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A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF CENTRAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND DALIT EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MGNREGA, NRLM, PMAY-G, AND PMKVY

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Keywords

*Dalit Empowerment,
Rural Development,
MGNREGA, NRLM,
PMAY-G, PMKVY,
Social Inclusion,
PRISMA, India.*

Abstract

The focus of Independent India has always been on the soul of India i.e. Rural Development and Social Justice. There was a crucial effort that Dalit empowerment was in the centre but various complexities are also found to be associated with it. The policies, their implication and their outcomes are highly dependent on their design, their true implementation and the intention of the removal of social discrimination. The current research study is a systematic review regarding the government approach of Dalit empowerment through various central rural development policies. These are MGNREGA, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, NRLM, National Rural Development Mission, PMAYG, PMKVY, PMKVY Pradhan Mantri, KaushalVikasYojana. These schemes were aimed for the rural development and they specially supported the Dalit society of rural India. The methods used in the current study is PRISMA framework and the literature analysed for the data came from the various government reports, academic journals and other empirical studies occurred between 2005-2014. From the research findings we came out with the idea that these all four policies have significantly increased the opportunities in employment, livelihood, housing and skill development for the Dalit communities. However, in context of empowerment there is uneven success across regions and groups that is highly based on the environmental factors and social factors. MGNREGA scheme helped to improve the financial security of Dalit workers but it also suffered the waste discrimination and delay in the payment system. NRLM



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scheme promoted collective agency and self-help groups for the upliftment of Dalit women communities but it also faces institutional weakness and limited sustainability. PMAYG scheme on one hand improved housing quality and the social dignity for the Dalit communities but as limitation the land ownership issues and the local inequalities could not be fully addressed. PMKVY scheme provided various kinds of trainings in skill development, also provided the platform for the new job opportunities but the rural job absorption is significantly low. So the long term benefits from the PMKVY were not so significant. For the real Dalit empowerment not just the policy inclusion is required but on the ground level social support is necessary. It also requires the structural changes, intersectional understandings and the participatory governance and involvement of society and its stakeholders. The current report suggests an approach of convergence which combines economic, social and political empowerment for the sustainable rural development and Dalit empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

After Independence, the Planning Commission has established for India's economic development through five years plan. Rural development has always been in the center of socio-economic planning by the Indian government due to the major dependence of India on the agriculture and rural public. More than two-thirds of the Indian population lives in the rural area, so the national progress always aligned with the inclusive rural growth. Various rural schemes and policies have been come into effect for its development. At the ground level various factors are hinder in the real benefits of all these schemes. Caste based discrimination significantly affect the upliftment of the Dalit communities and prevent them to receive the real benefit of all these schemes not truly addressed to them. After the 1990s economic reforms, India entered in the government system which was liberalization and rights-based and the idea of Indian development shifted more towards the inclusive and participatory developmental models. The government of India launched several major central rural development schemes time to time to improve the livelihood, housing, and skill development, especially for the rural marginalized communities.

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) scheme was introduced in 2005 to ensure and guarantee the rural wage employment to stop the labor migration and empower the marginalized communities through livelihood security. The NRLM (National Rural Livelihoods Mission) scheme was launched in 2011 to promote the self-employment and establishment of collective organizations for the women-led self-help groups for the strengthening of rural women. PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) was launched in 2015 and it has established various skill training and certification systems to enhance the employability opportunities for job and business establishments especially for the upliftment of the rural youth and guide them positively. PMAY-G (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin) scheme was launched in 2016 in the seek to ensure affordable housing for all in rural India with dignity and safety which was a major concern right then. These all policies are a true reflection of India's effort to make the rural development inclusive, rights-based, and socially transformative.



