

# Study on the Empowerment of Women's Participation in Rural Tourism Under the Background of Rural Revitalization —— Take the Rural Revitalization Demonstration Area of Mount Tai Jiunu Peak as an Example

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## Abstract

With continuous socioeconomic development, rural tourism has not only become a vital component of China's tourism industry system but also serves as a key mechanism to implement national development strategies and empower rural revitalization. As talent development forms the foundation of rural revitalization, women—benefiting from their unique advantages—are increasingly becoming driving forces and contributors to rural tourism development, currently constituting a significant proportion of rural surplus labor. Taking the Tai Shan Jiunu Peak Rural Revitalization Demonstration Zone as a case study, this paper focuses on women within its jurisdiction. Through literature review, questionnaire surveys, and semi-structured interviews, it explores their empowerment manifestations in rural tourism under the context of rural revitalization. The findings reveal: (1) Women's rights in Jiunu Peak have improved across four dimensions—economic, political, psychological, and social—with greater enhancements observed in economic and psychological empowerment, while social empowerment shows limited development and weaker political awareness; (2) Specific manifestations include: economic empowerment exhibiting "skill stratification," political empowerment showing "formalized institutional empowerment," psychological empowerment demonstrating "intergenerational differentiation" and "role conflict," while social empowerment faces challenges in achieving "symbolic recognition"; (3) Building on this foundation, the author deeply integrates women's empowerment into the five pillars of rural revitalization: industry, talent, culture, ecology, and organization. By restructuring systems, reallocating resources, and reshaping capabilities, the study demonstrates how "women's development" and "rural revitalization" can mutually reinforce each other. This approach transforms women from "participants in development" to "leaders in revitalization," enabling them to gain tangible empowerment through rural tourism. Such efforts carry significant theoretical and practical implications for sustainable rural tourism development, poverty alleviation through tourism, and the promotion of social equity and justice in the new era.

**Keywords:** rural revitalization, rural tourism, women's participation, empowerment, Jiunu Peak

## 1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China states: "Comprehensively advance rural revitalization. The most arduous and demanding tasks in building a modern socialist country remain in rural areas[1]". Since the 18th National Congress, President Xi Jinping has conducted multiple inspection tours in Shandong Province, delivering a series of important directives that have steadily advanced the rural revitalization strategy. As rural revitalization enters its deepening phase, rural tourism—a new form of economic development—has become a powerful driver for reshaping high-quality transformation in rural society[2]. It plays a vital role in promoting rural development, safeguarding farmers' principal status, enriching people's spiritual lives, enhancing rural livelihoods, and advancing green development in villages[3]. Furthermore, it is gradually emerging as a significant direction for domestic tourism development with promising market prospects.

However, due to the influence of Shandong's distinctive patriarchal culture, some women remain marginalized in rural tourism development. They face disadvantages in economic, cultural, and social environments while lacking awareness and effective channels to assert their self-interests. Therefore, addressing rural women's interests and researching empowerment issues has become an objective requirement for sustainable rural tourism development

and poverty alleviation through tourism in the new era. This also represents an inevitable trend toward promoting social equity and justice.

## 2. Research Review

### 2.1 Domestic and International Research on Women in Tourism Development

The participatory development concept originates from Sen's developmental theory, with its essence rooted in two pillars: "participation" and "empowerment". Participation requires active involvement of poverty-stricken communities in all phases of poverty alleviation efforts, while empowerment involves removing barriers to their participation while ensuring engagement. Governments must transition from traditional poverty relief roles to becoming empowerers by granting more autonomy to beneficiaries, thereby promoting their active participation and self-improvement. Participation serves as the foundation, while empowerment acts as the safeguard. This establishes a participatory mechanism where beneficiaries engage throughout the poverty reduction process, ultimately sharing in the benefits of industrial growth [4].

