

Cooperatives and Women's Empowerment: Mapping Research Trends and Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

The empowerment of women through cooperatives has emerged as a significant area of research and practice, addressing both social and economic inequalities. This study employs bibliometric analysis using PRISMA framework to examine the publication patterns and intellectual structure of research on women's empowerment through cooperatives over the past 50 years. The analysis covers 347 publications and 836 contributing authors, revealing a growing interest in this field, particularly in the 2000s and 2010s. The research landscape is global, with India, the United States, and the United Kingdom leading in contributions. The most influential institutions include SASTRA University, the University of South Africa, and the University of Delhi, among others. Thematic analysis based on 20 high-impact articles highlights the prominence of economic empowerment and social impact as key areas of focus, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of women's empowerment through cooperatives. The study also underscores the importance of addressing structural barriers and leveraging technology to further empower women. The study also emphasizes the need for further research in several areas, including the exploration of intersectionality, the development of robust tools for measuring impact, and the investigation of long-term effects and potential risks associated with empowerment interventions. The insights generated from this analysis can inform future research directions and guide the design and implementation of effective interventions to promote gender equality and inclusive development through cooperatives.

Keywords: women's empowerment, cooperatives, research trends, future directions

INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment and cooperatives are interconnected fields that have gained significant attention in various studies and research articles. Cooperatives have been identified as effective mechanisms for empowering women economically, socially, and politically (Andriani, Lal & Kalam, 2022; Niyonkuru & Barrett, 2021; Cinar, Akyuz, Ugur-Cinar & Onculer-Yayalar, 2021; Sulaiman, Suswanto, Masrukin & Windiasih, 2019; Brody, De Hoop, Vojtkova, Warnock, Dunbar, Murthy & Dworkin, 2015; Datta & Gailey, 2012). The empowerment of women through cooperatives has been explored in different contexts, ranging from agriculture (Theeuwens, Duplat, Wickert, & Tjemkes, 2021; Dohmwirth & Hanisch, 2019; Meador & O'Brien, 2019) to tourism, with a focus on economic, social and political (Castiblanco-Moreno & Duque, 2022; Theeuwens et al., 2021; Kapoor, 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2019). Studies have shown positive impacts of women's empowerment on various outcomes such as income, decision-making power, leadership roles, and participation in social activities (Andriani et al., 2022). This paper provides insights into the diverse ways in which women's empowerment is linked to cooperative participation. It delves into the multifaceted aspects of how women's empowerment is facilitated through the cooperative environment and suggests future research direction. Using a bibliometric analysis, it identifies the publication patterns and intellectual structures in this area. To the best of

our knowledge, this study is the first to analyze research publications for 50 years in the field of women's empowerment through cooperatives. The following research questions are to be addressed (RQs):

RQ1: What is the publication trend in women's empowerment through cooperatives?

RQ2: What are the most influential articles on women's empowerment through cooperatives?

RQ3: Which themes involving women's empowerment through cooperatives are the most popular among researchers?

RQ4: What are the future research suggestions as suggested by the 20 high-impact papers in this study?

Previous researchers such as Mahato, Jha, Nayak, and Kaushal (2023) attempted to review the principal dimensions of women's empowerment and their indicators and limited their study to Self-Help Groups. Inostroza and Sanchez (2023) reviewed the hindering and facilitating factors of women's participation in cooperatives for the past 15 years, Kumar, Reddy & Varsha (2019) applied scientometric techniques to study the evolution of women's empowerment between 1957 and 2018, and Afridia and Alib (2021) analyzed women's empowerment at an organisational level. This study is different as it includes 50 years of publications which allows for a comprehensive evaluation of research productivity within women's empowerment through cooperatives and enables the researchers to assess the impact and influence of specific studies, authors, and research groups over time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperatives have a rich history dating back to their origins in the 19th century, primarily in Europe and North America. They have since spread worldwide, adapting to local contexts and needs. The cooperative model is particularly beneficial for women in developing regions where traditional economic structures often marginalize them. By fostering member unity and shared governance, cooperatives empower women to take control of their economic destinies (Nakasiyo & Andrew, 2023). Cooperatives have played an important role in promoting women's empowerment around the world by tackling both social and economic issues.

The Role of Cooperatives in Women's Empowerment

Economic Empowerment

Cooperatives offer women access to microfinance institutions, which can assist them overcome barriers to getting business capital (Nawawi, Soemitra, & Dalimunthe, 2022). They also provide possibilities for women to participate in the economic sphere, particularly in rural areas where they have had success in extending markets and building enterprises (Setiawati & Badiah, 2023). Despite the hurdles, women members of Ethiopian cooperatives have reported increases in income, livestock holdings, autonomous decision-making, and spending power after joining, showing favorable effects on female economic empowerment (Tsfay & Tadele, 2013). Olabisi, MacDonald, and Emmanuela (2015) discovered a significant difference in women's income levels before and after joining cooperatives, and the economic empowerment activities of women's cooperatives have an effective and positive effect on the level of entrepreneurial skills acquired by female co-operators in Osun State, Nigeria. According to Sakai (2020), the Islamic Savings and Credit Cooperative (Baitul Maal wa Tamwil) promoted women's economic independence through its financing scheme known as the Qordhul Hasan (QH) scheme, which required loaners to repay only the loan amount without any additional interest. There were also charity initiatives, such as free health clinics and school grants, to help women improve their quality of life. Saha, Barsha, and Selim (2021) found that private dairy cooperatives may improve women's economic, physical, and social assets, as well as their mobility and leadership qualities in rural Bangladesh.

Leadership and Decision-making Development

Cooperatives encourage women's active participation in decision-making processes. By being part of a cooperative, women gain a voice in organizational governance, which fosters confidence and leadership abilities (Acharya & Kumar, 2025). This participation helps them understand the dynamics of group decision-making,

enabling them to advocate for their interests and those of their communities (Andrew et al., 2024). Cooperatives challenge individualism and gender inequity while encouraging collaborative capacity and leadership development (McLaren, 2019). A study conducted in India found that 83.9% of participants felt empowered after participating in the Gokul women's cooperative leadership development programme (Chavan & Apte, 2021). Participation in cooperatives has also helped women in Jharkhand, India, more confidence in expressing themselves and making decisions (Kakati & Kakoty, 2022).

Social Empowerment and Solidarity

Research indicates that participation in cooperatives leads to improved decision-making abilities among women, along with enhanced income levels. For example, studies conducted in Nepal demonstrate that cooperative membership correlates with increased economic activity and social standing for rural women (Sapkota, 2024). Cooperatives have helped to overcome social inequality and economic exploitation, especially in underdeveloped nations where women suffer disproportionate problems (McLaren, 2019). Cooperatives also challenge the individualism that underpins other social structures, which can be especially advantageous to women, who frequently endure prejudice and marginalization (McLaren, 2019). Chen (1999) found that cooperatives in China have an important role in boosting women's engagement and improving gender relations in community development.