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The idea of Dalit empowerment is not just about their economic improvement. It also involves their social recognition and freedom from the caste-based stigma that has been rooted in India, especially during the British period. The political participation and representation in decision-making is a significant key for the Dalit empowerment, while in hand-to-hand the human dignity and equal access to the opportunities and their acceptance by the other communities of the society are much important. The rural policies, which also aligns with the Dalit empowerment, are advocated by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in the seek of social justice and equality establishment in India. Although our government and legal system safeguards legally and take various affirmative actions for the Dalit improvement and empowerment, but there are various issues like high level of poverty and landlessness, less awareness and educational approach, limited access to the productive assets and up to a level of continued discrimination in labor market and governance system has the underlying causes of still the requirement of their improvement. By studying the current rural policies and their effect on the Dalit empowerment is a need of time and an ethical responsibility of the all stakeholders for ensuring the correct approach and development of Dalit communities. The need of the study is due to that there is fragmented understanding of how the rural developmental schemes and Dalit empowerment aligns and how much it is effective. Various studies hovered around it, but these schemes are studied usually isolated way and their overlapping and combined impact has been overlooked. The current systematic review seeks to fill the gap by synthesizing evidences from the policy documents, empirical studies and academic literature available. And it will also evaluate the collecting outcomes of these all four schemes, especially on the Dalit livelihood, dignity and participation in the social structure. The aim of the current study is to present a comprehensive and comparative understanding of how the the central rural developmental programs and schemes contribute to the Dalit communities' empowerment and where they fall short.

The objective of the current review article is to critically analyze the rural developmental policies of India in the context of Dalit empowerment. It also aims for the assessment of the level of inclusion of Dalit communities in all the four schemes. The review will also identify the gaps and challenges in implementation of the schemes and will try to draft the best practices to promote equity. It will help to create some positive policy directions for the improvement of Dalit participation, fairness, and sustainability in rural developmental initiatives, especially for the Dalit empowerment. The review is guided by the following core questions that how effectively the central rural developmental policies are promoting the socio-economic empowerment of Dalit communities what are the comparative outcomes of these four schemes in employment generation, livelihood improvement, housing access, skill development, etc. and what are the major implementation barriers like discrimination, institutional gaps, resource delays which are the hindrances in the participation and benefit of Dalit community and how this policy convergence and coordination of these schemes could lead to a stronger empowerment outcome for the Dalits in rural India.



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2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of empowerment for any group is in actual a multidimensional and evolving concept that includes, social, economic, political, psychological aspects of the human development. In a broader way, it is about the process of enabling people and communities to get involved in the social administration, provide control and involvement in the resources, provide liberty in the independent decision-making, and also to shape their life circumstances with complete autonomy. In rural India, empowerment refers to the dependency to self-reliance, which can be achieved through the access to livelihood, education, institutional participation in the community development. If we talk about the Dalit community's empowerment, it especially emphasizes on the adjustment in the societal structure, equitable opportunity for social dignity, gaining a voice in the local governance, and breaking the caste discrimination thought of school. According to Kabir 1999, in actual the empowerment is expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in context where this ability was previously denied. The whole idea of empowerment also lies in the soul of the Indian constituent, in which the principles of equality, liberty, and justice are the soul of it.

The Dalit empowerment could be understood as it is a long-due right to equity against the caste oppression and structural exclusion. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar envisioned empowerment not just as the economic progress but also the transformation in the social relations and democratization of the power structures. In rural India, the true empowerment of Dalit involves their access to the land, credit, skills, participation in the government, institutions, and decision-making processes. Three interconnected dimensions are there to better understand the Dalit empowerment that are Economic Empowerment, Social Empowerment, and Political Empowerment. Any change in any one of these dimension leads to the inclusion and sustainability which ultimately means social transformation for the Dalit empowerment. Historically, rural developmental policies in India have aimed to reduce poverty and regional imbalances. However, the inequalities based on the caste system are somehow not addressed as much as they should be. Rural development also consists of unequal and exclusionary outcomes. As John Rawls, 1971, argued, justice requires that the social and economic inequalities should be designed in a way to benefit the least advantaged members of the society. The principle also aligns with the Ambedkar's idea of social democracy that was based on liberty, equality, fraternity. The central rural schemes such as MGNREGA, NRLM, PMAYG, and PMKVY embodies this social justice vision by promoting the inclusive participation and equitable access. However, the true success of these ideas actually resides within the implementation and intention.

