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# Gender, power and intersectionality in India: A comprehensive literature review

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the intricate dynamics of gender, power, and intersectionality in the Indian setting, elucidating the way these aspects converge to shape social positions and interactions. By drawing upon a wide range of scholarly literature, the research clarifies how gender interacts with caste, class, religion, and other social identities to influence power dynamics in several domains, such as the family, workplace, and political arena. Significantly, this review highlights the substantial contributions of Indian feminist research to the area of intersectionality by offering unique insights into the actual experiences of disadvantaged groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Moreover, it rigorously assesses the influence of current policies and legal structures on the continuation of overlapping disparities. By combining important observations and filling in the gaps in existing research, this chapter advocates for more nuanced, intersectional approaches within gender studies and outlines potential avenues for future inquiry to enhance understanding of these multifaceted issues in India.

**KEYWORDS:** Caste and Class Inequality, Feminist Scholarship, Gender Roles, Gender Justice, Identity Politics, Intersectionality, Legal Frameworks, LGBTQIA+ in India, Power Structures, Social Hierarchies

## Introduction

Gender, power, and intersectionality frameworks are essential in sociological research for the explanation of the complex dynamics surrounding overlapping identities and societal structures impacting both personal and communal experience. Gender is a dimension of inequality, being a socially constructed category that shapes particular roles, opportunities, and power relations in different cultures. Power, as embedded in social structures and relationships, determines who has access to resources and how decisions are made, often perpetuating existing hierarchies. The concept of intersectionality, as developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, expands this discussion by looking at how multiple identities—such as caste, class, religion, and ethnicity—intersect to create distinct experiences of oppression or privilege.

In the case of the Indian subcontinent, particular factors take a more significant importance due to the significantly hierarchical character of its society. India, characterized by interrelationships of caste, religion, class, and regional identities, has a special setting for carrying out an analysis of the dialectics of gender and power within those structures. Such lifestyles are quite removed from the lifestyles of their well-to-do upper-caste counterparts in that they take on the intersecting features of both caste and gender-based oppressions. Muslim women are therefore multiply marginalized and constructed together with religious, cultural, as well as economic forms of discrimination that, in addition, affect the LGBTIQ community. This has great implications in understanding gender, power, and intersectionality in India: It goes beyond simple dynamics of inequality studies so as to inform policies and actions that can be taken toward realization of social justice. It is at the heart of international debates on intersectionality as it reveals challenges in the postcolonial and patriarchal context in which women and other marginalized groups exist. There is literature in this area that does not relate and integrate diverse perspectives with relevant empirical evidence in the Indian context.

This analysis aims to complement the prevailing limitations by generating current scholarship about gender, power, and intersectionality within India. The review literature is descriptive of theoretical as well as empirical contributions pertaining to this topic, keeping prevalent trends, important results, as well as research methodology focused while highlighting deficits within this currently existing body of knowledge and delineating areas of potential follow-on research. Such research contributes to an accurate understanding regarding the relationship of gender, power, and intersectionality over the sociocultural field of India.

## Research Objectives

The literature review will critically synthesize current academic discourses about inter-related themes of gender, power, and intersectionality in the Indian context. To achieve such ends, the research will be accomplished through the fulfilment of the following objectives:

➢ To rigorously analyse the intersections of gender, caste, class, religion, and sexuality within Indian society.
➢ To summarize contemporary academic literature (2013-2023) regarding gendered power dynamics in India.
➢ To evaluate the effects of governmental policies and legal structures on intersectionally marginalized populations.
➢ To identify deficiencies in the current literature and provide directions for future inquiry.

## Methodology

The literature review utilized databases including JSTOR, Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, and SSRN. Keywords encompassed "gender AND caste AND India," "intersectionality AND India," and "Dalit women AND policy." The inclusion criteria emphasized peer-reviewed publications, reports, and grey literature published between 2013 and 2023. A thematic analysis method was employed to discern recurring patterns.

