

Ashoka University

PSYCH!

Loafers, Thinkers, and Overthinkers:
A Semester in Reflection





WELCOME TO OUR
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

PSYCH!

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About Us

Welcome! As a part of the Psychology Society of Ashoka University, we are thrilled to bring to you our newsletter. Fueled by our passion for psychology, we aim to create a space to share knowledge and foster collaboration in our community. As we delve into the human mind and behavior, we are thrilled to bring you a diverse range of insights, research findings, and practical tips that we hope will enrich your understanding of the fascinating world of psychology. Whether you are an aspiring Psychology Major or simply someone with a passion for the understanding of the human mind, this newsletter is for you! Happy Reading!

Disappointed in Your Group Mates? Welcome to Social Loafing

Reviewed By- Srishti Ladha

Written By- Mohadisa Rizvi



Have you ever wondered why people slack off during group projects? In psychology, social loafing is a concept that explains this behavior. It is the phenomenon that describes how people exert less effort working in groups than they would if working alone (Harkins et al., 1980).

Social loafing was first introduced by a French professor, Max Ringelmann, during a rope-pulling experiment. Ringelmann was interested in maximizing the productivity of agricultural workers, so he measured their individual strengths and compared them to the total productivity of the group when they pulled the rope together. Much to his disappointment, he discovered that individuals exert less force when pulling the rope in a group than when pulling alone. He also observed that as the number of individuals in the group increased, the effort exerted by each person decreased (Fu, 2021).

You may have observed the same effect of social loafing playing out in different situations of our day-to-day lives. You might have likely noticed it in group activities or projects—people often don't put in the effort they would if working alone. This phenomenon extends far beyond academics or college. It can be seen everywhere, from team sports, where some players don't play their best, to voting, where people abstain, assuming others will vote. At this point, you might even recognize this tendency in yourself—slacking off in group settings because you believe others will handle the work or that your individual effort doesn't matter. But why do we fall prey to social loafing?

The main cause of performance losses is process losses, which include both coordination loss and motivation loss. Coordination loss refers to the lack of synchronization among group members. Motivation loss occurs when individuals lose the drive to work, often because they don't want to carry the burden for the entire group (Mueller, 2012). These factors may explain why your group members sometimes fail to work to the best of their abilities—perhaps due to poor coordination within the team or diminished motivation among its members.

Another concept that explains social loafing, especially in larger groups, is the diffusion of responsibility. When more people are involved, each individual feels less accountable for the group's output. Therefore, individual responsibilities become “lost in the crowd” (Liu et al., 2022).

Now that we understand what social loafing is and the mechanisms behind it, let's explore some strategies to minimize its impact:

- Set clear roles and expectations: To minimize coordination loss and ensure accountability, start by having a serious conversation with your group. Decide on responsibilities for each member and assign specific tasks to avoid conflicts from the outset.
- Keep groups small (if possible): Smaller groups make it harder for individuals to “get lost in the crowd” and avoid contributing. They also make task division and accountability easier.
- Foster a sense of belonging: Creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose within the group increases motivation and collaboration, making everyone more likely to put in their best effort.
- By understanding social loafing and implementing these strategies, you can make group work more productive and enjoyable for everyone. And next time you feel frustrated with your group mates, remember—social loafing is a common human tendency, but it’s something we can actively work to overcome.



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- Mueller, J. S. (2012). Why individuals in larger teams perform worse. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 117(1), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2011.08.004>

Existentialism and the Psychology of Human Freedom

Reviewed By- Ananya Dubey

Written By- Myrah Sahni

When I think of existentialism, I envision Jean-Paul Sartre sitting in a Parisian café, contemplating human nature and our struggle to define meaning in a seemingly indifferent world. My first introduction to this philosophy was through Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, in which the protagonist states, "I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world." These words struck me—not as a declaration of despair, but as an acceptance of reality.

