



GLOBALIZATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY OF GADCHIROLI DISTRICT

Firdous Parveen

Ph.D scholar, Diamond Harbour women's university

Sarisha - West Bengal

firdousparveen94@gmail.com

Abstract: *The socio-economic and cultural fabric of the tribal groups has been deeply affected by the process of globalization. It has created both opportunities and obstacles for women empowerment. The present study deals with the impact of globalization on women empowerment among tribal groups of Gadchiroli District of Maharashtra. The study is based on mixed methods research design. Primary data was collected from 300 indigenous women through structured surveys, interviews and focus group discussions while secondary data was collected from government papers, academic literature and policy documents. They measured different aspects of empowerment such as education, economic engagement, financial inclusion, healthcare access, digital literacy, political participation and decision-making within the household. The findings indicate that globalization has had a positive impact on women's empowerment, through increased educational attainment, increased livelihood opportunities through self-help groups and entrepreneurship, increased access to banking and digital technologies, and increased awareness of government welfare schemes and legal rights. The study finds that while globalization has been a driver for the betterment of the socio-economic condition of indigenous women, the advantages are not evenly distributed. To make empowerment sustainable, there is a need for targeted policy interventions, improved infrastructure, digital inclusion, quality education, strengthened health care services, and culturally sensitive development strategies that preserve indigenous knowledge and traditions while promoting gender equality and inclusive growth among tribal communities.*

Keywords: *Globalization; Women's Empowerment; Tribal Communities; Gadchiroli District; Self-Help Groups; Financial Inclusion; Digital Literacy; Gender Equality; Socio-Economic Development; Tribal Development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is one of the greatest transforming forces of the 21st century affecting economic, social, political and cultural institutions around the world. It has enabled the movement of commodities, services, technology, information and ideas across national boundaries, resulting to dramatic transformations in the lives of individuals and communities. Globalization has brought chances for economic growth, technical progress and better access to education and health care. However, the impact of globalization has not been the same for all areas of society. Globalization has brought with it benefits and challenges for marginalized populations, especially indigenous communities. The link of globalization and social transformation has assumed importance in nations like India where tribal tribes constitute a large part of the rural population.

India has one of the largest tribal communities in the world with over 700 recognized Scheduled Tribes in different geographical locations. Traditional tribal tribes have retained their distinct cultural identity, traditional knowledge system and subsistence methods strongly linked with forests, agriculture and natural resources. Despite constitutional provisions and several welfare measures introduced by the government, many indigenous groups still suffer from poverty, lack of opportunity for education, poor health-care facilities, unemployment, social marginalization and limited access to infrastructure. Empowering women in these communities is a key priority for sustainable and inclusive



development, as they confront many disadvantages from gender inequality, economic dependence, geographical isolation, and cultural restrictions.

Women's empowerment is the process by which women gain more influence over resources, opportunities, decision making and their lives. It includes economic independence, level of education, political engagement, social integration, legal awareness, access to health services, and freedom to participate equally in family and community matters. Empowerment empowers women to challenge unjust societal conventions, increase home welfare, contribute to community development and participate in democratic governance. Women's empowerment is particularly critical in tribal societies as women play a pivotal role in agriculture, forest resource management, household livelihoods, child care and preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural traditions. Strengthening their capacities leads to gender equality and sustainable development of indigenous communities.

Globalization has brought about various developments that have direct and indirect effects on the lives of tribal women. Better transport networks, digital communication technology, financial institutions, educational institutions, health services, market integration and government development plans have opened up greater prospects for education, employment, entrepreneurship and social involvement. The advent of cell phones, internet connectivity, digital banking and social media has increased access to information and public services, allowing many women to become more economically independent and socially conscious. Self-help organizations, microfinance institutions, skill development programmes and rural entrepreneurial initiatives have further empowered women participation in income producing activities and community development.

The Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra is an important site to study these processes. Gadchiroli is located in the eastern section of the state and has a large population of Scheduled Tribe communities including the Gond, Madia, Pardhan and Kolam. The region is known for its vast forest cover, abundant biodiversity, dispersed populations and a largely rural economy that is reliant on agricultural and forest-based livelihoods. Historically isolated due to difficult terrain and lack of infrastructure, Gadchiroli has gradually been integrated into the larger economic and administrative systems through improved road connectivity, expansion of educational institutions, banking services, health facilities, digital communication networks and government welfare programmes. At the same time, the district still faces development obstacles, such as poverty, low industrialization, the lack of public services in rural areas and socio-economic inequality.

Over the last decade, the socio-economic condition of tribal women in Gadchiroli has been uplifted by various government schemes like self-help groups, livelihood missions, financial inclusion schemes, digital governance, skill development programmes and educational scholarships. These programs have opened up new avenues for income production, savings, entrepreneurship, leadership and participation in local governance. However, to what degree globalization has resulted in meaningful empowerment for tribal women remains less clear. There are examples of progress, but it is necessary to analyze if the advances in education, technology, financial inclusion and market access have increased women's autonomy, decision-making power and quality of life and to identify the structural and cultural constraints that still restrict their advancement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Poonacha (2010) studied the oppression of indigenous women fighting against cultural oppression in the tribal regions of Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. The study pointed out that tribal women suffer from discrimination in various forms based on traditional norms, patriarchal social structures and uneven access to social and economic resources. Despite these limitations, indigenous women have engaged in resisting repressive practices through collective action, involvement in communal affairs and grassroots initiatives. The author said empowerment among indigenous women is mostly linked to access to education, awareness of legal rights and participation in local governance.

Sharan (2022) The policy framework of tribal females was studied through a case study of the agro-pastoral Gaddi group of the Himalayan region. However, the implementation gaps still continue to be a hindrance to the success of different government policies, aimed at improving the education and socio-economic condition of the tribal girls, as found in this study. Cultural practices, gender discrimination, economic hardship and geographical remoteness are some of the major barriers to girls' access to quality education and development opportunities.

Mutatkar (2018) gave a holistic perspective on tribal health and malnutrition in India with the emphasis on the fact that poor nutritional status continues to be one of the most important impediments to tribal development. The study revealed that lack of information about nutrition, poor sanitation, poverty, food insecurity and lack of healthcare infrastructure



were the key factors contributing to malnutrition among indigenous groups. Women and children were found to be particularly vulnerable due to maternal undernutrition, lack of access to health care and socio-economic hardship. Shahare (2020) studied the linkage between decentralized governance and socio-economic situation of tribal groups in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. The study examined the function of local self-government organizations in the promotion of tribal welfare and concluded that decentralization has led to advances in the delivery of public services, community engagement and local development planning. However, the continued limits of poor administrative ability, financial constraints, low literacy levels and weak institutional coordination continue to hamper the successful execution of development projects.

Guha (2022) reviewed the condition of tribal arts in Central Indian Tribal Belt and stressed its cultural, social and economic relevance. Tribal art forms are vital manifestations of indigenous identity, traditional knowledge and community heritage, the report said. However, growing modernization, commercialization, urbanization and decline of intergenerational transmission have jeopardized the survival of many indigenous art forms.

Tripathy (2025) studied the effectiveness of the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) and the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in alleviating the migration crisis of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the Vidarbha region. The report said that both legislations provide important legal protection for tribal land, forest rights and local self-governance, but the implementation has been patchy due to administrative inefficiencies, lack of awareness and institutional constraints. As a result, indigenous households continue to face relocation, livelihood insecurity and seasonal migration.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach has been employed to generate both quantitative and qualitative evidence, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the changing status of tribal women within the context of globalization.

3.1. Research Design

The study strategy was descriptive and analytical, employing a mixed method approach. The descriptive part deals with the documentation of socio-economic features of indigenous women and the identification of several facets through which globalization has affected their life. The analytical part explores the relationship between the variables concerning globalization and the measures of women empowerment. Quantitative statistics provide measurable evidence of increases in empowerment, while qualitative data offer deeper insights into lived experience, cultural shifts and community attitudes. The integration allows for triangulation of findings, and increases the reliability and validity of the investigation.

