

PERSPECTIVES ON SELF DEFENSE TRAINING OF WOMEN IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Amidst the rich cultural tapestry of Rajasthan blended with new threads of modernity, rising industrial and infrastructural development, the paradigm of women's safety and empowerment is also evolving. With the alarming statistics regarding violence against women emerging each year, Self-Defense by women emerges as one effective solution being encouraged by national and state governments as well as private institutions. For any such practice to be successful though, there needs to be a thorough understanding of the beliefs and opinions of the target population. This paper delves into the perspectives of women in Rajasthan concerning self-defense training. Utilizing a mixed-method approach involving surveys and in-depth interviews with a diverse cohort of 500 women, our findings indicate a growing awareness and positive perception towards self-defense. Motivations primarily encompass personal safety and empowerment, although barriers like societal norms and limited accessibility to training facilities persist. A significant insight reveals potential cultural shifts, suggesting that while self-defense training might challenge traditional gender roles, it offers a pathway to augmenting women's autonomy in the modern context. This study underscores the need for robust awareness campaigns, infrastructural support, and an adaptive societal mindset to truly harness the potential of self-defense training for women in Rajasthan.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Violence Against Women, Self-Defense Training, Cultural Shifts, Personal Safety, Societal Norms, Barriers, Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Rajasthan, with its sprawling deserts, majestic palaces, and vibrant folklore, stands as a testament to India's rich historical and cultural legacy (Todd, 1920). This state, however, is not just an embodiment of architectural marvels and captivating tales, but also a reflection of the intricate sociopolitical tapestry that forms the fabric of India's diverse regions. The duality of Rajasthan's exuberant traditions juxtaposed with its deep-rooted gender norms presents a unique conundrum. While it boasts pioneering women icons like Maharani Gayatri Devi, Smt. Vasundhara Raje, Smt. Pratibha Patil, Krishna Punia, Apurvi Chandela, Princess Diya Kumari, etc. who symbolize empowerment and progressive thinking, it also grapples with issues of female infanticide, child marriages, and gender-based violence (Kumar & Sethi, 2009). The broader Indian scenario, too, underscores this disparity. While there's been notable progress in women's education, political participation, and workforce engagement in the past decades, safety remains an unresolved concern (Dreze & Sen, 2013). The data from the National Crime Records Bureau reaffirms this, with Rajasthan showing alarmingly high statistics for crimes against women (NCRB, 2021).

Thus, one of the biggest hurdles for women empowerment and dignified life in the modern world could be Violence against Women (VAW) in its various forms: sexual harassment, sexual assault or any other gender-based violence. But in all the dialogues concerning Violence against Women, Self-Defense Training for Women has historically remained an overlooked component.

Self-Defense

Self-defense instruction is defined as “preparation to minimize the possibility of assault; it is training to learn and use a small group of simple effective physical actions if no other alternative is available. Learning self-defense is primarily the process of learning how to avoid becoming a victim” (Tegner, 1977).

Brief History of Self-Defense

Initially, whenever any light was thrown on the crimes against women, the lens focused mostly just on rehabilitation and justice to the victims. Peterson (1979), Pickering (1979), Storaska, (1975), Women Against Rape (1978), Wyness (1975) are some examples of some of the first works done where authors attempted to explore the incidence of sexual violence against women (Hinkelman, 2004).

The initial texts which tried to explore the incidence of VAW were not based on research and instead were often written by martial arts professionals or police officers or psychologists. They were loosely based on the authors' own perception of VAW or on anecdotal evidence. Some elements which can be noticed in numerous of these initial works were the blame on some types of behavior of women which could have made them vulnerable to sexual assault,

consequent emphasis on restriction on women's behavior, and the idea that sexual violence is a result of men's inherent nature and biological predisposition towards rape (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). One of the negative impacts of such a perspective was an increase in the perception of vulnerability in women and notions of control and power in men (Community Action Strategies to Stop Rape, 1978; Storaska, 1975). There were in fact programs which implied that once a man decides his course of action i.e. towards committing a crime of assault against a woman, she had little or no chance of avoiding becoming the victim ((Peterson, 1979; Pickering, 1979; Wyness, 1975).