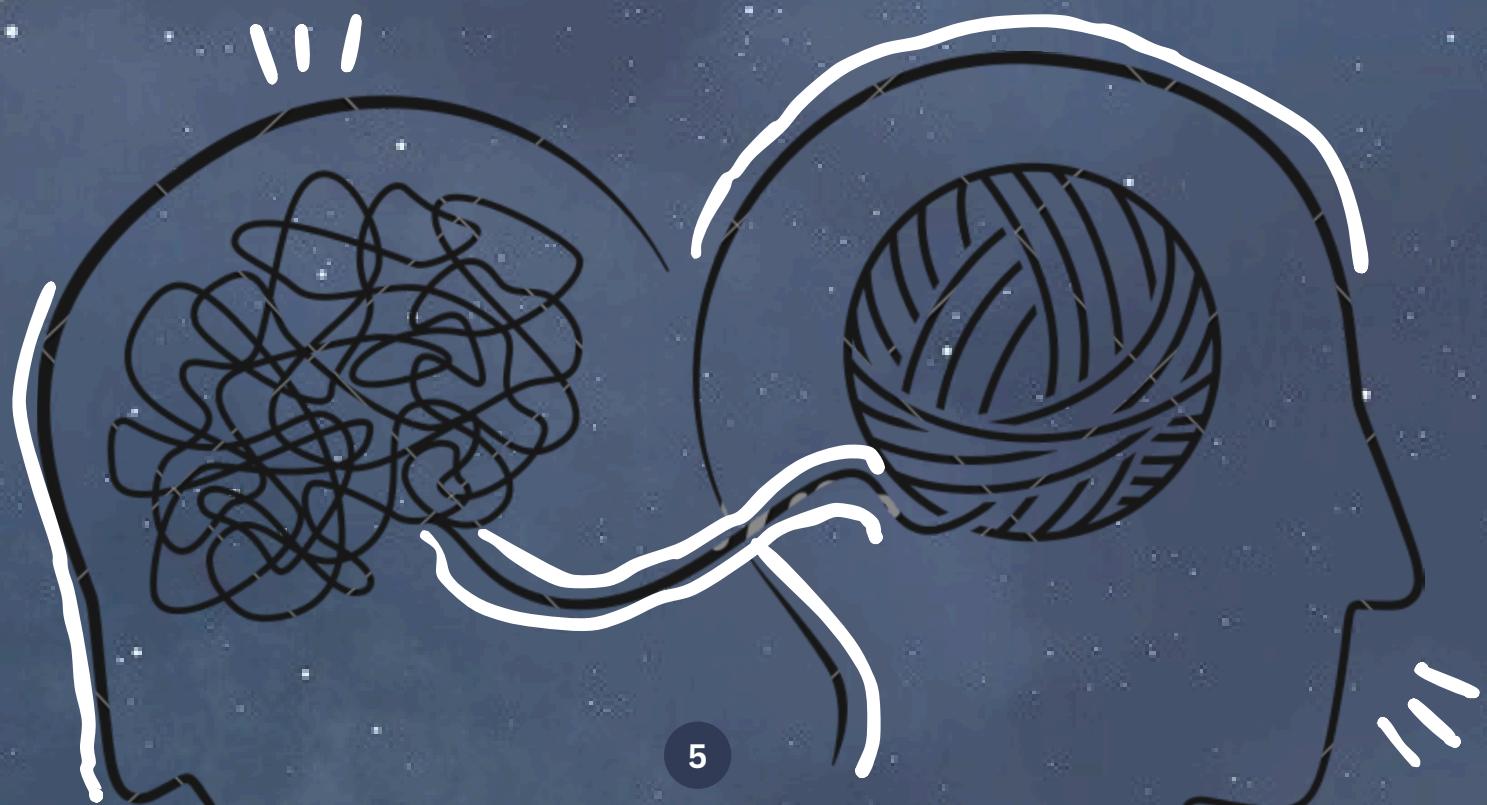
As I explored existentialism further, I encountered thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. However, Sartre's radical perspective stood out the most. His assertion that humans are "condemned to be free" presents a psychological paradox: while freedom is generally seen as liberating, it also imposes an immense responsibility on the individual. In a psychological context, this concept aligns with cognitive dissonance—the mental discomfort we experience when our thoughts/beliefs do not align with our actions. Sartre's philosophy forces us to acknowledge that we alone are responsible for constructing our identity, much like an artist shaping a blank canvas.

