

India's De-Notified Tribal Women: A Systematic Literature Review On The Socio-Cultural Barriers To Their Empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

British authorities categorized these populations as chronic offenders, leading to the imposition of compulsory settlement and regular police supervision of whole tribes (Safdar, 2020). The criminal designation was not determined by individual conduct but attributed collectively to groups, perpetuating systemic prejudice (Piliavsky, 2015). As a result of this action, DNTs were compelled to move to settlements where they experienced difficult living circumstances, loss of their means of making a living, and continuous surveillance by the authorities (Sarthak, 2017). The legal branding of DNTs resulted in their increased isolation from mainstream society, disrupting their usual vocations and impacting their socioeconomic exchanges.

After gaining independence in 1952, the Indian government introduced the Habitual Offenders Act of 1952, which replaced the CTA. Communities that were earlier labeled as 'criminals' (many of which were Nomadic Tribes or the NTs) were officially delisted and designated as the Denotified Tribes or the *Vimukta Jatis* to undo the harms of the CTA (Bhukya & Surepally, 2021; NHRC, 2024; Pawar, 2022; Piliavsky, 2015). Despite the change in legislation, the negative public attitudes and social stigma against these populations have persisted (Moore et al., 2016). Consequently, the DNTs are still seen as possible wrongdoers and encounter law enforcement mistreatment, societal isolation, and bias while attempting to receive fundamental services (Sarthak, 2017). Currently, in India, the DNTs continue to be one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (Sarthak, 2017) and encounter exclusion at various levels.

Social Marginalization

DNTs experience social exclusion from mainstream societies due to the enduring stigma associated with their status as erstwhile criminal tribes (Chatterjee, 2024). This marginalization is sustained via discriminatory practices in schools, workplaces, and public life (Crawford et al., 2010). Children of DNT often encounter derision in educational institutions, while their families experience exclusion and alienation within their communities (UNICEF, 2016). The historical practice of branding criminals has hindered their complete assimilation into society, significantly limiting their ability to move up the social ladder (Patra, 2016).

Economic Marginalization

Numerous DNTs experience economic disadvantage (Chatterjee, 2024). Their historical nomadic existence and being compelled to settle down have taken away their traditional ways of living (Shekari et al., 2022). Many DNTs lack land access (Korra, 2017), which hampers their capacity to sustain themselves via agricultural activities. Consequently, DNTs often resort to low-skilled tasks, unregulated employment, or illicit activities to sustain themselves (Kumar, 2020). Due to the absence of a consistent source of income, they find themselves entangled in recurring patterns of poverty (Korra, 2017; Narayan, 2022).

Political Marginalization

DNTs suffer from insufficient representation in the political sphere and have traditionally been disregarded by state and national administrations (Singh, n.d.). While other disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), have established systems and reserved quotas to safeguard their rights, DNTs frequently face neglect and lack adequate protection (GOI, 2016). Their little political influence has impeded their capacity to campaign for their entitlements, such as access to education, healthcare, and other social welfare programs. Despite the formation of the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT), implementing policies aimed at improving the conditions of DNTs has been sluggish and inefficient.

Although there was a formal delisting, the social and economic consequences of the colonial policies continued to exist. The police consistently monitored and harassed them, especially under the Habitual Offenders Act, which enabled local authorities to target them unfairly and continues even today (Sigler & Culliver, 1990; McNelis, 2017). Many DNTs have been deprived of land ownership and thus compelled to engage in low-skilled occupations or illicit behavior due to their exclusion from the dominant social order (Kumar, 2016). While these communities suffer as a whole, it is observed that the stigmatization impacted the DNT women more than the men. The intersectionality of gender, community (DNT), and various other socio-cultural parameters have only added to their increased vulnerability and compromised empowerment in all spheres (Agrawal, 2018; Bokil, 2002; NCW, 2017).

Tribal Women and Empowerment

Tribal women are doubly disadvantaged because of the community that they belong to, as well as their gender, resulting in inadequate education, job opportunities, and health compared to tribal males and the wider population (Paray, 2019). Due to institutional neglect (Xaxa, 2014), socio-cultural norms, and geographic isolation (Subramanyam, 2020), tribal or nomadic women have restricted access to economic opportunities (Gupta et al., 2013), decision-making (Sankar, 2021), healthcare (Roy et al., 2023), and education (Minz & Tyagi, 2023). Systemic and historical biases may make obtaining political representation (Pradha & Sethi, 2024), land ownership (Jain et al., 2023), and legal rights difficult (Saryal, 2014). Due to restricted access to markets, finance, and job prospects, tribal women experience economic instability that restricts mobility and their general well-being (Katini et al., 2024).

