



Evaluating Government Efforts to Reduce Gender Disparity among the Gujjar Tribe of Kalakote Tehsil in Rajouri District

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Abstract

The study examines the impact of government initiatives on gender inequality within the Gujjar community of Kalakote Tehsil in Rajouri District. Through a survey of 300 respondents, it evaluates the effectiveness of policies designed to empower women in key areas such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The findings indicate that, while there is a high awareness of programs like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, their perceived effectiveness is limited, primarily due to entrenched cultural norms and economic dependence that restrict women's access to resources. Statistical analysis reveals varying perceptions based on age and residential location, with rural respondents reporting a stronger impact of these programs compared to their urban counterparts. The study suggests that policies tailored to the cultural context, along with vocational training and financial literacy initiatives, could more effectively address the needs of Gujjar women, promoting their economic independence and greater community acceptance.

Keywords: Gujjar Tribe, Cultural Barriers, Gender Disparity, Government Initiatives,

Introduction

The study investigates gender disparities within the Gujjar community in Kalakote Tehsil, Rajouri District, with a focus on assessing the effectiveness of government initiatives promoting gender equality. Despite progressive policies like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, marginalized communities continue to experience significant gender gaps. Gujjar women, in particular, face socio-cultural barriers that limit their access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities—key factors for individual



empowerment and community development. These challenges are further reinforced by traditional norms that confine women to domestic roles, restricting their participation in public life and sustaining cycles of dependency.

This research explores the intersection of cultural and economic factors that impede the impact of government initiatives, especially in rural settings. Through an analysis of responses from 300 community members, the study assesses both awareness and perceived effectiveness of these policies while identifying persistent obstacles faced by women. It also highlights potential improvements, advocating for culturally tailored and locally relevant strategies to bridge gender gaps, empower women, and enhance the success of government programs within the Gujjar community.

Objectives

1. To identify socio-cultural barriers which hinder the effective implementation of the government policies
2. To study the gender disparities in access to education, healthcare, and economic resources within the Gujjar community
3. To evaluate the impact of government initiatives in addressing gender inequality

Hypotheses

1. **H₁:** Socio-cultural norms significantly restrict the effectiveness of government policies in promoting gender equality.
2. **H₂:** Government initiatives positively influence perceptions of gender equality within the Gujjar community.

Problem Statement

Gender disparity remains a pressing issue within the Gujjar community in Kalakote Tehsil, Rajouri District, despite government initiatives aimed at empowering women. Programs like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana seek to promote gender equality by enhancing women's access to education, healthcare, and economic resources. However, their effectiveness is hindered by deeply rooted cultural norms and economic dependencies that restrict women's access to these opportunities. Traditional roles confine Gujjar women to domestic responsibilities, limiting their participation in public life



and economic activities, which perpetuates cycles of dependency and curtails personal growth and autonomy.

These socio-cultural barriers are further exacerbated by geographic and infrastructural challenges in rural areas, which constrain the outreach and impact of government programs. Additionally, while awareness of these initiatives is relatively high, it does not always translate into perceived effectiveness, as many community members believe the programs fail to address the unique challenges faced by women within the local cultural context. This study aims to assess the extent of these challenges and evaluate ongoing efforts to reduce gender disparity in the Gujar community. By identifying key socio-cultural and economic barriers, the study seeks to propose culturally sensitive policy adjustments that can enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives in addressing gender inequality.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on three key frameworks: Social Role Theory, Empowerment Theory, and Intersectionality Theory, each providing a distinct perspective on gender disparity within the Gujar community.

Social Role Theory posits that culturally assigned gender roles shape behaviors and opportunities according to societal expectations. In the Gujar community, traditional norms prioritize domestic responsibilities for women, restricting their access to education, healthcare, and economic resources, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities.

Empowerment Theory emphasizes the importance of providing resources and opportunities to enhance autonomy and decision-making power. In the context of government initiatives, this theory supports the notion that expanding access to education, vocational training, and financial independence can empower Gujar women, helping them overcome socio-economic barriers and participate more actively in community life.

