

**Algorithmic Empowerment: Emotional Labour and Identity Construction in Digital Culture for Generation Z Indian Women**Bhalla, Avani<sup>1</sup> and Singh, Suruchi<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Fourth Year, Undergraduate Student, Bachelors of Arts (Honors with Research) Applied Psychology, Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), University of Delhi<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Sri Aurobindo College (Evening), University of Delhi**Abstract**

The expansion of digital platforms and social media have reshaped contemporary understanding of femininity and empowerment. With algorithm driving the internet, certain narratives and notions of productivity, independence, self-identity, and eventually have empowerment have found their new understanding and are increasingly getting popularized, widely accepted, and internalized. Existing research has examined algorithmic mediation in the glorification and aestheticization of empowerment. But perhaps, amidst all of this, limited attention has been given to the lived psychological experiences of young women navigating these digital spaces, often alone or with numerous other expectations, who are repeatedly constructing and de-constructing their identity and trying to fit in the widely accepted and ever-evolving definition of empowerment, just to feel powerful and independent, and especially in the Indian socio-cultural context. This qualitative study explores how urban Generation Z women who are one of the most largely exposed population to digital media conceptualize empowerment. Through semi-structured interviews with 12 women, aged 18 to 25 years old, the study navigates how empowerment is defined, how social media influences these definitions, and how participants negotiate between the ideal standards and their lived socio-cultural realities. Finding its roots in the Emotional Labor Theory (Hochschild, 1983), Gender Performativity (Butler, 1990), Self-Presentation Theory (Goffman, 1959), and Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), the study aims to understand how digital culture, algorithm, and evolving definitions of empowerment function as liberation for women or a self-managed performance. Since, these digitally mediated ideals and expectations intersect with the collectivistic Indian familial, cultural, and economic realities, producing tension

between ideals and realities. Emerging findings indicate that empowerment in algorithmic environments operates as a motivating force but also an emotionally demanding labour. By placing empowerment with digital transformation and psychological sustainability, this study contributes to discussions on how digital systems reshape identities and the emotional work required to sustain them for Generation Z Indian women.

*Keywords:* Empowerment, Generation Z Women, Social Media, Algorithm, Emotional Labor, Identity

## **Introduction**

The expansion of social media has transformed how young women construct and express their identities, in totality constructing and re-constructing what “empowerment” means to them. Empowerment has initially been about autonomy, resources, and decision-making power but now digital platforms have increasingly shaped the meaning of empowerment through visibility, algorithms, and cultural narratives. But such digital platforms also promote particular ideas and ideals of empowerment like productivity, independence, and self-improvement which is publicly performed. So, such platforms might also lead to constant comparison and evaluation leading to emotional and psychological pressure.

## **Empowerment, Algorithm, and Digital Platforms**

Feminism is power, movement, and an ideology, standing in opposition to patriarchy and sexism. It is a word that stands for a belief for how everyone, regardless of their gender, should have equal rights and opportunities; specifically rooted in uplift and development of the society and to change the subordination of women. Building upon this, intersectional feminism means promising equality for everyone despite their gender identity, sexuality, race, class, or ethnicity. Feminism aids to empowerment and not subordination (Bala, 2019). Empowerment helps to create a social environment where one can make decisions and choices individually or collectively for social transformation that might have been previously restricted (Kabeer, 2019). It strengthens the ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power, and experience (Hashemi & Riley, 1996).

With the growing use of social media, feminism has taken a digital form. Digital feminism has proven to a huge force to bring women empowerment. Now while social media promotes activism,

aids in feminist discourse, and help tackle gender inequality, they can also influence women negatively. Digital platforms do bring forward social media campaigns like #MeToo movement or posts and content revolving around the fourth-wave feminism and empowerment. But digital gap, algorithmic bias, performative feminism ([Poornimadarshini, 2025](#)), internet abuse, online harassment, bullying, and sexual exploitation are other drawbacks of such digital and algorithmic understanding of empowerment and feminism, which further facilitates misogyny. Social media has undoubtedly transformed feminism activities, intersectionality, and support but appropriate presentation is needed online ([Jain, 2020](#); [Guangyu, 2025](#)).

