SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS OF RURAL WOMEN IN WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Rural women in Western Uttar Pradesh play a critical role in the agrarian economy, yet their socio-economic empowerment remains constrained by systemic barriers. This study examines the socio-economic status, employment patterns, and challenges faced by rural women in Amroha and Meerut districts, aiming to inform policies for enhancing their economic agency. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 300 women through structured questionnaires, capturing demographic characteristics, income, landholding, occupations, and socio-economic constraints. Findings reveal a predominance of older women with low educational attainment, limiting their adoption of modern agricultural practices. Employment is primarily agricultural, with significant engagement in wage labor and non-agricultural activities like caste-based occupations, though high unemployment and irregular work persist. Low wages, gender discrimination, and limited access to skills and financial resources emerged as major barriers, with regional disparities highlighting better skill access in Meerut. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions, including expanded education, vocational training, financial inclusion, and gender-equity policies, to foster sustainable empowerment. These findings contribute to the discourse on gender and rural development, offering evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to enhance rural women's economic participation and well-being in Western Uttar Pradesh.

Keywords: Socio-economic empowerment, rural women, employment patterns, Western Uttar Pradesh, gender equity, agricultural labor

INTRODUCTION:

Rural women in India are pivotal to the agrarian economy, contributing significantly to agricultural production, food security, and household sustenance. Despite their indispensable role, they remain among the most marginalized groups, grappling with systemic socio-economic barriers that limit their empowerment and economic agency (Agarwal, 1994; Swaminathan, 2018). In regions like Western Uttar Pradesh, where agriculture forms the backbone of the rural economy, women's labor is critical, yet their contributions are often undervalued due to entrenched gender norms, economic inequalities, and social hierarchies. These challenges manifest in low wages, restricted access to education, limited land ownership, and pervasive gender discrimination, all of which hinder women's ability to achieve economic independence and social mobility (Deshpande, 2017; Jodhka, 2018). Addressing these issues is not only a matter of gender equity but also a prerequisite for sustainable rural development and the achievement of broader development goals, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on gender equality and economic inclusion.

Western Uttar Pradesh, encompassing districts such as Amroha and Meerut, offers a compelling context for studying rural women's socio-economic empowerment and employment patterns. The region is characterized by its agrarian dominance, diverse caste structures, and varying levels of infrastructural development, which collectively shape women's access to resources and opportunities (Kumar et al., 2019). Rural women in this region are predominantly engaged in agriculture, performing tasks such as sowing, harvesting, and livestock management, yet they also participate in non-agricultural activities, including caste-based occupations, small-scale trade, and informal labor. However, their employment is often characterized by precarious working conditions, irregular income, and limited access to social protections, reflecting the broader challenges of rural labor markets (Ghosh, 2014). Moreover, socio-economic factors such as caste, education, and income play a critical role in determining women's economic roles, with marginalized groups facing disproportionate barriers to accessing productive assets and opportunities.

The employment patterns of rural women in Western Uttar Pradesh reflect a complex interplay of agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood for many, driven by the region's agrarian economy and the seasonal nature of farming. Women contribute to both subsistence and commercial agriculture, often working as unpaid family labor or hired laborers. However, the rise of non-agricultural opportunities, such as small-scale enterprises, handicrafts, and service-based work, has opened new avenues for income generation, particularly in semi-urban areas like Meerut (Sharma & Singh, 2020). Despite these opportunities, rural women face significant challenges in diversifying their livelihoods, including limited access to markets, inadequate skill development programs, and poor infrastructure. Moreover, the informal nature of much of their work leaves them vulnerable to exploitation, with minimal access to social security or labor protections (Ghosh, 2014).

The significance of this study lies in its focus on rural women's socio-economic empowerment and employment patterns in a specific regional context, offering insights that are both academically rigorous and policy-relevant. While previous research has explored gender dynamics in rural India, few studies have examined the interplay of socio-economic factors and employment patterns in Western Uttar Pradesh, a region with unique demographic and economic characteristics (Sharma & Singh, 2020). By analyzing the challenges faced by rural women and their engagement in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender equity and rural development. It also aligns with national and global priorities, such as India's commitment to the SDGs and the promotion of inclusive economic growth.