Intersectionality Theory examines how overlapping identities—such as gender, socio-economic status, and geographic location—compound the challenges faced by marginalized groups. For Gujar women, these intersecting factors exacerbate their exclusion from essential resources and reduce the effectiveness of broad, one-size-fits-all policy interventions.



Together, these theoretical perspectives highlight the need for culturally sensitive and multidimensional approaches in implementing government initiatives to effectively address gender disparity within the Gujjar community.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study employs a comprehensive quantitative approach to assess gender disparity within the Gujjar community in Kalakote Tehsil. Data were collected from a stratified sample of 300 households through structured surveys, utilizing a three-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of government initiatives. To provide additional context, qualitative insights were gathered through interviews with local leaders and community members.

For data analysis, SPSS software was used, applying descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA to examine the relationships between demographic factors and the perceived impact of policies on gender equality. This mixed-method approach ensures a nuanced understanding of both statistical trends and community perspectives.

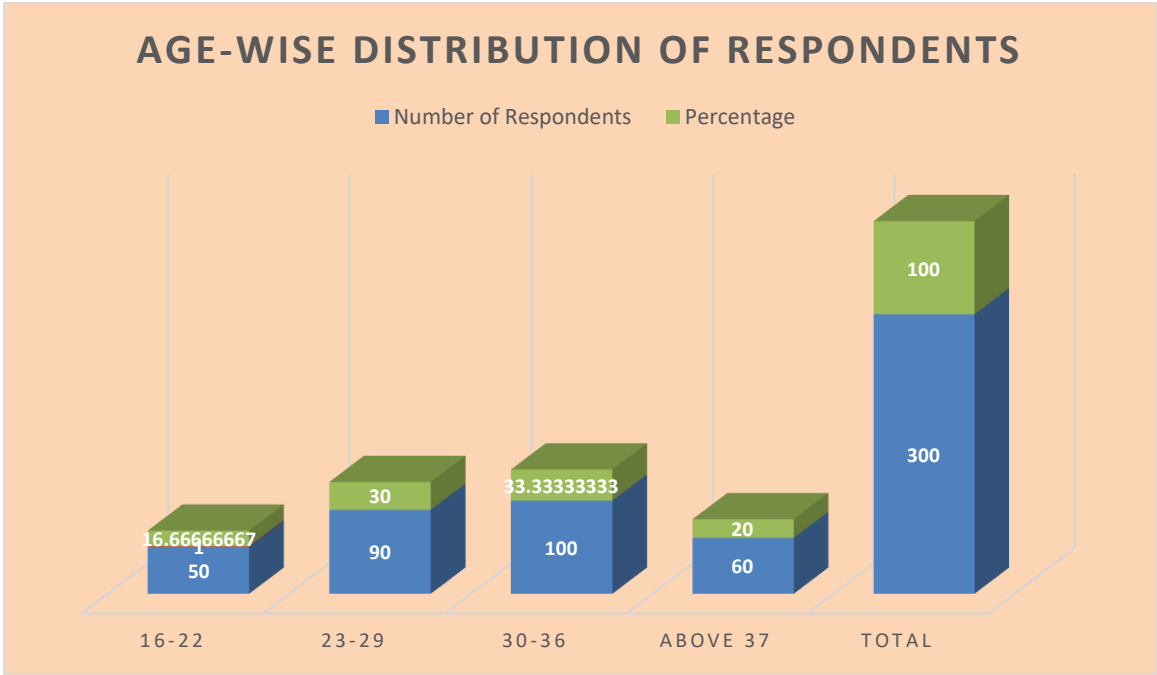
Variables

The study incorporates several key variables to explore gender disparity. Dependent variables include access to education, healthcare, and economic resources, which are crucial indicators of gender inequality. Independent variables, such as place of residence (rural vs. urban areas) and government initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, are examined for their influence on resource access among Gujjar women.

Control variables, including age groups (16-22 years, 23-29 years, 30-36 years, and 37+ years), allow the study to analyze how responses vary across different demographic segments. This approach provides insight into how factors like geographic location, government policies, and age influence perceptions of gender equality within the community.