The findings are organized into key themes that directly address research questions and objectives. This methodology provides a comprehensive and sophisticated comprehension of the interactions between gender, power, and intersectionality within the context of India, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse surrounding the subject.

## Review of Literature

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework emphasizes the analysis of gender, power, and intersectionality dynamics in India, offering both global and regional viewpoints.

In the Indian context, intersectionality encompasses intricate interactions among gender, caste, class, religion, and various other identities, which in turn influence power dynamics and social structures (Velaskar, 2016; Mrudula A. C., 2013). The convergence of these axes of identity is profoundly anchored in the historical context of Indian society, shaped by the forces of colonialism, nationalism, and globalization (Mrudula A. C., 2013). The intersection of various identities profoundly influences the experiences of individuals, especially women belonging to marginalized communities who encounter layered forms of discrimination (Haq, 2013). In order to tackle these complexities, academics advocate for the advancement of a continuum of intersectionality that transcends the conventional emphasis on race, class, and gender, incorporating additional elements such as migration, colonization, and sexuality (Mehrotra, 2010). This methodology has the potential to clarify the mechanisms underlying societal structures of domination and subordination, thereby offering a more sophisticated comprehension of women's experiences in India (Velaskar, 2016). These frameworks play a vital role in the formulation of impactful interventions and policies aimed at advancing gender equality and enhancing women's empowerment within the Indian context (Haq, 2013).

The collection of papers investigates diverse theoretical frameworks addressing gender, power, and social inequality. Marxist feminism and postcolonial feminism are analysed for their possible amalgamation in organizational theory, specifically in the examination of women's productive and reproductive labour responsibilities (Seneviratne, 2018). Gender studies represent a prominent and persistent theme in the literary discussions and academic gatherings of the twenty-first century. The repetition of this theme reflects the global aspiration to advance towards more inclusive strategies for tackling social issues. Consequently, feminism emerges as a potent avenue for articulation among women and their supporters. A multitude of feminist perspectives have enriched the discourse, yet one of the most compelling avenues for advocating women's rights and fostering continued discussions on the matter lies within the realm of literature. The significant impact of Marxist theories on feminist and postcolonial movements and writers, presenting a comprehensive overview of the prevailing realities. It considers significant matters that feminist authors from Africa, America, Asia, and Europe have explored. These contentious discussions have synthesized various theories and ideologies, underpinned by Marxist philosophy, to enhance the social conditions of women (Dia, 2020). A proposed anti-colonial discursive framework aims to forge alliances among anti-oppression activists by integrating indigeneity narratives and anti-racism practices, while recognizing its links to Marxist, feminist, and post-colonialist movements (Dei, 2018). Multiple social theories, such as Marxism, world-systems theory, and poststructuralist symbolic interactionism, are assessed for their advantages and shortcomings in elucidating gender disparity (England, 1993). These publications jointly illustrate the intricate interaction among many theoretical frameworks in comprehending and addressing gender and power issues within society.

### Gender and Power in India

Contemporary life is characterized by constant transformation, especially within the technological epoch, marked by swift globalization and peak technological breakthroughs (Somani P. , 2021). Gender equality is an essential human right for every individual in society and constitutes a crucial basis for a peaceful and sustainable world; nonetheless, despite significant progress, gender inequality persists (Belingheri et al, 2021). In the early 1800s, a woman's function was primarily to do domestic responsibilities within the household. They were characterized as custodians of the household and ethical educators, instilling moral principles in their families and the broader community. Concurrently, they were homemakers who reembraced the responsibilities of childbirth, family care, and submission to their spouses (Cerrato, 2018). In social contexts, women were regarded as the inferior sex, hence perceived as insufficient in comparison to men, leading to gender disparities. In modern culture, the historical treatment of women might be viewed as analogous to slavery, as women lacked autonomy and were subjugated by men (Nan, 2019). This originated from male parents before marriage, subsequently involving the woman's husband. The implementation of women's movements was highly effective; thus, women began to contest the social, traditional, economic, and political

systems that had perpetuated injustice for an extended period, so initiating their new positions in society. Nonetheless, women have historically faced diminished vocational possibilities and legal rights due to their underrepresentation relative to men, since societal norms prioritized motherhood and wifehood over professional aspirations. Women obtained voting rights around the late nineteenth century (Teele, 2020). Women have enhanced their opportunities to pursue education and professions traditionally reserved for men.

