

Review of: "Socio-cultural factors influencing women empowerment: A cross-sectional study among an ex-criminal tribe in West Bengal, India"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear authors,

Thank you for allowing me to read your manuscript. Women's empowerment -SDG5- is one of the most pressing topics in development studies, and all research efforts devoted to accomplishing it should be more than welcomed.

First, your paper is methodologically rigorous, and the results are very well described. I particularly enjoyed how you connected the quantitative findings with the qualitative data. Reading these women's stories gives readers a clearer idea of their daily lives and the stories behind the numbers.

Second, very respectfully, I have some suggestions I hope you find helpful.

1. It is essential to publish in an international development journal, showing the novelty of your research beyond the specificity of the case. In other words, why is it essential to study this case? How does this case help us to understand other similar cases better? I think it is important a further developing of these questions answers.
2. Considering the previous issue, it can also be helpful to check some systematic literature reviews of the topics. Since the relationship between SHG and empowerment has been widely studied, some quantitative and qualitative reviews can be helpful. I like the one by Carinne Brody, Thomas de Hoop, Martina Vojtkova et al. (2015).
3. I also suggest checking Naila Kabeer's definition of empowerment. She points out that women do not just need to make decisions; these have to be strategic life decisions. Reading your findings, I think this theoretical framework can be very enlightening.
4. Regarding the method, I strongly suggest validating the comparability between the two groups (belonging and not belonging to SHG). It is necessary to check if there are no previous attributes beyond the affiliation to the SHG that explain the associations between the analyzed variables.

Please, consider these suggestions made by someone passionate about the subject but still learning. Good luck! :)