Intersectionality and Gender

DNT women experience a combination of marginalization that is intensified or made worse (Paray, 2019) based on strongly patriarchal gender roles. It exacerbates the constraints on women's ability to get educated, access healthcare, and explore economic prospects (Gupta et al., 2023). Women belonging to such marginalized and disadvantaged communities often experience the negative consequences of societal disapproval since they are at a higher risk of being taken advantage of, subjected to abuse, and trafficked (NYU, 2022).

Efforts to enhance the empowerment of DNT women encounter substantial obstacles due to deeply ingrained sociocultural constraints. The effects of colonial marginalization and stigmatization persist and influence their current socioeconomic and political standing. As a consequence, DNT women undergo negative perceptions and discrimination and are prone to social isolation, financial difficulties, and political disregard (GOI, 2008). Without targeted intervention to deeply rooted societal biases, policy initiatives have not yielded valuable outcomes.

Intersectionality: The interconnectedness of gender, caste, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status

Examining DNT women's empowerment is essential as they experience unique and compounded marginalization (Pawar, 2022). Their gender combines with factors such as caste, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, further exacerbating their underprivileged position (Veenstra, 2011). This intersectionality exacerbates the structural obstacles they face in accessing their fundamental rights to education, healthcare, work, and political representation.

Caste and Ethnicity: Caste prejudice and its economic implications intensify the exclusion of DNTs from mainstream social and economic systems (Jadhav, 2022; Singh, 2021). Women have a more significant impact since traditional male-dominated norms in their communities and mainstream society's biased reciprocation restrict their ability to access resources and undergo socio-economic mobility (Bokhil & Raghavan, 2016). Such experiences demotivate and disconnect them from processes that promote upward mobility and empowerment.

Socioeconomic Status: It is observed that economic marginalization among the DNT women is more pronounced as they have limited access to conventional means of making a living, land, and formal employment (Korra, 2017). Further, while DNT women play a crucial role in their family's finances, they lack decision-making and an extra weight of restricted economic prospects (Singh, 2021). Their contributions are frequently underestimated and systematically excluded from economic decision-making processes (Sankar, 2021). It is reported that a significant number of DNT women participate in insecure and informal employment as well as illicit activities such as prostitution (Sarthak, 2017)), exposing them to exploitation and mistreatment and reinforcing their socioeconomic disadvantage.

The convergence of gender with caste, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class, thus, puts the DNT women in unique

circumstances, necessitating targeted efforts to address their issues. Recognizing these overlapping identities is crucial for creating specific interventions that advance gender equality and social justice for women with disabilities, nonbinary, and transgender individuals.

Distinct Vulnerabilities and Challenges Faced by DNT Women

The DNT women have specific vulnerabilities that differentiate their circumstances from those of males in their community, as well as women from other disadvantaged groups. The vulnerabilities include the following:

Abuse and Exploitation: Women who do not have a domicile, nationality, or legal status are susceptible to experiencing heightened abuse, such as domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking (Chaudhury, 2012). DNT women, due to the negative perception of their tribal heritage, are more vulnerable to being taken advantage of, and they often have difficulties in obtaining legal remedies or support networks to shield themselves from mistreatment (Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019).

Obstacles to Education and Healthcare: DNT women have substantial difficulties accessing education and healthcare (Pawar, 2022). Factors such as social stigma, poverty, and early marriage often hinder their ability to access education or successfully finish their studies. Consequently, many DNT women lack literacy skills (Borkar & Jambhulkar, 2022), hindering their ability to pursue employment outside the community or opt for political ambitions. Regarding healthcare, women from marginalized communities have elevated levels of maternal mortality, malnutrition, and limited availability of reproductive health treatments owing to geographical seclusion and discrimination within healthcare institutions (Madane, 2018). According to the mainstream health policy, DNTs, NTs, and SNTs have limited or no access to medical facilities and other advantages provided to the general population (Modi, 2022).

Insufficient Political Representation: DNT women are absent from community decision-making and political proceedings at the municipal or national levels (Pawar, 2022). This lack of sufficient political representation restricts their ability to influence policies that can directly impact their lives and communities (GOI, 2008). Thus, it is crucial to empower DNT women politically so they may actively participate in the decision-making and development processes that influence their future.

