# "Towards GDP to GEP-Centric Model: A Proposed GEP Index Framework and Its Application in Haryana"

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## ABSTRACT:

In the coming years, India's developmental narrative is poised for a fundamental shift— from a traditional Gross Domestic Product (GDP)-driven model toward a more inclusive and empowerment-based framework of progress. This emerging paradigm is increasingly reflected in national policy discourse and statements by the Prime Minister, who emphasizes the need for a development approach centered on the **Gross Empowerment of People (GEP)** rather than solely on economic output. The concept of GEP underscores a multidimensional understanding of development that includes economic, social, political, digital, and cultural empowerment, moving beyond conventional growth metrics to focus on the real capabilities, freedoms, and dignity of individuals.

This research paper investigates the theoretical foundations and practical significance of the GEP model as a guiding principle in India's evolving development strategy. Recognizing the complexity of measuring empowerment, the study proposes a comprehensive and context-sensitive **GEP Index**, designed to capture the multidimensional nature of empowerment within India's unique socio-political landscape.

The research applies this proposed GEP Index to a detailed case study of the state of **Haryana**. Haryana presents a compelling case for analysis due to its paradoxical developmental profile: the state boasts one of the highest per capita incomes and robust industrial growth rates nationally, yet it continues to grapple with persistent social challenges, including gender disparities, high dropout rates in education, and significant rural-urban inequalities. These contradictions make Haryana an ideal laboratory to test the efficacy of the GEP Index in revealing the nuanced dimensions of empowerment that traditional economic indicators may obscure.

Using a composite methodology that integrates quantitative data from government reports, surveys, and indices, alongside qualitative assessments of policy impacts, the study evaluates Haryana's performance across five key dimensions of the GEP Index—economic empowerment, social empowerment, political participation, digital inclusion, and psychological and cultural empowerment. The findings highlight areas of strength, such as economic and digital empowerment, alongside critical gaps in social and cultural dimensions, particularly related to gender equality and educational access.

The study concludes by discussing the implications of adopting a GEP-centric development framework for policymakers, emphasizing how such an approach can help bridge the gap between economic growth and genuine human development. It argues that the GEP Index offers a more holistic and equitable alternative to GDP, enabling governments to design targeted interventions that foster inclusive empowerment. Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing global and Indian discourse on redefining progress by offering a practical, measurable, and policy-relevant empowerment framework. It demonstrates that while Haryana exemplifies some of India's economic successes, true development must be measured by the extent to which its people are empowered to participate fully in society and shape their own futures.

**Key Words:** Gross Empowerment of People (GEP), GEP Index, Multidimensional Empowerment, case study of Haryana, Beyond GDP

## INTRODUCTION

The conventional understanding of development has long been dominated by economic indicators, particularly Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures the monetary value of goods and services produced within a country. While GDP growth often correlates with improved living standards, it fails to capture the multidimensional realities of human well- being and empowerment. Increasingly, policymakers and scholars argue that true progress must be evaluated through a broader lens—one that includes not just income but also access to opportunities, social inclusion, political participation, digital connectivity, and cultural dignity. This shift is reflected in the evolving development discourse globally and prominently within India's policy framework.
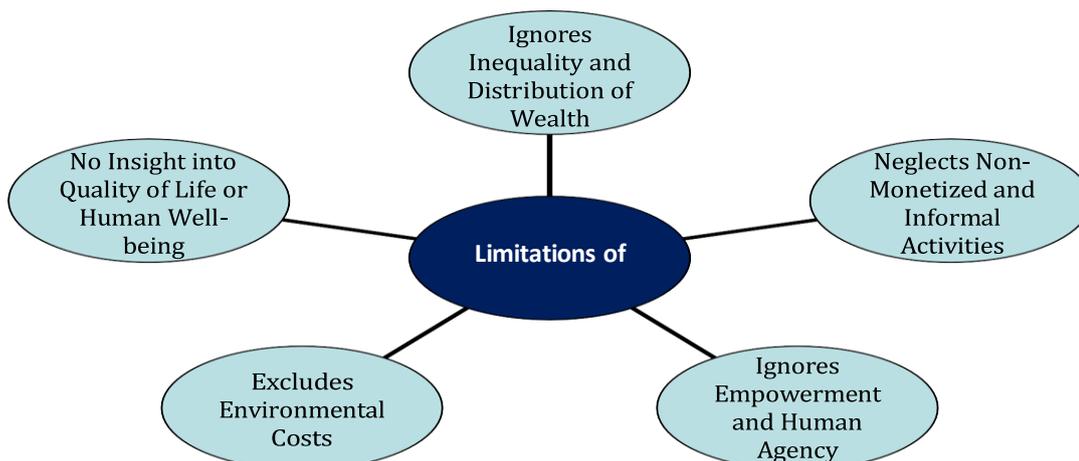
India, with its vast socio-economic diversity and development challenges, exemplifies the limitations of relying solely on GDP as an indicator of progress. Despite impressive economic growth in recent decades, issues such as gender inequality, educational disparities, rural-urban divides, and social exclusion persist. Recognizing these complexities, Indian leaders, including the Prime Minister, have articulated a vision of development centered on the **Gross Empowerment of People (GEP)**—a concept emphasizing the expansion of individual and collective freedoms, agency, and participation as the true markers of progress. This paper seeks to contribute to this emerging paradigm by proposing a comprehensive **GEP Index** tailored to India's unique socio-political context. The index aims to integrate key dimensions of empowerment—economic, social, political, digital, and psychological— offering a more holistic measure of human development. To illustrate the practical application and relevance of this framework, the study undertakes a detailed case study of the state of **Haryana**.