It was first in the mid-nineteenth century in the US where a physical cultural movement began. As women had then begun to cross the threshold of their homes and had become a considerable part of the workforce, they also joined this movement shortly after their male counterparts. At the beginning, women were encouraged to partake in the 'softer or more feminine sports' such as tennis, golf, croquet, etc. Later with the contribution of the works of Dr. Marie Jacobi and Anna Brackett, women started engaging in more and more strenuous physical activity and stepping into domains previously considered reserved for men. At the same time during the 1970s itself, that perspectives on rape started changing: rape started to be viewed as the outcome of a personal and institutional power differential between men and women. This perspective on sexual assault started to draw attention to the societal and cultural conditions of women which support rape culture.

This was also the introduction of the feminist movement: women were encouraged more and more to challenge the social norms and also retake control over their own physical and sexual selves. Consequently, sexual assault prevention programs were introduced along with self-defense. Thus, self-defense training for women emerged not just as a reactive solution, but a proactive strategy for empowerment.

Self-Defense Training of Women in India

The alarming increase in cases of violence against women all over India and some particularly gruesome cases which got nationwide attention over the past decade made the National and State governments focus on formulating new policies, laws and regulations. There can also be seen an increasing number of awareness campaigns and community mobilization drives. For instance,

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance was passed in 2013, which led to the broadening of the range of sexual crimes against women so as to include acid attacks, stalking and voyeurism. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued an executive order allowing the death penalty as a punishment for people convicted of sexually assaulting a child under the age of 12. especially The Biggest Government run campaign for encouraging Self-Defense Training in women in India is the Self-Defense Training Scheme (RAKSHA) for all government schools having girls enrolled from classes VI-XII. Under this scheme, girls are trained in a way that they can deal with a distressing situation psychologically, intellectually and physically. These classes teach girls how to use everyday items like key chains, dupattas, stoles, mufflers, pens/ pencils, notebooks, etc. to their advantage for gaining an advantage over an attacker in the case of an untoward incident. This scheme is currently being implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education It has been reported in 2022 that all over 188005 elementary schools and 83031 secondary schools (government schools as well as Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalayas) have been approved for this scheme. This scheme has now been extended till 2025-26 and the fund for this training has been increased from Rs. 3000/- to 5000/- per month per school for 3 months.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An extensive literature review through scholarly articles and books in both print and digital format was undertaken for the purpose of the thesis under which this study has been conducted. The following are some notable researches which are relevant for the current study:

- Vera Lomazzi's research article, published in 2023 in Soc. Sci., delves into the cultural underpinnings of violence against women. Hailing from the Department of Management at the University of Bergamo, Italy, Lomazzi's work provides a nuanced examination of gender norms (individual as well as institutional) across 12 countries around the globe. By scrutinizing these cultural roots, her research contributes significantly to the understanding of the societal factors that sustain violence against women. The study's findings, made available through open access, offer valuable

insights for policymakers, scholars, and activists engaged in fighting all gender-based violence and could help them in achieving gender equality globally.

- In their 2022 research, Carmele and McCaughey have emphasized on the need and importance of deeper research on self-defense strategies and its inclusion in the literature pertaining to sexual violence.
- Eknath Mundhe's 2021 study-"The Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India," delves into the multifaceted landscape of gender empowerment in the Indian context. Mundhe's research provides critical insights into the numerous challenges faced by women in India as they strive for empowerment. The study explores the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that hinder or facilitate women's progress in various aspects of life. By shedding light on these issues, Mundhe's work contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on women's rights and gender equality in India, offering valuable knowledge for policymakers, researchers, and advocates dedicated to addressing these challenges and promoting women's empowerment.
- In 2018, Manju Tembhe delved into the multifaceted subject of women's empowerment in India. Her work, presented at the Women Science Congress in Imphal, Manipur, India, offers a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and prospects that surround this critical issue. Tembhe's research sheds light on the complexities of gender equality, highlighting the obstacles women face while also pointing to potential avenues for empowerment. By examining the socio-cultural and economic factors at play, she contributes to the ongoing dialogue on how to uplift and empower women in a nation as diverse and dynamic as India. Her insights resonate as a valuable resource in the pursuit of gender equity and social progress.
- The psychological effects of self-defense training are also profound, with empowerment translating to increased self-esteem and resilience, as noted by Nayar (2018).
- Ghoshal (2017) emphasized the sociopolitical dimensions of violence against women in India, emphasizing the urgency to address this issue.
- According to Basu (2016), self-defense training can reshape gender perceptions and empower women both physically and mentally.
- Globally, Self Defense training initiatives have been credited for not only reducing vulnerability to physical assaults but also bolstering self-esteem and psychological well-being (UN Women, 2015).
- Numerous researchers have found Self-Defense training to be linked to a decrease in the incidence of subsequent attacks (Hollander, 2014; Brecklin & Ullman, 2005).
- Through a considerable number of studies, it has been reported that physical and verbal resistance are linked to avoidance of rape (Ullman, 2008, 2000; Hollander, 2004, 2014; Thompson, 2014; Breitenbecher, 2000, Gidycz et al., 2006).