In 1995, Swain first raised the issue of social gender in tourism development, marking the beginning of growing academic attention to women's participation in tourism. International research on female involvement in tourism began as early as the 1970s, with early studies focusing on female employment in the industry and women's travel behaviors. Furthermore, the 1997 World Tourism Organization Agenda 21 explicitly emphasized that sustainable tourism should involve all community levels, prompting scholars to explore gender empowerment and initiate research on women's empowerment. For instance, Irandu and Shah analyzed the impact of women's empowerment on tourism from a gender perspective, proposing that tourism could enhance gender equality through income-generating activities and educational initiatives[5]. Naomi et al. argued that effective tourism policies could empower women, alleviate poverty, and achieve equality and equal opportunities, highlighting the significance of women's empowerment[6].

Domestic research started relatively late. The Western concept of "participation" was introduced to China in the late 1980s, and subsequently in the 1990s, economists and managers in the field of development assistance began to accept and recognize this concept more from the perspective of improving intervention efficiency. In fact, "participation" reflects a process of empowering grassroots communities, while "participatory development" is widely understood as a developmental approach characterized by active and comprehensive involvement of decision-making entities in the process of influencing people's living conditions and development planning projects[7]. The theory and practice of participatory development are now primarily applied to anti-poverty initiatives or public welfare projects, such as nature conservation and ecological restoration[8]. Current research mainly focuses on the development of female tourism markets, studies on female tourists' behaviors, and the impact of tourism on ethnic minority women.

In summary, current research predominantly examines women as consumers, overlooking their dual roles as producers and operators in rural tourism development. In practice, women go beyond providing basic services by actively participating in planning and management processes—including resource selection, daily operations, and promotional activities—demonstrating their multifaceted contributions to rural tourism development.

### 2.2 Domestic and International Studies on Empowerment and Tourism Empowerment

Empowerment, a cross-disciplinary concept also translated as "empowerment" or "charging power", has gained increasing traction in tourism studies as its theory evolves and interdisciplinary integration deepens. Scholars worldwide hold divergent perspectives on both empowerment theory and tourism empowerment research.

#### (1) Foreign research on empowerment and tourism empowerment

In 1976, American scholar Barbara Solomon published her seminal work *\*Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities\**, introducing the concept of "empowerment" for the first time in racial studies. She argued that empowerment involves overcoming specific barriers to change societal stereotypes about marginalized groups, enabling members to redefine themselves and regain confidence and self-esteem. Early research primarily applied empowerment theory in social work, focusing on enhancing the power and participation of socially disadvantaged populations, which gradually became a theoretical foundation for social services. As related theories matured and practical applications expanded, this framework gradually extended to other research domains. In 1996, Akamal pioneered its application in tourism studies by emphasizing the necessity of power distribution, becoming the first to highlight how power impacts community engagement in tourism. In 1999, Scheyvens proposed that community residents are recipients of tourism empowerment during ecotourism research, establishing a four-dimensional empowerment framework encompassing economic, social, political, and psychological dimensions. He analyzed tourism empowerment comprehensively, noting that community tourism

development is often manipulated by privileged or affluent groups, while ordinary residents' limited power prevents them from benefiting from tourism economic gains[9]. In 2003, Sofield highlighted the necessity of tourism empowerment for sustainable development in his seminal work *\*Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development\** [10]. In 2008, Yoko Okazaki proposed that tourism empowerment should follow the eight-stage hierarchy outlined by Arnold (1976) as a progressive process[11]. Later in 2010, David Weaver developed a six-stage model illustrating the evolving relationship between tourism industries and local communities, introducing the concepts of in-situ empowerment and displaced empowerment[12].

In summary, international scholars' research on empowerment and tourism empowerment primarily focuses on fields such as economics, political science, sociology, and international relations. Their studies emphasize conceptual interpretation, structural analysis, evaluation methods, implementation content, and approaches to address fundamental questions about empowerment. These include: "What is empowerment?" "Which rights need to be enhanced?" "What are the pathways to empowerment?" "What is the rationale behind empowerment?" and "What are the purposes and significance of empowerment?" Meanwhile, due to their early development, these studies have played a significant guiding role in the advancement of domestic research in this field.