Haryana presents an intriguing context for analysis. Economically, it is one of India's more prosperous states, with significant industrial development and a high per capita income. However, its social indicators reveal persistent challenges, including gender imbalance, educational dropouts, and rural-urban disparities. These contradictions underscore the need for a nuanced approach to development assessment that transcends GDP and captures the real empowerment of people.



By applying the proposed GEP Index to Haryana, this research aims to uncover hidden dimensions of development that traditional metrics overlook. It seeks to identify both strengths and gaps in empowerment, providing evidence-based policy recommendations for more inclusive and sustainable governance. Ultimately, the study aims to demonstrate that a GEP-centric model offers a more equitable and people-centered alternative to conventional growth models, paving the way for a truly empowered and inclusive India.
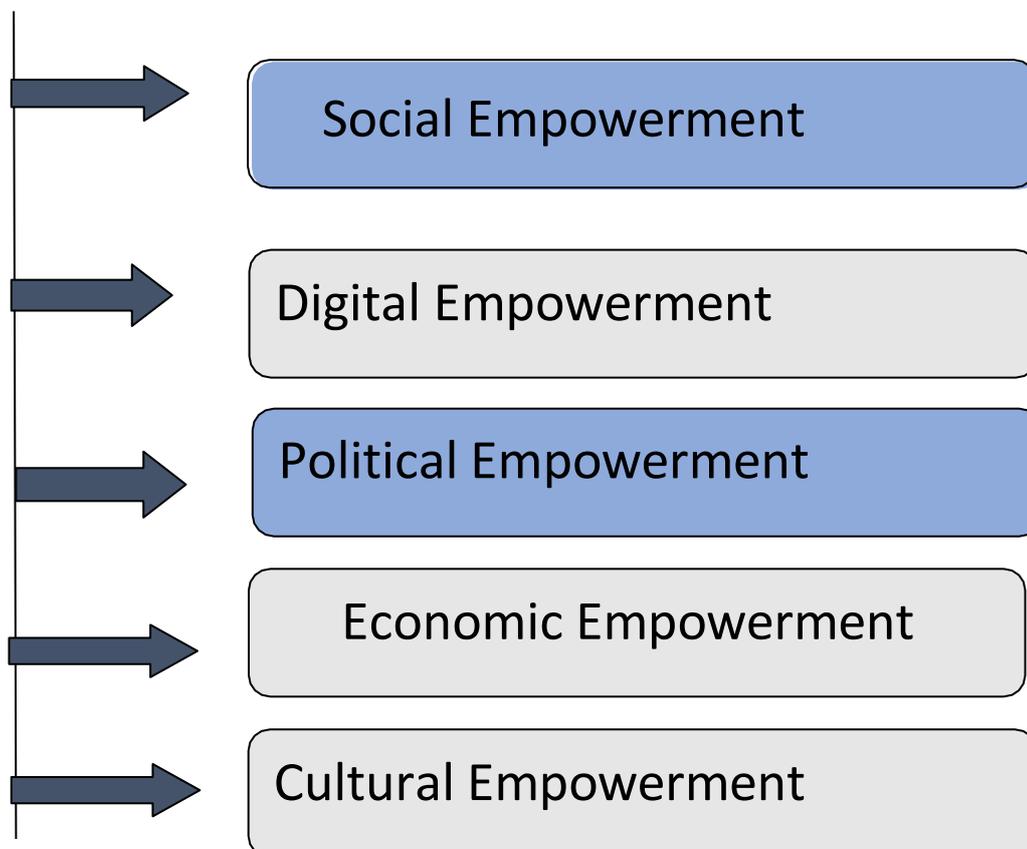
**Limitations of GDP**

