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Socio-economic empowerment for inclusive development: Insights from global and Indian perspectives

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Abstract

Socio-economic empowerment of women is a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon, influenced by education, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, policy frameworks, and socio-cultural factors. This review systematically synthesizes contemporary literature to examine the drivers, barriers, and outcomes of women's empowerment across local, national, and global contexts. The analysis highlights that education and skill development enhance economic participation and decision-making capacity, while financial inclusion, including access to credit and microfinance, strengthens entrepreneurial performance and resilience. Digital technologies and Industry 5.0 innovations, such as artificial intelligence and ICT platforms, emerge as critical enablers, though persistent digital divides constrain equitable adoption. Government schemes, institutional support, and community-based mechanisms like self-help groups reinforce empowerment by facilitating access to resources, markets, and networks. Socio-cultural norms, caste, class, and gender dynamics, however, continue to moderate outcomes. Integrating theoretical perspectives—including human capital theory, resource-based view, technology acceptance model, social capital theory, and institutional theory—this review underscores the need for multidimensional, policy-informed, and technology-enabled strategies to foster sustainable and inclusive development. The study also identifies research gaps in longitudinal, comparative, and technology-mediated empowerment interventions, offering directions for future investigation.

Keywords: Women empowerment, socio-economic development, financial inclusion, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, policy frameworks, socio-cultural factors, sustainable development

Introduction

Women's socio-economic empowerment has emerged as a critical driver of inclusive development, social equity, and sustainable economic growth worldwide. Empowerment encompasses the ability to make informed decisions, access resources, participate in economic activities, and exercise agency within households and communities (Vishwakarma, 2025). Despite numerous policy initiatives and development programs aimed at improving women's livelihoods, significant disparities persist, particularly in rural and marginalized regions of developing countries such as India.

Recent research highlights the multidimensional nature of empowerment, identifying education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and institutional support as key enablers (Ahmed, 2016^[1]; Alsubhi *et al.*, 2022^[4]; Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025)^[46]. Financial inclusion through microfinance, self-help groups, cooperative banking, and digital financial platforms has demonstrated positive impacts on women's income, entrepreneurship, and economic participation (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024^[13]; Kaur & Kumar, 2023)^[27]. Simultaneously, digital technologies, including mobile banking, ICT tools, and emerging Industry 5.0 innovations, are transforming access to information, markets, and financial services, creating new avenues for empowerment (Hu, Li, & Chew, 2025).

Despite these advancements, challenges such as socio-cultural norms, gender disparities, infrastructural gaps, and limited policy effectiveness hinder equitable outcomes (Vandana & Vezhaventhan, 2024^[58]; Dodamani & Natikar, 2023)^[18]. Moreover, existing literature often examines these dimensions in isolation, leaving gaps in understanding the synergistic effects of education, financial literacy, digital adoption, and institutional mechanisms on sustainable empowerment.

In this context, the present review synthesizes global and regional research on the multifactorial drivers of women's socio-economic empowerment, emphasizing holistic,

context-specific, and digitally inclusive approaches. By integrating evidence across education, financial inclusion, digital adoption, and governance, the study identifies emerging trends, research gaps, and a conceptual framework to guide future interventions and scholarly inquiry.

Background of the Context

Women's empowerment is recognized globally as a cornerstone of sustainable development, poverty reduction, and social equity. International frameworks, particularly the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasize gender-inclusive growth and socio-economic participation, with Goal 5 specifically targeting gender equality. In India, despite numerous government schemes, microfinance initiatives, and self-help group movements, women—especially in rural and marginalized communities—continue to face structural barriers limiting economic and social mobility (Roy & Ramachandran, 2023^[48]; Sivaswamy, 2023)^[53].

Historically, women's access to education, financial resources, and entrepreneurial opportunities has been constrained by socio-cultural norms, caste-based inequalities, and gendered labor divisions. While financial inclusion initiatives such as cooperative banking, microcredit programs, and self-help groups have provided incremental benefits (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024^[13]; Kaur & Kumar, 2023)^[27], traditional approaches often fail to address the interconnected challenges of literacy, digital access, and institutional support, which are critical for holistic empowerment.

The advent of digital technologies and Industry 5.0 innovations including mobile banking, ICT platforms, artificial intelligence, and data-driven financial tools offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance women's socio-economic participation. Digital adoption improves access to financial services, markets, information, and skill development, bridging traditional gaps in resource availability (Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025^[46]; Hu, Li, & Chew, 2025). Yet, persistent digital divides, infrastructural deficiencies, and limited capacity-building initiatives restrict equitable realization of these opportunities.