One of the most common misconceptions about existentialism is that it equates to meaninglessness and despair. However, Existentialism, at its core, encourages individuals to take ownership of their decisions and values rather than passively conforming to societal norms. This perspective closely aligns with self-determination theory, which emphasizes the intrinsic motivation that comes from exercising autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Thus, from a psychological standpoint, existentialism can be understood as a framework for personal agency and resilience. Psychological research suggests that a strong sense of autonomy enhances well-being and motivation.

However, Sartre also acknowledges the social dimension of existence. His concept of Being-for-Others highlights the psychological tension between personal freedom and external judgment. This is similar to the social psychological theory of the "Looking-Glass Self," which suggests that individuals shape their identity based on how they believe others perceive them. Sartre's notion of The Look describes the feeling of being objectified by another's gaze, a phenomenon that can be observed in the pressure to conform. This raises a critical psychological question: To what extent does external validation shape our self-concept, and how can we balance authenticity with social belonging?

A major challenge within existentialist thought is morality. If humans define their own values, how do we establish ethical behavior? Sartre argues that, in the absence of a divine moral framework, individuals must take full responsibility for their ethical choices. This aligns with moral development theories, such as Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning, which suggest that individuals progress from externally imposed rules to internalized ethical principles. Sartre's concept of bad faith—self-deception to escape responsibility—can also be analyzed through the lens of cognitive psychology. Defense mechanisms like rationalization and denial allow individuals to avoid the discomfort of choice, leading to inauthentic living.

At first glance, existentialism may seem overwhelming, even anxiety-inducing. However, psychologists often argue that embracing uncertainty fosters psychological growth. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, integrated existentialist principles into logotherapy, a therapeutic approach that helps individuals find meaning in suffering. His work demonstrates that even in extreme adversity, people can create purpose, reinforcing the idea that existentialism is not a burden but a tool for resilience. Sartre's philosophy challenges us to move beyond passive existence and actively construct our identity. While existentialist thought can be unsettling, it ultimately offers psychological empowerment. Rather than being weighed down by the responsibility of choice, we can view it as an opportunity for self-definition. In the end, existentialism is not about despair—it is about the freedom to become who we choose to be.



The Manifestation Pandemic: The Role of the Personal Over the Scientific

Reviewed By- Anoushka Malik

Written By - Gurnoor Kaur

An inherent lack of appropriate knowledge is what led people during the ancient civilizations like the Harappan or Indus Valley Civilization to believe in the forms of worship attributed to the unexplained, and un-identified natural phenomenon that they witnessed. Their beliefs then could not have been ascribed as pseudoscience simply because the foundations for what actually constitutes scientific knowledge for them were nebulous, and far from reach.

In modern times, though, the concept of pseudoscience has clutched on persistently to a group within high society that sways from niche to even commonplace. The luxury of this kind of belief limits itself to the higher, more privileged classes simply because it's a shameful tactic to try to explain to a beggar how manifestation could work to help them achieve their dreams when they lack even a menial shelter or food for a single meal.

Pseudoscience, conceptually, is everything that people claim to base on experience with cognitively favourable, or tangibly provable results for the technique in question. It is differentiated from an actual science owing to the failure to accurately measure empirical parameters, or experiment with the form of said pseudoscience to prove a logical foundation of its methods. Reliability i.e. the consistency of results from a phenomenon, and validity i.e. the accuracy of its results, are some of the most baseline parameters to be met in proving a hypothesis are often failed to achieve with these 'scientifically proven' methods of manifestation.

"Misinformation often misleads the public to make decisions, causes them to form corresponding actions, and generates emotional and psychological fluctuations" (Luo et al., 2021). Internet forums and social media platforms, especially so in the last few decades, have noted a sharp rise in success stories owing all of it to their manifestation practices and vision boards. It is interesting to observe that the more space there is for expression, and access to all kinds of expressions, the further the issue of misinformation gets exacerbated.

