SOWING ILLUSIONS, REAPING DISARRAY: MEDIA INFLUENCE, URBAN MIGRATION, AND THE DISMANTLING OF SOCIETAL NORMS IN SOUTH ASIA

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ABSTARCT

It aimed at a comprehensive understanding and practical application of information technology with respect to urban migration and the breakdown of values and norms of South Asian digital media. This page is intentionally left blank Media as social- Central to social- how we collectively construct, update and propagate ideals of: Ideally, success, when we can experience enclosure by diegesis, media will share a portion of the audience with social- media platforms, and With presenting and potencier expressions of ideologies. These narratives are also often glorifying the values of materialism, emotional alienation and socio-cultural oppobrium and creating new intersecting lines of interest from vogue on the streets, while simultaneously imbibing a sense of ennui, creating an angst and dislocation of consciousness that unifies in confusion strata of youth. The finding demonstrates how deeply embedded media has become — in some cases, an informal education system at least as powerful as family or school in shaping behavior and aspirations in ways that threaten indigenous cultural identities. There are few overarching governmental regulations on what can be shown online, nor is there much protection for vulnerable elements of the population or encouragement for values-based programming. These and other groups are underrepresented or ignored in popular narratives that paint broader groups (e.g., women, children, persons with disabilities) as victims of the violence. These are momentous findings and they call on policymakers, educators, media producers and civil society to concerted actions that will mitigate the negative impact of digital content and nurture endemic values. It will take strong regulatory initiatives, inclusive representation, and educational outreach on the part of the public to steer the media landscape in emerging nations toward peace, kindness, and sustainable development so that they can plant the seeds of social stability instead of mirages and unrest.

Keywords: Digital Media, Urban Migration, Societal Norms, South Asia, Economic Disparity, Media Regulation, Cultural Responsibility, Migration and Media, Social Stability.

INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have witnessed a significant socio-economic phenomenon in which urban migration is relationship with the economic instability, inflation, and the demand for better employment opportunities the people are moving more towards urban areas. This movement is not just a physical transition but a deep process of cultural, psychological, and social change. It's not uncommon for those leaving rural areas for urban centers to grapple with identity, societal expectations, or just finding their place in a new urban context. These transformations are particularly accompanied by an urban migration process that the media has a major impact on. But the new instant availability of information and a new, unregulated means of sharing that information through digital media, changed the landscape of cultural change, with profound implications for how individuals developed their social and moral frameworks
(Andrienko, & Guriev, 2004).

In this section we will discuss background of urban migration in South Asia, psychological & cultural effects of urban migration & how unregulated digital media impacts culture & values of society. This study primarily aims to investigate how unregulated digital content can continue to alter previously held cultural norms and behaviour in society, especially in the context of urban migration and how this unregulated content leads to the erosion of traditional values (Labor Force Survey, 2006).

When migrants reach cities, they encounter a new environment, which frequently upsets their inherited values and the traditional ways of life. This societal transformation is further deepened by the interlocking influence of digital media as the heart and soul of attitudes and behaviors. Without effective regulation, media channels often present distorted images of success, family life, and identity that leave individuals torn between pursuing these notions and staying true to their cross-cultural origins (Chaudhary, & Khan, 2002).

Unsettlingly, the introduction suggests a more constructive role the media might play. It has the potential, if harnessed correctly, to be a catalyst for social awareness, civic responsibility, and a force for collective improvement. Therefore, the introduction paves the way towards an interrogation of how media and urban migration together are working to deconstruct the social fabric in terms of normative ideals in South Asia—creating some chaos, but at the same time providing a space for potential transformation (Stark, & Bloom, 1985).

BACKGROUND ON URBAN MIGRATION IN SOUTH ASIA

This urban migration in South Asia is not a new phenomenon, yet, the last few decades saw it gaining staggering momentum. Widespread rural poverty, lack of employment, environmental degradation, and inadequate access to basic amenities in rural regions has forced men and women alike to look for better opportunities in urban metropolitan areas. Cities in nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have emerged as magnets for those in search of work, education, and better living standards. South Asia has been witnessing extensive population growth in urban cities, with numerous people moving from the villages to the urban cities in search of jobs, especially in government and non-government sectors, according to many studies (Stark, & Taylor, 1989).

When migrants get into structured professional job settings—like government jobs or NGO jobs—their search for status changes tracks, to more formalized markers of success, such as owning modern technology, elite networks, or emulating lifestyles seen in media. That leads to per formative behavior, playing roles that align with the image people want to have, even when that image is not compatible with their financial reality or their cultural roots. This gradual shift displaces the regular values of community support, humility, and self-reliance. Urban society, instead, offers image-consciousness and material success as key facets of identity. The segment points out that urban migration, while it transforms the places where people reside, also alters their perceptions of identity and their actions in their new social circumstances (Akerlof, & Kranton, 2000).

This migration is frequently regarded as a path to upward social mobility, but it poses several challenges in its wake. The cultural shock that they face can be encountered as they migrate from a more traditional, often conservative, way of life in the countryside to a more modern and urbanized life on the periphery. And it is not simply an economic shift, but one that is marked with a negotiation of new social norms and values — one that frequently responds to the media representations of success, materialism and individualism (Sjaastad, 1962).