The Importance of Prioritizing DNT Women in Wider Conversations on Gender Equality

India's extensive deliberations on gender equality generally center around women belonging to SCs and STs. In contrast, that of DNT women (within the categories specified) is neglected mainly because of reasons cited earlier. Considering the level of disadvantage they experience, an adequate understanding needs to be developed to establish their unique issues and aspirations.

Incorporation into Development Agendas: For India's development and empowerment programs to be inclusive, the unique requirements of the varied marginalized individuals require due exploration and attention (Modi, 2022). Government initiatives designed to empower women through education and livelihood programs should be extended to include DNT women and redress their obstacles in accessing various opportunities.

Breaking Cycles of Poverty and Exclusion: Empowering women from marginalized communities can disrupt the enduring patterns of poverty and social exclusion that have impacted these groups for several generations (Wei et al., 2021). Thus, instead of simply improving women's lives, these processes showcase the potential to reform whole communities. Providing DNT women access to education, healthcare, and work opportunities can help them contribute more to their family's and community's welfare, resulting in a broader scope for their well-being.

Human Rights and Social Justice: The ongoing exclusion of DNT women is a notable human rights concern (Korra, 2017). Prioritizing their empowerment is crucial to preserving India's constitutional obligation to equality and social justice (Bhawan, 2021). Women are entitled to equal chances for advancement and progress, just like any other member of society. Empowering women is crucial in addressing past injustices and promoting social justice for everyone.

Solutions to the issues of the DNT women and their empowerment can be achieved by exploring the entrenched structural inequities in Indian society through research. As discussed earlier, the intersection of gender with caste, ethnicity, and socioeconomic position gives rise to distinct obstacles for DNT women, resulting in compounded marginalization. Empowering women from the DNT community is not only an issue of fairness but also a crucial factor in promoting comprehensive and long-lasting growth for everyone.

Research Questions

This study aimed to establish a greater understanding of the subject by answering the following questions: How has the historical marginalization of DNT women impacted their well-being? In what ways are the DNT women socio-economically independent? What cultural factors hinder their empowerment?

Research Methodology

The study applied a systematic literature review (SLR) (Mengist et al., 2020) to investigate and evaluate the available literature on the empowerment of DNT women. SLR guarantees a methodical, reproducible, and thorough examination

of the existing corpus of research. Hence, it was a helpful technique for answering the research questions. Further, SLR pinpoints areas of research that require further exploration and provides a basis for future investigations.

Databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, Web of Science, and PubMed were used to ensure a comprehensive range of relevant research. The search phrases used included various combinations of keywords such as Women Empowerment, Denotified Tribes, Marginalized Communities, Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, and Barriers to Empowerment—Boolean operators ('And,' 'Or,' and 'Not') were used to narrow down searches and improve the specificity of relevant research (Bramer et al., 2018). The inclusion criteria for this study were peer-reviewed publications, reports, and grey literature published in English from 2010 till date, with a particular emphasis on women's empowerment and DNTs. The exclusion criteria were not to review literature that did not relate to DNTs or research irrelevant to women's empowerment. Additionally, it excluded non-English studies.

The data from chosen studies was methodically categorized for pertinent information, such as author particulars, publication year, research location, significant topics (such as obstacles to empowerment or policy effects), and conclusions. The retrieved data underwent thematic analysis to uncover prevalent patterns and significant discoveries throughout the literature. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying structural obstacles, such as socioeconomic, political, and cultural variables. A quality evaluation utilizing the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (Long et al., 2020) checklist ensured the validity and reliability of the chosen studies. Only publications adhering to a rigorous methodology were included in the final evaluation to reduce bias and enhance the review's reliability. Results were then consolidated and presented in a descriptive style, reinforced by tables and figures to emphasize the main patterns, topics, and areas of study that need further exploration. Figure 1 presents a comprehensive examination of the selection process of 18 papers.

The literature search showed a significant shortage of studies on the social well-being and empowerment of DNT women. The study highlights these by proposing measures to be adopted, policies to be implemented, and areas of future research exploration that both target and provide information on the practical actions needed for empowering DNT women.

PRISMA

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page, 2021) flow diagram visually represents the flow of studies through each phase of the review process (Figure 1).