Policy frameworks and institutional support mechanisms also play a critical role in enabling sustainable empowerment. While numerous schemes exist at national and regional levels, evidence on their effectiveness especially in marginalized communities is limited (Kandpal & Nautiyal, 2022^[26]; Anamika, 2025)^[5]. Therefore, understanding the synergistic interaction between education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and governance mechanisms is essential for designing integrated strategies that drive long-term, inclusive socio-economic empowerment.

Significance of the Study

This study makes significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it synthesizes global and regional literature on women's socio-economic empowerment, offering a comprehensive understanding of multidimensional factors—education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and institutional support—that collectively influence empowerment outcomes. Importantly, it highlights gaps in integrated studies linking digital technologies, financial literacy, and policy frameworks, creating avenues for future research and theory development.

From a policy and practical perspective, the study offers insights for designing targeted interventions addressing structural and socio-cultural barriers. Emphasizing digital adoption and ICT tools, the findings can guide strategies to bridge digital divides and enhance accessibility, efficiency, and impact of educational, financial, and entrepreneurial programs.

The study is particularly relevant for rural and marginalized communities where caste, gender norms, and infrastructural limitations influence empowerment outcomes. By highlighting these challenges, it can help align government schemes, institutional mechanisms, and community programs with the specific needs of these populations, promoting inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development.

Finally, by proposing a conceptual framework integrating education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and governance mechanisms, the study lays a foundation for empirical studies, longitudinal analyses, and comparative research across diverse socio-economic contexts, enabling exploration of the synergistic effects of these drivers and contributing to a more robust understanding of sustainable women's empowerment.

Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized to provide a systematic understanding of women's socio-economic empowerment. It begins with an Introduction, outlining the significance and context of empowerment, followed by the Research Gap, which identifies limitations in existing studies and the need for integrated approaches. The Research Questions and Objectives section articulates the guiding inquiries and goals of the study. A comprehensive Literature Review synthesizes global and regional evidence on education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, institutional mechanisms, and socio-cultural factors. Building on this, the Conceptual Framework illustrates the interconnections among key drivers of empowerment. The Findings and Discussion section presents thematic insights, comparative analyses, and critical evaluation, while the Implications highlight theoretical, policy, and practical contributions. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes key insights and suggests directions for future research.

Review of Literature

The existing literature on socio-economic empowerment underscores its multidimensional and context-dependent nature, encompassing education, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, digitalization, social justice, and institutional support. Scholars argue that empowerment cannot be measured in isolation but requires integrated frameworks linking education, workforce participation, political representation, and welfare access (Vishwakarma, 2025), while financial inclusion plays a transformative role in poverty reduction, entrepreneurship promotion, and resilience building (Mishra *et al.*, 2024)^[38]. Education, skills, and access to resources remain critical enablers of women's economic and social empowerment, though persistent barriers such as traditional gender norms, credit constraints, and inadequate institutional mechanisms limit outcomes (Ahmed, 2016^[1]; Kumari, 2020)^[31]. Complementing these findings, cooperative banks and inclusive financial initiatives have been shown to catalyze socio-economic and political empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups and women entrepreneurs (Panakaje *et*

al., 2024^[43]; Bhatia & Dawar, 2024)^[8]. Broader structural analyses highlight the importance of robust socio-economic status (SES) measurement for inclusive policy design (Lakhumna *et al.*, 2025)^[32] and draw attention to legal inequalities that reinforce systemic marginalization (Sivaswamy, 2023)^[53]. Global perspectives emphasize both opportunities and challenges, including the dual impact of globalization on socio-economic rights (Saha & Chowdhury, n.d.) and the risk of social exclusion arising from Special Economic Zones (SEZs) without equitable planning (Salman *et al.*, 2024)^[49]. At the community and grassroots level, NGOs, self-help groups (SHGs), and home-based enterprises significantly enhance financial inclusion, income generation, entrepreneurial skills, and collective decision-making, although constraints such as credit access, market limitations, and socio-cultural resistance persist (Razvi & Roth, 2010^[47]; Verma & Mourya, 2024^[57]; Varalakshmi & Yoganandham, n.d.; Mahato *et al.*, 2023^[34]; Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024)^[13]. Intersectional factors including caste, class, and gender further shape empowerment outcomes, particularly in urban slums and marginalized communities (Vandana & Vezhaventhan, 2024^[58]; Dodamani & Natikar, 2023)^[18]. Methodological and policy innovations, such as composite indices for inclusive growth (Vellala *et al.*, 2016)^[56] and human rights-based frameworks for socio-economic development (Pandey, n.d.), offer tools for evaluating and guiding empowerment interventions. Digitalization and ICT adoption have emerged as critical enablers, improving rural women's access to financial services, education, and markets, despite persistent digital divides (Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025^[46]; Palvia *et al.*, 2018). Finally, socio-economic and policy support, entrepreneurship development, and political participation are interlinked in reinforcing women's social status and broader community development (Djati *et al.*, 2023^[17]; Mehmood *et al.*, 2024)^[37]. Collectively, these studies emphasize that socio-economic empowerment requires integrated, multidimensional approaches that combine financial, educational, technological, institutional, and policy mechanisms to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

