

The Impact of Patriarchal Norms on Women's Empowerment in Rural Indian Families

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of patriarchal norms on the empowerment of women in rural Indian families, focusing on the socio-cultural and economic barriers women face. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess the roles of patriarchal norms in shaping women's empowerment outcomes. A sample of 137 rural women was surveyed, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 respondents to understand their lived experiences. The findings reveal that patriarchal structures significantly impede women's access to education, economic independence, and social mobility. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis confirms that these norms have a negative impact on empowerment, with regional and class-based disparities affecting empowerment levels. Community-driven initiatives, particularly education and mentorship, show promise in challenging these barriers. The study concludes by proposing targeted interventions, including legal reforms, educational access, and economic support programs, to address gender inequality in rural India.

Keywords: Patriarchal Norms, Women's Empowerment, Rural India, Gender Inequality, Community Interventions.

Introduction

Women's empowerment, a cornerstone of equitable and sustainable development, continues to face significant challenges in patriarchal societies, particularly in rural areas. In India, where over 65% of the population resides in rural areas, women frequently encounter systemic barriers that hinder their autonomy and decision-making (Chatterjee & Dwivedi, 2023). Patriarchal norms deeply embedded in social and cultural structures perpetuate gender inequality by limiting access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Sarkar & Das Gupta, 2024). These entrenched practices exacerbate inequalities and restrict women's participation in household and community decision-making processes (Goel & Ravishankar, 2021). Understanding these dynamics is essential to devising effective strategies that empower women and foster inclusive growth, particularly in rural contexts where such norms are most resistant to change.

Global studies have highlighted the transformative potential of targeted interventions in challenging gender norms and promoting empowerment. For instance, Heaton et al. (2024) demonstrated that unconditional cash transfers significantly improved women's financial independence in Pakistan. Similarly, Lecoutere and Chu (2023) found that involving women in intrahousehold decision-making processes in Tanzania led to improved empowerment outcomes. While these findings underscore the importance of economic interventions, their success often depends on addressing the broader socio-cultural barriers that perpetuate patriarchal attitudes. In India, efforts to empower women have been implemented through various government and non-governmental programs, such as self-help groups and vocational training initiatives (Yadav et al., 2022). However, research reveals that these interventions often fail to achieve sustainable outcomes due to a lack of alignment with local cultural contexts (Das, 2024). This underscores the need for community-led,

context-sensitive approaches that address the root causes of gender inequality.

Patriarchal norms in rural societies not only restrict women's mobility and access to resources but also limit their agency in critical areas such as education and health. As highlighted by Gopalakrishnan et al. (2024), community-level inequitable gender norms significantly impact women's empowerment, often negating the benefits of individual-level advancements. For example, even when women gain education or employment, the persistence of restrictive societal expectations often prevents them from exercising their autonomy. Moreover, the intersectionality of caste, class, and gender further complicates the empowerment process, as marginalized groups face compounded disadvantages (Chandramohan et al., 2023). This intersectional perspective is crucial for understanding the lived realities of rural women and for designing interventions that are both inclusive and effective.

Education and mentorship have emerged as powerful tools for challenging patriarchal structures and empowering women. Kamaldeen Smith (2025) emphasized the transformative impact of mentorship programs in equipping women with the skills and confidence needed to navigate traditional norms and assert their agency. Such interventions provide not only economic benefits but also psychological empowerment, fostering resilience and self-efficacy among women. However, as Miah and Islam Sifat (2024) noted, the effectiveness of these programs often depends on addressing the underlying socio-economic factors, such as poverty and access to resources, which perpetuate gender disparities. Research in this domain must therefore adopt a holistic approach, considering both structural and individual dimensions of empowerment to ensure sustainable progress.

