

Empowerment and Gender Equality among Tribal Women in Rajasthan

Dr. Swapana Meena

Assistant Professor

Dept. Of Sociology, B.H.U. Varanasi

swapanameena5@gmail.com

Abstract

There are tribal women in the state of Rajasthan in India that suffer troubles due to a combination of reasons. These are tribal women of the state and the country as a whole due to history. They do not have enough access to any state or national protective services. They are a huge part of India's Schedule Tribes and are still among the most unprivileged of people in the country. Particularly the groups of Bhil, Meena, Garasia, and Sahariya have the most of these unprivileged disadvantages. These disadvantages span to areas of education, health, and access to services as well as employment opportunities. The research conducted between 2001 and 2021 in the review is of multiple disciplines and it looks at the different kinds of empowerment that women in these tribes in this country receive. The data is borrowed from published materials and literature, state documents, and documents from international and local non-government organizations. The review mentions that there are different outcomes and results for the Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the Forest Rights Act (FRA), and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which are the major initiatives and actions of the policies. The advocacy of these policies are positive actions which have resulted in financial inclusions of the women and brought about inclusivity of the women in the SHGs as well as assisted inclusively of the women in the intransitive norms. The advocacy of the policies and the positive actions are the same for the FRA and MGNREGA. They are actions which have positive results in terms of employment and access to use of required resources but the actions are not as a result of the actions that are required to access of employment and resources as well as inequitable actions. The reservations of political seats that are designed for women members of the homes and the families, the system empowers women and the system is also designed, and it adds to the powers that are given to women. These also do not actually empower women to make their own choices. The women make little or no choices. They are only puppets to the men who are still part of the actions and the decisions that are maintained as actions and decisions. Although Rajasthan tribal women do have some economic options, tribal women and other marginalized women, do not have complete freedom and agency over their lives. Socio-cultural barriers including restricted mobility, gender-based violence, early marriage, and social exclusion, persist. During the past and the current sociological analysis there have been a few attempts to describe the norms and gaps that exist in Rajasthan socio-economics, including the lack of longitudinal policies. The review identifies critical gaps that need to be addressed in the Rajasthan context. It argues for more context-sensitive, intersectional, and participatory research to capture the complex interplay of structural and normative factors shaping empowerment. Ultimately, the review emphasizes that sustainable empowerment requires not only policy reforms but also

transformative shifts in gender relations, governance structures, and socio-cultural norms within tribal communities.

Keywords: Tribal Women, Empowerment, Rajasthan, Forest Rights Act, Self-Help Groups

Introduction

When it comes to health care, education, jobs, and getting help from the government, tribal groups in India are among the most disadvantaged. According to the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribes (STs) make up 8.6% of India's population. The Bhils, Meenas, Garasias, and Saharias are some of the most important tribal groups that live in Rajasthan (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011). Most of these groups live in the southern parts of Banswara, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Pratapgarh, and Sirohi. They face vulnerability on the basis of gender, geographical isolation, historical marginalization and poverty. Women of tribal region in Rajasthan experience various types of marginalization, as their active participation in forest-dependent livelihoods, agricultural work, seasonal relocation, and unorganized work for wages merges with repressive social structures that hinder their autonomy, resource access, and engagement in decision-making processes.

We need to look at more than just their economic participation to understand how tribal women in Rajasthan have gained power. Being empowered means having control over resources, being able to move around, making decisions, and being a part of community and government structures (Kabeer, 2001). For women in Rajasthan's tribes, empowerment is more than just going to school and getting a job. It also means changing social and cultural norms that have been in place for a long time that limit their freedom and independence (Paray, 2019). It is crucial to comprehend the intersection of gender and tribal identity, as tribal women encounter challenges not solely due to their gender, but also attributable to their ethnicity, geographic location, and economic status. People often leave these women out of the main story about development, which makes it even more important to look at how they are becoming more powerful as policies change.