The perspective on social justice of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar provides the moral base for the Dalit empowerment. He emphasized that the true democracy requires social and economic equality. The empowerment policies should address the structural caste discrimination and the rural development could be a very crucial tool for this social transformation. And we have to make our smallest unit of villages for inclusiveness. Amartya Sen in 1998 reported that for the expansion of the people's



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real freedom and choices, it is not just about the income or growth. It truly resides within the value and power to choose. In Dalit power empowerment context, MG NREGA, NRL, PMAYG, and PMKVY schemes strongly implies the livelihood security, strengthening of the collective agencies, insurance of secured and dignified living, and the skill development. However, the success of these schemes lies in their true implementation. World Bank Empowerment Framework developed in 2002 identifies four core dimensions of empowerment that are access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, local organization capacity. These elements also align with four discussing schemes that aims to transparent and right-based approach, participatory self-help groups, inclusive targeting, and access to the skill and training for the future upliftment. Although the implementation Gaps could restrict the real empowerment for Dalits, the current review chapter combines basically three perspectives. Embedded rights, social justice that is about the equality and dignity of every citizen. The capability approach that includes the expansion of the real freedoms and the World Bank Empowerment Framework that talks about the participation and accountability. Altogether, they view empowerment as a multidimensional transformation in the sense of economic upliftment, the rights, the dignity, and agency. This review will evaluate the MG NREGA, NRLM, PMAYG, and PMKVY through this integrated lens and try to truly assess the Dalit empowerment outcomes in rural India.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study follows a systematic review design for the analysis of the impact of the major Central Rural Developmental Schemes MG NREGA, NRLM, PMAYG, and PMKBY on Dalit empowerment in rural India. The systematic review ensures structured and transparent analysis along with reduced biasness and comprehensive evidence synthesis. The PRISMA framework developed by Mohar et al. 2009 and Page et al. 2021 is applied to identify the relevant studies, screening and access eligibility, and inclusion of the final set of publications for the analysis.

The objectives of this review study are to achieve the following goals that it will collect and synthesize both empirical and policy evidences about the Rural Development Schemes and their contribution to the Dalit empowerment. It will evaluate the extent of inclusion and participation of Dalit beneficiaries in the selected programs. It will also identify the major trends and barriers for the implementation of schemes which affects the empowerment outcomes. It will also derive actionable policy lessons to improve the concept of equity, participation and inclusiveness in the future interventions. The data resources all the data collected from various academic and institutional databases like Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, ResearchGate and Shodh Ganga etc. Government and policy sources included in this review are reports from the Ministry of Rural Development, NITI Aayog and UNDP India. The grey literature involved is NGO reports, independent monitoring studies and the district level evaluations. These are also given place to capture the ground level realities. The review period considered is 2005 to 2025 that aligns with the launch and implementation phases of the selected programs. The search strategy used in the data collection includes keyword based search using Boolean operators to ensure the



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inclusiveness. The main search strings used are Dalit Empowerment or Scheduled Castes or Marginalized Groups and MGNREGA or NRLM or PMAYG or PMKVY and Rural Development or Inclusive Growth or India.

4. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to maintain academic rigor and relevance:

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Geographical Scope	Studies focused on India	Studies outside India
Population	Dalit/Scheduled Caste communities in rural areas	Urban-focused or non-Dalit studies
Policy Focus	MGNREGA, NRLM, PMAY-G, PMKVY, or related rural development schemes	Studies unrelated to these programmes
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed articles, theses, reports, and government documents	Opinion pieces, blogs, and news articles
Language	English and Hindi	Other languages without translation

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis is the PRISMA approach for a synthesis of review of literature for a specific relevant academic literature. It works in the four distinct stages. 1. Identification for the current study, a total of 356 records are identified through systematic searches across different established and recognized academic databases globally with the help of the aforementioned keywords. The next stage is screening in which the removal of duplicates and exclusion of the titles that did not meet the preliminary relevance. A total of 187 studies are retained after this screening. Further, the abstracts and full text of the remaining studies are assessed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria that left us with the 92 eligible resources and in the final stage of the inclusion, 62 studies and policy documents met the criteria that are totally relevant for this review and its synthesis out of a total of 356 records.