This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on women's empowerment by exploring the intersection of patriarchal norms, socio-economic barriers, and community-led strategies in rural India. Building on the insights from existing research (Tripathy et al., 2022; Bukhari et al., 2024), the study aims to analyse how localized interventions, such as education and mentorship

programs, can effectively challenge patriarchal structures and promote gender equality. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that shape empowerment outcomes and offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders. Through this lens, the study aspires to bridge the gap between policy intent and grassroots realities, fostering a more inclusive and equitable framework for women's empowerment.

The empowerment of women in rural India, particularly within the confines of patriarchal family structures, has garnered significant scholarly attention in recent years. A comprehensive study by **Kumar and Mondal (2024)** examines women's empowerment across India through the lens of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). This study reveals a nuanced perspective of women's empowerment, assessing dimensions such as decision-making power, economic participation, and autonomy in health. The importance of this study lies in its wide-reaching data and its ability to capture both the barriers and progress in women's empowerment in diverse Indian states. The authors utilized a cross-sectional survey design, drawing on national data to analyse regional disparities and trends. Key findings indicate that although women's empowerment has improved, significant disparities persist, particularly in rural regions where patriarchal norms remain entrenched. The study concludes that targeted interventions, especially in education and economic participation, are crucial to bridging these gaps. A major research gap identified is the need for more localized studies focusing on specific rural communities to understand how regional cultural nuances shape women's empowerment outcomes.

In the study **"Women's experiences and sustainable adaptation: a socio-ecological study of climate change in the Himalayas"** by Das (2024), the author explores the intersection of gender norms and climate change resilience in rural Himalayan communities. The study is significant for its focus on women's roles in climate adaptation, where the social and environmental challenges are uniquely experienced by women. Das employs a

socio-ecological framework, analysing the experiences of rural women in adapting to climate change and its impact on food security. Findings reveal that while women are central to household adaptation strategies, their decision-making power remains limited due to deeply rooted gender norms. The study highlights the need for inclusive climate policies that consider gender-specific challenges. The research gap identified is the lack of studies exploring the agency of rural women in environmental decision-making and how empowerment can enhance adaptive capacity.

Heaton, Kashif, and Mukhopadhaya (2024) in their study on **“Unconditional cash transfer programs and women’s empowerment in Pakistan”** provide valuable insights into the economic dimensions of empowerment. Their research explores how cash transfer programs, aimed at alleviating poverty, influence women’s autonomy, decision-making, and control over resources. Using a randomized control trial (RCT), the study assesses the impact of unconditional cash transfers on women’s economic empowerment. Findings suggest that such programs significantly enhance women’s financial independence and improve their social status within the household. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on the economic impact of social welfare programs but also calls for more longitudinal studies to assess the sustainability of these changes. A key gap noted is the absence of studies addressing the intersectionality of caste, class, and gender in the effectiveness of cash transfer programs.

In **“Social Inequality in the Context of Gender: A Study of Rural West Bengal, India”**, **Chatterjee and Dwivedi** (2023) examine the persistent social inequalities faced by women in rural India, particularly in the context of gender-based discrimination. This study is crucial for understanding the deep-rooted social structures that perpetuate inequality and limit women’s empowerment, especially in rural areas where gender norms are more rigid. The authors utilize qualitative methods, conducting interviews and focus groups with rural women to understand their lived experiences of gender discrimination. Findings indicate that despite legal frameworks aimed at

improving women’s rights, social norms such as dowry practices, early marriage, and limited access to education continue to stifle women’s progress. The study concludes that empowerment requires not only policy reforms but also a cultural shift towards gender equality. The gap identified in this research is the need for longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of social policies on gender inequality in rural contexts.

Goel and Ravishankar (2021) investigate the impact of public policies on the autonomy and empowerment of women in India, specifically in education, financial inclusion, and governance. This study underscores the significance of women-centric policies in enhancing women’s socio-economic status. Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors evaluate data from government reports, surveys, and interviews to assess the effectiveness of policies such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and MGNREGA. Their findings show that these policies have had a positive impact on women’s autonomy, particularly in urban areas. However, in rural settings, women’s autonomy remains constrained due to continued social stigma and patriarchal family structures. The research identifies a gap in understanding the differential impacts of such policies across urban and rural settings, suggesting that more targeted and context-sensitive policies are needed to foster empowerment in rural areas.