Media representations- often anecdotal or based on subjective experiences, seem to reach and connect with the consumer more than evidence-based research might. This idea also ties back to the fact that during emotionally vulnerable times, people tend to rely more on personal ideas or advice that resonates with them or claims to provide certain answers over scientific knowledge that is limited in its scope and surpasses the certainty that they seek, often suspending personal beliefs and faith in ambiguous territory. "The persuasive power of anecdotal evidence often stems from its emotional resonance and relatability, which can make it seem more compelling to individuals, despite its lack of scientific rigour or broader applicability." (Editor, 2023).

In conclusion, ideas behind practices like that of manifestation tend to provide a false sense of community based on the selective cases where it works and provides an escape from hopelessness in the form of a quick resolve that pulls all its weight from the institution of the human condition that hinges on trial and error and is bound to be in favour few of those times. Emotionality as a tool for commodification and perpetuation of capitalistic practices is nothing new, but by the time that epiphany dawns on the target of these practices, it slides its way into the consumer's life in some other form, leaving them oblivious. Besides the political and socio-economic bases for the propagation and popularization of practices such as that of manifestation, every other person, in an attempt to stand out, wants to believe in an occasional miracle, anyway.



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Luo, H., Cai, M., & Cui, Y. (2021). Spread of Misinformation in Social Networks: Analysis Based on Weibo Tweets. *Security and Communication Networks*, 2021(7999760).
<https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/7999760>

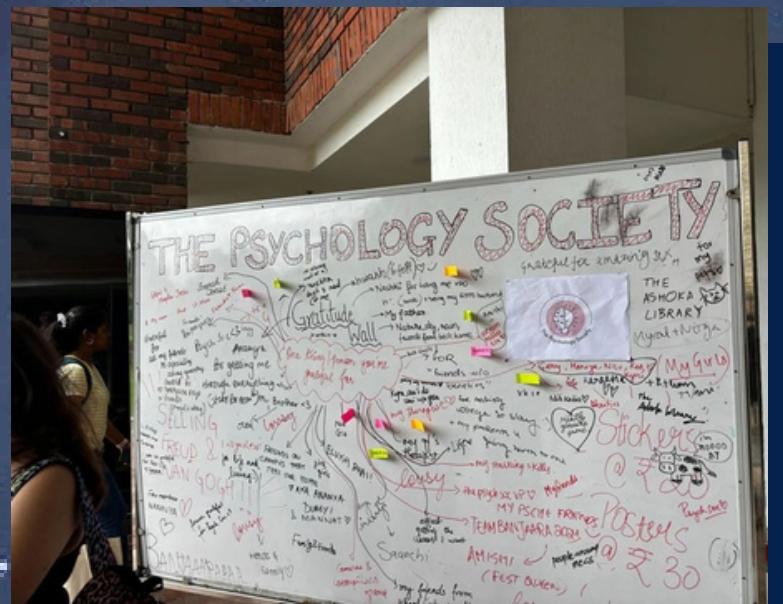
KEEP UP WITH PSYCHSOC

EVENTS !



1. Gratitude Wall

To promote a sense of gratitude, the PSA set up a 'Gratitude Wall' where the student-body could write down things they are grateful for. We also sold stickers and posters designed by the Events department.



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2. Be 'KIND' marketing event



In collaboration with the marketing department, we set up a banner where the student body could pose as the 'I' in the word 'KIND'. This was later posted on our social media pages.



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3. Psych Out 3.0 (with Prof. Dipanjan Ray)



We conducted the 3rd edition of our flagship event with Prof. Dipanjan Ray where we asked him questions about life as a Prof. at Ashoka, his hobbies and interests as well as his journey as a Physician. Moreover, we announced the release of our merchandise at the end of the event.



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MARKETING !