Access to resources and social welfare

Cooperatives help women achieve economic empowerment by providing resources, loans, training, and opportunity. It also highlighted cooperatives' ability to alleviate resource access issues among women (Chen, 1999). Furthermore, Soto Alarcón and Sato (2019) discovered that women's cooperatives in rural Mexico could create horizontal solidarity both within and beyond the cooperatives by extending moral obligations beyond the family, which is essential for the establishment of mutual trust and cohabitation.

METHODS

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative tool for analyzing academic publications on a particular subject, offering information about publication patterns, influential authors, research themes, and collaborations (Li & Xu, 2022; Ahmi & Mohamad, 2019). The goal and significance of bibliometric analysis in the Social Sciences include identifying research trends, mapping research networks, recognizing significant authors and publications, tracking research impact, and guiding future research directions (Li & Xu, 2022). For this study, the papers collected from the Scopus database were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and VOSviewer software. In this section, we will explain the approach used to perform a comprehensive and rigorous bibliometric review of research articles on women's empowerment through cooperatives. The goal is to uncover important trends, renowned writers, significant publications, and emerging ideas in this subject. Using bibliometric tools, we hope to demonstrate the conceptual structure and progress of cooperative and women's empowerment research over time. The keywords used for the articles in the bibliometric study are displayed in Figure 1.

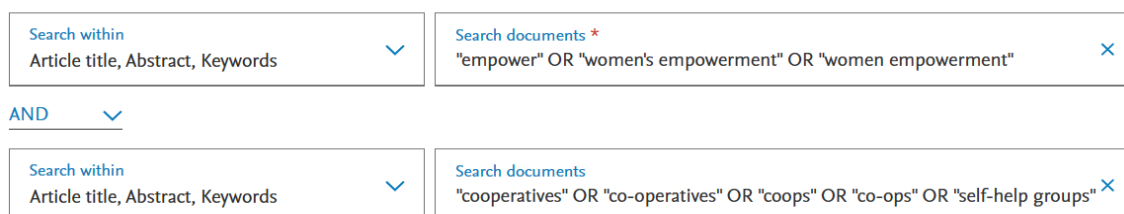


Figure 1. Keywords Selection

Search Strategy

The SCOPUS database was used for the search. Data mining was done in June 2024 using the keywords mentioned above. A thorough and accurate examination of the literature is ensured when only papers from the

SCOPUS database are included. For academic research in quantitative science studies, Scopus is a well-selected, excellent source of bibliometric data (Baas, Schotten, Plume, Côté, & Karimi, 2020). This literature review adheres to academic standards of rigor and reliability by concentrating only on articles from SCOPUS. This ensures that the included research has undergone a rigorous peer-review process, adding to the validity and credibility of the findings and conclusions drawn from the review (Delias, Falk, & Ridderstaat, 2024).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The subsequent sections detail the process of data collection, database selection, inclusion criteria, and the analytical methods applied to extract meaningful insights from the collected literature. This systematic approach enables us to shed light on the intellectual structure of women’s empowerment through cooperative research, identify influential works, and discern emerging trends in the field. To achieve the research objectives, the search results were limited to only articles published in journals, conference papers, and review papers. The publication year was limited to 1973 until 2023 (50 years), and only publications in English were selected. Table 1 tabulates the inclusion and exclusion criteria set for this review and Figure 2 shows the PRISMA protocols that were followed to do this study.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication year	1974 – 2024	Before 1974
Language	English	Non-English
Article types	Article	Non articles
Subject Area	Social science Business, management & accounting Economics & econometrics	Other than social science, business, management and accounting, economics, and econometrics