In the chapter **“Entrepreneurship Development of Rural Women Through Digital Inclusion”** by **Yadav, Paliwal, and Chatradhi** (2022), the authors explore the role of digital technologies in promoting entrepreneurship among rural women. The study highlights how digital inclusion programs, often facilitated by government and non-government organizations, can empower women economically by providing access to markets, knowledge, and financial resources. Through case studies of rural women entrepreneurs, the research shows that digital literacy significantly enhances women’s participation in the formal economy. However, the study also points out the challenges posed by digital illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, and cultural barriers. The research gap here lies in the need for more robust evaluations of digital inclusion programs, particularly in underserved rural areas.

Like this, **Sarkar and Das Gupta** (2024), in their introduction to *Understanding Women's Empowerment in South Asia*, emphasize the multidimensionality of empowerment, particularly in South Asian contexts. This chapter sets the theoretical groundwork for understanding empowerment, framing it not as a single construct but as a complex interplay of social, economic, political, and cultural factors. The authors argue that empowerment is not just about economic independence but also about access to knowledge, participation in decision-making, and the ability to challenge oppressive norms. The chapter calls for further research on the intersection of gender, class, and caste in the empowerment process and emphasizes the importance of intersectional approaches in future studies. The gap highlighted in this work is the need for more cross-country comparative studies that consider the nuances of empowerment across different South Asian nations.

The study by **Gopalakrishnan, El Ayadi, and Diamond-Smith** (2024) examines the role of community-level gender norms in shaping women's empowerment in India, drawing on the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). This research is significant as it provides a comprehensive multilevel analysis of the influence of gender norms at the community level on individual women's empowerment, an area often overlooked in empowerment studies. The study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing large-scale survey data to assess the correlation between community gender norms and women's autonomy. The findings suggest that while individual factors like education and employment enhance women's empowerment, community-level gender norms strongly hinder their ability to make independent decisions. The conclusion emphasizes the need for context-specific interventions to challenge harmful gender norms at the community level. The research gap identified in this study is the lack of detailed qualitative insights into how these norms are lived and experienced on a day-to-day basis by women, particularly in rural settings.

In “**Transforming Traditional Norms: Education and Mentorship Strategies to Challenge Patriarchal Structures**” by **Kamaldeen Smith**

(2025), the study explores the potential of education and mentorship in transforming patriarchal structures and empowering women in rural areas. This article holds importance for its practical focus on strategies that can be used at the grassroots level to effect change in gender relations. The study combines qualitative and action research methods, interviewing mentors and female beneficiaries of mentorship programs in rural communities. The findings underscore that mentorship and education provide women with the tools to challenge traditional patriarchal norms, though the success of these interventions is often contingent on community acceptance. The study concludes that for such programs to be effective, they must integrate local cultural norms while promoting gender equality. A gap identified is the need for longitudinal studies to assess the lasting impact of these mentorship programs on the broader community and on men's views regarding gender roles.

Lecoutere and Chu (2023) in their article “**Supporting Women's Empowerment by Changing Intrahousehold Decision Making: A Mixed Methods Analysis of a Field Experiment in Rural South-West Tanzania**” delve into the role of intrahousehold decision-making in women's empowerment in rural settings. This research is significant as it links decision-making autonomy within households to broader empowerment outcomes. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from field experiments with qualitative interviews. Findings show that when women were included in financial decision-making processes, their overall sense of empowerment increased, leading to better outcomes in child welfare and economic stability. However, the study concludes that the change in decision-making power within households does not always translate into broader social empowerment. The gap identified in this research is the need for exploring how external interventions like microfinance or health programs might further influence decision-making power at the household level.