- The Marketing department raised awareness on important days (World Suicide Prevention Day, World Alzheimer's Day, etc.)
- Created engaging content with the student body (teaching them sign language, asking about their sleep schedule during exam season)
- Showcased the entire team, highlighting PSA core and members through posts.
- Promoted the upcoming fest with a trailer and other promotional content



The Psychology Society of Ashoka
Higher Education
Sonipat, Haryana · 370 followers
The official psychology-oriented academic society of Ashoka University.

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About us

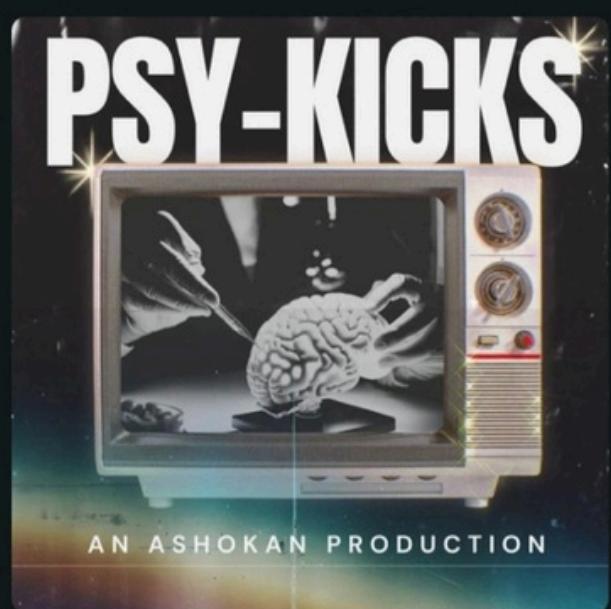
We are the official academic society for Psychology at Ashoka University. As of now, we have four departments for Ashoka University students to participate through, in our society, namely:

1. Content, Research and Ideation
2. Helpdesk (only for rising 3rd years and 4th years)
3. Events

- Increased visibility for the PSA newsletter and podcast
- Started a review series covering movies, books, and more
- LinkedIn was started up and we've had posts go out covering our year so far, a new years mood board and a few more ideas on the way

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PODCAST !



Psy-Kicks episode 1: Psychology at Ashoka

- Conducted research, scripting, and recording for a Halloween-themed episode.
- Explored paranormal activity, witch trials, schizophrenia, and out-of-body experiences

Episode 2: Mind Over Monsters:

- Conducted research, scripting, and recording for a Halloween-themed episode.
- Explored paranormal activity, witch trials, schizophrenia, and out-of-body experiences



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Episode 3: Interview Episode with Dr. Baxi

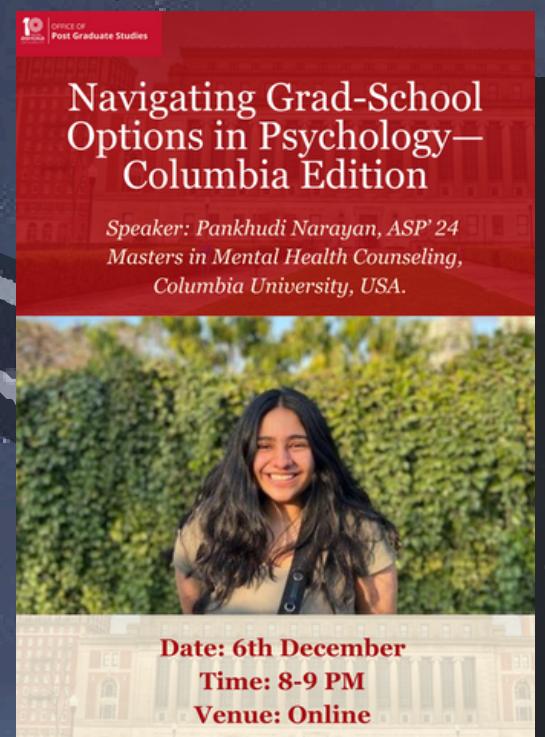
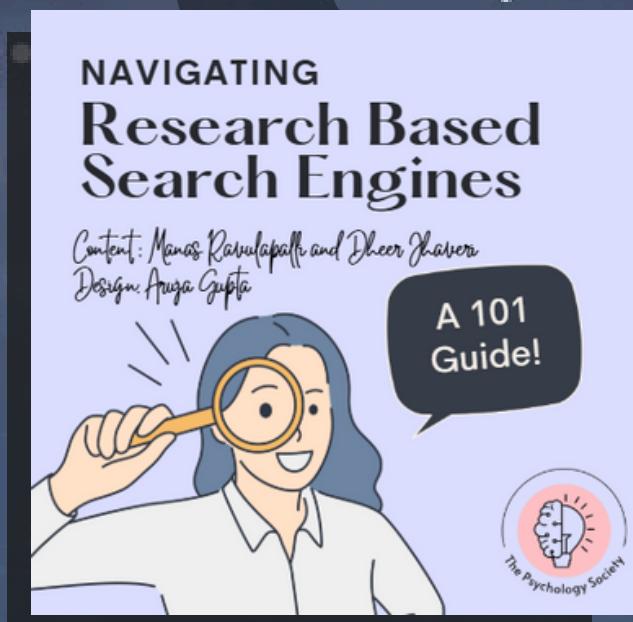
- Recorded and edited an insightful discussion with Dr. Annie Baxi.
- Delved into her research on women's mental health, normalcy, and madness.