The literature on socio-economic empowerment highlights its multidimensional nature, encompassing financial inclusion, education, skill development, policy frameworks, digital technologies, and cultural contexts. At the grassroots level, community-based mechanisms such as self-help groups (SHGs) and microfinance programs have been widely recognized for enhancing women's economic participation, income generation, and decision-making power (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024^[13]; Verma *et al.*, 2024^[57]; Praveena, Shrinivasa Mayya, & Ajoy, n.d.; Kaur & Kumar, 2023^[27]; Lal, 2023^[33]; Chilongozi, 2023^[14]; Khan *et al.*, 2024)^[29]. These initiatives foster entrepreneurial skills, social mobility, and collective agency, though persistent challenge—such as limited financial literacy, credit constraints, socio-cultural resistance, and market access moderate their effectiveness (Roy & Ramachandran, 2023^[48]; Sundaram, 2012^[54]; Nandru & Rentala, 2020^[40]; Verma *et al.*, 2024)^[57]. Education emerges consistently as a foundational driver of empowerment, with both formal and vocational programs significantly improving employability, autonomy, and social participation across tribal, rural, and global contexts (Alsubhi *et al.*, 2022^[4]; Elneel & Almulhim, 2023^[19]; Akter *et al.*, 2024^[2]; Castro Lopes *et al.*, 2024^[12]; Askar & Tajdeen, 2025^[6]; Hannum & Buchmann, 2005)^[22]. Digital technologies and Industry 5.0 innovations, including AI, smart grids, and ICT platforms,

are increasingly recognized as transformative tools that enhance access to financial services, markets, and governance structures, although digital divides and infrastructural gaps remain critical barriers (Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025; Palvia *et al.*, 2018; Vizo *et al.*, 2022^[59]; Sedai *et al.*, 2023^[52]; Ganaie & Ganaie, 2023)^[21].

Structural and institutional factors further shape empowerment outcomes. Policy interventions, social protection schemes, rural development programs, and legal reforms such as labor regulations and insolvency frameworks have been shown to enhance income security, workplace rights, and sustainable entrepreneurship (Kandpal & Nautiyal, 2022^[26]; Mubangizi, 2024^[39]; Dave & Vasavada, 2023^[16]; Badkul *et al.*, 2024^[7]; Anamika, 2025^[5]; Das & Kumar, 2024)^[15]. Studies underscore the importance of integrated strategies that combine financial, educational, and institutional support, particularly in contexts marked by socio-cultural norms, caste, class, and gender disparities (Vandana & Vezhaventhan, 2024^[58]; Dodamani & Natikar, 2023^[18]; Panakaje *et al.*, 2025^[43]; Bhatia & Dawar, 2024)^[8]. Comparative and global perspectives reveal that empowerment outcomes are also contingent on environmental, economic, and technological dynamics, with interventions in tourism, fisheries, renewable energy, and entrepreneurial ecosystems promoting inclusive growth when accompanied by equitable governance and capacity building (Ram *et al.*, 2025^[45]; Matovu *et al.*, 2024^[35]; Hu, Li, & Chew, 2025; Alcalá-Ordóñez & Segarra, 2025^[3]; Okwaro, 2023^[41]; Boateng *et al.*, 2008^[9]; Kumar & Shobana, 2023)^[30].