In “**Empowerment Level Among Rural Women of Sindh: A Sociological Analysis**” by **Bukhari et al.** (2024), the authors explore the sociological factors that impact women's empowerment in rural

Sindh, Pakistan. This study provides valuable insights into the intersection of culture, religion, and gender in shaping women's empowerment in a patriarchal society. The study employs a survey methodology, gathering data from rural women to analyse their perceptions of empowerment in areas such as education, health, and economic participation. The findings indicate that women in rural Sindh experience significant challenges due to rigid gender norms, with most women reporting limited access to education and economic opportunities. The study concludes that although women in these communities show resilience, external interventions are necessary to improve their empowerment outcomes. The gap identified in this study is the lack of exploration of how religious institutions and practices influence women's access to empowerment opportunities.

Chandramohan et al. (2023) in their article **“Diagnosing Norms and Norm Change in Rural Bangladesh: An Exploration of Gendered Social Norms and Women's Empowerment”** tackle the complex issue of gendered social norms in rural Bangladesh and their impact on women's empowerment. This research is crucial as it addresses the role of societal norms in shaping women's opportunities and status within the family and community. The authors utilize a combination of interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observations to explore the lived experiences of rural women. Their findings reveal that deeply entrenched patriarchal norms severely limit women's mobility and decision-making power, but gradual norm shifts, especially through education and local women's groups, show promising results in challenging these structures. The research gap highlighted in this study is the need for more research on how to scale such local changes to the national level and the role of men in supporting norm change.

In **“Women's Economic Empowerment and Maternal Mental Health: A Qualitative Study in Rural Kenya”** by **Wainaina et al.** (2024), the focus is on the interplay between economic empowerment and maternal mental health. This study is significant for its novel exploration of how women's economic autonomy influences their mental health outcomes,

an often-neglected dimension of empowerment. The research adopts a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews with rural women engaged in small-scale economic activities. The findings show that economic empowerment not only improves women's mental health by reducing stress but also strengthens their ability to negotiate better health outcomes for themselves and their families. The study concludes that improving women's economic status is a crucial, yet underutilized, strategy for enhancing maternal mental health. The gap identified in this study is the need for more research on the mechanisms through which economic empowerment translates into mental health benefits, particularly in rural settings.

Tripathy, Paliwal, and Singh (2022) in **“Women's Social Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Innovation: An Exploratory Study from India”** explore the potential of social enterprises led by women in improving livelihoods and promoting women's empowerment. This research holds importance as it examines the economic contributions of women-led businesses within rural communities and their broader social impact. Through qualitative interviews and case studies, the authors highlight the significant role of social entrepreneurship in fostering women's economic autonomy and leadership. The study finds that these businesses provide not only economic independence but also social recognition for women, enhancing their status within their communities. However, the study identifies a research gap regarding the scalability of these enterprises and the challenges women face in accessing financial resources and markets.

Miah and Islam Sifat (2024) in their article **“Economic Dimensions of Violence Against Women: Policy Interventions Needed”** investigate the economic implications of violence against women, particularly in countries with high gender inequality, such as Bangladesh. This article is significant because it links economic dimensions of violence with broader policy frameworks aimed at empowering women. The authors employ a policy analysis approach, reviewing national legislation, program evaluations, and interviews with policymakers. Findings reveal that while many

policies exist to combat violence, they are often not adequately enforced, and economic support for survivors is insufficient. The article concludes that stronger policy enforcement and economic empowerment programs for women are essential to reduce violence and improve women's status. The research gap identified in this study is the lack of comprehensive evaluations of the economic impacts of violence and the effectiveness of policy interventions in rural areas.

Brechenmacher and Mann (2024) in their chapter **“Tackling Patriarchal Gender Norms”** offer an in-depth examination of the role of patriarchal gender norms in perpetuating inequality and their impact on women's empowerment. This chapter provides a theoretical analysis, drawing from case studies of various South Asian countries, including India. The authors argue that patriarchal norms serve as barriers to women's participation in political, economic, and social spheres. Through a combination of qualitative research and case study analysis, the study suggests that interventions targeting the transformation of these norms are necessary for meaningful empowerment. The conclusion stresses the importance of addressing both institutional and cultural barriers. The research gap identified here is the need for longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of norm-changing interventions.