Graphs

Graph 1.1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents



Graph 1.2: Place of Living-wise Distribution of Respondents

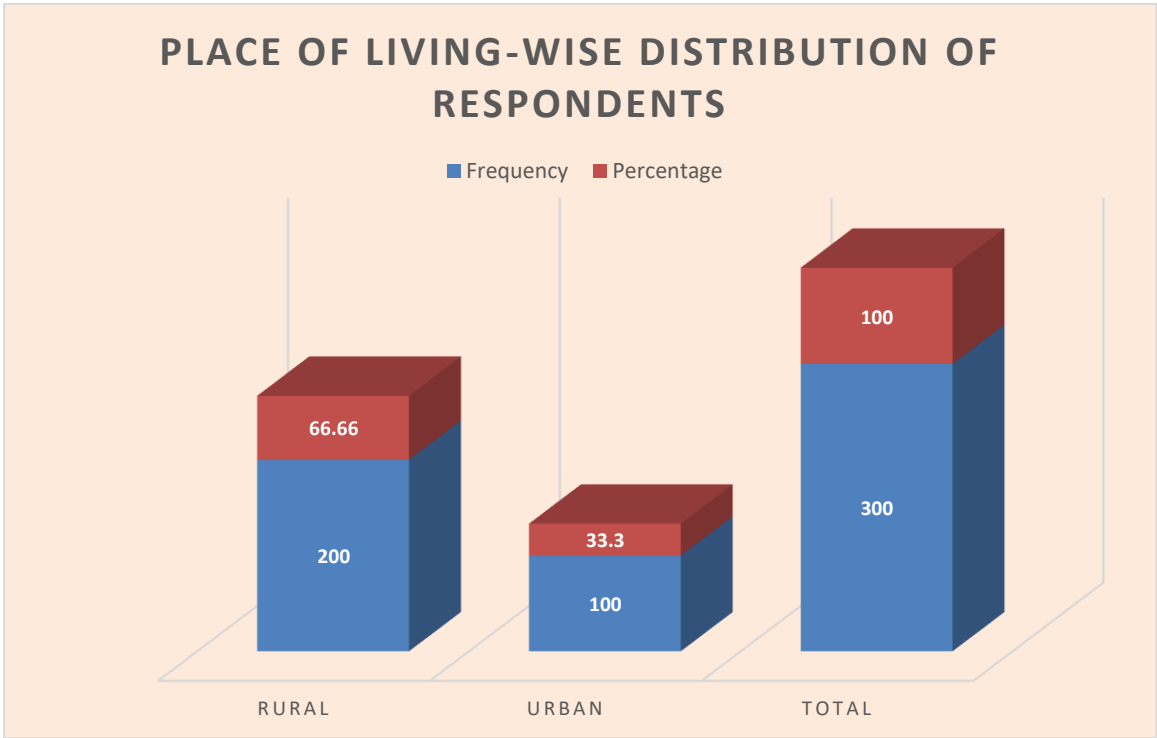


Table 1.1: Frequency Distribution of Responses on Gender Disparity, Resource Access, and Impact of Government Initiatives



S. No.	Statement	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
1	Do you believe there is significant gender disparity in access to resources?	240	30	30	80.0%	10.0%	10.0%
2	Are you aware of government initiatives addressing gender disparity?	255	25	20	85.0%	8.3%	6.7%
3	Have these initiatives positively impacted gender equality?	180	60	60	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%
4	Do traditional norms hinder women's access to resources?	210	45	45	70.0%	15.0%	15.0%
5	Would access to education empower Gujjar women?	270	15	15	90.0%	5.0%	5.0%
6	Does economic dependence on male family members hinder empowerment?	225	45	30	75.0%	15.0%	10.0%
7	Do you support vocational training programs for women?	285	10	5	95.0%	3.3%	1.7%

Source: Survey data

Table 1.1 shows that 80% of respondents recognize a significant gender gap in access to resources within the Gujjar community, while 10% disagree and another 10% are uncertain. This widespread acknowledgment of gender inequality is likely linked to cultural traditions, economic dependence, and limited access to education and healthcare for women. Awareness of government programs aimed at addressing gender disparity is high, with 85% of respondents recognizing these initiatives, though only 60% feel they have had a positive impact. The gap between awareness and perceived effectiveness suggests potential challenges in policy implementation, cultural resistance, or the need for more specific interventions.