## (2) Domestic research on empowerment and tourism empowerment

In the field of sociology, empowerment is regarded as a social process that promotes social equity and justice by enhancing individuals' social status and power. In psychology, empowerment is considered a process of self-actualization and self-improvement, which enhances psychological well-being and happiness through boosting self-confidence and capabilities. In 2008, Chinese scholars Zuo Bing and Bao Jigang first systematically introduced Western empowerment theory into tourism research, organizing, absorbing, and critiquing it. They analyzed and proposed that empowerment serves as a crucial prerequisite for achieving sustainable tourism development, with individual empowerment preceding community empowerment. When applying empowerment theory to China's tourism practices, it is necessary to expand its scope to include promoting "individual rights" and "institutional empowerment" through national politics, thereby ensuring the legitimacy of both individual rights and community empowerment[13]. Subsequently, Zuo Bing further proposed using Yunnan's Diqing as a case study to demonstrate that empowerment is an effective approach to promote fairness and sustainability in tourism development[14]. Sun Ying argued that empowerment involves processes where individuals, groups, or communities tap into their inherent potential or seek external support, which not only strengthens individuals' ability to control their own destinies but also optimizes social resource allocation. Shi Zhuoma emphasized that empowering villagers in tourism requires comprehensive understanding and accurate grasp of rural tourism development trajectories, as only through deep comprehension can villagers avoid unnecessary detours when participating in decision-making. Huang Ji, in her research on the development of traditional ethnic folk arts, pointed out that tourism empowerment is one of the key strategies following stakeholder theory for driving sustainable tourism development. In 2012, Liao Junhua proposed a six-dimensional perspective building upon Schefens' four-dimensional framework, encompassing economic empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment, cultural empowerment, psychological empowerment, and environmental empowerment. He further explored the relationship between tourism empowerment and participation willingness under this multidimensional view[15]. In 2015, Xiu Xintian introduced a five-dimensional perspective, categorizing tourism empowerment into five components: economic empowerment, political empowerment, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, and environmental empowerment[16].

In summary, domestic scholars' research on empowerment and tourism empowerment primarily focuses on two fields: sociology and psychology. Research topics cover discussions on the core concepts of empowerment and tourism empowerment, explanations of their necessity and importance, exploration of implementation strategies, as well as empirical studies. Meanwhile, with the gradual localization of related concepts and theories in China's research, domestic scholars are actively exploring research approaches that better align with China's national conditions. They are no longer confined to community empowerment, and their research perspectives and methodologies are becoming increasingly diversified.

## 2.3 Summary

In summary, research on women's empowerment in rural tourism has achieved significant progress both domestically and internationally, spanning multiple academic disciplines. However, existing studies still face limitations, particularly the lack of comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis and in-depth empirical research. Future research should focus on three key areas: First, enhancing interdisciplinary integration by combining empowerment theory with methodologies from psychology, sociology, economics, and related fields. Second,

strengthening empirical validation through surveys and experiments to verify the feasibility and effectiveness of empowerment theories. Third, emphasizing practical implementation by applying these theories to social practices and policy development to advance social equity and progress.

### 3. Overview of the Case

Shandong Province has thoroughly studied the methodologies, development philosophies, and implementation mechanisms behind its "Model Village Initiative and Comprehensive Rural Improvement Program". Building upon grassroots practices, the province has pioneered a "cluster-based village development" approach, establishing demonstration zones as key implementation tools. To date, 138 provincial-level model zones have been launched across the region, creating a tiered construction framework with categorized advancement strategies. The Taishan Jiunu Peak Rural Revitalization Demonstration Zone (hereafter referred to as "Jiunu Peak") has emerged as a timely response to these efforts.

Nestled in Daiyue District of Tai 'an City, Shandong Province, Jiunu Peak stands as the inaugural rural revitalization project developed by Lushang Group. This integrated resort combines leisure tourism, conference facilities, and vacation amenities. Through comprehensive rural development initiatives, it has transformed a once impoverished mountainous area with poor transportation infrastructure into a vibrant tourist destination. With a population of 13,000 residents, Daiyue District statistics indicate that women constitute 50.18% of the population, translating to approximately 6,536 female residents. The current tourism development model combines government support, corporate partnerships, and village collectives. This transformation has created extensive employment opportunities for local women while significantly enhancing their economic status and social standing. Women play vital roles in Jiunu Peak's tourism sector, not only maintaining traditional agricultural and household responsibilities but also actively contributing to rural tourism services—including homestay operations, catering services, and tourism merchandise production—all designed to deliver comfortable and enjoyable travel experiences for visitors.