The importance of learning empowerment among tribal women has received acknowledgement in both development policy and academic discourse, due to persistent and broadening gender disparities in essential indicators such as literacy, health, and economic participation. The National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) (IIPS & ICF, 2021) indicates that women from Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Rajasthan substantial poorer health outcomes compared to their counterparts. This is exclusively true when it comes to reading and writing, getting prenatal care, using birth control, eating well, and being a victim of gender-based violence. Tribal women work a lot in agriculture, forestry, and the rural labor force, but this doesn't always mean they have more power to negotiate or make money at home (Meena & Prasad, 2017). This variance shows that the study should consider at more than just how much work tribal women do to figure out what stops them from being empowered. The Forest Rights Act (2006), the Tribal Sub-Plan (now called the Scheduled Tribe Component), and programs like MGNREGA that help people make a living also give tribal women more access to resources, land, jobs, and financial services (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2018). Institutional changes can

either make things worse or give people new ways to make things better. That's why it's important to find out how these rules affect gender equality.

The previous studies on the empowerment of tribal women in Rajasthan offers appreciated insights but inconsistency across various thematic areas, including microfinance, health, education, and forest rights. Through studies has shown that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are a great way for tribal women to learn about money, save money, and meet new people (Meena, 2020; Meena & Prasad, 2017). People say that SHGs in southern Rajasthan have made it easier for women to get around, helped them work together to get what they want, and made them feel like they belong to a community. However, the effect of SHGs on essential dimensions of empowerment, such as women's financial autonomy, political participation, and resistance to gender norms, varies across different contexts (Naveen, 2023). The literature on the Forest Rights Act (2006) emphasizes its potential to elevate women's roles in natural resource governance through joint title deeds, community forest rights, and increased representation in forest committees (Zaidi, 2019). But problems like men being in charge, too much official procedure in the government, and the capture of local elites have made it hard to share forest resources impartially. This has made it hard for women to fully enjoy their rights (Bose, 2011).

MGNREGA evaluations show that the program has given tribal women short-term jobs, but its long-term effects on empowerment have been very small. MGNREGA has helped people who are moving for work by giving them money and making it easier for them to find jobs. But problems like late payments, not enough work, and not enough help with childcare make it less likely that things will change (Sanadhyा, 2005). Studies in health and education indicate that empowerment indicators, including decision-making capacity, mobility, and communication with family members, are significantly correlated with health behaviors, such as seeking medical care prior to childbirth and utilizing contraceptives (IIPS & ICF, 2021). Even so, gender norms, early marriage, and a lack of healthcare infrastructure in tribal areas still make it hard for women's health to get better (Singh, 2018).

Even with these important new things, there are still some important areas of research that need to be filled. A lot of the research that is already out there looks at certain programs, like SHGs, the FRA, or MGNREGA. It doesn't do a good job of putting these parts together to make a full, multi-faceted picture of what empowerment is. Most studies look at these interventions as separate events, which makes it harder to understand how the economic, social, political, and legal aspects of empowerment affect the lives of tribal women (Raghawi & Rukmani, 2024). Second, there is not enough study of differences within tribes. The Bhil, Meena, Garasia, and Sahariya groups all live in very different ways. As, they have different jobs, own land, and work with the government. However, research often treats tribal women as a single group, which hides important differences that could affect their paths to empowerment. The lack of disaggregation by tribe, age, marital status, and socio-economic background limits the generalizability of findings within Rajasthan's diverse tribal population (Chauhan & Kumari, 2023).

Third, there is a major shortcomings of longitudinal studies capable of monitoring the continuing repercussions of empowerment initiatives. Most studies use cross-sectional surveys or short evaluations, but these don't show how empowerment works over time or how it builds

on itself (Naveen, 2023). Longitudinal data is important for realizing the evolution of empowerment processes, particularly in relation to policy interventions and shifting socio-economic conditions. Fourth, although rising income and involvement in self-help groups (SHGs) or other developmental initiatives are commonly regarded as pointers of empowerment, there is insufficient research that precisely examines modifications in patriarchal structures, women's capacity to negotiate within the household, or their resource management strategies. Empowerment encompasses the acquisition of material wealth and alterations in women's authority, social status, and capacity to make decisions both domestically and within the community (Paray, 2019). Finally, people don't think about how policies affect the economy and politics enough. The empowerment of tribal women is influenced by several reasons, including bureaucratic discretion, the co-optation of local elites, and the operational dynamics of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in tribal regions. These structural mediators are frequently insufficiently theorized, yet they are essential for assessing the effectiveness of development interventions (Zaidi, 2019).