3.2. Study Area

The study was carried out in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, one of the most tribal dominated districts of India. The district contains a substantial population of Scheduled Tribes comprising Gond, Madia, Pardhan and Kolam groups. Gadchiroli is a region with dense forest cover, rural settlements, minimal infrastructure development and dependency on agriculture and forest based incomes. In the recent years, the district is exposed to globalization to a greater extent through road connectivity, educational institutions, digital communication, banking services, government welfare initiatives, self-help organizations and market integration. These developments make Gadchiroli a suitable research place to explore the impact of globalization on empowerment of indigenous women.

3.3. Study Population

The research population included tribal women of 18 years and above from the selected villages of Gadchiroli district. The survey covered women who were actively involved in domestic activities, agriculture, forest based vocations, self-help groups, entrepreneurship, wage jobs, education and local governance. Community leaders, women's self-help group representatives, government officials, non-governmental organization personnel and village elders were the major sources for qualitative interviews.

3.4. Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique was adopted to assure the representative participation of various tribal groupings. In the first phase, four administrative units of Gadchiroli district were identified on the basis of tribal population and ease of access. In the second stage, out of each block three villages were selected randomly, therefore twelve villages were



selected. Finally, eligible indigenous women were identified using systematic random sampling. Purposive sampling was utilized to identify key informants with substantial experience in community development and women's empowerment activities.

3.5. Sample Size

The total sample of 300 tribal women were recruited from 12 villages of Gadchiroli district. In addition, 20 key informants were interviewed which included members from the Panchayat, Anganwadi workers, heads of self-help groups, school instructors, health care workers and representatives from NGOs. The sample size was considered sufficient to ensure statistical reliability and qualitative depth.

3.6. Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized.

Primary Data

Primary data were acquired from respondents using structured questionnaire, personal interview, focus group discussion and field observation. The questionnaire included information on demographic characteristics, education, occupation, income, access to health care, access to digital technology, membership in self-help groups, financial independence, political participation, decision-making power, mobility, and views on globalization.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from government reports, Census publications, National Family Health Survey (NFHS), Ministry of Tribal Affairs reports, academic journals, books, policy documents, District Statistical Handbooks, reports of non-governmental organizations and published research articles related to tribal development, globalization and women's empowerment.

3.7. Data Collection Tools

A structured interview schedule was developed containing closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was structured into sections concerning demographic profile, socio-economic position, educational attainment, livelihood patterns, healthcare accessibility, digital literacy, financial inclusion, involvement in governance, awareness of government schemes and indications of empowerment. Semi-structured interview guides were utilized for key informant interviews and focus group discussion schedules for collective exploration of community experiences.

3.8. Variables of the Study

The independent variable in the study was globalization measured through indices such as access to education, media exposure, digital connectivity, market involvement, government welfare programmes, financial services, migration, employment opportunities, and technology adoption.

Women's empowerment was the dependent variable, operationalized through indicators such as education, economic independence, decision-making within the household, ownership of assets, political participation, health care use, leadership roles, self-confidence, mobility, legal awareness, and participation in community organizations.

3.9. Data Collection Procedure

Permission was sought from local administrative officials and village leaders prior to data collection. Respondents were told of the study's purpose and signed an informed consent form. Where appropriate, face-to-face interviews were conducted in the local language with the help of trained field investigators. Focus group talks and field notes augmented the survey results. To achieve the overall coverage of the designated villages, data gathering was conducted within four months.

3.10. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tools. Respondent characteristics and empowerment indicators were summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistical approaches were used to analyze the association between globalization and women's empowerment characteristics. These included Chi-square tests, independent sample t-tests, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using thematic analysis, identifying themes, narratives and patterns, which were then interpreted together with quantitative findings.