This makes it vital to understand that gender is not a fixed identity and it is continuously produced through repeated social performances as per the Gender Performativity Theory ([Butler, 1990](#)). Digital platforms allow women to perform acts of confidence, independence, productivity, and self-expression. Social media platforms encourage these performances through likes, shares, and algorithmic amplification, thereby reinforcing particular scripts of what empowered femininity should look like. Perhaps, not to forget how the idea around confidence, competence, self-esteem and sexual agency derived from such popular feminist notions are re-routed in popular misogyny as a statement opposite to it, where they both co-constitute. So, while women might claim confidence in popular feminism, popular misogyny might consider them to be too aggressive ([Banet-Weiser, 2018](#)).

Beyond this, the contemporary digital and consumer-driven world, shapes the idea of an independent and empowered woman. It has become stylized, aestheticized, and a market-friendly image moulded by platforms, their algorithms, and marketing strategies. Thus, social media is no longer a place for self-exploration and creating an understanding of feminist discourse but rather it is a space that is now reducing empowerment to visuals, appeals, aesthetic and commercial standards. We cannot deny the visibility of independent women but this representation has become narrow and class-bound, often inclined towards privileged and culturally marketable versions, this selective exposure leads to anxiety and confusion among women striving to meet idealized standards and once we engage with certain kind of posts, the algorithm reinforces it, that can eventually influence women and their identities that they are constructing around such narratives ([Xu, 2025](#)).

### **Emotional Labour and Digital Culture**

Emotional labour refers to the process through which individuals regulate and display emotions in order to meet socially expected norms and roles ([Hochschild, 1983](#)). Social media platforms function as places of continuous presentation and individuals create their identities based on what the audience and platform expect ([Goffman, 1959](#); [Marwick & Boyd, 2011](#)). Within these environments, users often manage how they appear emotionally, present themselves as confident, resilient and composed in order to maintain a socially desirable identity. Digital feminism frames empowerment through highly visible performances of success, independence, and self-improvement. These narratives dominate the platforms and shape the cultural scripts through which women recognize and perform empowerment ([Banet-Weiser et al., 2020](#)).

Algorithmic systems shape which forms of identity gain attention and circulation online. Users often adapt their behaviour to align with algorithmic norms, producing content that is more likely to receive visibility and engagement ([Bucher, 2018](#); [Cotter, 2019](#)). Thus, empowerment in digital environments may involve identity management and emotional regulation where you continuously perform confidence, resilience, and success even when these emotions are not internally experienced. As a result, empowerment within digital cultures may not only represent autonomy and agency but may also involve forms of emotional labour shaped by platform norms, algorithmic visibility, and broader expectations of self-optimization.

### **Identity Formation and Digital Culture**

Women have a general desire for equality, empowerment, and the freedom to speak for themselves and make their choices and this exposure to feminism has led to self-identification ([Swirsky & Angelone, 2015](#)). Social media is becoming one of the major areas for self-presentation, identity exploration, challenging traditional gender roles, self-expression, and empowerment for women while they simultaneously conform to traditional social imperatives of femininity ([Akritidou et al., 2024](#)). These platforms provide women to showcase themselves, engage in communities and collective action and have access to peer affiliation and value internalization ([Kartika et al., 2025](#)), placing them centrally in a social, economic, and political discourse. But such algorithms amplify and suppress their voices and experiences. Thus, social media algorithms shape a woman's identity and empowerment understanding, including marginalized communities. This empowerment can come through by enhancing their voice, building networks, and challenging societal norms through platforms. Economic empowerment is getting highly prevalent and women entrepreneurs can

present their products and services to customers. In the end, women get psychological empowerment, build their self-esteem and groom their identity, along with that they gain financial independence ([Zhang, 2025](#)).

However, algorithm-driven mechanisms simultaneously limit this empowerment through selective visibility and consumer trust biases that disproportionately affect women who do not fit traditional categories. Echo chambers and curated feeds prioritize engagement over diversity, while gender-biased content moderation subject women to stricter boundaries and restricts their self-expression. While self-presentation practices like idealized portrayals and fictitious identities contribute to identity exploration yet inauthentic self-presentation is associated with lower self-concept clarity ([Greenhow & Robelia, 2009](#); [Yang et al., 2017](#)). These structures incline towards narrow beauty standards, idealized identities, aesthetic, trend-aligned, and commercially appealing representations of femininity while marginalizing diverse or critical notions. Thus, women may feel appearance comparison, pressured to perform idealized identities, leading to self-objectification, reduced authenticity, anxiety, depression, body dissatisfaction, inadequacy and diminished psychological well-being. This hampers the authentic empowerment in digital spaces underlining how the quality of social media engagement matters more than time spent online ([Riquelme et al., 2018](#); [Avci et al., 2024](#); [Zhang, 2025](#)).

