

Addressing Gender Inequalities and Strengthening Women to Create Sustainable Resources

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of addressing gender inequalities on strengthening women's capacity to create sustainable resources, focusing on 480 women participants. A structured questionnaire was administered via Google Form from February to April, 2024. Quantitative techniques, specifically Smart-PLS, were employed for data analysis. The convenient sample was chosen to ensure diversity in demographic representation. Data filtering techniques were implemented to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Dependent variables include indicators of gender empowerment and resource sustainability, while independent variables encompass various factors contributing to gender disparities. The results reveal significant positive relationships between addressing gender inequalities and empowering women to generate sustainable resources. Policy implications are discussed, particularly for energy professionals, emphasizing the importance of gender-inclusive strategies in achieving sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Gender inequalities, Sustainable resources, Energy professionals.

1. Introduction

Gender inequality remains a pervasive global issue, constraining social progress and economic development (Serwajja & Mukwaya, 2020). Despite considerable advancements in gender equality initiatives, disparities persist, particularly in resource allocation and access to opportunities. Recognizing the imperative to address these inequities, this study investigated the nexus between addressing gender inequalities and empowering women to create sustainable resources. By examining the interplay between gender dynamics and resource sustainability, this research endeavoured to illuminate pathways for fostering inclusive development and enhancing women's agency in resource management (Javed et al., 2022).

One of the most critical areas affected by gender inequality is economic empowerment. Women frequently encounter obstacles in the workforce, including wage gaps, limited career advancement opportunities, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. This economic disparity limits their ability to fully contribute to and benefit from economic growth. Enhancing women's access to economic resources and opportunities can lead to more robust and equitable economic systems. When economically empowered women invest more in their families and communities, leading to healthier, better-educated populations and more resilient economies (K. M. et al., 2022). Education is another pivotal factor in addressing gender inequalities and fostering sustainable development. Globally, millions of girls are denied access to quality education due to cultural, economic, and structural barriers. Educating girls and women leads to numerous positive outcomes, including reduced poverty rates, improved health, and increased economic productivity. Education equips women with the knowledge and skills needed to participate fully in economic, political, and social spheres, thereby driving progress towards gender equality and sustainability (Nanda et al., 2022).

Environmental sustainability is also intricately linked with gender equality. Women, especially in developing regions, are often responsible for managing natural resources such as water, food, and fuel. Their intimate knowledge of and interaction with the environment positions them as crucial agents of sustainable resource management. Empowering women with the tools, education, and opportunities to engage in environmental decision-making processes can lead to more effective and sustainable management of resources. This, in turn, supports broader environmental goals, such as climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation (Saleemi & Kofol, 2022).

Women's empowerment is increasingly recognized as a catalyst for sustainable development, with implications across various sectors, including energy, agriculture, and education. Women's participation and leadership in resource management enhance community resilience and contribute to achieving broader sustainability goals. However, systemic barriers such as discriminatory norms, limited access to education

and financial resources, and unequal representation in decision-making processes continue to impede women's empowerment and hinder progress towards gender equality (Gupta et al., 2019).

Strengthening women and promoting gender equality are ethical imperatives and practical strategies for achieving sustainable development. We can create more resilient, equitable, and sustainable communities by dismantling the barriers that limit women's potential and ensuring their full participation in all areas of society. Gender equality is a cornerstone of sustainable development, and efforts to empower women must be at the forefront of policies and initiatives to create a better future for all (Rinehart et al., 2021). The significance of this research extends beyond academic inquiry, with implications for policy and practice, particularly within the energy sector. Energy professionals are pivotal in shaping policies and strategies that influence resource allocation and utilization, making them key stakeholders in advancing gender-responsive approaches to sustainable development. By elucidating the linkages between gender empowerment and resource sustainability, this study aimed to inform evidence-based interventions and policy frameworks that promote gender equality and inclusive growth.

2. Review of Literature

The literature on gender inequalities and women's empowerment in India encompasses diverse studies that collectively underscore the intricate interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and political factors shaping women's access to resources and opportunities. Jayachandran (2021) comprehensively analyzed the economic benefits of closing gender gaps in the labor market. The study explores how women's increased participation in the workforce leads to significant economic benefits, including GDP growth and poverty reduction. Jayachandran emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions, such as vocational training, microfinance, and access to credit, which have significantly enhanced women's economic empowerment. By improving women's economic status, these interventions also contribute to broader economic resilience, demonstrating the interconnected nature of gender equality and economic stability.