Shrivastava (2021) in her chapter **“Women Tech Entrepreneurship in India”** investigates the barriers and opportunities faced by women in the technology entrepreneurship sector in India. This study is significant as it sheds light on the underrepresentation of women in the tech industry and the unique challenges they encounter. Using a combination of survey data and interviews with women entrepreneurs, the study finds that access to networks, venture capital, and societal stereotypes are major challenges. However, the research also highlights the innovative ways in which women overcome these obstacles. The study concludes that targeted interventions are needed to support women in the tech sector. The gap identified in this study is the lack of research on the long-term impact of such interventions on women's careers in tech and entrepreneurship.

Rajasekhar and Manjula (2024) in their chapter **“Women Leadership, Decentralised Governance, and Inclusive Development”** discuss the role of women in leadership positions within decentralized governance systems, with a particular focus on South Asia. This chapter is crucial as it highlights the link between women's participation in governance and inclusive development. The authors use a comparative analysis of case studies from India and Sri Lanka to illustrate the positive impact of women's leadership on community development outcomes. The findings show that women leaders are more likely to prioritize social issues such as education and health, leading to more inclusive development outcomes. However, the study concludes that institutional and cultural barriers still limit women's participation in leadership roles. The gap identified in this research is the need for deeper exploration of the mechanisms through which decentralization policies can be made more inclusive for women.

Das and Mishra (2018) in **“Women and Work in Rural Assam: Patterns and Determinants”** explore the changing patterns of women's work in rural Assam, India, and the socio-economic determinants that affect their participation in the labour force. This study is significant as it contributes to the understanding of how economic transformations in rural areas impact women's roles in the workforce. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study finds that despite increased opportunities in agriculture and allied sectors, women continue to be confined to low-wage and low-status jobs. The study concludes that while economic development provides opportunities, entrenched gender norms prevent women from accessing higher-income opportunities. The research gap identified is the need to examine the role of education and skill development in enhancing women's workforce participation in rural areas.

Despite significant progress in research on women's empowerment, critical gaps persist in understanding the intersectionality of patriarchal norms, socio-economic challenges, and community-level interventions, particularly in rural contexts. While studies such as Chatterjee and Dwivedi (2023)

highlight the pervasive social inequalities affecting women in rural West Bengal, they fall short of exploring dynamic strategies that can counteract these entrenched norms across different cultural contexts. Similarly, Das (2024) underscores the role of women in climate resilience but does not address how adaptive strategies might shift ingrained patriarchal structures. Goel and Ravishankar (2021) emphasize policy-driven autonomy for women, yet their analysis lacks a granular focus on the disparities between rural and urban policy outcomes. Furthermore, while Heaton, Kashif, and Mukhopadhyaya (2024) provide compelling evidence of the economic benefits of cash transfers on women's empowerment, the socio-cultural dimensions limiting their effectiveness remain underexplored. This indicates a clear research gap in examining how tailored, multi-dimensional interventions can dismantle patriarchal systems while fostering sustainable empowerment across various contexts.

Importance of the Study

This study holds immense significance in addressing the multifaceted impact of patriarchal norms on women's empowerment in rural contexts. By focusing on the intricate interplay between socio-cultural practices, economic participation, and gender inequality, the research sheds light on the systemic barriers that hinder women's autonomy and agency. The study's importance lies in its potential to provide actionable insights for policymakers, grassroots organizations, and educators aiming to create inclusive interventions. It highlights the resilience of women navigating deeply entrenched patriarchal structures and identifies strategies to amplify their voices in decision-making processes. By bridging the gap between policy intent and local realities, this research contributes to the global discourse on gender equality, offering a nuanced understanding of how community-driven approaches can foster long-term empowerment and

social transformation. Ultimately, the study aspires to inspire sustainable changes that advance gender equity and societal well-being.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the role of patriarchal norms in shaping the socio-economic and cultural realities of women in rural communities.
2. To examine the effectiveness of community-led interventions, such as education and mentorship programs, in challenging patriarchal structures and promoting women's empowerment.
3. To explore the intersectionality of gender, class, and regional disparities in influencing the empowerment outcomes of women within rural contexts.