The stability of society relied on a solid foundation that encompassed the sanctity of marriage (Pessin, 2018). This partnership entailed an expectation for women to comply with their husbands and concur with them to maintain a stable and contented marriage. Nevertheless, several subjects incited contention, notably women's right to education, which subsequently resulted in protests (Cain, 2020). Only the girls of affluent parents may obtain formal education at a significant financial cost within their domestic settings. Nevertheless, a well-educated woman was regarded as undesirable by male suitors, hence complicating the attainment of a marriage proposal. Consequently, access to education in topics such as reading, writing, and languages was restricted. Moreover, the available disciplines focused on preparing women to thrive as homemakers, encompassing skills like as knitting, midwifery, cooking, and weaving, which were considered essential for fulfilling their 'wifely responsibilities' (Whittle, 2020). The establishment of women's rights movements catalysed protests against slavery and male dictatorships. This resulted in upheaval and ultimately the processes of constitutional amendment and the abolition of slavery. Women were able to express their thoughts without oppression, so marking a significant achievement in women's history. In modern society, women have increasingly opposed male domination in various countries worldwide and seek to achieve complete independence from their male counterparts. Women have secured their rights through perseverance and protests advocating for equal educational opportunities and religious action, surmounting oppressive hurdles imposed by men and even by some women in the past. Ultimately, women began to pursue jobs beyond their domestic spheres and applied their knowledge and talents in socially sanctioned occupations. Despite societal advancements that have unveiled greater options for women, significant inequities between men and women persist and require attention.

## India and Equality
### Gender-Based Violence and its Correlation with Power Dynamics

Gender equality, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution, represents a fundamental right for women, envisioning "empowered women living with dignity and engaging as equal partners in development within a violence- and discrimination-free environment." It also emphasizes "well-nurtured youth with abundant opportunities for growth and development in a safe and protective setting" (WCD., 2021). Violence against women persists at unacceptably high levels and has been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Globally, one in three women, amounting to 736 million, have encountered physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, starting from the age of 15, primarily perpetrated by an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls represents a breach of human rights (WHO, 2021). During the pandemic, reports from frontline workers revealed a significant increase in many forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence (Women, 2022). In the forthcoming decade, as many as 10 million girls will be at risk of underage marriage as a consequence of COVID-19. This is in addition to the 100 million expected to become child brides before the epidemic (UNICEF, 2021). The pandemic has intensified the increase in unpaid domestic and caregiving duties undertaken by women (Seedat, 2021), impacting employment rates, mental health, and coping strategies. Women presently allocate over two and a half times more hours than men to unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore, the incidence of female harassment and violence against women persists in both public and home settings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, compliance with government lockdown measures and self-isolation led to an increase in alcohol and drug consumption, driven by feelings of insecurity and instability (Mittal, 2020). The notable increase of COVID-19 cases and associated deaths has placed a considerable strain on global health systems, particularly in India, where communities encountered significant difficulties in accessing hospital beds and oxygen cylinders (Singh, 2021). As a result, essential services, including domestic violence shelters and helplines, have exceeded their capacity, resulting in limited or no available aid. Diversity in the workforce encompasses various elements that contribute to the establishment of vibrant cultures, enhanced responsiveness to employee and customer needs, increased innovation and creativity, and assists organizations in competing within an increasingly globalized and diverse marketplace (IES., 2022). Despite a

gradual decrease in gender disparities, women remain underrepresented in positions of power due to the gender pay gap and entrenched attitudes inside male-dominated senior management roles. This can be addressed by requiring all organizations to conduct equal pay audits, reform pay structures, identify and rectify inequitable compensation, implement pay progression to bridge gender pay gaps, and promote women to positions of authority in India. According to the United Nations, women remain under-represented in political leadership roles, with an estimated one hundred and thirty years required to achieve gender equality in positions of power. As of September 2021, only twenty-six women across twenty-four countries have served as Heads of State or Government (UN, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted women, whose resourcefulness and innovative ideas will facilitate the global rehabilitation of communities. Consequently, it is asserted that by placing women in positions of authority, both men and women can collaborate to strategize and make decisions for a swift recovery.