In terms of traditional norms, 70% agree that these norms hinder women's access to resources, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive strategies. When asked about education as a



tool for empowerment, 90% believe it would benefit Gujjar women, indicating strong community support for initiatives focused on women's education.

Economic dependence on male family members is considered a significant barrier to women’s empowerment by 75% of respondents, suggesting that programs in financial literacy and income generation are crucial for enhancing women’s autonomy. Furthermore, 95% support vocational training for women, reflecting widespread community approval of efforts to boost women’s economic involvement and independence.

These results suggest that while government initiatives are recognized, their perceived effectiveness is constrained by cultural and economic factors, indicating the need for more culturally tailored and targeted policies to effectively address gender inequality in the Gujjar community.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 1.2: Mean Difference in Perceptions of Government Initiatives Based on Place of Living

Variable	Place of Living	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Impact of Government Initiatives on Gender Equality	Rural	200	3.1	0.5	3.41	0.001
	Urban	100	2.8	0.6		

Table 1.2 presents the perceived impact of government initiatives on gender equality among Gujjar community members from rural and urban areas. The table shows that rural respondents have a higher mean perception score (3.1) compared to urban respondents (2.8), suggesting that those in rural areas tend to view these initiatives more positively. The standard deviations for rural and urban respondents are 0.5 and 0.6, respectively, indicating similar levels of variance in perceptions within each group, though slightly greater variability is seen among urban respondents. This higher variability in urban areas may reflect a wider range of opinions, possibly influenced by different levels of awareness, socio-economic diversity, and individual experiences with gender equality initiatives.

The t-test statistic of 3.41 and p-value of 0.001 indicate that the difference in perceptions between rural and urban respondents is statistically significant. With a p-value well below the



standard threshold of 0.05, there is less than a 0.1% likelihood that the observed difference is due to chance. This suggests a strong likelihood that rural and urban respondents perceive the impact of government initiatives on gender equality differently.

This significant difference may be influenced by several factors. Rural respondents might experience more direct or visible effects from government programs targeting rural communities, such as initiatives in education, healthcare, or financial support. Furthermore, rural areas may be more influenced by traditional gender norms, making government interventions seem more impactful compared to urban areas, where perceptions of gender equality may already be more progressive due to greater exposure to diverse perspectives and economic opportunities. Urban respondents, with access to more resources, information, and alternative forms of empowerment, may view government efforts as less impactful. Additionally, urban areas may face fewer traditional restrictions, reducing the visible effects of government interventions compared to more conservative rural settings.

Table 1.3: Mean Difference in Perceptions by Age

Variable	Age	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Impact of Government Initiatives on Gender Equality	16-22	50	2.9	0.4	2.21	0.07
	23-29	90	3.0	0.5		
	30-36	100	2.7	0.5		
	Above 37	60	3.1	0.6		

Table 1.3 presents the mean differences in perceptions of the impact of government initiatives on gender equality across different age groups within the Gujar community. The table reveals varying levels of perceived impact among age groups, with respondents aged 16-22 showing a mean perception score of 2.9, those aged 23-29 with a mean of 3.0, the 30-36 age group with a lower mean of 2.7, and respondents above 37 reporting the highest mean perception score at 3.1. These differences suggest a trend where older respondents (those above 37) perceive government initiatives as more effective in promoting gender equality, while younger respondents, particularly those in the 30-36 age group, report lower perceived impact. The standard deviation values for each group (ranging from 0.4 to 0.6) indicate that perceptions within each age group vary to some degree, with slightly more variability observed in the older age groups. The variability among older respondents may reflect diverse individual experiences



and interactions with government programs over a longer period of time, leading to differing opinions on their effectiveness.