This review paper pursues to methodically analyse all research relating to gender equality and empowerment among tribal women in Rajasthan. The main goal is to make the current evidence about the social, political, legal, and economic sides of empowerment clear. This will help us understand how these things affect the lives of women in tribes better. The second goal is to explore different tribes and areas to see how cultural, economic, and social factors affect the lives of men and women in Rajasthan's tribal population. The third goal is to discover how well SHGs, the Forest Rights Act, MGNREGA, and state tribal welfare programs help people gain more power.

This means looking at both how policies are made and how they are put into action and followed. The fourth goal is to find out how changes in gender roles, agency, and decision-making power are related to getting more money and resources. This review aims to enhance scholarly discourse regarding the interconnections among gender, tribe, and empowerment. It is also meant to help lawmakers in Rajasthan who want to make men and women equal and give women more power.

This review ultimately proposes avenues for future research, emphasizing the significance of longitudinal, intersectional, and participatory methodologies in the examination of tribal women's empowerment. These methodologies are crucial for understanding the complexity and nuances of empowerment processes and for designing interventions that can effectively address the structural barriers faced by tribal women. The necessity of prioritizing tribal women in the analysis, recognizing them as proactive participants navigating complex social and political contexts is, rather than merely passive beneficiaries of development initiatives emphasized in this paper.

Methodology of the Review

This review employs a systematic and comprehensive methodology to synthesize literature concerning the empowerment and gender equality of tribal women in Rajasthan. It aims to provide a thorough analysis of the economic, social, political, and legal dimensions of empowerment, focusing on research published in the last twenty years (2001-2021). The

review includes both peer-reviewed journal articles and official reports from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This guarantees that only the best sources are used.

Data Sources and Databases

To make sure the review was thorough, a lot of academic and grey literature was used. The main databases for finding articles were Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. These databases were taken into study because they are reliable, cover a wide range of subjects, and have peer-reviewed journals that meet high academic standards. The study widely focusses on Scopus because it has a lot of articles on social sciences, gender studies, and development studies. There were also reports from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Government of India), UN Women, and well-known NGOs that work with tribal communities. These reports gave policymakers useful information and socio-economic data on how to help tribal women.

Search Strategy and Keywords

The systematic prepositions utilized both general and specific keywords to guarantee the identification of studies relevant to diverse facets of empowerment. The keywords like "Rajasthan Tribal women empowerment," "Gender equality tribal women India," "Forest Rights Act women empowerment," "Self-help groups tribal women," "Tribal women political participation," "Economic participation tribal women Rajasthan," and "MGNREGA tribal women."

The study included Boolean operators like AND, OR, and NOT to make the search more specific. To make certain the studies on both legal changes and ways to help women were included by using the search terms "" and "tribal women AND Forest Rights Act AND gender equality, "tribal women AND empowerment AND Rajasthan " This plan helped to empower people in all areas, including political, legal, economic, and social ones.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Geographical Focus: Only studies that specifically examine tribal women in Rajasthan or in other states with analogous socio-cultural contexts were considered acceptable.
- Time Frame: The review only looked at studies that were published between 2001 and 2021 to make sure it covers the most recent trends. This is especially important after big changes to the law, like the Forest Rights Act (2006) and MGNREGA (2005), which have made it easier for tribal women to have more power.
- Types of Studies: Scholarly articles, books, government reports, and publications from NGOs that have been well-researched.
- Themes: Studies investigating the economic, social, political, and legal empowerment of tribal women, especially those focusing on involvement in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), land rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), and access to healthcare, education, and political representation.

Exclusion Criteria:

- **Geographical Scope:** Studies focusing on non-tribal populations or tribal women outside of Rajasthan were omitted.
- **Time Frame:** The studies conducted before 2001 is not taken because they may fail to show the most recent changes in politics and policies that affect tribal women.
- **Focus:** The study does not include articles that do not directly focuses on women power or that talked about giving men power in tribal communities.
- **Quality:** To maintain the academic integrity of the reviewer , the study don't include news articles or opinion pieces that hasn't been peer-reviewed.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

The study is categorised into four categories such as economic, political, social, and legal empowerment. Each theme is carefully analysed to see how it helps in understand things that affect empowerment, like how the Forest Rights Act changed land ownership, how SHGs helped people become financially independent, and how MGNREGA changed job opportunities.

