

A Thematic Exploration of Gender Inequality in the Gujjar Community of Kotranka Tehsil, Rajouri District

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KEYWORDS

gender imbalance, Gujjar tribe, sociocultural norms, Kotranka Tehsil, Jammu and Kashmir, women empowerment, decision-making, autonomy, traditional customs.

ABSTRACT

The study looks into the gender disparities that exist among the Gujjar clan in Kotranka Tehsil, Rajouri District in Jammu and Kashmir. It investigates the socio-cultural and economic constraints that women confront in their communities, examining how traditional norms influence their autonomy, involvement, and access to resources. Data from 35 respondents were acquired using a descriptive study method, with structured interviews and questionnaires. The research indicates considerable limitations on women's daily lives, particularly in decision-making, mobility, and educational prospects. The findings show that male dominance prevails in financial and family decisions, but social conventions continue to limit women's roles. While some respondents acknowledge a shift toward more gender-equitable practices, traditional gender norms are nonetheless deeply established, restricting women's potential and increasing dependency. Despite government efforts and changing societal perceptions, Gujjar women in Kotranka Tehsil continue to encounter obstacles as a result of established socio-cultural expectations. The study emphasizes the crucial need for comprehensive policies and community-based programs to achieve gender equality and empower women in the Gujjar tribe.

1. Introduction

Our culture is inherently separated into two groups: men and women, resulting in unique and frequently unequal social standings (Hosseini and Sharifzad, 2021). Closer analysis reveals that gender discrepancies are caused by socially imposed roles and cultural conventions that perpetuate gender injustice, rather than fundamental biological differences. These cultural contrasts have resulted in an environment in which women's fundamental rights, access to resources, and opportunities are routinely denied, marginalized, and disadvantaged in both the public and private sectors. Despite accounting for over half of the worldwide population, women's voices and presence are continually overshadowed by their male counterparts, perpetuating a cycle of inequality. Women have historically been viewed as the weaker members of families and communities, resulting in a situation in which they frequently rely on men for financial support, social acceptance, and decision making. This dependency is worsened by a variety of socioeconomic issues, with approximately 70% of women worldwide living in poverty as a result of gender inequity. (Frecheville-Faucon, Jaoul-Grammare and Perrin, 2024)

This problem is especially acute in a quickly developing country like India, where women's positions remain uncertain. Despite the country's economic prosperity, women continue to confront enormous problems, relying on men for many aspects of their lives. This patriarchal framework shapes women's experiences from birth to death, limiting their potential. Gender inequality typically has its roots in the family. In many households, girls receive poorer health care, education, and nutrition than their male brothers. This disparity not only harms their present well-being, but it also stifles their growth and future chances. (Ayu, 2023). As young girls enter maturity, they frequently miss out on important adolescent experiences, being driven into motherhood at a young age with little support or agency. Their lack of control over their own life makes them unable to advocate for themselves, prolonging the cycle of dependency and marginalization. Furthermore, gender disparity has an impact on communities and cultures as a whole, not just individual families. When women are denied the right to fully engage in the economic, social, and political sectors, the entire society suffers from wasted potential and stalled growth. (Kevin Namiro Kuteesa, Chidiogo Uzoamaka Akpuokwe and Chioma Ann Udeh, 2024)

The Jammu region is distinguished by its rich tapestry of ethnic, linguistic, and religious variety, which includes a large number of ethnic groups, castes, and communities. Each group is a keeper of distinct cultural traditions and customs, which contribute to the region's thriving social fabric. Among these communities, the Gujjars of Jammu are a noteworthy group, largely situated in the Rajouri area. Their lifestyle is inextricably related to the region's geological features, since they live on the plains, kandi lands, valleys, and lower Himalayan foothills.

The Gujjars are noted for their transhumant pastoralism, which involves moving between alpine summer pastures and fertile plain valleys with the changing seasons.