The objectives of this research are threefold: first, to examine the socio-economic status of rural women in Western Uttar Pradesh, focusing on the demographic, economic, and social factors that shape their livelihoods; second, to analyze their employment patterns, including their participation in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and the extent of occupational diversification; and third, to identify the key constraints they face and propose policy recommendations to enhance their economic empowerment. The study addresses critical research questions, such as: What are the primary socio-economic barriers to rural women's empowerment? How do employment patterns vary across agricultural and non-agricultural sectors? By providing evidence-based insights, the research aims to inform policymakers, development practitioners, and stakeholders in designing interventions that promote gender equity and sustainable rural development.

The policy implications of this study are particularly relevant in the context of India's rural development agenda. Targeted interventions, such as expanding access to education and vocational training, improving market linkages, and promoting women's land ownership rights, can significantly enhance rural women's economic agency. Moreover, addressing gender discrimination through legal reforms and community-based initiatives can help dismantle social barriers that limit women's opportunities. The study also emphasizes the importance of region-specific policies that account for the unique socio-economic dynamics of Western Uttar Pradesh, such as the prevalence of caste-based occupations and the reliance on agricultural labor in certain districts. By advocating for inclusive and equitable policies, this research seeks to contribute to the empowerment of rural women and the broader goal of sustainable development.

This paper builds on existing literature by offering a comprehensive analysis of rural women's socio-economic empowerment and employment patterns in Western Uttar Pradesh. It extends prior work by focusing on the intersectionality of gender, caste, and economic status, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by rural women. The emphasis on policy recommendations ensures that the findings are actionable, making the study relevant to both academic and policy audiences. The research also highlights the need for further studies to explore the long-term impacts of empowerment initiatives and the role of technology in transforming rural women's livelihoods.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the socio-economic empowerment and employment patterns of rural women in Western Uttar Pradesh, with a focus on Amroha and Meerut districts. The research aims to assess demographic and socio-economic characteristics, analyze employment patterns in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and identify constraints faced by women, thereby informing policy recommendations for their empowerment. A cross-sectional approach was employed to capture a snapshot of the socio-economic dynamics at a specific point in time, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping rural women's livelihoods.

The study was conducted in Amroha and Meerut, two districts in Western Uttar Pradesh selected for their agrarian economies, diverse caste structures, and varying levels of infrastructural development. These districts provide a representative sample of the region's socio-economic conditions, enabling comparative analysis of rural women's empowerment across different contexts. The target population comprised rural women engaged in agricultural and non-agricultural activities, including farming, wage labor, caste-based occupations, and small-scale enterprises.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents, with 150 women from each district to ensure balanced representation. The sample was stratified based on key demographic variables, such as age and caste, to reflect the diversity of the rural population. Villages in each district were randomly selected from a list provided by local administrative authorities, and households were chosen using systematic sampling to identify eligible women participants. This approach minimized selection bias and ensured the sample's representativeness.

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered via face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire covered demographic details (age, caste, education), socio-economic status (income, landholding, occupation), employment patterns (agricultural and non-agricultural work, unemployment days), and constraints (e.g., low wages, limited skills, gender discrimination). Trained enumerators conducted the interviews in local languages (Hindi and regional dialects) to ensure clarity and cultural sensitivity. Secondary data, including government reports and academic literature, were reviewed to contextualize the findings and validate the study's framework.

Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize demographic characteristics, employment patterns, and socio-economic constraints. A comparative analysis between Amroha and Meerut was conducted using cross-tabulations to identify regional differences. Inferential methods, including chi-square tests, were applied to examine associations between variables (e.g., education and employment type).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The socioeconomic profile of individuals or households is an essential aspect of understanding their living standards, economic well-being, and social status. Various factors contribute to this profile, including age, caste, education, occupation, income, and assets. Below is an overview of the key parameters commonly considered in a socioeconomic assessment:

Table 1: Distribution of age of respondents by district

Age (Years)	Districts		Total
	Amroha	**Meerut**	
20-35	48	42	90
	53.3%	46.7%	100.0%
36-50	25	23	48
	52.1%	47.9%	100.0%
50-65	77	85	162
	47.5%	52.5%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 1 presents the age-wise distribution of respondents across the districts of Amroha and Meerut. The total sample consists of 300 respondents, with an equal representation from both districts (150 respondents each). The respondents are categorized into three age groups: 20-35 years, 36-50 years, and 50-65 years. The youngest age group (20-35 years) comprises 90 respondents (30%), with 53.3% from Amroha and 46.7% from Meerut. The middle age group (36-50 years) accounts for 48 respondents (16%), showing a nearly equal distribution between the two districts (52.1% from Amroha and 47.9% from Meerut). The largest proportion of respondents falls in the 50-65 years age group, constituting 162 individuals (54%), with a slightly higher percentage in Meerut (52.5%) compared to Amroha (47.5%). This age distribution indicates that a significant portion of the respondents are in the older age group, which may influence agricultural decision-making, land management, and adoption of new farming technologies. The lower participation of younger individuals suggests potential challenges in attracting youth to agricultural activities, emphasizing the need for targeted policies and incentives to encourage their engagement in the sector. Studies have shown that aging agricultural populations can impact productivity and sustainability, necessitating youth-oriented interventions (Birthal et al., 2014; Dutta & Sharma, 2020). Additionally, previous research highlights that older farmers tend to rely on traditional methods, whereas younger farmers are more open to adopting modern agricultural techniques (FAO, 2017).

Table 2: Distribution of caste of respondents by district

Caste	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
General	34	18	52
	65.4%	34.6%	100.0%
OBC	82	72	154
	53.2%	46.8%	100.0%
SC	34	60	94
	36.2%	63.8%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 2 presents the caste-wise distribution of respondents across the districts of Amroha and Meerut. The total sample consists of 300 respondents, with an equal representation from both districts (150 respondents each). The respondents are categorized into three caste groups: General, Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Scheduled Castes (SC). The General category comprises 52 respondents (17.3%), with a higher proportion from Amroha (65.4%) compared to Meerut (34.6%). The OBC category represents the largest group, accounting for 154 respondents (51.3%), with 53.2% from Amroha and 46.8% from Meerut. The SC category consists of 94 respondents (31.3%), with a greater representation from Meerut (63.8%) compared to Amroha (36.2%). The caste-wise distribution indicates a higher proportion of OBC respondents, which aligns with the overall demographic structure of Western Uttar Pradesh, where OBC communities form a significant part of the agrarian workforce (Kumar et al., 2019). The relatively higher representation of Scheduled Castes in Meerut may suggest a greater

reliance on agricultural labor and other non-landowning activities in that region. Previous studies have shown that caste plays a crucial role in determining access to land, financial resources, and agricultural opportunities, impacting overall livelihood patterns (Deshpande, 2017; Jodhka, 2018). These disparities highlight the need for inclusive policies to promote equitable access to agricultural resources across different caste groups.

Table 3: Distribution of education of respondents by district

Education	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Illiterate	49	30	79
	62.0%	38.0%	100.0%
Primary education	39	73	112
	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%
High school	36	12	48
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Intermediate	15	0	15
	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Graduate	7	8	15
	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
Skill training	4	27	31
	12.9%	87.1%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 3 presents the educational status of respondents across the districts of Amroha and Meerut. The total sample comprises 300 respondents, with equal representation from both districts (150 respondents each). The respondents' education levels are categorized into six groups: Illiterate, Primary Education, High School, Intermediate, Graduate, and Skill Training. The largest group of respondents is illiterate, comprising 79 individuals (26.3%), with a higher proportion in Amroha (62.0%) compared to Meerut (38.0%). The primary education group forms the largest category (112 respondents, 37.3%), with a higher concentration in Meerut (65.2%) than Amroha (34.8%). In contrast, those with high school education (48 respondents, 16%) are predominantly from Amroha (75.0%). The intermediate education category (15 respondents, 5%) is exclusively from Amroha (100%). Similarly, the graduate category (15 respondents, 5%) is evenly distributed between the two districts. A significant contrast is observed in the skill training category (31 respondents, 10.3%), where a large majority (87.1%) belong to Meerut, highlighting a higher engagement in vocational and technical education in that district. The higher illiteracy rate and lower formal education levels in Amroha suggest potential barriers to accessing agricultural knowledge, modern farming techniques, and financial literacy programs. Meanwhile, Meerut exhibits a higher prevalence of primary education and skill-based training, which may provide better opportunities for employment diversification beyond agriculture. Education plays a critical role in adopting modern farming practices, utilizing digital agricultural platforms, and improving productivity (Swaminathan, 2018). Research also indicates that higher education levels among farmers contribute to better decision-making, increased adoption of innovative technologies, and improved financial management (Patel & Mehta, 2020). Therefore, enhancing literacy and vocational training programs in rural areas is essential for empowering farmers and improving overall agricultural efficiency.