Materials and methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the impact of patriarchal norms on women's empowerment in rural Indian families, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. A total of 137 respondents from rural regions of India participated in the survey, which included both demographic questions and a 15-item Likert scale measuring attitudes towards gender roles, education, economic independence, and empowerment. The survey was administered using a structured questionnaire to ensure consistency and reliability in data collection. In addition to the quantitative survey, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 women, selected based on their diverse socio-economic backgrounds. These interviews provided qualitative insights into the lived experiences of women in rural communities, allowing for a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing empowerment. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 24 for descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and correlation, while Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to assess the relationships between patriarchal norms and empowerment indicators.

Results and discussion

1. SPSS 24 Analysis: Likert Scale Responses

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Patriarchal norms restrict women's access to education.	4.32	0.92	-0.75	1.45
Patriarchal norms limit women's decision-making in families.	4.21	0.88	-0.62	1.12
Economic independence improves women's empowerment.	4.10	0.85	-0.62	1.05
Community-led mentorship programs are effective in empowerment.	4.26	0.89	-0.77	1.28
Intersectionality impacts women's empowerment outcomes.	4.25	0.87	-0.69	1.15
Education significantly challenges patriarchal norms.	4.32	0.85	-0.78	1.34
Government policies positively influence empowerment.	4.20	0.80	-0.59	1.04
Cultural norms strongly resist gender equality.	3.95	0.91	-0.56	0.95
Access to resources is critical for empowerment.	4.22	0.86	-0.68	1.08
Healthcare access is limited due to patriarchal norms.	4.10	0.88	-0.59	1.03
Intersectionality is overlooked in empowerment programs.	3.96	0.87	-0.65	0.91
Local leaders can drive empowerment at the grassroots level.	4.32	0.81	-0.70	1.12
Awareness programs are effective in changing gender norms.	4.20	0.84	-0.68	1.08
Economic interventions address empowerment effectively.	4.25	0.85	-0.65	1.14
Mentorship programs have a lasting impact on empowerment.	4.28	0.83	-0.72	1.22

The descriptive statistics presented in **Table 1** show the central tendencies and distributions of the respondents' views on the impact of patriarchal norms on women's empowerment. The high mean scores, mostly above 4.0, indicate a general agreement among participants that patriarchal structures significantly influence women's access to education, economic independence, and decision-making power within families. For example, the

question on education (mean = 4.32, SD = 0.92) demonstrates that most respondents recognize the barriers posed by patriarchal norms in limiting educational opportunities for women. The negative skewness values, combined with kurtosis values above 1.0, suggest that while a majority of the responses lean toward agreement, there is some variability, with a few participants likely expressing more nuanced or critical views.

2. SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) Analysis

Table 2: SEM Model Path Coefficients

Path	Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio (CR)	p-value
Patriarchal Norms → Education Impact	0.42	0.09	4.67	0.000
Education Impact → Women's Empowerment	0.53	0.08	6.63	0.000
Patriarchal Norms → Decision Making in Families	0.35	0.07	5.00	0.000
Economic Independence → Women's Empowerment	0.61	0.10	6.10	0.000
Community-led Programs → Women's Empowerment	0.49	0.09	5.44	0.000
Intersectionality → Women's Empowerment	0.47	0.08	5.87	0.000

The **SEM (Table 2)** model path coefficients reveal the dynamics between patriarchal norms and women's empowerment outcomes. The direct effects, such as the path from **Patriarchal Norms → Education Impact** ($\beta = 0.42$) and **Patriarchal Norms → Decision-Making** ($\beta = 0.35$), confirm that entrenched gender norms restrict women's educational access and their decision-making

agency within households. Moreover, the path from **Economic Independence → Women's Empowerment** ($\beta = 0.61$) strongly reinforces the notion that economic autonomy is a powerful enabler of women's empowerment. These findings align with existing literature, which highlights economic independence as a critical factor for shifting power dynamics within households (Goel & Ravishankar, 2021; Bukhari et al., 2024).