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

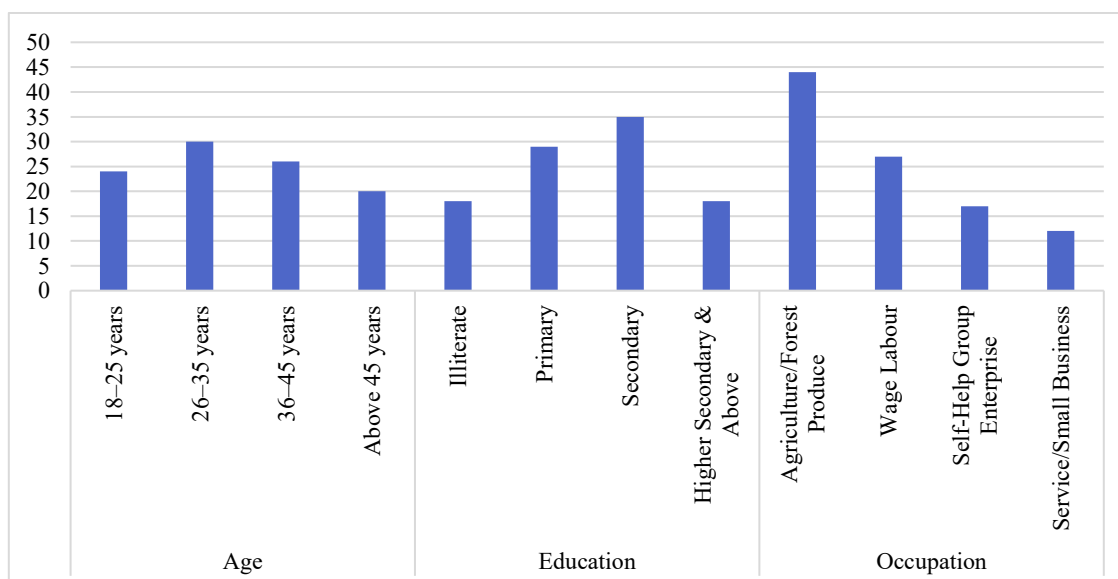
In this part the results of the study on the impact of globalization on women empowerment in the tribal groups of Gadchiroli District, Maharashtra are presented. The analysis is based on data obtained from 300 indigenous women belonging to diverse age groups, educational background, occupation and tribal community. The findings explore the impact of globalization on women's access to education, health care, financial services, digital technologies, chances for livelihoods, and participation in household and communal decision-making. Qualitative observations based on interviews and discussions in focus groups corroborate quantitative results. The commentary interprets the data as per the aims of the study and shows both the benefits and problems of globalization in tribal communities.

4.2. Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Socio-demographically, the bulk of the respondents belonged to the economically active age group of 26-45 years which constituted about half of the sample. The majority of the respondents were married and belonged to Gond and Madia tribes. The major occupation was still agriculture and collecting of minor forest produce, while a large number of women had diversified into paid jobs, self-help group activities and small companies. Younger women had higher educational achievement, with a greater proportion finishing secondary education than older cohorts. However, illiteracy still existed among older women in rural communities.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Tribal Women (n = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25 years	72	24.0
	26–35 years	90	30.0
	36–45 years	78	26.0
	Above 45 years	60	20.0
Education	Illiterate	54	18.0
	Primary	87	29.0
	Secondary	105	35.0
	Higher Secondary & Above	54	18.0
Occupation	Agriculture/Forest Produce	132	44.0
	Wage Labour	81	27.0
	Self-Help Group Enterprise	51	17.0
	Service/Small Business	36	12.0





4.3. Impact of Globalization on Women's Empowerment

The study finds that several elements of women empowerment are positively influenced by globalization. The improved women's participation in economic and social activities is witnessed due to wider road connection, mobile communication, digital banking, educational opportunities and government assistance schemes. Nearly three-fourths of respondents reported using mobile phones on a regular basis for communicating and getting government information. Bank accounts and self-help organizations have boosted women's saving ability and their income generation ability, which has contributed to financial inclusion.

