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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: **IJAR-58612**

Title: "The Evolving Psyche of Women in India: A PRISMA-Guided Qualitative Systematic Review of Psychological, Socio-Cultural, and Gender-Based Transformations (2016–2026)."

Recommendation:	Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Accept with Minor Revisions.....	Originality	✓			
	Techn.		✓		
	Quality		✓		
	Clarity		✓		
	Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: **Faheem Abdul Muneeb**

Reviewer Report

The manuscript entitled "The Evolving Psyche of Women in India: A PRISMA-Guided Qualitative Systematic Review of Psychological, Socio-Cultural, and Gender-Based Transformations (2016–2026)" presents a comprehensive qualitative systematic review synthesizing evidence on the changing psychological, social, and gendered experiences of women and girls in India over the past decade. Following the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework, the review integrates findings from one hundred evidence records identified through searches of PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and citation tracking. Rather than limiting itself to mental health outcomes, the review adopts a broad conceptualization of the female psyche by examining the interaction between psychological wellbeing, gender norms, violence, education, work, reproductive autonomy, digital participation, institutional trust, and collective action. Through reflexive thematic synthesis, the author identifies eight interconnected themes and proposes a conceptual model that explains women's psychological transformation as the outcome of interactions among structural conditions, relational institutions, and psychosocial mechanisms.

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The topic is both highly relevant and timely. During the last decade, India has witnessed significant social, technological, educational, and legal changes affecting women's lives, yet these developments have often been studied separately within psychology, sociology, public health, or gender studies. This review successfully brings together these diverse strands of literature into a single interdisciplinary synthesis. The manuscript demonstrates a commendable understanding of contemporary scholarship while maintaining a balanced perspective that neither romanticizes empowerment nor reduces women's experiences to psychological pathology. The central argument that women's psychological transformation is negotiated rather than linear represents a thoughtful and theoretically meaningful contribution.

The review is exceptionally well organized and follows a transparent methodological structure. The description of the search strategy, eligibility criteria, risk-of-bias assessment, PRISMA flow diagram, thematic synthesis, and conceptual framework reflects careful planning and methodological awareness. The inclusion of detailed appendices, quality appraisal procedures, and explicit discussion of methodological limitations further enhances the transparency of the review process. The conceptual model presented by the author effectively integrates structural, relational, and psychological dimensions of women's experiences and provides readers with a coherent framework for interpreting the findings.

Despite these considerable strengths, several aspects of the manuscript require refinement before publication. While the review is methodologically rigorous, certain theoretical discussions occasionally become repetitive, some thematic sections are considerably longer than others, and the synthesis would benefit from deeper critical comparison across included studies rather than primarily summarizing individual findings. In addition, although the review appropriately acknowledges its methodological limitations, greater discussion regarding publication bias, language restrictions, and the implications of using a single-reviewer screening process would further strengthen the credibility of the review. These observations concern refinement rather than fundamental weaknesses, and the manuscript represents a valuable contribution that is suitable for publication following minor revisions.

Strengths of the Paper

One of the greatest strengths of the manuscript lies in its originality and scope. Rather than examining only one aspect of women's wellbeing, such as mental health or gender-based violence, the review adopts a holistic perspective that integrates psychological, social, institutional, cultural, and economic dimensions of women's lives. This comprehensive approach allows the review to capture the complexity of women's evolving experiences within contemporary Indian society and distinguishes it from many existing reviews that remain confined to single disciplinary perspectives.

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Another major strength is the methodological rigor of the review. The manuscript closely follows PRISMA 2020 reporting standards and provides transparent documentation of every stage of the review process, including database selection, search strategy, eligibility criteria, duplicate removal, quality appraisal, thematic synthesis, and reporting bias. The detailed explanation of the methodological procedures significantly enhances the reproducibility and credibility of the review. The use of design-specific appraisal tools, including JBI checklists, MMAT, and AMSTAR 2, demonstrates methodological sophistication and appropriate consideration of evidence quality.

The conceptual framework developed by the author represents another important contribution. The model linking structural conditions, relational institutions, psychosocial mechanisms, and evolving psychological outcomes provides an effective analytical lens through which the diverse findings of the review are synthesized. Rather than treating psychological wellbeing as an isolated individual characteristic, the framework appropriately emphasizes the interaction between institutional structures, social relationships, and individual experiences, thereby reflecting current developments in gender and mental health scholarship.