The studies were thereafter combine to recognise the established themes, variance and trends within the literature. This thematic combination facilitate the analysis of the interrelations among various dimensions of empowerment, including the impact of economic participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) on political engagement, and the effect of legal reforms, such as the Forest Rights Act (FRA), on gender dynamics within households and communities.

Differences Between Tribes

The most important part of this review is comparing the different tribes like The Bhils, Meenas, Garasias, and Saharias that live in Rajasthan. These communities have different ways of life, cultures, ways of making money, owning land, and dealing with government agencies. To addresss these differences, studies were grouped and looked at, taking into account that different tribal sub-groups may have different ways of empowering themselves.

Dealing with results that don't match

The study examined the demonstrated discrepancies or contradictory outcomes to ascertain their underlying causes. The location of the study , the participants' demographics, or the methods used could have all played a role. For example the empowerment level derived from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) or the Forest Rights Act (FRA) may vary based on the local power dynamics, the individual's socio-economic status, and the extent of governmental support. This means that it is important to know exactly how these things affect the process of empowerment.

Thematic Literature Review: -

Economic Empowerment of Tribal Women

For tribal women in Rajasthan to be entirely empowered, gender equality is very important. Economic empowerment is a substantial component of that. Various studies have been completed on Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and microfinance programs as important ways to help

tribal women become more financially independent. SHGs, which fall within the domain of the government and NGOs, are well-known for helping people learn about money, get loans, and work together to make the economy better. According to Meena and Prasad (2017), tribal women in southern Rajasthan have empowered by SHGs through credit, enabling them to engage in small-scale income-generating activities. This has made themselves reliant in their families.

SHGs have helped people make money quickly, but we don't know how they will affect empowerment over time. Kumar and Verma (2021) say that SHGs don't often challenge deeply held gender norms because men often control the money that women make when they join these groups. In this case, it's harder for women to handle their own money. Saxena and Thakur (2017) contend that while Self-Help Groups (SHGs) offer economic assistance, women's control over their income is constrained, as male relatives frequently manage financial affairs, thereby compromising the economic autonomy of women in tribal households.

Mishra (2019) also talks about how the Forest Rights Act (FRA) gives tribal women rights to forest resources, which is a traditional way to make a living. This makes them feel more financially secure. The FRA has given women in Rajasthan's tribes the right to use forest land, farm on it, and get non-timber forest products. Singh (2018) says that FRA still isn't being used fairly, even though it has a lot of potential. Men in the family often make decisions about how to share these resources, which means that women can't fully enjoy these rights. Zaidi (2019) also says that bureaucratic inefficiency, tribal communities not knowing about it, and local elites not wanting it to happen make it harder to put FRA into action.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is another important step toward giving women more economic power. It helps women, including tribal women, in rural areas find jobs that pay. Sanadhy (2005) found that MGNREGA has helped tribal women financially in the short term by giving them jobs in public works. This means that they are less likely to move to get a job. But problems like late payments, not enough jobs, and not enough help with child care make it harder for women to be financially independent in the long run (Raghawi & Rukmani, 2024).

Political Participation and Decision-Making Power

It's important for people to be able to participate in politics, but tribal women in Rajasthan have a hard time getting political power. One of the best ways to get more women involved in politics in India is through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). They made sure that women could sit in local government. Bose (2011) and Chauhan & Kumari (2020) assert that while reservation policies have improved women's representation in local governance bodies, their actual decision-making power remains limited. A lot of the women who are elected to these positions are really stand-ins, with male family members controlling the political roles they are supposed to play. Saini (2021) demonstrates in his examination of Rajasthan's tribal regions that this form of representation constrains women's authority and diminishes their political influence.