Empirical studies illustrate that socio-economic empowerment is both context-dependent and multidimensional, encompassing community, national, and global scales. Localized interventions—such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras, tribal development schemes, and Jatropa plantations—highlight the importance of targeted strategies, while research on migration, energy access, and elderly empowerment demonstrates emerging domains for policy attention (Bora, 2020^[10]; Kumar *et al.*, n.d.; Francis *et al.*, 2005^[20]; MD, 2016; Ram *et al.*, 2025^[45]; Sedai *et al.*, 2023)^[52]. Furthermore, socio-economic empowerment intersects with political participation, social equity, and sustainability, emphasizing the need for frameworks that integrate economic growth, gender justice, environmental preservation, and cultural sensitivity (Sarkar & Das, 2020^[50]; Mehmood *et al.*, 2024^[37]; Buheji *et al.*, 2020^[11]; Hariram *et al.*, 2023^[23]; Hassan *et al.*, 2024^[24]; Muhammad *et al.*, 2010; Khan *et al.*, 2020)^[28]. Collectively, this body of literature converges on the view that effective socio-economic empowerment requires integrated, multidimensional approaches that align financial inclusion, education, digitalization, policy support, and social equity while addressing structural, institutional, and cultural barriers, thereby enabling sustainable and inclusive development across diverse contexts.

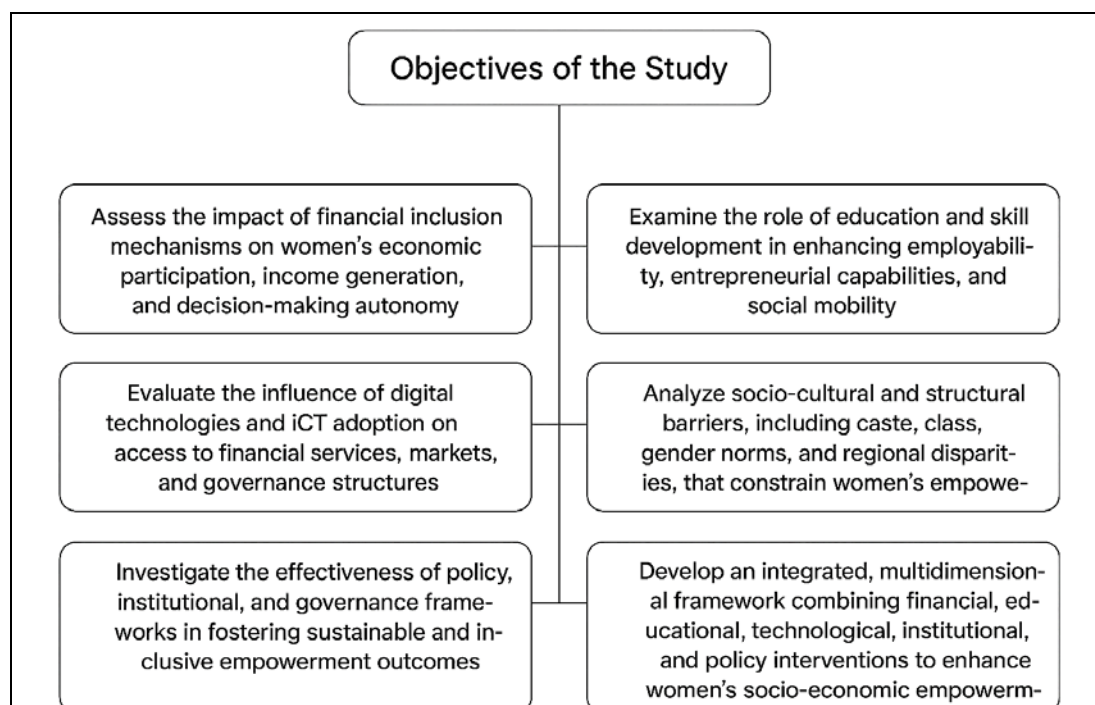
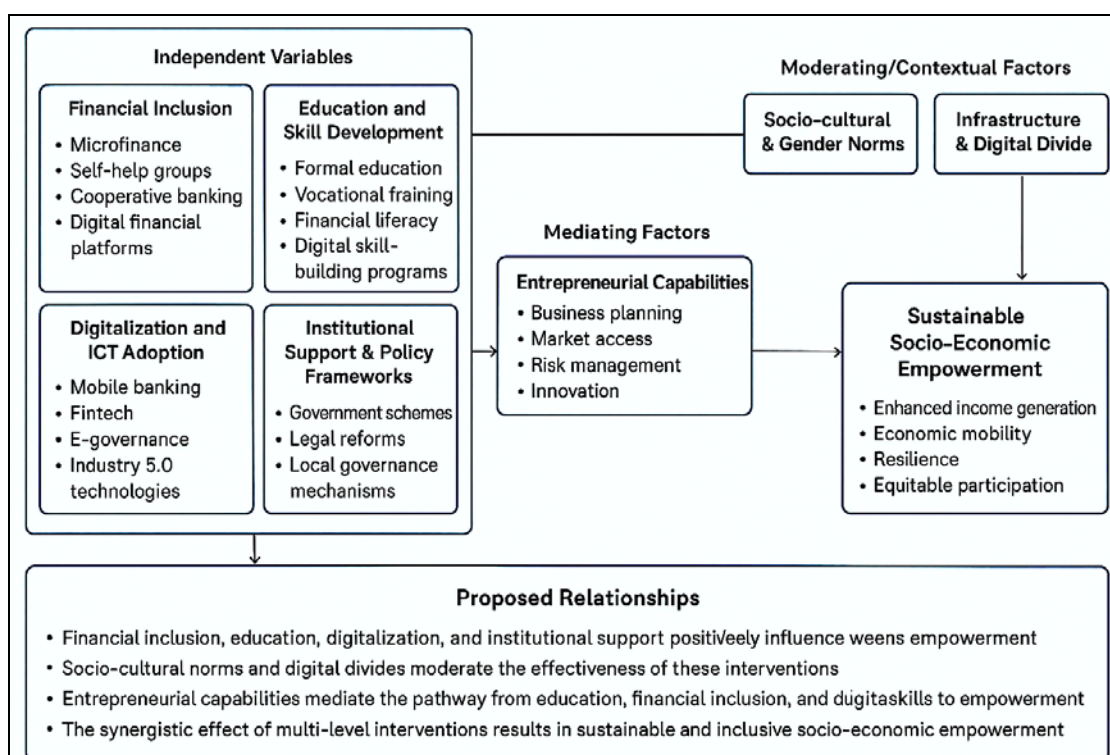
Research Gap