Table 4: Distribution of education of respondents by district

Annual Income	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Very Low	45	44	89
	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%
Low	45	44	89
	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%
Medium	30	33	63
	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
High	30	29	59
	50.8%	49.2%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Mean	95920.00	96000.00	95960.00
S.D.	39286.16	38578.77	38868.938

Table 4 presents the annual income distribution among respondents in Amroha and Meerut. The total sample comprises 300 respondents, with equal representation from both districts (150 respondents each). The respondents' annual income levels are categorized into four groups: Very Low, Low, Medium, and High-income levels. The very low and low-income groups each comprise 89 respondents (29.7%), indicating that nearly 60% of respondents belong to the low-income category. The distribution between Amroha (50.6%) and Meerut (49.4%) is nearly identical in these groups. The medium-income category (63 respondents, 21%) is slightly higher in Meerut (52.4%) than Amroha (47.6%). Similarly, the high-income group (59 respondents, 19.7%) is almost evenly distributed between the two districts, with Amroha having a marginally higher percentage (50.8%) than Meerut (49.2%). The mean annual income of respondents across both districts is ₹95,960, with similar values for Amroha (₹95,920) and Meerut (₹96,000). The standard deviation (S.D.) of income levels suggests high variability in earnings within both districts, with Amroha (₹39,286.16) showing slightly greater variation than Meerut (₹38,578.77).The findings indicate that a significant proportion of the respondents belong to the lower-income groups, which may limit their access to modern agricultural inputs, credit facilities, and advanced farming technologies. This is consistent with previous studies highlighting the economic vulnerability of rural farming communities and the need for financial inclusion policies (Desai et al., 2019). Addressing these income disparities through targeted rural development programs, improved market linkages, and financial support mechanisms could help enhance agricultural productivity and overall economic well-being (Kumar & Singh, 2021).

Table 5: Distribution of Occupation of respondents by district

Occupation	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Farming	86	62	148
	58.1%	41.9%	100.0%
Agri. Labour	48	59	107
	44.9%	55.1%	100.0%
Agriculture + Caste Occupation	10	21	31
	32.3%	67.7%	100.0%
Agriculture+ Business	6	8	14
	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 5 presents the distribution of occupations among respondents in Amroha and Meerut. The total sample consists of 300 respondents, equally divided between the two districts (150 respondents each). The respondents' occupations are classified into four categories: Farming, Agricultural Labor, Agriculture + Caste-based Occupation, and Agriculture + Business. The majority of respondents (148 individuals, 49.3%) are engaged in farming as their primary occupation, with a higher proportion in Amroha (58.1%) than Meerut (41.9%). The second-largest group consists of agricultural laborers (107 respondents, 35.7%), with Meerut having a higher percentage (55.1%) compared to Amroha (44.9%). This suggests that Meerut may have a greater reliance on hired labor in agriculture, while Amroha has a higher percentage of landowning farmers. A smaller proportion of respondents (31 individuals, 10.3%) combine agriculture with caste-based occupations, such as traditional crafts, blacksmithing, or weaving. This category is more prevalent in Meerut (67.7%) than Amroha (32.3%), indicating a higher level of occupational diversification in Meerut. Lastly, 14 respondents (4.7%) are engaged in both agriculture and business, such as small-scale trade or livestock-related enterprises, with Meerut (57.1%) having a slightly higher percentage than Amroha (42.9%). These findings highlight that farming remains the dominant occupation in both districts, but a significant proportion of respondents work as agricultural laborers, especially in Meerut. The presence of caste-based occupations and agriculture-linked businesses suggests some level of occupational diversification, which can contribute to income stability. However, the relatively low proportion of respondents involved in agribusiness indicates limited entrepreneurial engagement, which could be improved through skill development programs, financial support, and market access initiatives (Sharma & Singh, 2020). The study reinforces previous research suggesting that rural occupational patterns are shaped by land ownership, caste dynamics, and access to financial resources (Jodhka, 2018).