Despite multiple development plans and government measures to alleviate poverty, the Gujjar community faces enormous obstacles. Many members of this group suffer from chronic poverty, which is exacerbated by high birth and mortality rates. The health indicators are alarming, with high rates of neonatal mortality and an average life expectancy of less than 55 years. This demographic reality highlights the critical need for focused actions to enhance health and living circumstances in the neighborhood. Education is another essential issue, especially for women. The literacy rate among the Gujjars is frighteningly low, with female literacy rates almost nonexistent. This educational gap perpetuates the cycle of poverty and limits possibilities for women, exacerbating gender disparities in the community. Furthermore, the region's sex ratio is problematic, with 860 females for every 1,000 males. Such an imbalance raises major concerns about the Gujjar community's social dynamics, as well as broader societal issues such as gender discrimination and undervaluation of female life. (Khan and Kumar, 2016)

2. Literature review

(Ahmed, 2019)“Women's education in India has been a major issue for both the government and civil society, as educated women may play a vital role in the country's growth. Education is a symbol of women's empowerment since it allows them to respond to problems. Tribal communities in India have faced a variety of deprivations, including alienation of land and other resources. However, in order to develop and enhance their level of desire, enough educational opportunities must be offered so that they are inspired to participate, support, and, eventually, launch their own development programs. As a result, the purpose of this article is to examine the current state of educational opportunities available to tribal women and girls. It is also advised that tribal women be empowered through skill and vocational training programs.

(Ahmed, 2018)Education's importance in human resource development and economic success is widely accepted in today's society. Education not only broadens people's cerebral horizons, but it also promotes the financial well-being of their families, communities, and nations. It is an important way to accomplish social mobility and advance up the social ladder. Despite the state's long-standing struggle and affirmative action to reduce social inequalities in independent India, we can see stark multiple inequalities and disparities in education and economic development based on caste, creed, tribe, religion, and gender. However, despite constitutional protections, regulations, and programs in favor of women, increased literacy rates, and promotion of women's education, many social ills practices and customs persist in our society, preventing women from taking use of available opportunities. Women, in general, are the most underprivileged and disadvantaged members of Indian society, and they have historically faced numerous impediments to educational possibilities. In independent India, however, women have made enormous achievements by entering every field of education. Even so, many women, particularly those living in rural areas, continue to be trapped in a vicious cycle of familial expectations, gender discrimination, and stigmatization. The available research shows that women's literacy rates have increased in recent decades, yet there is still a significant gender disparity. According to the 2011 census data, rural women's literacy rate in J&K is 53.36 percent, while urban females' literacy rate is 70.19 percent, compared to 36.7% at the rural and 61.9% at the urban level in 2001. Literacy rates vary significantly between rural and urban areas in Jammu and Kashmir. Literacy rates are greater in districts with a larger urban population, which is generally centered in plain areas, than in districts that are primarily hilly and have a low level of urbanisation. The current study attempts to examine the educational level of women in rural areas of Poonch district. The study is primarily based on secondary sources of data. The results show that socioeconomic factors are more important predictors of women's independence than religion.”

(Khan and Kumar, 2016) Important components of human geography studies include the spatial distribution of ethnic groupings and tribal populations, their settlements, human occupation, transportation networks, etc. Most of the people living in the area under investigation, the Rajouri district, are Gujjars or Bakerwals. They are mostly involved in agriculture and have a very traditional lifestyle where modernism has not yet made its way in. Because of their distinctive trait of seasonal transhumance, the Gujjar people of Jammu and Kashmir have fallen behind other parts of the country. Studying their demographic traits becomes significant because of this reason. The study revealed that despite being a backward community, the Gujjars have experienced development in demographic variables such as growth, literacy, sex ratio, dependence ratio, and occupational structure over the years.

(Tufail, 2014)Gujjars and Bakarwals are Jammu and Kashmir's third-largest community. According to the 2001 Indian census, they account for 8.1 percent of the state's overall population. The Jammu region has the biggest population of Gujjars and Bakarwals, "followed by the Kashmir Valley. It is thought that Gujjars came to Jammu and Kashmir via Gujarat (via Rajasthan) and the Hazara district of North Western Frontier Province. When severe droughts struck in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., they most likely fled Gujarat and crossed Rajasthan and Punjab to reach the verdant pastures of the Siwaliks and Himalayas. Transhumance practice is the most significant hurdle for individuals seeking to provide formal education for their children. One of the most significant barriers to schooling for the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities is the frequency of seasonal mobility. Because of the varying climatic circumstances in Jammu and Kashmir, Gujjars and Bakarwals have developed distinct modes of living and adaptability. Without a doubt, the Gujjar and Bakarwal people of Jammu and Kashmir have converted to Islam, and their dress, way of life, marriage, and kinship are distinct from those of their counterparts in other regions of the state. Their Gojri language is almost identical to the Rajasthani language and dialect. Gujjars and Bakarwals residing in Jammu and Kashmir have a towering personality with Jewish characteristics. Their clothing is traditional, which is more similar to the Pushto peoples of Pakistan. Gujjar and Bakarwal communities have distinct cultural and linguistic identities."