The F-test statistic of 2.21 and a p-value of 0.07 provide insight into the statistical significance of these differences in perceptions across age groups. The p-value of 0.07 is slightly above the conventional threshold of 0.05, suggesting that while there is some evidence of variation in perceptions based on age, this difference is not statistically significant at the 5% level. However, the proximity of the p-value to the 0.05 threshold may indicate a trend worth considering, as it suggests that age may have some influence on perceptions, even if it does not reach strict statistical significance.

The observed trend in perception differences could be attributed to a variety of factors. Older respondents may have had longer exposure to and potentially greater reliance on government support, especially in areas like healthcare, education, and financial initiatives aimed at empowering marginalized groups. The extended experience might lead to a higher perceived impact, as older individuals may have witnessed incremental changes in gender equality over time due to these initiatives. In contrast, younger respondents, particularly those in the 30-36 age group, may have different expectations or criteria for assessing the effectiveness of these initiatives. Growing up in an era where gender equality has gained increased attention globally, younger respondents might expect more comprehensive or faster-paced changes and may thus perceive the current initiatives as less impactful. Younger age groups may have more access to alternative sources of empowerment, such as social media, private education, or employment opportunities, which could reduce their reliance on government initiatives as primary drivers of gender equality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender Disparity in Access to Resources in the Gujjar Community

Gender inequality in access to resources within the Gujjar community of Kalakote Tehsil is a significant concern, with 80% of survey respondents indicating that women face considerable barriers in obtaining education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. This disparity is deeply ingrained in cultural norms that impose rigid gender roles, limiting women's autonomy and perpetuating cycles of economic and social dependency. Traditional expectations often confine women to domestic roles, restricting their involvement in areas outside the home and thereby reducing their access to education and employment. The lack of access to resources



reinforces dependence, hindering women from achieving financial independence or taking on leadership roles in the community.

While various government initiatives aim to address these gender gaps, the persistent cultural norms pose a considerable obstacle, suggesting that more comprehensive strategies are necessary to achieve meaningful progress. These traditional norms within the Gujjar community create significant challenges, as even well-intentioned policies may fail to be fully effective if they do not consider the community's cultural context. Without tackling these cultural expectations, women may continue to face restrictions not only in accessing resources but also in making independent choices regarding their education, health, and economic participation. Additionally, the limited presence of women in public spaces due to cultural constraints may reinforce the notion that they are unworthy or incapable of accessing the same resources as men, further perpetuating gender inequality.

Respondents reported that while awareness of government initiatives is relatively high (85%), only 60% believe these programs have had a measurable positive impact on gender equality. This gap between awareness and perceived effectiveness highlights that simply raising awareness is not enough to drive significant change. Despite the reach of these initiatives, cultural resistance and barriers to proper implementation reduce their effectiveness within the Gujjar community. These findings emphasize the need for policies that are tailored to the specific needs and cultural contexts of the community, as broad, generic approaches may not resonate with or effectively support Gujjar women.

The continued influence of cultural norms that restrict women's access to resources points to the necessity of a community-focused strategy to address gender inequality. Engaging local leaders and key decision-makers within families could be an effective approach to gradually shift these norms. Involving community stakeholders in awareness programs and discussions on the value of women's empowerment can help create an environment where cultural attitudes evolve to support gender equality. Role models from within the community, especially those who are educated or economically successful, can be included in these programs to demonstrate the benefits of equal access to resources. This would show families that empowering women does not threaten, but rather strengthens, family and community structures. By adopting such approaches, the government and community leaders can collaborate to lay the groundwork for long-term, sustainable change.



Economic Dependency and Educational Gaps as Barriers to Women's Empowerment

Economic dependence on male family members is a significant barrier to women's empowerment within the Gujar community, as noted by 75% of respondents. This dependency restricts women's financial autonomy, limiting their decision-making power and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Without the ability to independently manage finances or access economic resources, women are reliant on male relatives who often control the family's finances and, by extension, household decisions. This lack of financial independence not only hinders women's ability to invest in education or healthcare but also makes it difficult for them to seize opportunities for personal and economic growth.