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

Migration has multifarious psychological and cultural ramifications. Migrants go through a process of psychological adaptation, which is at once freeing and disorienting. People encounter identity, alienation, and self-image in their transition from rural to urban settings. But the fast-paced life of the city, coupled with constant exposure to various ways of living, may make some rural migrants feel alien and disoriented in the city, as they try to balance the values of their rural upbringing with those of the new environment they find themselves in (Appleton, & Balihuta, 2001).

Living in rural areas fosters close-knit family ties and a culture of passed-down traditional values. Yet city life, based on individualism and personal achievement, tends to undermine these traditional ties. This generational clash can put strain on families, as older generations often cling to conservative ideals while flavor of the new hires in the city, as younger waves of migrants adopt the more modern ideals they find in the city. Stress, depression, and anxiety as a psychological impact: the pressure to succeed and the need to adapt to the urban lifestyle. Moreover, the media images of prosperous urban lifestyles add fuel to these frustrations and insecurities when migrants come to the grim realization that their living conditions do not mirror the idealized copies of life (Bardhan& Udry, 2000).

ROLE OF UNREGULATED DIGITAL MEDIA IN SHAPING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

This study focuses in particular on the unregulated media that is ubiquitous to the cultural and social remaking of urban migrants across South Asia. The internet and Smartphone availability have expanded digital media access dramatically, making it an ever-present force in people's lives. What people see on social media, streaming platforms, news sites, and other half-baked digital media all tend to give an exaggerated view of success in the city. Such descriptions hover over material wealth, social status, and individualism the end goals of life (Dixit, & Bhattacharyya, 2004).

All of these media images have a strong impact on young migrants The target audience also try to find out what they have to do in a new world through digital media which serves as a guide, and if they're lucky enough, help them to find their place in this world. The media love to sensationalize the lifestyles of the rich and famous, a distorted version of reality that reinforces the need for viewers to make it big no matter the cost. This affects migrants not only in the perception they have of themselves but also in the way they think to behave in society and leads them to seriously alienate him from traditional values of family, community and sense of social responsibility. Not to mention, because there is no regulation over digital media content, harmful, misleading or extreme views go often unchecked. However,

with no clear limits and full ethical autonomy for that content, a wide acceptance can develop in that sector which, in turn, can contribute to bringing about a life and lifestyle that encompasses primarily the values and aspects of life associated with materialism. As a result, this unregulated media and lack of censorship allow people to control the narrative and provide content to young and malleable people, therefore, reshaping their morals and pushing towards the fading of societal norms even further (Coulson, & Rondeau, 2001).

As people consume this content regularly, their definitions of well-behaved and successful also begin to change. The narrative of wealth, emotional detachment, and disregard for cultural norms is increasingly presented as the new ideals. Educational or morally grounded content is rare, so there are few positive or balanced lifestyles on display for the public to emulate (Coulson, & Rondeau, 2001).

In this part of the article, we are exploring the more profound implications of unchecked digital media, introducing it not exclusively as a means of entertainment, but as a delicate tool of cultural persuasion. It provides access to the "fast life" and could be played over (or deciphered from) the steady trickle of glamorized lifestyles and distorted images of success that eventually shape public awareness in developing nations (De Haan, & Rogaly, 2002).

Whereas in the recent past the markers of success may have been education, community service, or intellectual development, the newer narrative equating success with material wealth plus social standing plus physical appearance has been repeated often enough in a digital world that programs that stoke that daploma-edu-greed recognition culture creates a monotonous drone to the fourth paradigm of mass content creating behavioral norms that we mistakenly call "aspirants". This change doesn't just affect behavior; it rewrites the values of entire populations.

The effect is particularly perilous in low media literacy environments where the recipients of these messages mostly the youth may internalize them as verisimilar and inspirational. Consequently, they suffer from frustration, confusion and identity crises, and traditional norms and local cultural pride weaken. In this light, digital media is not just an algorithmic force for good or ill, it is an unauthorized pedagogy that can do both; informing, supporting, and renewing networks or rendering them hazardous, what they trigger is dependent on how these materials of the digital are curate and read. This gives all that is traditional an overwhelming priority and prevents contacts with other cultures that are not coordinated with hari hara only result in confusion (Engel, & Kogan, 2000).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
Through this study, we aim to explore how exposure to unfiltered digital media content leads to the deconstruction of cultural norms amongst urban migrants in South Asia. The study investigates the mediated representations of success, social roles, and lifestyles and their homogenization in media, seeking to understand how the latter contribute to the formation and adaptation of migrants to urban life by addressing the performance of media as a set of fate.

This research will examine:
1. The argument that unvented media content glorifies materialism, self-interest, and unequally represents the image of success
2. The psychological impact of the media exposure of migrants, especially in their efforts to settle in urban spaces
3. The process by which migrants acclimate to a new country, adopting values and norms that are shaped by digital media and often outstripping traditional family networks and social structures
4. This phenomenon and its possibly detrimental effects on social cohesion, familial relationships, and cultural transmission in South Asian communities

URBAN MIGRATION AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS
Urban migration in South Asia is a shift of geographic location, but also a well of psychological and cultural adjustment. People move from the countryside to cities, mainly for better economic opportunities, such as jobs, schools, and services. However, this migration process is not without its own psychological and emotional challenges since migrants need to adapt to a new and uncharted environment (Dustmann, & Glitz, 2005).