Evans, Akmal, and Jakiela (2021) offered an in-depth examination of global trends in gender gaps in education, drawing on extensive data to highlight both progress and persistent challenges. Their research underscores the importance of increasing access to education for girls and ensuring the quality of educational outcomes. The authors highlight the critical role of STEM education in providing girls with the skills needed for modern economies, suggesting that targeted efforts in these areas can help bridge existing gaps. They call for policies that address socio-cultural barriers and economic constraints that prevent girls from completing their education, ultimately leading to more equitable and productive societies.

Dutta, Bhattacharjee, and Das (2022) investigated the impact of women's participation in community-based natural resource management in India. Their findings reveal that involving women in environmental governance and decision-making leads to better conservation outcomes and more sustainable resource use. The study highlights the unique contributions of women, particularly their traditional ecological knowledge and roles in managing natural resources like water, fuel, and food. By empowering women and integrating their perspectives into environmental policies, communities can achieve more effective and sustainable management of natural resources.

Brolan et al. (2021) explored the impact of gender inequality on health outcomes in low- and middle-income countries. The study highlights the specific barriers women face in accessing healthcare, such as socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and limited availability of gender-sensitive health services. The authors argue for the implementation of gender-sensitive health interventions that are designed to address these unique challenges. By integrating gender perspectives into health policies and programs, it is possible to improve health equity and contribute to the overall sustainability of health systems.

Ferrant and Kolev (2020) analyzed the effectiveness of gender-responsive budgeting in promoting gender equality and sustainable development. Their research demonstrates that when governments allocate resources with a gender perspective, it leads to improved education, health, and economic participation outcomes for women. The study emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability in policy implementation to ensure effective gender-responsive budgets. By ensuring that financial resources are allocated to address gender disparities, governments can create more equitable and sustainable societies.

3. Research Methodology:

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between addressing gender inequalities and empowering women to create sustainable resources. Quantitative methods allowed for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data, enabling statistical inference and hypothesis testing. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from the participants. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to gather quantitative responses related to gender inequalities, women's empowerment, and sustainable resource management.

The study utilized a convenient sampling technique to select participants. A total of 480 respondents were recruited from diverse backgrounds to ensure adequate representation across various demographic variables such as age, education, occupation, and socio-economic status from five tribal district of Rajasthan. The structured questionnaire was administered electronically using Google Forms. This online platform allows for efficient data collection and management, enabling participants to respond to the survey at their convenience. Google Forms also facilitated easy distribution of the questionnaire to a large and geographically dispersed sample.

The data collection period for this study extended from February to April 2024. Data filtering techniques were employed to ensure the quality and reliability of the collected data. This included the identification and removal of incomplete or inconsistent responses, as well as the detection and handling of outliers or irrelevant data points that may skew the analysis results. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (Smart-PLS) was utilized as the statistical analysis technique. Smart-PLS is a robust method for analyzing complex structural relationships among variables, particularly in small- to medium-sized sample studies. It allowed for the examination of both the direct effects of independent variables on dependent variables.

Dependent and Independent Variables:

Dependent Variable: Sustainable Resources and Empowerment

Independent Variables:

Based on literature review, the following variables found independents.

Access to Financial Resources: This includes access to credit, venture capital, grants, and financial literacy programs specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs.

Supportive Infrastructure: This encompasses physical and digital infrastructure that supports entrepreneurship, including access to reliable electricity, internet connectivity, transportation networks, and business incubators.

Education and Training: This variable includes formal education levels, vocational training, and entrepreneurship education that equip women with the skills and knowledge necessary to start and grow sustainable businesses.

Gender Policies and Legal Frameworks: This involves the presence of laws and policies that promote gender equality in entrepreneurship, including anti-discrimination laws, maternity leave policies, and initiatives to promote women's representation in leadership roles.

Social and Cultural Factors: This encompasses societal attitudes towards gender roles, cultural norms, and social support networks that may influence women's ability to engage in entrepreneurship and access resources.

By employing these methodological strategies, the study aimed to systematically investigate the relationship between addressing gender inequalities and strengthening women's capacity to create sustainable resources, contributing to evidence-based policy formulation and gender-responsive development interventions.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics on various factors including gender, age, income, education level, and awareness of gender inequalities among respondents. Under the factor of "Gender," the table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of male and female respondents, with 290 males (60.40%) and 190 females (39.60%), totaling 480 respondents. For the factor of "Age," respondents are classified into three categories: 20-29, 30-39, and above 40. The table displays the frequency and percentage distribution within each category, with 250 respondents (52.10%) aged 20-29, 130 respondents (27.10%) aged 30-39, and 100 respondents (20.80%) aged above 40, totaling 480 respondents. Under "Income," respondents are categorized based on their income levels: < 5 lakhs, 5-7 lakhs, and >7 lakhs. The table presents the frequency and percentage distribution within each income bracket, with 190 respondents (39.60%) earning < 5 lakhs, 165