Table 6: Distribution of Marital Status of respondents by district

Marital Status	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Married	140	137	277
	50.5%	49.5%	100.0%
Unmarried	6	5	11
	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
Widow	4	8	12

	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents' marital status across the two districts, Amroha and Meerut, with an equal sample size of 150 respondents from each district, making a total of 300. The table categorizes respondents into three marital status groups: Married, Unmarried, and Widow. Among the married respondents (277 in total), 50.5% are from Amroha, while 49.5% are from Meerut. The unmarried respondents constitute a smaller group (11 in total), with 54.5% from Amroha and 45.5% from Meerut. The widowed category includes 12 respondents, the majority of whom belong to Meerut (66.7%), whereas Amroha accounts for 33.3%. The data indicates that marriage is the predominant marital status among respondents, followed by a small proportion of unmarried and widowed individuals. The equal distribution of the sample across both districts ensures balanced representation, making the findings more reliable for further analysis.

Table 7: Distribution of Family Size of respondents by district

Family Size	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Up to 5 members	79	68	147
	53.7%	46.3%	100.0%
More than 5 members	71	82	153
	46.4%	53.6%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 7 presents the distribution of respondents' family sizes across the districts of Amroha and Meerut, with an equal representation of 150 respondents from each district, making a total of 300 respondents. Family size is categorized into two groups: "Up to 5 members" and "More than 5 members." Among the respondents with smaller family sizes (up to 5 members), 79 (53.7%) belong to Amroha, while 68 (46.3%) are from Meerut, summing up to 147 respondents (49.0%) of the total sample. Conversely, among those with larger family sizes (more than 5 members), 71 (46.4%) belong to Amroha, whereas 82 (53.6%) are from Meerut, with a total of 153 respondents (51.0%). The data suggests that larger families (more than 5 members) are slightly more prevalent (51.0%) than smaller families (49.0%), with a higher proportion of such families in Meerut compared to Amroha. The equal distribution of respondents between the two districts ensures balanced representation, allowing for meaningful comparisons.

Table 8: Distribution of House type of respondents by district

House type	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Kuccha	39	29	68
	57.4%	42.6%	100.0%
Pucca	57	54	111
	51.4%	48.6%	100.0%
Mixed	54	67	121
	44.6%	55.4%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 8 presents the distribution of respondents based on their house type across the districts of Amroha and Meerut, with an equal sample size of 150 respondents from each district, making a total of 300 respondents. The house types are categorized as Kuccha, Pucca, and Mixed. Among the respondents living in Kuccha houses, 39 (57.4%) are from Amroha, while 29 (42.6%) are from Meerut, totaling 68 respondents (22.7%). For Pucca houses, the distribution is 57 (51.4%) from Amroha and 54 (48.6%) from Meerut, with a total of 111 respondents (37.0%). The Mixed house type has the highest number of respondents, with 54 (44.6%) from Amroha and 67 (55.4%) from Meerut, making a total of 121 respondents (40.3%). The data suggests that mixed-type housing is the most common (40.3%), followed by pucca houses (37.0%), while kuccha houses (22.7%) are the least common. The higher proportion of kuccha houses in Amroha indicates potential infrastructural differences between the two districts. The balanced distribution of respondents across both districts ensures comparability for further analysis.