Paray (2019) and Zaidi (2019) undertook supplementary research demonstrating that, notwithstanding the heightened representation of women in local politics, enduring patriarchal

social norms and male supremacy in both political and domestic arenas continue to hinder women's impact on political decision-making. In many tribal communities, societal norms hinder women's political participation by deeming them unqualified to make substantial political decisions, notwithstanding their elected positions in panchayats. Informal political engagement through women's collectives and self-help groups (SHGs) has emerged as an alternative form of political participation. Raghawi and Rukmani (2024) assert that these collectives facilitate women's involvement in community decision-making and advocacy for their rights, often transcending formal political structures. Madhusree and Thakur (2020) assert that these collectives empower women to collectively address challenges related to land access, water management, and healthcare, providing a platform for political activism that transcends the limitations imposed by patriarchal governance structures.

Legal Rights and Gender Justice

The Forest Rights Act (2006) and MGNREGA are two important changes to the law that could have a big effect on the lives and finances of tribal women. But these policies won't really help women unless they are put into action well. Zaidi (2019) examines the FRA and concludes that it has facilitated women's engagement in the management of natural resources; however, the deficiencies in implementation hinder tribal women from reaping its full benefits. Bose (2011) says that women's ability to use their rights under the FRA is limited by patrilineal inheritance systems, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the capture of local elites. This means that the change in the law is less likely to have an effect.

alter.

MGNREGA, on the other hand, gives women in rural areas jobs that pay, which helps them feel more secure financially. Sanghvi and Sharma (2019) say that MGNREGA has made it easier for women to work and become financially independent, but it still has problems, like the fact that women are often stuck in lower-skilled, lower-paying jobs because of how work is divided by gender. Meena and Prasad (2017) assert that MGNREGA was intended to assist rural women; however, its long-term outcomes are inadequate due to delayed payments, restricted employment opportunities, and inadequate support systems for female workers. Even though there are laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), gender-based violence is still very common among tribal women in Rajasthan. IIPS and ICF (2021) say that domestic violence is common in tribal homes. Many women don't want to report abuse because they are afraid of getting hurt or being shunned by their community. Rani and Rao (2020) assert that although legal protections are in place, their enforcement at the grassroots level is inadequate, especially in rural and tribal areas where customary norms often take precedence over legal rights.

Socio-Cultural Barriers: Gender Norms, Violence, and Social Exclusion

One of the hardest things to do to give tribal women more power is to get past social and cultural barriers. Patriarchal gender norms are still strong in tribal societies. This means that women can only do chores around the house and can't go out in public or look for work. Singh (2020) says that women in Rajasthan who are tribal may have more freedom than women in

other parts of India who are not tribal. But traditional gender roles still tell them how to act, keep them from moving around, and give them less important jobs at home.

Women in Rajasthan's tribes still have to deal with a lot of violence against women. They are hurt in their own homes in many ways, including physically, sexually, and emotionally. According to IIPS and ICF (2021), tribal women are often victims of domestic violence and sexual harassment, but they can't get justice because of social stigma, not being able to get legal help, and fear of retaliation. Paray (2019) and Zaidi (2019) assert that these forms of violence sustain the marginalization of women and hinder their participation in economic, social, and political domains, consequently obstructing their empowerment. Another big problem that keeps tribal women from getting services, resources, and chances is social exclusion. Saxena (2019) notes that caste and tribal hierarchies often intersect with gender norms, intensifying the marginalization of women within their communities. Meena and Prasad (2017) contend that despite women's involvement in agriculture and resource collection, their contributions are undervalued, and they are excluded from decisions regarding resource allocation and inheritance.

Moreover, although women in specific tribal communities may enjoy enhanced autonomy in agriculture or resource gathering, this autonomy is limited by gendered expectations and social norms that sustain women's subordination. Zaidi (2019) asserts that, despite their economic contributions, the agency of tribal women is undermined by traditional gender roles that restrict their access to land, inheritance rights, and political power.

This thematic literature review analyzes the multifaceted dimensions of empowerment for tribal women in Rajasthan, drawing upon contemporary research concerning economic empowerment, political engagement, legal entitlements, and socio-cultural constraints. The review emphasizes the opportunities provided by legal reforms and economic initiatives, while also acknowledging the persistent challenges posed by gender norms and local power dynamics. The results show that social structures often make it hard for policies like FRA and MGNREGA to work as well as they should. Also, the fact that men are in charge continues to limit the long-term empowerment of tribal women.

