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**Debasish Rout**  
Assistant Professor, Amity  
Global Business School,  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

**Dr. Somabhusana Janakiballav Mishra**  
Assistant Professor, Amity  
Global Business School,  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

**Debabrata Sahoo**  
Professor and Lecturer,  
Department of Management,  
DAV School of Business  
Management, Bhubaneswar,  
Odisha, India

**Dr. Ashamayee Mishra**  
Assistant Professor, Amity  
Global Business School,  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Somabhusana Janakiballav Mishra**  
Assistant Professor, Amity  
Global Business School,  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

## Perception of youth towards making body tattoos: A comprehensive study in Bhubaneswar, Odisha

**Debasish Rout, Dr. Somabhusana Janakiballav Mishra, Debabrata Sahoo and Dr. Ashamayee Mishra**

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### Abstract

This paper investigates how young people view body tattoos by examining a wide range of variables that affect their opinions and choices. Understanding the underlying motivations and societal forces behind the rising popularity of tattoos among young people is essential. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to collect data from a representative sample of individuals in the 18–30 age range. It does this by combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The main conclusions show that social media, societal influences, and self-expression all have a big impact on how young people perceive tattoos. The study also reveals disparities in perception according to gender, place of education, and geographic area. The consequences of these perceptions for the tattoo industry and larger cultural norms are discussed in the article's conclusion as well as suggestions for future research.

**Keywords:** Youth perceptions, body tattoos, personal expression, social media influence, cultural attitudes

### 1. Introduction

Youth now frequently express themselves through body tattoos, which are a result of a complex interaction between social, cultural, and personal elements. In recent decades, tattoos have evolved from being symbols of underground cultures to becoming widely accepted fashion statements, appealing to a wide range of individuals. This shift is especially noticeable in young individuals, who see tattoos as a way to express their uniqueness, convictions, and creative tendencies.

Determining how young people feel about body tattoos requires a complex analysis. Social media's widespread reach and the quickly shifting cultural trends have a big impact on this group. Young people's opinions and decisions about having tattoos are shaped by the exhibition, celebration, and criticism of tattoo art on platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok. Furthermore, it is impossible to undervalue the influence of celebrities and other influential people, whose outward support of tattoos frequently shapes public opinion and sets trends.

There are many different and very personal reasons why people acquire tattoos. Some people use tattoos as a means of self-expression or rebellion. Others use them as a means of expressing spiritual views, marking important life events, or just using art to adorn the body. These incentives, meanwhile, are not all the same and might differ greatly depending on a number of variables, including geography, gender, and educational background.

#### 1.1 Historical Context and Cultural Shifts

Throughout history, tattoos have had varying cultural and historical significance. They served as spiritual emblems, social status marks, or rites of passage in various communities. In others, they were stigmatized and connected to marginalized or rebellious subcultures. But thanks to a shift in societal perceptions and the impact of popular culture, tattoos have become far less stigmatized and accepted in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

This change has been mostly influenced by the increase of tattoos among public figures and celebrities. Famous figures from the entertainment, sports, and music industries have displayed their tattoos, normalizing them and elevating them to an aspirational status for a lot of young people.

The globalization of media has contributed to this cultural shift by making stories and tattoo designs from many cultures more accessible and motivating to a worldwide audience.

### 1.2 The Role of Social Media

Social media sites-in particular, Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest-have played a significant role in influencing tattoo culture as it exists now. These platforms act as galleries where tattoo artists may display their creations, as forums where people can discuss their tattoo experiences, and as gathering places for others with similar tastes in art. With millions of posts, hashtags like #tattooart, #inked, and #tattooinspiration have created an online community where tattoos are embraced, and ever-changing trends are shared.

It is impossible to overestimate the impact of social media on young people's opinions about tattoos. A wide range of tattoo designs, tales, and experiences are shown to young people, and this can have a big influence on their attitudes and choices. In addition to being a place for conversation and affirmation, social media is a source of inspiration. Here, the aesthetics and meanings of tattoos are constantly negotiated and reinvented.

