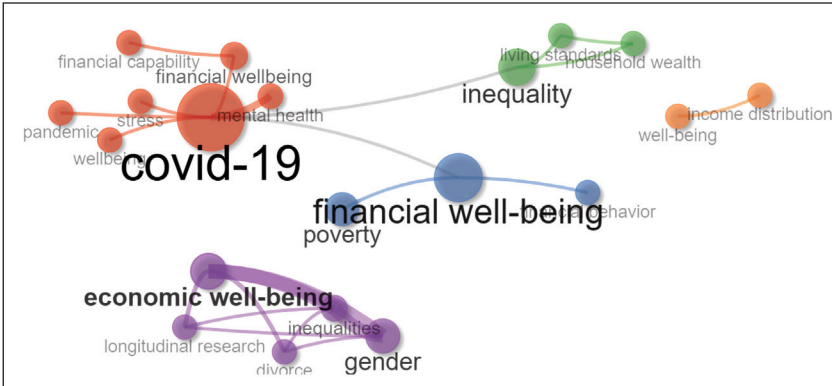


Figure 4. Co-word Network Analysis.

financial well-being, and mental health, indicate the dominant research trends in this area.

The fourth cluster includes economic well-being, gender, inequalities, divorce and longitudinal research. In this cluster, longitudinal research has been done on the relationship or the impacts of economic well-being on gender, divorce and inequalities.

The fifth cluster is a combination of two words: well-being and income distribution. The research related to well-being and income distribution has been focused.

Overall, we can see that the popular researches are related to financial well-being and poverty, mental health and COVID-19. Research on financial well-being and inequalities is very little; hence, it can be a trigger for future researchers who can do their research on financial well-being and inequalities.

Relationship Between SDGs and Financial Well-being

Eliminating Extreme Poverty (SDG 1)

As per the World Bank, more than 700 million people whose income is less than or equal to US \$2.151 per day are living in poverty. As per Singh et al. (2022), economic well-being and poverty are negatively related, and financial well-being is a powerful tool against poverty (Bashir & Qureshi, 2023). Providing knowledge about how to achieve financial well-being, that is, knowledge about how to improve financial condition by maintaining mental satisfaction, to the poor people facilitates the first SDG: eliminating extreme poverty (Xiao & Porto, 2022). Income enables people to satisfy their basic and universal requirements. Regardless of social comparisons or other factors, persons with higher incomes are more likely to be able to satisfy their basic requirements, such as those of food, safety, health and pleasant housing. As a result, they are more likely to report having higher financial well-being (Diener et al., 1993). So, we can say that financial well-being helps people to overcome poverty because higher financial well-being

means that the person must be able to fulfil his or her basic needs. Financial well-being helps individuals to protect themselves from danger including unemployment, health emergency, insolvency, poverty and retirement. If an individual achieves financial well-being, it automatically leads to them meeting their current and future requirements, having freedom of choice and living a better quality of life (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019; Fields, 2000). An individual can meet their current and future obligations when they have sufficient savings and investments and have financial literacy (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019). Lower financial well-being can increase the chances of financial crises among people, which can increase extreme poverty by 10% (Antoniades et al., 2020).

Xiao and Porto (2022) stated that financial behaviour is the most important and effective tool for improving financial well-being for people in poverty.

Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3)

Financial well-being and mental health are strongly correlated (Brown et al., 2020; Currie & Widom, 2010; Friedline et al., 2021). The lives of individuals may be significantly impacted by stress related to money and finances (Brown et al., 2020). According to research done in the USA, over 72% of adults say that they feel anxious about money at least occasionally, while nearly 25% say they feel extremely stressed about money. Globally, 3.6% of people exhibit symptoms of anxiety disorders, while 4.4% have depressive disorders (Hassan et al., 2021). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), financial stress is the main contributor to harmful habits including smoking, gaining weight, and abusing alcohol and other drugs.

Strong financial well-being helps people to live stress-free lives by enabling them to meet medical emergency costs (Benson-Eggelton, 2019). According to research, one of the main reasons why individuals stay in poverty in developing nations is because of out-of-pocket expenses for health care. Sometimes people have to spend their life savings on a medical emergency. Medical insurance is one example of a financial service that might offer a formal avenue for reducing the risks associated with medical emergencies. Savings are a crucial tool for managing medical bills, whether they are expected or unexpected. Mental health and financial well-being have a significant relationship. By improving their financial well-being, people can increase their mental satisfaction, which will finally lead to good health and well-being (Benson-Eggelton, 2019; Farid, 2019).

Reducing Inequalities Within and Across Countries (SDG 10)

Financial well-being can help reduce inequality by providing individuals and families with the means to improve their economic standing and achieve financial stability. This can include access to financial services such as banking and credit, as well as the ability to earn a steady income and manage their money effectively. When individuals are financially secure, they are better able to afford necessities

such as food, housing and healthcare, which can help reduce the gap between the wealthy and the poor. Financial well-being can also provide people with the opportunity to save and invest, which can help them build wealth and create a more equal society. To improve well-being and reduce financial difficulties for those at the bottom side of the income distribution, it is essential to address inequality and poverty. Inequality of income has an impact on opportunities and achievements in every aspect of life. Poorer households have less access to healthcare and education than wealthier households, which hinders them from reaching their full potential (OECD, 2015).

Income inequality, which is strongly connected with poverty, can be decreased, in addition, by a sound financial system. Instability affects many areas of developing nations. The lower half of the population frequently controls less than 10% of the total wealth, and inequality is prevalent both in industrialised and developing nations (Prakash et al., 2022). In contrast to their 20% share of total family income, the bottom 40% own only 3% of all household wealth in the 18 OECD nations (OECD, 2015).

Financial literacy (components of financial well-being) can increase the speed of achieving financial well-being. Financial education and literacy can help individuals understand how to manage their money, make informed financial decisions and achieve their financial goals. By providing access to financial education and resources, people can be empowered to improve their financial well-being and reduce inequality (Bansal & Kumar, 2020).

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), SDG 16 aims to 'significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime'. Improving financial well-being is seen as an important part of achieving this goal, as financial well-being can help people build resilience, manage risks and invest in their own and their families' futures. This can in turn contribute to social stability and the overall well-being of individuals and communities. A high level of financial well-being helps people to live stress-free and happy lives. When people are mentally happy and satisfied with their lives, then they are less likely to commit fraud, robberies or any other type of violence; they will not even commit acts of domestic violence (Benson-Egginton, 2019). Omoniyi and Omoniyi (2014) discussed that poverty is the main reason for the high crime rate and terrorism. We had previously discussed how financial well-being helps to reduce poverty. Reducing poverty will automatically lead to less crime and less terrorism. As per Xiao and Porto (2022), financial behaviour is the most effective component of financial well-being in case of fraud victims to improve their financial well-being.

As observed in Table 6, various SDGs, such as SDG-1 (No Poverty) and SDG-3 (Good Health and Well-being), have direct links with financial well-being, as identified by multiple authors.

Table 6. Link of SDGs with Financial Well-being.

Name of SDGs	Authors
SDG-1	Lupu & Ivan (2021), Levine (2021), Ghazali et al. (2020), Mansor et al. (2022)
SDG-3	Levine (2021), Mansor et al. (2022)
SDG-10	Levine (2021)
SDG-16	

Table 7. Parameters of Financial Well-being Used by the Researchers.

Parameters	Authors
Number of accessible emergency finances/ ability to meet long-term financial goals/ financial inclusion/planning or management of finance	Delafrrooz et al. (2010), Prather (1990), Michael Collins and O'Rourke (2013), Fu (2020), Ghazali et al. (2020), CFSI (2018), Limbu and Sato (2019) and so on
Creditworthiness/level of debt	Delafrrooz et al. (2010), Kim et al. (2003), Prather (1990), Vlaev and Elliott (2014), Michael Collins and O'Rourke (2013), Fu (2020), Ghazali et al. (2020), CFSI (2018), Limbu and Sato (2019) and so on
Savings level	Prather (1990), Vlaev and Elliott (2014), Michael Collins and O'Rourke (2013), van Praag et al. (2003), Fu (2020), Ghazali et al. (2020), CFSI (2018), Mansor et al. (2022), Limbu and Sato (2019) and so on
Control over expenses/level of expenses	Vlaev and Elliott (2014), Michael Collins and O'Rourke (2013), van Praag et al. (2003), Fu (2020), Ghazali et al. (2020), CFSI (2018) and so on
Income	van Praag et al. (2003), Diener et al. (1993), Mansor et al. (2022) and so on
Financial security/financial resilience	Diener et al. (1993), Fan and Henager (2022), García-Mata and Zerón-Félix (2022), Kaur et al. (2023), Mokhtar et al. (2015) and so on
Financial freedom/financial satisfaction	Diener et al. (1993), Mansor et al. (2022), Fan and Henager (2022), García-Mata and Zerón-Félix (2022), Kaur et al. (2023), Mokhtar et al. (2015)

Measurement of Financial Well-being

As per the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), financial well-being is the degree to which a person feels financially secure based on how much he or she (a) has command over monthly and daily finances; (b) has the ability to

withstand a financial shock; (c) has the financial flexibility to make decisions that allow him or her to enjoy life and (d) is currently on a path to reach his or her financial goals.

Savings and expenses (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019) can satisfy the first two criteria, (a) and (b) and financial inclusion (Levine, 2021) can justify the other two criteria, (c) and (d), because if an individual has access to financial services, they will enjoy financial flexibility and it can help them to achieve their future goal (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019). In the research conducted by CFSI (2018), Fu (2020), and García-Mata and Zerón-Félix (2022), they used savings, spendings, borrow and plan to measure financial well-being. Further savings and expenses are needed to meet people's financial commitments, and for investment for feeling financially secure (Carton et al., 2022). Global research indicates that those who put money aside for their future appear to feel happier, sleep better and have better mental health than those who do not. Financial inclusion helps people to have the financial freedom to make choices among the different financial instruments and to have a sense of social belonging (Carton et al., 2022; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019; Fu, 2020). A number of writers (Carton et al., 2022; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2019; Fu, 2020; Vlaev & Elliott, 2014) have shown that factors like savings, spending and financial inclusion may be used in secondary data to quantify financial well-being.

Table 7 lists the key parameters that have been used in different studies to measure financial well-being, including factors like savings levels, creditworthiness, and income.

Conclusion

Earlier the research in financial well-being was already popular among the other streams, but after 2000 it started to get popular in commerce, finance and management. The SDGs are also a new and emerging topic. This article plays an important role in finding out the link between the SDGs and financial well-being by doing bibliometric analysis. This article has gone through several steps and methods for using bibliometric analysis by using R Studio. This article finds that financial well-being can be measured with savings, expenses and financial inclusion. Again, it can be clearly seen that the relationship between financial well-being and SDGs is not popular. On the basis of this bibliometric analysis, there are a few scopes for research, which are mentioned as follows:

1. Since this study maximum study was done with reference to the COVID-19 period, there is a scope for research after the COVID-19 period.
2. Researchers can establish a direct link between poverty and financial well-being empirically.
3. From the co-word analysis, it is observed that the research in financial well-being and inequalities are very little; hence, it can be the trigger for future researchers to do research in financial well-being and inequalities.

4. There is further scope for research in financial well-being and crime, peace and justice as there are no words related to it.
5. Since this study is limited to only some goals of the SDGs, future research can be done to see whether there is any link between other goals of SDGs with financial well-being or not.

If a researcher can do the empirical research on financial well-being and SDGs, it will be a great contribution to the research corpus.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. <https://www.hsbc.co.in/financial-wellbeing/why-saving-is-important/>
2. [https://www.worldbank.org/en/understanding-poverty#:~:text=Note%20on%20global%20poverty%20lines,%242.15%20per%20person%20per%20day; https://www.hsbc.co.in/financial-wellbeing/why-saving-is-important/](https://www.worldbank.org/en/understanding-poverty#:~:text=Note%20on%20global%20poverty%20lines,%242.15%20per%20person%20per%20day;https://www.hsbc.co.in/financial-wellbeing/why-saving-is-important/)

ORCID iD

Mantosh Sharma  <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3241-0463>

References

- Antoniades, A., Widiarto, I., & Antonarakis, A. S. (2020). Financial crises and the attainment of the SDGs: An adjusted multidimensional poverty approach. *Sustainability Science, 15*(6), 1683–1698. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00771-z>
- Attanasio, O. P., & Pistaferri, L. (2016). Consumption inequality. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 30*(2), 2–28. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.2.3>
- Bansal, G., & Kumar, J. (2020). *Financial literacy and financial well being: An empirical study*. Deenbandhu Chhotu Ram University of Science and Technology.
- Bashir, I., & Qureshi, I. H. (2023). A systematic literature review on personal financial well-being: The link to key Sustainable Development Goals 2030. *FIIB Business Review, 12*(1), 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23197145221106862>
- Benson-Eggleton, J. (2019). The financial circumstances associated with high and low well-being in undergraduate students: A case study of an English Russell Group institution. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 43*(7), 901–913. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1421621>
- Boisjoly, J., Duncan, J. G., & Hofferth, S. (1995). Access to social capital. *Journal of Family Issues, 16*(5), 122–136. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/019251395016005006?journalCode=jfia>
- Brown, S. M., Doom, J. R., Lechuga-Peña, S., Watamura, S. E., & Koppels, T. (2020). Stress and parenting during the global COVID-19 pandemic. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 110*, 104699. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104699>