The strong community support for women's empowerment through education (90%) highlights a potential route for change. Education is widely seen as a powerful tool for empowerment, enabling women to acquire critical skills, broaden their perspectives, and engage in social and economic activities. Educated women are better equipped to understand and assert their rights, access improved healthcare, and make informed decisions for themselves and their families. However, implementing educational programs in rural areas, where infrastructure is often limited and cultural norms may discourage women's participation, presents a significant challenge. Even when educational opportunities are available, the indirect costs, such as transportation, supplies, or the loss of household labor, may discourage families from investing in the education of female members.

Vocational training programs offer a promising solution to bridge the gap between education and economic independence. With 95% of respondents supporting vocational training, it's clear that the community values programs that provide women with practical, marketable skills. Vocational training offers a flexible, locally relevant alternative to formal education, focusing on skills that women can directly apply in their communities. Programs in fields like agriculture, animal husbandry, or handicrafts could empower women to contribute economically without the need to migrate for work, aligning with cultural expectations for women to remain close to home. These skills also enable women to engage in economic



activities that complement their household roles, thereby enhancing their financial autonomy without disrupting traditional norms too abruptly.

To further promote financial independence, initiatives like microfinance programs or self-help groups could complement educational and vocational efforts. By providing women with access to small loans, these programs enable them to start businesses or invest in income-generating activities, offering a pathway to financial independence. Such economic empowerment could gradually shift the decision-making balance within families, helping women gain respect and influence as contributors to household income. Financial literacy programs could further enhance the impact of these initiatives, equipping women with the knowledge and confidence to manage their earnings and investments. Through these combined efforts, women in the Gujjar community could overcome economic dependency, laying a solid foundation for sustainable gender equality.

Support for Vocational Training Programs and the Need for Culturally Sensitive Implementation of Government Initiatives

The strong support for vocational training programs, with 95% of respondents expressing approval, demonstrates a shared recognition of the potential benefits these programs offer. Vocational training is viewed as a practical means for women to acquire skills that lead to economic opportunities, improving their quality of life and contributing to the broader economic development of the community. Unlike traditional education, which may require women to spend extended periods away from family responsibilities, vocational training can often be completed in shorter sessions and focuses on skills directly applicable to local economic activities. This makes it a more suitable solution for the Gujjar community, where cultural norms still emphasize women's roles within the household and local community.

However, to ensure the success of vocational training programs, it is crucial that they are implemented in a culturally sensitive way. Programs that ignore local customs or fail to involve community leaders are unlikely to gain widespread acceptance or participation. To overcome this challenge, vocational programs could be integrated into existing community structures, with local leaders or trusted figures promoting these opportunities. Offering training in areas that align with the community's needs, such as agriculture, animal care, or crafts, would make



the programs appealing to both women and their families as a means to enhance household income without disrupting cultural norms.

Perceptions of government initiatives aimed at addressing gender disparities were mixed, with only 60% of respondents indicating that these initiatives had a positive impact. This suggests that while the community is aware of such initiatives, there may be issues with how they are implemented or received. Generic national policies may not resonate within the specific cultural context of the Gujar community. Therefore, there is a need for policies to be adapted or complemented by locally tailored programs that address the unique challenges faced by Gujar women. For example, rural areas could benefit from mobile education units or on-site vocational training workshops, which would minimize the need for women to travel far from home—a practice that may be culturally restrictive. Involving community members in the design and execution of these programs could increase their relevance and acceptance. Local leaders, particularly successful female role models who have advanced through education or economic engagement, could serve as ambassadors for these initiatives, helping build trust and encouraging participation. This approach not only increases the chances of success but also creates a sense of ownership within the community, as members see their input reflected in the programs. By collaborating with the community, policymakers can develop initiatives that are effective in promoting gender equality while respecting cultural traditions, paving the way for sustainable change.