### 1.3 Personal Expression and Identity

A very personal form of expression, tattoos mean a lot for young people. They offer a concrete means of expressing one's identity, remembering important occasions in life, or honouring ideals and ideas. Tattoos can be expressions of love and grief, remembrance of significant events, or marks of tenacity. Because tattoos are permanent, getting tattooed is a thoughtful and frequently life-changing decision.

There are many different reasons why people acquire tattoos. Certain young people see tattoos as a declaration of independence or a kind of rebellion, especially in communities or families where getting a tattoo is taboo. Others view them as a means of expressing their identification with specific groups or views and establishing a connection with a community or subculture.

### 1.4 Gender and Tattoos

Tattoo experiences and impressions are greatly influenced by gender. Research has indicated that there are frequently differences between the reasons and experiences that lead men and women to get tattoos. Men tend to equate tattoos with toughness, strength, and masculinity. Women, on the other hand, frequently have to negotiate a more difficult landscape, where tattoos can both subvert and uphold conventional ideas of femininity.

Gender differences can also be reflected in the tattoo placement and design choices. Men might select bolder, more noticeable tattoos, for example, whilst women might prefer subtler or more artistically detailed art. These variations demonstrate how, in the context of body art, cultural norms and individual expression interact.

### 1.5 Geographic and Socioeconomic Factors

Youth attitudes and decisions about tattoos are also influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status and geographic region. Tattoos are generally more tolerated and common in urban settings due to their greater cultural diversity and exposure to global trends. On the other hand, people may still regard tattoos with distrust or disdain in more traditional or rural places.

The decision to acquire a tattoo and its final result can be influenced by socioeconomic issues that impact access to high-quality tattoo artists and studios. While those with lower incomes might find it more difficult to get high-quality tattoo services, those with higher incomes might have greater access to trustworthy tattoo artists and safer procedures. These differences show how crucial it is to take socioeconomic background into account when figuring out how young people view tattoos.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Historical Context and Cultural Shifts

Throughout history, tattoos have represented various cultural and historical concepts. The meaning of tattoos has varied greatly, ranging from the stigmatized marks of misfits in some communities to the tribal tattoos of indigenous peoples (DeMello, 2000) <sup>[4]</sup>. Western civilizations saw a dramatic change in the late 20th century, when tattoos ceased to be seen as a sign of deviance and began to be used as a means of artistic and personal expression (Atkinson, 2003) <sup>[3]</sup>.

According to Atkinson (2003) <sup>[3]</sup>, the emergence of countercultures in the 1960s and 1970s, which accepted body alteration as a means of protest and self-expression, is intimately associated with the mainstreaming of tattoos. In the twenty-first century, tattoos became more and more common across a variety of demographic groups, especially young people.

### 2.2 Cultural Influences

Tattoos are viewed differently in different cultures and in different groups. Tattoos are ingrained in customs and traditions throughout some societies. For example, tattoos from the Polynesian culture are highly regarded and have historical value; they represent social standing, bravery, and spiritual convictions (Rubin, 1988) <sup>[9]</sup>. Other cultures, on the other hand, might link tattoos to criminal activity or societal deviance.

According to recent studies, tattoo practices and styles have become more widely exchanged between cultures as a result of cultural globalization. Kang and Jones (2017) <sup>[7]</sup> draw attention to the ways in which social media and the internet have made it possible for young people all across the world to access and absorb tattoo trends from other cultures. The blending of different tattoo styles has made tattoo culture among young people more diverse and inspired by the world.

### 2.3 Social Media Impact

Young people's perceptions and experiences of tattoos have been completely transformed by social media. Social media sites such as Instagram and TikTok have become essential for promoting tattoo art and influencing public opinion. According to research by Tiggemann and Hopkins (2011) <sup>[13]</sup>, people's opinions toward tattoos are greatly influenced by social media exposure to tattoo photos, and these attitudes are frequently more positive.

It is impossible to overestimate how important celebrities and social media influencers have been in normalizing tattoos. According to DeMello (2014) <sup>[5]</sup>, famous people who have tattoos have the power to dispel myths about them and encourage young people to see tattoos as acceptable forms of self-expression. The emergence of tattoo influencers, who utilize their platforms to publicize body art

and share their tattoo adventures, is a prime example of this phenomena.