- Carton, F. L., Xiong, H., & McCarthy, J. B. (2022). Drivers of financial well-being in socio-economic deprived populations. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, 34, 100628. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2022.100628>
- CFSI. (2018 October 7). *Introduction to CFSI financial health*. Center for Financial Services Innovation.
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. (2019, January). *Getting started with measuring financial well-being: A toolkit for financial educators* (pp. 1–36) Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.
- Currie, J., & Widom, S. (2010). Long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect on adult economic well-being. *Child Maltreatment*, 15(2), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559509355316>
- D'Acci, L. (2011). Measuring well-being and progress. *Social Indicators Research*, 104(1), 47–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-010-9717-1>
- Delafruz, N., Paim, L., Sabri, M. F., & Masud, J. (2010). Effects of financial wellness on the relationship between financial problem and workplace productivity. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 10(8), 871–878. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Delafruz%2C+N.%3B+Paim%2C+L.%3B+Sabri%2C+M.F.%3B+Masud%2C+J.+Effects+of+financial+wellness+on+the+relationship+between+financial+problem+and+workplace+productivity.+World+Appl.+Sci.+J.+2010%2C+10%2C
- Diener, E., Sandvik, E., Seidlitz, L., & Diener, M. (1993). The relationship between income and subjective well-being: Relative or absolute? *Social Indicators Research*, 28, 195–223.
- Duhoon, A., & Singh, M. (2023). Corporate governance in family firms: A bibliometric analysis. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/ijim.231174155>
- Fan, L., & Henager, R. (2022). A structural determinants framework for financial well-being. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 43(2), 415–428. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-021-09798-w>
- Farid, S. F. (2019). Conceptual framework of the impact of health technology on healthcare system. *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, 10, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2019.00933>
- Fields, G. S. (2000). The dynamics of poverty, inequality and economic well-being: African economic growth in comparative perspective. *Journal of African Economies*, 9(Suppl. 1), 45–78. https://doi.org/10.1093/JAFECO/9.SUPPLEMENT_1.45
- Friedline, T., Chen, Z., & Morrow, S. P. (2021). Families' financial stress & well-being: The importance of the economy and economic environments. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 42(s1), 34–51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-020-09694-9>
- Fu, J. (2020). Ability or opportunity to act: What shapes financial well-being? *World Development*, 128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104843>
- García-Mata, O., & Zerón-Félix, M. (2022). A review of the theoretical foundations of financial well-being. *International Review of Economics*, 69(2)145–176. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12232-022-00389-1>
- Ghazali, M. S., Syed Alwi, S.F., Abdul Aziz, N.N., & Hazudin, S.F. (2020). Pathway to financial well-being: A review on the role of psychological factors. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 5(13), 55. <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v5i13.2063>
- Hassan, M. F., Hassan, N. M., Kassim, E. S., & Said, Y. M. U. (2021). Financial wellbeing and mental health: A systematic review. *Estudios de Economía Aplicada*, 39(4). <https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v39i4.4590>

- Kaur, G., Singh, M., & Gupta, S. (2023). Analysis of key factors influencing individual financial well-being using ISM and MICMAC approach. *Quality and Quantity*, 57(2), 1533–1559. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-022-01422-9>
- Kim, J., Garman, E. T., & Sorhaindo, B. (2003). Relationships among credit counseling clients' financial wellbeing, financial behaviors, financial stressor events, and health. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, 14(2), 75–87.
- Kreutz, R. R., Silva, W. V. da, Vieira, K. M., & Dutra, V. R. (2021). State-of-the-art: A systematic review of the literature on financial well-being. *Revista Universo Contábil*, 16(2), 87. <https://doi.org/10.4270/ruc.2020212>
- Kumar, S., Lim, W. M., Sivarajah, U., & Kaur, J. (2022). artificial intelligence and blockchain integration in business: Trends from a bibliometric-content analysis. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 25, 871–896. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-022-10279-0>
- Le Blanc, D. (2015). Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets. *Sustainable Development*, 23(3), 176–187. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1582>
- Levine, R. (2021). Finance, growth, and inequality. *IMF Working Papers*, 2021(164), 1. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781513583365.001>
- Limbu, Y. B., & Sato, S. (2019). Credit card literacy and financial well-being of college students: A moderated mediation model of self-efficacy and credit card number. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 37(4), 991–1003. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-04-2018-0082>
- Lupu, A. C., & Ivan, O. R. (2021). Achieving the sustainable development goals. *The Annals of the University of Oradea Economic Sciences*, 30(2), 147–154. [https://doi.org/10.47535/1991auoes30\(2\)016](https://doi.org/10.47535/1991auoes30(2)016)
- Mansor, M., Sabri, M. F., Mansur, M., Ithnin, M., Magli, A. S., Husniyah, A. R., Mahdzan, N. S., Othman, M. A., Zakaria, R. H., Mohd Satar, N., & Janor, H. (2022). Analysing the predictors of financial stress and financial well-being among the bottom 40 percent (B40) households in Malaysia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(19), 12490. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912490>
- Markham, W. T., & Bonjean, C. M. (1995). Community orientations of higher-status women volunteers. *Social Forces*, 73(4), 1553–1571. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/73.4.1553>
- McGarry, K. (2004). Health and retirement do changes in health affect retirement expectations. *Journal of Human Resources*, XXXIX(3), 624–648. <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.XXXIX.3.624>
- Michael Collins, J., & O'Rourke, C. (2013). *Finding a yardstick: Field testing outcome measures for community-based financial coaching and capability programs* (August, pp. 1–17). University of Wisconsin-Madison. http://fyi.uwex.edu/financialcoaching/files/2013/07/Report_Final.pdf
- Mokhtar, N., Husniyah, A. R., Sabri, M. F., & Abu Talib, M. (2015). Financial well-being among public employees in Malaysia: A preliminary study. *Asian Social Science*, 11(18), 49–54. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n18p49>
- Nannicini, T., Stella, A., Tabellini, G., & Troiano, U. (2013). Social capital and political accountability. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 5(2), 222–250. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.5.2.222>
- Nolan, C. T., & Garavan, T. N. (2016). Human resource development in SMEs: A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 18(1), 85–107. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12062>
- OECD. (2015 October). *Inequality inclusive growth: Policy tools to achieve balanced growth in G20 economies*. <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/inclusive-growth/>

- Omoniyi, M. B. I., & Omoniyi, A. O. (2014). Unlocking potentials in developing country through education: A panacea for economic growth and poverty alleviation. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), 868–872. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n23p868>
- Palomäki, L. M. (2019). Does it matter how you retire? Old-age retirement routes and subjective economic well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 142(2), 733–751. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-1929-9>
- Prakash, A. S., Gupta, A. K., & Kaur, S. (2022). Economic aspect of implementing green HR practices for environmental sustainability. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/ijim.221109016>
- Prather, C. G. (1990). The ratio analysis technique applied to personal financial statements: Development of household norms. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, 1, 53–67.
- Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Ou, S. R., Robertson, D. L., Mersky, J. P., Topitzes, J. W., & Niles, M. D. (2007). Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being: A 19-year follow-up of low-income families. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 161(8), 730–739. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.161.8.730>
- Riphahn, R. T. (1999). Income and employment effects of health shocks: A test case for the German welfare state. *Journal of Population Economics*, 12(3), 363–389. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s001480050104>
- Singh, H. P., Singh, A., Alam, F., & Agrawal, V. (2022). Impact of sustainable development goals on economic growth in Saudi Arabia: Role of education and training. *Sustainability*, 14(21), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142114119>
- van Praag, B. M. S., Frijters, P., & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, A. (2003). The anatomy of subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 51(1), 29–49. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-2681\(02\)00140-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-2681(02)00140-3)
- Vlaev, I., & Elliott, A. (2014). Financial well-being components. *Social Indicators Research*, 118(3), 1103–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0462-0>
- Wolff, E. N., & Zacharias, A. (2009). Household wealth and the measurement of economic well-being in the United States. *Journal of Economic Inequality*, 7(2), 83–115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10888-007-9068-6>
- Xiao, J. J., & Porto, N. (2022). Financial capability and wellbeing of vulnerable consumers. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 56(2), 1004–1018. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12418>
- Zahoor, N., Al-Tabbaa, O., Khan, Z., & Wood, G. (2020). Collaboration and internationalization of SMEs: Insights and recommendations from a systematic review. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 22(4), 427–456. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12238>

Role of District Central Cooperative Banks in Financial Inclusion: A Study on Two Selected Districts of West Bengal

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management
4(2) 227–247, 2026
© The Author(s) 2024
DOI: 10.1177/ijim.241277370
jim.imibh.edu.in



Udaybhanu Bhattacharyya¹ , Anupam Nandy¹
and Debendra Nath Dash²

Abstract

Financial inclusion provides the legitimate provisions of basic banking services with adequate financial securities to the unbanked population at a reasonable cost. Since the early decade of the 20th century, the cooperative system has been engaged to percolate financial inclusion in various strata of our society. Several initiatives regarding financial inclusion have been implemented in the post-independence period; however, the *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY) 2014 has been considered as one of the most fruitful and effective initiatives by the Government of India for opening no-frill bank accounts with zero balance facilities for financially excluded people in our country, and the cooperative banks have been playing a vital role in the process of implementing the said *Yojana*. The present study, based on Hooghly District Central Cooperative Bank (HDCCB) and Burdwan Central Cooperative Bank (BCCB) of West Bengal, has comprehended to investigate the role of the DCCBs in the process of financial inclusion with respect to a number of financial operations and annual changes of savings accounts over the second decade of the 21st century. The study has identified statistically significant segments of the financial operations. Those segments are consequences of several fluctuations in financial operations due to the changes in banking policy, implementation of *PMJDY*, demonetisation, loss of agriculture production, adverse effects of COVID-19 and also the national

¹Department of Rural Development Studies, University of Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal, India

²Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education, MoE, Gol, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

Corresponding author:

Udaybhanu Bhattacharyya, Department of Rural Development Studies, University of Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal, India.

E-mail: udaybhanu.rds@klyuniv.ac.in



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

economic downturn. Finally, it has been observed that the implementation of *PMJDY* significantly gave rise to the business of the HDCCB and also acted as a threshold point of financial inclusion than its counterpart in the *Burdwan* district of West Bengal.

Keywords

Financial inclusion, demonetisation, self-help group, community sensitisation, Jan-Dhan Yojana, low-risk customers

Introduction

One of the contemporary versions of financial inclusion has been initiated by C. Rangarajan (Government of India, 2008), the former governor of the Reserve Bank of India, as the process of ensuring access to financial services and timely and adequate credit where needed by vulnerable groups such as 'weaker sections' and 'low income groups' at an affordable cost. It may be an act of including, as emphasised by Ananth and Sabri-Oncu (2013), at least one adult member from every household in the formal banking sector by opening an account. They identified that public sector banks are primal players in the implementation of several interest-subsidy government schemes among the unbanked population on a large scale. It has been argued that the success of financial inclusion depends on expanding scopes of financial literacy, interventions of agencies to lead the programmes and ultimately overcoming the asymmetries in the real world (Ananth & Sabri-Oncu, 2013). Mishra et al. (2024) argued that several 'Fintech' organisations are creating new vistas of employment by opening new outlets, such as kiosks, PoS gadgets and mobile vans across rural India, to address the aforementioned issues. Demircuc-Kunt et al. (2015) have criticised the nature of institutional characters of banking sector, that is, accessibility of appropriate financial services to adult members in a regulated environment. Financial inclusion has immense potential to promote poverty reduction strategy and also has ample scope for poverty reduction if duly accomplished by responsible authorities (Collins et al., 2009). Researchers have opined that there have been significant contributions to establish a link between the micro- and macro-economic structure of a nation by affecting the financial development indices¹ when vulnerable gaps are financially included (Beck et al., 2000; Clarke et al., 2006; King & Levine, 1993). The study by Senapati and Parida (2024) opined that decision-making on financial issues empowers the women population to set up their own micro-enterprises.

Considering the aforementioned aspects of financial inclusion, public good theory (Ozili, 2020) gives the most appropriate premises to explain the initiatives that have been taken by the Government of India in the process of implementation of financial inclusion. The said theory has two distinct propositions, namely (a) the whole population will be the beneficiary of formal financial services, and (b) it is the responsibility of the regulating authority to ensure that universal access of formal financial services should have to reach every beneficiary. After independence, a number of initiatives on financial inclusion have been taken by the

Government of India to percolate the formal financial services to every Indian. Introduction of *cooperative banks in the agricultural credit sector* in the late 1950s, nationalisation of commercial banks under the *Lead Bank Programme* (1969), establishment of *Regional Rural Banks* (1975), reduction in cash reserve ratio in statutory liquidity during the post-liberalisation period, *Bank-SHG Linkage Programme* (1992), introduction of the *Kishan Credit Card Programme* (1998) and finally implementation of the *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* (PMJDY) (Government of India, 2014) are some of the remarkable initiatives in India in the course of financial inclusion (Mukhopadhyay, 2016; Rao, 2007). The visions and implementing strategies of the said initiatives make every Indian the beneficiary of financial inclusion. Also, these initiatives create a large-scale public fund to facilitate the process of financial inclusion for the public at large.² Thus, the aforementioned initiatives satisfy the propositions of the Public Good Theory to foster financial inclusion in India. Teki and Mishra (2012) have rightly observed that the increase in the number of financial institutions has a positive impact on the process of financial exercise by extending financial services to the public at large and thereby contributing to financial inclusion.

The present study has been divided into a number of sections. The introductory section deals with an overview, framework and theoretical background, as well as initiatives taken by the Government of India to facilitate the process of financial inclusion. The review of literature has been discussed in the next section under two distinct headings, namely, the evolution of cooperative models in India along with the West Bengal perspective and aspects on cooperative banks' initiatives in India. The next section deals with the objectives of the study, duly considering the literature gap. Thereafter, the rationale of the study section states the implications of this study, which is followed by the methodology in details. The penultimate section deals with the analysis and discussions based on the data as collected. Finally, the conclusion has been drawn with some suggestive measures for better implication and operations of financial inclusion, focusing on cooperative banks in general and selected district cooperative banks in particular.

Review of Literature

This section has been divided into two distinct arenas as discussed below.

A Evolution of Cooperative Models in India and West Bengal

It has been identified by eminent scholars (e.g., Kamath & Kurian, 1996; Roy, 1982; Teki & Mishra, 2012) that the cooperative model is an established microfinance approach to leverage the financial betterment of society in general. It had been institutionalised in India by enacting the *Cooperative Credit Societies Act (Act X of 1904)* (Governor General of India in Council, 1904). It is interesting to note that the prevailing three-tier cooperative model³ has been based on the recommendations of *Maclagan Committee*⁴ (1915). After independence, the *All India Rural Credit Survey Committee*⁵ (1954) identified the cooperative model as

an engine of rural development to mobilise the unbanked population in a formal credit structure. In 1979, the highly empowered *Shivaraman Committee* recommended to develop a specified financial institution to oversee the various credit issues of rural population; based on the recommendations of the committee, the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) was established in 1982 (NABARD, n.d.). Since inception, the NABARD has consistently been dedicated to promote sustainable and equitable financial interventions with innovative approaches towards financial inclusion in rural India.

The aforementioned cooperative model (1915) came into operation as a cooperative federation—the *Bengal Provincial Cooperative Federation Ltd*—in the then united Bengal since 1918. This federation was converted into *The Bengal Provincial Cooperative Bank Ltd.* in 1923, with a significant extension in operational areas covering the whole Bengal Province. In 1964, the said bank was finally renamed as *The West Bengal State Cooperative Bank Ltd.*⁶ and after two years, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) enlisted this bank as Scheduled Bank (The WBSCB, n.d.).