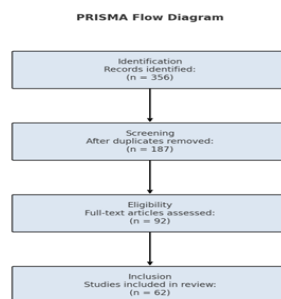


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Systematic Review Process



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Each selected study is coded with a structured matrix with the following dimensions. These are the policy context and nature of the scheme, geographical reasons and demographic focus of the study, the indicators involving the reflection of the Dalit participation and empowerment, the methodological designs and the major findings, identified challenges and suggested recommendation from them. The extracted data out of it analyzed thematically and organized around the three core domains of empowerment that are economic, social, and political. Later on, a comparative synthesis is performed for the identification of patterns of convergence and divergence across these four major schemes under review.

The current review study has followed systematic and comprehensive approach, but there are certain limitations that need to be addressed. There could be the variation in the methodological rigor and quality of included studies, especially the data from the grey literature sources. There is also limited access to disaggregated data concerning the Dalit subcaste and gender dimensions. Another factor to be noticed is the contextual and regional differences across regions that could affect the generalizability of the findings. But the systematic approach of PRISMA strengthens the reliability and credibility of the currently synthesized outcomes.

5. REVIEW OF CENTRAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Since the independence, India has launched various rural development programs. Among that, most of them were focused on the upliftment of the marginalized groups, especially the Dalits. The sole theme of welfare-oriented programs was to establish the rights-based and capacity-building frameworks. Among them, the core flexible initiatives are the consideration of the current study that our Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, MG NREGA, National Rural Livelihood Missions NRLM, Pradhan MantriAwasYojanaGramir PMAYG, Pradhan MantriKaushalVikasYojana PMKVY. These four schemes are a bouquet of the developmental intention of the Indian government and forms a foundation of India's rural development policy architecture. The core objective of all the schemes are to promote the inclusion of every group in our society, to ensure the security of livelihood, empower the marginalized communities financially and socially,

6. MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA)

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was established by UPA government in 2005 under which the aim was to provide at least 100 days of wage employment per annum to every rural household for their unskilled manual work. The objectives of the scheme were to reduce the rural poverty, their migration, and enhance the livelihood security. This was aimed to strengthen the infrastructure of rural India. This scheme was a rights-based and participatory framework-emphasizing scheme in which transparency and accountability, decentralization of implementation, social audits were incorporated to ensure the community oversight and democratic governance. There was also consideration of the Dalit participation and their inclusion as the major



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source of livelihood for Dalit households comes from the Rural Wage Labour Force as per the reports of Ministry of Rural Development Ministry of Rural Development, MoRD-2023. 21% to 23% scheduled caste contributed in MG NREGA scheme. Dalit women have also benefited through this scheme and the paid employment opportunities have increased in the rural India, which enhanced the stability financially.

Dres and Khera 2017 and Jatav& Sen 2020 provided the empirical evidence that highlighted the various dimensions of empowerment through this scheme that were economic empowerment by the improved regular wage income, social empowerment by diminishing the dependence on dominant caste, psychological empowerment by increasing self-confidence and the dignity of labour, and the political empowerment through the involvement of Dalits in Gram Sabha deliberations. But there were some persistent issues that are also non-ignorable that on a few fronts caste-based discrimination in work allocation and the supervisory appointments were reported. Limited wage payments was also a crucial issue. The representation of Dalits on the supervisory and administrative committees was limited. The social dominance also influenced the theme of equity. Consequently, we can say that the MGNREGA's framework promotes inclusivity and its empowerment potential remains underutilized only in the areas where the caste hierarchies are highly influential and affecting the panchayat-level governments still.