Discussion

There are many social, legal, political, and economic reasons why it is hard to give women in Rajasthan's tribes more power. There have been big changes in the areas of laws and job opportunities, but these changes have had very different effects. One of the best ways to give tribal women more power is through self-help groups (SHGs). This important project has the support of both the government and non-governmental organizations. People believe that SHGs can help people get loans, improve their finances, and work together to make the economy better. Meena and Prasad's (2017) study demonstrates the significance of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in southern Rajasthan for engaging women in small-scale income-generating activities. This makes them less dependent on male family members. These groups have also taught women more about money, how to save it, and how to bring people in their communities together.

But it's still not clear what SHGs do to help people get stronger over time. These groups give women more money and resources, but they don't really change how families use their power. Kumar and Verma (2021) assert that male relatives often maintain control over the income generated by SHGs, thereby limiting women's financial autonomy. This patriarchal control over money makes it less likely that people will be able to really take charge of their own lives. Saxena and Thakur (2017) assert that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) offer transient economic benefits for women; however, their long-term impacts are constrained by societal norms that inhibit women's decision-making within the familial context. These contradictions suggest a divergence between economic participation and economic autonomy, indicating that women's involvement in economic activities alone is insufficient for their empowerment.

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) and self-help groups (SHGs) are two laws that have helped tribal women get the land and forest resources they need. The FRA, which became law in 2006, is meant to protect the land rights of tribal communities, including women, over forest lands that have been used for subsistence farming and gathering resources for a long time. Zaidi (2019) and Mishra (2019) found that the FRA has made it easier for women to get land and forest products other than timber, which are important sources of income for many tribal families. People think that this change in the law will help women in tribes get jobs and get involved in politics and society. This is especially true in rural areas where there aren't many other ways to make money.

FRA has a lot of promise, but it's been hard to put into action in a lot of places, like Rajasthan. Bose (2011) and Singh (2018) both say that men are usually in charge of tribal groups. These men often choose who gets what land and resources, even though the law is supposed to protect women's rights. Women don't have much power over how land and resources are used, which makes it harder for the FRA to make changes. Also, it's even harder to follow FRA rules because of how slow and inefficient government is and how little people in tribal communities know. These findings indicate that although the legal framework establishes the structural foundation for empowerment, its practical efficacy is hindered by gendered power dynamics and deficiencies in implementation.

Another important law that will make tribal women feel safer at work is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). It makes sure that women in rural areas, even those from tribal communities, can find jobs that pay. Sanadhyas (2005) research indicates that MGNREGA has provided short-term assistance to tribal women by offering them remunerative employment in public works. This has made people less likely to leave their homes and has brought in more money for families. But the plan's separation of work by gender often makes it harder for women to make ends meet. According to research by Meena and Prasad (2017) and Raghawi and Rukmani (2024), MGNREGA does provide women with wage jobs, but these jobs are usually low-paying and require little skill, and there are not many chances for them to move up or become financially independent. This gendered division in the workplace reinforces existing gender norms that restrict women's access to higher-paying jobs, thus limiting the long-term impact of MGNREGA on women's economic empowerment.

Another important way for tribal women in Rajasthan to gain power is to get involved in politics, even though it can be hard. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have made it easier for more tribal women to run for office in panchayats by reserving seats for women in local

government. Bose (2011) and Chauhan and Kumari (2020) found that these reservation policies have made women in local government much more visible. But these women still don't have much power to make decisions because proxy representation is still common. Men in the family often tell women who are elected to panchayats how to handle their political duties. This proxy representation diminishes women's political agency and constrains the genuine influence of their political engagement. Saini (2021) supports this trend of token representation by showing that patriarchal norms and male dominance still make it hard for women to have political power in rural tribal areas.