Table 9: Distribution of Land Holding of respondents by district

Land Holding	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Landless	48	59	107

	44.9%	55.1%	100.0%
Marginal	56	30	86
	65.1%	34.9%	100.0%
Small	26	10	36
	72.2%	27.8%	100.0%
Medium	13	28	41
	31.7%	68.3%	100.0%
Large	7	23	30
	23.3%	76.7%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 9 presents the distribution of respondents based on their landholding size across the districts of Amroha and Meerut, with an equal sample size of 150 respondents from each district, totaling 300 respondents. The landholding categories are classified as Landless, Marginal, Small, Medium, and Large. Among the respondents, 107 (35.7%) are landless, with a higher proportion in Meerut (55.1%) compared to Amroha (44.9%). The marginal landholders (owning small plots of land) account for 86 respondents (28.7%), with a significantly higher proportion in Amroha (65.1%) than in Meerut (34.9%). The small landholding category consists of 36 respondents (12.0%), predominantly from Amroha (72.2%) compared to Meerut (27.8%). In contrast, the medium landholding group (41 respondents, 13.7%) is more concentrated in Meerut (68.3%) than Amroha (31.7%). Similarly, the large landholding category (30 respondents, 10.0%) is primarily found in Meerut (76.7%), while only 23.3% of large landholders are from Amroha. The data highlights that landlessness is the most common category (35.7%), followed by marginal landholders (28.7%), while large landowners are the least common (10.0%). The higher concentration of marginal and small landholders in Amroha and medium to large landholders in Meerut suggests regional differences in land distribution patterns. The equal representation of respondents from both districts ensures a balanced comparison of landholding status.

Table 10: Distribution of Family education of respondents by district

Family education	Districts		Total
	Amroha	**Meerut**	
Uneducated	49	30	79
	62.0%	38.0%	100.0%
Up to primary	39	73	112
	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%
Up to secondary	36	12	48
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
High School	15	0	15
	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Intermediate	7	8	15
	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
Graduate and above	4	27	31
	12.9%	87.1%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 10 presents the distribution of respondents based on their family education levels across the districts of Amroha and Meerut, with an equal sample size of 150 respondents from each district, totaling 300 respondents. The data is categorized into six educational levels: Uneducated, Up to Primary, Up to Secondary, High School, Intermediate, and Graduate and Above. Among the respondents, 79 (26.3%) belong to uneducated families, with a higher proportion in Amroha (62.0%) compared to Meerut (38.0%). The largest group comprises those with education up to primary level (112 respondents, 37.3%), where Meerut has a significantly higher proportion (65.2%) than Amroha (34.8%). The up to secondary education group consists of 48 respondents (16.0%), with the majority from Amroha (75.0%) compared to Meerut (25.0%). Interestingly, all 15 respondents (5.0%) with a high school education are from Amroha (100.0%), while Meerut has none. The intermediate-level group has an almost equal distribution, with 7 respondents (46.7%) from Amroha and 8 (53.3%) from Meerut, totaling 15 respondents (5.0%). The graduate and above category (31 respondents, 10.3%) is primarily concentrated in Meerut (87.1%) compared to Amroha (12.9%).The data suggests that primary education is the most common level (37.3%), while higher education (graduate and above) is relatively low (10.3%), with a much stronger presence in Meerut. Amroha has a higher proportion of uneducated and secondary-educated families,

while Meerut shows better representation in primary and higher education levels, indicating regional differences in educational attainment.

Table 11. District-wise distribution for Level of Income generating agricultural and animal husbandry technologies

Level of Income generating agricultural and animal husbandry technologies	Districts		Total
	Amroha	Meerut	
Low	39	31	70
	55.7%	44.3%	100.0%
Medium	87	83	170
	51.2%	48.8%	100.0%
High	24	36	60
	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
Total	150	150	300
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Mean	10.32	11.42	10.87
Std. Deviation	5.14	5.39	5.29

The table 11 presents the district-wise distribution of the level of income-generating agricultural and animal husbandry technologies among respondents from Amroha and Meerut, with a total sample of 300 individuals (150 from each district). The levels are categorized as Low, Medium, and High. A total of 70 respondents (23.3%) fall into the low category, with 55.7% from Amroha and 44.3% from Meerut. The majority (170 respondents, 56.7%) exhibit a medium level, with 51.2% from Amroha and 48.8% from Meerut. Meanwhile, 60 respondents (20.0%) have a high level, with 40.0% from Amroha and 60.0% from Meerut. The mean score is slightly higher in Meerut (11.42) than in Amroha (10.32), with overall variability reflected by standard deviations of 5.14 in Amroha and 5.39 in Meerut. The total mean score is 10.87, with a standard deviation of 5.29. These results suggest that most respondents have a medium level of involvement in income-generating agricultural and animal husbandry technologies, with a slightly higher proportion in the high category in Meerut compared to Amroha.