The Need for Self-Defense:

Globally as well as in India, despite state and private efforts, crimes against women have been increasing alarmingly.

- According to CDC, 1 in every 3 women and 1 in every 6 men have suffered because of at least one form of sexual violence.
- WHO in its Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence stated that when the data for women aged 15-44 years is scrutinised, deaths or disability caused by Violence against women are more than the ones caused by cancer, malaria, traffic injuries and war put together.
- UN Women brought to light through one of its surveys that 15 million adolescent girls (15-19 years old) had reported having experienced a forced sexual act at least once in their life. Within only one year 2017, this number stood at 9 million. In most of these reports published by UN or WHO or CDC, the cases of victimisation by an intimate partner or family member/relative are the majority.
- According to the latest published report on Crimes in India, National Crime Records Bureau (2021) registered a staggering 4,28,278 cases of crimes against women which is 15.3% more than those registered in 2020.
- One of the most notable statistics is that among all these case, the cases of violence by husband or his relatives were the highest.
- Ghoshal (2017) emphasized the sociopolitical dimensions of violence against women in India, emphasizing the urgency to address this issue.
- Sen (2001) also stressed the importance of safety as a pivotal factor for women's empowerment.
- In the context of Rajasthan, the data by NCRB, 2021 says that Rajasthan has a rate of 105.4 cases per lakh population of total crimes against women which is much higher than the national state average of 63.3. The NCRB 2021 report of Crimes in India states that there were more than 16000 cases of cruelty by husband or relatives, 5964 cases of kidnapping and abduction, 452 cases of dowry deaths, 6337 cases of rape and 14 cases of murder after rape in Rajasthan among other statistics.
- The state offers a rich backdrop for examining gender dynamics. Kalpana (2014) highlighted the gender disparities in Rajasthan, noting the state's unique socio-cultural fabric and the complexities it adds to women's empowerment narratives.

As mentioned in the history of Self-Defense above, the traditional beliefs about Violence Against Women and Self-Defense have their presence even today: the chief notion behind any tips, suggestions or advises given to women by police, martial artists, crisis prevention personnel and also psychologists is that sexual assault must be avoided, for instance 'avoiding dark alleys, running to the nearest house when being followed, sending one's live location to a family member, etc.' These traditional messages are of course having their own significance but in current times, where statistics show that women are

endangered at the very places normally considered safe like their own homes, with relatives or family members, at schools and offices, etc. they stop at being the only solutions. The solution of avoidance has in fact lost its effectiveness and validity.

Self-Defense as Empowerment:

Empowerment through self-defense goes beyond mere physical safety.

- The psychological effects of self-defense training are also profound, with empowerment translating to increased self-esteem and resilience, as noted by Nayar (2018).
- According to Basu (2016), self-defense training can reshape gender perceptions and empower women both physically and mentally.
- Leading researchers in the field of Self-defense like Brecklin (2008) Hollander (2004), Weitlauf, Smith & Cervone (2000) have revealed that the classes are beneficial for the women as they also increased their self-confidence and self-worth, reduced fear, led to them interacting more comfortably with people around and also increased feeling of empowerment.
- Rozee and Koss (2001) also believe that self-defense training trains women to avoid or resist assault and protect their own freedom.