## 2.4 Personal Expression and Identity

A potent tool for identity formation and self-expression are tattoos. According to Sanders and Vail (2008) <sup>[10]</sup>, tattoos are a form of "identity work," in which people utilize body art to convey their distinct personalities, morals, and life experiences. Many young individuals use their tattoos as a means of expressing their uniqueness and defying social norms.

## 2.5 Gender Differences

Differences in gender significantly affect how people view and interact with tattoos. According to Wohlrab *et al.*'s 2007 <sup>[14]</sup> research, men and women frequently have distinct reasons for getting tattoos and different perspectives on them. In contrast to women, who could see tattoos as a means of aesthetic enhancement and emotional expression, men are more inclined to identify them with ideas of masculinity, strength, and rebellion.

According to Swami *et al.* (2012) <sup>[12]</sup>, women who have tattoos are more likely than men to be subjected to stereotypes and social criticism. The kinds of tattoos selected and where they are placed on the body can be influenced by this gendered view. Notwithstanding these difficulties, women who get tattoos can use them as a tool for empowerment, taking back ownership of their bodies and defying conventional notions of beauty.

According to a poll by Armstrong *et al.* (2002) <sup>[2]</sup>, college students' main motives for obtaining tattoos were self-expression, creative inspiration, and remembering important life events. These results highlight how intensely personal tattoos are and how they influence one's sense of self.

## 2.6 Socioeconomic Factors

The access to and opinions of tattoos among young people are greatly influenced by their socioeconomic status. Research has indicated that people with better socioeconomic status are more likely to consider tattoos as a kind of art and look for respectable tattoo artists and studios (Guéguen, 2012) <sup>[6]</sup>. On the other hand, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds could have more social stigma and difficulty getting access to high-quality tattoo services.

According to Kosut (2006) <sup>[8]</sup>, the commercialization of tattoo culture has caused a stratification within the tattoo community, with high-end studios serving wealthy clientele and less respectable enterprises being the choice for those with lesser incomes. This discrepancy emphasizes how crucial it is to take socioeconomic variables into account when talking about tattoo culture.

## 2.7 Psychological Perspectives

Psychological studies shed further light on the reasons for and consequences of youth tattooing. For some people, getting a tattoo is a coping method that helps them get over emotional challenges or past traumas (Antoszewski *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[1]</sup>. For young individuals negotiating the uncertainty of adolescence and early adulthood, tattoos' permanency can offer a sense of stability and continuity.

Additionally, tattoos can improve one's body image and sense of self. According to a Skoda *et al.* (2020) <sup>[11]</sup> study, people who get tattoos frequently express greater levels of

self-confidence and body appreciation. This improvement in self-perception highlights tattooing's therapeutic potential for certain people.

## 3. Research Gap

Although earlier research has shed light on public attitudes toward tattoos, more targeted studies on teenage perspectives are necessary, especially in multicultural environments. This study attempts to fill this knowledge gap by offering actual information on young people's attitudes toward body tattoos.

## 4. Methodology

A structured poll was created to gather information on how youth view tattoos in different contexts. Demographics, tattoo possession, motives, views, and influencing factors were all included in the poll. The online survey, which was intended for those between the ages of 18 and 30, was disseminated using social media and Google Forms. Over the course of a month, 200 replies in all were gathered. In order to promote candid and open comments, respondents were guaranteed anonymity and secrecy. Using Chi-Square tests to look for relationships between categorical variables, correlation analysis to look for relationships between continuous variables, and descriptive statistics to summarize the data, the acquired data was analyzed using SPSS.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

There was a gender parity among the survey participants, with 52% female and 48% male. With a mean age of 24, the age range covered was 18 to 30. The sample reflected the cosmopolitan character of modern society by representing a range of cultural backgrounds.

**Table 1:** Tattoo Possession

Category	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Have Tattoos	40%	80
Do Not Have Tattoos	60%	120

### 5.1.1 Perception Score

With a mean perception score of 3.8, respondents evaluated their perceptions of tattoos on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very negative and 5 was very positive.