Objective

- To study the Gender disparity in socio-cultural practices among Gijjar Tribe of Kotranka Tehsil.

3. Research methodology

Semi-structured interviews are used in the approach, allowing participants to express their experiences while addressing certain topic areas such as household decision-making, women's constraints, and gender-based birth celebrations. This approach gives detailed data, allowing individual narratives to be heard while also revealing bigger social trends.

Description of the Study Area

Kotranka tehsil is a subdivision of Rajouri district in India's Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. It is located on the banks of the Ans River, which lies within the southern range of peer panchal. The distance between Rajouri to Kotranka is 39 kilometers. The spoken languages are Gojri and Pahari. Kotranka Tehsil is divided into two blocks: Block Old Budhal and Block New Budhal. Kotranka Village is located in Block Old Budhal. The Gujjar community of Kotranka Tehsil has a far lower literacy rate than other tehsils in the Rajouri district, at 66.61%. The overall geographical area of the village is 326.6 hectares. Kotranka has a total population of 1,434 people, with 401 Scheduled Tribes (229 men and 172 women). The literacy rate in Kotranka village is 53.14%, with 61.36% males and 43.71% females (District Census Handbook Rajouri, 2011).

Universe of Study:

The state of Jammu and Kashmir, divided into three regions: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, is located in northern India. Each of these three divisions has its own language, culture, traditional clothing, traditional cuisine, folk music, and traditional dances. Jammu and Kashmir stands out from the multitude of religions, languages, civilizations, and tribes due to its unique, colorful, and distinct cultural blend. Jammu and Kashmir is also well known for its tribal population.

The current study examines Gujjar community women in Rajouri district, Kotranka tehsil, Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir, in terms of socio-cultural, educational, economic, and political participation. Kotranka is a tehsil in Rajouri district, Jammu and Kashmir, India. It is situated along the banks of the Ans River, a tributary of the Chenab River that forms part of the southern peer panchal range. Kotranka is 20 km from Budhal and 39 km from Rajouri.

Research Design

This study takes a qualitative method, employing interviews to collect viewpoints from the Gujjar tribal community on gender-based constraints, decision-making processes, and celebration customs. Through this design, the research aims to provide insights on the prevalent social norms, attitudes, and cultural traditions that determine gender roles and women's autonomy in this society.

Sample

The sample consists of 35 people, representing a variety of age groups, marital statuses, and gender identities.

This sample size is intended to provide a manageable but representative subset of the Gujar tribal community, balancing depth of research with diversity of experiences.

Source of data

Primary Sources of Data

Primary data were gathered through structured interviews participants.

Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data were gathered from existing research on gender disparities, cultural norms, and socioeconomic studies including the Gujar population. Journals, publications, and earlier research on related themes offered contextual information and served as a platform for comparison.

Type of Study

This study uses a qualitative cross-sectional approach to better understand gender-based decision-making and social norms in the Gujar community. In-depth interviews were performed with participants to elicit specific narratives, allowing them to openly discuss their thoughts and experiences. The interview questions focused on crucial themes such as gender roles in decision-making, women's autonomy, cultural constraints, and gender-specific celebration rituals. This approach ensured that the data gathered mirrored the participants' genuine perspectives and gave a full insight of the community's societal norms.

Data analysis

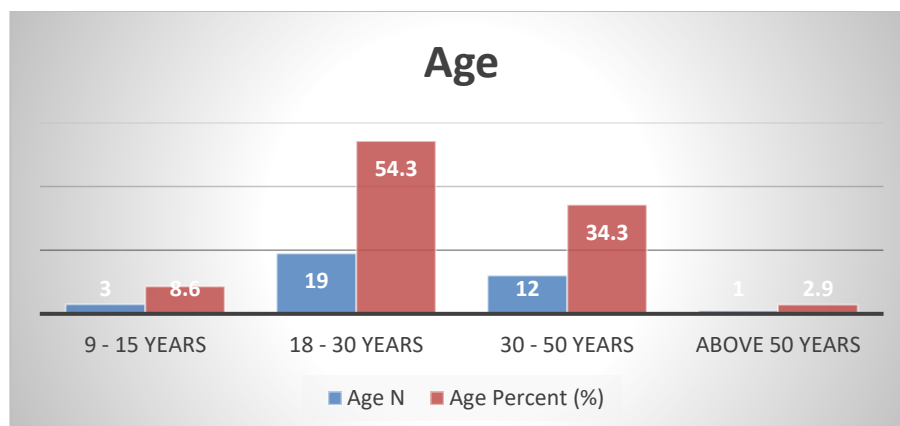
The data analysis in this study was aimed at studying gender-based decision-making dynamics, cultural constraints, and the impact of social norms on the Gujar community. Given the qualitative character of the study, a thematic analysis approach was used to discover common themes and patterns in interview replies.