This collection of articles analyses gender dynamics in India, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges. Gender scholarship in India investigates theoretical issues, the women's movement, and violence against women (Purkayastha, 2003). Notwithstanding advancements in female education, a reduction in early marriages, and an increase in leadership roles, significant gender disparities endure (Somani D., 2022). Key issues include societal norms, cultural prejudices, violence, and inadequate representation in leadership roles (Somani D., 2022). To address these challenges, societal education, behavioral adjustments, and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations are recommended (Somani D., 2022). The literature examines the historical context of gender and power in early Indian history (Visvanathan, 2013) and the interaction of gender, development, and the state in contemporary India (Stock, 2020). These publications collectively improve the understanding of gender dynamics in India, highlighting the imperative for further efforts to achieve gender equality.

**Intersectionality in Indian Feminist Scholarship**
**Menon vs. Govinda**
Intersectionality within Indian feminist research has been a topic of discussion and criticism. Some scholars advocate for its significance in elucidating intricate identities and experiences (Govinda R. , 2022), while others question its relevance in the Indian context (Menon N. , 2015). (Govinda R. , 2022) challenges Western feminist rhetoric for generalizing "Third World women," emphasizing the necessity for a nuanced comprehension of varied realities. (Govinda R. , 2022) illustrates the efficacy of intersectionality in highlighting disparities among Dalit women and promotes its application in decolonizing feminist education. (Menon N. , 2015) contends that intersectionality benefits international funding agencies more than feminism and sees capitalism as the principal sustainer of patriarchy in South Asia. The discussion highlights conflicts between embracing intersectionality globally and opposing its relevance to domestic disparities in India, indicating a necessity for deeper decolonization of feminist theory nationally (Menon N. , 2019).

Indian feminist scholars have significantly contributed to the discourse on intersectionality, albeit their opinions differ. (Govinda R. , 2022) illustrates how intersectionality exposes disparities among Dalit women and promotes its application in decolonizing feminist education. (Menon N. , 2019) critiques intersectionality, perceiving it as a depoliticizing force regarding gender and emphasizing capitalism as the primary perpetuator of patriarchy in South Asia. (Fernandes, 2021) advocates for intersectionality as a mechanism to confront inequities in India, highlighting the necessity of contextual interactions to tackle epistemic violence. (Arya S. & Rathore, 2019) offer divergent perspectives, referencing John's advocacy for engagement with intersectionality and Gopal's criticism of Menon's dismissal, emphasizing the concept's capacity to tackle intricate matters of gender injustice. The contrasting viewpoints of mainstream Indian feminists and Dalit feminists about intersectionality highlight the persistent discourse on its applicability and significance within the Indian context (Menon N. , 2019; Arya S. & Rathore, 2019).

Intersectionality in Indian feminist scholarship is a subject of contention and critique. Certain researchers contend that it aids in comprehending intricate identities and experiences, but others challenge its pertinence within the Indian setting. Some contend it reveals inequalities among Dalit women and advocates for decolonizing feminist education. Critics argue that it depoliticizes gender and reinforces patriarchy. Indian feminist scholars have enriched the discourse on intersectionality, however their perspectives vary. Some proponents endorse its

implementation to rectify disparities in India, whilst critics denounce its contribution to the perpetuation of patriarchy. The divergent perspectives underscore the continuing debate on the relevance and importance of intersectionality within the Indian context.