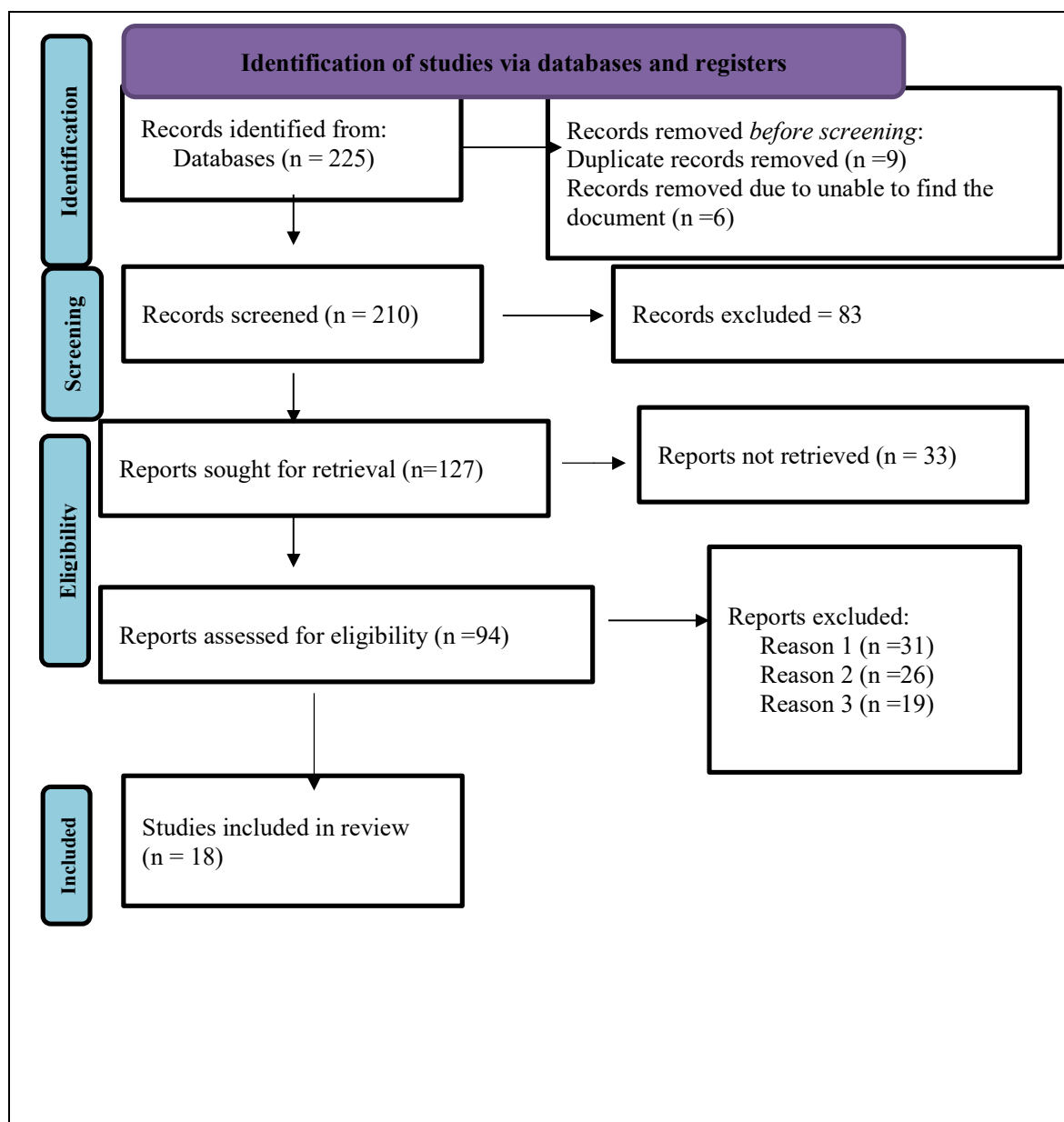


Figure 1. The PRISMA Flow Diagram outlines the process of screening and selecting literature reviews. The PRISMA is through a four-stage process: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. 225 Records were identified from the five databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, Web of Science, and PubMed. In the identification stage 225, nine articles were removed due to duplicates, and six were removed as the language was not in English. In the next stage, the screening, 210 documents were screened, and out of 210, 83 were excluded due to the inability to find the full text. In the third stage, out of 127, 33 were excluded due to not being retrieved. Out of 94 articles, 76 were excluded: 31 were excluded due to the topic not offering the specific concern, 26 were excluded due to studies conducted before 2010, and 19 were excluded due to the no results availability. In the final stage, 18 articles are included in the literature review.