ECONOMIC INSTABILITY AND THE MIGRATION TREND
The primary drivers in South Asia are economic uncertainty and the migration factor. Rambling plot points that illustrate new jobs in cities are contrasted with the ghosts of agriculture, underdeveloped infrastructure, fewer rural jobs and high inflation as villains, pushing people to the city for a living. These economic pressures have accelerated urban migration

in countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. This is gradually leveling out for poor people, in particular in the rural pockets of developing countries, which has bred the perception that cities are where you need to be if you want a shot at economic opportunity. Urban migration is not always a guarantee of prosperity even though it has its benefits. In addition to these economic difficulties, migrants often experience issues related to housing, social integration, and access to basic services that may adversely affect their well-being. Psychologically, a transition from a rural life to an urban life could

be stressful. These are migrants who are often put in a context that leaves them feeling socially marginalized, isolated, disconnected from their essence (Galor, & Stark, 2000).

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES FACED BY MIGRANTS IN URBAN CENTERS

Psychological and cultural hurdles greet migrants who arrive in urban centers. Urban and rural settings differ in values, traditions, and lifestyles, which hinder adaptation. Identity Crisis and Cultural Alienation: With transition of individuals from backward areas to modern cities, many migrants are being exposed to urban culture which formricamly developed with a clear disconnect with the families, causing them with an identity crisis. The collectivist cultural values of rural societies dictate close-knit social networks. This clash of values can lead to cultural alienation, with migrants being the strangers to their rural roots (maybe a severing from the land) but not being integrated into the very society they want to integrate in (Groot, & Van den Brink, 2000).

SOCIAL ISOLATION

Urban centers, no matter how small, can be powerful isolators for newcomers. Migrants may not enjoy the same social support networks family or close-knit community groups that they did in rural societies. Such people in cities have to build new networks from scratch, which is especially difficult with all the challenges migrants might face like language barriers, unfamiliar social dynamics or discrimination. That disconnect can fuel loneliness and social isolation (Hargreaves, & Sennett, 2002).

ADAPTING TO URBAN NORMS

And when they transition into an urban place, they are forced to assemble a new way of life   commuting, often via public transit, navigating the brokratic hoops and joining an often alienating work experience. For migrants coming from the slow-paced, family-oriented rhythm of village life, these challenges can feel pretty overwhelming. The abrupt displacement involved in migration is hard enough, but the frenetic, and sometimes brutal, rhythm of urban life can impose a different kind of psychological toll on migrants trying to keep up, and hold their spot, in a world that tends to look right through them (Glick, & Sahn, 2007).

INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON MIGRANTS' PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS AND SOCIETAL ROLES

Exposure to media is one of the most significant factors that are felt in the adaptation of urban migrants to their psychological and cultural adaptation to their new social environment. Digital as well as traditional forms of media play an influential role in the shaping of perceptions of success, roles in society, and aspirations in South Asia. For younger migrants, multimedia instruction offers pathways to navigate the city and form their own identities in it (Jackson, & Moreland, 2004).

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF SUCCESS

Most of the media agree that personal success means reaching for wealth, social status, and independence. The media, particularly social media, glorifies individualism, material wealth and consumerism as the pinnacle of success. For the migrants who come to the city in search of something better, such renderings can have a really big impact on their visions and dreams (Houghton, & Goodwin, 2003).

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CELEBRITIES

Television televangelists, social media influencers, and movie stars are often portray an idealistic version of success, which is also closely related to personal wealth and social recognition. Migrants especially will see these figures as role models, and presume that the same success is within reach. Yet, this has led to unrealistic expectations and pressures to adhere to a lifestyle that may not be sustainable. What can happen is that people see images and success stories on the internet and become increasingly inspirational, feeling frustrated when they are in circumstances they do not wish to be when it comes to life and achievements (Kahl, 2002).

SOCIETAL ROLE EXPECTATIONS

In urban centers with evolving gender, class and social mobility, the media also acts as a significant force in the framing of societal roles. In media representations, specific roles are thus assigned to women, youth, and marginalized groups

regarding how they should act in urban spaces. So, for example, South Asian women may be seeing media content calling for more independent lives, incompatible with expected family roles in some rural areas. Men may, likewise, receive exposure to media that highlight both career success and financial independence that may strengthen gendered expectations in urban centers (Martin, & Taylor, 2001).

THE GAP BETWEEN MEDIA PORTRAYALS AND REALITY

Urban migrants consume massive amounts of media content, particularly new media content, but there exists a large gap between representations of success in the media and migrants' lived experiences. Urban migrants simply work harder and starve longer than if you stay in a small country where life is simpler and easier (Lipton, 2005).

UNREALISTIC LIFESTYLES

The media often depicts luxury, wealth, and materialism as the ultimate goals of life. This effect is especially true for migrants from lower-status or rural backgrounds, who can come to internalize these representations and expect to attain a similar backlog once they make it to the city. But the reality for many migrants bears little resemblance to this wishful, idealized version. Underemployment, lack of affordable housing and poor living conditions oftentimes trap our youth in a cycle of frustration and disillusionment. These disconnect between the mythologizing in the media and reality makes us feel hopeless, like we have failed (Lee, 2004).