**Intersections of caste, class, and gender in rural and urban India**
Some studies explore the interconnections of caste, class, and gender in both rural and urban India. In rural regions, caste and gender profoundly influence child nutrition, with class inequality prevailing over caste inequality in North India, but caste inequality predominates in South India concerning severe stunting (Mukhopadhyay, 2015). Gender and caste significantly affect water access and distribution in peri-urban areas (Prakash, 2016). Urban migration might diminish caste and gender affiliations, affording women enhanced prospects and greater influence in labor markets via familial networks (Srinivasan, 1997). The migratory process and industrial labor are influenced by caste and gender identities, which are frequently reinforced and redefined in urban environments (Kunduri, 2018). Although development projects have faced challenges in dismantling caste and gender constraints in rural regions, urban migration has demonstrated the capacity to undermine these conventional hierarchies and enhance women's circumstances (Srinivasan, 1997; Kunduri, 2018).

Recent research investigates the influence of intersectionality on women's movements and gender legislation. Research indicates that although intersectional elements are progressively incorporated into European Union gender equality policies, they are frequently addressed implicitly and from a distinct viewpoint (Lombardo E. & Agustín, 2012). The incorporation of intersectionality in European policy has faced criticism for being whitened, additive, and depoliticized (Christoffersen, 2022). Four methodologies for tackling intersectionality in politics and policy have been delineated: reactive, pragmatic, substantial, and procedural (Verloo, 2013). The use of gender and minority quotas has yielded varied results for the representation of minority women in national legislatures globally, with the majority of quota programs not effectively contesting the dominance of majority men (Hughes, 2011). The findings underscore the intricate relationship between intersectionality and gender policies, indicating a necessity for more comprehensive and inclusive strategies to simultaneously address several dimensions of injustice.

**Policy and Legal Framework**
The Indian Constitution grants special status and empowering measures for women, as well as many legislations designed to eliminate disparities and penalize discrimination (SreeKrishnaBharadwaj, 2016). Principal legislative instruments addressing gender inequities encompass legislation on marriage, divorce, property rights, and domestic violence, and affirmative action measures like as reservations for women in local governance (Rani, 2023). Notwithstanding these initiatives, gender discrimination persists in the workplace, with more than 72% of women indicating its prevalence (Kumar M.V. & Rao, 2021). India's performance in gender equality metrics, such as labour force participation and the Global Gender Gap Index, is below average compared to other countries (Kumar M.V. & Rao, 2021). Although advantageous law has been established, the successful execution and proactive assertion of rights by women are essential for attaining the intended results in addressing gender-based violence and discrimination (Tyagi, 2020).

**Modi's SDG initiatives:** In 2015, the Prime Minister of India, Modi, adopted the SDG after the United Nations took his confidence as one of the Asian leaders. He has successfully developed communities and says, "Many of the agenda items listed for Indian development are seen in the Sustainable Development Goals." Our national programs have a serious intent; ensuring sustainable development for one-seventh of the world shall make quite a statement on the impact on earth. (Modi, 2017). It is one of the planet's largest and most populous counties next to China, plus its economic growth is accelerating faster in the world compared to everyone else. There is not a better scenario to enable Prime Minister Modi accomplish his missions relating to sustainable growth and also to inclusiveness. His effort under his helm, and with his leading India and together with other Nations, facilitated the development for SDG and balanced in the ratio of economic factor, Social Factors, and as well, environment factors. P.M Modi never ceases while facing an issue related to the fiscal implications in this country because he believes by transforming thoughts for ambitious efforts. Including a goal of unifying lighting for rural electricity, Road and digital linkages improvement, clean sources of energies, sanitation betterment of homes, a school, and elementary level education will be provided around the nation. With so