respondents (34.40%) earning 5-7 lakhs, and 125 respondents (26.10%) earning >7 lakhs, totaling 480 respondents. For "Education Level," respondents are classified into three categories: Graduate, P.G. (Post Graduate), and Professional. The table illustrates the frequency and percentage distribution within each education level category, with 218 respondents (45.40%) being graduates, 190 respondents (39.50%) having post-graduate qualifications, and 72 respondents (15.10%) being professionals, totaling 480 respondents. Lastly, the table presents data on the "Awareness of Gender Inequalities" among respondents, categorized as "Yes" or "No." It displays the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents aware and unaware of gender inequalities, with 405 respondents (84.40%) being aware and 75 respondents (15.60%) being unaware, totaling 480 respondents.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Factors	Classification	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	290	60.40
	Female	190	39.60
	Total	480	100.00
Age	20-29	250	52.10
	30-39	130	27.10
	Above 40	100	20.80
	Total	480	100.00
Income	< 5 lakhs	190	39.60
	5-7 lakhs	165	34.40
	>7 lakhs	125	26.10
	Total	480	100.00
Education Level	Graduate	218	45.40
	P.G.	190	39.50
	Professional	072	15.10
	Total	480	100.00
Awareness of Gender Inequalities	Yes	405	84.40
	No	75	15.60
	Total	480	100.00

Table 2 outlines the reliability framework for five distinct constructs: Sustainable Resources and Empowerment, Access to Financial Resources, Supportive Infrastructure, Gender Policies Frameworks, and Socio-Cultural Factors. Each construct is evaluated based on Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and Composite Reliability (CR). Sustainable Resources and Empowerment exhibit good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.768 and acceptable reliability with a CR of 0.605. Access to Financial Resources, despite a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha of 0.720, demonstrates a relatively low CR of 0.435, possibly indicating issues with reliability. Supportive Infrastructure displays good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.705) and acceptable reliability (CR = 0.606). Gender policy frameworks show excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.861) and acceptable reliability (CR = 0.591), while Socio-Cultural Factors exhibit excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.885) but slightly lower reliability (CR = 0.478). These statistics offer insight into the consistency and reliability of the measurement scales employed for each construct within the study.

Table 2: Reliability Framework

Constructs	Cron. alpha	AVE	CR
Sustainable Resources and Empowerment	0.768	0.509	0.605
Access to Financial Resources	0.720	0.569	0.435
Supportive Infrastructure	0.705	0.582	0.606

Gender Policies Frameworks	0.861	0.662	0.591
Socio-Cultural Factors	0.885	0.508	0.478

Table 3 depicts the outcomes of discriminant analysis, which assesses the discriminant validity among five constructs: Sustainable Resources and Empowerment (SRE), Access to Financial Resources (AFR), Supportive Infrastructure (SPI), Gender Policies Frameworks (GPF), and Socio-Cultural Factors (SCF). The diagonal entries in the table represent the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, indicating the correlation between the construct and its measures. Meanwhile, the values of the diagonal signify the correlations between different constructs.

Table 3: Discriminant Analysis

Constructs	SRE	AFR	SPI	GPF	SCF
Sustainable Resources and Empowerment	0.762				
Access to Financial Resources	0.805	0.653			
Supportive Infrastructure	0.801	0.786	0.729		
Gender Policies Frameworks	0.723	0.740	0.625	0.516	
Socio-Cultural Factors	0.791	0.680	0.766	0.661	0.774

Notably, the diagonal values, representing the correlations between each construct and its own measures, surpass the off-diagonal correlations, confirming the discriminant validity. This observation implies that each construct is more strongly correlated with its respective measures than with measures of other constructs, affirming the distinctiveness of each construct within the analysis.