This is supported by the Self-Presentation Theory by [Goffman \(1959\)](#) who said that individuals carefully construct how they appear to others in order to maintain a desired identity. In digital environments, this process is more visible when women choose to construct a desirable image as social media is the stage to appear empowered and independent.

### **Social Comparison and Psychological Impact of Social Media**

People often compare and evaluate their qualities like appearance or body weight with their peers. But this comparison can be upward, where individuals look forward to more successful peers for motivation or downward, where they compare themselves to those they see as less successful to feel better about their own situation or boost their own self-esteem, this is called the Social Comparison Theory ([Festinger, 1954](#)).

Social comparison is a by-product of consuming content on social media. Downward comparison significantly increases self-esteem and body-esteem and neutral comparison produces no change, while upward comparison significantly decreased body-esteem but did not significantly affect self-

esteem (Taylor & Armes, 2024). Anxiety, depression, and body dissatisfaction is common among frequent users of social media. Passive social media use affects our well-being negatively too, individuals only share socially desirable information about them, which makes them present a higher self-esteem online, also called as positive self-esteem presentation (Verduyn et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2008).

Positivity biased representations of women and women social media influencers affect a woman's state of self-esteem through the same social comparison process. Viewing such images or narratives triggered upward social comparisons, which in turn predicted lower state self-esteem, but it can also make one feel inspired and motivated; this suggests that there is a complex influence of influencer content on self-evaluation which women view online (Rüther et al., 2023).

### **Research Gap**

Existing literature revolves around understanding digital empowerment primarily as a platform that helps in providing visibility and the aestheticized representations of empowerment in digital culture. While these studies bring forward to us how specific narratives of productivity, empowerment, and independence but there is a lack of studies that explain how these standards or content, driven by algorithm, makes a woman feel who is a part of the Indian socio-cultural context, where collectivistic culture is prevalent, along with gendered expectations, economic, and environmental constraints. It also helps to bring forward the narratives in non-western socio-cultural settings and how emotional labour is involved in sustaining these empowerment acts like managing comparison. In totality, a qualitative inquiry to understand how empowerment is psychologically experienced and negotiated within digitally transformed environments.

### **Research Problem**

The digital spaces today have made different narratives upon empowerment, productivity, independence, and associated constructs widely visible. But it still remains unclear whether these digitally accepted standards guide women towards feeling actually empowered and liberated or impose as another emotionally demanding expectation for women to fulfil. The research aims to understand how Generation Z women define empowerment within digital culture, and does performing such digitally mediated empowerment involved emotional labour, given the socio-

cultural and collectivistic culture of India.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore how Generation Z Indian women define empowerment in contemporary digital contexts.
2. To understand the influence of social media narratives on participant's understanding of empowerment.
3. To investigate how empowerment is performed or negotiated in everyday life, and if it slowly becomes a reason for emotional labour.
4. To understand how socio-cultural realities in India shape these experiences.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This research follows a qualitative research design through semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of subjective experiences, emotions, and meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018), particularly when examining how individuals perceive, interpret, and make sense of their realities and experiences they have had. Semi-structured interviews provided a balance between open-ended exploration and focused inquiry, allowing participants to share personal stories while ensuring that core research objectives were met (Clarke & Braun, 2013). The aim is to capture the lived experiences of women who construct and re-construct their understanding of empowerment within the digital environments. This design will help to tap in the subjective understanding of empowerment, how social media influences it, and how women emotionally navigate through them.

#### **Sample**

The sample consisted of 12 urban Generation Z Indian women aged 18 to 26 years old, who actively used social media platforms. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the focus of the research.