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RESEARCH !

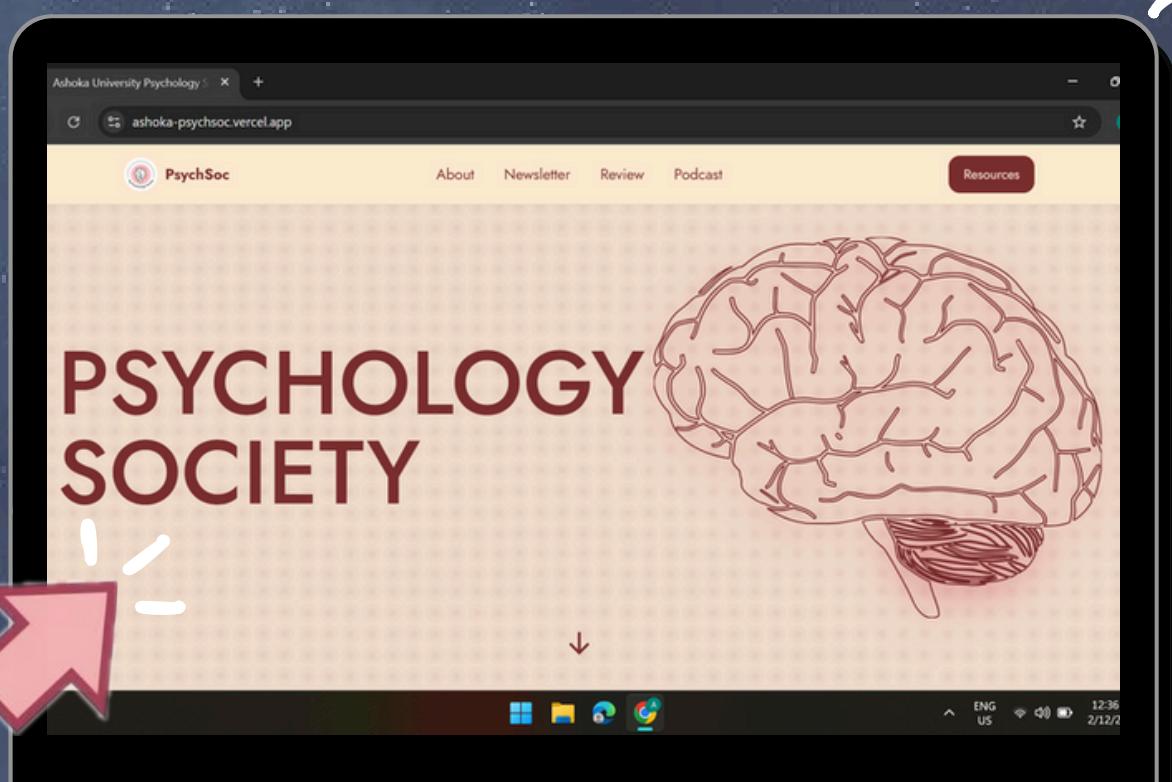
- The Research department hosted 2 Postgrad 101 Sessions in collaboration with the Office of Postgraduate Studies. Session 1 with Ruti Bhattacharya (LSE) and session 2 with Pankhudi Narayan (Columbia)
- Initiation and training of new members into Psychology Society Research Department including brainstorming and ideation sessions