Thematic Synthesis

The literature review results were analyzed using thematic analysis. Four significant themes were generated—historical overview, cultural and social barriers, socioeconomic independence, and policy gaps and interventions.

Table 2. Systematic Literature review and thematic synthesis analysis of selected articles			
Author & Year	Study Design	Aim	Theme
Pawar, 2022	Qualitative research design: 8000 families across 15 districts, five in-depth interviews, and three focus group discussions (FGDs) with 21 women of NT-DNT communities aged 18 and 35 from Maharashtra.	The single aim of the research can be stated as: To identify and assess the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) needs of women and girls from Nomadic and De-Notified Tribes (NT-DNT), examining the extent to which these needs are met through accessible services. The research also aims to analyze the barriers and enablers affecting access to these services, explore the behaviors and attitudes of government SRHR service providers towards these communities, and gather recommendations from NT-DNT women for improving SRHR services.	
Safdar, 2020	Archives from the latter half of the nineteenth century, Textual analysis.	Critically examine the historical evolution, socio-political context, and implications of the Criminal Tribes Act 1871, tracing its enactment, enforcement, and eventual repeal. The research seeks to explore how colonial narratives constructed certain tribes as 'criminal,' assess the long-term impact of this stigmatization on these communities, and review the historiographical approaches to understanding the Act and its legacy in post-colonial India.	
Pradha & Sethi, 2024	Secondary data, textual analysis	The study aims to explore the historical challenges tribal women face in political participation, trace the evolution of policies and initiatives supporting their empowerment, and examine the legal provisions and constitutional rights safeguarding their interests. It further aims to analyze affirmative action policies and assess their impact on tribal women's representation in political and decision-making processes.	
Sankar, 2021	Secondary data, textual analysis	To evaluate the extent of autonomy and decision-making authority possessed by tribal women, with a focus on understanding the factors that influence their empowerment within their communities	
Jain et al., 2023	Data on gender disaggregation taken from about 16,000 original digital land records for 12 States/Union Territories (UTs) in rural India.	To provide evidence-based reinforcement of the existing gender biases in land rights at various stages, thereby advocating for a rethinking of policies in innovative ways that promote gender equity and ensure equal access to land ownership for women.	
Sarthak, 2017	Exploratory-cum-descriptive design, the sample size of the study was 1600 respondents from 8 Denotified Tribes,	To develop a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic challenges faced by women from these communities, evaluate the effectiveness of various government schemes and interventions aimed at improving their quality of life, and assist the government in evolving new strategies that	

	women of denotified and nomadic communities settled or working in Delhi.	bring about positive and sustainable changes in their lives	Historical Overview
Gupta et al., 2023	Secondary data, textual analysis	To critically examine the role of patriarchy in hindering psychological development and explore the associated risks for mental health, with a focus on how systemic gender-based power dynamics contribute to these challenges.	
Khan, 2023	Secondary data, textual analysis	The purpose of this study is to investigate the heterogeneous nature of tribal identities in Tripura, North-East India, by examining cultural, social, and economic variations within tribal communities, challenging the assumption of tribal homogeneity.	Cultural and Social Barriers
Chatterjee, 2024	Secondary data, textual analysis	To examine marginalized communities' social, economic, and political exclusion due to the lack of recognition, documentation, and access to essential services and to evaluate initiatives and recommendations—particularly from national commissions and government schemes—to address their marginalization.	
Balasubramanian & Parvathy, 2020	Secondary data, textual analysis	To explore the correlation between gender identities and the cultural settings of the Mullu Kuruma Tribe in Wayanad, Kerala, and to understand how traditional practices shape gender roles within this tribal community.	
Korra, 2018	Random sampling, 14 tribes out of 59 DNT tribes selected in Andhra Pradesh, Quantitative method	The study aims to analyze the socio-economic and educational status of denotified tribes, with a focus on understanding the pervasive issues of chronic poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, health complications, and substandard living conditions they face. It also aims to identify the impact of societal stigma and the lack of statutory documentation on their identity crisis. Additionally, the research seeks to propose and advocate for developing targeted policies and interventions to address these challenges and promote the welfare and upliftment of denotified tribes.	
Kumar, 2020	Secondary data, textual analysis	To assess the socio-economic and educational challenges Denotified Tribes face, explore the lingering effects of historical stigma, and evaluate the impact of current policies and the UN's recommendations on the rehabilitation and welfare of these communities.	
Minz & Tyagi, 2023	Secondary data, textual analysis	This study examines the significant obstacles faced by tribal groups in India, with a focus on educational challenges. It aims to assess the role of government, institutions, and programs in linking education to development and to identify critical barriers to addressing these educational issues.	Socio-Economic Independence