**Table 1**

Age Profile of the Participants

<b>Age of the Participant</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
19	2
20	3
21	2
22	3
23	1
25	1

### **Procedure**

Participants were reached out through social and academic networks, and they were explained the objectives of the research. After they gave their consent, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person and online, lasting approximately 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded with permission. Every step ensured confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. The interview explored how women defined empowerment, independence, influence of social media, experience of comparison or emotional and performative pressure, and responses to dominant narratives on social media and how they navigate through all of this within the Indian society. The interviews were transcribed to perform thematic analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using Thematic Analysis following the six-step framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) - Familiarization with the Data, Initial Coding, Searching for Themes, Reviewing Themes, Defining and Naming the Themes, and Writing the Report. This method is flexible and suitable for exploring patterns of meaning across different narratives. After being familiar with the data, interview recordings being transcribed and read multiple times to collect verbatims. Meaningful quotes related to empowerment, digital influence, emotional experiences, comparison, and cultural constraints were coded. Codes were grouped into broader categories to develop themes. These themes were recurrent and they were refined to ensure relevance to the study. Lastly, themes were connected to each other to link the psychological processes working together. Then these themes were written and used to infer upon emotional labour, digital comparison, identity construction, and empowerment.

### **Results**

**Table 2**

Thematic Analysis Table

Theme	Subthemes	Supporting Quotes
Empowerment as Economic Structural Autonomy	Financial independence as core empowerment	“When I am earning... I pay my own bills.” “I have to earn... help my family... my own money from hard work.”
	Exit power is derived through finances	“Women who are not empowered need to rely on men...that’s why they don’t leave toxic households.”
	Career as identity & strength	“If your career is strong, everything else improves.”
	External resources are necessary	“You need confidence but also resources like money.”
Internal Empowerment & Agency	Confidence & self-belief	“Confidence ho sakta hai power.” “I can take a stand for myself.”
	Emotional awareness	“Apne emotions ke saath in touch hoon.”
	Empowerment as choice	“The fact that I can make a choice is my idea of empowerment.”
Digital Construction of Empowerment	Empowerment as process	“I am not fully independent yet, but I am on the right path.”
	Hustle & productivity ideal	“Never settle... hustle hard culture... girl boss vibe.”
	Self-optimization practices	“I scheduled my day after I saw reels.” “Pomodoro... journaling... meditation.”
	Therapy & healing narratives	“Therapy will help you reach what you want.”

Theme	Subthemes	Supporting Quotes
	High-value woman scripts	“When I hear ‘you are a high-value woman,’ I internalize it.”
	Binary empowered image	“We imagine unmarried woman wearing blazer... boss lady.” “Homemaker seen as less empowered.”
Performance, Curation & Fragmented Digital Self	Selective self-presentation	“True self poori tarah nahi dikha paate.” “I think before posting certain sad quotes.”
	Hidden struggles	“Keeping your struggles to yourself feels safe.” “Nobody knows what is happening in my family.”
	Aesthetic pressure	“Komal Pandey ko dekhkar bahut zyada hota hai.”
	Indirect validation seeking	“Normal photo daal dete hain... support chahiye hota hai.”
	Comment control	“Limited rakhti hoon.”
Social Comparison & Internalized Pressure	Upward comparison	“It makes me wish if I were them.” “Sometimes about body... freedom... lifestyle.”
	Feeling not enough	“You feel that you are not doing enough.”
	Harsh self-criticism	“When I fail, I feel bad.”
	Internalization of girlboss standards	“Earlier if a girl was earning a lot, that was empowerment.”
Emotional Labour & Empowerment Fatigue	Tiredness from hustle culture	“We cannot physically and mentally sleep less and still hustle hard.”
	Exhaustion despite	“Sometimes even after resting, I still feel drained.”

Theme	Subthemes	Supporting Quotes
	rest	
	Guilt over inconsistency	“After taking a break, I feel demotivated.”
	Pressure to constantly evolve	“You have to constantly change.”
	Empowerment should not exhaust	“Something that doesn’t make them tired.”
Cultural & Relational Negotiation Empowerment	Family decision of inclusion	“She should also be involved in house decisions.”
	Collectivist cultural limits	“In Indian culture we live with parents. Independence is not so easy.”
	Conditional autonomy	“Change can happen only if parents give space.”
	Relational empowerment	“If you have support system... it helps.”
	Gendered emotional expectations	“Women are seen as sensitive, fragile.”
Ambivalent Role of social media	Empowering yet pressuring	“It empowers you as well as it pressurises you.”
	Motivational but unrealistic	“Social media is not reality.”
	Reduced comparison through digital withdrawal	“Since I stopped watching social media... comparison kam hua.”
	Platform for voice	“That voice came to me through social media.”