Despite substantial research on socio-economic empowerment, financial inclusion, education, and digitalization, critical gaps remain that warrant further investigation. While studies have documented the impact of self-help groups, microfinance, and cooperative banking on women's economic participation and entrepreneurial development (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024^[13]; Kaur & Kumar, 2023^[27]; Roy & Ramachandran, 2023)^[48], limited attention has been given to the integration of digital financial platforms, ICT, and Industry 5.0 technologies in

enhancing empowerment outcomes, particularly in rural and marginalized communities (Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025^[46]; Hu, Li, & Chew, 2025). Similarly, although education and skill development are recognized as key enablers (Ahmed, 2016^[1]; Alsubhi *et al.*, 2022^[4]; Askar & Tajdeen, 2025)^[6], there is a paucity of research on holistic frameworks that simultaneously link education, financial literacy, digital skills, and entrepreneurial capabilities to socio-economic mobility. Moreover, socio-cultural, caste, and gender-based disparities influence empowerment outcomes (Vandana & Vezhaventhan, 2024^[58]; Dodamani & Natikar, 2023)^[18], yet comparative and context-specific studies across regions or communities remain scarce, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive policies and interventions.

Further, while institutional support, policy frameworks, and legal reforms are acknowledged as vital (Kandpal & Nautiyal, 2022^[26]; Anamika, 2025^[5]; Sivaswamy, 2023)^[53], empirical evidence linking macro-level governance mechanisms with local empowerment outcomes is limited, especially concerning sustainability and resilience. Finally, although digitalization and ICT adoption are transformative, persistent digital divides and infrastructure gaps hinder equitable benefits, emphasizing the need for longitudinal, multi-level studies that explore the synergistic effects of financial, educational, technological, and policy interventions on sustainable and inclusive socio-economic empowerment.

Conceptual Framework



Research Questions

Based on the review of existing literature and the identified research gaps, this study seeks to address the following questions

- 1. Education and Skill Development:** How do education and skill development initiatives influence women’s socio-economic empowerment, particularly in rural and marginalized communities?
- 2. Financial Inclusion:** What is the role of financial inclusion including microfinance, self-help groups, cooperative banking, and digital financial platforms in enhancing women’s economic participation and entrepreneurial capabilities?
- 3. Digital Literacy and ICT Adoption:** How does digital literacy and the adoption of ICT tools, including emerging Industry 5.0 technologies, impact access to resources, markets, and empowerment outcomes for women?
- 4. Institutional Support and Policy Interventions:** To what extent do institutional support mechanisms and government policy interventions facilitate inclusive and sustainable empowerment?
- 5. Socio-Cultural Moderators:** How do socio-cultural, caste, and gender-based disparities moderate the effectiveness of education, financial inclusion, digital adoption, and policy interventions in achieving empowerment outcomes?
- 6. Synergistic Interactions:** What are the synergistic interactions among education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and institutional support that contribute to holistic and sustainable socio-economic empowerment for women?