7. NATIONAL RURAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION, NRLM.

The scheme was launched in 2011 as an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development. The core objective of the scheme was the elevation in the rural residing individuals by promoting the self-employment, entrepreneurship, and collective livelihood initiatives through self-help groups. The framework of the scheme was focused on the social mobilization and establishment of the institutions among poor rural women and marginalized communities to promote the financial inclusion through formal banking institutions. It also involved the encouragement of the capacity building, skill development, and micro-enterprise promotions at the very grassroots level. The principle of the scheme was one woman per rural household in an SHG. Dalit participation and inclusion was also an indirect approach in this scheme. Dalit women form a significant proportion of SHG memberships, especially in the states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. The scheme provided a platform for the collective agency that enabled women of the Dalit community and provided them voice for the decision making. The financial inclusion of them was also considered and reduced the dependency on the informal moneylenders. Their participation also enhanced the solidarity, mutual support, and visibility of Dalit women in the societal structure. The core aim of the scheme came as their empowerment goals that were economic empowerment through the establishment of small trade-based business and agri-based activities and businesses. It has also included the social empowerment under which gender equity in household decision making have significantly increased due to the financial power in the hand of the women. Political empowerment through this scheme has enhanced as many SHG leaders transitioned into the panchayat leadership roles. The studies done by Nayar 2020, Kumar and Mishra 2021 confirmed



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that the scheme has impacted in the enhancement at both the levels, economic self-sufficiency and social dignity among Dalit women. But there were also some challenges and gaps like uneven implementation of the scheme across states due to the administrative and institutional disparities. The light capture of SHG by the dominant caste was also reported. The limited access to market and sustainable livelihood linkages were found to be a concerning issue. The capacity gaps in the financial literacy have hindered the process a lot. Despite all these challenges, the scheme NRLM continued to serve as a key instrument for the upliftment of the Dalit women's empowerment and provided the collective economic mobilization to them.

8. PRADHAN MANTRIA AWAS YOJANA (PMAY-G)

This scheme came on the ground on 2016 and it was the successor scheme to Indira Awas Yojana which was earlier in effect. The aim of the scheme was to provide the permanent house structures with the basic amenities to every houseless individual specifically in the rural India by 2024. The key features of the scheme were socio-economic and caste census data for the beneficiary identification. It has to provide the financial assistance up to 1.2 to 1.5 lakh per unit that also covers the sanitation, drinking water, and electricity under complementary schemes. The transparency mechanisms in this scheme was maintained through the Aadhaar-based verification and the geo-tagging of the house images. Under the scheme, Dalit households inclusion was prioritized as they became the primary beneficiaries due to their socio-economic vulnerability. As per the reports of the MORD 2023, more than 40% of the houses under this scheme were allotted to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families. This program really provided housing security to these marginalized groups that has surely improved the conditions, hygiene, and social dignity for the Dalit communities. Women's ownership in these cases encouraged joint titling that has significantly contributed to the gender equitable asset creation. The empowerment on the various fronts out came as the result. Economic empowerment was achieved as the increase in core asset. The social empowerment was increased as the residential segregation was reduced. Gender empowerment was recognized as the women were made co-owners of the property. The studies done by Panda and Datta in 2021 and the reports of MORD 2023 highlighted that the PMAYG's role in enhancing the housing equity and dignity among Dalit beneficiaries was very significant. There were also some challenges and gaps that like delays in the fund release and bureaucratic bottlenecks caused some issues. The local level discrimination was also reported. Landlessness among Dalit households restricted the eligibility criteria. The quality variation in construction was also found due to the limited technical supervision. Despite of all these limitations, the scheme remains very instrumental in the advancement and establishment of the housing justice and material empowerment among every marginalized group including the Dalits.

9. PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA (PMKVY)

The scheme was launched in 2015 under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The primary objective of the scheme was to promote the skill development and employability,