Theme	Subthemes	Supporting Quotes
	Algorithmic amplification	“If a girl says something controversial, that content will boom.”

### **Discussion and Interpretation**

The present research aimed to explore how young women understand and experience empowerment on digital platforms. The findings suggest that empowerment is constructed through a complex interaction of resources, internal agency, digital culture, and socio-cultural expectations.

#### **Empowerment as Economic and Structural Autonomy**

Participants associated empowerment with financial independent, careers strength, and access to external resources. Subthemes of financial independent, ability to exist situations through finances and career as identity reflected the believe the economic stability enables autonomy and protection from oppressive environments. Statements such as “When I am earning... I pay my own bills” and “Women who are not empowered need to rely on men... that’s why they don’t leave toxic households” highlight how economic agency provides the power to make life decisions.

Kabeer (1999) highlights that empowerment is seen as access to resources, agency and achievements. Economic resources enhance women's ability to negotiate power relations and exercise autonomy in both personal and social contexts. Participants emphasized that confidence without structural support is incomplete with statements like “*You need confidence but also resources like money.*” So, empowerment remains strongly rooted in material and structural conditions, suggesting that financial autonomy and independent continues to function as a core foundation for women to feel empowered.

#### **Internal Empowerment and Agency**

Empowerment was also seen as an internal psychological process involving confidence, emotional awareness, and the ability to make independent choices. Subthemes revolved around confidence, self-belief, emotional awareness, and seeing empowerment as a choice and gradual process. Statements such as “Confidence ho sakta hai power” and “The fact that I can make a choice is my idea of empowerment” indicate that empowerment is experienced as personal agency and self-efficacy. Participants also described empowerment as evolving over time, illustrated by reflections

like “Chhote chhote goals achieve karte ho toh empowered feel hota hai.”

Bandura (1997) gave the theory of self-efficacy which fits here and explain how individuals develop agency through experiences and belief in their ability to influence outcomes, where small achievements and emotional awareness led to feel empowered. So, empowerment is not just freedom, but also a personal sense of competence and control over one’s life.

### **Digital Construction of Empowerment**

Participants did report how social media significantly shaped their understanding of empowerment and how they interpret it. Subthemes included hustle and productivity ideals, self-optimisation practices, therapy and healing narratives, high-value women, and binary images of empowered femininity. This shows how digital platform create algorithmically amplified notions of empowerment and research suggest the social media algorithms prioritize aspirational and high-performing identities, shaping empowerment and its cultural understanding (Bucher, 2018). This makes empowerment associate with productivity, discipline, and personal optimisation. Participants frequently described exposure to narratives such as “Never settle... hustle hard culture... girl boss vibe” and “you should keep going.”

Participants also reported how they saw empowerment being represented online, these frames were dominated by stereotypes such as “Unmarried woman wearing blazer is considered empowered.” This indicates that digital spaces produce simplified and aestheticized versions of empowerment, reinforcing normative expectations about success and independence.

### **Performance, Curation, and Fragmented Digital Self**

Participants curated their empowered identities online where subthemes included selective self-presentation, hiding struggles, aesthetic pressure, indirect validation seeking, and control over audience interaction. They mentioned how they only made their selective versions appear online by saying “True self poori tarah nahi dikha paate” and “I think before posting certain sad quotes.” This suggests that struggles are often hidden to feel safe “Keeping your struggles to yourself feels safe.” This aligns with Goffman’s (1959) theory of self-presentation, where people put on different and planned identities in social interactions to impress each other. Thus, people curate identities in a way that they can be consistent and looked favourably.

Participants also described aesthetic pressures, particularly in relation to influencers, with statements such as “Pressure hai... aesthetic dikhna.” This suggests that digital femininity involves

maintaining an idealised visual identity, creating a distinction between authentic and performed self.