EXCLUSION FROM MAINSTREAM SUCCESS STORIES

Though a few migrants might manage to realize their dreams, most remain outside the aspiration millennium, apart from the enterprising success stories piled in the media. The truth is that many urban migrants are unemployed or have tenuous jobs in informal industries that do not yield the financial or cultural benefits that media portrayals might suggest. When the message prevalent in marquee media is that anyone who is diligent enough can succeed, the people that are left out of the success stories may feel isolated, but at the very least are left out of the be spoiling of success (Mincer, 2000).

MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

The difference between the media's portrayal of success and what is experienced on the run can threaten the health of migrants' minds. When migrants find that the promises of urban life are unachievable, as sold by the media, it can result in feelings of inadequacy, depression, and anxiety. Endless exposure to idealized success stories can exacerbate failure and disillusionment, especially when migrants are having trouble making ends meet in the city. Ultimately, emerging out of the countryside into the cities of South Asia is an existential struggle for so many, and the journey poses many psychological and cultural challenges for them. Expectations and perceptions of migrants as far as urban success is concerned are largely shaped and influenced by media. But the difference between this kind of portrayal in the media and the reality of life in the city is psychological distress, and more frustration, in which pathological behavior manifests as alienation. The expectation to live an idealized life; the milky way of media fantasies against the dark alleys of the everyday struggle; as North the media becomes a junks and we expand our dreams up, eventuality a new form of media literacies (Massey, 2003).

MEDIA'S ROLE IN REDEFINING SOCIAL NORMS

The conception that accessibility to mass media and digital media has some big impact on societies been across the world and its route till here has got lot of areas to be covered. Toward South Asia, a place where values and societal analogies have been the device of social behavior, the impact of media, particularly computerized media, has remained huge over the most recent couple of decades. With more people having access to the internet and social media platforms, traditional media outlets are no longer able to control the narrative anymore, resulting to a change in social norm formation and understanding (Montoya, 2003).

OVERVIEW OF HOW DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT INFLUENCES SOCIETAL VALUES

Digital space content, especially considered the platforms of Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and TikTok, contributes to rethinking the values of the society. These platforms enable individuals to post their feelings, dreams, and accomplishments, allowing people to engage in a virtual world where the truth is frequently embellished or conditionally filtered. The subliminal imprinting of these picture-perfect ways of living shape viewers notions of betterment, balmy and inclusion (Myers, 2004).

Entertainment, information, aspiration the internet and social media serve up a unique blend of all three, with the lines between fiction and reality frequently indistinct. For example, content about influencers, celebrities, and entrepreneurs that's spreadable, and highlights excessive lifestyles creates unattainable standards of living. These representations emphasize material wealth, physical appearance, and personal achievement, often omitting the adversity, struggles and compromises that are the daily reality for many people. As a consequence of such exposures, people, especially the new

generations, become accustomed to memorizing those values; that is, that a person becomes successful if he is rich, popular, and consumes a lot. The promotion of such values destroys conventional notions of community, family bonds, and the pursuit of the common good that were once common among many South Asian societies (Ip, & Tuffin, 2000).

IMPACT OF MEDIA ON YOUTH, FAMILY STRUCTURES, AND COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING

Psychoanalysis of Youth and Media Consumption the youth are particularly susceptible to the effects of digital media during the critical stages of life that shape their beliefs, values, and worldview. Research indicates that young people spend excessive time on social media platforms, frequently utilizing these platforms for inspiration, entertainment, and validation. Media plays a significant role for youth in terms of self image, ambitions and social behavior (Harris, & Todaro, 1999).

SELF-IMAGE AND SOCIAL COMPARISON

Young people tend to compare themselves to the celebrities and influencers they follow on social media, resulting in problems such as body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and anxiety. They measure success and happiness through the materialistic and outside world: looks, things, and status, not through internally growth, relationships, and your community (Todaro, 2007).

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND ASPIRATIONS

The media only offers a limited and often unattainable view of success, distorting how young people learn what is possible or desirable in life. Consequently, many city-dwelling young migrants may feel disappointment due to unmet expectations when they find out that the attractive lifestyles portrayed in the media do not correlate with their reality in terms of their struggles in life (Castles, & Miller, 2003).

FAMILY STRUCTURES

In South Asia, traditional family structures have been historically predicated on a communal living framework, characterized by a focus on familial duty, elder reverence, and a collectivist approach to decision-making. But media portrayal of individualism and personal achievement has changed these dynamics (Castles, & Miller, 2003).

SHIFTING ROLES WITHIN THE FAMILY

Societal dependence on the media is growing stronger with time, causing more recent generations in society to value individual esteem over family attachment. For instance, urban youth are seeking careers and lifestyles that may diverge from the family unit or force them to make decisions that may clash with family expectations. The clash between older generations, who hold on to the values of the past, like the patriarchal structure of society, and younger family members, who are more exposed to the influence of leaked media, often leads to conflict.

REDEFINITION OF GENDER ROLES

Development agencies has also exploited media to break traditional gender roles as seen in some urban areas(Misal) where the exposure to media has led women to know more of their rights (feminist). This is where the role of women empowerment comes into action; as it represents functionalist aspects of reinforcing women's rights. And seeing strong, independent women in the media (however they are often depicted, whether successful entrepreneurs, professionals or celebrities) is often inspirational girls breaking away from societal norms of marriage, parenting, homemaker. Although the change can be liberating, it can also create tensions among families still governed by traditional gender norms (Castles, & Miller, 2003).

COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING

The impact of media on the collective well-being is even more subtle, but certainly more significant. Traditionally, South Asian societies have placed great value on collective wellbeing, including social harmony, ties with seniors, and strong communal bonds. On the other hand, media's emphasis on individualism and self-interest has weakened these collective values (Clark, & Hunter, 1998).

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Digital independence — particularly in cities — has emphasized the importance of personal success over the success of the community. The mark of this change is most clear in the way we interact with others — digital platforms reward individual accomplishment, while collective contributions, or community-building endeavors, are rarely actually honored. In social media, the culture of "likes" and "followers" rewards self-promotion and personal branding over collaboration or shared community goals (Clark, & Hunter, 1998).

CONSUMERISM VS. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In a climate of individualistic consumerism and cargo cult success, the environment, social justice and our shared future become less important. This is particularly evident in urban centers where the need for money often outweighs any wider question of society.

DRAMATIZED PORTRAYALS OF SUCCESS AND MATERIALISM

Digital media, in particular social media channels, often exaggerate success and affluence to the point that it skews the public interpretation of what success actually involves. Negative and negative advertisements are filled with the impression that wealth, luxury, and personal achievement are the only things that matter in life and the practice for millions to believe that happiness and fulfillment is in material accumulation (Clark, & Hunter, 1998).

ESCAPIST NARRATIVES

There are always "rags-to-riches" stories on the media, where someone starts from nothing then becomes wildly wealthy and famous. These fictionalized narratives purport to show that anyone can achieve a dream, if they try hard enough or get in line. Although this can be very motivational for some, it often disregards the systemic barriers, privilege and other complexities involved in success. So, a narrative forms where the individual must feel that they are the failure who is unable to achieve such greatness, as opposed to acknowledging external factors and societal limitations (Faini, 2007).

MATERIALISM AND SOCIAL COMPARISON

A materialistic culture is promoted by the relentless focus on material success — expensive cars, designer clothes, exotic vacations, fancy offices, luxury homes — in the media. Adding to the pressure on urban migrants to compare their own realities with highly curated online content by fellow youth. And the comparisons we make can lead us to feeling inadequate and unsatisfied, not to mention the false sense of entitlement to success we think we deserve, only to be pulled up short by these misogynistic social standards (Faini, 2007).

THE SHIFT FROM TRADITIONAL TO MODERN SOCIAL NORMS

One context that offers particularly clear examples of the role of media in shifting social norms is the evolution from traditional to modern values. With the rise of such individualistic ideals through digital media, in South Asia — a part of the world with a firm grip on collectivism, family values and social cohesion — the changing of the social fabric is unprecedented (Harris, & Todaro, 1999).

TRADITIONAL NORMS

Previously, South Asian communities attached great value to family, community, and social obligations. There were clear expectations about marriage, family arrangements and social obligations. These concepts, of respect for elders, of communal living, and of the collective welfare of society at large, were vital to social cohesion (Faini, 2007).

MODERN NORMS

The... free media has fostered a turn toward newer, more individualistic values. Success has become, now more than ever, a solitary experience; in contrast to communal assistance or intergenerational alignment. Although this change can provide additional individual freedom and opportunity, it can also signify the indulgence of self over communal accountability, and foster fears that vital Chinese cultural values of solidarity and the greater good lose relevance (Glick, & Sahn, 2007).

BALANCING TRADITION AND MODERNITY

As digital media became more popular, a debate ensued between new-age, self-oriented values versus traditional social ones. The question that South Asian societies face is how to reconcile the individual empowerment, autonomy, and self-expression of modernity with the family, community, and social responsibility that underscore their cultural identity. In other words digital media are helping South Asia to reconstruct society's values and social norms. It is responsible for the emergence of individualism, materialism, and unrealistic images of success that are affecting our youth, families, and society as a whole. Media potential allows one to develop personal growth and social change, but it also tests the old values and leads to fragmentation of social norms (Houghton, & Goodwin, 2003).

THE ABSENCE OF A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

We have inherited many of these issues in South Asia, where a robust, effective and nuanced regulatory frameworks is absent, especially in terms of how media content influences societal values and norms. Digital media platforms have outstripped traditional regulatory measures, creating a gap in which media content is often distributed unchecked as various platforms blossom. The end result is ubiquitous access to unregulated, sensationalized and at times damaging content that influences those watching in a way that can pervert values, appropriate social roles and how to navigate one's

life vis-a-vis the rest of society. In various South Asian nations, the growth of the internet and social media has outpaced the growth of the legislative and regulatory framework of digital media. While traditional media like television and print have been regulated by government agencies, digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are mostly subject to lax or vague frameworks. And this has been dangerous automation, particularly when it comes to the sort of content that targets vulnerable groups, like children, adolescents and those in marginal or rural communities (Houghton, & Goodwin, 2003).

To add more spice in this whole thing, just to make them salter, mind you, there are no Ethics or Society Laws in Digital Media that govern these types of contents. This enables access to material that can promote poor lifestyles, impossible godly standards, and materialistically inclined content. This kind of content is all digitized and not regulated, therefore offering no safeguards for the erosion of traditional societal values, which is rather important for keeping a society functioning properly (Jackson, & Moreland, 2004).