Participation in the self-help groups was found to be one of the major contributors to economic empowerment. Women connected with these organizations had more financial freedom, more confidence in speaking in public and more involvement in decisions on domestic matters. Many respondents, using access to microcredit, ventured into small companies such as chicken farming, tailoring, bamboo handicrafts, vegetable gardening and food processing.

Healthcare awareness improved dramatically with stronger communication networks and outreach initiatives. Higher institutional deliveries, vaccination coverage and maternal health care utilization indicated better awareness among native women. Yet, insufficient transportation infrastructure and shortage of healthcare workers still made healthcare accessible inadequate in some distant villages.

Younger respondents demonstrated a gradual development in their digital literacy. Women were increasingly using smart phones to access internet banking, government aid systems, educational materials and agricultural information. Still, challenges persisted for older women due to low computer skills and linguistic hurdles.

Table 2. Indicators of Globalization and Women's Empowerment (n = 300)

Indicator	Yes n (%)	No n (%)
Access to Mobile Phone	228 (76.0)	72 (24.0)
Participation in Self-Help Groups	204 (68.0)	96 (32.0)
Own Bank Account	252 (84.0)	48 (16.0)
Participation in Household Decision-Making	216 (72.0)	84 (28.0)
Awareness of Government Welfare Schemes	234 (78.0)	66 (22.0)
Digital Banking Usage	168 (56.0)	132 (44.0)
Participation in Gram Sabha/Panchayat Activities	147 (49.0)	153 (51.0)
Independent Income Source	189 (63.0)	111 (37.0)

4.4. Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment was one of the most palpable results of globalization. Increased access of indigenous women to banking institutions, rural development initiatives and self-help groups led to their independent income generation. Many respondents indicated improvement in household income through participation in micro-enterprises, agricultural value addition, forest produce marketing and skill development initiatives.

Women engaging in entrepreneurship showed increased financial confidence and enhanced bargaining power within the household. However, limited market access, poor infrastructure and sporadic income prospects continued to constrain sustainable economic progress for many people.

4.5. Educational and Digital Empowerment

The results show that globalization has increased the aspirations of the indigenous families for education to a great extent. The increase in schools, scholarships, digital learning resources and government educational programmes has motivated more girls to go to secondary schools. Younger women have much stronger literacy and computer skills than older generations.

Digital technology has also increased access to information pertaining to agriculture, health, career possibilities and government support schemes. Despite advancements, poor connectivity, and inadequate provision of electricity and digital infrastructure remain major challenges in numerous remote tribal areas.



4.6. Social and Political Empowerment

Under the influence of globalization, gradual changes in gender roles and social involvement have been taking place. Women are increasingly taking part in village meetings, community organizations and local governance through Panchayati Raj Institutions and self-help groups. Increased exposure to education and media has raised understanding on legal rights, health, gender equality and government support schemes.

However, many families still work with patriarchal practices. Older respondents said that cultural norms often impede women's mobility and involvement in public affairs. Political engagement was lower but improving, but still relatively low compared to economic participation.

4.7. Challenges Associated with Globalization

The study found some beneficial outcomes but also some problems which impede the empowerment of tribal women. Globalization has worked better for some villages than for others, in terms of infrastructure and access to markets. This is the reason for the economic discrepancies. Remote villages still suffer from insufficient educational facilities, inadequate healthcare services, restricted career possibilities and bad digital access.

4.8. Discussion

The findings indicate that globalization has been a major motivator for the improvement of women empowerment among indigenous groups of Gadchiroli District. The rise in education possibilities, financial inclusion, digital technologies, self-help groups and government welfare schemes have greatly improved the economic independence, decision making power and social engagement of women. These results are in line with recent literature that highlights the positive influence of globalization on inclusive rural development and gender equality.