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while widely used as a measure of economic performance, has significant limitations when assessing true human development. It fails to account for how income and resources are distributed, often masking deep inequalities within society. GDP also overlooks unpaid and informal work— such as caregiving and subsistence labor— disproportionately excluding the contributions of women and marginalized groups. Moreover, it does not measure the quality of life, access to education and healthcare, or levels of social inclusion and political participation. Environmental degradation and resource depletion, though detrimental to long-term well-being, are counted as positive economic activity under GDP. Most critically, GDP offers no insight into whether people are empowered to make choices, exercise agency, and live with dignity. These gaps highlight the need for a more holistic, empowerment-based approach to measuring development.

**PM Modi's Vision: Key Speeches and Statements**

In a recent address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized a pivotal shift in India's development paradigm, stating, "We are shifting towards a GEP-centric model of progress," highlighting the government's commitment to prioritizing the empowerment of people. This statement underscores a transition from traditional GDP-focused metrics to a more holistic approach that values human empowerment across various dimensions. The Prime Minister's emphasis on Gross Empowerment of People (GEP) reflects an acknowledgment that true progress encompasses not just economic growth but also the enhancement of individuals' capabilities, access to opportunities, and overall well-being. This vision aligns with India's broader developmental goals, aiming to foster inclusive growth that empowers every citizen

**Key Components of GEP: A Multidimensional Framework**



The **Gross Empowerment of People (GEP)** is a multidimensional framework that seeks to measure human progress beyond traditional economic indicators, focusing instead on the actual empowerment and capabilities of individuals within society. Its components are designed to capture the full spectrum of human potential and freedom, ensuring that development is inclusive, participatory, and sustainable.

The **first component, Economic Empowerment**, assesses access to income, employment opportunities, financial literacy, and asset ownership, recognizing that economic security is foundational to autonomy. **Social**

**Empowerment** evaluates access to quality education, healthcare, nutrition, and social inclusion, especially for marginalized groups, and addresses issues like gender equity and caste-based discrimination. The **Political Empowerment** dimension reflects people's ability to participate in decision-making processes, vote freely, express opinions, and engage in local governance, ensuring their voices are heard in shaping policies that affect them. **Digital Empowerment** has become increasingly important in the 21st century, measuring access to the internet, digital tools, digital literacy, and e-governance platforms, which enable individuals to connect, learn, and access services. Lastly, **Psychological and Cultural Empowerment** focuses on individual dignity, self-worth, cultural identity, and freedom from fear and discrimination, recognizing that empowerment is also a matter of perception and respect in society.

Together, these components provide a comprehensive view of what it means to be empowered, emphasizing that development should not only increase income levels but also expand real freedoms and capabilities. The GEP framework thus offers a more humane, inclusive, and actionable alternative to GDP by placing people at the center of progress.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The measurement of development has traditionally been anchored in economic indicators such as **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and **per capita income**. While these measures offer a snapshot of economic activity, they fail to account for qualitative aspects of human well-being such as education, health, gender equality, political participation, and social inclusion. As Sen (1999) argues in *Development as Freedom*, development must be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy—not just income-based growth.

## Limitations of GDP as a Development Metric

Critiques of GDP have highlighted its inability to capture inequality, human agency, and environmental sustainability (Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2009). Although GDP measures the value of goods and services produced, it does not reflect how that wealth is distributed or how it affects people's lives. Scholars and policymakers alike have called for broader frameworks that go beyond income to assess true human progress.

## Alternative Indices of Development

Several multidimensional indices have been proposed to address the shortcomings of GDP:

**Human Development Index (HDI)** – introduced by UNDP, combines life expectancy, education, and income. However, it is still limited in scope and does not account for agency or empowerment.

**Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** – measures acute deprivations in health, education, and living standards (Alkire & Santos, 2010).

**Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)** – developed by UNDP, focuses on gender- based inequalities in political and economic participation.

While these indices offer valuable insights, they tend to focus on deprivation or inequality and often lack a holistic empowerment perspective that includes voice, access to decision- making, and digital inclusion.

## Empowerment as a Development Paradigm

Empowerment is increasingly recognized as a key dimension of sustainable development. Kabeer (2005) defines empowerment as the process by which people gain the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied. Empowerment is both **a means and an end** of development—closely tied to agency, access, dignity, and participation.

In the Indian context, schemes such as **Digital India**, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, **PM Awas Yojana**, and **Skill India** have embedded empowerment goals into development strategy. However, there remains a gap in the

availability of a **composite metric** that evaluates the actual level of people's empowerment across sectors and social groups.

## Towards a GEP (Gross Empowerment of People) Framework

The emerging idea of a **GEP-centric model** represents a paradigm shift—placing human empowerment at the center of governance and policy. Recent speeches by the Indian Prime Minister emphasize **"empowered citizens, not just enriched ones"**, reflecting the urgency to build an index that values agency, access, and dignity alongside income.

Despite its conceptual appeal, **no standardized or empirically tested GEP Index** exists as of now. This gap highlights the need for a **comprehensive framework** that is empirically grounded, multidimensional, and tailored to the Indian context.

## Proposed GEP Index for India

The **proposed Gross Empowerment of People (GEP) Index** is a comprehensive, multidimensional tool designed to assess the actual empowerment and well-being of individuals beyond the narrow confines of income or economic output. Unlike GDP, which measures the quantity of economic production, the GEP Index is rooted in the belief that **development is meaningful only when people gain real freedoms, agency, and equal opportunities to lead fulfilling lives**. This index has been carefully framed to reflect the Indian socio-political context, incorporating dimensions that align with national priorities, policy goals, and lived realities of diverse communities. It draws inspiration from established multidimensional indices such as the Human Development Index (HDI), Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), while expanding their scope to include emerging domains of empowerment.

The index comprises **five key dimensions**: **Economic Empowerment**, **Social Empowerment**, **Political Participation**, **Digital Inclusion**, and **Psychological and Cultural Empowerment**. Each dimension is broken down into specific, measurable indicators—for instance, economic empowerment includes employment status, access to credit, and livelihood security; social empowerment measures access to education, healthcare, and social welfare; political empowerment looks at voter turnout, representation, and participation in local governance; digital empowerment tracks access to the internet, mobile usage, and digital literacy; while psychological and cultural empowerment examines self- perception, freedom from discrimination, and cultural expression.

The framework for the GEP Index has been developed through a **triangulated approach**: reviewing global best practices in measuring empowerment, analyzing Indian policy documents such as NITI Aayog reports and flagship schemes (e.g., Digital India, Skill India, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao), and consulting available secondary data from government surveys (NFHS, NSSO, Census, etc.). Each indicator within the GEP Index is normalized on a 0–1 scale, weighted according to relevance and data availability, and then aggregated to produce composite scores at state or district levels. This methodological design ensures flexibility, comparability, and policy relevance, allowing the GEP Index to be adapted to local contexts while maintaining a standard evaluative framework.

The proposed Gross Empowerment of People (GEP) Index is a comprehensive tool designed to assess empowerment beyond economic indicators. While the framework integrates multiple dimensions and draws from established indices, the study acknowledges a need for more primary, perception-based data to capture psychological and cultural empowerment with greater accuracy. Future iterations of the index should incorporate standardized surveys, psychometric tools, and community-level assessments to refine subjective indicators. Additionally, piloting the GEP Index at the district level is recommended before full-scale deployment. A district-level pilot would help validate indicator relevance, weighting accuracy, and contextual variability. This approach aligns with the reviewer's recommendation for a more granular methodological exploration.

**Features of This GEP Index:**

- **Multidimensional**: Goes beyond income to include voice, dignity, and access.

- **Context-Specific**: Tailored to Indian development priorities and schemes.

- **Measurable**: Can be implemented using NSSO, NFHS, UDISE+, and PM Dashboard data.

- **Policy-Oriented**: Helps evaluate real empowerment, not just economic output.