### 4. Research Programme

The study is grounded in empowerment theory and participatory development theory, primarily employing questionnaire surveys and sociological in-depth interviews. Beginning in 2023, the author collected materials on Jiunufeng's rural tourism, women's engagement in tourism, and tourism empowerment-related topics and literature. Field preliminary research was conducted in January, February, August, and December of the same year. Based on collected data, the final questionnaire content and interview outline were finalized by late December. Key research sites included Zhujia Village (February 25-26, 2024), Beizhang Village, Liyu Village, and Balou Village (March 2-3, 2024), with a follow-up supplementary survey conducted on February 13, 2025.

The questionnaire consists of three main sections: the first covers basic personal information, the second details participation in rural tourism activities, and the third assesses perceived empowerment gains from these experiences. The survey included 188 women with 91.5% valid responses, of whom 172 actively contributed to rural tourism development initiatives.

Table 1. Overview of questionnaire samples

content	option	Number of persons/person	of the proportion of /%
age	A. 18 years and under	5	2.91
	B. 19-25 years	41	23.84
	C. 26-35 years	30	17.44
	D. 36-45	45	26.16
	E. 46-55 years	15	8.72
	F. 56 years and older	36	20.93
degree of education	A. Primary and below	18	10.47
	B. Junior secondary/senior secondary/higher secondary	44	25.58
	C. College/undergraduate	104	60.47
	D. Postgraduate and above	6	3.49
family structure	A. unmarried	44	25.58
	B. Married, no children	14	8.14

	C. Married with at least one child under 18 years of age	66	38.37
	D. Divorced, no children	3	1.74
	E. Divorce with at least one child under 18 years of age	4	2.33
	F. Married or divorced with children of full age	40	23.26
	G. other	1	0.58
The average monthly income level after participating in rural tourism	A.2000 yuan and below	16	9.3
	B. 2001-3000 yuan	42	24.42
	C.3001~4000 yuan	43	25
	D.4001~5000 yuan	46	26.74
	E.5001 yuan above	25	14.53

Source: The author compiled the data according to the questionnaire survey

In addition, there are 16 women who are not involved in the development of rural tourism. The reasons for not participating are mainly: no time, no opportunity, busy with taking care of children, not related to their own professional field, no idea to participate, the government has not popularized it, and there is no channel to participate. The specific word frequency analysis is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Word frequency analysis of reasons for not participating in rural tourism

The interview samples were collected using convenience sampling. As this study focuses on women's empowerment through rural tourism participation, face-to-face interviews were conducted with women involved in rural tourism development. Before interviews, we first asked participants whether they had participated in rural tourism initiatives. If denied, we would inquire about reasons for non-participation and terminate the interview. For confirmed participation, we followed a pre-designed interview outline with verbatim documentation. Key data collection areas included: (1) What positions did you hold before and after rural tourism development? (2) What motivated your initial involvement in rural tourism? (3) Have your economic income and living standards significantly improved since participating? (4) Was the government decision-making process transparent during rural tourism planning? Did you have opportunities to voice opinions during policy formulation? (5) Has rural tourism development deepened your understanding of local folk culture? (6) What challenges do you currently face in rural tourism initiatives? What roles do you believe women should play in rural tourism development? What are your perspectives or suggestions regarding women's participation? Interviews averaged 20 minutes per participant, with the longest lasting 35 minutes and shortest 13 minutes. The interview materials were recorded in real time to capture information, but in order to prevent the omission of key information and details, after obtaining the permission of the interviewees, the author used the recording application on the mobile phone as a supplementary recording means, and after the interview, the audio files were systematically sorted out.