B Initiatives Taken by Cooperative Banks in India

At present, there are 34 State Cooperative Banks and 366 District Central Cooperative Banks remain operational across the country under the regime of the rural cooperative credit system (RBI, n.d.). However, Demirguc-Kunt and Klapper (2012) identified, as documented in Census 2011, that only 58.7% of Indian households have at least one bank account. Various cooperative structures and their respective functions have been identified by Nagaraj (2015) to portray the evolution of formal credit support in both urban and rural areas. The study has also observed that the *introduction of the single window system* in credit support has a positive contribution towards the significant growth of the performance of banks. Another study (Dubey et al., 2009) has critically identified that cooperative loans disbursed with low rates of interest can be a potential weapon to counteragent the debt trap as well as to check out-migration of the male population. Nowadays, every banking institution is facing sheer competition in the field of their operations; cooperative banks are also no exception. How the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Challenges analysis can help to identify a suitable strategy to combat present challenges was focused on a study by Lakshmi and Manoj (2015). Distinguished from all above, Mitra (2012) has documented the success journey of an urban cooperative bank by analysing its performance in comparison with other banks in the state of Maharashtra. Wealthy farmers are principal beneficiaries of short-term as well as long-term credit support, as identified by Dubhashi (2001), and it is also considered a major pitfall of operations in cooperative institutions. In another study, it has been identified that major sections of the excluded population have opened no frills accounts in cooperative banks (Majumder & Gupta, 2013). It has also been identified by Mohapatra (2016) that the cooperative system in India has a total deposit of ₹296,803 crore and the total number of loan accounts is ₹382,617 (as of 31 March 2016).

Thus, it is evident that the evolution of the cooperative model since the pre-independence period led to delivering universal access to formal financial

services for the public at large. At the same time, the governments, both central and state, are always putting their efforts to oversee the inclusion processes to make it sustainable in future. Thus, it can necessarily be concluded that the initiatives related to financial inclusion in India clearly follow the propositions of the Public Good Theory.

Against this backdrop, the present study has been undertaken and needless to mention that no comparative study among District Central Cooperative Banks with longitudinal data has ever been made in the state of West Bengal identifying the periods of pre- and post-launching of PMJDY.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to *investigate* the status of financial inclusion of *Hooghly* and *Burdwan* district populace as initiated by the Hooghly District Central Cooperative Bank (HDCCB) and the Burdwan Central Cooperative Bank⁷ (BCCB), respectively, giving stress on access to banking services, availability of credit and participation in financial literacy programmes by the excluded group. *The literature gap as pointed out in the previous section has been considered.*

The supplementary objectives of the study are to see the pattern of growth of both the banks operating in their respective districts as well as to obtain a comparative insight into the performances of the two banks during the second decade of the 21st century. *Finally, some suggestive measures have been offered to improve the overall operations and activities of the banks.*

Rationale of the Study

A considerable number of studies have been taken for financial inclusion in India since the pre-independence period, but no study has ever been made on assessment of performances by District Central Cooperative Banks before and after enactment of the PMJDY, 2014 in the selected districts of West Bengal. The present study is a humble attempt to bridge the gap between the mission objectives of PMJDY and implementation strategies by the District Central Cooperative Banks. The obtained results, based on the analysis of collected data, highlight the issues wherein appropriate measures need to be taken to implement the financial inclusion programme more efficiently and effectively. The study, it is believed, may be helpful to the responsible authorities to restructure their policies and implementation strategies.

Methodology

The Directorate of Rice Development under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, while presenting an overview of rice productivity in different ecosystems of India (Directorate of Rice Development, n.d.), has identified that out of 18 districts in West Bengal, only four, namely Burdwan

(2,842 kg/Ha), Birbhum (2,743 kg/Ha), Nadia (2,705 kg/Ha) and Hooghly (2,514 kg/Ha), are categorised as high producers of rice (yield more than 2,500 kg of rice per hectare). As per Census 2011, in rural areas more than 75% of the total male population must be engaged in agriculture; since the operations of the District Cooperative banks vastly cover the rural areas, two districts out of four as stated, are selected on a simple random sampling method. As of 2011, in Burdwan Central Cooperative Bank, nearly 82% of the total members belong to agricultural farmers, while it is 78% in Hooghly District Central Cooperative Bank (HDCCB) (Department of Planning and Statistics (Purba & Paschim Burdwan), 2019a, b).

Several important heads of accounts in banking operations, such as share capital, reserve fund, deposits, borrowings, loans and advances, investments, gross income, gross expenditure and gross profit, have been tabulated to see the pattern of growth of financial inclusion; also applied descriptive statistics, namely, change in per cent ($c = \frac{x_2 - x_1}{x_1} * 100$), mean ($\bar{x} = 1/n \sum_{i=1}^n x_i$), standard deviation ($SD = \sqrt{1/n \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$) and skewness (Fisher Skewness Coefficient $= \frac{\sum f_i (x_i - \bar{x})^3}{N * SD^3}$), using the PASW Statistic 18 application, to examine the stability in business. Dendrograms have been obtained by hierarchical clustering, with the between-groups linkage method and Euclidean distance as an interval. Based on the threshold value 5 among the 25-point scale of similarity, the number of suitable clusters has been identified from the dendrograms; thereafter, k-means clustering has been applied to obtain statistically significant segments on the basis of the identified number of clusters from the dendrograms with the iterate and classify method. Finally, different financial services and the number of savings accounts of both banks have been tabulated to see the pattern of financial inclusion in the concerned districts over the decade.

Data Source

The study has been done using both primary and secondary data. The longitudinal data and different initiatives regarding financial services, so collected by administering a structured questionnaire on responsible officials and annual financial reports (duly audited) of both the banks between 2011–2012 and 2020–2021 are the primary sources of data.

Secondary data sources comprise several cooperative acts (operative in pre- and post-independence period), mission documents of different government programmes, RBI guidelines, annual reports of NABARD, scholarly articles by eminent researchers, books, journals, Census Report, 2011 and the District Statistical Handbooks of *Hooghly, Purba and Paschim Bardhaman* districts

(Department of Planning and Statistics, 2018, 2019a,b).

Perspectives of Financial Operations of Banks: Analysis and Discussion

Economic Background of Account Holders

According to the prevailing rules, a citizenry with some qualifications can be a member of any grassroots cooperative society, namely, Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS), Employees' Cooperative Credit Societies, Local *Adibashi* Multipurpose Societies, weavers' cooperatives, self-help groups (SHGs), cold storage cooperatives, engineers' cooperatives, labour contractors' cooperatives, labour cooperatives, etc. and open an account in a cooperative bank. It has been observed that major account holders are belonging to *low-risk customers*.⁸

Pattern of Growth and Business Stability

From Table 1, it has been observed that the moderate rate of growth (13.59% and 11.93%) and positive value of skewness (0.25 and 0.21) in share capital and deposit accounts, respectively, in HDCCB are the clear indications of a slow but steady increment in the number of cooperative members and positive growth of business. At present, the total number of deposit accounts is 5,63,336 (i.e., savings: 508,962, current: 3,272, other deposit: 51,102 as of 31 March 2023). The salary of primary school teachers has now been disbursed through cooperative banks. These newly opened accounts are clearly reflecting the growth of share capital and deposit accounts. *RBI Banking Regulation Act*, 1949, has been directed to all financial institutions to transfer 20% of their annual net profit to the reserve fund to enhance financial sustainability. 13.93% average increment in reserve fund and lower SD (₹34.73 crores) value than mean (₹80.70 crores) are the indicators of financially stable condition.

Increase in borrowings (average 32.68%), especially in 2016–2017 onwards, and disbursed loan amount (average 14.01%) are the clear reflection of high credit demands from lower-tier cooperatives. Actually, enactment of the *Interest Subvention Scheme*, 2018, by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has a significant effect on the increase of credit demands. *Kishan Credit Card* (KCC) loans are disbursed at a 7% annual rate of interest, but there is a provision of a 3% interest subsidy for timely repayment of loans. Also, SHGs are borrowing loans at 11% annual rate of interest, but there is also a provision of a 9% interest subsidy. Needless to mention availing of interest subsidy schemes entails beneficiaries by reducing volume of annual interest on one hand and also helps the financial institutions to comprehend their business sustainability by way of better loan recoupment (93% in 2020–2021) which reduced the NPA (e.g., gross NPA is 3.55% and net NPA is 0% as of 31 March 2021) on the other. The positive growth rates of gross income (average 12.20%), gross expenditure (average 11.33%) and profit (average 48.54%) indicate that by implementing the *PMJDY*, the overall business operations have significantly been boosted up. However, in 2020–2021, a loss (17.62%) was incurred due to the effect of COVID-19. A slightly lower value of SD (₹8.17 crores) than the mean value (₹9.09 crores)

Table I . Details of Financial Operations of Hooghly District Co-Op Bank. (All Figures are in Crores of Rupees) Period: FY 2011–2012 to 2020–2021.

Particulars	Liabilities					Assets				
	Share Capital	Reserve Fund	Deposits	Borrowings	Loans	Investments	Gross Income	Gross Expenditure	Gross Profit	
2011–2012	15.08	47.74	675.64	124.75	350.65	495.02	73.35	69.99	3.36	
2012–2013	18.15	50.34	793.16	139.74	443.65	533.34	82.17	79.63	2.54	
2013–2014	21.18	55.45	887.74	163.86	494.21	635.07	91.25	88.95	2.3	
2014–2015	24.46	60.02	1018.05	194.08	599.87	673.56	105.44	102.7	2.74	
2015–2016	27.18	66.34	1146.55	192.69	630.26	784.2	117	110.39	6.61	
2016–2017	31.39	69.02	1301.03	277.68	682.52	951.31	118.79	115.96	2.83	
2017–2018	33.6	78.57	1353.65	293.61	717.47	989.97	130.26	120.88	9.38	
2018–2019	37.63	103.06	1503.45	465.93	892.42	1157.67	155.87	134.53	21.34	
2019–2020	41.62	125.61	1667.16	678.45	1033.07	1385.24	168.88	151.3	17.58	
2020–2021	47.27	150.81	1856.13	1308.94	1117.42	2124.6	204.42	182.24	22.18	
Mean	29.76	80.70	1220.26	383.97	696.15	972.99	124.74	115.66	9.09	
SD	10.46	34.73	386.51	367.64	251.15	453.54	41.28	33.96	8.17	
Skewness	0.25	1.17	0.21	2.12	0.47	1.54	0.72	0.65	0.86	

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Annual Financial Reports of HDCCB.

Note: SD = Standard Deviation.

is a clear prediction of stability with some degree of risk in profit. Presently, the bank has 24 branches across the *Hooghly* district.

In the case of *Burdwan* district (Table 2), at present, the BCCB has 40 branches. As of 31 March 2023, the concerned bank has a total of 3,262,177 deposit accounts (savings: 853,789, current: 10,536 and other deposit: 2,397,852); however, there has been a very slow rate of growth in share capital (average 6.81%) and deposits (average 7.21%) over the decade. The low rate of interest in savings accounts from 2015 has significantly affected the growth of share capital and deposit accounts. The negative value of skewness (-0.15) is clear evidence of fall in the rate of growth of share capital during 2018–2019 and onwards. In 2015–2016, in the course of introduction of *PMJDY*, 2014, the bank had faced some financial vulnerabilities entailing a negative rate of change in the reserve fund (-23.57%). However, the bank has a stable financial condition as the value of SD (₹9.27 crores) is much lower than the mean value (₹103.02 crores) of the reserve fund. During the early years of the decade, KCC loans, mid-term agriculture loans, crop loans and cash credit (CC) loans were mainly disbursed from the bank; however, after the implementation of the SHG-Bank Linkage Scheme, various other short-term credit supports are now disbursed (₹810 crores in 2020–2021) by the bank on a large scale. It has been found that due to the drastic fall in agricultural production during 2011–2012 onwards, the demand for agricultural loans was reduced remarkably. As a result, the reduced demand for loans from the markers compelled the BCCB not to borrow any sizeable amount of fund from the RBI or any other commercial loans. This is evident from Table 2 that the borrowings of BCCB has been cut down remarkably. However, the situation has changed from the financial year 2014–2015. In 2017, some changes have been made in the terms and conditions of loan disbursements. Again, it has long been practiced by farmers to borrow funds on account of crop loans in a season that have been used to redeem the earlier crop loans. To stop this practice, a new policy was introduced by the BCCB in 2017–2018 where it is stated that the new loan would be granted to the borrowers only when the previous crop loans have been repaid entirely. Introduction of such a policy yields a negative growth in borrowings (i.e., -25.53% in 2018–2019) as well as loan approval (-2.7% in 2018–2019). High seasonality and climatic changes have adversely affected consistency in crop yielding; the nationwide lockdown for COVID-19 also slowed down the growth of the economy. As a result, loan recovery was only 62% during 2020–2021 resulting in an increase of NPA (7.66%). In 2014–2015, cooperative banks have been permitted to invest in government bonds and securities as an alternative source of income. The sharp growth of investment (82.85% in 2014–2015 and 184.15% in 2015–2016) reveals that the bank has taken the opportunity for further income generation. Over the last decade, gross income has increased at an average of 5.40% but in 2016–2017 and 2019–2020, due to high administrative costs to maintain no-frill accounts and the unprecedented epidemic broke out of COVID-19, significant negative growth has emerged as -2.92% and -9.7% , respectively. Implementation of information communication technology has drastically reduced the gross expenditure since 2016–2017. The bank has been suffering from fluctuations in profit due to the high seasonality of the agriculture sector but a new

Table 2. Details of Financial Operations of Burdwan Co-Op Bank. (All Figures are in Crores of Rupees) Period: FY 2011–2012 to 2020–2021.

Particulars	Liabilities						Assets				Gross	
	Share Capital	Reserve Fund	Deposits	Borrowings	Loans	Investments	Gross Income	Expenditure	Gross Profit			
2011–2012	29.59	99.75	1355.3	122.57	603.45	77.79	122.72	93.23	29.49			
2012–2013	32.63	101.79	1499.91	115.04	631.57	80.06	138.34	111.35	26.99			
2013–2014	34.72	107.1	1638.72	118.89	674.94	80.94	154.75	127.96	26.79			
2014–2015	38.07	109.8	1721.73	145.4	717.01	148	166.59	138.33	28.26			
2015–2016	41.23	83.92	1895.76	139.85	758.88	420.55	179.41	146.15	33.26			
2016–2017	43.45	93.37	2007.78	152.71	735.38	668.62	174.18	145.04	29.14			
2017–2018	47.3	103.69	2047.1	169.41	824.23	866.59	174.92	139.89	35.03			
2018–2019	49.59	104.02	2218.15	126.16	801.99	1083.93	205.59	136.55	69.04			
2019–2020	50.13	109.83	2339.82	100.39	866.1	1140.3	185.66	128.33	57.33			
2020–2021	53.39	116.91	2527.88	145	871	1310.32	192.53	145.06	47.47			
Mean	42.01	103.02	1925.22	133.54	748.45	587.71	169.47	131.19	38.28			
SD	8.13	9.27	376.04	20.54	93.59	489.21	25.01	17.05	14.72			
Skewness	(0.15)	(0.78)	0.06	0.14	(0.17)	0.25	(0.63)	(1.48)	1.36			

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Annual Financial Reports of BCCB.