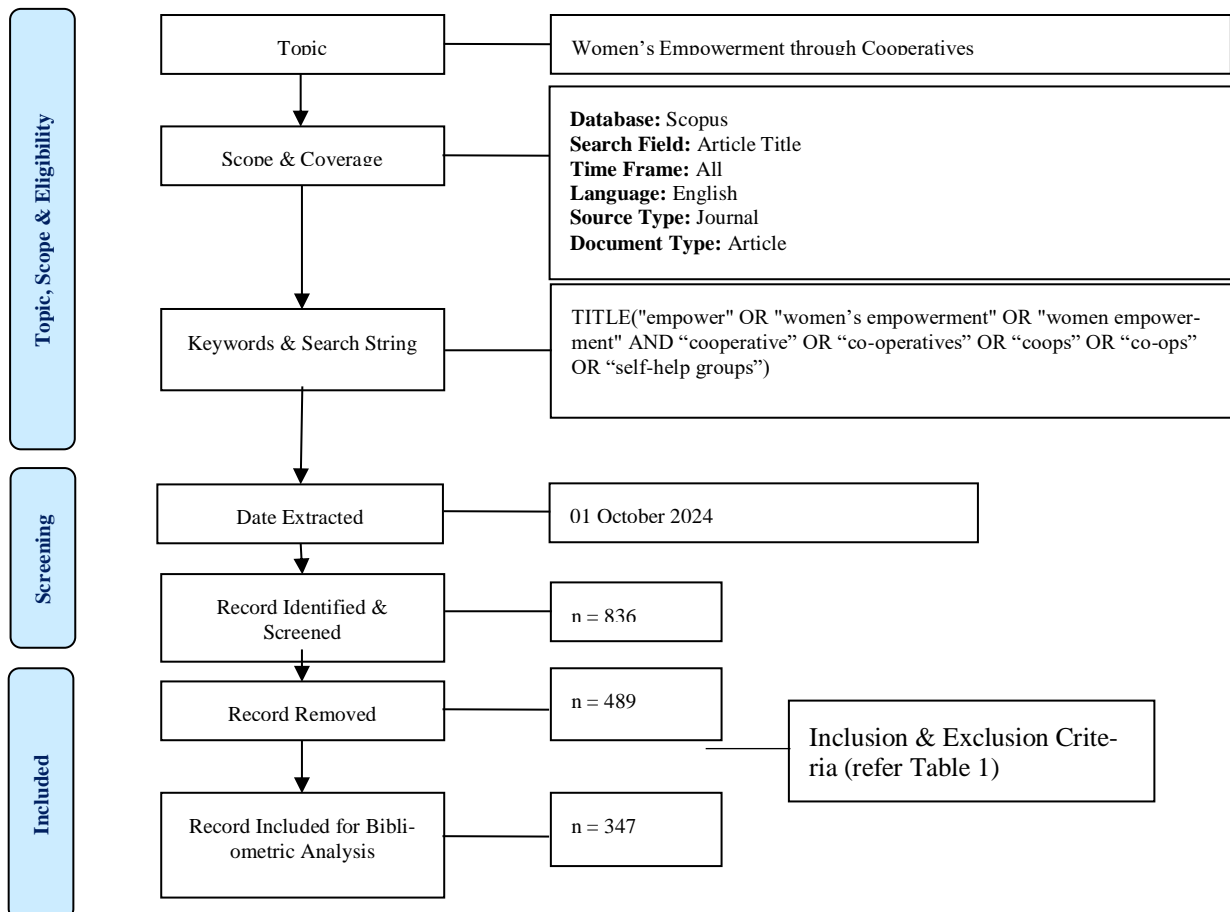


Figure 2. Flow diagram of the search strategy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 provides a valuable overview of the academic landscape surrounding “women’s empowerment through cooperatives” over the past 30 years (1974-2024). With 347 publications, the publication exhibits a positive growth trend, indicating increasing research interest. The publications span five decades, suggesting sustained scholarly attention to the topic. As for the citation impact, the average citation per paper (11.94) and per author (4.80) reflect moderate impact within the field. Meanwhile, the h-index of 33 and g-index of 54 indicate a concentrated core of highly cited publications and authors. The citation per year (83.13) suggests that even older publications continue to generate citations, demonstrating their lasting relevance. The number of contributing authors (865) relative to publications (347) suggests a collaborative research culture. The prevalence of collaborative research is proven by author per paper ratio (2.49).

Table 2. Basic Information & Citation Metrics

Source Type	Total Publications (TP)
Start Year	1974
End Year	2023
Total Publications	347
Number of Contributing Authors	865
Number of Cited Papers	273
Total Citations	4,156
Citation per Paper	11.94
Citation per Cited Paper	15.22
Citation per Author	4.80
Citation sum within h-Core	3,825
h-index	33
g-index	54
Publication Years	1974 - 2023
Citation Years	50
Citation per Year	83.12
Author per Paper	2.49

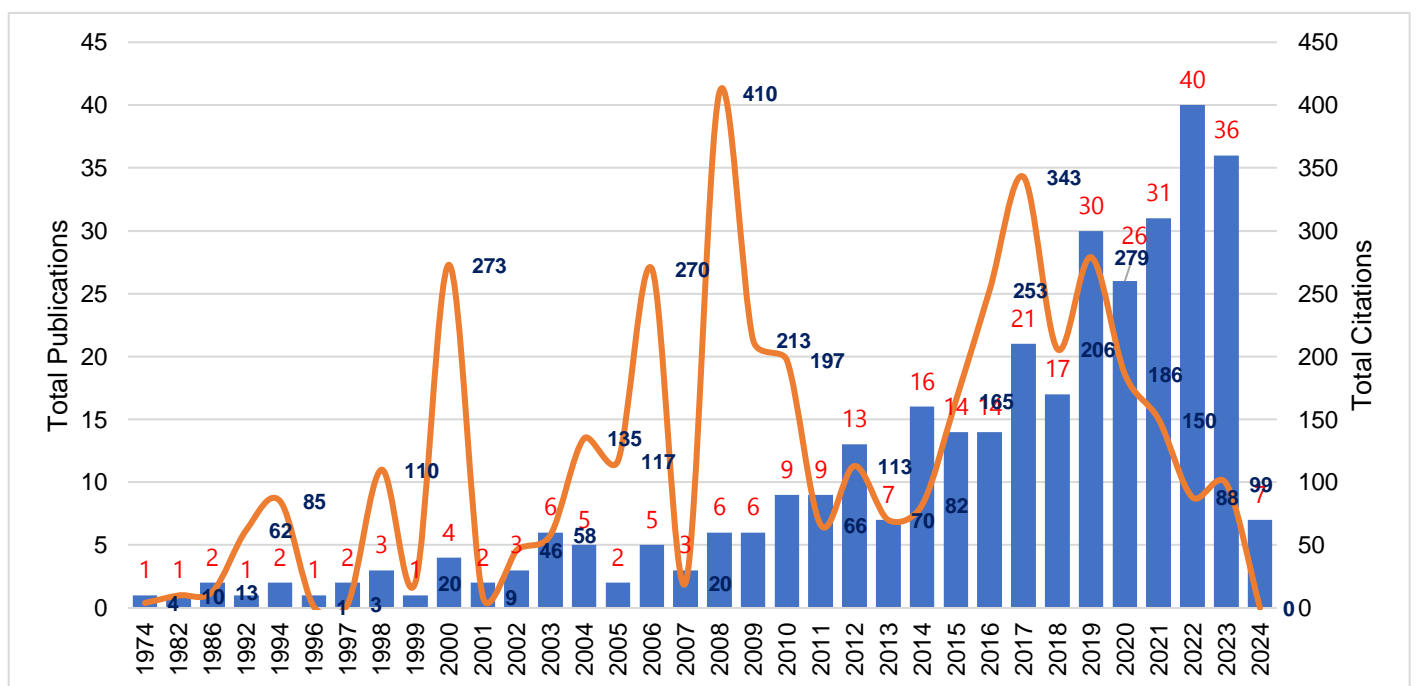


Figure 3. Total Publications and Citations by Year

Figure 3 shows the trends of publication and citation over the years for publications on women’s empowerment through cooperatives. The number of publications has steadily increased over the years, from 1 in 1974 to 36 in 2023. This suggests a growing interest in the research field of women's empowerment through cooperatives. The total number of citations has also increased over time, peaking at 410 in 2018. Although the trend of publications is gradually increasing until 2023, there is a gradual decrease in total number of citations from 2017 to 2023.

Table 3 presents the top 20 most highly cited articles to women’s empowerment, microfinance, and cooperative development, with a focus on recent scholarship from various global regions. The most-cited article is *“Friends and benefits? Endogenous rotating savings and credit associations as alternative for women's empowerment in India”*, published in World Development in 2021, with 14 total citations and an average of 3.50 citations per year. Several articles from 2021 and 2022 have relatively high citations, indicating significant interest in these topics in recent years. The World Development journal appears multiple times, underscoring its prominence in research related to women’s empowerment and development studies. The highest annual citation rate (5.50 per year) belongs to the article *“Impact of Microfinance on Economic, Social, Political and Psychological Empowerment: Evidence from Women’s Self-help Groups in Kashmir Valley, India,”* published in FIIB Business Review in 2023, reflecting strong early engagement.