strong an implementation team - that what the Prime Minister describe as the efforts for SabKa Saath Sabka Vikas - That literally a collective effort which implies all aspects of growth equally. Subsequently, PM Narendra Modi facilitated a collaboration towards various sorts of stakeholders where their abilities or competencies offered to bring growth for further future needs toward the nation plus SDG fulfilment. Two governing levels- both collaborated toward change The Federal Governments support job packages, enabling schooling, highway under the interlinking approach connecting an urban and suburban region developing houses to accommodate equal access opportunity to women- who originate from lower socio- economic conditions to men similarly. Substantially, many states Chief Minister subgroups proffer basic counsel on various subjects and talents development Digital payment the implementing of Clean Indian Campaign that Swachha Bharat Abhiyaan. Taking into account rapidly advancement, it is speculated that until the end year 2024, at least there will be achieved the 'Cashless ' status achieved due to Digital Economy integration across the circular concept. Hence, it projected that towards the end years 2027, any student attending at any school to adhere strictly for the same educational curriculum developed to ensure for any program initiated by Un. To help towards education, whereby, will provide the 'Same Level Educational Standard' same quality among the students despite gender while studying in Tribal Areas due to this program 'Conversion for Global.

**Intersectionality and Marginalized Communities**: Intersectionality has become an essential concept for comprehending the intricate interactions of identity, marginalization, and social systems across diverse situations. In educational research, it elucidates the influence of various identities on experiences and institutions, yet its implementation frequently suffers from theoretical ambiguity (Sibbett, 2020). This methodology has broadened the investigation of intimate partner abuse within minority communities, uncovering distinct experiences and requirements (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2019). In occupational therapy, intersectionality enhances nuanced and socially sensitive practices for oppressed groups, highlighting the significance of co-constructing knowledge and critical reflexivity (Gerlach, 2015). An intersectional framework in political science illustrates that endorsements from organizations supporting oppressed communities can substantially impact voter assessments, occasionally surpassing the influence of candidate demographics alone. The phenomenon known as "associational affect" underscores the intricate influence of identification on voting behavior (Bell, 2023).

Intersectionality is widely acknowledged as essential in formulating gender policies and tackling many forms of discrimination. The European Union has commenced the integration of intersectional dimensions into its gender equality policies; however, these aspects are frequently addressed implicitly and from a distinct viewpoint, which may result in a de-gendering of policy content (Lombardo E. & Agustín, 2012). Intersectionality provides essential insights for policy formulation and development, especially on equal opportunities and diversity legislation (Bagilhole, 2010). In climate change adaptation research, gender is primarily conceptualized within a binary framework of men vs women, overlooking power dynamics and social ties (Djoudi et al, 2016). To rectify these deficiencies, researchers advocate for the adoption of a "intersectionality impact assessment" to enhance the quality of policy-making (Lombardo E. & Agustín, 2012) and underscore the necessity of instructing intersectionality to furnish students and policymakers with theoretical frameworks and practical illustrations for comprehending and tackling intricate patterns of discrimination (Olsson et al, 2009).

Intersectionality is essential in influencing gender policies and tackling disparities in India. Studies indicate that transportation plans frequently neglect the intricate disparities faced by marginalized populations, emphasizing singular perspectives instead of intersectional frameworks (Kakar I. P., 2021). The convergence of gender, class, and caste profoundly influences healthcare accessibility, with economic status serving as a critical determinant of unmet healthcare requirements (Mahapatro, 2021). Research on gender violence, exemplified by the Nirbhaya case, uncovers significant interconnections of gender and class that affect public reaction and governmental response (Dey, 2016). The intersection of several identities, especially gender and caste, profoundly influences Indian society, impacting representation and fundamental human rights (Mrudula A. C., 2013). Utilizing an intersectional perspective in policy research and development is essential for crafting more effective and inclusive policies that tackle the complex nature of discrimination and inequities in India.

These researches analyse intersectionality within Indian policy, with a specific emphasis on transportation and violence against women. (Kakar I. P., 2021) examined transportation policy in India, revealing that they frequently neglect the intricate intersectional requirements of marginalized groups, instead depending on monolithic interpretations of population segments. The policymaking process was identified as exclusive and

dominated by experts, disregarding the perspectives of marginalized groups. (Mangubhai, 2015) emphasize the necessity of tackling intersecting disparities within development frameworks, deriving insights from their experiences with Dalit and single women in India. (George, 2023) examines the impact of intersectionality on the perceptions of survivors of sexual and domestic abuse, specifically focusing on Dalit women, within the social and legal frameworks of India. The author underscores the necessity for policies and frameworks to confront intersectional violence and oppression experienced by marginalized women.