4. Result and discussion

Table 1: Age wise distribution of participants

Age	N	Percent (%)
9 - 15 years	3	8.6
18 - 30 years	19	54.3
30 - 50 years	12	34.3
Above 50 years	1	2.9
Total	35	100.0

The age distribution of respondents suggests a substantial concentration of individuals aged 18 to 30 years, accounting for 54.3% of the entire sample. This implies that the study is predominantly representative of young adults, most likely reflecting their distinct viewpoints, attitudes, and experiences. The 30- to 50-year-old age group accounts for 34.3%, demonstrating a significant representation of middle-aged people who may give diverse insights depending on their life stage. In comparison, the younger age range of 9 to 15 years is represented by only 8.6%, while those over 50 make up only 2.9%.

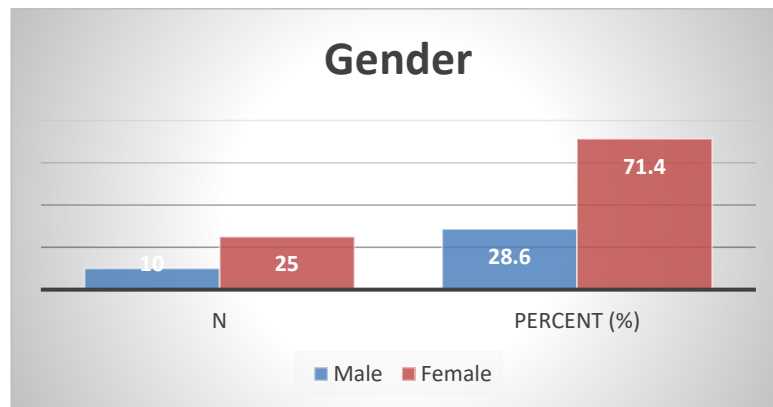


Graph: 1 Graphical representation of Age.

Table 2: Gender wise distribution of participants

Gender		
	N	Percent (%)
Male	10	28.6
Female	25	71.4
Total	35	100.0

The gender distribution of respondents shows a substantial imbalance, with females accounting for 71.4% of the entire sample and males for only 28.6%.

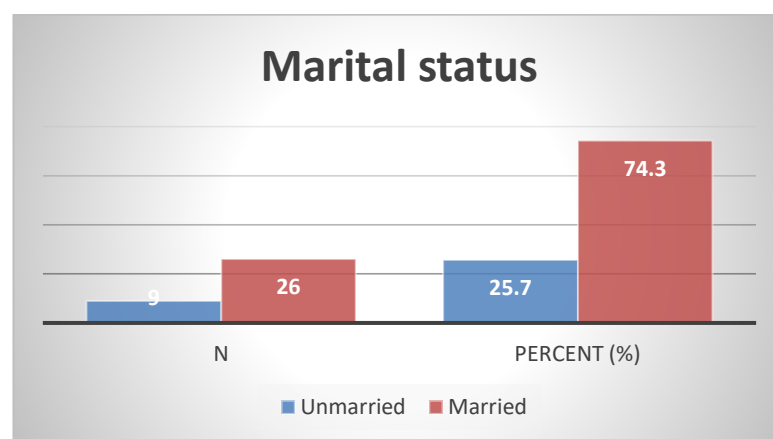


Graph: 2 Graphical representation of Gender wise distribution of participants.

Table 3: Marital status of participants

Marital status		
	N	Percent (%)
Unmarried	9	25.7
Married	26	74.3
Total	35	100.0

The marital status distribution of respondents suggests that a considerable majority are married, accounting for 74.3% of the entire sample, while unmarried individuals make up 25.7%.