Table 3. Top 20 Highly Cited Articles

No.	Authors	Title	Source Title	Cites	Citesper Year
1	Sedai et al. (2021)	Friends and benefits? Endogenous rotating savings and credit associations as alternative for women's empowerment in India	World Development	14	3.50
2	Mwambi M.; Bijman J.; Galie A. (2021)	The effect of membership in producer organisations on women's empowerment: Evidence from Kenya	Women’s Studies International Forum	13	3.25
3	Quisumbing, Meinzen-Dick & Malapit (2022)	Women's empowerment and gender equality in South Asian agriculture: Measuring progress using the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) in Bangladesh and India	World Development	12	4.00
4	Khan, Bhat & Sangmi (2023)	Impact of Microfinance on Economic, Social, Political and Psychological Empowerment: Evidence from Women’s Self-help Groups in Kashmir Valley, India	FIIB Business Review	11	5.50
5	Samineni & Ramesh (2023)	Measuring the Impact of Microfinance on Economic Enhancement of Women: Analysis with Special Reference to India	Global Business Review	10	5.00
6	Farnworth et al. (2022)	Caste-gender intersectionalities in wheat-growing communities in Madhya Pradesh, India	Gender, Technology and Development	8	2.67
7	de Boef et al. (2021)	Unleashing the social capital of self-help groups for strengthening seed systems in Uttar Pradesh, India	Global Food Security	5	1.25
8	Hyunanda et al. (2021)	State ibuism and women’s empowerment in indonesia: Governmentality and political subjectification of chinese benteng women	Sustainability (Switzerland)	5	1.25
9	Arvanitis (2021)	Educating ‘others’: Drawing on the collective wisdom of intercultural experts	British Educational Research Journal	4	1.00

10	Jacob & Munuswamy (2022)	The role of micro-enterprises in the four-dimensional framework of women's empowerment	International Journal of Professional Business Review	4	1.33
11	Mahato & Vardhan (2021)	Discourses by Didis of Community Kitchens: A Case on Women Empowerment	South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases	3	0.75
12	Chandra (2021)	Amma Unavagam: mitigating food insecurity through state sponsored food subsidisation programme	Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies	2	0.50
13	Kandpal (2022)	Socio-economic development through self-help groups in rural India – a qualitative study	Qualitative Research in Financial Markets	2	0.67
14	Nichols (2022)	The politics of mobility and empowerment: The case of self-help groups in India	Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers	2	0.67
15	Brogan & Dooley (2023)	Weaving together social capital to empower women artisan entrepreneurs	International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship	1	0.50
16	Ghosh et al. (2023)	Achieving Sustainable Development Goal of Women Empowerment: A Study among Self-help Groups in India	FIIB Business Review	1	0.50
17	Barrientos-Rastrojo (2023)	From philosophy for children to philosophy from indigenous children: a proposal from the nosotricación mayan-tojolabal	Childhood and Philosophy	1	0.50
18	Kunasekaran et al. (2022)	Promoting small family businesses through OCOP program and tourism activities in rural areas in Vietnam: the case of Bac Giang province	Journal of Family Business Management	1	0.33
19	Dulhunty A. (2022)	Examining microcredit self-help groups through the lens of feminist dignity	Oxford Development Studies	1	0.33
20	Pethe & Lalvani (2022)	Critical Importance of Cooperative Federalism	Economic and Political Weekly	1	0.33

Table 4 offers valuable insights into the evolution of research on women's empowerment through cooperatives over the past 50 years (1974-2024). Early publications (1974-1990s) saw sporadic publications, with only a few papers published each year. This suggests that research in this area was still in its nascent stages. Despite the low volume, there was a gradual increase in publications throughout this period, indicating growing interest in the topic. The 2000s and 2010s witnessed a substantial rise in publications, with several years exceeding 10 publications. This reflects a surge in research activity and growing recognition of the importance of women's empowerment through cooperatives. The 2020s show fluctuations in the number of publications, ranging from 26 in 2020 to 40 in 2022. This suggests that research output might be stabilizing at a moderately high level. Despite the fluctuations, the overall trend indicates continued interest in researching this topic, even in the most recent years. This data reveals a positive trajectory in research on women's empowerment through cooperatives. From its initial sporadic publications to the current sustained level of research activity, the field has witnessed significant growth. While further investigation into citation impact and geographical trends would be valuable, this table undoubtedly highlights the growing importance of this research area in today's world.

Table 4. Year of Publication

Year	TP	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	<i>h</i>	<i>g</i>
1974	1	1	4	4.00	4.00	1	1
1982	1	1	10	10.00	10.00	1	1
1986	2	2	13	6.50	6.50	2	2
1992	1	1	62	62.00	62.00	1	1
1994	2	2	85	42.50	42.50	2	2
1996	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1	1
1997	2	2	3	1.50	1.50	1	1
1998	3	3	110	36.67	36.67	3	3
1999	1	1	20	20.00	20.00	1	1
2000	4	4	273	68.25	68.25	3	4
2001	2	1	9	4.50	9.00	1	2
2002	3	3	46	15.33	15.33	3	3
2003	6	4	58	9.67	14.50	3	6
2004	5	5	135	27.00	27.00	5	5
2005	2	2	117	58.50	58.50	2	2
2006	5	5	270	54.00	54.00	4	5
2007	3	3	20	6.67	6.67	2	3
2008	6	6	410	68.33	68.33	6	6
2009	6	6	213	35.50	35.50	3	6
2010	9	7	197	21.89	28.14	6	9
2011	9	8	66	7.33	8.25	6	8
2012	13	11	113	8.69	10.27	6	10
2013	7	7	70	10.00	10.00	5	7
2014	16	13	82	5.13	6.31	5	8
2015	14	11	165	11.79	15.00	8	12
2016	14	12	253	18.07	21.08	7	14
2017	21	19	343	16.33	18.05	10	18
2018	17	16	206	12.12	12.88	9	14
2019	30	24	279	9.30	11.63	11	16
2020	26	23	186	7.15	8.09	8	12
2021	31	26	150	4.84	5.77	6	10
2022	40	26	88	2.20	3.38	4	7
2023	36	16	99	2.75	6.19	6	9
Total	347	272	4156	12.01	15.28		

Notes: TP=total number of publications; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; *h*=*h*-index; and *g*=*g*-index.