Among them, the basic information of 15 women involved in rural tourism development in the selected case area is shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Basic sociodemographic characteristics of interviewees

number	age	degree of education	marital status	Occupation/position	Monthly income level
Z1	56 years and above	Primary school and below	Married with adult children	Vendors at markets	Under 2000 yuan
Z2	26~35 years old	Junior high school/vocational school/high school	Married with at least one child under 18	Caiyun Garden/Staff	2000~3000 yuan
Z3	56 years and above	Primary school and below	Married, children are all adults	XX supermarket / owner	Under 2000 yuan
Z4	56 years and above	Junior high school/vocational school/high school	Married, children are all adults	Pig Farm Agricultural Culture Experience Base/farm worker	2000~3000 yuan
L1	36-45 years	Junior high school/vocational school/high school	Married with at least one child under 18	No. XX, Farm House / Owner	4000~5000 yuan
L2	56 years and above	Primary school and below	Married, children are adults	No. XX, Farm House / Waiter	Under 2000 yuan
L3	56 years and above	Primary school and below	Married with adult children	Strawberry picking garden/Staff	Under 2000 yuan
L4	26~35 years old	College/university	Marital status: Married, no children	XX Xiangchun online shop/operator	2000~3000 yuan
B2	19-25 years	College/university	unmarried	Nagano Hospital/Staff	4000~5000 yuan
B3	46-55 years	Junior high school/vocational school/high school	Married with at least one child under 18	Nagano-Chukyu Restaurant / Front desk (shift leader)	3000~4000 yuan

Supplementary table 2

number	age	degree of education	marital status	Occupation/position	Monthly income level
BZ1	19-25 years	College/university	Married with at least one child under 18	Hotel / Front Desk in Spring	2000~3000 yuan
BZ2	26-35 years	Junior high school/vocational school/high school	Married with at least one child under 18	Tourism performance/actors	3000~4000 yuan
X	36-45 years	Junior high school/vocational school/high school	Married with at least one child under 18	Hotel cleaning in spring	2000~3000 yuan
D	26~35 years old	College/university	Married with at least one child under 18	Hotel staff (General Manager) in spring	3000~4000 yuan

Source: The author compiled the data based on interview records

In addition, through communication, the author also learned that most respondents are currently employed mainly in rural tourism-related jobs, supplemented by agriculture or other non-agricultural industries. The initial motivation for participating in rural tourism is to work nearby and obtain higher economic income. The specific ways of participating in rural tourism are summarized as follows in Table 3:

Table 3 . Ways of participating in rural tourism

class	Specific elaboration	instance
Government + individual	Relevant government units will create a series of entrepreneurship and employment bases, actively carry out relevant vocational skills training, and lead and promote women's employment.	The Women's Federation of Daiyue District established a women's poverty alleviation base in Caiyun Garden, employing qualified local women to achieve employment at home (Z2, Z4, L3)
Business + Individuals	Enterprises directly employ women to alleviate the problem of employment	Spring City Resort Hotel and Yeyouyuan boutique Homestay under Shandong Culture and Tourism Group are recruiting qualified local women to achieve employment at home (B2, B3, BZ1, BZ2, X, D)
Individuals vs. individuals	Expand the scale of rural tourism by the "pioneers" and employ other women	The owner of Farm House No.19 employs women from the surrounding area as helpers (L2)
individual operation	Independent tourist reception facilities	The major farmhouse in Rifu village (L1)

Source: The author compiled the data based on interview records

## 5. Analysis of Women's Empowerment in Jiunu Peak

Based on the previous literature and the current situation of Jiunu Peak, this paper describes the changes of women's sense of empowerment in Jiunu Peak from four dimensions of economy, politics, psychology and society according to the weighting theoretical framework proposed by Scheyvens. The details are as follows:

Table 4 .Analysis framework for increasing rights

Dimension of increase in equity	The representation of empowerment
economy	Tourism brings lasting economic benefits to the local community, and the benefits are shared by the community families. Some of them are used for community construction (such as road construction, some public facilities, etc.), and the living standard of the community residents has been improved.
politics	The interests of community residents can be satisfied and expressed through various channels. The community can participate in tourism decision-making and express the interests of the community through basic administrative organizations.
psychology	The recognition of the uniqueness and value of their cultures, natural resources and traditional knowledge has strengthened the self-esteem of many community members, who are now seeking further education and training opportunities. Access to employment and economic benefits can improve the status of traditionally disadvantaged social groups such as women and youth.
society	Tourism development helps maintain or strengthen community balance. When individuals and families work together to build successful tourism businesses, community cohesion improves. A portion of tourism revenue is used to build public facilities (such as schools and roads), which contributes to community development.