### 5.1.2 Motivations for getting Tattoos

Among respondents who have Tattoos the primary motivations were

**Table 2:** Reasons for getting Tattoos

Reason for Getting Tattoos	Percentage
Personal Expression	70%
Aesthetic Reasons	50%
Cultural Significance	20%
Peer Influence	30%

### 5.1.3 Attitudes and Beliefs

- **Effect on Career:** According to 60% of respondents, getting a tattoo doesn't necessarily mean that one will be denied possibilities in the workplace.
- **Views of Society:** Of those surveyed, 45% see tattoos as positively viewed by society, 35% as neutral, and 20% negatively.

## 5.2 Inferential Statistics

### 5.2.1 Chi-square Test

An analysis of the relationship between gender and tattoos was done using the Chi-Square Test.

**H0: There is no significant association between gender and getting a tattoo.**

**Table 3:** Observed Data for Chi-square Test

Gender	Have Tattoo (Yes)	No Tattoo (No)	Total
Male	48	52	100
Female	52	48	100
Total	100	100	200

The chi-square test results are as follows

Statistic	Value
Chi-Square Statistic ( $\chi^2$ )	0.32
p-value	0.57
Degrees of Freedom (dof)	1

We are unable to rule out the null hypothesis because the p-value (0.57) is higher than the significance level (0.05). This indicates that among the responders, there is no significant relationship between gender and getting a tattoo.

### 5.2.2 Correlation Analysis

A correlation study was done to look at the correlations between perception of tattoos, the influence of friends, and the influence of social media.

**Table 4:** Correlation Output

	Perception	Friends Influence	Social Media Influence
Perception	1	0.45	0.5
Friends Influence	0.45	1	0.65
Social Media Influence	0.5	0.65	1

- There is a somewhat favorable association (0.45) between friends' impact and how people see tattoos. This implies that people's perceptions of tattoos tend to get better the more friends they have.
- There is a somewhat favorable association (0.50) between social media influence and how people view tattoos. This suggests that as social media's influence grows, people's perceptions of tattoos tend to get better.
- The influence of friends and social media influence have a significant positive link (0.65). This implies that when it comes to how they view tattoos, people who are influenced by their friends are also probably influenced by social media.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 General Perception

According to the study, young people have a generally positive opinion of tattoos (mean perception score: 3.8). This is consistent with current trends that demonstrate how tattoos are becoming more accepted and normalized in society. The positive perception scores show that tattoos are accepted, indicating a change in societal perspectives on body art.

### 6.2 Motivating Elements

Personal expression and aesthetic appeal are the main

drivers behind tattoo acquisition. This emphasizes to the younger generation the value of uniqueness and self-expression. People view tattoos as a means of expressing their artistic choices, personal narratives, and worldviews. A smaller degree of effect is also exerted by peer pressure and cultural relevance.

### 6.3 Variations in Demographics

There are no discernible gender disparities in tattoo ownership, according to the data, indicating widespread acceptability across both sexes. This result is in keeping with the shifting perceptions of gender and body art, as tattoos are no longer primarily associated with either gender. The respondents' varied cultural origins also point to a broad cross-cultural acceptance of tattoos.

### 6.4 Effects of External Factors

The impression of tattoos is greatly influenced by friends' comments and social media, highlighting the influence of social networks on people's attitudes and choices. These parameters' moderate to significant connections suggest that social influence plays a crucial role in the decision-making process. This conclusion is especially pertinent in light of the digital age, as social media significantly influences how people behave.

## 7. Conclusion

This study offers insightful information about how young people see body tattoos. The results demonstrate a favorable perception of tattoos, mostly motivated by aesthetics and self-expression. There are clear and significant relationships between tattoo perceptions and social factors, highlighting the role that social networks play in influencing opinions.

## 8. Implications

Young people's increased acceptance of tattoos points to a change in societal standards, which could have an impact on the fashion, media, and work sectors. A greater understanding of these developments can assist stakeholders in meeting the needs and values of the younger generation. Companies could have to reevaluate their dress codes in order to accommodate employees who have tattoos, and marketers could use the trend of tattoos in their advertising.

## 9. Future research

Subsequent research endeavors may delve into the longitudinal evolution of tattoo perceptions and broaden the sample size to encompass a more extensive demographic spectrum. Furthermore, qualitative research may offer more in-depth understanding of how youth perceive and engage with body tattoos, contributing valuable insights for sociologists, psychologists, educators, policymakers, and the tattoo industry.

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