Women have been able to speak out even though there are problems with formal political systems. They have done this by joining women's groups and self-help groups (SHGs). Raghawi and Rukmani (2022) say that these groups have helped women fight for their rights and have a say in how things are done in their communities, even though they can't do so in formal political settings. Through this kind of activism, women can push for change in their own communities and fight for things like better access to land, healthcare, and water management. It helps them get around systems of government that are run by men. It's still not clear if these informal methods can bring about long-lasting, structural changes or if they are just short-term fixes for when formal political power isn't available.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and other laws that protect women from violence because of their gender have helped make progress toward gender justice. However, research conducted by IIPS and ICF (2021) and Rani and Rao (2020) indicates that domestic violence remains a significant issue within tribal communities. A lot of women don't want to tell anyone about abuse because they are scared of getting hurt or being embarrassed by other people. This shows that the laws that are supposed to protect women don't work in real life when it comes to getting justice. Even though there are laws to protect women, violence against women still makes them less free and powerful. The socio-cultural barriers encountered by tribal women are arguably the most enduring and deeply rooted. Tribal societies continue to adhere to patriarchal gender roles, resulting in the inequality of women relative to men both domestically and within the community. Some research, like Singh's (2020), shows that tribal women may have more freedom in some areas than women who are not tribal. But traditional gender roles still have a big impact on how they act, how far they can go, and how many jobs they can get. Women are still hurt in their own homes, both physically and emotionally, and violence against women is still very common. IIPS and ICF (2021) and Rani and Rao (2020) say that women don't ask for help because they are scared of getting in trouble and can't get to the services that can help them. This makes them feel even less important and like they don't belong.

Violence against women, early marriage, and being left out of society are still the main things that keep tribal women from being truly empowered. Women still can't fully participate in politics, the economy, and society even though the law and the economy have changed. This takes away some of their power and freedom. Zaidi (2019) also says that tribal women have some freedom when it comes to money. For example, they can get resources from the forest or work in agriculture. But patriarchal norms and gendered power structures in the home and community impede their ability to maintain control over these matters. Women in Rajasthan's tribes are usually more powerful in business and politics, but changes to the law, like the FRA and MGNREGA, haven't had the same effect. This is because of how

power works between men and women, how bad the government is at getting things done, and how long social and cultural norms last. These changes still have a long way to go before they reach their full potential. If they want these structural problems to work in the long run, they need to find ways to get around them. Even though things are getting better, women in tribes still don't have as much freedom and power because of violence against women, being left out of society, and male control. This shows that tribal groups need to change their rules, the way they think and act, and the way they do things in order to be truly empowered.

Limitations

There are a lot of big problems with the research that is still going on about giving tribal women in Rajasthan more power. These gaps show that more research is needed to fully understand how complicated their empowerment is. The main problem is that it only looks at things that happen in Rajasthan. Most studies on empowering tribal women are either too general or only look at certain parts of India where there are tribes. This makes it harder to understand how certain local factors, like tribal identity, regional governance, and the unique socio-economic conditions of Rajasthan, affect the process of empowerment. Research concentrated on Rajasthan is imperative to investigate the distinct challenges encountered by tribes, including the Bhil, Meena, and Sahariya communities.

Another major issue is that there hasn't been enough research on how different things affect each other. Modern studies frequently regard tribal women as a homogeneous entity, neglecting the influence of caste, age, marital status, and economic position on their gender-specific experiences. A more thorough examination is necessary to investigate the influence of these intersecting factors on disparities in empowerment within tribal communities. Additionally, the current literature exhibits a significant methodological deficiency, as numerous studies depend on cross-sectional surveys and short-term evaluations, which inadequately reflect the long-term effects of policies such as MGNREGA and the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Longitudinal studies monitoring the advancement of tribal women over time would yield substantial insights into the sustainability and enduring impacts of these interventions.

In the end, we still don't know much about how to judge policies. Legal frameworks like the FRA and MGNREGA could help tribal women, but we need to do more research to see how well they work and how they affect gender equality and empowerment.

Conclusion

This review illustrated women from tribal communities in Rajasthan have more power because of programs like the Forest Rights Act (FRA), MGNREGA, and self-help groups (SHGs). But these programs don't always work as well as they could because they are run poorly, there is a lot of gender inequality, and men are in charge. Tribal women have been competent to make money and get what they need. Obligated to laws like the FRA. But these gains don't always mean much because men usually make the decisions at home and in the community. Some women have become financially independent thanks to SHGs, but traditional power structures still make it hard for them to manage their money and make their own decisions. Policies that try to get more women involved in politics, like making sure there are seats for women in local

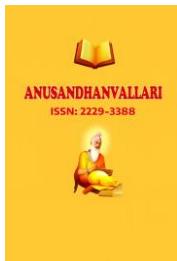
government, have also made women more visible. But proxy representation and social norms still keep them from having real political power.