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especially among the youth of the rural areas through short-term training and certification. The key components of the scheme were recognition of prior learning to validate the informal skills, to provide the short-term training programs in the high-demand sectors related to construction, textile, IT, etc., to provide the financial rewards for the trainees upon certification, for the incentive participation and implementation of it through the Sector Skill Councils and National Skill Development Corporations. The Dalit participation and inclusion in this scheme was also its crucial feature, as the inclusion of SC and ST youth was over 20%. As per the reports of NSDC 2022, the training programs organized were improved employment readiness and vocational mobility among the Dalit youth in the individuals residing in rural and peri-urban regions. The skill centers established in different districts were designed to target the Dalit majority blocs to bridge the opportunity gaps. Through the scheme, various fronts of empowerment have touched very well. In case of economic empowerment, the skill development resulted into the job opportunities and self-employment opportunities. In case of social empowerment, the occupational rigidity based on the caste-based system was reduced significantly. Self-esteem development and training of the Dalit youth empowered them psychologically. Participation of the Dalit women in the non-traditional skill domains such as IT tailoring and retail encouraged the gender dimension. The various empirical findings by Mehrotra 2021, NSDC reports 2023, indicated that the scheme contributed significantly toward the inclusion of the human capital development. There were also some challenges and gaps like the mismatch between training and the job market demand that sometime led to the underemployment. There were some reports of inadequate support after the trainings and placements. In some cases, the regional disparities in training infrastructure have also been reported. Short-term course durations were found insufficient to get the high skill-based jobs. But overall, the scheme represented a vital policy mechanism to link the Dalit youth empowerment with the skill-based economic mobility.

10.COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR SCHEMES

India's four flagship rural development schemes mentioned in this review are representative of the intention of the Indian government for the upliftment of the marginalized groups, especially the Dalits. The schemes MG NREGA, NRLM, PMAYG, and PMKVY address different aspects, but their soul reunites them at a common ground, i.e., the empowerment of rural India individuals and the marginalized groups, especially Dalits. While MG NREGA ensures employment and income security, NRLM promotes livelihood, PMAYG provides housing and social dignity, and PMKVY develops skill and employability. Together, they all form a bouquet that is complete in itself and are representative of the integrated policy framework that targets for the multidimensional empowerment of Dalits through outcomes, vary with the design implementation and the local context.

All the four schemes are compared across four parameters that are Coverage and Reach, Inclusivity, Empowerment Outcomes, and the Challenges in their Implementation.



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Table 1: Comparative Framework of Major Rural Development Schemes and Dalit Empowerment Dimensions

Parameter	MGNREGA	NRLM	PMAY-G	PMKVY
Primary Objective	Employment guarantee and livelihood security	Livelihood promotion through self-help groups (SHGs)	Housing for the rural poor	Skill development and employability
Target Group	All rural households willing to undertake unskilled manual work	Women from poor households (with priority to SC/ST)	Rural poor identified via SECC data	Youth aged 18–35 years (SC/ST reservation in enrolment)
Dalit Inclusion Mechanism	Demand-driven approach with SC/ST monitoring and person-day tracking	SHG-based social mobilization and financial inclusion	Priority inclusion through deprivation and vulnerability index	Reservation norms and subsidized training opportunities
Average SC Beneficiaries (% of total)	21–23%	24%	25%	22–25%
Core Empowerment Dimension	Economic security, wage stability, and participation in governance	Collective agency, entrepreneurship, and financial independence	Social dignity, asset ownership, and secure housing	Skill capability, human capital formation, and youth mobility
Key Challenges	Local caste bias, wage delays, underemployment	Limited market linkages, elite capture within SHGs	Landlessness, allocation bias, quality variations	Skill–job mismatch, limited placements, regional disparities

Note. Data synthesized from MoRD (2023), NSDC (2023), Dreze & Khera (2017), Nair (2020), and Panda & Dutta (2021).

All the four schemes combinedly works on different empowerment styles. In the case of Economic Empowerment, MG NREGA and NRLM contribute directly to the Dalit economic advancement. In case of Social Empowerment, PMAYG and MG NREGA reinforces the social dignity by securing housing and state-backed employment. Political and Institutional Empowerment is recognized through MG NREGA's Gram Sabha process and NRLM's federal SHGs foster Dalit representation. When all the schemes viewed together, all these schemes create a complementary empowerment pathway by ensuring wage employment through MG NREGA, by channeling earnings into enterprises through NRLM, by upgrading living conditions through PMAYG, and achieving employable skills through PMKVY. The convergence of all these schemes amplifies the outcomes by the intention of the government and the achievement of livelihood, infrastructure, capacity building is well achieved. Despite all these progresses, several systematic barriers are also persistent, caste-based exclusion, fragmented implementation, intersectional gender inequalities, weak capacity building and monitoring, short-term welfare focuses are need to be addressed for the further refinement and true implementation of this integrated empowerment model. These all



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schemes have broadened Dalit inclusion in rural development, the inclusive and enduring social transformation for the Dalits have a significant achievement of this bouquet of schemes.