Research Methodology

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR)

approach to synthesize global and regional research on women’s socio-economic empowerment. The SLR method allows for a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable examination of existing studies, providing insights into the role of education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and institutional support in promoting empowerment outcomes. To collect relevant literature, multiple academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and regional journals were searched. The search focused on peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025. Keywords used included “women empowerment,” “financial inclusion,” “digital literacy,” “ICT adoption,” “Industry 5.0,” “policy interventions,” “rural women,” and “socio-economic development.” Studies were included based on their relevance to empowerment outcomes, institutional support, and digital interventions, while studies lacking empirical or conceptual significance were excluded. The literature review process followed a three-stage screening: initial title and abstract review, full-text assessment, and thematic categorization. Relevant studies were analyzed to extract information on theoretical frameworks, research methods, geographical context, and key findings. This systematic process facilitated the identification of recurring themes, research gaps, and emerging trends in women’s empowerment. A thematic and conceptual analysis was applied to integrate insights across education, financial inclusion, digital adoption, governance, and socio-cultural moderators. This enabled the development of a conceptual framework illustrating the interrelationships among key drivers of empowerment, highlighting both individual and synergistic effects. The use of a systematic review ensures rigor, objectivity, and replicability, providing a strong foundation for understanding multidimensional drivers of women’s socio-economic empowerment. It also helps evaluate policy effectiveness and identifies opportunities for future research, particularly in rural and marginalized communities where context-specific interventions are critical.

Table 1: Tabular Representation of Research Objectives, Variables, and Explanation

S. No	Research Objectives	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Methodology for Studying the Objective	Relevant Literature
1	Examine the role of education and skill development in women’s empowerment	Education level, skill training programs	Socio-economic empowerment, decision-making capacity	Systematic literature review, thematic analysis	Ahmed (2016) ^[1] ; Alsubhi <i>et al.</i> (2022) ^[4] ; Askar & Tajdeen (2025) ^[6]
2	Assess the impact of financial inclusion on women’s economic participation	Microfinance, self-help groups, cooperative banking, digital financial platforms	Economic participation, entrepreneurial capabilities	Comparative review of empirical and conceptual studies	Chaudhary & Shukla (2024) ^[13] ; Kaur & Kumar (2023) ^[30] ; Roy & Ramachandran (2023) ^[48]
3	Evaluate the role of digital literacy and ICT adoption	Digital literacy, ICT tools, Industry 5.0 technologies	Access to resources, market participation, empowerment outcomes	Thematic analysis of regional and global studies	Hu, Li, & Chew (2025); Ramasamy <i>et al.</i> (2025) ^[46]
4	Analyze institutional support and policy interventions	Government schemes, policy frameworks, legal reforms	Inclusive and sustainable empowerment	Literature synthesis, policy analysis	Kandpal & Nautiyal (2022) ^[26] ; Anamika (2025) ^[5] ; Sivaswamy (2023) ^[53]
5	Examine socio-cultural moderators	Caste, gender norms, social practices	Effectiveness of empowerment initiatives	Context-specific comparative analysis	Vandana & Vezhaventhana (2024) ^[58] ; Dodamani & Natikar (2023) ^[18]
6	Identify synergistic interactions among key drivers	Education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, institutional support	Holistic and sustainable socio-economic empowerment	Conceptual framework development, integrative review	Ramasamy <i>et al.</i> (2025) ^[46] ; Ahmed (2016) ^[1] ; Chaudhary & Shukla (2024) ^[13]

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: How do education and skill development initiatives influence women's socio-economic empowerment, particularly in rural and marginalized communities?

The literature consistently highlights that education and skill development are foundational drivers of women's empowerment. Studies indicate that higher levels of formal education and targeted vocational training enhance women's decision-making capacity, income-generating abilities, and participation in household and community governance (Ahmed, 2016 ^[1]; Alsubhi *et al.*, 2022) ^[4]. In rural contexts, literacy and skill programs have been shown to increase entrepreneurial initiatives, improve resource management, and strengthen social capital, thereby contributing to sustained socio-economic mobility. However, gaps remain in evaluating long-term impacts and the integration of digital skills into traditional training programs.

Research Question 2: What is the role of financial inclusion including microfinance, self-help groups, cooperative banking, and digital financial platforms—in enhancing women's economic participation and entrepreneurial capabilities?