LACK OF GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS ON DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT
Government regulation in South Asia has often lagged behind the distinctive challenges posed by digital media. Digital platforms, in contrast, are received with little regulation — traditional forms of media have at least sometimes been subject to regulatory control. Belly aching in to the steps and body structure of this digital scene that operates out of the limits of the traditional broadcast style laws and laws (Jackson, & Moreland, 2004).

LACK OF ETHICAL STANDARDS
While traditional media outlets are required to follow specific editorial guidelines and abide by professional ethics, digital media content is not controlled by any random government or private sector agency. With little oversight, there is no accountability for content that may glorify dangerous behavior or disseminate misinformation. Sensationalized, false or misleading content can get widespread visibility without any regulatory repercussions (Kahl, 2002).

INADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS
The lack of regulation can have far reaching consequences but one of the most important is that children and youth are put at risk. Media made for children on online platforms doesn't face the same scrutiny as children's programming on television. Consequently, children have to endure unsuitable materials, content that inures them to consumerism, through unrealistic body image standards and damaging behaviors. Besides, the nonexistence of content rating systems or age-appropriate guidelines only aggravates this dilemma (Kahl, 2002).

LIMITED CONTROL OVER ADVERTISEMENTS
With the advent of social media influencers and digital marketing, advertisements became a common and inseparable part of our online experience. Instead, with scant regulation in these areas, more often than not, digital advertisements target individuals, including children, without sufficient checks and balances. Viewing ads promoting materialism, luxury items, and unrealistic standards of living, ads are often watched by the same young viewers over and over — which can lead to a warped perception of life (Kahl, 2002).

CONSEQUENCES OF UNREGULATED MEDIA, PARTICULARLY IN CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING AND VALUE-BASED CONTENT
The absence of regulatory safeguards in digital media has serious implications to consider, particularly in children's programming and value-based content. Many digital media platforms seek engagement over content quality, which results in the production and promotion of sensationalized content focused on attracting clicks and views rather than facilitating substantive learning and positive social values (Massey, 2003).

EXPOSURE TO HARMFUL CONTENT
In fact, exposure to unregulated digital media among children can result in various psychological and behavioral problems. Over materialism, violence, and other inappropriate behaviors are also often offered to children. Social media, in particular, is a haven for unrealistic imagery, unhealthy eating practices, and extreme lifestyles (Massey, 2003).

DISTORTION OF SOCIAL VALUES
But in contrast to the way South Asians view success — through hard work, family, community and social responsibility — the messaging in digital media is often focused on material wealth, individualism and physical appearance. When children and teenagers consume societal values that they cannot always process, they may start to absorb some of the warped values of the content they consume, eventually harming themselves in terms of body image, picoversality and identity. Children growing up under these conditions will emerge to become a generation which may favor personal interests, pandemic or not, as they care less about the greater good (Martin, & Taylor, 2001).

PROMOTION OF UNREALISTIC LIFESTYLE

The other aftereffect you have upon unregulated media content is the propagation of informal ways of living. Many content creators will have over the top lifestyles full of extravagant wealth and success. Such representations can engender unrealistic expectations among children and teenagers, making them think such lifestyles come with ease. Unfortunately, most individuals will never achieve the material wealth and success presented in media content and ends up feeling inadequate and frustrated (Lipton, 2005).

THE ROLE OF SENSATIONALISM IN SHAPING PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND SOCIETAL VALUES

When digital media shapes the public's perception and society's values, sensationalism, even in abstract concepts, is a big part of those values. Such sensationalized media contents are meant to draw attention as well to elicit such strong emotional reactions, by exaggerating and distorting facts. Social media is filled with this type of content, and algorithms favor eye-catching, high-engagement content (Montoya, 2003).

MANIPULATION OF EMOTIONS

The sensationalized content most likely to be clicked on manipulates emotions — fear, anger, excitement — to be maximized for engagement. This manipulation Is just another aspect of the twisted perception of reality, issues are oversimplified, and issues are boiled down to overdramatic sound bites. However, these media are often filtered and simplified, which can lead to misunderstandings and represent the issues as something they are not, as in the case of sensationalized news and viral videos influencing the public opinion on social issues (Myers, 2004).

EROSION OF CRITICAL THINKING

The decline of meaningful, enlightening media only further contributes to the people being unable to think critically about the information they are consuming. Less colourful storytelling works in favour of those individuals who are more likely to challenge the veracity of what they read. At the same time, the inability to think critically leads to stronger waves of misinformation and less informed public debates (Todaro, 2007).

Sensationalism can also serve to normalize extreme or unethical behavior. Repeated messages that condone aggression, violence, or unethical success can lead viewers — especially young ones — to perceive this behavior as normal when carried out by the media platforms that provide their information. It can result in a change in social geists, where dominion over other people and unjust profit is a measure of success (Mincer, 2000).

VULNERABILITY OF RURAL AND UNDERPRIVILEGED COMMUNITIES TO DISTORTED MEDIA PORTRAYALS

Especially in rural and disadvantaged communities, we are all devastated by the false narratives served up by unfettered digital media. Members of these communities often have barriers to access educational, health and employment opportunities, and they are also presented with media that does not accurately represent their realities (Clark, & Hunter, 1998).

LIMITED ACCESS TO MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

In fact, many in rural areas or lower socio-economic groups do not have the media literacy they need to approach content on digital with a critical eye. These individuals, lacking the skills to differentiate between what is real and what is dramatization, are more prone to internalizing unrealistic representations of success and social roles. This can create cycles of frustration and disillusion as we chase after mirages (Castles, & Miller, 2003).