### 5.1 Economic Dimension

The change of tourism economic income is an important manifestation of whether tourism has the most direct impact on the local area after tourism intervention. Economic empowerment refers to the change of women's lifestyle through participating in rural tourism activities, which can obtain economic income, increase economic autonomy, and thus improve their economic status in the family and society.

Before developing rural tourism, the Jiunu Peak area was a notorious "poverty-stricken village". Interviewee L1 once shared her past as a traditional homemaker: "I used to stay home tending to our family..." (L1, March 3, 2024).

Another resident X remarked: "We used to stay home caring for the elderly and children every day. Now that my kids are older and in college, I've started earning extra cash to ease the financial pressure. We can save some money every month now..." (X, March 2, 2024). Z1 added: "Before Jiunu Peak fully developed rural tourism, we relied on farming. When my husband went out to work, I'd stay home growing wild vegetables, groundnuts (potatoes), and persimmons just to make ends meet. We couldn't even cover my two kids' school fees, so we had to borrow from neighbors in the town." (Z1, February 25, 2024)

Given the low entry barriers in tourism and women's inherent advantages in language skills, observational abilities, memory retention, visual thinking, and intuitive reasoning[17], interviews revealed that nearly all respondents reported increased employment opportunities and improved income since rural tourism development began. "When tourism started here, we gradually attracted more visitors from other regions. During off-seasons, I'd set up stalls selling peanuts, handicrafts, eggs, and duck eggs at local markets. When my aunt's restaurant got busy, I'd help out. Now I earn 2,000-3,000 yuan monthly. Though off-season earnings might be slightly lower, it's still better... (laughs)" (Z1, February 25, 2024). L1, owner of Farmhouse No.19, noted improved living standards after government poverty alleviation programs and tourism development in Jiunu Peak: "Inspired by government initiatives, we started our farm stay business... Initially, we worried tourists might dislike our food, but many loved it and became regulars. (laughs) Look at this family who's a regular customer... Our income has steadily increased to over 4,000 yuan monthly now!" (L1, March 3, 2024) Both B1 and B2 shared similar experiences. After graduating from university, they both took part-time jobs in first-and second-tier cities. "While the income seems much higher now, after deducting daily expenses like rent, utilities, commuting, and food, we can't save any real money. Let alone settling down to buy a home there. Nowadays, working near my hometown is not only convenient but also comes with company-provided meals and housing. The pressure has eased compared to before, and I can even save a decent amount each month." (B1, March 2, 2024) The regional development of Jiunu Peak's rural tourism has also alleviated employment pressure for college graduates to some extent, attracting more young entrepreneurs to return home and start businesses."

The questionnaire analysis reveals that Jiunufeng's rural tourism development has indeed generated economic benefits for local women, with overall living standards showing improvement. However, a pronounced "skill stratification" phenomenon persists: women skilled in e-commerce operations typically experience greater income growth compared to those working in basic tourism services. Additionally, the number of job opportunities provided by scenic areas and tourism enterprises fails to meet all women's needs within the region. For instance, some women are excluded due to age-related limitations and educational constraints, highlighting the geographical constraints in the tourism industry's reach.

### 5.2 Political Dimension

Political empowerment refers to women's increased participation in village decision-making and governance through rural tourism activities, thereby enhancing their political engagement capabilities. This concept evaluates whether a region's political systems and regulatory frameworks effectively address local residents' needs, fairly represent community interests, and establish effective channels for public feedback. Residents can voice their opinions through proper channels and participate in community decision-making processes.