Note: SD = Standard deviation.

investment opportunity in government bonds has raised the profit to its peak in 2018–2019. Thereafter, profit has again fallen due to the harsh effects of COVID-19 along with the national economic downturn. Although mean value (₹38.28 crores) of profit is much higher than the value of SD (₹14.72 crores) and high positive skewness (1.36) clearly predicts that, the financial condition of the concerned bank is highly stable, and it will also achieve a significant margin of profit in the coming years.

Discussion

Applying the hierarchical clustering, three segments have been identified in both districts (Figures 1 and 2) by observing the dendrograms in the agglomerative method with a threshold value of 5 within the 25-point scale of similarity. On the basis of the identified number of clusters, k-means clustering has been applied to obtain cluster membership of different years.

Now, final cluster membership (shown in Table 3) and their respective centres (Table 4) have finally been obtained after two iterations in the case of Hooghly

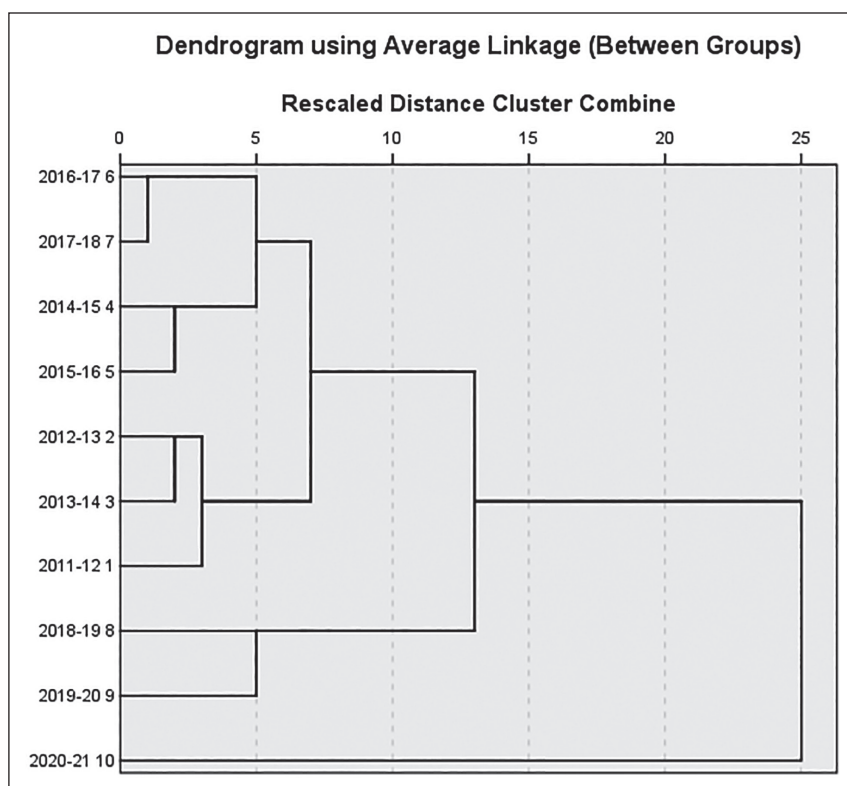


Figure 1. Hooghly District Central Cooperative Bank.

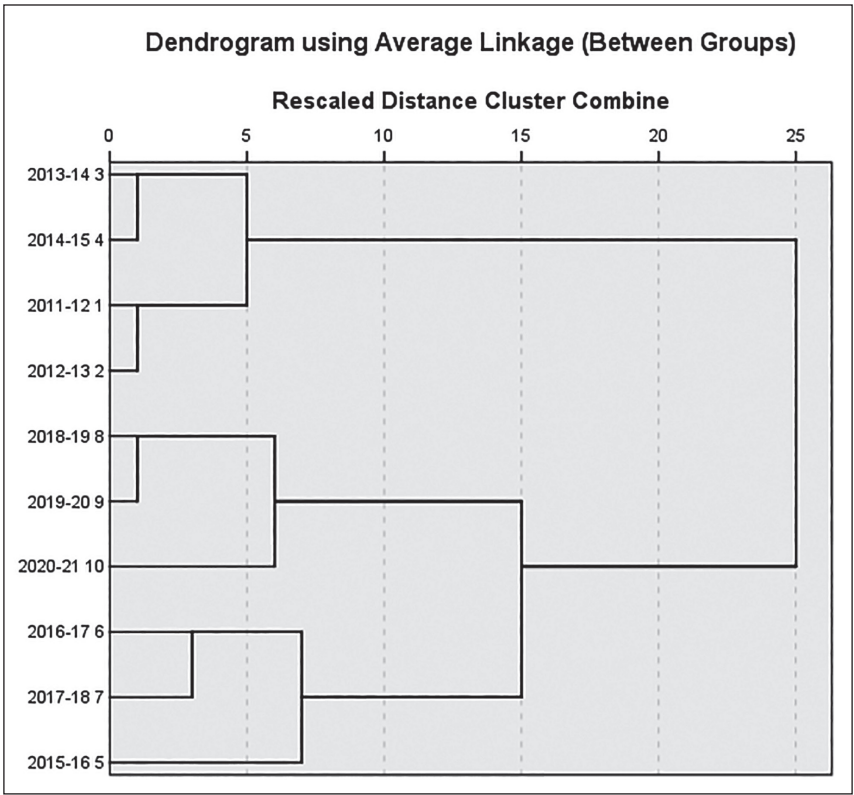


Figure 2. Burdwan Central Cooperative Bank.

Source: Dendrograms by the hierarchical clustering method.

district and four iterations in the case of Burdwan district by applying the k-means clustering algorithm.

Three different segments, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, derived from the data incorporated in Table 4, have been affected by different characteristics, namely the introduction of *PMJDY* changes in cooperative banks’ policies of investment and loan disbursement, a low rate of interest in deposit accounts, demonetisation in 2016, fluctuations in agriculture loan recoupment due to climatic stress, and the effects of COVID-19.

In Table 5, mutual exclusiveness and the mutual distance between obtained clusters are presented based on k-means clustering.

As shown in Table 6, the jurisdiction of each branch in HDCCB is 131 km² (approx.), and it is 171 km² in the case of BCCB. It has been estimated that a single branch of HDCCB may have an average of 23,472 deposit accounts. On the contrary, it is approximately 81,554 in BCCB. Again, it has been appraised that 12.26% of the total population of the Hooghly district are registered cooperative members of HDCCB, and it is 9.46% in BCCB. HDCCB has been performing much better in the process of inclusion of the unbanked population than its counterpart in *Burdwan*. Disbursement of primary

Table 3. Obtained Final Cluster Membership.

Sl. No.	Hooghly District		Burdwan District	
	Clusters	Year	Clusters	
1.	1	2011–2012	1	
2.	1	2012–2013	1	
3.	1	2013–2014	1	
4.	1	2014–2015	1	
5.	1	2015–2016	2	
6.	2	2016–2017	2	
7.	2	2017–2018	3	
8.	2	2018–2019	3	
9.	2	2019–2020	3	
10.	3	2020–2021	3	

Source: k-means clustering with the agglomerative method.

Table 4. Final Cluster Centres of Co-Op Banks' Financial Operations.

Particulars	Hooghly District			Burdwan District		
	1 (FY 2011–2016)	2 (FY 2016–2020)	3 (FY 2020–2021)	1 (FY 2011–2015)	2 (FY 2015–2017)	3 (FY 2017–2021)
Share capital	21.21	36.06	47.27	33.75	42.34	50.10
Reserve fund	55.98	94.06	150.81	104.61	88.65	108.61
Deposits	904.23	1456.32	1856.13	1553.92	1951.77	2283.24
Borrowings	163.02	428.92	1308.94	125.48	146.28	135.24
Loans	503.73	831.37	1117.42	656.74	747.13	840.83
Investments	624.24	1121.05	2124.60	96.69	544.59	1100.29
Gross income	93.84	143.45	204.42	145.60	176.80	189.68
Gross expenditure	90.33	130.67	182.24	117.72	145.60	137.46
Gross profit	3.51	12.78	22.18	27.88	31.20	52.22

Source: k-means clustering.

Table 5. Distance Between Final Cluster Centres.

Cluster	Hooghly District			Burdwan District		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
1		857.626	2208.538		1255.504	607.935
2	857.626		1425.847	1255.504		654.758
3	2208.538	1425.847		607.935	654.758	

Source: k-means clustering.

Table 6. A Comparative Statement of Banking Operations in Two Districts. Period: As of 31 March 2023.

Sl. No.	Particulars	Hooghly District	Burdwan District
A.	Present number of bank branches	24	40
B.	Area of the district(in sq. km.) as per 2011 census	3,149	7,024
C.	Total number of population as per 2011 census	5,519,145	7,717,563
D.	Total number of cooperative members as per District Statistical Handbook	676,901 (as on 2018)	729,999 (as on 2019)
E.	Total number of account holders	563,336	3,262,177
F.	Share capital	Moderate rate of growth (13.59%) Positive skewness (0.25)	Low rate of growth (6.81%) Negative skewness (-0.15)
G.	Deposits	Moderate rate of growth (11.93%) Positive skewness (0.21)	Low rate of growth (7.21%) Positive skewness (0.06)
H.	Rate of interest in savings account	3.25%	3.05%
I.	Rate of interest in term-deposit account	6.30%	7.00%
J.	Borrowings	High rate of growth (32.68%) High positive skewness (2.12)	Low rate of growth (3.81%) Poor positive skewness (0.14)
K.	Loans	Moderate rate of growth (14.01%) Positive skewness (0.47) Moderate stability (Mean = 2.77*SD)	Low rate of growth (4.27%) Negative skewness (-0.17) High stability (Mean = 7.99*SD)
L.	Rate of interest of loans to individual through society (agriculture sector)	12.00%	11.25%
M.	Rate of interest of loans to individual through society (other than agriculture sector)	12.00%	12.50%
N.	Cash credit loans	11.50%	12.50%
O.	No. of ATMs	4	41

school teachers' salary through cooperative banks may be considered a high rate of growth in the share capital of HDCCB. On the contrary, BCCB has faced a lower rate of growth in share capital due to the low rate of interest offered on deposits after 2016.

There is also a significant difference in the rate of interest under various deposit schemes offered by the banks. It is special to mention that implementation of interest subvention schemes could have been a cause for such a huge increase in demand for loans. But the introduction of policy changes in loan disbursement to control the higher scale of NPA by BCCB was possibly a prime reason for the reduction of loan applications. Negative skewness values of loans and borrowings are clear indications of such changes. There is also a significant difference in the rate of interest on loans between the agriculture sector and the non-agriculture sector in Burdwan. The rate of interest on cash credit loans is also high in Burdwan district, *and that negatively affects the non-agricultural loan borrowers. On the contrary, the HDCCB's policy on cash credit loans is helping the beneficiaries to alleviate their poverty status.* As a result, there has been a negative impact among the grass-roots-level cooperative branches to borrow loans. However, in the case of ATM services, the BCCB has performed much better than the HDCCB and the numbers of ATM counters are also higher than the HDCCB.

The *PMJDY* was formulated with six prime objectives—universal access to banking facilities, providing basic bank accounts with overdraft facilities, a financial literacy programme, the creation of a credit guarantee fund, micro-insurance and an unorganised sector pension scheme to provide financial security to the unbanked population of India (PMJDY, 2014). The increment in the number of savings accounts is another indication of financial inclusion, and Table 7 represents the decadal growth of the number of savings accounts with a year-wise breakdown in both districts.

It is identified that a negative change (−3.63%) in growth of savings accounts occurred in HDCCB during 2015–2016, but the implementation of *PMJDY* has boosted the growth rate up to 69% in the following year. The highest positive changes (69.03% and 32.75%) in growth have been observed during 2016–2017 and 2019–2020, respectively. However, the BCCB had the highest growth (18.14%) in savings accounts during 2016–2017 due to the effective implementation of the *PMJDY*. Later, however, the growth rate of savings accounts was decreased due to the adverse effects of demonetisation. Percentage changes of savings accounts of both banks over the decade have been depicted in Figure 3. It is clear that HDCCB is a better performer than its counterpart just after the enactment of the *PMJDY*. On the contrary, the BCCB has been performing well with steady growth over the decade.

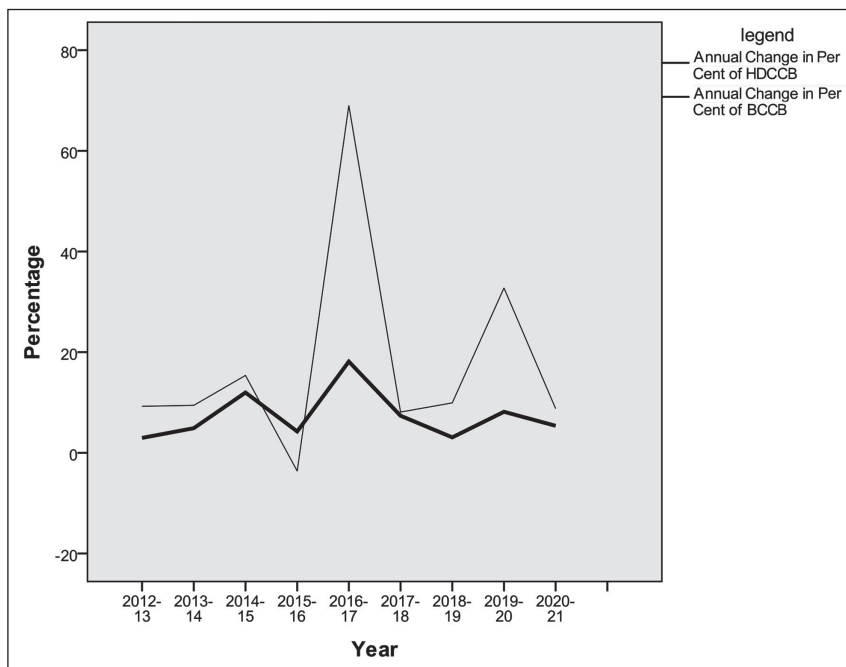
Initiatives on Community Sensitisation

The District Cell of Cooperative Union and the District Cell of NABARD have long been collaborating to organise community awareness camps, mainly at countrysides, on a regular basis. Since inception, these camps have been engaged in sensitising PACS and SHG members on the various benefits and prospects of the cooperative system. However, local people are also permitted to participate voluntarily in these camps. Bank officials have regularly been discharging their duties as co-facilitators in these awareness camps. Also, different insurance schemes as available for eligible beneficiaries on health, human life and crops are

Table 7. Cumulative Growth of Savings Accounts. Period: Between FY 2011–2012 and 2020–2021.