Graph: 3 Graphical representation of Marital status of participants.

Table: 4 Women participation in decision-making processes

Women Participation in decision-making processes		
	N	Percent (%)
Restricted Autonomy in Family Decisions	15	42.85
Partial Participation in Community Decisions	10	28.57
Active Participation and Empowerment:	4	11.42
Cultural and Community Variability	4	11.42
Shifting Dynamics in Decision-Making	2	5.71
Total	35	100.0

A significant portion of respondents (42.85%) indicates that women's autonomy in family decision-making is largely restricted. This reflects a prevailing cultural norm where women may contribute ideas but rely on male family members for final decisions. This limitation suggests that traditional gender roles remain deeply entrenched, affecting women's independence and agency within their households.

Nearly a third of respondents (28.57%) noted that women participate partially in community decision-making. This indicates that while there is some involvement, it is not at the level of equality seen in family decisions. Factors such as societal expectations and community norms likely contribute to this restricted engagement, limiting women's influence in broader community matters.

A smaller segment of respondents (11.42%) reported that women actively participate and feel empowered in family decision-making. This suggests that there are instances where women are taking on more significant roles, indicating progress towards gender equality and the dismantling of traditional barriers.

The equal percentage (11.42%) of respondents acknowledging cultural and community variability highlights that women's roles in decision-making can differ significantly across different contexts. This variability suggests that cultural influences play a crucial role in shaping the extent of women's participation, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of gender roles within diverse communities.

Finally, only 5.71% of respondents noted a shifting dynamic towards greater participation. This indicates that while there may be emerging trends towards increasing women's involvement in decision-making, these changes are still minimal compared to the overall context of restricted autonomy.

Findings illustrate a complex landscape regarding women's participation in decision-making processes. While there are signs of progress in certain areas, particularly in family settings, significant barriers remain that restrict women's autonomy and involvement, especially in community decision-making. The data underscores the importance of continued efforts to promote gender equality and empower women, facilitating their active participation in both familial and community contexts. Addressing cultural and societal norms that limit women's roles is essential for fostering a more inclusive decision-making environment.

Table: 5 Decision-making process in house hold

Decision making process in household (who decide regarding)	Male		Female		Both	
	N	Percent (%)	N	Percent (%)	N	Percent (%)
Children	7	20	3	8.571429	25	71.42857
Health care of family members	3	8.571429	2	5.714286	30	85.71429
Family planning		0	2	5.714286	33	94.28571
Purchasing any item in your household	6	17.14286	12	34.28571	17	48.57143
Selling any asset in your house	27	77.14286	0	0	8	22.85714
Expenditure	25	71.42857	2	5.714286	8	22.85714
Female freedom to go outside of home	33	94.28571	0	0	2	5.714286

This table provides insights into the distribution of decision-making responsibilities in various household matters, analyzed by gender roles. It highlights areas where men, women, or both are involved in the decision-making process within the family.

Children: The majority (71.43%) of households make decisions regarding children jointly, indicating a shared responsibility in this area. However, 20% of decisions are made solely by males, while only 8.57% are made solely by females, reflecting a slight tendency toward male dominance, though both genders are largely involved.

Health Care of Family Members: In 85.71% of households, decisions about healthcare are made jointly, suggesting that health is viewed as a collaborative concern. A small percentage of decisions are made by males (8.57%) and females (5.71%) independently, indicating occasional gender-specific roles, but mostly a shared approach.

Family Planning: Family planning is predominantly a joint decision (94.29%), showing a high degree of shared decision-making in this sensitive area. Only a small percentage (5.71%) of household's report that family planning decisions are made solely by women, underscoring the collaborative nature of this topic.

Purchasing Household Items: Decisions regarding household purchases show a more balanced involvement, with 48.57% made jointly, 34.29% by females, and 17.14% by males. This reflects that women have a relatively stronger influence in this area compared to other categories, though joint decision-making remains common.

Selling Household Assets: The decision to sell assets is predominantly made by males (77.14%), with only 22.86% of households making this a joint decision. This indicates a strong male dominance in decisions involving significant financial transactions or asset disposal, reflecting traditional gender roles in financial authority.

Household Expenditure: Similar to asset-selling, household expenditures are largely controlled by males (71.43%), with only 22.86% of decisions made jointly and 5.71% made by females alone. This reflects a high degree of male authority over financial decisions in the household, with limited female involvement.