At the same time, the study underscores the uneven distribution of the benefits of globalization. Women in isolated forest villages continue to face structural impediments of poor infrastructure, limited access to healthcare, digital isolation and continued socio-cultural norms. Economic empowerment has outpaced political empowerment, highlighting the need for more institutional support for women's leadership and involvement in governance.

5. CONCLUSION

The study shows that globalization has played a major impact in the empowerment of tribal women in Gadchiroli District by increasing their access to education, financial services, health care, digital technologies, livelihood opportunities and government assistance schemes. Enhanced engagement in self-help groups, increased financial inclusion and better awareness of legal and social rights have boosted women's economic independence and decision-making capacity in their households and communities. But the gains from globalization are still unevenly dispersed, with women in distant tribal villages still grappling with obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, limited digital connectivity, restricted access to decent healthcare and education, and persistent socio-cultural impediments. While globalization has opened up new avenues for social and economic development, sustainable empowerment can only be achieved through inclusive development policies that bridge regional gaps, empower local institutions, promote digital and financial literacy, create more employment opportunities, and ensure the preservation of the cultural identity and traditional knowledge of the tribal communities. The study finds that globalization, with appropriate governance, community involvement and specific interventions based on the specific requirements of tribal groups, can be an effective stimulant for women's empowerment.

REFERENCES

1. Poonacha, V. (2010). Women resist indigenous cultural oppression in Gadchiroli, India.
2. Sharan, K. (2022, July). Tribal Girls in Policy: A Case Study of Argo-pastoral Gaddi of the Himalayas. In NATIONAL (Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 40).
3. Mutatkar, R. K. (2018). Tribal health and malnutrition. Concept Publishing Company.
4. Shahare, V. B. (2020). Decentralised Governance and Socio-Economic Status of Tribals in Vidarbha, Maharashtra, India. Rajagiri Journal of Social Development, 12(1), 19-37.
5. Guha, S. (2022). A Status Report of the Tribal Arts within the Central Indian Tribal Belt. In Tribal Development Report (pp. 275-338). Routledge India.



6. Tripathy, S. N. (2025). Can PESA and FRA Resolve Vidarbha's PVTGs Migration Crisis. *Asian Journal of Economics and Finance*, 7(3-4), 249-263.
7. Dicholkar, S. (2018). 'Adivasi Ashram shala' (Tribal Residential school) and Protection for Tribal Children in Maharashtra, India.
8. Hazare, A. P., & Tholiya, J. J. (2024, August). Preserving Tribal Culture Through Tribal Children Centric Design (TCCD): A Case Study of Ashram Shalas in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, India. In *IIA International Research Conference* (pp. 29-56). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
9. Patel, V. (2005). GENDER AUDIT OF BUDGETS—A CASE STUDY OF INDIA. *Studies in Indian Economy*, 1, 100.
10. Rajkumar, G. K. (2018). Employment, income and expenditure pattern of tribal farm families in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra (Doctoral dissertation, M. Sc. Thesis. Department of Agricultural Economics, MPKY Rahuri, Maharashtra, India).
11. Valli, D. V. A., & Sutha, M. J. THE ROLE OF NABARD IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE. In *Online Multi-Disciplinary E-National Seminar On Tribal Development Initiatives For Sustainable Livelihood*.
12. Lal, J. S. (2016). A STUDY OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THANE DISTRICT (Doctoral dissertation, University of Mumbai).
13. Patil, D. A. LOCATING VULNERABILITY OF INDIA'S STRANDED TRIBAL MIGRANT WORKERS DURING THE TIMES OF COVID-19: A STUDY IN TRIBAL DISTRICT OF GADCHIROLI IN CENTRAL INDIA. *Amitesh Publication & Company*, 114.
14. Fernandez, B. (2016). *Transformative policy for poor women: A new feminist framework*. Routledge.
15. Gupta, S. (2018). Globalisation and Tribal Integration in India: Undoing Exclusionary Practices for Inclusive Development. *Dynamics of Public Administration*, 35(1), 34-56.