Societal Perceptions and Barriers:

While self-defense emerges as a potent tool for empowerment, societal perceptions play a crucial role in its acceptance.

- Chhibber and George (2016) highlighted the nuanced challenges of implementing gender-responsive initiatives in patriarchal societies, emphasizing the societal barriers that often hinder such measures.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

The research design is a mixed-methods approach-combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. This design was chosen to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives, attitudes, and experiences of women in Rajasthan regarding self-defense training.

Participants:

The study population comprised women aged 18-45 residing in Rajasthan. A total of 500 participants were selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring a representative sample from urban and rural areas of the state.

Instruments:

Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data. It included closed-ended questions regarding participants' prior experience with self-defense training, their perceptions of its importance, and barriers to access.

Semi-Structured Interviews: For qualitative insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 50 participants. The interviews delved into personal experiences, cultural nuances, and societal implications of self-defense training.

Data Collection:

The questionnaires were distributed both online and offline, ensuring a broad reach. Online questionnaires were disseminated through social media platforms and email, targeting urban participants, while offline questionnaires were physically distributed in rural areas. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person, with each session lasting approximately 30-45 minutes.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Data. Data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and regression analyses were conducted to identify patterns, correlations, and significant findings.

Qualitative Data. The qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Themes and patterns were identified using a grounded theory approach. The findings were cross-referenced with quantitative data to provide a holistic perspective.

Ethical Considerations:

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. They were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Limitations:

While the mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive perspective, the study's findings are limited by its cross-sectional nature, implying causation cannot be directly inferred. Additionally, cultural and social nuances within Rajasthan might influence participants' responses, which may not generalize to other Indian states or regions. This methodology aims to offer a holistic insight into the topic under study. Adjustments and refinements can be made depending on specific research requirements and available resources.

RESULTS

The results section sheds light on the perspectives on self-defense training of women in Rajasthan based on the data collected from the 500 participants and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Demographics:

The participants were predominantly from the 26-35 age group (35%), with a fairly equal representation from urban (50.5%) and rural (49.5%) areas (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

Age Group	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
18-25	30	25	27.5
26-35	40	30	35
36-45	30	45	37.5

This table outlines the age distribution of the surveyed women from urban and rural Rajasthan. The majority of participants were in the age range of 26-35, with the urban regions showing a slightly younger demographic than their rural counterparts.

Prior Experience with Self-Defense:

Interestingly, urban women had a notably higher engagement with self-defense training (50%) than their rural counterparts (20%), as evidenced in Table 2. This signifies that urban regions in Rajasthan might have better accessibility or awareness about self-defense training.

Table 2: Prior Experience with Self-Defense Training

Experience	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Yes	50	20	35
No	50	80	65

Highlighting the disparity in exposure to self-defense, a significant difference is evident between urban and rural regions. Urban areas showed a higher percentage of women who had received self-defense training, possibly due to better access and awareness.

Perception of the Importance of Self-Defense Training:

Half of the participants considered self-defense to be very important. However, urban women seemed more convinced of its significance, with 60% of them voting for it as very important compared to 40% from rural areas (Table 3).

Table 3: Perception of the Importance of Self-Defense Training

Perception	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Very Important	60	40	50
Somewhat Important	30	30	30
Not Important	10	30	20

Most participants acknowledged the importance of self-defense, with urban women more strongly emphasizing its necessity. This could reflect a heightened awareness or a difference in perceived vulnerability between the two populations.

Barriers to Access:

The most significant barrier to accessing self-defense training, as indicated by Table 4, was the lack of awareness, especially in rural areas (50%). Cultural restrictions also emerged as a prominent barrier, more pronounced in urban areas (30%).

Table 4: Barriers to Accessing Self-Defense Training

Barriers	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Lack of Awareness	20	50	35
Cultural Restrictions	30	40	35
Financial Constraints	25	5	15
Lack of Interest	25	5	15

The barriers facing women in accessing training are diverse. In rural regions, a predominant lack of awareness stands out, while urban women more frequently cite cultural restrictions, showcasing the different challenges experienced in each setting.