Sl. No.	Year	Number of Savings A/c in Hooghly District Central Co-Op Bank		Number of Savings A/c in Burdwan Central Co-Op Bank	
		No. of A/c	Change in Per Cent	No. of A/c	Change in Per Cent
1.	2011–2012	121,376		399,042	
2.	2012–2013	132,597	9.24	410,892	2.97
3.	2013–2014	145,108	9.44	431,020	4.90
4.	2014–2015	167,415	15.37	482,642	11.98
5.	2015–16	161,336	(3.63)	503,168	4.25
6.	2016–2017	272,706	69.03	594,431	18.14
7.	2017–2018	294,819	8.11	638,235	7.37
8.	2018–2019	324,062	9.92	657,814	3.07
9.	2019–2020	430,203	32.75	711,476	8.16
10.	2020–2021	467,997	8.79	749,697	5.37

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Financial Reports of the banks.

**Figure 3.** Annual Changes of Savings Accounts in Two District Central Co-Op Banks.

Source: Depicted as per the data in Table 7.

earmarked by the facilitators, and they explain the benefits of each of the schemes to those beneficiaries. An amount of Rs. 5,000 per awareness camp has been disbursed by both banks as financial support in compliance with the order of NABARD. Every year, a cooperative week has been observed between 14 November and 20 November with the support of West Bengal State Cooperative Union to discuss various areas of operations, such as cooperative marketing, strengthening health care facilities, entrepreneurship development, inclusion of youth, women and weaker sections, digitisation of PACS, inclusive development with a public-private partnership (PPP) model, cooperative training and education with the objective of developing the social capital in the long run, where the epicentre lies on financial inclusion.

Conclusion

The present study sheds light on the role of Hooghly District Central Cooperative Bank and Burdwan Central Cooperative Bank as financial facilitators in the districts of *Hooghly* and *Burdwan*, respectively. Analysis of the longitudinal data of both banks has revealed positive growth of financial operations and propagation of the number of savings accounts; these are significant evidences of the inclusion of the unbanked population in the formal microfinance structure. It has been observed that changes in policy of loan disbursement, reduction in rate of interest in savings accounts, loss of agricultural production due to climatic stresses, along with the national economic downturn due to the COVID-19 situation, are among the reasons for the fluctuations in gross profit and creating potential challenges towards the financial stability of banks.

The analysis depicts that though the BCCB has much better financial stability than the HDCCB, its overall banking operations are inferior to the latter. Three significant segments have been identified out of the decadal growth of business by application of cluster analysis (Figures 1 and 2). However, cluster memberships of financial years are different due to the introduction of new scheme, changes in banking policies and the sudden outbreak of epidemic diseases. The duration of the first cluster in both banks (2011–2016 in HDCCB and 2011–2015 in BCCB) was the pre-enactment period of *PMJDY* and the main characteristic of this segment was due to the huge loss in agricultural production affected by climatic changes. The implementation of *PMJDY* and changes in investment policies of cooperative banks are pointed out as the basis of generation of the second cluster (2016–2020 in HDCCB and 2015–2017 in BCCB). Finally, in the case of HDCCB, the third cluster is based on the damaging effects of COVID-19 in business operations for 2020–2021; it is, however, based on changes in loan disbursement policy, seasonality in crop yielding and adverse effects of COVID-19 for BCCB (2017–2021). It has been identified from the cumulative number of savings accounts that the performance of BCCB is more or less stable over years; however, the HDCCB's performance over years is highly fluctuating with respect to opening of savings accounts for reasons as identified above.

Both BCCB and HDCCB have seriously implemented schemes, such as interest subvention, insurance of the Government of West Bengal and the Government of India to provide social support and financial securities to the beneficiaries. These initiatives, along with cooperative awareness programmes, have positively contributed to sustaining the growth of business for both banks.

However, some major challenges have been identified as being faced by the HDCCB—slow growth in the establishment of new branches and ATM counters across the district, a higher rate of interest on loans in the agriculture sector, a decrease in the number of savings accounts and also unexpected fluctuations in the annual growth rate of savings accounts. Again, the BCCB has been facing the following challenges:

1. probable loss may occur in the near future due to the negative value of skewness in share capital, reserve fund, loan disbursement and gross income;
2. high rate of interest in the non-agriculture sector and cash credit loans;
3. low percentage of loan recovery and higher NPA;
4. almost flat curvature of annual growth in savings accounts.

Apart from the challenges mentioned above, a moderate to high growth rate of share capital, a reserve fund, loan disbursement, a higher rate of interest in savings accounts, a lower rate of interest in non-agriculture loan, a cash credit loan and a higher annual change (in percent) in the number of savings accounts are the potential strengths of HDCCB. On the other hand, the major strengths of BCCB are the higher number of savings accounts, the higher rate of interest in term-deposit accounts, the low rate of interest in agriculture loans and the sufficient number of ATM counters operating across the district.

Considering the challenges faced by the banks, the following suggestive measures need to be explored and implemented by the banks for the betterment of banking operations in view of their role in financial inclusions:

- Banks should conduct community sensitisation programmes throughout the year to attract existing and potential customers.
- Banks should have to implement business correspondents and business facilitators schemes as per the RBI guidelines to percolate financial inclusion at the grassroot level.
- A robust mobile application needs to be developed for a hassle-free online payment method targeting the new Gen population.
- Banking hours should be flexible and customised to make banking operations more convenient to the customers.
- Efforts are to be initiated, particularly in the case of HDCCB, to open more ATM counters across the district for easy accessibility of cash transactions; if possible, ATM counters may also be opened in other districts as well.

Finally, it can be stated that both the banks have stable business conditions; financial reports depict their impressive performances as financial facilitators to

percolate financial inclusion in various strata of the unbanked population. Implementation of the *PMJDY* has escalated the praxis of Public Good theory for financial inclusion by the governing authority. The effectiveness of the said programme has significantly changed the pattern of financial inclusion by the HDCCB as depicted in Figure 3; however, the said programme has not been that much effective in the case of the BCCB.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has been undertaken to investigate the status of financial inclusion of *Hooghly* and *Burdwan* district populace as initiated by HDCCB and BCCB, respectively, and the study period is the second decade of the 21st century. Had the study been conducted across more other districts in West Bengal for a span of the last 20 years, the results would have been more effective in decision-making. The study has been limited to the state of West Bengal; had the experience of the other states been incorporated, needless to mention that the study would generate more appropriate results.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the anonymous referees of the *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management* for their extremely useful suggestions to improve the quality of the paper. Usual disclaimers apply.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Per capita income, good governance and access to formal financial credit in a regulatory environment are considered the major financial development indices.
2. It is one of the merits of Public Good theory as referred to in Ozili (2020).
3. The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919) introduced the present three-tier cooperative model; that is, primary cooperative societies at grass-roots level, district central cooperative banks at district level and state cooperative banks at state level.
4. The Maclagan Committee (1915), headed by Sir Edward Maclagan, observed that illiteracy, misappropriate usage of funds, nepotism and inordinate delay in granting loans were major hindrances of microfinance.
5. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India had appointed Shri A.D. Gorwala as the Chairperson of the All India Rural Credit Survey Committee (1954) to produce a detailed report on demands of the credit market and future prospects of cooperatives as vehicles of rural development.
6. Presently, the West Bengal State Cooperative Bank Ltd. has been regulated under the purview of the West Bengal Cooperative Societies Act, 2006.

7. The Burdwan district was bifurcated into two districts—East Burdwan and West Burdwan—with effect from 7 April 2017, but the Burdwan Central Cooperative Bank is still operating with 40 branches spread over both districts.
8. As per the Master Circular of 1 July 2009 issued by RBI for the purpose of risk categorisation, individuals and entities whose identities and sources of wealth can be easily identified and transactions in whose accounts, by and large, conform to the known profile may be categorised as *low risk*.

ORCID iD

Udaybhanu Bhattacharyya  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8994-925X>

References

- Ananth, S., & Sabri-Oncu, T. (2013). Challenges to financial inclusion in India: A case of Andhra Pradesh. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 48(7), 77–83.
- Beck, T., Levine, R., & Loayza, N. (2000). Finance and the sources of growth. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 58(1), 261–300.
- Clarke, G., Xu, C., & Zou, H. (2006). Finance and inequality: What do the data tell us? *Southern Economic Journal*, 72(3), 578–596.
- Collins, D., Morduch, J., Rutherford, S., & Ruthven, O. (2009). *Portfolios of the poor: How the world's poor live on \$2 a day*. Princeton University Press.
- Demircuc-Kunt, A., & Klapper, L. (2012). *Measuring financial inclusion: The Global Findex database* [Policy Research Working Paper 6025]. World Bank.
- Demircuc-Kunt, A., Klapper, L., Singer, D., & Van Oudheusden, P. (2015). *The Global Findex database 2014: Measuring financial inclusion around the world* [World Bank Group Policy Research Working Paper 7255]. World Bank.
- Department of Planning and Statistics. (2018). *District statistical handbook Hooghly*. Office of the Assistant Director, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Government of West Bengal.
- Department of Planning and Statistics. (2019a). *District statistical handbook Purba Bardhaman*. Office of the Assistant Director, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Government of West Bengal.
- Department of Planning and Statistics. (2019b). *District statistical handbook Paschim Bardhaman*. Office of the Assistant Director, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Government of West Bengal.
- Directorate of Rice Development. (2002). *Rice productivity analysis in India*. Retrieved May 15, 2024, from <https://drdpat.bih.nic.in/PA-Table-25-West%20Bengal.htm>
- Dubhashi, P. R. (2001). Revitalising cooperative rural credit: A critique of Capoor Committee's Report. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 36(17), 1378–1380.
- Dubey, A. K., Singh, A. K., Singh, R. K., Singh, L., Pathak, M., & Dubey, V. K. (2009). Cooperative societies for sustaining rural Livelihood: A case study. *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education*, 9(1), 43–46.
- Governor General of India in Council. (1904). *The Cooperative Credit Societies Act (X of 1904)*. Retrieved October 5, 2023, from https://www.indiacode.nic.in/repealed-act/repealed_act_documents/A1904-10.pdf
- Government of India. (2008). *Report of the committee on financial inclusion*. Rangarajan committee. Retrieved October 5, 2023, from <https://www.findevgateway.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/mfg-en-paper-report-of-the-committee-on-financial-inclusion-jan-2008.pdf>

- Government of India. (2014). *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana—A national mission on financial inclusion*. Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance. Retrieved November 30, 2023, from https://www.pmjdy.gov.in/files/E-Documents/PMJDY_BROCHURE_ENG.pdf
- Kamath, M. V., & Kurian, V. (1996). *Milkman from Anand—The story of Verghese Kurian*. Konark Publishers.
- King, R. G., & Levine, R. (1993). Finance and growth: Schumpeter might be right. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 108(3), 717–737.
- Lakshmi, & Manoj, P. K. (2015). Cooperative banks and rural credit for inclusive growth: A study of Kannur district Cooperative Bank in Kerala. *Indian Journal of Retailing and Rural Business Perspectives*, 4(1), 1442–1450.
- Majumder, C., & Gupta, G. (2013). Financial inclusion in Hooghly. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 48(21), 55–60.
- Mitra, A. (2012, August). Cooperative bank turning to private: A case study on Saraswat Cooperative Bank. *The Management Accountant*, 944–946. <https://icmai.in/Knowledge-Bank/upload/case-study/2012/Co-operative-Bank.pdf>
- Mishra, A., Vangaveti, A., & Majoo, S. M. K. (2024). Fintech reshaping the financial ecology: The growing trends and regulatory framework. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 2(1), 34–44.
- Mohapatra, N. P. (2016). This is financial inclusion. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(35), 4.
- Mukhopadhyay, J. P. (2016). Financial inclusion in India: A demand side approach. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(49), 46–54.
- Nagaraj, K. V. (2015). A case study on banking operations in cooperative sector with reference to Visakhapatnam District Cooperative Bank, Visakhapatnam. *Paripex—Indian Journal of Research*, 4(8), 189–192.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). (n.d.). *Genesis and vision*. Retrieved on May 1, 2023, from <https://www.nabard.org/content.aspx?id=2>
- Ozili, P. K. (2020). Theories of financial inclusion. In E. Ozen & S. Grima (Eds.), *Uncertainty and challenges in contemporary economic behaviour* (pp. 89–115). Emerald Publishing Ltd.
- Rao, S. (2007). Financial inclusion: An introspection. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 42(5), 355–360.
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI). (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved October 5, 2023, from <https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/AboutUsDisplay.aspx?pg=StateCooperativeBanks.htm>
- Roy, D. (1982). *Reorganisation of rural credit in West Bengal through the cooperative institutions during the plan period*. West Bengal State Cooperative Union.
- Senapati, A. K., & Parida, D. (2024). Labour force participation, gender equity and women's empowerment through micro-entrepreneurship: Evidence from Odisha, India. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 2(1), 82–99.
- Teki, S., & Mishra, R. K. (2012). *Microfinance and financial inclusion*. Academic Foundation.
- The West Bengal State Co-Op Bank (WBSCB). (n.d.). *Genesis mission*. Retrieved on October 1, 2023, from https://www.wbstcb.com/page/genesis_mission

Understanding the Global Awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility of Multinational Corporations in the Oil and Gas Sector

IMIB Journal of Innovation and
Management
4(2) 248–266, 2026
© The Author(s) 2025
DOI: 10.1177/ijim.251355322
jim.imibh.edu.in



Sarah Mohabir¹ , Yogesh C. Joshi¹ and Darshana R. Dave¹

Abstract

This study investigates global awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) among multinational corporations (MNCs). Despite the rapid growth of MNCs, research on public CSR awareness on a global scale is limited. To address this deficit, primary research data have been collected from across the globe to identify the level of awareness among the existing public at large of CSR in accordance with economic development. The data were collected using the purposive quota sampling method across over 100 nations, with over 1,500 respondents from North America, South America, Asia, Europe, Oceania and the Caribbean offering a global sample set. Data were then coded in accordance to the World Bank's economic development classification and analysed using Spearman's rho test. Findings reveal that there is indeed an association between the economic development of a nation and awareness of CSR. The association shows that there seems to be an inverse effect and that CSR awareness is higher in economies that are developing. This suggests that factors such as culture, religion and colonial history may influence CSR perceptions in these regions.