INCREASED EXPOSURE TO UNETHICAL ADVERTISING

There is currently no control over advertisements on digital platforms, and those ads specifically target underprivileged communities and promise, through the purchase of a certain product or service, an easy path to financial success or improved quality of life. People in rural and marginalized groups may be more vulnerable to these messages, which can worsen consumer debt, poor financial management, and unrealistic expectations (Castles, & Miller, 2003).

CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT

The idealization of city life (even those in rural areas) encourages cultural displacement. Despite traditional systems of community support, many rural members migrate to urban centers in search of jobs and better living conditions, only to become entranced by the popular media regarding success, which may eventually lead them to leave traditional values behind for a more materialistic, individualistic outlook. It is this shift that can chip away at the social cohesion and communal bonds that lie at the heart of life in rural parts. Children, youth, and marginalized groups in such society are,

therefore, highly exposed to risks of all sorts in the space that is virtually uncontrolled, and its implications are deep-rooted in South Asia given the weak regulatory framework for digital media. This is in part due to the lack of regulation on digital content, and as a result, a sensationalized and distorted portrayal of success has crept into the mainstream and chipped away at traditional values in society. When rural and underprivileged communities get exposed to these unrealistic portrayals, they become more vulnerable to force themselves to conform to the deviant societal norms. Regulatory frameworks that set these higher ethical standards, protect vulnerable members of society, promote digital media that is sensitive to the cultural values and the social realities of South Asia, and are supported by the government is urgent to mitigate these effects (Castles, & Miller, 2003).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
The role of digital media should be transformative in building values, but we need to have a digital media policy, which national perspectives must reflect. Such a policy, should, however, govern media and enhance digital ethics, while protecting the most vulnerable whilst ensuring that we consume digital content reflecting the ideals and aspirations of society today, yet coming from a milieu of traditional values. Faced with the challenges posed by unregulated media content, especially its influence on cultural norms, social behaviors, and vulnerable communities, this section presents a set of policy recommendations that could help mitigate these harms and leverage the benefits of digital media.

THE NEED FOR A GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED DIGITAL MEDIA POLICY
This part also concerns the lapse of state policy in effectively dealing with fast developing digital media, especially in developing countries. Even though the digital media continues to have a major effect on society, there are no used regulatory systems to maintain or track the contents on web based systems.

Worried about vulnerable groups' use: Children, youth, women, disabled people. In the absence of clear guidelines or constructive, values-based alternatives, young people are often subjected to content that is inappropriate, misleading or culturally irrelevant. Such representations often clash with local values and their ethics provide little in the way of positive models.

Moreover, the portrayal and representation of gender, ability, and identity are distorted by the media due to underrepresentation and misrepresentation of marginalized groups. Parents, especially low-income parents, face an uphill challenge navigating this media bombardment, either from not knowing the extent of the exposure or simply being too busy trying to stay above water economically.

The Bottom Lineultimately this section highlights a key point there is a widening gap between technological realities and governmental responsibility. Given without timely interventions, this disconnect could result in lasting systemic consequences as generational consequences, cultural degeneration, rising isolation, social fragmentation.

REGULATION AND OVERSIGHT
Digital media has grown at an unmatched pace compared to the evolution of regulatory structures. A nuanced approach towards this issue requires South Asian governments to acknowledge the fact that a digital media policy is needed that takes into account the challenges of the internet, social media and streaming platforms. We will support a policy that will ensure digital media is governed by an ethical content policy that protects the public from harmful, misleading and sensational media. Such policy must regulate how content is created, distributed and consumed, but also provide a basis to enforce these regulations.

COOPERATION WITH INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS
Successful regulatory frameworks will need to react in concert with government, content creators, digital platforms, and civil society organizations. Each of these stakeholders plays a role to ensure that the policy to which freedom of expression must obviously comply is effective and fair, balancing the right to freedom of expression with the responsibility of protecting societal values. The government should instead partner with the tech industry and work on joint standards and practices to encourage ethically produced media and limit the spread of harmful content.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND LOCAL ADAPTATION
Governments must leverage international practices and regulations, but tailor them to the local context of their countries. This can include maintaining rights of digital users alongside citizens' rights to values in line with the historical customs and moral life.

GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL MEDIA PRODUCTION AND CONTENT REGULATION
PROMOTE POSITIVE CONTENT

The other main recommendation of the report reflects a high concern about digital media involved consumers like human. Such a policy should promote content that reinforces social norms like respect for diversity, family cohesiveness, and healthy communities and morals. Narrative promoting subjects that uplift versus sensationalize, responsible narrative that does not promote materialism, violence, or negative stereotypes.

CONTENT RATING SYSTEMS

Every digital platform should have a content rating system. This would be a rating system that would categorize content in terms of how appropriate it is for each age group and its cultural context. This would be especially valuable in shielding children and adolescents from exposure to inappropriate content. Such a system will need to be constantly updated as norms and technology evolves. Content creators and platforms must also be accountable for being more obvious about the material they register, to limit confusion, particularly in scenarios involving violence, explicit content or unrealistic portrayals of success.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MISINFORMATION AND HARMFUL CONTENT

The flow of misinformation and other harmful content is one of the major downsides of unregulated digital media. Governments must create legal systems that will hold digital platforms responsible for the materials they spread. This covers everything from fake news and hate speech to content that promotes dangerous behaviours like substance abuse, eating disorders and violence. It's fair to make the platforms act to eliminate such material as soon as it's spotted, and to penalize companies that fail to comply.

IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE MEDIA THAT REFLECTS TRADITIONAL VALUES
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN CONTENT CREATION

Digital content must portray the cultural diversity, traditions and values of South Asian communities. Creators must be incentivized to create content that honors and maintains local culture, practices, and beliefs. This includes creating positive representations of family life, community respect and moral perceptions, respect for elders and religious diversity. Amidst the super-fast pace of modern media, new technologies, and consequent trends, it's important to remember that the media need to be a stable point in time and that they need to protect cultural traditions so they aren't entirely overshadowed by globalization and westernization.

CELEBRATING LOCAL HERITAGE AND TRADITIONS

By promoting local heritage, languages, and traditions, precede media platforms that can serve a vital role in the process of building national identity and pride. Digital media can thus encourage the strengthening of individuals to their surroundings by producing content showcasing local traditions, historic personalities, and local socio-civic contributions. It can also be a counterbalance against foreign content that may lead to misguided values.

SUPPORTING LOCAL CONTENT CREATORS

Governments must provide positive encouragement and assistance to local content creators who create media that correspond with national values and cultural interest. This might be done through grants and tax breaks or public recognition programs. We can also encourage local creators to create original content that is grounded in their own cultures, diversify the media landscape, and produce relatable, culturally relevant content for South Asian viewers.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS: CHILDREN, YOUTH, WOMEN, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, AND THE ELDERLY
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

The media can be damaging to children and young people particularly as they are still forming an understanding of their role in society, who they are, and what is important to them. There is a need for stronger safeguards that limit children's exposure to poisonous content, from advertising that encourages unhealthy habits to images that promote impossible body standards. Governments should also partner with tech companies to make certain that platforms have strong parental controls and content filters — which enable parents to oversee and restrict what their kids see online.

GENDER SENSITIVITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Do not allow media content that perpetuates stereotypes about women. This means depicting women in a variety of roles—in addition to outdated depictions as homemakers or sidekicks, as any of the following: leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs, activists. Also, must include content that addresses issues women face like: gender based violence and discrimination along with providing solutions and creating awareness.

INCLUSIVE MEDIA FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Media content must be accessible to persons with disabilities, and should include diverse representations of persons with disabilities, recognizing their rights and potential as contributing members of society with dignity. This may even extend to creating a fully-accessible media experience — providing content in formats such as sign language, subtitles, and audio descriptions that make it possible for those with hearing, visual, or other impairments to experience the same media content. Governments should also promote the production of content that portrays the realities and hardships experienced by persons with disabilities between them, fostering inclusivity and decreasing stigma.

CARING FOR THE ELDERLY

Mainstream media tends to focus on younger generations, and as a result cover older adults less. Yet the older population is a significant part of South Asian societies. Such media policies should contain provisions for inclusion and representation of the elderly within media content, including their wisdom, contributions and multiple life experiences. Also, informative content on key issues faced by older adults such as health care, financial security, and social isolation should be promoted to raise awareness and encourage support for this population.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN NATION-BUILDING AND CIVIC AWARENESS
FOSTERING NATIONAL UNITY

Media is one of the major factors that helps in constructing national identity and integration. A regulated media environment can help reinforce values like respect for diversity, which can help foster collective responsibility and social cohesion. Media also can play an important role in encouraging a national consciousness through placing the nation's accomplishments, common past and artistic wealth in the context that one develops a sense of belonging and pride in oneself.

CIVIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Education of the public about civic rights and responsibilities is very important, and media plays the crucial role. This can be something like a government promoting content that deals with important issues facing society – governance, environmental protection, public health, human rights. The media can be a powerful force for informed citizenship, public participation, and the pursuit of change, but it is also possible to do the opposite and to completely misinform citizens and cut them out from social conflicts.

PROMOTING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Media must be a medium to promote sense of social responsibility and positive social initiative. Media can highlight stories of individuals or groups who serve their communities, address problems, or advocate for social justice, inspiring others to follow suit. It helps promote a civic culture and the concept of "public-good" which are pre-requisites to a growing, evolving, and more developed country. Such a policy supported by the government should be prioritised in South Asia to ensure that the content as per both modern aspirations and traditional norms. This can be achieved through developing ethical media production practices, introducing regulations for content moderation, and ensuring inclusivity for vulnerable groups. Media can also be a vital tool for nation-building; civic consciousness and values that hold any society together can be reinforced through it.

CONCLUSION

Now more than ever it is so crucial to understand the power digital media has to shape social codes, cultural identities and narratives in South Asia. While these digital platforms show promise and have implications for society, they also present a complex and nuanced field of study due to the prevalence and the domination of society today. Researchers in the group have demonstrated the history of this phenomenon among urban migrants, youth, families and vulnerable social groups working in the field for new media such as film and radio, leading to a greater understanding of presentation formats and social experiences of changing cultural values, gender roles and identity. As if the fictitious representations of success, consumerism, and social customs have already entered their lives, destroying their indigenous beliefs, and they have become a victim of psychological displacement and societal atrocities.

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