The thematic synthesis is comprehensive and thoughtfully organized. The eight identified themes successfully integrate a wide range of empirical evidence concerning gendered distress, violence, marriage, education, employment, reproductive autonomy, digital participation, and collective action. Throughout these discussions, the author consistently demonstrates sensitivity to issues of caste, class, rural-urban differences, and intersectionality, thereby avoiding overly generalized conclusions about Indian women.

The review also deserves recognition for maintaining a balanced interpretive approach. Rather than presenting social transformation as either complete empowerment or continued oppression, the manuscript convincingly argues that women increasingly negotiate their agency within existing structural constraints. This nuanced interpretation reflects the complexity of contemporary gender relations and strengthens the theoretical contribution of the review.

Finally, the manuscript is written in a clear, scholarly, and accessible style. The progression from conceptual framework to methodology, thematic findings, discussion, and policy implications is logical and easy to follow. The inclusion of figures, tables, and the PRISMA flow diagram further improves the clarity and presentation of the manuscript.

Areas to be Improved

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Although the review demonstrates considerable methodological rigor, the synthesis could be strengthened by providing greater critical comparison among the included studies. In several thematic sections, the manuscript primarily summarizes findings from individual studies sequentially. A more analytical discussion highlighting areas of agreement, disagreement, methodological differences, and inconsistencies across the evidence would enhance the interpretive depth of the review and further distinguish synthesis from narrative description.

The discussion of methodological limitations could also be expanded. The author appropriately acknowledges that screening and appraisal were conducted by a single reviewer and that prospective protocol registration was not completed. However, a more detailed discussion regarding the possible implications of these limitations for study selection, interpretation, and reproducibility would improve methodological transparency. Similarly, the exclusive inclusion of English-language publications may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant regional-language scholarship on Indian women, and this potential source of publication bias deserves further consideration.

The conceptual framework is one of the manuscript's strongest contributions, yet its relationship with the thematic findings could be made more explicit throughout the discussion. While the framework is introduced early in the manuscript, subsequent thematic sections occasionally discuss empirical findings without consistently linking them back to the proposed conceptual model. Stronger integration between theory and synthesis would reinforce the originality of the framework and improve the coherence of the manuscript.

Certain thematic sections are disproportionately lengthy, particularly those addressing mental health, violence, and gender norms, whereas discussions concerning digital participation and economic identity are comparatively brief. A more balanced treatment of the eight themes would improve the overall organization of the review and provide a more proportionate representation of the included evidence.

The policy implications presented in the conclusion could also be developed further. While the manuscript appropriately recommends integrated approaches linking mental health, violence prevention, education, labour, reproductive health, and digital safety, more specific recommendations directed toward policymakers, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and community organizations would increase the practical significance of the review.

In addition, the review could benefit from a brief discussion of emerging research gaps. The evidence base appears relatively limited for older women, women with disabilities, tribal communities, and populations from several regions of India. Highlighting these gaps more explicitly would provide useful

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guidance for future researchers and strengthen the contribution of the review to the development of the field.

Finally, minor editorial revisions are recommended. Although the manuscript is generally well written, there are occasional grammatical inconsistencies, repetitive expressions, and several lengthy paragraphs that could be condensed to improve readability. Careful language editing and stylistic refinement would further enhance the overall presentation of the manuscript.

Recommendation

This manuscript represents a substantial and well-executed qualitative systematic review addressing an important and contemporary topic concerning the evolving psychological and socio-cultural experiences of women in India. The study demonstrates methodological transparency, interdisciplinary breadth, theoretical originality, and thoughtful synthesis of a large body of evidence. The conceptual framework proposed by the author provides a meaningful contribution to gender, psychology, and public health scholarship, while the review offers valuable implications for research, policy, and practice. Although several aspects of the synthesis, theoretical integration, discussion of limitations, and editorial presentation could be further refined, these issues are relatively minor and do not diminish the overall quality or significance of the work. Subject to the revisions suggested above, the manuscript is suitable for publication. Therefore, I recommend that the manuscript be **accepted with minor revisions**.