Keywords

Corporate social responsibility, economic development, environment, multinational corporations, Sustainable Development Goals

¹Postgraduate Department of Business Management, Sardar Patel University, Anand, Gujarat, India

Corresponding author:

Sarah Mohabir, Postgraduate Department of Business Management, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, Anand, Gujarat 388120, India.

E-mail: sarahmohabir@ymail.com



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed.

Introduction

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are entities that operate in more than one country, giving them global reach. They have been known to carry with them a great deal of power and influence (Bouquet & Deutsch, 2008). In his study, Friedman (1970) postulated that entities often operate for economic gain rather than social considerations. Authors such as Frederick (1986), however, argued that an entity does not solely operate for their profiteering and development but also for the advancement of its stakeholders, given that it stands to benefit from society and should thus give back to it. These entities may tend to be in industries that garner vast amounts of wealth. This particularly rings true for entities that are operating in the oil and gas (O&G) sector.

In 2005, nine out of ten of the top income-earning entities were either automobile or O&G-based, with the wealthiest company in the world being in the O&G sector (Palan, 2016). O&G MNCs are considered to be the lifeline of any country and various industries as these firms engage in the extraction, refinement and production of fossil fuels, leading to them ultimately impacting the global logistics system (Prakash et al., 2023).

They are reputedly known for their impact on society (García-Rodríguez et al., 2013) and the environment in which they operate (Du & Vieira, 2012), which often brings into question their legitimacy (Ma et al., 2017).

Research has shown that an entity's image can be positively related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Lopez & Fornes, 2015), especially environmentally driven CSR towards the popularly known Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs were developed by the UN in 2015 and are expected to be accomplished by the year 2030 (Lee et al., 2016). SDG 13 calls for the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, while SDG 9 emphasises the need for sustainable infrastructure. These SDGs provide a unique opportunity for MNCs to enhance public perception, which can inadvertently contribute not only to their bottom line but also to their legitimacy in society (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018). Thus, these entities must establish a better relationship with their stakeholders through CSR (Gifford & Kestler, 2008), since they are often associated with having negative impacts on the environment (Oliver et al., 2020) and climate change (Levy & Kolk, 2002).

Despite this scrutiny, research is scarce for the O&G industry, though the industry itself is projected to expand substantially in the coming years due to the growth of the population, industrialisation and O&G demands (Maurya et al., 2023). Authors such as Mohabir and Joshi (2024) went on to emphasise that there should be research on MNCs and CSR. They posited that much of the existing literature focused on developed nations, leaving a critical gap for understanding how CSR awareness in developing regions can influence O&G MNCs' strategies on a global scale.

Public awareness of CSR globally is prone to vary significantly from the economic context. This awareness plays an important role in moulding the O&G MNCs' image. In differing economies, expectations and policies may vary significantly. Thus, understanding this awareness is important for MNCs to be more informed. This should allow them to develop and adapt effective CSR strategies

and policies to cater to the levels of awareness of diverse economic conditions and societal expectations. Hence, this research aims to address the gap by providing insights into economic development on public awareness of O&G MNCs' CSR.

The sections to come include the literature review outlining previous contributions to the body of knowledge and additional research gaps, followed by the rationale for this research and its objectives. The research methodology section describes how the data were gathered and planned to be analysed. The results are presented in the analysis section, followed by a discussion of the findings and a conclusion that will cover whether the objectives of the study are met. The implications section will be presented for academics, industry professionals and managers to more specifically hone in on the significance of this study's findings to them. As with any study, this research also has its limitations, which shall be disclosed in the last section of this article.

Literature Review

CSR has been defined as being very broad and multifaceted in nature (Frynas & Stephens, 2015). There is no set or generally agreed-upon definition of what it is as of yet (Hack et al., 2014), which contributes to its diverse interpretations. For this article, CSR has been defined as 'the obligation of decision-makers to take actions that protect and improve the welfare of society along with their own interests' (Davis & Blomstrom, 1975). It can take different forms and be used to tackle social issues in society (Carroll, 1979; Carroll & Brown, 2021), inclusive of environmental issues, which present themselves as fundamental issues to both areas of sustainable development and also have linkages to CSR (Ye et al., 2020).

CSR theoretical underpinnings help to identify why firms might choose to adopt CSR practices and how they are influenced by public awareness. MNCs may be more inclined to adopt CSR based on their ownership or their industry, as it contributes to their reputational value in society (Duhoon & Singh, 2024).

The legitimisation theory suggests that it is through CSR practices that the image or reputational value of an entity may be enhanced, thereby leading to an easier flow of operations within a society due to the acceptance gained (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018). This is especially important since the O&G industry is perceived as controversial (Du & Vieira, 2012). Stakeholder theory, as asserted by authors such as Freeman (2010), highlights the perpetual importance of taking into consideration the stakeholders' preference in CSR rather than just the shareholders, thereby enhancing its reputational value and the firm's wealth.

The triple bottom line theory was purported by Elkington and Rowlands (1999), and is continuously supported by authors such as Anis and Siddiqui (2015) who state that firms do not simply operate to make a profit, but also to contribute socially and environmentally. However, it is dubious whether these entities will adopt environmentally driven CSR practices as authors such as Menaga et al. (2024) argue that few entities execute CSR with pure intention, even when CSR is deemed mandatory.

Furthermore, Weyzig (2009) called for more studies that focus on MNCs and CSR issues that are deemed to have an impact, as with the O&G MNCs and the

impact that they currently wield on the environment. Based on their immense global impact, these MNCs in the O&G field present a critical area of focus for CSR research. Therefore, research seeks to explore this domain, building on these recommendations.

Throughout the years, there has been a gradual increase in the level of awareness and expectation of O&G entities (Edoho, 2008), which may be linked to a scarcity of industry-specific literature (Maurya et al., 2023). Furthermore, Sookram (2007) posits that there is a limited level of awareness of CSR and its benefits to MNCs in the O&G sector, thereby affecting both the planning and implementation of CSR. This could, in turn, affect the public at large.

Similarly, Nyabakora and Mohabir (2024) presented a gap in research through their bibliometric study, which identified a deficit of studies focusing on both CSR and the MNC. They went on to discuss that MNCs have, over time, developed a more vested interest in developing nations, where related studies are similarly in deficit (Grasso et al., 2021). Accordingly, it is crucial for more research regarding this disparity to be done to enhance the understanding of CSR public awareness globally, since global trends affecting the MNCs' public image may vary due to regulatory and economic factors.

There are mixed findings regarding the level of awareness of MNCs' CSR. As can be seen from Gupta's (2011) study, the levels of awareness of MNCs' CSR were higher in the developing nations when compared to the developed ones. In their study, Arli and Lasmono (2010) conversely found that there was a higher level of awareness in developed nations as opposed to developing nations, likely due to larger investments from MNCs in their home markets (Sharma et al., 2023). The authors then called for more research to be done for developing nations and CSR. These contrasting findings highlight the need for further investigation of the relationship between economic development and CSR awareness.

Despite the previously presented literature evidencing the growth of interest in the field, there has yet to be a study which examines CSR awareness on a more comprehensive, global scale. As such, this research aims to attempt to do so through identifying the relationship between the public level of awareness of O&G MNCs' CSR and the economic development of nations globally, offering a more wide-ranging perspective.

Thus, the research questions are as follows:

- RQ1*: Is there an association between CSR awareness and economic development?
- RQ2*: What type of association exists between CSR MNC awareness and the economic development of nations?
- RQ3*: What are the contributing factors to the levels of awareness observed through the association of economic development?

The study hypothesis is:

- H_1 : There is an association between the level of CSR awareness and economic development.

Objectives

To address the identified research gap, the primary objective of this study is to examine whether the economic development of a nation affects the public's awareness of O&G MNCs' CSR globally. To bridge this gap, the research shall include a cross-sectional analysis to examine the shared relationship between the economic development of sampled nations and the public's CSR awareness of O&G MNCs globally. Additionally, this study aims to explore what might be the potential factors influencing this relationship by shedding light on what may drive these differences in CSR throughout different economic conditions.

Through examining the existing conditions against CSR awareness levels, research should reveal where O&G MNCs stand with their stakeholders, allowing them to tailor their CSR efforts and strategies to align with their economic conditions and expectations of their stakeholders. This is crucial since the majority of existing literature focuses heavily solely on specific developed nations, leaving a gap in understanding how economic context shapes CSR awareness in developing nations through a global context.

Rationale of the Study

The reputational value of an MNC can be shifted based on public opinion. This opinion may very well hinge on CSR. This rings true for entities that operate in industries with significant environmental impact, such as the O&G sector. The relationship shared between CSR awareness and a country's economic development is still not fully understood despite the expansion of the industry.

Notably, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) indicated that there is continuous growth in the demand for renewable energy, and it will continue to grow substantially (Energy Information Administration, 2021). Demand for O&G has been similarly predicted to grow and account for the consistently dominant energy source through the year 2030 (International Energy Agency, 2023). This demonstrates that it may continue to play a role in differing economies of the world, particularly in developing nations, where there may be challenges in adapting infrastructures for renewable energies. As a result, CSR awareness comprehension should remain significant, since the stakeholders demand environmental concern, especially as the supply of renewable energy development is growing, as will the inevitable stakeholder interest.

Thus, insights must be gained to empower managers, the public and the government with the information equipping them to develop policies and shape CSR practices. This is crucial since the O&G sector has such a substantial effect on the environment and society. To narrow the current gap of knowledge, this research examines how public awareness of CSR actions by the O&G sector is influenced by the economic development of a nation.

Methodology

Sample Framework and Technique

The primary objective of this study was to identify the association shared between the level of CSR awareness and economic development globally. The chosen stakeholder, that is, the public at large, was selected as per Clarkson's (1995) list of stakeholders, since they are central to obtaining the awareness of the sample necessary for this study. Web-based questionnaires were distributed on a purposive quota sampling basis, grouping countries by continents/regions, namely North America, South America, Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania, inclusive of the Caribbean, to obtain a global sample. This information was obtained from respondents based on their country of origin, then coded based on the assigned region/continent. This was initially done to ensure that the data emanated from the selected global regions. The Caribbean region was included due to its being prone to natural disasters because of climate change and its coastal geographical location (Middelbeek et al., 2014).

As per Mason (2017), 'quota sampling means there is greater flexibility; rather than fixed numbers of cases being required with particular criteria, quota sampling specifies categories and the minimum number needed for each one'. The minimum number for each category was identified as 30 to obtain normalcy in the data (Carnahan et al., 2010) per region. Due to the sample's inclusiveness, resources were allocated effectively, enabling a wide range of geographic and economic backgrounds to be collected from the sample set. As a result, quota sampling was utilised to procure global representation, with the minimum threshold per region being set at 30 respondents to obtain statistical normalcy and to guarantee data robustness across all regions. This was optimal since the researcher's capacity to contact participants in every location physically was limited.

Furthermore, purposive sampling was adopted to strategically identify respondents from across the outlined regions to share the questionnaires to obtain 'global CSR awareness'. This allowed for there to be the expression of judgement by the researcher of the sample set based on the prospective respondents' locality and their network to obtain data. Thus, the purposive quota sampling method was used since the reach of the researcher was limited to regions globally. It should be noted that the employed sampling methods introduce inherent biases and the risk of imbalances regionally. Efforts to mitigate biases include targeted survey distribution to regions that were underrepresented and customised survey introductions encouraging underrepresented regions to participate. It is also important to acknowledge that these measures bring with them limitations (Lohr, 2021), which affect the generalisability of this study's findings (Etikan, 2016).

Once this initial phase was complete, the snowball technique was employed to extend reach by requesting initial respondents to forward the questionnaire to their local networks, thus expanding the sample size in harder-to-reach regions. Notably, potential biases using the snowball technique include the possibility of overrepresentation from certain demographic networks or regions. This was minimised through careful and deliberate initial targeting to ensure a balance of

respondents. Thus, the flow of responses was monitored to ensure that the regional responses were proportionate and sufficient. Additionally, when snowballing to regions where responses were not sufficient, the introduction and conclusion sections of the questionnaire were customised to elicit support for snowballing from the initial participants, to share the questionnaire with their fellow countrymates or anyone who might be from the specific region. Through these disclosures, respondents were expected to opt to participate in the questionnaire based on the outlined region.

Data Collection

Web-based questionnaires (created using Google Forms) were deemed the primary optimal tool to obtain public perspective, granted the researcher's physical limitations. It was through this medium that questionnaires could be globally dispersed across different continents efficiently. Not only was it fast, but it was also cost-effective and ensured that data could be stored securely and systematically in real-time.

The questions in the survey were framed using a five-point Likert scale to test levels of the public's O&G MNCs' CSR awareness. This scale is a well-established measure of subjective attitudes, such as awareness. In addition, it offered granularity, thereby allowing the different levels of CSR awareness of O&G by the public to be assessed, from high awareness to no awareness. This tool was used to optimise time and enhance the efficiency in reaching respondents across diverse geographic regions, especially with the physical limitations of contacting a vast number of participants globally. Its validity was also tested through a review of the questionnaire by four experts in relevant fields, including academia, data analytics, management and CSR, to ensure that the questions would effectively capture the necessary data to obtain the research objectives.

Each expert received a document which contained the survey, an introduction to the study and its aims, and a request to provide specific and general feedback. Adjustments were made to the wording of the introduction of the survey and the questions themselves to improve their comprehensiveness and clarity regionally and cross-culturally. Suggestions include the use of the Likert scale to optimise for granularity to measure CSR awareness, and nations were revised from regions as a measure for simplicity and data collection purposes.

In addition, the introduction of the survey includes definitions of key terms, alongside detailed information about the researcher (inclusive of contact information for respondent follow-up) and data protection measures. These measures were taken for transparency purposes and to ensure respondent confidence and comfort. Based on expert recommendations, the sequence of the questions was also adjusted to ensure a logical flow. Irrelevant and redundant questions were also removed to optimise the questionnaire performance and minimise respondent fatigue without compromising data quality. Ethical considerations were also undertaken based on expert advice for recommendations regarding participant anonymity. As such, modifications were made to sections requesting personal information, such as email addresses.

To ensure the adoption of Gupta's (2011) method of testing for the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire, responses were reviewed through a developed two-item scale to measure CSR awareness using Cronbach's alpha. The test revealed a score of 0.82, which was deemed adequate in measuring CSR awareness.

The questionnaire also included a question regarding the nation of the respondent strategically to categorise respondents based on the World Bank's (2022) classifications: 'high income', 'high middle income', 'lower middle income' and 'low income' levels of economies for analysis purposes. These classifications were used as measures of economic development, granted their origins from the World Bank—a well-reputed database. Based on the responses received from each country, classifications were then coded from numbers one through four. These classifications were crucial in measuring the relationship between CSR awareness and economic development.