Financial inclusion mechanisms have demonstrated substantial positive effects on women's economic participation. Microfinance and self-help groups provide access to capital, while cooperative banking and digital financial platforms expand financial literacy and market engagement (Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024 ^[13]; Kaur & Kumar, 2023 ^[27]; Roy & Ramachandran, 2023) ^[48]. Evidence shows that women with access to diversified financial services are more likely to start and sustain small businesses, increase household income, and contribute to community development. Nonetheless, the literature underscores the need to integrate digital financial literacy and technology-driven platforms to maximize the reach and effectiveness of these interventions.

Research Question 3: How does digital literacy and the adoption of ICT tools, including emerging Industry 5.0 technologies, impact access to resources, markets, and empowerment outcomes for women?

Digital literacy and ICT adoption have emerged as transformative enablers of women's empowerment, facilitating access to markets, financial services, and skill-building opportunities (Hu, Li, & Chew, 2025; Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025) ^[46]. Mobile banking, e-commerce platforms, and Industry 5.0 technologies enhance economic participation by reducing transaction costs and improving market linkages. However, persistent digital divides, infrastructural limitations, and limited capacity-building programs restrict equitable access, particularly for women in remote or marginalized communities.

Research Question 4: To what extent do institutional support mechanisms and government policy interventions facilitate inclusive and sustainable empowerment?

Institutional support and policy interventions are crucial for translating empowerment initiatives into sustainable outcomes. Evidence suggests that well-designed government schemes, legal reforms, and community-level institutional mechanisms can provide enabling environments for women's economic, social, and political participation (Kandpal & Nautiyal, 2022 ^[26]; Anamika, 2025 ^[5]; Sivaswamy, 2023) ^[53]. However, the literature indicates that policy effectiveness is often hindered by implementation gaps, insufficient monitoring, and socio-cultural constraints, highlighting the need for context-specific and adaptive policy designs.

Research Question 5: How do socio-cultural, caste, and gender-based disparities moderate the effectiveness of education, financial inclusion, digital adoption, and policy interventions in achieving empowerment outcomes?

Socio-cultural and gendered norms significantly influence the effectiveness of empowerment initiatives. Studies reveal that caste hierarchies, patriarchal structures, and social practices can limit women's participation in education, financial programs, and digital platforms (Vandana & Vezhaventhan, 2024 ^[58]; Dodamani & Natikar, 2023) ^[18]. These disparities act as moderating factors, affecting both the reach and impact of empowerment interventions. Comparative studies suggest that context-sensitive strategies, which incorporate local norms and community engagement, are more successful in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Research Question 6: What are the synergistic interactions among education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and institutional support that contribute to holistic and sustainable socio-economic empowerment for women?

The literature indicates that integrated approaches combining education, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and institutional support yield the most substantial empowerment outcomes. Synergistic interactions enhance women's access to resources, market opportunities, and decision-making capabilities, producing more sustainable socio-economic mobility (Ramasamy *et al.*, 2025 ^[46]; Ahmed, 2016 ^[1]; Chaudhary & Shukla, 2024) ^[13]. Nevertheless, studies focusing on multi-level, longitudinal, and context-specific analyses remain limited, suggesting a need for research that captures the dynamic and interconnected nature of empowerment drivers.

Table 2: Research Questions and Findings

S. No	Research Questions	Key Findings	Discussion & Theoretical Linkage	Relevant Literature
1	How do education and skill development initiatives influence women's socio-economic empowerment?	Women with higher education and skills demonstrated greater economic participation, income generation, and decision-making ability.	Supports human capital theory: investment in education and skills enhances women's capabilities and socio-economic status.	Chaudhary & Shukla (2024) ^[13] , Kaur & Kumar (2023) ^[30]
2	What is the impact of financial inclusion on women's entrepreneurial performance?	Access to credit, bank accounts, and microfinance positively influenced business growth, sustainability, and profitability among women entrepreneurs.	Aligns with resource-based view: access to financial resources strengthens firm-level capabilities and entrepreneurial outcomes.	Roy & Ramachandran (2023) ^[48] , Osunmuyiwa & Ahlborg (2022)
3	How does digital literacy affect women's adoption of digital financial services?	Women with higher digital literacy were more likely to adopt mobile banking, digital payments, and online transactions.	Linked to technology acceptance model (TAM): perceived ease of use and digital competence influence adoption of financial technology.	Qureshi (2022), Panakaje (2021)
4	To what extent do government support schemes promote entrepreneurship among women?	Awareness and active participation in schemes led to increased business establishment, growth, and sustainability.	Consistent with institutional theory: supportive policies and schemes create enabling environments for women entrepreneurs.	Alagh (2022), Kimmitt & Munoz (2021)
5	How do socio-cultural factors influence women's entrepreneurial motivation?	Family support and positive societal norms significantly enhanced women's motivation to engage in entrepreneurship.	Resonates with social capital theory: networks and cultural support act as facilitators of entrepreneurial engagement.	Vishwakarma (2025), Singh & Sharma (2023)