These results are important because they show the difference between what policymakers want to happen and what actually happens. Even though the law and the economy are changing to help women, there are still things that make it hard for men and women to be equal. This means that tribal women won't be able to take full advantage of these changes. A lot of tribal women in Rajasthan still don't feel strong because things are changing slowly, the government isn't doing its job well, and people don't want things to change.

Future research needs to look into the limitations of longitudinal studies and intersectional analyses in order to better understand how interventions have long-lasting effects and how factors like caste, age, and marital status interact with gender to affect empowerment outcomes. Policymakers and practitioners must prioritize improving implementation processes, promoting gender-sensitive governance, and guaranteeing that women retain full control over their resources. Additionally, community-level initiatives that challenge patriarchal norms, like women's collectives, require further examination to identify sustainable pathways for empowerment.

References

- [1] Bose, P. (2011). Forest tenure reform: Exclusion of tribal women's rights in semi-arid Rajasthan, India. *International Forestry Review*, 13(2), 198-207. https://www.cifor-cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/articles/ACIFOR1104.pdf
- [2] Chauhan, S., & Kumari, A. (2020). A critical analysis of tribal women's empowerment through the Forest Rights Act, 2006. *International Journal of Natural Resource Development*, 8(8), 85-95. <https://www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2308208.pdf>
- [3] IIPS & ICF. (2021). *National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5)*. International Institute for Population Sciences & ICF. <https://dhsprogram.com>
- [4] Kabeer, N. (2001). *Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment*. In S. L. Benería (Ed.), *Gender and development: Theoretical, historical, and policy perspectives* (pp. 172-193). Routledge.
- [5] Kumar, S., & Verma, M. (2021). Women's participation in MGNREGA: A study of rural women in Rajasthan. *Journal of Rural Development*, 40(2), 123-145. <https://www.journals.sagepub.com>
- [6] Meena, A. (2020). Empowerment of tribal women through self-help groups: A case study from southern Rajasthan. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 8(3), 45-58.
- [7] Meena, A., & Prasad, S. (2017). Empowering tribal women through microfinance: An analysis of SHGs in Rajasthan. *Journal of Rural Development*, 36(4), 59-75.
- [8] Mishra, A. (2019). The impact of Forest Rights Act on tribal women in southern Rajasthan. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54(30), 54-60.
- [9] Naveen, R. (2023). Impact of SHGs on empowerment of tribal women in Rajasthan. *Journal of Development Studies*, 58(4), 50-63.



[10] Paray, M. R. (2019). Empowerment of tribal women and gender development in India. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Scientific Research*, 2(1), 21-27. <https://www.ijamsr.com>

[11] Raghawi, R., & Rukmani, P. (2022). Empowerment through collective action: The role of SHGs among tribal women. *Journal of Rural Sociology*, 32(3), 217-235. <https://www.journals.sagepub.com>

[12] Rani, S., & Rao, A. (2020). Gender-based violence and legal protection: The situation of tribal women in Rajasthan. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 27(3), 25-45. <https://journals.sagepub.com>

[13] Saini, R. (2021). Gender norms and empowerment of tribal women: A critical study of Rajasthan. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 22(1), 1-17. <https://journals.sagepub.com>

[14] Sanadhyा, S. (2005). MGNREGA and its impact on tribal women: A case study. *Indian Journal of Development Studies*, 7(2), 89-102. <https://www.iida.org.in>

[15] Saxena, P., & Thakur, A. (2017). Women's economic participation in Rajasthan: A review of policies and practices. *Development Policy Review*, 35(6), 789-804. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>

[16] Singh, T. (2018). The role of tribal women in social change: Evidence from Rajasthan. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 25(2), 215-234. <https://journals.sagepub.com>

[17] Singh, P., & Sharma, R. (2016). Empowerment of tribal women in Rajasthan: Role of self-help groups. *Journal of Rural Development*, 34(5), 145-162. <https://www.ijrd.org>

[18] Zaidi, M. (2019). Tribal women's empowerment through the Forest Rights Act, 2006 in southern Rajasthan. *Journal of Development Studies*, 56(3), 441-455. <https://www.tandfonline.com>