The interaction of gender, caste, religion, and class profoundly affects marginalized people in India, especially Dalits, Adivasis, and Muslims (Banerjee, 2018; Dubey, 2016). Women from these demographics encounter many forms of discrimination and oppression, frequently confined to informal employment characterized by job insecurity (Dubey, 2016). In indigenous communities, patriarchal traditions may restrict women's rights and resource access, notwithstanding constitutional guarantees for self-governance (Kabeer et al. N., 2019). The intricacies of identity politics and power relations are apparent in the witchcraft practices of Dalits and Adivasis, illustrating intersectional interactions (Brunnekreef, 2023). External organizations have sought to mitigate these challenges by establishing women's self-help groups, with the objective of improving their financial resources, livelihood skills, and political competencies (Kabeer et al. N., 2019). These interventions aim to confront prevailing power dynamics and afford women enhanced agency and alternatives within their communities. Intersectionality significantly influences access to resources, rights, and opportunities in multiple areas of social life. (Kumar et al., 2023) examined the impact of intersecting characteristics such as occupation, education, handicap, social position, religion, age, economic status, and ethnicity on female WASH entrepreneurs in Indonesia. These characteristics influence personal consciousness, competencies, and the capacity to navigate social norms and establish networks (Pinem, 2023) identified four principal domains in which intersectionality influences experiences: education, healthcare, politics, and the workplace. The research highlights the intersection of several identities, including race, gender, and class, and their impact on outcomes in these areas. Both articles emphasize the significance of employing an intersectional framework to comprehend and tackle systematic inequities. This approach can help identify the complex ways social identities shape experiences of discrimination, privilege, and marginalization, ultimately promoting greater equality and diversity in various aspects of social life. The significance of NGOs and grassroots movements in promoting intersectional justice has increased in recent years. Non-governmental organizations have progressively integrated intersectional methodologies into their human rights campaigning, collaborating synergistically with UN treaty agencies to advance holistic remedies for victims of human rights violations (Bond, 2021). Grassroots migrant organizations in Canada have exemplified the efficacy of intersectionality in activism by representing varied social positions and challenging interconnected power structures (Tungohan, 2016). In response to political challenges, NGOs are encouraged to bolster grassroots and frontline leadership by collaborating with social movements to tackle climate justice (Quinn-Thibodeau, 2016). Critical perspectives emphasize the necessity of analysing the communicative efforts of NGOs and the possible gaps resulting from grassroots discourse, questioning the presumption that NGOs genuinely represent established populations (Dempsey, 2009). These studies collectively emphasize the complex dynamics of NGO advocacy for intersectional justice and its potential for social change.

**COVID-19's Intersectional Impacts on Marginalized Women:** The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected marginalized women, intensifying pre-existing inequities. Socially marginalized women encountered more pronounced mental health repercussions than men, including heightened anxiety around infection and symptoms of PTSD (Tor-Olav Naevestad et. al., 2023). Women, especially those from low-income and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, were disproportionately represented in sectors severely impacted by the pandemic (Kantamneni, 2020). The crisis exacerbated unpaid caregiving responsibilities, predominantly affecting women, and resulted in elevated instances of gender-based violence (N. Kabeer et. al., 2020; Dlamini, 2020). The convergence of vulnerable social identities rendered specific groups of women more prone to both COVID-19 and gender-based violence (Dlamini, 2020). Notwithstanding these limitations, nations led by women exhibited more advantageous results during the pandemic (Kabeer et al. N., 2019). The pandemic's effect on vulnerable women underscores the necessity for focused study and legislative measures to rectify these inequalities.