Table 5 highlights the global reach of research on women’s empowerment through cooperatives, with authors from the top 20 countries contributing to the field. India leads the pack in terms of publications with 265 authors and 127 publications, followed by the United States with 174 authors and 77 publications as well as the United Kingdom with 42 authors and 25 publications. The United States stands out with the highest citations per publication and citations per co-author, indicating a strong influence and impact in this field. European countries like the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Sweden, and Italy also show significant contributions, with relatively high citations per publication ratios. This indicates the quality and impact of research coming from these regions. Countries like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and China show a notable presence in terms of total authors and publications. While their citation metrics are lower compared to some Western countries, they demonstrate growing research output in this area. There is variability in citation metrics across countries. While some countries have high citations per publication and per co-author ratios (e.g., United States, United

Kingdom), others have relatively lower values (e.g., Nigeria, Thailand). This might reflect differences in research quality, collaboration patterns, or visibility within the academic community. Collaboration seems to positively impact citation metrics, as seen in countries with higher numbers of total authors and publications.

Table 5. Top 20 Countries with the most authors

Country	TA	TP	TC	C/P	C/CP	<i>h</i>	<i>g</i>
India	265	127	1343	5.07	7.72	17	36
United States	174	77	3281	18.86	20.90	30	57
United Kingdom	42	25	758	18.05	18.49	13	27
Canada	27	15	633	23.44	28.77	12	25
Netherlands	26	13	468	18.00	18.00	15	21
Indonesia	26	12	66	2.54	5.50	4	8
Australia	25	14	935	37.40	40.65	16	25
Spain	24	11	168	7.00	7.64	7	12
South Africa	22	13	44	2.00	2.59	4	6
Italy	20	10	84	4.20	5.25	6	9
Malaysia	17	8	119	7.00	11.90	4	10
Sweden	14	9	614	43.86	43.86	10	14
Ethiopia	12	7	59	4.92	5.36	5	7
Turkey	11	4	35	3.18	3.89	4	5
Germany	10	8	136	13.60	19.43	4	10
Morocco	9	6	106	11.78	11.78	8	9
China	9	6	135	15.00	22.50	5	9
Nigeria	7	3	11	1.57	2.75	2	3
Thailand	7	5	54	7.71	13.50	4	7
Brazil	6	4	126	21.00	21.00	3	6

Notes: TA=total authors; TP=total number of publications; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; *h*=*h*-index; and *g*=*g*-index.

Table 6 presents a list of influential institutions based on their publications. The institutions listed are from diverse geographical locations, including India, South Africa, the United States, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Italy, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, and Turkey. This indicates a global interest and involvement in research on women's empowerment through cooperatives. Institutions like the University of California, the International Food Policy Research Institute, and the University of Manchester stand out with a high number of citations and strong citation metrics (C/P and C/CP). These institutions have made significant contributions to the field and have garnered attention and recognition from the academic community. Institutions with a higher number of co-occurring publications (NCP) indicate a culture of collaboration within the institution. For example, the University of California and the International Food Policy Research Institute have a substantial number of co-occurring publications, suggesting active collaboration among researchers within these institutions. Institutions from countries like India, Malaysia, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua are also represented in the list, showcasing their growing contributions to the field. These institutions may have smaller publication and citation counts but demonstrate potential for further development and impact in the future.

Table 6. Most Influential Institutions with A Minimum Of Five Publications

Affiliation	Country	TP	TC	NCP	C/P	C/CP	h	g
SASTRA University	India	9	5	5	0.56	1.00	1	2
University of South Africa	South Africa	8	23	8	2.88	2.88	3	4
University of Delhi	India	7	9	5	1.29	1.80	2	3
University of Manchester	UK	7	88	7	12.57	12.57	7	7
Utrecht University	Netherlands	7	77	7	11.00	11.00	5	7
University of California	USA	7	398	7	56.86	56.86	7	7
International Food Policy Research Institute	USA	7	154	7	22.00	22.00	7	7
the University of South Florida College of Public Health	USA	6	84	6	14.00	14.00	6	6
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia	6	0	0	0.00	0.00	0	0
Arizona State University	USA	6	82	6	13.67	13.67	6	6
National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management	India	6	6	6	1.00	1.00	1	2
Boston College	USA	6	30	6	5.00	5.00	4	5
Amity University	India	6	36	6	6.00	6.00	3	6
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua-León (UNAN-León)	Nicaragua	5	5	5	1.00	1.00	1	2
University of Johannesburg	South Africa	5	4	2	0.80	2.00	2	2
University of Florida	USA	5	10	5	2.00	2.00	2	3
University of Perugia	Italy	5	32	2	6.40	16.00	2	5
Dilla University	Ethiopia	5	5	5	1.00	1.00	1	2
University of Maryland	USA	5	105	5	21.00	21.00	5	5
Bilkent University	Turkiye	5	14	5	2.80	2.80	3	3

Notes: TP=total number of publications; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; h=h-index; and g=g-index.

Table 7 reveals the journals and publishers that have been the most active in publishing research on women's empowerment through cooperatives. World Development emerges as the leading source, with the highest number of publications (9) related to this research area. Its high H-Index (206) and SJR 2022 (2.504) indicate its prestige and impact within the academic community. The table showcases a range of publishers and journals, including those with global reach (World Development, Sustainability) and more regionally focused publications (Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Indian Journal of Economics and Development) which indicate a niche within the broader field of women's empowerment through cooperatives. This diversity suggests that research on this topic is being disseminated through various channels, reaching a broad audience of scholars and practitioners. While publication volume is one indicator of a source's activity, it's crucial to consider other factors like the journal's impact factor, reputation, and target audience. For instance, World Development and Food Security boast high impact factors and are well-established journals in the field of development studies, whereas other titles like the International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering have been discontinued, suggesting their potential lack of lasting impact or academic rigor. This information is crucial for researchers to consider when selecting sources for publication or citation.

Table 7. Most Active Source Title

Source Title	TP	TC	Publisher	H-Index	SJR 2022	Quartiles
World Development	9	192	Elsevier	206	2.504	Q1
Sustainability (Switzerland)	7	46	Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI)	136	0.664	Q2
Journal of Rural Development	6	14	National Institute of Rural Development	9	0.112	Q4
Indian Journal of Gender Studies	6	83	SAGE	23	0.161	Q4
Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies	5	2	Emerald Publishing	7	0.191	Q4
Indian Journal of Economics and Development	5	3	The Society of Economics and Development	4	0.134	Q4
International Journal of Economic Research	4	1	Serials Publications	22	Discontinued since 2019	
Development in Practice	4	71	Taylor & Francis	49	0.414	Q2
International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering	4	5	Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication	27	Discontinued since 2019	
International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	4	2	International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research	26	Discontinued since 2020	
Food Security	3	44	Springer Nature	66	1.764	Q1
International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research	3	2	Serials Publications	23	Discontinued since 2017	
Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities	3	4	UPM Press	16	0.164	Q4
Gender, Technology and Development	3	26	Taylor & Francis	26	0.633	Q1

Notes: TP=total number of publications; TC=total citations;

Table 9 shows the distribution of the number of authors per document. The most frequent number of authors per document is 2, accounting for 31.41% of the documents. This is followed by 1 author documents, at 30.26%. Less frequent are documented with 3 authors (18.44%), 4 authors (9.51%), and 5 authors (5.76%). Documents with 6 or more authors are rare, comprising only 4.32% of the total. It is important to consider the possible reasons behind this distribution. One possibility is that research in this field is often collaborative, with scholars from different disciplines or institutions working together. Additionally, some studies may involve data collection or analysis from multiple researchers. However, it is also possible that some single-authored documents represent studies that are smaller in scope or that focus on a specific and well-defined research question.