- Curated content for 3 new Research Guides currently being designed by the Review Department
- Collated a repository of professionals in different areas of psychology both for fest and other purposes. Similar work initiated for an alumni database

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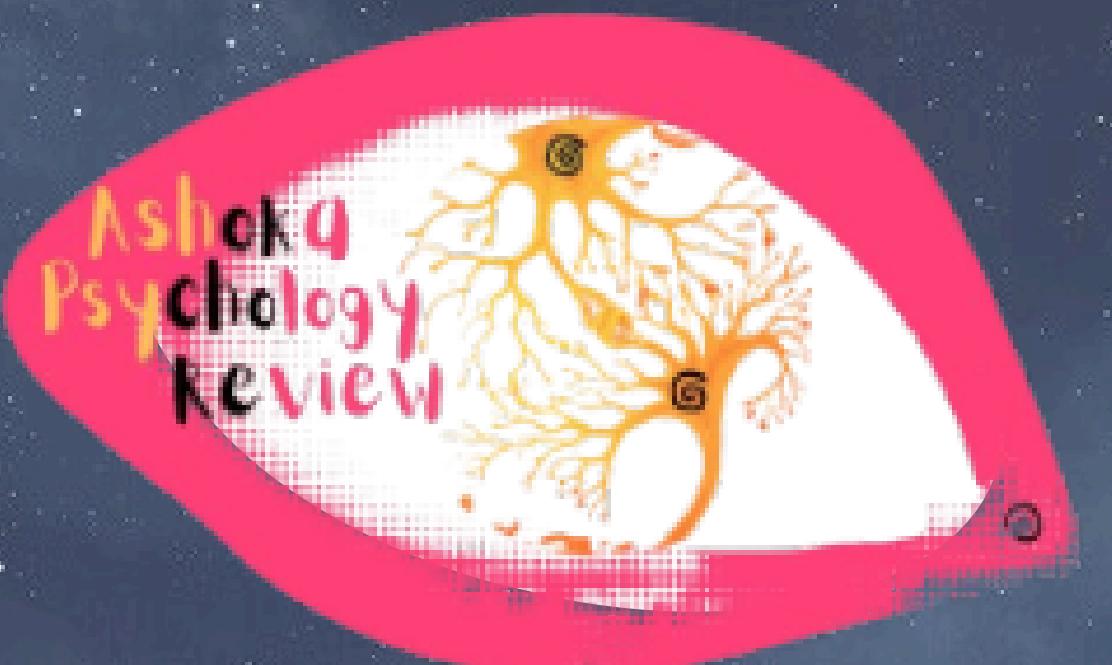
WEBSITE !



<https://ashoka-psychsoc.vercel.app>

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REVIEW !



COMING
SOON...

MEET OUR TEAM



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Mohadisa Rizvi (UG 2023)
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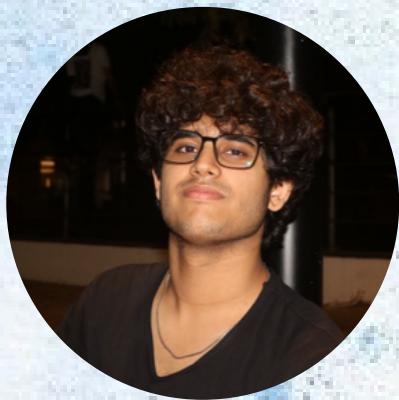


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