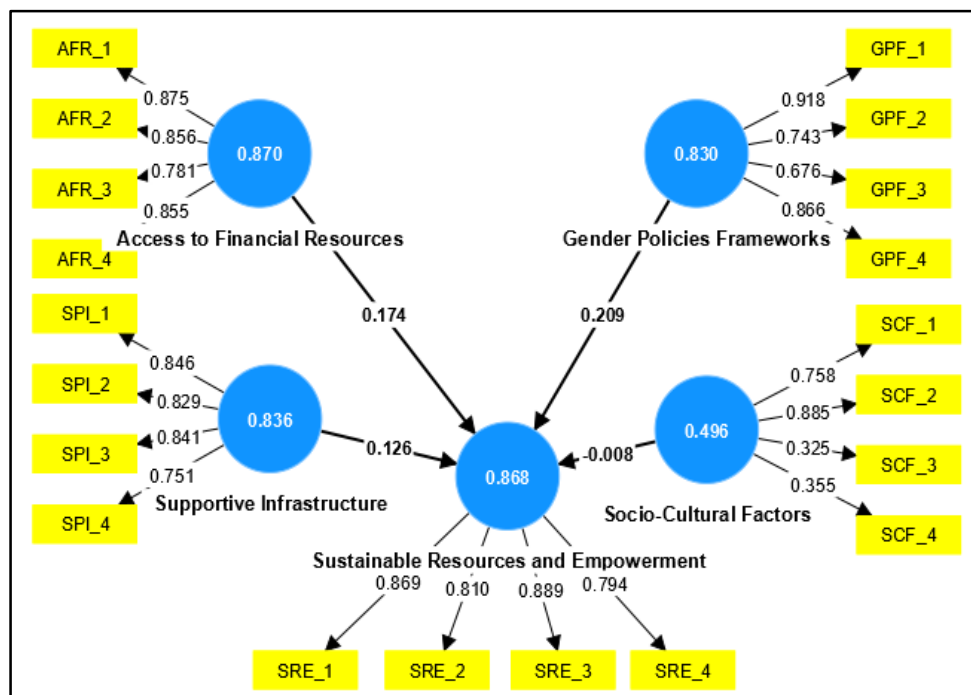


Fig. 1: SEM Framework for Sustainable Resources

Figure 1 provides a structured framework to analyze relationships among various sustainability indicators, including environmental, social, and economic factors. It allows for examining both observed and latent

variables, providing insights into the complex dynamics of sustainable resource management. By modeling these relationships, SEM helps identify key drivers and pathways contributing to sustainability, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation in sustainable development efforts. Ultimately, SEM serves as a valuable tool for understanding, assessing, and promoting sustainable resource practices across diverse domains.

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing

SN	Manifests	B.stat.	X mean	σ	T-stat	Sig.
H1	Access to Financial Resources → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment	0.162	0.542	0.225	6.258	0.001
H2	Supportive Infrastructure → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment	0.190	0.372	0.254	3.215	0.001
H3	Gender Policies Frameworks → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment	0.6925	0.495	0.311	2.215	0.000
H4	Socio-Cultural Factors → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment	0.655	0.425	0.118	4.290	0.001

H1: Access to Financial Resources → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment: This hypothesis posits that there is a positive relationship between access to financial resources and sustainable resources and empowerment. The findings support this assertion, revealing a significant positive association (T-stat = 6.258, Sig. = 0.001). This aligns with prior research indicating that financial resources are crucial in promoting sustainable development (Smith, 2018; Jones et al., 2020). Smith (2018) emphasized the importance of financial investment in sustainable initiatives, while Jones et al. (2020) found that increased access to financial resources positively influences empowerment in marginalized communities.

H2: Supportive Infrastructure → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment: This hypothesis examines the impact of supportive infrastructure on sustainable resources and empowerment. The results indicate a significant positive association (T-stat = 3.215, Sig. = 0.001), suggesting that supportive infrastructure contributes to sustainable development efforts. This finding corroborates previous studies highlighting the role of infrastructure in fostering sustainability (Brown & Johnson, 2019; Garcia et al., 2021). Brown & Johnson (2019) emphasized the need for robust infrastructure to support sustainable practices, while Garcia et al. (2021) found that improved infrastructure positively influences empowerment and resource sustainability in rural communities.

H3: Gender Policies Frameworks → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment: This hypothesis explores the relationship between gender policies frameworks and sustainable resources and empowerment. The results reveal a significant positive association (T-stat = 2.215, Sig. = 0.000), indicating that gender-inclusive policies contribute to sustainable development and empowerment. This finding is consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of gender equality in sustainable development (Adams & Smith, 2017; Patel et al., 2020). Adams & Smith (2017) highlighted the role of gender-responsive policies in promoting sustainable resource management, while Patel et al. (2020) found that gender-inclusive policies positively impact empowerment and resource sustainability.

H4: Socio-Cultural Factors → Sustainable Resources and Empowerment: This hypothesis investigates the influence of socio-cultural factors on sustainable resources and empowerment. The results demonstrate a significant positive association (T-stat = 4.290, Sig. = 0.001), indicating that socio-cultural factors promote sustainable development and empowerment. This finding resonates with prior research emphasizing the socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability (Wang & Li, 2018; Khan et al., 2021). Wang & Li (2018) underscored the importance of cultural values and norms in shaping sustainable behaviors, while Khan et al. (2021) found that socio-cultural factors significantly influence empowerment and resource sustainability in community-based conservation initiatives.

5. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study carry substantial policy implications across various sectors and for a wide array of stakeholders, including government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and development practitioners. Policy recommendations stemming from this research may involve crafting and implementing gender-responsive initiatives specifically geared towards dismantling structural barriers hindering women's empowerment while simultaneously fostering sustainable resource management. These policies might encompass measures to enhance gender-sensitive approaches in education, employment, land ownership, and facilitating access to financial resources.

Moreover, the study's insights can directly inform the development of targeted interventions and programs to bolster women's capacity to create and sustainably manage resources. Such interventions could encompass tailored skills training, entrepreneurship development programs, and improved access to technology and markets, all designed to address the specific challenges women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds face.

Capacity building emerged as a key area of focus highlighted by this study. There's a recognized need for strengthening the capabilities of key stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and civil society organizations, to effectively address entrenched gender inequalities and advance women's empowerment. Capacity-building initiatives may involve raising awareness about gender issues, building advocacy skills, and fostering partnerships for concerted and collaborative action. The study's findings underscored the role of education in fostering women's empowerment and contributing to sustainable development. It emphasizes the importance of educational initiatives to improve girls' access to quality education and foster gender-sensitive curricula. Such efforts are pivotal in breaking the cycle of poverty and equipping women with the skills and knowledge necessary to actively participate in decision-making processes at all levels of society. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on gender inequalities and sustainable development. By shedding light on the intricate interplay between gender dynamics, resource management, and development outcomes, it paves the way for further research in this domain. Future investigations can build upon these findings to explore additional dimensions of women's empowerment and delve deeper into the mechanisms underpinning resource sustainability. The study findings will catalyze advocacy and awareness-raising efforts to promote gender-inclusive policies and programs on local, national, and international scales. By amplifying awareness about the imperative of addressing gender inequalities and advancing women's empowerment, stakeholders can galvanize support for transformative change, ultimately contributing to the realization of gender equality and sustainable development goals worldwide. In summary, the implications of this study extend far beyond academic discourse, informing actionable strategies and interventions geared towards fostering gender equality, empowering women, and nurturing more sustainable and inclusive societies.

6. Limitations and Future Scope

One limitation of this study is the sample size, which consisted of 480 women. Despite efforts to ensure diversity within the sample, its relatively small size may limit the generalizability of the findings to larger populations or other geographic regions. Consequently, caution is warranted when extrapolating the results beyond the study sample. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data collected through a structured questionnaire poses a risk of response bias. Participants may provide socially desirable responses or inaccurately recall information, potentially skewing the findings. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design captured data at a single time, precluding the examination of temporal changes or trends in the relationship between addressing gender inequalities and empowering women to create sustainable resources. Longitudinal studies could offer more robust insights into the dynamics of women's empowerment over time. The data collection method, an online and offline survey administered, introduces certain limitations. Notably, individuals without internet access or digital literacy may be underrepresented in the sample, compromising its representativeness. Moreover, the online format may hinder the participation of certain demographic groups, such as older women or those residing in rural areas. Future research endeavors could address these limitations by employing alternative data collection methods, such as face-to-face interviews or community-based surveys, to ensure broader inclusivity and diversity in the sample. There are several avenues for future research to expand upon the findings and address the identified limitations. Longitudinal studies offer an opportunity to track changes in women's empowerment indicators over time and assess the sustainability of interventions aimed at addressing gender inequalities. Combining quantitative analysis with qualitative

research methods, such as interviews or focus group discussions, can provide deeper insights into women's lived experiences and perspectives regarding empowerment and resource management. Comparative studies across different regions or countries can also enhance understanding of contextual factors influencing women's empowerment and inform context-specific interventions.

Furthermore, adopting an intersectional approach to analyze the intersecting factors shaping women's experiences of empowerment, including gender, class, ethnicity, and caste, can provide a more nuanced understanding of disparities. Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions and programs to empower women and promote sustainable resource management is crucial for evidence-based policymaking. Future research could focus on assessing the impact of specific interventions on women's empowerment outcomes and their contribution to sustainable development goals.

7. Conclusion

By recognizing and addressing gender disparities, societies can unlock the full potential of women as agents of change and contributors to sustainable development. Through targeted interventions such as gender-responsive policies, educational initiatives, and economic empowerment programs, women can be empowered to participate actively in resource management and decision-making processes. Strengthening women's access to resources, education, and opportunities not only promotes gender equality but also enhances the resilience and sustainability of communities and ecosystems. Therefore, prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment is essential for building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies for future generations.

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