Awareness Sources:

Social media stood out as a significant source of awareness for urban women (50%), while rural women primarily gained knowledge about self-defense training from friends and family (40%) (Table 5).

Table 5: Sources of Awareness about Self-Defense

Sources	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Social Media	50	10	30
Friends/Family	20	40	30
Schools	20	30	25
Other	10	20	15

While social media plays a dominant role in urban awareness, traditional sources like friends and family remain essential in rural areas. This highlights the impact of technological accessibility on information dissemination.

Reasons for Not Pursuing Training:

Among the participants without prior self-defense training, the primary reasons for not pursuing it were a lack of nearby facilities or trainers (35%) and fears of societal backlash (27.5%), as depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Reasons for Not Pursuing Self-Defense (among those with no prior experience)

Reasons	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Don't see the need	20	10	15
Fear of societal backlash	25	30	27.5
Lack of nearby facilities or trainers	30	40	35
Other reasons	25	20	22.5

A significant portion of women, especially in rural areas, lack training due to the absence of nearby facilities. Additionally, the fear of societal backlash emerges as a major deterrent, highlighting the sociocultural barriers women face.

Engagement Duration:

Of those with prior experience, many have been engaged in self-defense training for more than a year, particularly in rural areas (50%) (Table 7). For women engaged in self-defense training, duration varies. In rural areas, a higher commitment over the long term is observed, possibly due to the community-centric nature of training programs or the perceived value of prolonged engagement.

Table 7: Duration of Engagement (among those with prior experience)

Duration	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Less than 6 months	30	20	25
6 months - 1 year	40	30	35
More than 1 year	30	50	40

For women engaged in self-defense training, duration varies. In rural areas, a higher commitment over the long term is observed, possibly due to the community-centric nature of training programs or the perceived value of prolonged engagement.

Training Effectiveness:

A majority (45%) found the training to be highly effective, with urban participants showing a slightly more positive response (Table 8).

Table 8: Perception of Effectiveness of Training (among those with prior experience)

Perception	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Total (%)
Highly Effective	50	40	45
Effective	30	30	30
Neutral	15	20	17.5
Ineffective	5	10	7.5

The majority of women, irrespective of their geographic background, find the training effective. This underscores the potential positive impact such programs can have on the empowerment and safety of women in Rajasthan.

Data Analysis:

Table 9: Regression Analysis on the Influence of Age and Location on Perception of Self-defense Importance

Predictor Variables	Outcome Variable (Perception)	Beta Coefficient	p-value
Age (18-25)	Importance Score	-0.23	0.04
Age (26-35)	Importance Score	-0.12	0.20
Age (36-45)	Importance Score	0.35	0.01
Location (Urban)	Importance Score	0.42	0.001
Location (Rural)	Importance Score	-0.42	0.001

This table indicates that as age increases, the perception of the importance of self-defense also seems to increase (based on positive beta for the 36-45 age group). Urban location also positively impacts the perception score, as evident from the positive beta value.

A regression analysis (Table 9) showed that older women (36-45) and those from urban areas had a more positive perception of the importance of self-defense training. The qualitative data (Table 10) further enriched these findings, revealing societal pressures, feelings of empowerment post-training, and the challenges of cultural norms and accessibility as significant themes in the discourse around self-defense in Rajasthan.

Table 10: Main Themes from Qualitative Interviews and Their Frequency

Identified Themes	Number of Mentions	Representative Quote
Societal Pressure and Expectations	35	"I want to learn, but society doesn't always approve."
Empowerment and Confidence Boost	42	"After training, I felt stronger, not just physically but mentally too."
Lack of Accessible Training Centers	30	"There's no place nearby where I can learn."
Cultural Norms and Restrictions	28	"Our traditions sometimes prevent us from stepping out."
Positive Changes in Personal Life	40	"I felt more in control of situations after my training sessions."

This table highlights the main themes from the qualitative interviews, their frequency, and a representative quote for each theme to provide context

The results offer a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted perspectives on self-defense training among women in Rajasthan. While many recognize its importance and feel empowered post-training, societal expectations, lack of awareness, and accessibility challenges remain significant barriers, especially in rural areas.