Table 9. Number of Author(s) per document

Author Count	Total Publications (TP)	Percentage (%)
1	105	30.26
2	109	31.41
3	64	18.44
4	33	9.51
5	20	5.76
6	7	2.02
7	3	0.86
8	2	0.58
9	1	0.29
10	3	0.86
Total	347	100.00

Keywords

Table 10 showcases the top keywords used in the 347 publications concerning women's empowerment through cooperatives, offering valuable insights into the prevailing themes and terminology employed in this field. Unsurprisingly, "empowerment" emerges as the most frequent keyword, highlighting its centrality to the entire research domain. Additionally, terms like "women empowerment," "women's empowerment," and "women status" further emphasize the emphasis on uplifting and improving the lives of women through cooperative endeavors. The prominence of keywords like "self-help groups" and "microfinance" underscores their critical role as mechanisms for empowering women. These concepts appear frequently, indicating their extensive exploration within the field. Keywords like "cooperative behavior," "cooperation," "cooperative," and "collective action" highlight the core principles of cooperatives that contribute to women's empowerment. The consistent use of terms like "gender," "women," and "female" reinforces the specific focus on gender equality and women's agency within the cooperative movement. Keywords like "poverty," "social capital," "rural area," "sustainability," and "sustainable development" hint at the broader societal and economic context in which women's empowerment through cooperatives takes place. These themes suggest that researchers are exploring the multifaceted nature of empowerment and its interconnections with various social and economic factors. By analyzing the most frequently used keywords, we gain valuable insights into the core themes and research priorities within the field of women's empowerment through cooperatives. The data suggests a strong focus on empowerment through self-help groups, microfinance, and cooperative principles, while also acknowledging the broader context of gender equality, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

Table 10. Top Keywords

Author Keywords	Total Publications (TP)	Percentage (%)
Empowerment	100	28.82
Women Empowerment	44	12.68
Women’s Empowerment	38	10.95
Women Status	38	10.95
Self-help Groups	35	10.09
Microfinance	32	9.22
Cooperative Behavior	25	7.20
Cooperation	16	4.61
Self-help	16	4.61
Gender	16	4.61
Women	16	4.61
Female	15	4.32
Cooperative	14	4.03
Poverty	14	4.03
Social Capital	13	3.75
Rural Area	12	3.46
Sustainability	12	3.46
Sustainable Development	12	3.46
Self-Help Groups	11	3.17
Collective Action	10	2.88

Visualisation Map

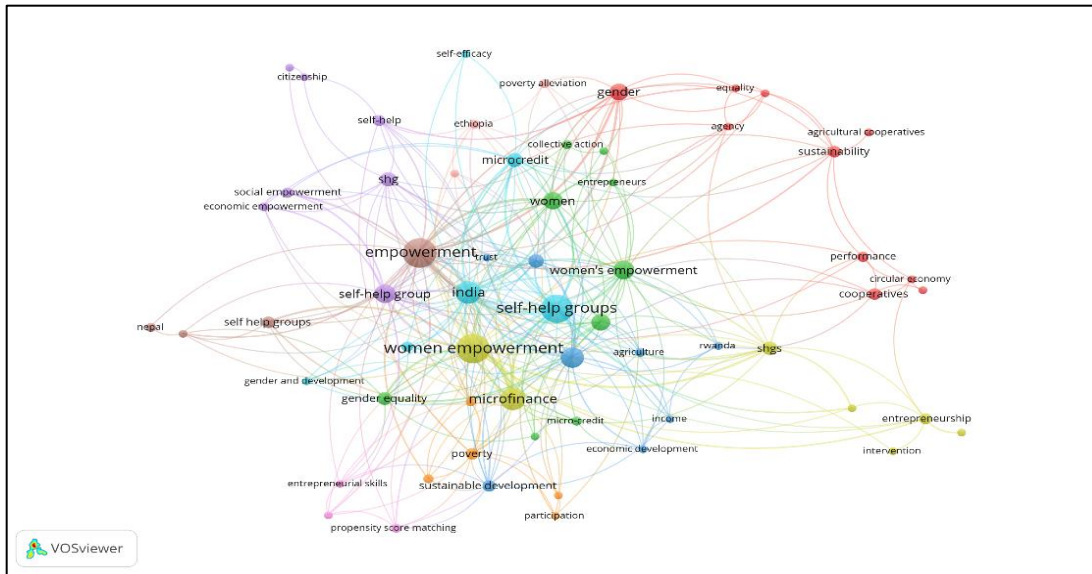


Figure 4. Network visualisation map of the author keywords

Figure 4 is the network visualization map that displays the relationships between keywords used in the 347 publications on women's empowerment through cooperatives. The size of each circle represents the frequency of the keyword, and the lines connecting the circles indicate the co-occurrence of keywords in the same publications. A large central cluster of keywords dominates the map, including "empowerment," "women empowerment," "women's empowerment," "self-help groups," "microfinance," "gender," and "women." This cluster highlights the interconnectedness of these core themes within the research domain. The centrality of "empowerment" and its related terms reflects their foundational importance in the field. They connect to various other keywords, suggesting that researchers are exploring empowerment from diverse perspectives and in different contexts. The prominence of "self-help groups" and "microfinance" within the central cluster reinforces their established role as facilitators of women's empowerment. Smaller clusters on the periphery of the map group related keywords. For instance, one cluster includes "cooperative behavior," "cooperation," and "collective action," highlighting the cooperative principles that contribute to empowerment.