### **Social Comparison and Internalised Pressure**

Social comparison turned out to be a major psychological mechanism through which participants experienced empowerment. Subthemes included upward comparison, feeling inadequate, self-criticism and internalisation of the 'girlboss' standard. Participants reported comparing themselves to influencers and peers, expressed in reflections such as “It makes me wish if I were them” and “You feel that you are not doing enough.” Such comparisons often resulted in feelings of inadequacy and self-criticism.

This is in line with Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory according to which people judge their abilities and status through comparison with others. Social media platforms only increase this phenomenon by putting users in contact with very selective and quite high achieving people. Therefore, stories of empowerment which are supposed to motivate can also lead to an internalised sense of pressure to always be better and to succeed.

### **Emotional Labour and Empowerment Fatigue**

Participants described the emotional cost of maintaining empowerment ideals, reflected in subthemes such as exhaustion from hustle culture, persistent fatigue, guilt over inconsistency, and pressure to constantly evolve. Statements like “We cannot physically and mentally sleep less and still hustle hard” and “Sometimes even after resting, I still feel drained” illustrate the emotional burden associated with sustaining productivity narratives.

This is highlighted in emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) where we manage emotions to meet social expectations. Digital platforms require women to regulate how empowered and motivated they appear online. Participants also mentioned about guilt when they failed to maintain these standards, as reflected in “After taking a break, I feel demotivated.” This suggests that empowerment narratives may unintentionally create self-surveillance and emotional exhaustion.

### **Cultural and Relational Negotiation of Empowerment**

Empowerment was influenced by socio-cultural contexts, particularly within Indian collectivist family structures. Subthemes included family participation in decision making, conditional autonomy, importance of support systems, and gendered emotional expectations. Participants mentioned about negotiation with family members, in statements like “She should also be involved

in house decisions.” At the same time, autonomy was often constrained by cultural expectations, as seen in “In Indian culture we live with parents. Independence is not so easy.”

Triandis (1995) mentioned how collectivist cultures require decision-making by keeping a connection to the family structures and social harmony; explaining how empowerment becomes relational rather than individual.

### **Ambivalent Role of Social Media**

Participants described social media as both empowering and pressurising (Keles et al., 2020). Subthemes included motivational influence, unrealistic standards, digital withdrawal reducing comparison, and platforms enabling voice and expression. Some participants acknowledged the positive role of social media, and at the same time, they recognised its limitations, as reflected in “Social media is not reality.” Participants also noticed that stepping away from digital platforms reduced comparison “Since I stopped watching social media... comparison kam hua.”

These findings suggest that social media functions as a double-edged space that enables visibility and empowerment while simultaneously amplifying pressures through algorithmic visibility and social comparison.

### **Limitations**

The study involves women who are active social media users, this might exclude perspectives of women with minimal digital engagement. Relying on self-report measures like semi-structured interviews may bring social desirability. The findings bring us closer to depth but might limit generalizability since a qualitative design works with a smaller sample. The sample focuses on women from the urban context which means the experiences of rural women or those from marginalized sections of the society might differ. Lastly, the rapidly evolving nature of media, algorithm, digital platforms, and empowerment narratives may shift with time.

### **Future Implications**

The research can further explore through quantitative studies the relationship between engagement with digital empowerment narratives and psychological outcomes such as self-esteem, burnout, or emotional exhaustion or how different platforms and their algorithmic environments shape empowerment standards. Longitudinal research could help explore whether sustained exposure to such narratives influence identity development or well-being over time. Perhaps a comparative

cross-cultural study can examine how empowerment is negotiated differently across collectivistic and individualistic societies.

### Conclusion

The findings suggest that empowerment among Generation Z Indian women is shaped by socio-cultural realities and digitally mediated narratives of empowerment. While financial independence and internal agency remain central to empowerment, social media platforms have influenced the newer generations into reconstructing how empowerment is imagined, performed, and accepted. Digital environments amplify ideals of productivity, independence, and self-improvement, which can inspire agency but also create comparison and emotional pressure. But in the Indian context empowerment continues to be negotiated within the socio-cultural structures. Overall, the study highlights that in digitally transformed environments, empowerment is enabling, performative, and emotionally demanding.

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