3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis for Women's Empowerment

Independent Variables	B	Standard Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
Patriarchal Norms → Education	-0.21	0.08	-0.24	-2.63	0.009
Education Impact → Women's Empowerment	0.44	0.06	0.51	7.33	0.000
Economic Independence → Women's Empowerment	0.53	0.07	0.59	7.57	0.000
Community-led Programs → Women's Empowerment	0.40	0.09	0.48	4.56	0.000
Intersectionality → Women's Empowerment	0.30	0.08	0.36	3.75	0.000

In the **Multiple Regression Analysis (Table 3)**, the high **Beta** values for education ($\beta = 0.51$) and economic independence ($\beta = 0.59$) further confirm the significant influence of these factors on women's

empowerment. The negative relationship between **Patriarchal Norms** and empowerment ($\beta = -0.24$) demonstrates the restrictive influence of gender norms, corroborating the findings of previous

studies that emphasize the need for structural interventions to challenge patriarchal systems (Das, 2024; Yadav et al., 2022). The results suggest that

policies aimed at enhancing women's access to education and economic opportunities are paramount in the fight for gender equality.

4. Factor Analysis

Table 4: Factor Loadings for Women's Empowerment Dimensions

Question	Factor 1: Empowerment	Factor 2: Gender Norms	Factor 3: Policy Impact
Patriarchal norms restrict women's access to education.	0.80	0.12	0.07
Economic independence improves women's empowerment.	0.84	0.14	0.04
Community-led mentorship programs are effective in empowerment.	0.79	0.13	0.06
Government policies positively influence empowerment.	0.78	0.10	0.65
Cultural norms strongly resist gender equality.	0.63	0.85	0.04
Intersectionality impacts women's empowerment outcomes.	0.70	0.30	0.40

The **Factor Analysis** (Table 4) results reveal that women's empowerment, gender norms, and policy impact are distinct yet interrelated factors. Empowerment-related variables such as education and economic independence load heavily on **Factor 1: Empowerment**, underscoring the importance of access to resources and opportunities. On the other

hand, **Factor 2: Gender Norms** reveals the enduring influence of patriarchal expectations, with strong loadings on cultural norms that limit women's autonomy. These findings echo the conclusions of Bukhari et al. (2024) and Brechenmacher & Mann (2024), who argue that patriarchal gender norms remain a primary obstacle to women's empowerment in rural settings.

5. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

Table 5: SEM Model Goodness of Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	104.56
Degrees of Freedom (df)	98
CFI	0.95
RMSEA	0.032
TLI	0.94

Finally, the **Goodness of Fit Indices** presented in **Table 5** demonstrate that the SEM model fits the data well, with a **CFI** of 0.95, indicating a good model fit. The **RMSEA** value of 0.032 suggests that the model adequately represents the relationships between variables, highlighting the crucial role of community-led interventions, economic independence, and education in mitigating the impacts of patriarchal norms. The **TLI** of 0.94 further supports the robustness of the model, suggesting that the data align with the theoretical framework proposed in this study. These results are consistent with other studies on the impact of patriarchal norms on women's agency and empowerment in rural South Asia (Chatterjee & Dwivedi, 2023; Kumar & Mondal, 2024).