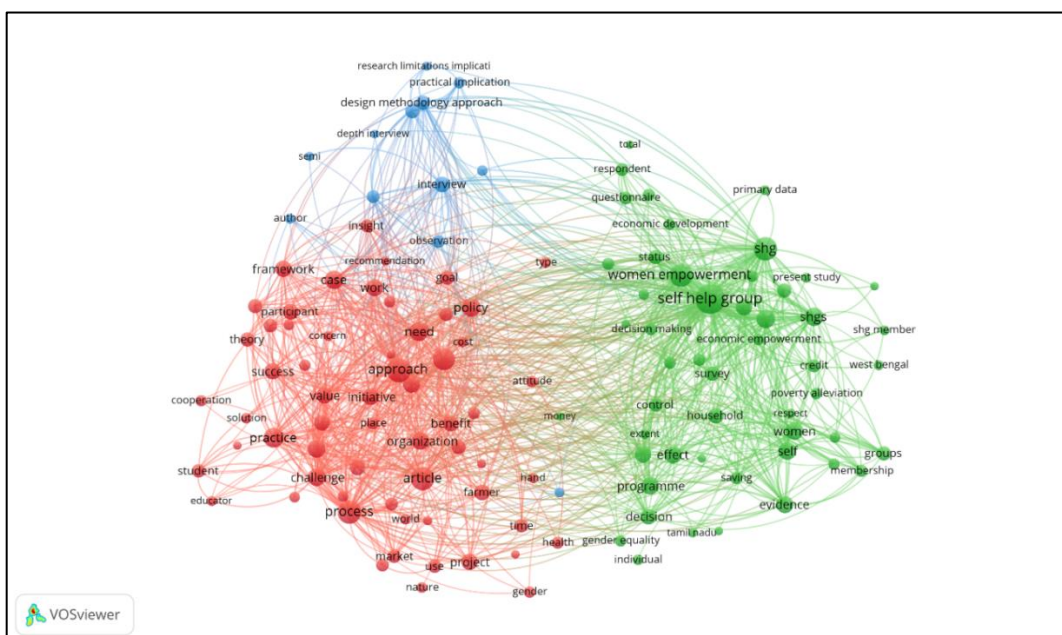


Figure 5. VOSviewer visualisation of a term co-occurrence network based on title and abstract fields (Binary Counting)

Figure 5 shows the network visualization of term co-occurrence based on the title and abstract fields revealing several key themes and relationships within the research on women's empowerment through cooperatives. A prominent central cluster of terms dominates the map, including "women empowerment," "self-help groups," "microfinance," "empowerment," "poverty," "gender," and "women." This cluster highlights the interconnect-edness of these core themes, suggesting their frequent co-occurrence in titles and abstracts. The centrality of "empowerment" and its related terms like "women empowerment" reinforces their foundational importance in the field. The presence of terms like "economic empowerment" and "social empowerment" indicates that re-searchers are exploring empowerment from diverse perspectives. The prominence of "self-help groups" and "microfinance" within the central cluster underscores their established role as key mechanisms for facilitating women's empowerment.

DISCUSSIONS

RQ1: What is the publication trend in women's empowerment through cooperatives?

The publication trend in women's empowerment through cooperatives has shown a steady increase over the years, from 1 publication in 1974 to 36 publications in 2023, with a total publication of 347 and 836 contrib-uting authors and 4,156 total citations within 50 years. This shows a growing interest in and recognition of the importance of this topic within academic and research communities. It also indicates a shift in focus towards understanding and promoting gender equality and women's participation in economic activities. The trend al-so reflects a broadening research focus within the field of development studies. Scholars are increasingly ex-ploring the multifaceted relationship between cooperatives and women's empowerment, delving into diverse contexts and examining the impact of cooperatives on various dimensions of empowerment. The upward trend in publications on women's empowerment through cooperatives is an encouraging sign. It reflects a growing commitment to addressing gender inequality and leveraging the potential of cooperatives for inclusive devel-opment. As research in this area continues to evolve, we can expect even more nuanced insights and innovative solutions to emerge, paving the way for a more just and equitable world where women can thrive.

RQ2: What is the most influential article on women's empowerment through cooperatives?

Some of the most influential articles on women's empowerment through cooperatives include those focusing on the impact of microfinance and self-help groups on women's empowerment (Table 9). Top cited article (14 citations) is *Friends and benefits? Endogenous rotating savings and credit associations as alternative for women's empowerment in India* (Sedai, Vasudevan & Alves Pena, 2021). Their study examined the effect of Rotating Saving and Credit Association (ROSCA) membership and exogenous micro-credit on women's em-powerment in India. They concluded that ROSCA increased regular cash flow for women by 1.7% and prop-erty ownership by 3.3%. By investigating the effects of these financial mechanisms, the study contributes to understanding how cooperative structures can facilitate women's empowerment, particularly in the context of economic resources and property ownership. The authors employ a robust econometric approach, controlling for various factors that could influence empowerment outcomes. This methodological rigor adds credibility to their findings and contributes to the study's influence. The study reinforces the idea that financial inclusion is a crucial pathway to women's empowerment. Access to financial resources enables women to invest in in-come-generating activities, build assets, and enhance their economic security.

RQ3: Which themes involving women's empowerment through cooperatives are the most popular among re-searchers?

The most popular themes involving women's empowerment through cooperatives among researchers include economic empowerment (Farnwoth, Bharati, Krishna, Roeven & Badstue, 2022, Pethe & Lalyani, 2022; Qui-suming, Meizen-Dick & Malapit, 2022; Mwambi, Bijman & Galie, 2021), and social impact (Barrientos-Rastrojo, 2023; Brogan & Dooley, 2023; Jacob & Muniswamy, 2022; de Boef, Singh, Trivedi, Yadav, Mohan-an, Kumar, Yadavendra & Isaacs, 2021). The focus on economic empowerment and social impact in research on women's empowerment through cooperatives reflects a holistic understanding of empowerment. While

economic gains are essential, true empowerment also encompasses social, political, and psychological dimensions. Further research in this area will continue to shed light on the complex dynamics of women's empowerment through cooperatives and inform the design of effective interventions that promote gender equality and inclusive development.

RQ4: What are the future research suggestions suggested by the 20 high-impact papers in this study?