Madane & Deonar, 2018	Secondary data, textual analysis	To study and analyze the various factors contributing to the educational problems faced by women from Nomadic and Denotified Tribes (NT-DNTs).	
Korra, 2017	The study's sample size is 574 households; systematic random sampling is applied, 5 DNT communities out of 59 de-notified communities in Telangana.	To investigate the learning and language challenges faced by children from Denotified Tribes, focusing on high dropout rates, economic constraints, and an unsupportive school environment. The study aims to explore the impact of teacher indifference and discrimination on these children's educational outcomes and engagement.	
Paray, 2019	Secondary data, textual analysis	To evaluate the socio-economic and educational conditions of tribal women in India, focusing on understanding their current status and identifying the challenges and opportunities for improvement.	
Shekari, 2022	Case Study in Fars province, Iran	To explore the impact of tourism development on the resilience of nomadic livelihoods, through a qualitative field study of four nomadic communities in the Fars province of Iran.	Policy Gaps and Interventions
Narayan, 2022	Case Study in Rajasthan Denotified community, semi structured interview and field observation	This study explores the issues of citizenship rights, poverty, and exclusion among Denotified Communities in India. It traces the historical development of their citizenship identity, classification, and patterns of poverty and exclusion from the British Raj to post-independence India.	

1. Historical Overview

An awareness of the historical backdrop of DNTs in India is crucial for comprehending the current issues these people encounter, especially women (Pawar, 2022). In the past, DNTs were categorized as criminal tribes under British colonial administration under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (Safdar, 2020). Naming these communities significantly impacted their reputation, resulting in social isolation, constant monitoring, and compulsory relocations. Despite being denotified in 1952 after India's independence, the stigma linked to crime remains enduring.

The past deprivation of voting rights has had a long-lasting influence on those who are now denied the right to vote, especially women (Pradha & Sethi, 2024). Women are disproportionately affected by persistent socioeconomic disparities due to the absence of land rights, formal employment, and access to essential amenities like education and healthcare (Sankar, 2021; Jain et al., 2023). Many women in developing nations cannot read or write proficiently, and their involvement in the official labor market is limited. The historical marginalization has also affected their political participation since they are often not adequately represented in decision-making procedures at the municipal and national levels (Pawar, 2022).

The gender-specific obstacles women encounter in these tribes are often eclipsed by the more comprehensive problems impacting the DNT group (Sarthak, 2017). Their current condition is still influenced by past prejudice, which restricts their ability to achieve empowerment. DNT women are often seen as upholders of customary practices, strengthening patriarchal standards and impeding their independence and ability to get resources (Gupta et al., 2023). Although there have been state and central-led measures to enhance the socio-economic status of DNTs, the longstanding history of their marginalization has hindered the effectiveness of these programs in making significant advancements, especially in empowering women.

2. Cultural and Social Barriers

Cultural limitations substantially impede the empowerment of DNT women (Kumar, 2020). These obstacles are ingrained in conventional patriarchal institutions (Gupta et al., 2023), which provide specific duties and obligations to women and often restrict their access to education (Korra, 2017) and employment opportunities (Korra, 2018). Among several DNT communities, there is a prevailing cultural expectation that women should confine themselves to the domestic

realm (Naresh, 2014), prioritizing childrearing and home responsibilities (Balasubramanian & Parvathy, 2020). At the same time, males assume positions of economic and social authority. The marginalized position of DNTs contributes to the prevalence of patriarchal beliefs, reinforcing old power relations (Chatterjee, 2024). Women sometimes face discouragement when seeking education or formal work, as society prioritizes their responsibilities as mothers and wives. This constrains their prospects for personal growth and diminishes their autonomy in determining their life choices. Firmly rooted-cultural norms also have a role in the prevalence of early marriages, limiting prospects for education and empowerment (Khan, 2023).