Table 2: Integrated Empowerment Pathway of Major Rural Development Schemes

Scheme	Core Focus	Primary Empowerment Dimension	Complementary Outcomes
MGNREGA	Wage employment and livelihood security through guaranteed work	Economic empowerment via income generation	Reduces dependence on dominant caste employers; builds rural assets
NRLM	Promotion of self-help groups and sustainable livelihoods	Social and collective empowerment through group agency	Strengthens women's participation and local governance inclusion
PMAY-G	Housing for all and improved rural living conditions	Social empowerment through dignified housing	Enhances self-esteem and security for marginalized groups
PMKVY	Skill development and vocational training	Economic and individual empowerment	Increases employability and diversifies livelihood opportunities

11. Findings and Discussion

The current review covering MGNREGA, NRLM, PMAYG, and PMKY schemes reveals that there is notable expansion in the institutional access and livelihood opportunities for the Dalit communities by these schemes of government. The various empowerment outcomes vary across the regions and schemes, but the economic inclusion has been in the core of these schemes. It has also achieved social transformation and political involvement that provided the equity opportunities and entrenched the caste hierarchies. The patterns of empowerment through these schemes were economic empowerment through MGNREGA which ensured the wage employment and reduced the seasonal migration, also the dependency on the upper class employers and financial dependency on the informal money lenders while the NRLM scheme have provided the concept and opportunities for entrepreneurship and the financial inclusion via self-help groups have been an significant achievement of government. The income gains of all these not suffice the long-term asset creation or the sustainable livelihood up to the mark. In case of social empowerment, the PMAYG scheme enhanced the dignity by achieving the ownership of pukka houses. It also ensured the social inclusion, MGNREGA promoted the community participation, NRLM empowered the women via SHG networking, but the caste discrimination persistence is not to be denied and it also limits the depth of social transformation effort of these schemes. In case of political and institutional empowerment, participation in the Gram Sabha, Social Audit and SHG federations increased for the Dalit, MGNREGA and NRLM partially democratize local planning processes, but the elite capture and the bureaucratic control have dominated usually the decision-making power. The interest scheme synergies derived from the all four schemes formed a continuum of empowerment and the effective policy convergence amplified the outcomes of all these four schemes through linking the income, assets and skills, various empirical data evidences



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from the states Kerala, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh, as in the reports of the NITI Aayog 2022, UNDP 2021, significantly reported that the better results are obtained in the sectors and regions where the interdepartmental coordination and the Panchayati Raj participation were strong.

There are still some persistent structural constraints. The caste-based exclusion, that is, discrimination in the job allocation, selection of the beneficiaries, and SHG leadership is there. The local elites often manipulate the implementation. And the social democracy requires the annihilation of caste. These words of Ambedkar came into mind after this. There is also the lack of productive assets that limits long-term empowerment due to the landlessness and asset poverty. The economic dependence is also persisting. Despite participation in the various schemes, the gender inequalities issues could also not be ignored. Dalit women experience double marginalization due to their caste as well as the gender. The NRLM and MG NREGA schemes improved participation, but the patriarchal norms are still there. There are also some institutional weaknesses like the bureaucratic delays, corruptions at various levels, poor grievance reiteration mechanism.