The suggestions can be divided into a few themes:

Methodological and Analytical Refinements

Farnworth et al. (2022) highlight the importance of examining how caste, gender, and other factors intersect to shape women's experiences and empowerment outcomes. In India, women from lower castes often face double discrimination based on both their gender and caste. They may be excluded from education, employment, and decision-making processes, and may be more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Future studies need to collect and analyze data on multiple social identities to understand the complex ways in which they interact to shape women's experiences. Several papers, including Sedai et al. (2021) and Mwambi et al. (2021), underscore the need for longitudinal research to assess the sustainability and long-term impacts of empowerment interventions. Many interventions may show promising initial results, but their impact may fade over time if they are not sustainable. Longitudinal research helps us evaluate whether the changes brought about by interventions are enduring and whether they continue to benefit individuals and communities even after the intervention has ended. The use of mixed methods is exemplified in studies like Quisumbing et al. (2022), which combines quantitative data from the pro-WEAI index with qualitative insights. Mixed methods research, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, offers a powerful approach to studying complex phenomena like women's empowerment. Empowerment is a multi-faceted concept influenced by various factors at individual, household, and community levels. Mixed methods can capture this complexity by exploring both the "what" (quantitative data on empowerment outcomes) and the "why" and "how" (qualitative insights into the processes and contextual factors). Advancing women's empowerment demands methodological rigor, contextual sensitivity, and a commitment to understanding the long-term dynamics of change. By embracing these principles, we can create more effective interventions and policies that foster genuine and sustainable empowerment for women across diverse social realities.

Empowerment Strategies and Interventions

Multiple papers, including de Boef et al. (2021), Jacob & Munuswamy (2022), and Ghosh et al. (2023), highlight the critical role of SHGs in empowering women and suggest ways to enhance their capacity and effectiveness. These groups provide access to financial resources, build social capital, enhance skills and capacities, as well as promote collective action for women to advocate for their rights. To enhance their effectiveness, transparent and participatory decision-making processes within SHGs should be ensured for trust building and ownership promotion. The impact of microfinance on women's empowerment is a central theme in several papers, including Samineni & Ramesh (2023) and Khan et al. (2023), although they also emphasize the need for careful assessment and monitoring. Future research should evaluate the extent to which microfinance programs are achieving their intended goals of empowering women, both economically and in other dimensions and identify potential challenges and risks, such as over-indebtedness or the reinforcement of gender inequalities, and take corrective measures. Arvanitis (2021) advocates for drawing on the collective wisdom of intercultural experts in education to empower women and other marginalized groups. Intercultural perspectives help to dismantle harmful stereotypes and biases that often marginalize women and minority groups within education. Intercultural education encourages critical reflection on power dynamics and social inequalities, empowering marginalized groups to challenge oppressive structures and advocate for change. Farnworth et al. (2022) and Hyunanda et al. (2021) emphasize that dismantling structural barriers is crucial for fostering women's empowerment. These barriers, which include discriminatory laws and entrenched social norms, significantly limit women's access to education, employment, property ownership, and decision-making processes. Deeply ingrained cultural practices often perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, further restricting women's roles and opportunities in society. While not explicitly addressed in the listed papers, the potential of technolo-

gy to empower women is widely recognized in development discourse and could be a fruitful area for future research in this context. Technology can provide women with access to information and educational resources, enabling them to acquire new skills, knowledge, and perspectives. E-commerce platforms, mobile banking, digital payment systems, and social medias can facilitate women's participation in the economy, providing them with greater control over their finances, access to markets, and empower them to connect, share experiences and amplifying their voices in advocating for change.

Policy and Advocacy

Quisumbing et al. (2022) and Pethe & Lalvani (2022) underscore the need for policies and programs to be designed and implemented with a gender-sensitive lens. This call is implicit in many of the papers, as they highlight the interconnectedness of women's empowerment with broader development goals. The explicit call for gender-sensitive policies and programs underscores a fundamental principle: addressing gender inequality and empowering women requires intentional and deliberate action. It's not enough to simply have policies that are gender-neutral; rather, policies and programs need to be designed and implemented with a keen awareness of the specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of women. To achieve genuine empowerment, policies and programs must actively address the root causes of gender inequality and create an enabling environment for women to flourish. Additionally, women often play a critical role in natural resource management and environmental conservation. Empowering women can lead to more sustainable practices and greater resilience to climate change. Mahato & Vardhan (2021) showcase the importance of women's voices and leadership through their study of community kitchens run by women. Community-led initiatives, like community kitchens, can be potent vehicles for empowerment, providing women with opportunities to develop leadership skills, voice their opinions, and influence decision-making. By creating spaces where women can exercise agency, express their opinions, and collaborate with others, we can nurture a generation of empowered women who can lead their communities towards a more equitable and just future.

Focus Areas for Future Research

The mixed findings on the impact of microfinance in papers like Samineni & Ramesh (2023) and Khan et al. (2023) highlight the need for further research in this area. The impact of microfinance is likely to differ across individuals and groups based on factors such as age, education, marital status, and existing levels of empowerment. Research needs to account for this heterogeneity and identify which women are most likely to benefit from microfinance. De Boef et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of social capital within SHGs, suggesting a need for deeper investigation into its role in women's empowerment. Examining the specific pathways through which social capital translates into different forms of empowerment, such as economic, social, and political, will be worthwhile. Khan et al. (2023) include psychological empowerment as one of the dimensions they study, indicating a growing recognition of its importance, warranting further exploration. Developing and refining tools to accurately measure psychological empowerment is crucial for understanding its dynamics and evaluating the impact of interventions. Designing and evaluating interventions specifically aimed at fostering psychological empowerment among women. While not explicitly addressed in the listed papers, engaging men and boys in promoting women's empowerment is crucial and requires further research and strategic development. Gender equality is not just a "women's issue." It is a societal issue that requires the collective effort of all genders. Men and boys have a crucial role to play in dismantling patriarchal norms, challenging stereotypes, and creating a more equitable world.

Limitation

While this study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on women's empowerment through cooperatives over the past 50 years, it has several limitations. First, the study relies solely on publications indexed in the Scopus database, which may exclude relevant studies from other academic databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar. As a result, some key contributions from non-indexed sources or regional publications may not be captured. Second, the study focuses primarily on quantitative bibliometric indicators, which, while valuable, do not provide in-depth qualitative insights into the content, theoretical frame-

works, and real-world impact of the research. A systematic literature review incorporating qualitative methods could complement these findings. Lastly, the study does not assess the practical implementation of empowerment strategies within cooperatives, as it is limited to published academic research. Future studies could incorporate case studies, interviews, and fieldwork to gain a more nuanced understanding of how cooperatives influence women's empowerment in different socio-economic and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

The bibliometric analysis presented in this study provides a comprehensive overview of the research landscape on women's empowerment through cooperatives. The findings highlight a growing interest in this field, with an increasing number of publications and citations over time. The identification of influential articles, authors, institutions, and countries underscores the global reach and collaborative nature of research in this domain. The prominence of themes such as economic empowerment and social impact underscores the multifaceted nature of women's empowerment through cooperatives. The study also emphasizes the importance of addressing structural barriers and leveraging technology to empower women further. The insights generated from this analysis can inform future research directions and guide the design and implementation of effective interventions to promote gender equality and inclusive development through cooperatives.

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