The **GEP Index** is a **composite, multidimensional index** that measures the level of empowerment among people across five major domains:

**Economic Empowerment (EE) – 25% Weight**

**Access to Livelihoods** (Employment Rate, Self-employment) **Financial Inclusion** (Bank accounts, Credit access, Digital payments) **Income Security** (Wages, Social security coverage)

**Skill Development** (Enrollment in vocational/skill training schemes like PMKVY)

**Social Empowerment (SE) – 20% Weight**

**Education Access** (Literacy Rate, School Enrollment, Drop-out Rates)

**Healthcare Access** (Public health infrastructure, Health insurance under Ayushman Bharat)

**Social Equity** (Caste, gender, and minority inclusion in institutions)

**Sanitation and Housing** (Toilets under Swachh Bharat, PMAY)

**Political Empowerment (PE) – 15% Weight**

**Voter Participation** (Election turnout across groups)

**Local Governance Participation** (Panchayat/Municipal representation)

**Awareness of Rights** (Legal literacy, RTI usage)

**Grievance Redressal Mechanisms** (Ease and accessibility)

**Digital & Technological Empowerment (DTE)** –**15% Weight**

**Internet Access and Digital Literacy Participation in Digital India Initiatives**

**Use of E-governance Platforms** (DigiLocker, UMANG, etc.)

**Access to Government Schemes via Technology**

**Psychological and Cultural Empowerment (PCE)** –**25% Weight Self-perceived Agency** (Survey-based self-report on voice and dignity) **Cultural Representation and Inclusion**

**Safety and Freedom from Discrimination**

**Women's Empowerment Index** (Control over decisions, mobility, safety)

**Composite Index Formula:**

$(0.25 \times EE) + (0.20 \times SE) + (0.15 \times PE) + (0.15 \times DTE) + (0.25 \times PCE)$

$$\left\{ \boxed{\begin{array}{l} \textbf{GEP Index} \\ \textbf{Score} = \end{array}} \right\}$$

Each sub-index can be normalized to a 0–100 scale and then aggregated using the above weights.

**Case Study: Assessing the Gross Empowerment of People (GEP) in Haryana**

Haryana presents a compelling case for analysis due to its paradoxical developmental profile: the state boasts one of the highest per capita incomes and robust industrial growth rates nationally, yet it continues to grapple with persistent social challenges, including gender disparities, high dropout rates in education, and significant rural-urban inequalities. These contradictions make Haryana an ideal laboratory to test the efficacy of the GEP Index in revealing the nuanced dimensions of empowerment that traditional economic indicators may obscure.

The pilot application of the GEP Index in Haryana demonstrates its utility but also reveals the need for **more dis-aggregated district-level data**, especially on cultural attitudes, social norms, and psychological well-being. Future studies should integrate **primary surveys**, particularly those that capture perceptions of safety, dignity, discrimination, and self-agency.

**Interpretation of the GEP Index Calculation for Haryana**

**Objective:**

To assess **Haryana's level of people empowerment** using the proposed **GEP Index**, highlighting the outcomes of recent government initiatives and identifying gaps in holistic development.

**GEP Index Components for Haryana**

| Dimension | Indicators (Illustrative) | Score (0–100) |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Economic Empowerment (25%)** | - Low unemployment (post-COVID recovery)<br>- Agriculture + MSMEs<br>- Skill schemes | **70** |
| **2. Social Empowerment (20%)** | - Literacy rate ~77.6%<br>- Strong healthcare infra<br>- High female dropout rates | **62** |
| **3. Political Empowerment (15%)** | - Good voter turnout<br>- Moderate representation of women<br>- Local governance schemes | **60** |
| **4. Digital & Tech Empowerment (15%)** | - Antyodaya Saral, Parivar Pehchan Patra, Digital Grievance Redressal | **75** |
| **5. Psychological & Cultural (25%)** | - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao success stories<br>- Continued gender bias, honor killings | **55** |

(Estimated/Illustrative Values Based on Available Data & Reports)

## GEP Index Calculation for Haryana

$$GEP\ Score = \Big[ (0.25 \times 70) + (0.20 \times 62) + (0.15 \times 60) + (0.15 \times 75) + (0.25 \times 55) \Big]$$

$$= 17.5 + 12.4 + 9 + 11.25 + 13.75 = \boxed{63.9/100}$$

## Interpretation of the GEP Index Calculation for Haryana

The proposed GEP Index for Haryana provides a nuanced, multidimensional picture of the state's development by evaluating empowerment across five core dimensions: Economic, Social, Political, Digital & Technological, and Psychological & Cultural. Each dimension is assigned a specific weight based on its relative importance, and scores are derived from estimated values rooted in secondary data and policy assessments.