Ambedkarite perspective about the schemes provision of welfare, but do not dismantle the caste power structures, and the capability approach which expands the capability in work, housing, and skill, but limits the freedom of choice. The World Bank empowerment framework that targets improvement in access and inclusion, but there is also the weak accountability. Overall, the empowerment remains instrumental rather than transformative. Improving welfare without altering the power relations, that is a traditional kind of socio-economic dilemma of our society. The various emerging trends of inclusive mandates across the schemes are hopefully prioritizing the Dalit beneficiaries. The shifting from welfare to the right-based governance led by MG Narega is promising the feminization of the empowerment for the greater Dalit women participation in the schemes like NRLM and MG Narega. The digital governance through geo-tagging social audits enhances the transparency and accountability. However, to implement it and come on the ground level, there is still need of the true institutional strengthening that will create a sustainable long-term transformation mechanism. The findings of the current study would be summarized as the economic empowerment is the most tangible outcome, while the social and political empowerment evolves slowly. Policies are very inclusive and designed, but in practice they are uneven and affected by the caste, gender and regional disparities. The results will be strongest when the multiple schemes converge under active local governance and the inclusion of all the social stakeholders. Dalit empowerment through the rural policies marks a necessary but incomplete step in the path of social justice, which requires more deeper structural and institutional reform.

12.CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This systematic review based on the MG NREGA NRLM PMAYG and PMQBY highlights the significant progress that is in India promoting the Dalit inclusion along with the rural development. The schemes are collectively advancing the economic access, social dignity, and participatory governance by providing the depth of empowerment. The livelihood security and asset creation



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have improved the structural inequalities and the caste hierarchies but continues to restrict full social and political transformation. MG NREGA is contributing most to the economic inclusion, reducing the distressed migration and the waste dependency. NRLM strengthens collective agency, especially for the Dalit women through the SHG-led entrepreneurship. PMAYG is providing the livelihood security through housing-based dignity and social recognition, while PMQBY is enhancing human capital through skill and employment. However, the schemes are largely in isolation and operation but are inclusive for the integrated empowerment. The true empowerment requires not just the welfare and delivery but also the redistribution of the power, assets, and decision-making space. For the real ground-level transformation and make the inclusion into sustainable and transformative empowerment.

The Policy Implications for the Transformation of Welfare Inclusion into Sustainable and Transformative Empowerment There are some directions that are to be recommended like strengthening of the convergence of all these four schemes is required at the district level which will provide an integrated livelihood, housing, and skill development plan for the individuals targeted There is also a need to encourage the joint monitoring system to ensure the accountability and the local participation To promote the caste-sensitive implementation There is a need to introduce anti-discrimination protocols at all levels of the scheme operation There should be a mandate of the social equity audits for the monitoring of the caste-weight participation and outcomes There is also a need to train local officials and SHG facilitators on the inclusiveness and governance practices For the enhancement of women's inter-sectional strategies There is a need to strengthen the Dalit women's SHGs with the proper access to the market, technology, and leadership training There is a need to address the gender budgeting within rural programs to address the double marginalization For the improvement of institutional capacity and accountability Digitalization of the grievance, redressal, and re-entitlement system is needed The local administrative capacity for the planning, coordination, and data-driven evaluation is required For the foster participatory and democratic governance There is a need to encourage the representation of Dalits and women in local planning committees and self-help federations

Due to theoretical implications from an empiric lens, the empowerment must go beyond welfare to challenge the caste-weight exclusion and ensure the social democracy. From a capability approach, perspective, the rural schemes should not be only expand choices, but also strengthen the freedom and agency. A transformative empowerment model which links the economic, social and political domains is required. The future policy research should be focused on the longitudinal studies that will assess the intergenerational impact of the schemes on the Dalit communities. There is a need to imply greater attention for the digital inclusion, youth skill migration and climate-resilient livelihoods. For ensuring sustainability, the collaborative planning between the Ministry of Rural Development, MORD and the civil society can institutionalize convergence as a standard practice. India's rural development approach demonstrates very meaningful progress towards the inclusion. Yet, the true empowerment sense without equity remains partial partial. For the Dalit communities,



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the real transformation is not just in receiving the benefits in the form of skill, money or houses, but it is in gaining agency, recognition and voice within the social structure. A convergent, case-sensitive and participatory policy paradigm is therefore indispensable for realizing the constitutional vision of social justice and equality in rural India.

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14.CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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15.PLAGIARISM POLICY

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