Table 12. District-wise distribution for unemployment status of women

Details	Amroha	Meerut	Total
Total days available for work	300	300	300
Total employment days	220	240	230
Total Unemployment days	80	60	70
Percentage of employment days	73.33	80.00	76.67
Percentage of unemployment days	26.67	20.00	23.33

The table 12 presents the district-wise distribution of the unemployment status of women in Amroha and Meerut, with a total sample of 300 women from each district. The total number of days available for work is 300 in both districts. Women in Amroha reported 220 employment days, whereas those in Meerut had 240 employment days, leading to a total of 230 employment days on average. Correspondingly, the total unemployment days were 80 in Amroha and 60 in Meerut, with an overall average of 70 unemployment days. The percentage of employment days was higher in Meerut (80.00%) than in Amroha (73.33%), while the percentage of unemployment days was higher in Amroha (26.67%) compared to Meerut (20.00%). The overall employment rate across both districts was 76.67%, leaving an unemployment rate of 23.33%, indicating relatively better employment opportunities for women in Meerut compared to Amroha.

Table 13. District-wise distribution for Socio-Economic Problems of Rural Women Workers in Western Uttar Pradesh

Problem	Amroha	Meerut	Total
Low Wages & Income Inequality	114	118	232
	76.0%	78.7%	77.3%
Lack of Regular Employment	101	102	203
	67.3%	68.0%	67.7%
Limited Access to Education	86	82	168
	57.3%	54.7%	56.0%
Poor Working Conditions	75	70	145
	50.0%	46.7%	48.3%

Limited Land Ownership Rights	69	70	139
	46.0%	46.7%	46.3%
Lack of Social Security & Benefits	60	55	115
	40.0%	36.7%	38.3%
Gender Discrimination	54	52	106
	36.0%	34.7%	35.3%
Limited Skill Development Programs	45	40	85
	30.0%	26.7%	28.3%
Poor Access to Financial Services	39	42	81
	26.00	28.00	27.00
Health & Malnutrition Issues	30	32	62
	20.0%	21.3%	20.7%

The table 13 presents the district-wise distribution of socio-economic problems faced by rural women workers in Western Uttar Pradesh, covering respondents from Amroha and Meerut. The most commonly reported issue is low wages and income inequality, affecting 76.0% of respondents in Amroha and 78.7% in Meerut, with an overall prevalence of 77.3%. Lack of regular employment is the second most reported problem, impacting 67.3% in Amroha and 68.0% in Meerut. Limited access to education affects 57.3% in Amroha and 54.7% in Meerut, while poor working conditions are reported by 50.0% and 46.7%, respectively. Limited land ownership rights are a concern for 46.0% of respondents in Amroha and 46.7% in Meerut. Other issues include lack of social security and benefits (38.3% overall), gender discrimination (35.3%), limited skill development programs (28.3%), poor access to financial services (27.0%), and health and malnutrition issues (20.7%). The data suggest that economic insecurity, lack of stable employment, and limited educational opportunities are the most significant challenges faced by rural women workers in the region.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

This study investigated the socio-economic empowerment and employment patterns of rural women in the districts of Amroha and Meerut, Western Uttar Pradesh, a region characterized by its agrarian economy and complex social structures. The research focused on understanding the demographic and socio-economic profiles of rural women, their engagement in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, and the constraints that hinder their economic empowerment. Through a detailed analysis of 300 respondents, the study revealed critical insights into the factors shaping women's livelihoods and the barriers to their socio-economic advancement.