Often, cultural conventions result in limitations on the movement of DNT women (Kumar, 2020). They may be discouraged when venturing outside their villages or engaging with individuals outside their community (Borkar & Jambhulkar, 2022). Moreover, conventional notions of gender roles frequently sustain acts of violence against women, such as domestic abuse and sexual exploitation, so exacerbating their marginalization and impeding their capacity to seek assistance or express their rights (Chaudhury, 2012).

3. Socio-Economic Independence

The absence of socioeconomic independence is a significant barrier to DNT women's empowerment (Paray, 2019). Women's limited access to education, healthcare, and financial services substantially influences their capacity to engage in the formal economy and enhance their standard of living (Korra, 2017). Many women in DNT communities live in isolated or countryside locations where basic amenities are either absent or challenging (Korra, 2018). The geographical isolation of these settlements worsens their socioeconomic difficulties, forcing people to rely on informal and sometimes exploitative methods of making a living.

Education is a crucial domain in which socioeconomic accessibility is significant (Madane & Deonar, 2018). Women in developing nations have many obstacles to accessing formal education, including poverty, cultural constraints, and insufficient infrastructure. Many females in these communities must discontinue their education early to assist with domestic tasks or care for younger siblings (Minz & Tyagi, 2023). Occasionally, the occurrence of early marriage or societal expectations to adhere to conventional gender roles hinders individuals from successfully finishing their education. The absence of educational options significantly hampers their capacity to get formal jobs and achieve financial autonomy.

Further, women in developing and newly industrialized countries face significant challenges in accessing healthcare. Many have difficulties obtaining reproductive health services, maternity care, and overall medical treatment. Due to the absence of healthcare facilities near their villages and restricted transportation alternatives, women often forego essential medical treatment. This impacts their physical well-being and limits their capacity to participate in the labor market or engage in other endeavors that may enhance their autonomy.

4. Policy Gaps and Interventions

Although the government has made many attempts to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups, the absence of specific policies, programs, and regulations for DNT women continues to hinder their empowerment (Narayan, 2022). Although there are overarching programs aimed at improving the socioeconomic condition of STs and other disadvantaged communities, these policies often neglect the specific requirements and obstacles DNT women encounter (Shekari et al., 2022).

A significant problem is the absence of customized policy responses that consider the distinct social, cultural, and economic circumstances of DNTs. Many current programs are formulated using a standardized approach that fails to adequately tackle the unique obstacles women encounter in these areas. Furthermore, executing existing policies is often characterized by inconsistency or ineffectiveness. The prevalence of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and little understanding among DNT groups contribute to the exclusion of many women from benefiting from the measures specifically aimed at assisting them. For instance, programs designed to provide monetary aid or medical treatment often fail to reach their intended recipients owing to inadequate outreach efforts and a lack of accountability.

Conclusion

Overview of Key Findings

The thematic analysis uncovers significant insights into the obstacles and facilitators to the empowerment of DNT women. The primary obstacles encompass:

Cultural Barriers: The rigid and longstanding patriarchal beliefs among DNT communities limit women's ability to act independently, move freely, and take part in decision-making processes. Conventional societal standards often place women in subordinate positions, restricting their education and work opportunities. The tribal identification of these women exacerbates their marginalization within the larger community due to the attached stigma.

Socioeconomic Barriers: DNT women often face exclusion from official economic systems. Their ability to get work,

acquire property, and achieve financial autonomy is limited by caste-based prejudice and economic deprivation. High illiteracy rates and a lack of vocational skills pose substantial obstacles to achieving economic empowerment.

Availability of Policies: Despite government attempts to empower disadvantaged women, research indicates that these policies often do not effectively reach women from the DNT community owing to inadequate implementation, insufficient cultural awareness, and geographical remoteness. Many initiatives disregard the particular socioeconomic circumstances of DNT women and neglect to tackle the historical marginalization of these groups. On the other hand, some factors facilitate empowerment, such as:

Community Support: Community-led efforts are implemented, and women who do not have traditional education and training (DNT women) show a higher level of involvement in educational and career prospects. Empowerment initiatives tailored to include and engage DNT communities are more likely to succeed.

NGO Involvement: Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been instrumental in championing the rights of DNT women, providing educational and vocational training initiatives, and raising awareness on health, sanitation, and legal entitlements. Their endeavors are crucial in regions where government initiatives are inadequate.

These results directly relate to the study objectives as they emphasize the most critical obstacles to empowerment within DNTs and provide specific areas where focused interventions might have the most impact.