Women's participation in tourism has effectively reduced economic friction between spouses. Particularly for low-income women originally engaged in farming, working in tourism not only increases their income but also allows them to balance family responsibilities, thereby enhancing their influence in household decision-making and financial management, which elevates their family status[18]. Through interviews, all respondents indicated that rural tourism has brought them varying degrees of economic income, partially altering the traditional "men work outside while women manage inside" household dynamics. "Initially, I thought about staying home to care for the elderly and children. Now that my child has grown up and started college, I'm finally able to earn some extra money to ease the financial burden... As for family status... Ha ha... It has indeed improved. With more disposable income, my influence in the household has significantly increased," (X, March 2, 2024)

Meanwhile, an increasing number of women have expressed that they now participate in the planning and decision-making processes of rural tourism development in their village, with a certain degree of influence. "Our village has established specific deliberation rules for Liyu Village, holding regular meetings at the Credit Deliberation Hall. These include activities like group study sessions, volunteer program arrangements, and policy consultations... I find the process quite democratic... Villagers generally follow the requirements outlined in the Village Self-Governance Charter with a sense of responsibility." (L4, March 3, 2024) Through developing rural tourism, Jiunu Peak women have gained political empowerment while ensuring more comprehensive and inclusive tourism policies and development plans. "The company conducts weekly theoretical training sessions. While



enhancing our service skills, we also gain a clearer understanding of future development strategies... Our manager is very approachable. She regularly engages in discussions with us, and we share our ideas with her... Having worked here for several years, I feel like I'm growing alongside the company." (D, March 2, 2024)

The analysis reveals a positive trend in political empowerment for women regarding rural tourism development. Village committees have established dedicated councils to facilitate women's political participation, yet challenges persist in information dissemination, stakeholder engagement, opinion expression, leadership commitment, and organizational infrastructure development. Key issues include inadequate policy implementation at the grassroots level and limited decision-making influence for women. Many women lack understanding of policy details, relying heavily on village cadres' guidance while demonstrating insufficient initiative in political participation. To enhance women's sense of political involvement and empowerment, relevant authorities should prioritize their input, strengthen organizational capacity-building, and improve both practical participation rates and satisfaction levels among female community members.

### *5.3 Psychological Dimensions*

Psychological empowerment in rural tourism refers to women's ability to boost self-confidence, enhance self-efficacy, and strengthen their sense of agency through participation in rural tourism activities. As the tourism industry advances, women involved in rural tourism development gradually recognize the unique cultural and ecological characteristics of their communities. They come to appreciate the value of traditional culture and natural resources, which fosters a sense of pride within them. This pride motivates them to actively integrate resources into tourism development, pursue necessary training and education, and improve their skills to adapt to modern tourism demands.

Through interviews, it is evident that the thriving rural tourism at Jiunu Peak has influenced the ideological and psychological changes of local women. "Now I can converse with tourists from all over every day, gaining a fresh perspective on the outside world... I get to showcase my skills and spread our unique folk culture, making me feel incredibly fulfilled," said Interviewee BZ2, whose confident demeanor radiated throughout her interactions. (BZ2, March 2, 2024) While serving guests, Interviewee L1 added: "Apart from household chores, things like grocery shopping and hiring staff now fall under my responsibility. When overwhelmed, my mother-in-law helps out... (guests often request extra dishes)... Men are big spenders, but we women know better about managing finances. Money is hard-earned – it needs to be spent wisely, especially for our children's education! (laughs)" She then continued working on her small business. (L1, March 3, 2024) "Since starting work, we've participated in various company training programs and team-building activities. These have improved our professional skills and boosted our confidence to keep growing." (BZ2, March 2, 2024)

In summary, women's recognition in the workplace generates positive feedback that boosts self-affirmation. This enables them to tap into their inherent value and potential, allowing them to shape their roles with greater effort and confidence in both professional and personal life. Such empowerment fosters optimism about the future while also driving the positive development of rural tourism. However, generational disparities persist. For instance, some young women face "family-career" role conflicts, while older women may experience technical anxiety, feeling unable to keep pace with emerging industry trends.

### *5.4 Social Dimension*

Social empowerment through rural tourism enables women to expand their social networks and elevate their social status and influence. The most tangible manifestation of this empowerment is the balanced development of community elements as local tourism progresses. The economic benefits generated from initial tourism industry involvement serve as seed funding for upgrading living, educational, and recreational facilities. This drives comprehensive improvements in tourist destinations, elevates residents' quality of life, broadens their perspectives, strengthens community bonds, enhances overall cohesion, and empowers individuals to voluntarily participate in collective governance.