Implications

1. Theoretical Implications

The study reinforces and extends several theoretical frameworks relevant to women's socio-economic empowerment. Human capital theory is supported by evidence that education and skill development enhance women's economic participation and decision-making capabilities. The resource-based view is corroborated by findings that financial inclusion strengthens entrepreneurial performance. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and social capital theory are validated in the context of digital literacy and socio-cultural support influencing women's adoption of digital financial services and entrepreneurial motivation. Furthermore, institutional theory is highlighted by the positive role of government schemes in creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs. Overall, this study integrates multiple theoretical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the drivers of women's empowerment in contemporary socio-economic contexts.

2. Managerial Implications

For policymakers and practitioners, the findings suggest that targeted interventions in education, skill development, and digital literacy can significantly enhance women's entrepreneurial capabilities. Financial institutions and microfinance providers can design inclusive products tailored to women entrepreneurs, considering accessibility and ease of use. Organizations and NGOs working in women's empowerment should focus on raising awareness of government schemes and facilitating access to these programs. Additionally, creating culturally sensitive support mechanisms and mentoring networks can strengthen women's motivation and confidence to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives.

3. Policy Implications

Government and regulatory bodies can utilize these findings to refine and expand support schemes that address not only financial access but also skill enhancement, digital literacy, and socio-cultural barriers. Policies should prioritize integrated programs combining education, training, financial

services, and digital tools to ensure holistic empowerment. Furthermore, regular monitoring and evaluation of such programs will help in measuring effectiveness and scaling best practices.

4. Research Implications

The study highlights areas for future investigation, including longitudinal analyses of the impact of digital financial inclusion on women's entrepreneurial sustainability, cross-regional comparisons of socio-cultural influences, and the role of emerging technologies like AI and fintech in enhancing women's financial literacy and business performance. It also underscores the need for interdisciplinary approaches combining economics, management, sociology, and information systems to understand complex empowerment dynamics.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive review of the factors influencing women's socio-economic empowerment, with a particular focus on education, skill development, financial inclusion, digital literacy, government schemes, and socio-cultural support. The findings underscore the multidimensional nature of empowerment, revealing that education and skills enhance economic participation, financial inclusion strengthens entrepreneurial performance, digital literacy facilitates adoption of financial technologies, and government schemes create enabling environments for women entrepreneurs. Socio-cultural support further reinforces motivation and engagement in entrepreneurial activities.

The integration of theoretical perspectives including human capital theory, resource-based view, technology acceptance model, social capital theory, and institutional theory offers a robust framework for understanding the complex interplay of personal, institutional, and technological factors in women's empowerment.

Practically, the study emphasizes the need for holistic and inclusive interventions that combine education, training, financial access, and digital tools while addressing socio-cultural barriers. For policymakers, it highlights the importance of designing targeted schemes that not only

provide resources but also foster awareness, skill-building, and supportive networks.

In conclusion, empowering women is a multidimensional endeavor that requires coordinated efforts across education, finance, technology, policy, and social support. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts, regional variations, and the role of emerging digital innovations to further enhance evidence-based strategies for sustainable and inclusive women's empowerment.

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Author Contributions

Dr. S. Saranya: Conceptualization, Methodology, Literature Review, Data Curation, Analysis, Visualization, Writing - Original Draft Preparation, Writing - Reviewing and Editing, Validation. Dr. K. Chandrasekar: Supervision.

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Ethical Approval

This research is a systematic review based solely on existing, publicly available literature and did not involve human or animal subjects, primary data collection, or experimental intervention. Hence, ethical approval was not required.

Competing Interest

The authors declare no competing financial, institutional, or personal interests that could have influenced the content or conclusions of this paper.

Data Availability

The study is based entirely on secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed academic sources. No new primary data were generated or analyzed. Supplementary references and materials can be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Usage Disclosure

The authors confirm that no generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) were used to draft or write the substantive content of this manuscript. Only standard spelling, grammar, and formatting tools in Microsoft Word were used. All analytical, theoretical, and critical writing is original and authored by the researchers.

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