Final Reflections of the Study

1. Cultural norms in the Gujar community severely limit women's access to education, healthcare, and economic resources.
2. Economic dependency on male relatives is a significant obstacle to women's empowerment, restricting their autonomy and financial independence.
3. While awareness of government initiatives for gender equality is high, the perceived impact of these programs is moderate.
4. Traditional gender roles confine women to domestic duties, diminishing their opportunities for social and economic participation.
5. The community overwhelmingly supports vocational training programs as a means to empower women and enhance their economic opportunities.



6. Access to education is widely regarded as a vital tool for empowering Gujjar women, signaling a readiness for change within the community.
7. Gender inequality is more pronounced in rural areas, where limited infrastructure and entrenched cultural norms further restrict women's access to resources.
8. The effectiveness of government programs is perceived differently across the community, underscoring the need for culturally tailored policies that address local challenges.
9. Financial literacy programs and access to microfinance could reduce economic dependency and foster women's financial independence.
10. Involving local leaders and respected community figures can aid in facilitating gradual changes in cultural attitudes toward women's empowerment.
11. A community-driven approach is crucial, with collaboration between policymakers and local members to ensure that initiatives are both relevant and effective.
12. Comprehensive, culturally sensitive strategies that combine education, economic empowerment, and community engagement are essential for achieving lasting gender equality in the Gujjar community.

Suggestions

1. Develop community-based educational programs, such as mobile learning units or local schools, to reduce travel and associated costs for women and girls in the Gujjar community.
2. Design vocational training programs that focus on locally relevant skills, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicrafts, aligning with the community's economic activities and cultural norms.
3. Introduce financial literacy programs alongside microfinance opportunities to empower women with the knowledge and resources needed to contribute to household income and reduce economic dependence.
4. Involve respected community leaders in awareness campaigns to promote women's empowerment and challenge restrictive gender norms, fostering community support for gender equality initiatives.
5. Set up mobile health clinics or telemedicine services in rural areas to enhance healthcare access for women, particularly focusing on maternal and reproductive health.



6. Organize community dialogues and workshops on the benefits of gender equality, allowing members to discuss and gradually change restrictive cultural norms.
7. Conduct awareness campaigns that clearly outline the benefits and goals of gender equality initiatives, ensuring community members understand and trust these programs.
8. Establish community centers or safe spaces where women can access resources, participate in educational programs, and receive support without fear of cultural backlash.
9. Highlight successful women from the Gujar community as role models to inspire others and show families the positive outcomes of empowering female members.
10. Adapt government policies to better address the unique needs and cultural context of the Gujar community, ensuring initiatives are relevant and culturally respectful.
11. Provide financial incentives or scholarships for families who support the education of female children, easing the economic burden and encouraging families to invest in girls' education.
12. Support women's cooperatives where women can collectively produce and sell goods, fostering economic independence and creating a network of support for entrepreneurial activities.
13. Collaborate with NGOs experienced in gender-focused development to design and implement programs that address specific local barriers to women's empowerment in Kalakote Tehsil.
14. Create programs that engage men and boys in discussions about gender equality to build understanding and encourage support for women's empowerment within families and the community.
15. Establish regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives, allowing for ongoing improvements to meet the needs of the Gujar community and enhance program outcomes.

Conclusion

The study highlights the complex challenges of addressing gender disparity within the Gujar community in Kalakote Tehsil, despite the existence of government initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality. Policies such as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana have raised awareness, but their effectiveness remains limited due to persistent



cultural norms and economic dependency. These norms confine women to domestic roles, restrict their access to education and healthcare, and prevent economic independence, creating barriers that policy alone cannot overcome. Significant differences in perceptions between rural and urban respondents, as well as among different age groups, show that local context plays a crucial role in shaping the reception and impact of government programs. As a result, a one-size-fits-all approach is not sufficient to drive meaningful change. Tailored solutions, such as vocational training, financial literacy programs, and community-driven awareness campaigns, are crucial to addressing these entrenched challenges. By incorporating culturally sensitive and context-specific strategies, future initiatives can better support Gujjar women in gaining greater autonomy, improving access to resources, and achieving more equitable participation in their community.

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