The demographic analysis highlighted a diverse respondent pool, with a significant proportion of older women, indicating potential challenges in engaging younger generations in traditional agricultural activities. Caste composition varied across the districts, with marginalized groups facing greater barriers to resource access. Educational attainment was generally low, particularly in Amroha, limiting women's ability to adopt modern agricultural practices or transition to non-agricultural employment. Income levels were predominantly low, reflecting the economic vulnerability of rural women, while landlessness was prevalent, further restricting access to productive assets and financial services. These socio-economic characteristics underscore the structural inequalities that shape women's economic opportunities in the region.

Employment patterns revealed a heavy reliance on agriculture, with women engaged in both family-based farming and wage labor. However, a notable segment participated in non-agricultural activities, such as caste-based occupations and small-scale enterprises, particularly in Meerut, where access to skill training was relatively higher. Despite this diversification, unemployment rates remained significant, driven by seasonal agricultural cycles and limited non-agricultural opportunities. The study also identified key constraints, including low wages, irregular employment, and inadequate access to skill development programs, which collectively undermine women's economic security and social mobility. Gender-based discrimination and health challenges further exacerbated these issues, particularly for women from lower caste groups.

The findings highlight the interplay of demographic, economic, and social factors in shaping rural women's empowerment. While some women demonstrated agency through participation in non-agricultural work and skill acquisition, systemic barriers such as low education, landlessness, and gender inequities continue to limit their economic potential. The comparative analysis of Amroha and Meerut suggests that regional differences, such as access to training and infrastructure, play a critical role in determining employment outcomes. These insights align with prior research emphasizing the need for education, financial inclusion, and gender-sensitive policies to enhance rural women's empowerment (Swaminathan, 2018; Sharma & Singh, 2020).

The study underscores that socio-economic empowerment of rural women in Western Uttar Pradesh remains a complex challenge, shaped by structural inequalities and regional disparities. Rural women in Amroha and Meerut contribute significantly to the agrarian economy, yet their economic agency is constrained by low educational attainment, limited access to land and financial resources, and pervasive gender discrimination. While agricultural work remains the primary livelihood source, the emergence of non-agricultural employment opportunities offers potential pathways for diversification, particularly in areas with better access to skill

development. However, high unemployment rates, low wages, and irregular employment highlight the precarious nature of women's work, necessitating targeted interventions to enhance their socio-economic status.

The findings suggest several policy recommendations to promote rural women's empowerment. First, expanding access to education and vocational training is critical to equip women with the skills needed for modern agricultural practices and non-agricultural employment. Second, financial inclusion initiatives, such as microcredit and subsidies, should be scaled up to support women's entrepreneurial activities and reduce dependence on low-paying labor. Third, addressing gender discrimination through legal reforms and awareness campaigns can help dismantle social barriers that limit women's economic participation. Finally, region-specific policies that account for differences in infrastructure and socio-economic conditions between districts like Amroha and Meerut are essential for equitable development.

This research contributes to the discourse on gender equity and rural development by providing a nuanced understanding of rural women's socio-economic dynamics in Western Uttar Pradesh. It highlights the need for holistic interventions that address both economic and social barriers to empowerment. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of empowerment programs, such as self-help groups and skill development initiatives, and examine the role of technology in transforming rural women's livelihoods. By prioritizing inclusive policies, stakeholders can enhance the economic agency of rural women, fostering sustainable development and gender equality in the region.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

To enhance the socio-economic empowerment of rural women in Western Uttar Pradesh, targeted interventions are essential. Expand access to education and vocational training to equip women with skills for modern agriculture and non-agricultural jobs. Promote financial inclusion through microcredit and subsidies to support entrepreneurial ventures. Address gender and caste-based discrimination via legal reforms and awareness campaigns. Improve employment opportunities by prioritizing women in rural job schemes and ensuring better working conditions. Strengthen women's land ownership rights to enhance access to credit and resources. Develop region-specific policies to bridge disparities between Amroha and Meerut, focusing on infrastructure and skill programs. Provide healthcare and social security to address health challenges and informal labor vulnerabilities. Foster ongoing research to monitor empowerment initiatives' impact. These measures can drive sustainable development and gender equity.

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