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role patriarchal norms play in shaping the socio-economic realities of women in rural Indian families, aligning with existing research that highlights the pervasive influence of gendered power structures on women's autonomy. The descriptive statistics presented in **Table 1** indicate a general consensus among respondents that patriarchal norms continue to impede women's access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making within the household. These findings are consistent with the work of Chatterjee and Dwivedi (2023), who explored social inequalities in rural West Bengal and emphasized the role of entrenched gender norms in limiting women's potential. The respondents in this study echoed similar concerns, with high mean scores for the influence of patriarchy on education (mean = 4.32) and decision-making (mean = 4.28), further highlighting the obstacles women face in gaining independence. These statistical results corroborate earlier studies that underscore the complexity of gender-based discrimination in rural settings (Bukhari et al., 2024; Goel & Ravishankar, 2021).

The structural equation modeling (SEM) results presented in **Table 2** strengthen the argument that patriarchal norms directly limit women's empowerment. The path coefficients show that patriarchal norms exert a strong negative effect on

women's empowerment ($\beta = -0.24$), which resonates with existing literature on gender inequality in South Asia (Brechenmacher & Mann, 2024; Das, 2024). In particular, the influence of **Economic Independence** on empowerment ($\beta = 0.61$) illustrates that economic self-sufficiency is a powerful tool for women to challenge patriarchal structures. This finding is in line with studies by Yadav et al. (2022) and Bukhari et al. (2024), which emphasize that financial autonomy allows women to transcend traditional gender roles. Moreover, **Table 3's** regression analysis affirms that education ($\beta = 0.51$) and economic independence ($\beta = 0.59$) are the most significant predictors of empowerment, suggesting that interventions targeting these domains will be pivotal in altering the patriarchal framework in rural India. Thus, it is clear that women's empowerment is inextricably linked to their access to resources, education, and economic opportunities, all of which are often constrained by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms.

The factor analysis results in **Table 4** provide further clarity on how gender norms and empowerment-related variables interact within the rural Indian context. The high factor loadings for education and economic independence on **Factor 1: Empowerment** reveal that access to education and financial autonomy are fundamental to enhancing women's empowerment. On the other hand, the loadings on **Factor 2: Gender Norms** highlight the persistent cultural norms that restrict women's agency. This dual-factor structure underscores the complexity of empowerment in rural areas, where economic and educational empowerment must be addressed alongside the transformation of deeply rooted gender norms. The findings resonate with Kamaldeen Smith (2025), who explored how community-led education and mentorship programs can challenge patriarchal structures, supporting the notion that empowerment is a multifaceted process requiring both structural changes and shifts in societal attitudes. The SEM model (Table 5) further confirms the theoretical robustness of these findings, with the model fit indices indicating that patriarchal norms, economic independence, and education are indeed central to the empowerment process.

Conclusion & Suggestions

This study sheds light on the profound impact of patriarchal norms on women's empowerment in rural Indian families, confirming that traditional gender roles continue to impede women's autonomy and socio-economic progress. The findings underscore the need for multifaceted interventions that tackle both the structural inequalities perpetuated by patriarchal systems and the individual-level empowerment of women. As indicated by Brechenmacher and Mann (2024) and Goel and Ravishankar (2021), interventions focusing on education and economic empowerment are pivotal for challenging these ingrained norms. The SEM model results highlight that economic independence, alongside educational access, plays a significant role in improving women's empowerment, aligning with the observations of Bukhari et al. (2024) and Yadav et al. (2022). Thus, fostering women's economic participation and enhancing educational opportunities remain key strategies for overcoming patriarchal barriers in rural settings.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that policymakers prioritize gender-sensitive policies that promote women's access to education and economic resources. Public programs designed to provide skill-building opportunities and financial literacy, especially in rural areas, will equip women with the tools necessary for economic independence (Kamaldeen Smith, 2025). Furthermore, community-based initiatives that challenge patriarchal norms and foster gender equality, as advocated by Chatterjee and Dwivedi (2023), should be expanded. Social campaigns, mentorship programs, and public awareness efforts can play an essential role in reshaping societal attitudes and reducing gender-based discrimination. Future research could explore the intersectionality of gender, class, and region, examining how these factors uniquely influence empowerment outcomes in rural India. This comprehensive approach will contribute to a more equitable and empowered society for rural women in South Asia.

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