The road at the entrance used to be an unpaved dirt path, making daily life difficult for villagers. Many moved from the mountains to settle at the foothills. "Our old roads here were all cement tracks about three to four meters wide. Over time, they became riddled with potholes and bumps. Nobody wanted to come here. Those who tried selling fruits or free-range eggs here had to trek long distances to town just to make ends meet," (Z1, February 25, 2024)

In 2019, Jiunu Peak Area became a provincial model demonstration zone for rural revitalization in Shandong Province. The Daishan District Transportation Bureau advanced rural tourism road construction and the "Four Good Rural Roads" initiative to high standards, opening doors to previously isolated villages and significantly

improving tourism transportation infrastructure. Interviews revealed that most respondents noted Jiunu Peak's rural tourism development had greatly enhanced local infrastructure and living conditions. "Seeing the roads near our homes become wider and smoother, with more tourists visiting, I can truly feel our hometown gradually improving. It's genuinely heartwarming... and of course, a sense of pride." (BZ2, March 3, 2024) "Our village committee established a credit system to encourage good deeds, even creating a Women's Credit Supermarket where members can exchange points for services like free water bills or haircuts... We maintain good relations. Young women often go out together to watch movies or explore the city, not just us young folks. Even my mother and Aunt Li frequently plan grocery trips or card games." (X, March 2, 2024) This demonstrates how Jiunu Peak's rural tourism development has fostered friendly interactions among women, creating a harmonious social atmosphere. "...Our group and the village also engage in mutual promotion. For instance, during peak seasons when our restaurant can't accommodate all visitors, we recommend them to dine at local farmhouses. Meanwhile, if their facilities can't provide sufficient lodging, we'll suggest they stay at our hotel. Of course, the final decision rests with the travelers themselves." (B2, March 2, 2024)

In summary, the infrastructure improvements in the area have enhanced living conditions for local women, while the rural tourism road winding around Jiunu Peak has become a path to prosperity for villagers. Through measures such as establishing relevant policies and building cross-village collaboration networks, the village committee has effectively expanded women's social circles and fostered a harmonious and friendly social atmosphere.

## 6. Conclusions and Discussion

Taking Jiunufeng as an example, this study deeply explores the empowerment performance and perception of women's participation in rural tourism under the background of rural revitalization under the guidance of Scheyvens' four-dimensional weighting theory framework. The following conclusions are drawn:

First, in recent years, with the efforts of the government, enterprises and society, the practice of women's participation in rural tourism has achieved remarkable results.

Second, participation in rural tourism has a positive impact on the economic, political, psychological, and social empowerment of women in Jiunu Peak. However, the extent of influence varies, with economic and psychological empowerment being the most prominent, while political empowerment is perceived less strongly. During the rapid development of rural tourism in Jiunu Peak, women, as vital human resources, have enhanced their economic income through engaging in reception services, developing distinctive tourism products, and providing cultural experiences. This not only enriched the essence of rural tourism but also strengthened their confidence and pride in folk culture. To some extent, it has increased their participation and voice in rural tourism development, gradually transforming them into active participants and beneficiaries of rural revitalization.

Third, economic empowerment exhibits a "skill stratification" phenomenon, with women skilled in digital technologies seeing significant income growth. Political empowerment shows characteristics of "formalized institutional empowerment" —while women enter decision-making systems through the "Party building + cooperatives" model, gender-blindness in policy implementation renders their influence nominal. Psychological empowerment manifests as "intergenerational differentiation" and "role conflict": young women awaken self-awareness through redefining their identity as "new rural residents," whereas traditional gender norms still constrain elderly women's self-identity. Social empowerment faces challenges of "symbolic recognition" —although women expand social networks via tourism associations, outdated cultural labels hinder substantial accumulation of social capital.

The empowerment theory and participatory development theory provide a robust theoretical framework for analyzing the role transformation and empowerment attainment of women in Jiunu Peak's rural tourism, demonstrating exceptional applicability. Future research could further explore this approach in other case studies. While these women have achieved notable progress in gaining empowerment through rural tourism, challenges remain, including insufficiently targeted skill training programs and the need to enhance both awareness and practical capabilities among women participating in such initiatives.

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