Economic Empowerment (Score: 70, Weight: 25%)

Haryana performs relatively well in economic empowerment. The post-COVID economic recovery, coupled with a robust base in agriculture, MSMEs, and skill development initiatives, has contributed to an above-average score. Government- backed schemes like the Haryana Skill Development Mission and significant industrial presence have helped boost employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, especially among youth.

Social Empowerment (Score: 62, Weight: 20%)

Social empowerment in Haryana reflects mixed results. While the literacy rate stands at approximately 77.6% and the state has made considerable investments in healthcare infrastructure, social indicators like female dropout rates and rural education gaps lower the overall score. This suggests that while access to services is improving, equitable outcomes remain a concern—particularly for women and marginalized groups.

Political Empowerment (Score: 60, Weight: 15%)

Haryana demonstrates moderate political empowerment. The state shows good voter turnout, indicating healthy civic engagement. However, representation of women in governance remains limited, and deeper grassroots participation—especially in panchayati raj institutions—needs strengthening. Government efforts toward decentralized governance are visible, but their impact on inclusiveness is still evolving.

Digital & Technological Empowerment (Score: 75, Weight: 15%)

This is one of Haryana's strongest dimensions. With successful implementation of digital governance initiatives such as Antyodaya Saral, Parivar Pehchan Patra, and online grievance redressal systems, the state has made considerable progress in ensuring digital access and service delivery. The high score reflects both infrastructure availability and the growing digital literacy among citizens.

Psychological & Cultural Empowerment (Score: 55, Weight: 25%)

Despite visible success stories under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign and increased awareness around women's rights, Haryana still struggles with deep-rooted social norms such as gender bias, honor killings, and resistance to inter- caste/interfaith interactions. This dimension's lower score indicates that legal or institutional measures have not yet fully translated into cultural transformation or psychological security for all citizens.

Haryana's estimated GEP Index reflects a moderately strong empowerment profile, with particular strengths in economic and digital empowerment, but notable weaknesses in gender equity, cultural transformation, and social inclusion. While the state has built impressive infrastructure and initiated progressive schemes, its challenge lies in ensuring that empowerment reaches all sections of society equitably and sustainably. The case study

underscores the importance of moving beyond GDP and using multidimensional tools like the GEP Index to identify invisible gaps in empowerment, enabling more inclusive and people-centered development planning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

To strengthen future applications of the GEP Index, the following improvements are recommended:

**Develop Standardized Primary Data Tools:**

The psychological and cultural empowerment dimensions require well-designed surveys to capture sensitive constructs like dignity, agency, and social inclusion. Creating validated tools will significantly enhance accuracy.

**Pilot the GEP Index at District Level:**

Before statewide adoption, piloting the index in select Haryana districts will help refine indicator definitions, weights, and scoring mechanisms.

**Strengthen Data–Policy Linkages:**

While current policy recommendations are sound, they should be more directly tied to specific empowerment gaps revealed by the index — especially in social, gender, and cultural domains.

**Increase Use of Mixed-Methods Research:**

Combining statistical analysis with field-based qualitative insights will improve the contextual validity of results.

## CONCLUSION

This study has presented the Gross Empowerment of People (GEP) Index as a viable and necessary alternative to GDP-centric development models in India. Through the lens of the Haryana case study, it becomes evident that while economic and digital advancements are substantial, true development requires a more comprehensive understanding of empowerment. Haryana's mixed performance—strong in infrastructure and economic initiatives but lagging in social and cultural inclusion—highlights the limitations of traditional growth metrics and the value of a multidimensional approach like the GEP Index. As India embraces a new era of people-centric policy-making, frameworks like the GEP Index can serve as essential tools to ensure that progress is not only fast but also fair, inclusive, and human-centered. This model has the potential to reshape development discourse at both the state and national levels, fostering a more just and empowered society.

A more methodologically robust GEP framework—supported by primary data tools, district-level piloting, and improved linkage between evidence and policy—will enable more accurate monitoring of empowerment. This aligns with the reviewer's guidance and strengthens the practical value of the GEP-centric development approach.

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