Social media platforms such as Yahoo.com, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Facebook were used for the distribution of the questionnaire. Questionnaires were also published on forums such as surveycircle.in, surveysparrow.com and surveycircle.com to obtain additional responses that would have otherwise been difficult for the researcher to obtain globally, particularly from Oceania and Europe. To further expand reach, the Uniworld (2023) database was also accessed to obtain email addresses where surveys could be forwarded to additional recipients.

Analysis

In this section, the results of the study will be discussed. It includes the descriptive tables of the study, which will include tables, bar charts of both variables and a frequency chart of the sampled regions' responses. In addition to the inferential analysis output of Spearman's rho to display the relationship existing between the two variables and to also provide answers to the primary research question. Data analysis was executed using the Jamovi 2.3.28 (The Jamovi Project, 2022) software. It was chosen as the primary tool for analysis since it has a user-friendly interface and robust statistical capabilities. The Excel 365 software tool has been used because it is user-friendly and capable of facilitating adequate visualisations for the descriptive and inferential data, as can be seen in the sections below. Additionally, its capabilities have been utilised for collecting, organising and coding the data.

The Shapiro–Wilk test (see Table 1) indicates that both variables have a p value that is less than .001. This implies that there is evidence that suggests that the null hypothesis of both variables' normality is rejected. Therefore, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that the data for the economic development and awareness variables are not normally distributed. With these considerations, suitable inferential tests will be utilised moving forward.

From the dissemination of the questionnaire to all regions, feedback was garnered from 1,505 respondents, indicating that the collected data are sufficient to move forward with the study, with consideration of the fact that the sample size

Table 1. Descriptive Data of Global Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Awareness and Economic Development Variables.

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis		Shapiro–Wilk	
					Value	SE	Value	SE	W	p
Global CSR awareness	2.1	2	0.922	0.849	0.9714	0.0631	0.9	0.126	0.885	<.001
Economic development	1.65	1	0.928	0.86	1.13	0.0631	-0.0423	0.631	0.701	<.001

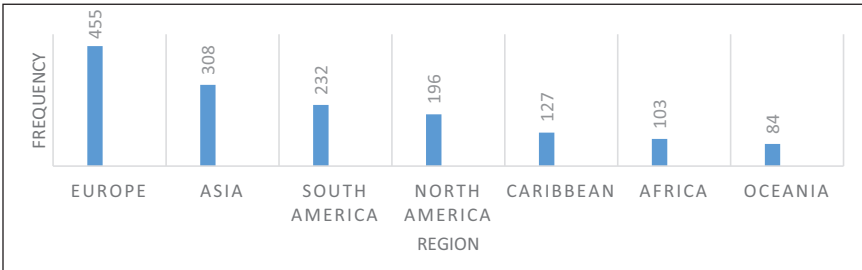


Figure 1. Global Dispersion of Respondents by Region.

was greater than the requisite 384 (Ahmad & Halim, 2017). The highest levels of responses were received from Europe, and the least number of responses were garnered from Africa (see Figure 1). The number of responses per region is well within the requisite level of feedback, in addition to the total sample size.

Figure 2 shows that the highest levels of feedback were gathered from higher income levels, and the lowest number of feedback was garnered from low-income levels. Based on the frequency of each range of the economic development indicator, the feedback was sufficient to move forward with the study, granted that a large population can utilise a sample size of 30 or more (Kothari, 2004).

Figure 3 displays the level of awareness of the participants using the five-point Likert scale, with one being the highest level of awareness and five being the lowest. Figure 3 demonstrates that there is a high level of awareness among aggregate respondents, with the lowest levels of skews emanating from respondents who were deemed ‘fully not aware’ of CSR.

The inferential non-parametric test, Spearman’s rho (see Table 2), was the applied and appropriate test to obtain the association between CSR awareness and economic development since the tested data were not normally distributed. Considerations were also given to the fact that the data collected to obtain CSR awareness were ordinal. Additionally, it was chosen due to its suitability for larger sample sizes and its robustness in measuring the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between the level of CSR awareness and the economic development level.

As can be seen in Table 2, the output ($-0.070, p = .003$) indicated that p value when the alpha was set at 0.05 is .003, which is significant. Furthermore, the test’s

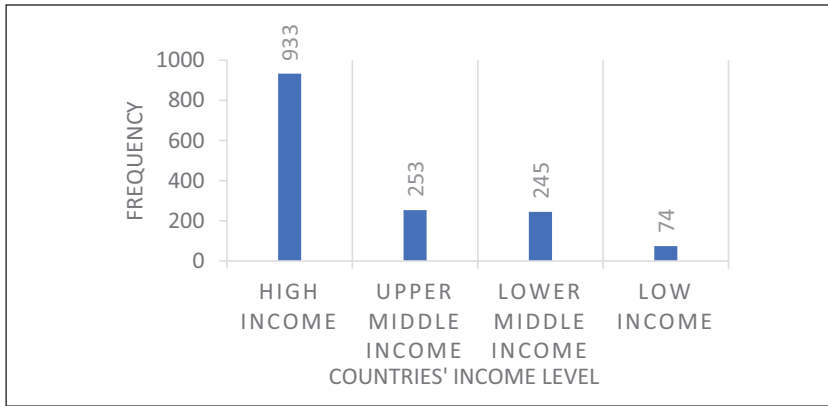


Figure 2. Distribution of Economic Development of Sampled Respondents.

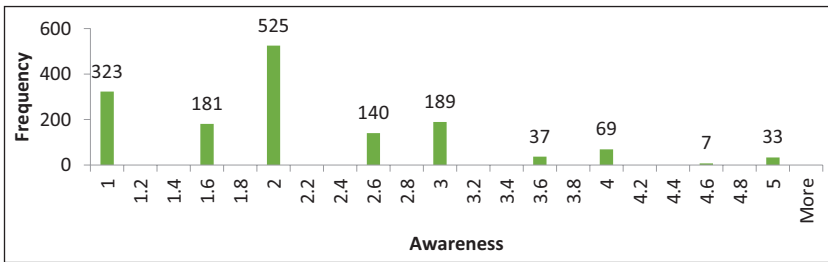


Figure 3. Distribution of Frequency of Awareness of Sampled Respondents.

Table 2. Spearman’s Rho Test Between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Awareness and Economic Development.

Awareness		Awareness	Income
Income	Spearman’s rho	–	
	<i>p</i> value	–	
	Spearman’s rho	–0.070**	–
	<i>p</i> value	.003	–

Notes: Spearman’s rho correlation coefficients. ** Statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

results also revealed that the relationship was negative in nature, given that the above-placed figure was -0.070 . It should be noted, however, that though the relationship is significant, the correlation between the two variables is still deemed weak.

In the sections to follow, there will be a discussion of the results presented above to introduce the meaningfulness of the data and information presented in the results section, followed by an implications section discussing the theoretical, practical and social implications of this study’s findings.

Discussion

As previously mentioned, this section will cover the interpretations and inferences that can be drawn from the analysis section. This study's findings will be used to discuss the relevance of the results to the research question and whether or not the literature ties into the findings.

Through Spearman's rho test, it was identified that there was indeed a relationship between the development of a nation and the level of awareness of MNCs' CSR, thereby answering the first question of this study. The relationship presented through the p value indicated that the probability of the occurrence of the finding was not by chance and that there is indeed a correlation between the two variables.

These findings contradict Visser's (2011) assumption that CSR is static across nations. Instead, it supports Werther and Chandler's (2010) argument that, given the shift in communication brought about by technological development, there would be even more awareness of corporate acts, regardless of whether they were positive or negative. This may be why the O&G sectors have been increasingly scrutinised publicly in both developing and developed nations. In their study, Arli and Lasmono (2010) also called for clarity regarding CSR awareness about the development of a nation, which has thus been provided through confirmation that CSR awareness is associated with economic development through empirical evidence.

Having established the relationship between CSR awareness and economic development, the second question aimed to determine the nature of the association. Findings reveal a negative association between the two variables, though the magnitude of the negative association is weak. Thus, when CSR awareness of the O&G MNCs increases, economic development seems to decrease, but this decrease is only slight. To be more precise, when the economic development of a nation increases, there is only a slight decrease in the level of awareness of CSR. The weak association may be based on the fact that the interest in CSR is still growing and has not yet become pronounced (Rajapakse, 2005).

In building upon the first two questions, the final question endeavoured to identify possible factors influencing the levels of CSR observed. The negative association identified was contrary to Arli and Lasmono's (2010) study, where they stated that developing nations are preoccupied with actively pursuing necessities; thus, they are not fully aware of MNC CSR.

Furthermore, developing nations may have had a higher level of awareness of CSR because the entities that carry out acts of philanthropy in these existing areas, though superficial, may seem impactful because of high visibility as Mbalisi and Okorie (2020) purported. This may also be the case, given that these nations are more deeply influenced by factors such as religion and colonialisation (Gupta, 2011), which increase their propensity to be more attuned to CSR activities emanating from their deep-rooted religious views emphasising ethical behaviour and acts of philanthropy.

Barrena Martínez et al. (2016) emphasised stakeholder power as a factor since society can expel entities that are not operating in accordance with the stakeholders' interests. Therefore, there must be awareness of O&G MNCs' CSR, as it will allow society to have a stance. This will facilitate a wider perception of CSR,

allowing the public at large to better decide whether or not the CSR activities being executed by these entities are sufficiently contributing to the enhancement of the O&G MNCs' reputational value and legitimacy.

Furthermore, the weak association identified indicates that economic development as a factor is not dominant, nor does it solely affect CSR awareness (Visser, 2009). These findings suggest that CSR awareness may also be influenced by other factors such as sociocultural variables (Hofstede, 1984; Matten & Moon, 2008), which may play a more prominent role. The slightly negative association could also be demonstrative of a growing interest in CSR globally, especially in economically developing nations, though it has yet to become significant to the public.

In addition, the weak association may demonstrate that though economically developed nations might have better institutional frameworks for CSR, there might also be a deficit in public awareness due to the disconnect between corporate practices and public understanding caused by insufficient corporate–public communication, lack of public engagement or the actual presence of CSR activities. Conversely, CSR awareness in low-income regions may be slightly higher since these regions might be more inclined to prioritise immediate economic concerns, thus overshadowing CSR awareness. Their slightly higher levels of awareness might have been brought about by the direct relevance of socio-economic challenges (Visser, 2009).

A final contributing factor might include collaborations with governments, NGOs and supranationals (Pizzi et al., 2021; Sookram, 2007) for resources and more comprehensive databases with skillsets that will not only enhance public CSR awareness levels but also perceptions of CSR initiatives. This especially applies to O&G MNCs with diverse and developing host economies where, through support, they should be able to align CSR strategies with the public's expectations. Thus, it can be seen that CSR awareness is multifaceted (Orlitzky et al., 2003) as it may also be predicted through stakeholders, reputation, religion, sociocultural, and historical contexts, along with economic development.

Conclusion

Through this study, the primary objective—to determine if a relationship exists between the two variables: economic development and CSR awareness—was achieved through incorporating Spearman's rho test. The relationship was deemed to be significant, thereby answering the first research question posed in the study. These findings challenged earlier assumptions made by Visser (2011) of CSR being universally static.

The second research question aimed at investigating the nature of the relationship, which was similarly answered through Spearman's rho test results. It revealed that there was a negative correlation between the two variables; thus, when economic development decreases, the level of awareness increases. The negative association, however, was deemed to be relatively weak. Though this is the case, the *p* value shows that it is by no means coincidental and is thus still supported. The weak inverse association suggests that more studies can be done to

identify potential factors that influence the relationship, including social and cultural influences on CSR awareness. Through this expansion, a more comprehensive understanding of how CSR awareness varies is gained.

The final question of the study aimed to identify contributing factors that might affect the level of CSR awareness and economic development. Suggested factors based on previous literature indicated that sociocultural factors included religion, colonialism and pressure from stakeholders—especially in developing nations. This conclusion was derived based on the weak association from Spearman's rho test, indicating that, though CSR awareness is affected by a nation's development, there may also be other underlying influential factors.

This study provides insights into important relationships between CSR awareness and economic development. Through it, additional avenues have presented themselves for future research, inclusive of the exploration of the nuanced sociocultural factors that might influence CSR in different economic environments. It contributes to the CSR body of knowledge of O&G MNCs by presenting the fact that CSR awareness is not the sole function of economic development and encouraged that practitioners also include different factors when designing their CSR initiatives, in addition to partnering locally with institutions such as NGOs and governments, granted their expertise, especially in developing nations.

Implications of the Study

Practical Implications

The results provided insights which might be useful to both policymakers and managers, especially those who are working for MNCs in the O&G sector. Since there is a significant relationship existing between a nation's development and CSR awareness, it is recommended that managers customise CSR programmes with more consideration for the country's economic development and level of awareness. Granted that the magnitude of the association was inverse and weak, managers should also consider other influential factors that might be more dominant, such as the social, technological and cultural dimensions, when crafting CSR initiatives, since the weak correlation suggests that economic development is not the only factor driving CSR awareness.

Additionally, rather than implementing CSR that might be visible but superficial, they might want to collaborate with influential, more knowledgeable local bodies about regional and sociocultural contexts to implement impactful CSR initiatives that resonate with the community. This should contribute to their effectiveness and social legitimacy. Managers should also focus on other factors, including engaging the community and providing public awareness campaigns to bridge the awareness gap and promote long-term CSR effectiveness.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on CSR with a nuanced approach to CSR, as it challenged Visser's (2011) assumption of CSR

being static, since the relationship between both CSR awareness and economic development was significant. This indicated that the relationship was dynamic. The negative correlation went on to challenge the assumptions made by Arli and Lasmono (2010), who implied that CSR was not as prevalent in developing nations. This negative correlation was, however, weak in magnitude. This shows that, though there is indeed a relationship, other factors such as religion or culture may also play a role in CSR awareness and could thus be studied more in-depth in future research. In addition, due to the weak association, it sheds more light on the fact that, though CSR may not be directly correlated with economic development, there may still be other sociocultural factors that might also have a role to play. Through these findings, research provides nuanced insights into the relationship between CSR awareness and economic development, especially with regard to the controversial O&G sector. It also acts as a basis for more research to understand additional factors that might affect CSR awareness.

Social Implications

From a societal perspective, the findings of the study demonstrate that public awareness can have a role in how MNCs in the O&G sector might design their CSR initiatives, particularly in developing nations. From the weak negative correlations of the Spearman's rho test, it can be seen that, though slight, there is value in including more engagement and education regarding the topic. This is especially true for those who might be from developing nations, where the CSR might be superficial but still impactful based on this study's findings. Thus, better-informed societies might be more likely to demand quality, long-term social benefits. The study also called for more collaborations of these MNCs with NGOs or governments in executing CSR, especially in developing nations, since these bodies might have first-hand knowledge of how to implement suitable CSR strategies.