Female Freedom to Go Outside the Home: In 94.29% of households, males decide on women's freedom to go outside, with only 5.71% of households allowing joint decision-making. This highlights a significant restriction on women's autonomy, suggesting a strong control over their mobility and freedom by male members, with very little joint or female autonomy in this area.

The findings reveal a complex picture of household decision-making processes that are strongly influenced by traditional gender roles. While some areas, such as children's matters, healthcare, and family planning, show high levels of shared decision-making, other areas—particularly those related to financial decisions and women's freedom of movement—reflect a dominant male influence. This distribution underscores persistent cultural norms where men typically control financial and mobility-related decisions, while women are either involved jointly or play a secondary role. These findings indicate a need for increased gender equality in household decision-making, especially in aspects impacting women's personal autonomy.

Table: 6 Restrictions and Limitations

Imposed restrictions	Yes		No		Never	
	N	Percent (%)	N	Percent (%)	N	Percent (%)
Do you impose restrictions on your daughter in her daily life activities?	24	68.57143	10	28.57143	1	2.857143
Dressing pattern	33	94.28571	2	5.714286	0	0
Social Relation/meeting people	27	77.14286	8	22.85714	0	0
Behavior	34	97.14286	1	2.857143	0	0
Seating and standing style	33	94.28571	2	5.714286	0	0
Playing	22	62.85714	13	37.14286	0	0
Talking	31	88.57143	4	11.42857	0	0
Eating Food	26	74.28571	9	25.71429	0	0

The following table explores the groups and frequency of limitations placed on females within the Gujar tribal culture. It highlights social norms and restrictions imposed on women in every aspect of their everyday existence.

Daily Life Activities: Approximately 68.57% of respondents impose restrictions on their daughters' daily life activities, indicating a majority practice of controlling various aspects of their daughters' routines. Only 28.57% of families report no restrictions, and 2.86% have never imposed such limitations.

Dressing Pattern: Nearly all respondents (94.29%) impose restrictions on their daughters' dressing patterns, reflecting a strong emphasis on maintaining traditional attire or specific dress codes within the community. A small minority (5.71%) report no restrictions, indicating limited flexibility in attire choices for females.

Social Relations/Meeting People: 77.14% of respondents limit their daughters' social interactions, suggesting a cultural norm of controlling socialization to maintain family honor or adhere to community standards. Around 22.86% do not impose restrictions on social relations, showing some degree of acceptance for social interaction in a minority of families.

Behavior: Behavioral restrictions are highly prevalent, with 97.14% of families enforcing rules on how daughters should conduct themselves, underlining the importance placed on traditional behavior in public and private spheres. Only 2.86% report no behavioral restrictions, demonstrating that behavioral expectations are nearly universal in this community.

Seating and Standing Style: Restrictions on seating and standing style are imposed by 94.29% of families, likely

reflecting cultural norms around posture and demeanor as symbols of respect and propriety. A small 5.71% report no restrictions in this area, suggesting that these norms are firmly ingrained.

Playing: Limitations on play activities affect 62.86% of daughters, indicating a significant restriction on recreational freedom, possibly to ensure conformity to traditional roles or gender expectations. However, 37.14% report no restrictions on play, suggesting some leniency or evolving attitudes toward recreational activities for females.

Talking: Restrictions on talking are reported by 88.57% of respondents, reflecting control over speech, likely to encourage modesty, respect, or adherence to community norms. Only 11.43% of families report no restrictions, showing that freedom of expression is limited for most females.

Eating Food: About 74.29% of respondents impose restrictions on eating habits, which may relate to cultural norms around food consumption, timing, or dietary choices. 25.71% report no restrictions, indicating that some families may allow more flexibility in this aspect of daily life.

The findings shows that females in the Gujar tribal community face substantial restrictions across various aspects of their daily lives, including dressing, behavior, social relations, and speech. These restrictions appear to be strongly influenced by cultural and traditional values, with the community placing considerable emphasis on maintaining specific standards of conduct. While there are some families who report fewer or no restrictions in certain areas (such as playing and eating), the prevailing trend indicates that limitations on females' freedom remain widespread. This suggests that gender-based norms and control over women's daily activities are prominent in this community, with only minor signs of flexibility or progressive change.