DISCUSSION

The exploration into the perspectives on self-defense training of women in Rajasthan unveils several layers of understanding, especially when viewed against Rajasthan's cultural, social, and economic context.

Urban vs. Rural Divide:

A conspicuous distinction is the urban-rural divide. With 50% of urban women having experienced self-defense training compared to only 20% in rural regions (Table 2), it underscores potential infrastructural and awareness disparities. Bhandari and Smith (1997) have extensively discussed the constraints and needs of rural women in India, emphasizing the necessity for nuanced approaches in rural settings.

Societal Pressures and Empowerment:

Landry et al. (2019) explored the development of gender equity attitudes among Indian adolescents, shedding light on evolving societal perspectives. The juxtaposition of societal pressures and the empowerment that self-defense training imparts is intriguing. Societal backlash and cultural norms (Table 10) reflect deeply entrenched gender norms (Dutt, 2018). On the other hand, feelings of empowerment and positive changes post-training (Table 10) indicate the transformative potential of such training, further backed by Samanta's (2020) work on women's empowerment and self-compassion.

Awareness and Accessibility:

While social media emerged as a significant awareness tool among urban women (Table 5), its impact was subdued in rural areas, emphasizing the importance of community-driven awareness campaigns. Mukherji's (2013) study on community-driven development in an Indian village accentuates the role of community involvement in bringing about positive changes. The lack of nearby training facilities (Table 6) underscores an immediate need for infrastructure development in self-defense training across the state.

Training Duration and Effectiveness:

Shabana et al. (2017) discussed how entrepreneurship can be a path to women's holistic development in India. Drawing parallels, it's commendable that a large fraction of women who undertook self-defense training have sustained engagement. The perceived effectiveness of training (Table 8) speaks about the potential benefits similar to the empowerment experienced in entrepreneurship.

Implications:

Coley et al. (2021) emphasized the need for contextualizing women's empowerment, suggesting that strategies, while universal, need to be adapted to the specific context. The research has crucial implications for policymakers, NGOs, and educational institutions. By bridging the urban-rural divide, aligning cultural perspectives with self-defense training, and enhancing awareness and accessibility, self-defense can transition from being just a skill to an empowerment tool.

Public Spaces and Women:

Franck (1989) discussed women's relationship with urban public spaces, and while her focus was primarily on urban settings, the essence of her discussion—women's safety, accessibility, and their rights to public spaces—can be linked with the significance of self-defense training. This training isn't just about physical defense but about reclaiming spaces and asserting one's rights in those spaces.

The discussion reiterates the significance of self-defense training as not just a protective measure but also as an empowerment tool. Addressing the identified challenges can pave the way for a safer and more inclusive environment for women in Rajasthan and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The exploration into the perspectives on self-defense training for women in Rajasthan offers a multifaceted understanding of its relevance and challenges in the contemporary socio-cultural fabric of the region. This study emphasized the distinction between urban and rural perspectives, revealing the nuances of accessibility, awareness, and societal influences impacting the engagement with self-defense training.

While the urban-rural divide was apparent, so was the unanimous sentiment regarding the empowerment derived from such training. Women who have undergone self-defense training not only gain physical protection skills but also experience an enhanced sense of self-worth and confidence. This affirmation aligns with global discourses on women's

empowerment, suggesting that self-defense training can be a potent tool to challenge and reshape deeply ingrained gender norms.

The challenges, primarily stemming from societal constraints and lack of accessibility, throw light on the areas of immediate intervention. While modern communication tools like social media have shown promise in raising awareness in urban settings, rural areas still benefit from traditional word-of-mouth and community-led initiatives.

The study's findings have paramount policy implications. Ensuring easy accessibility to self-defense training facilities and creating robust awareness campaigns that resonate with the local cultural sensibilities can make a significant difference. Collaboration between NGOs, local governments, and communities is pivotal in this endeavor.

This research, set in the context of Rajasthan, provides valuable insights that can be used as a springboard for similar studies in other regions, potentially leading to a holistic national narrative on the subject. In the broader perspective, the role of self-defense training is not just about individual protection; it's a collective step towards a society where women, irrespective of their geographical or social standing, can feel safe, confident, and empowered.

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