Scope for Further Research

Although there have been studies conducted, there are still significant gaps that prevent a complete knowledge of women's empowerment in DNT communities:

Geographically Focused Research: The lack of research specifically focused on DNT women in different regions hinders a comprehensive knowledge of how cultural, geographical, and socioeconomic factors in those regions impact their empowerment. Most existing research offers a general perspective without examining the geographical discrepancies that might affect women's ability to get education, healthcare, and economic prospects.

Longitudinal Studies: Current research primarily examines the immediate effects of empowerment efforts, resulting in a lack of comprehension of the enduring consequences of these programs. There is a lack of research on the long-term impact of continued engagement in school or occupational training on the economic situation, health, and social standing of women who do not transition (DNT). Longitudinal studies are necessary to quantify the enduring impacts of these empowerment measures.

Inconsistent Research Results on Policy Effectiveness: Research often yields contradictory perspectives about the efficacy of government initiatives designed to empower women in nontraditional roles. Several studies indicate that these programs have had little effect, but others argue that they have played a crucial role in improving the conditions of disadvantaged populations. This disparity highlights the need for more stringent assessments of policy results.

Future research may address these deficiencies and provide a more intricate understanding of the elements that impede or facilitate the empowerment of women in DNT communities, eventually driving more efficient solutions.

Policy Recommendations

The results of this research have significant consequences for policymakers who are dedicated to enhancing the socioeconomic circumstances of DNT women. These include:

Tailored Initiatives for DNT Women: Existing regulations often overlook the distinct obstacles encountered by DNT women, who experience discrimination due to their caste and gender. To be effective, future strategies must prioritize addressing DNT-specific concerns, including stigma, geographical isolation, and historic exclusion. Programs targeting women's education, healthcare, and economic empowerment should be culturally responsive and developed in collaboration with DNT communities.

Augmented Allocation for Education and Healthcare: A major obstacle faced by women from marginalized communities is the limited availability of high-quality education and healthcare facilities. Policymakers should prioritize enhancing financing and allocating resources for schools, healthcare institutions, and vocational training institutes in regions populated by DNTs. Scholarships, attendance incentives, and awareness initiatives on reproductive health and maternity care should be provided to enhance women's social and economic empowerment.

Culturally Sensitive Empowerment Initiatives: Numerous government initiatives cannot connect with the cultural background of DNT women, leading to little involvement and restricted effectiveness. Policymakers should formulate empowerment measures that demonstrate respect for and include local cultures, traditions, and languages to promote active participation and cultivate a feeling of community ownership.

Advocacy and Awareness: Government agencies should collaborate with local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups to promote awareness of women's rights in the DNT community. This includes initiatives aimed at reducing the negative perception of DNT communities, advancing gender equality, and guaranteeing that DNT women are informed of their legal rights and benefits.

Practical Implications

Furthermore, the review's conclusions may guide policymaking and provide concrete suggestions for individuals and organizations promoting women's empowerment in disadvantaged areas.

Inclusive, Community-Driven Models: NGOs, government agencies, and other stakeholders should embrace empowerment models that include DNT communities in the design and implementation of programs. Projects should be customized to meet the unique requirements and ambitions of DNT women, integrating traditional knowledge systems and addressing local power dynamics.

Comprehensive Approaches to Empowerment: The empowerment of DNT women should include more than just economic or educational measures. Adopting a more comprehensive strategy encompassing mental health assistance, legal assistance, leadership development, and access to reproductive health care is imperative to achieve full empowerment. This approach recognizes several aspects of marginalization and aims to tackle them comprehensively.

Collaboration with Local Stakeholders: Effective empowerment initiatives often depend on robust collaborations with local community leaders, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and activists. Engaging in partnership with local stakeholders guarantees that initiatives are culturally attuned and more likely to be embraced by the community. Additionally, local leaders can act as exemplars and champions for women's rights in their communities.

Sustainability and Capacity Building: Practical initiatives should prioritize sustainability, guaranteeing that empowerment programs do not provide short-term benefits but generate enduring transformation. This may be accomplished via capacity-building programs, in which DNT women get training to assume leadership positions within their communities. Equipping individuals with the necessary abilities and tools to oversee community initiatives may result in a self-sufficient empowerment framework.

By applying these pragmatic suggestions, those involved may establish more efficient and enduring empowerment frameworks for women in the DNT community while advancing larger gender equality objectives.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethics Statement

The Institutional Ethical Committee, National Institute of Technology Raipur, India, No./NITRR/IEC/2023/16, approved the study.

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