Recent studies highlight continued challenges in tackling the digital gender barrier and intersectionality within artificial intelligence. (Ferritto, 2023) observes that Ethiopian digital strategies inadequately address

gender characteristics and societal obstacles, hence diminishing their efficacy in bridging the divide. (Anukriti Dixit, 2022) contend that existing digital gender gap policies overlook intersectionality and perpetuate colonial frameworks, advocating for decolonial methodologies. (Manasi el. al., 2022) highlight that gender biases in AI algorithms and workforce disparities sustain inequality, advocating for enhanced accountability across several industries. (Malin Rönnblom et. al., 2023) analyse Swedish AI policies, indicating that gender equality is conceptualized as a knowledge deficit rather than a matter of power dynamics. These studies jointly highlight the necessity for more sophisticated, intersectional strategies in policy-making to successfully address the digital gender barrier and guarantee equitable AI development and implementation across varied contexts.

**Discussion**

Existing literature reviewed portrays a gamut of recurring themes placed at the intersection of gender, power, and intersectionality in the Indian context. The major themes revolve around how caste, class, and religion impact the gender-specific experience and how these intersect to sustain systemic inequalities. Some notable themes included the impact of caste hierarchies and patriarchal structures, particularly how these impact marginalized populations such as Dalit women, Muslim women, and LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals. It epitomizes how globalization and modernity have given way to new means of empowerment and marginalization.

Gender and power dynamics are deeply rooted in historical and socio-political contexts, and colonial histories and contemporary neoliberal policies work to heighten these gaps. The inscription of intersectionality within Indian feminist scholarship further throws light on the forms of oppression that women experience in different contexts; it also draws attention to the need for strategies tailored for particular local contexts. Thematic findings demonstrate that intersectionality is essential for comprehending power structures in India. Principal issues encompass the invisibility of Dalit women in policy discussions, the digital marginalization of underprivileged women, and the interplay of caste and gender in both urban and rural contexts.

**Policy Recommendation**

The incorporation of intersectional impact evaluations into governmental policy development is essential for achieving equitable and successful governance. This approach acknowledges that individuals encounter intersecting kinds of discrimination and privilege influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. To guarantee that policies are inclusive and equitable, especially for marginalized women, it is crucial to actively engage these women in policymaking bodies. Their distinctive experiences and viewpoints are essential in formulating policies that cater to the varied requirements of our society. By implementing intersectional effect evaluations, actively involving marginalized women in policymaking, and integrating intersectionality into gender sensitization training, governments can foster a more equitable and just society. This comprehensive plan will guarantee that all perspectives are acknowledged and that the implemented policies genuinely represent the varied requirements of the populace, facilitating systemic change and a more promising future for everyone.

**Conclusion**

The present chapter is a literature review on texts published on gender, power, and intersectionality in the Indian context. It highlights the intricacy of these factors in shaping the configuration of social institutions and personal experience. Now it is crucial that caste and gender hierarchies are seen as still in evidence, that cultural norms and economic inequalities remain, and that these call for intersectional approaches in feminist and sociological research. It suggests the possibility of being able to discern and correct systemic imbalances and of working towards inclusive societal change through such insight. The review significantly contributes to the maturation of the discipline of gender studies and uses an intersectional lens fine-tuned to the sociocultural and historical conditions of India and helps form a bridge from academic pursuit into practical applications, thereby giving comprehensive frameworks with which to approach disparities in development of policy, institutional practices, and community-level initiatives. This literature review contributes to the body of knowledge in gender studies by drawing on the framework of intersectionality within specific Indian contexts. It connects academic debate with practical initiatives by providing frameworks meant to deal with injustices in policy, practice, and activism. Additionally, it lays down a foundation for interdisciplinarity to promote studies in the areas of gender and

intersectionality in India and thereby adds value to the global feminist and sociological discourse. The chapter asserts that intersectional frameworks are crucial for deconstructing systematic inequities in India. Future study ought to concentrate on rural-urban comparisons, the effects of technology on gender roles, and the empirical validation of policies guided by intersectionality.

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**Authorship and Level of Contribution**
Dr. Sheeba Khalid is the first author and contributed significantly to the conceptualization, literature review, thematic analysis, and writing of the manuscript. She led the overall research design and coordinated the review and integration of sources. Dr. Laid Bouakaz supported with specific aspects such as data compilation, referencing, or formatting.

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