Table: 7 Gender-Based Celebrations of Birth in Gujar Families

Gender-Based Celebrations of Birth in Gujar Families		
	N	Percent (%)
Traditional Rituals for Both Genders	10	28.57
Equal Celebration of Birth for Both Genders	3	8.57
Greater Joy or Emphasis on the Birth of a Boy	15	42.85
Changing Attitudes Towards Balanced Celebration	3	8.57
Limited or No Celebration of Birthdays	4	11.42
Total	35	100.00

Greater Joy or Emphasis on the Birth of a Boy (42.85%): The majority of respondents said that the birth of a boy is celebrated with more passion and delight than the birth of a girl. This illustrates conventional preferences, wherein sons are frequently seen as bearers of lineage and legacy, hence enjoying more extravagant ceremonies.

Traditional Rituals for Both Genders (28.57%): Approximately one-third of respondents indicated that all genders are received with customary ceremonies, but occasionally with differing levels of excitement. This indicates that the Gujar culture has instituted celebration customs for both males and females, but perhaps varying in magnitude.

Limited or No Celebration of Birthdays (11.42%): A minority of respondents indicated that birthday festivities are not prioritized in their culture, irrespective of the child's gender. This is a cultural norm in certain households where particular birth ceremonies may be limited.

Equal Celebration of Birth for Both Genders (8.57%): A minor but substantial number of respondents reported that both boys and girls are celebrated equally, without any gender-based discrimination. This indicates a transition toward gender equality in the Gujar community's celebratory practices.

Changing Attitudes Towards Balanced Celebration (8.57%): Another 8.57% indicated a progressive transition towards more equitable celebrations for both boys and girls, mirroring evolving cultural attitudes and a heightened focus on gender equality.

While traditional values still hold strong in many Gujar families, with a clear preference for celebrating boys more elaborately, there are signs of evolving attitudes toward gender equality. Approximately 17% of respondents support equal or more balanced celebrations, indicating a shift towards inclusivity in cultural practices. This diversity in responses highlights the interplay of tradition and modernization in shaping gender-based celebrations in the Gujar community.

Discussion

This study provides light on the widespread gender discrepancy in the Gujjar tribe of Kotranka Tehsil in Rajouri District, demonstrating a community where conventional gender norms are strongly embedded. Women in this group have restricted autonomy, particularly in household decisions, financial transactions, and migration. Male family members make the majority of decisions about household expenditure, asset sales, and even personal freedom, suggesting the continuation of patriarchal standards. Although women play a role in decision-making processes, particularly those involving family and children, these positions are secondary and frequently rely on male approval. This finding is consistent with previous studies, illustrating how traditional attitudes in patriarchal society limit women's participation in critical areas.

Further investigation finds that women experience limitations in sociability, wardrobe, and even personal behavior, with around 94% of respondents adhering to traditional dress rules and 97% managing social interactions and expressions. Such traditions demonstrate the continuance of societal standards that value modesty and submission in women, limiting their uniqueness and self-expression. Despite evidence of modernization in some families, these constraints demonstrate a strong adherence to cultural norms that prevent gender equality.

In schooling, female literacy rates continue to be much lower than male literacy rates, continuing a cycle of dependency and economic marginalization for community women. However, some families indicate support for shared decision-making in some areas, such as children's healthcare and family planning, implying that incremental progress toward gender equality is ongoing. Birth celebrations are likewise gendered, with boys having more elaborate rites due to their considered status as lineage bearers. Nonetheless, a modest but growing proportion of families support equal celebration, pointing to changing attitudes that may lessen gender disparities over time.

5. Conclusion

The study suggests that gender disparities among the Gujjar tribe of Kotranka Tehsil are heavily influenced by cultural traditions and societal expectations, which limit women's engagement in family and community life. The ingrained patriarchal framework perpetuates male supremacy in decision-making, economic power, and social advancement. Although industrialization and education are gradually influencing traditional beliefs, the changes are slow and limited.

Efforts to alleviate gender disparities in the Gujjar community should prioritize education and awareness, shared decision-making, and equitable opportunities for women in education, the economy, and society. Government interventions, community programs, and educational activities must highlight women's empowerment and work to decrease restrictive norms, ensuring that incremental improvements in attitudes result in substantial progress toward gender equality. Through consistent efforts, it is possible to create a more inclusive atmosphere that values both equally, allowing women to actively participate to their communities and society at large.

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