Limitations/Future Research

The findings of this study can be used by those within the O&G industry to identify which economic development areas they may be deficient in, in an effort to increase the CSR awareness level. Through doing so, they would be able to proactively empower those in the public at large to acknowledge these entities' CSR contributions.

Limitations of this article include that the study was executed on a cross-sectional basis, limiting it to a finite period. Furthermore, while the purposive quota and snowball sampling methods employed enabled global inclusivity, they are still subject to trade-offs (Smith & Lewis, 2011) such as biases and under/overrepresentation. Attempts to mitigate these issues include monitoring feedback and customised introductions soliciting participation from underrepresented regions.

Further mitigation was obtained through outreach to a wide range of respondents across different backgrounds and regions, regardless of awareness levels. The questionnaire was solely distributed online, which limits the sample to respondents who have access to the internet. Because of the sampling methods employed, there is a risk of the data applying to just the sampled data set, thereby affecting the generalisability of this study (Patton, 2014). These findings, however, do provide insights into what can be expected in the field and provide the opportunity for growth in the research field as they provide empirical-based findings on global CSR awareness.

In addition, this study focuses heavily on quantitative data to study the economic development's association with CSR awareness. While this approach allowed for there to be a wider reach, it limited the ability to explore contextual nuances that qualitative measures could have provided. Future researchers could thus include a mixed-methods approach, which would complement their quantitative findings and enhance the depth of understanding.

Moreover, given the growing worldwide usage of electric vehicles, there may be halts or cancellations in several O&G projects globally, thereby affecting this study's findings. Future research may also need to take into account the continuous shift towards alternative energy sources and their effects on CSR preferences, practices and reporting within the O&G industry. Finally, this research was executed utilising solely data to obtain public awareness, but it did not take into consideration the secondary data that could be gathered from annual reports of companies. By analysing profitable CSR O&G companies' annual reports, researchers would be able to identify effective CSR practices within the sector.

Lastly, based on the findings, though the economic development of a country does have its impact, there are also other factors that can contribute to influencing CSR awareness globally (Carroll & Shabana, 2010), including stakeholders, reputation, sociocultural, regional and religious factors. Thus, future research can also include these variables moving forward to provide deeper insights into the complex dynamics affecting CSR awareness globally.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Almighty God for his love and protection. Also, they managed to accomplish this research work, thanks to the efforts of many people. Their special thanks to the Postgraduate Department of Business Management at Sardar Patel University (India) and the Indian Commission for Cultural Relations. They are aware of their moral, material and academic support. Any mistakes remain solely the authors' responsibility (Sarah Elizabeth Mohabir, Dr Yogesh C. Joshi and Dr Darshana R. Dave).

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to the study's conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Sarah Elizabeth Mohabir and Professor (Dr) Yogesh C. Joshi. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Sarah Elizabeth Mohabir. Editing of the manuscript was done by Professor (Dr) Yogesh C. Joshi and Professor (Dr) Darshana R. Dave. All authors commented on the versions of the manuscript, read and approved the final manuscript for publication.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Sarah Mohabir  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3733-6248>

References

- Ahmad, H. B., & Halim, H. B. (2017). Determining sample size for research activities: The case of organizational research. *Business Review*, 2(1), 20–34.
- Anis, M. D., & Siddiqui, T. Z. (2015). Issues impacting sustainability in the oil and gas industry. *Journal of Management and Sustainability*, 5(4), 115. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jms.v5n4p115>
- Arlı, D. I., & Lasmono, H. K. (2010). Consumers' perception of corporate social responsibility in a developing country. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34(1), 46–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2009.00824.x>
- Barrena Martínez, J., López Fernández, M., & Romero Fernández, P. M. (2016). Corporate social responsibility: Evolution through institutional and stakeholder perspectives. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 25(1), 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.redee.2015.11.002>
- Bouquet, C., & Deutsch, Y. (2008). The impact of corporate social performance on a firm's multinationality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 80, 755–769.
- Carnahan, S., Agarwal, R., & Campbell, B. (2010). The effect of firm compensation structures on the mobility and entrepreneurship of extreme performers. *Business*, 920(October), 1–43.
- Carroll, A. B. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate performance. *The Academy of Management Review*, 4(4), 497–505.
- Carroll, A. B., & Brown, J. A. (2021, January). Corporate social responsibility: A chronicle and review of concept development and refinements. In *The Routledge companion to corporate social responsibility*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003152651-3>
- Carroll, A. B., & Shabana, K. M. (2010). The business case for corporate social responsibility: A review of concepts, research and practice. *International Journal of Management*, 12(1), 85–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00275.x>
- Clarkson, M. E. (1995). A stakeholder framework for analyzing and evaluating corporate social performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(1), 92–117. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1995.9503271994>
- Davis, K., & Blomstrom, R. L. (1975). *Business and society: Environment and responsibility*. McGraw Hill.
- Deighton-Smith, N., & Bell, B. T. (2018). Objectifying fitness: A content and thematic analysis of #fitspiration images on social media. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 7(4), 467.
- Du, S., & Vieira, E. T. (2012). Striving for legitimacy through corporate social responsibility: Insights from oil companies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 110(4), 413–427. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1490-4>

- Duhoon, A., & Singh, M. (2024). Corporate governance in family firms: A bibliometric analysis. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/ijim.231174155>
- Edoho, F. M. (2008). Oil transnational corporations: Corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 15(4), 210–222.
- Elkington, J., & Rowlands, I. H. (1999). Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business. *Alternatives Journal*, 25(4), 42.
- Energy Information Administration. (2021, October 7). *EIA projects nearly 50% increase in world energy use by 2050, led by growth in renewables*. <https://www.eia.gov/today-in-energy/detail.php?id=49876>
- Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Frederick, W. C. (1986). Toward CSR3: Why ethical analysis is indispensable and unavoidable in corporate affairs. *California Management Review*, 28(2), 126–141.
- Freeman, R. E. (2010). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Friedman, M. (1970). A Friedman doctrine—The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *New York Times Magazine*, 6(33), 122–124. <http://www.nytimes.com/>
- Frynas, J. G., & Stephens, S. (2015). Political corporate social responsibility: Reviewing theories and setting new agendas. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 17(4), 483–509. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12049>
- García-Rodríguez, F. J., García-Rodríguez, J. L., Castilla-Gutiérrez, C., & Major, S. A. (2013). Corporate social responsibility of oil companies in developing countries: From altruism to business strategy. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 20(6), 371–384.
- Gifford, B., & Kestler, A. (2008). Toward a theory of local legitimacy by MNEs in developing nations: Newmont mining and health sustainable development in Peru. *Journal of International Management*, 14(4), 340–352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2007.09.005>
- Grasso, M. S., del Carmen Valls Martínez, M., & Ramírez-Orellana, A. (2021). Health policies based on patient satisfaction: A bibliometric study. *Healthcare*, 9(11), 1520.
- Gupta, S. (2011). Consumer stakeholder view of corporate social responsibility: A comparative analysis from USA and India. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 7(3), 363–380. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17471111111154518>
- Hack, L., Kenyon, A. J., & Wood, E. H. (2014). A critical corporate social responsibility (CSR) timeline: How should it be understood now? *International Journal of Management Cases*, 16(4), 46–55.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Vol. 5). Sage Publications.
- International Energy Agency. (2023). *World Energy Outlook 2023*. <https://www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-outlook-2023>
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods & techniques*. New Age International (P) Ltd.
- Lee, B. X., Kjaerulf, F., Turner, S., Cohen, L., Donnelly, P. D., Muggah, R., Davis, R., Realini, A., Kieselbach, B., MacGregor, L. S., Waller, I., Gordon, R., Moloney-Kitts, M., Lee, G., & Gilligan, J. (2016). Transforming our world: Implementing the 2030 Agenda through sustainable development goal indicators. *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 37(1), S13–S31. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41271-016-0002-7>

- Levy, D. L., & Kolk, A. (2002). Strategic responses to global climate change: conflicting pressures on multinationals in the oil industry. *Business and Politics*, 4(3), 275–300. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1469-3569.1042>
- Lohr, S. L. (2021). *Sampling: Design and analysis* (3rd ed.). Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Lopez, B., & Fornes, G. (2015). Corporate social responsibility in emerging markets: Case studies of Spanish MNCs in Latin America. *European Business Review*, 27(2), 214–230. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-03-2013-0053>
- Ma, H., Zeng, S., Lin, H., Chen, H., & Shi, J. J. (2017). The societal governance of mega-project social responsibility. *International Journal of Project Management*, 35(7), 1365–1377. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2017.01.012>
- Mason, J. (2017). *Qualitative researching*, 1-288.
- Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2008). “Implicit” and “explicit” CSR: A conceptual framework for a comparative understanding of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(2), 404–424.
- Maurya, A. M., Padval, B., Group, T. E., Kumar, M., & Pant, A. (2023, July). To study and explore the adoption of green logistic practices and performance in manufacturing industries in India. *Innovation and Management*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/ijim.221148882>
- Mbalisi, O. F., & Okorie, C. U. (2020). Implementation of corporate social responsibility by oil companies in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Myth or reality. *African Research Review: An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia, 14(57), 119–132.
- Menaga, A., Lokesh, S., & Vasantha, S. (2024). Corporate social responsibility initiatives during COVID-19: A study on the Indian FMCG sector. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/ijim.221148837>
- Middelbeek, L., Kolle, K., & Verrest, H. (2014). Built to last? Local climate change adaptation and governance in the Caribbean—The case of an informal urban settlement in Trinidad and Tobago. *Urban Climate*, 8, 138–154. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212095513000631>
- Mohabir, S. E., & Joshi, Y. (2024). A bibliometric analysis of the knowledge base on multinational corporations’ behavior. *SN Business & Economics*, 4, 105.
- Nyabakora, W. I., & Mohabir, S. E. (2024). Corporate social responsibility knowledge base: A bibliometric analysis. *Modern Finance*, 2(1), 101–120.
- Oliver, R., Jamie, G., Ugboaku, I. M., & Oyono, E. E. (2020). Communities’ perception and expectations of CSR: Implication for corporate-community relations. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 12(18), 25–33. <https://doi.org/10.7176/EJBM/12-18-03>
- Orlitzky, M., Schmidt, F. L., & Rynes, S. L. (2003). Corporate social and financial performance: A meta-analysis. *Organization Studies*, 24(3), 403–441. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840603024003910>
- Palan, R. (2016). Corporate power in a global economy. In *Susan Strange and the future of global political economy: Power, control and transformation* (pp. 152–164). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315627878>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage Publications.
- Pizzi, S., Moggi, S., Caputo, F., & Rosato, P. (2021). Social media as stakeholder engagement tool: CSR communication failure in the oil and gas sector. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 28(2), 849–859. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2094>

- Prakash, A. S., Gupta, A. K., & Kaur, S. (2023). Economic aspect of implementing green HR practices for environmental sustainability. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 1(1), 94–106.
- Rajapakse, B. (2005). Trend of social and environmental reporting practices in developing countries: Evidence from Sri Lanka. In *Monograph*. University of Colombo.
- Sharma, R., Mishra, N., & Sharma, G. (2023). India's frugal innovations: *Jugaad* and unconventional innovation strategies. *IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management*, 1(1), 25–45.
- Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 381–403. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.59330958>
- Sookram, R. R. (2007). *Mapping corporate social responsibility in Trinidad & Tobago: Private sector and sustainable development*. UNDP. <http://www.abovestudios.com>
- The Jamovi Project*. (2022). (Version 2.3). <https://www.jamovi.org>
- Uniworld*. (2023). Uniworldonline. <https://uniworldonline.com/>
- Visser, W. (2009). Corporate social responsibility in developing countries. In *The Oxford handbook of corporate social responsibility* (pp. 473–500). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199211593.003.0021>
- Visser, W. (2011). *The age of responsibility: CSR 2.0 and the new DNA of business*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Werther, W. B. J., & Chandler, D. (2010). *Strategic corporate social responsibility: Stakeholders in a global environment*. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4si6VV5RGNeC&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=%22csr%22+or+%22corporate+social+responsibility%22+or+%22csp%22+%22social+issues%22&ots=zajNZRZI-x&sig=u16_dwJwFeXILSuP4Er9Y_rkQHs
- Weyzig, F. (2009). Political and economic arguments for corporate social responsibility: Analysis and a proposition regarding the CSR agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 86(4), 417–428.
- World Bank. (2022). *The world by income and region*. The World Bank Group. <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html>
- Ye, N., Kueh, T. B., Hou, L., Liu, Y., & Yu, H. (2020). A bibliometric analysis of corporate social responsibility in sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 272, 122679. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122679>

IMIB Journal of Innovation and Management: Guidelines for Authors

Manuscript submission

- The preferred format for your manuscript is MS Word.
- The journal does not consider a paper that has been published elsewhere or that is under submission to another publisher. Authors must attest to this at the time of submission. It is also author's responsibility to disclose any potential conflict of interests regarding their submitted papers.
- Authors will be provided with a copyright form once the contribution is accepted for publication. The submission will be considered as final only after the filled-in and signed copyright form is received.

Basic formatting of the manuscripts

The journal publishes the following article types:

- Original Articles (empirical research papers on Innovation and Management-related areas)
- Review Articles
- Methodological Articles
- Case Studies
- Book Reviews

Please refer to the Submission Guidelines on the journal website for details on formatting.

Spelling and numerical usages

- Consistent use of British spelling is advised.
- Spell out numbers from one to nine, 10 and above to remain in figures. However, for exact measurements use only figures (e.g. 3 km, 9%). Please use '13th' instead of 'thirteenth century'; use '1960s' instead of 'nineteen sixties'.

Quotations, notes, tables and figures

- British English uses single quotation marks to indicate quotations or dialogue, double quotation marks for quotation inside quotation (nested quotation).
- Notes should be numbered serially and presented at the end of the article. Notes must contain more than a mere reference.
- Tables and figures must be cited in the text, and indicated by number separately (Table 1), not by placement (see Table below). Source details for figures and tables should be mentioned irrespective of whether or not they require permissions.
- All photographs and scanned images should have a resolution of minimum 300 dpi and 1500 pixels, and their format should be TIFF or JPEG. Due permissions should be taken for copyright-protected photographs/images.

References and their text citations

- References and their citations should be given in accordance with APA 7th edition.
- Please ensure that all references mentioned in the reference list are cited in the text and vice versa.

For detailed style guidelines, please visit <https://jim.imibh.edu.in>

