



A Study of Perception of Female Students of Higher Secondary School towards Women Empowerment

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1. Introduction

The empowerment of women is a contemporary issue regardless of the country in which a social planner tries to bring a sustainable development. Though women empowerment is not a sufficient condition it is still a necessary condition in order to stabilize and in turn to have sustainability of the development process. This paper by characterizing the women empowerment tries to obtain a scientific measure of empowerment.

Empowerment is the most frequently used term in development dialogue today. It is also the most nebulous and widely interpreted of concepts, which has simultaneously become a tool for analysis and also an umbrella concept to justify development intervention. For some, the empowerment of women is an active multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. For others, empowerment represents the ability of women to handle responsibilities, to envision a better future and to work to overcome the obstacles that confront them. Empowerment can be measured by using selective indicators, such as active contribution in the household, the workplace and the community. Although the participation of women in the paid labour force and female enrolment in education has increased considerably over the last years, gender disparities still exist in almost all the countries in the world. Urban working women all over India have proved that they can not only match but also excel men in various skills, if equal opportunities are available to them without any discrimination. The promotion of women empowerment as a development goal is based on a dual argument: (a) that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing; and (b) that women empowerment is a means to other ends. A recent policy research report by the World Bank (2001). for example, identifies gender equality both as a development objective in itself, and as a means to promote growth, reduce poverty and promote better governance.

Despite empowerment of women and eliminating gender disparities being one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) [Human Development Report (HDR). 2003], yet to date, no major efforts have been made to develop a rigorous method for measuring and tracking changes in the levels of empowerment. The Gender Development Index (GDI) takes into account inequality in the achievements between women and men. The greater the gender disparity in human development, the lower is a country's GDI compared to its Human Development Index (HDI). Thus, the GDI is simply the HDI, which is adjusted downwards for gender inequality. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) on the other hand, measures the extent to which a woman has influence in decision-making, in politics, in professional life, and in organizations. The GEM has been used widely in advocating the empowerment of women. The HDR takes into account some aspects of female empowerment (i.e., economic participation, political participation and power over the economic resources) and to an extent it explains the degree of their empowerment. But there are various other aspects also that decide the level of empowerment. Though a woman is literate and working, she may not be empowered in the following aspects: domestic decision making, financial autonomy (i.e., control over the resources).

mobility/freedom of movement, child related issues (e.g. well-being, schooling, health, marriage). and participation in the modern sector.

2. Literature Review

Promoting gender equality and women empowerment is one of the key objectives of MDGs. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) introduced GDI and GEM in 1995 as a supplement of HDI. These two indices account for gender inequality in the achievement of basic capabilities and in the economic opportunities and political areas.

The study by **Vianello et al. (1990)** showed that a husband's power within marriage tended to increase in proportion to the resources that he could muster: education, income, prestige, social status, and so on. The author also found that the husband's power was associated with the stage in the life cycle and with the presence of children in the home. More importantly, wives who worked for pay had more power than wives not gainfully employed. When the resource theory was applied to the study of marital power in different societies, the findings were inconsistent. Research results about decision-making from the United States [Kendell and Lesser, 1972; Centers et al., 1971], France [Michel, 1967], West Germany [Lamouse, 1969; Lupri, 1965; 1969], and other countries showed a positive association between the husband's power and his socio-economic resources, such as education, social status, income, and occupation. In the above studies there were curvilinear tendencies in the data and weak relationships that lacked statistical significance.

Burr (1973) developed a general model of marital power which spells out a set of proposition. It takes into account the complex interconnection between the amount of power, the cultural or normative context, and the specific tangible and intangible resources that affect the distribution of marital power. Peattie and Rein (1983) and Sapiro (1984) rightly mentioned that it is necessary for women to organize themselves as women, and to devise a strategy on how to win leading positions.

Amarnath et al. (1996). have described the consequences of middle-class women taking up economically productive roles. The study examines whether the gender bias of men has undergone some change in the recent past. In order to carry out the analysis, the study uses six parameters – role perception, say in decision-making, acquisition of assets, economic freedom, spouse's co-operation, and perception of status change. A sample of 68 middle-class women employed in different sectors of Anantapur District (Andhra Pradesh) within the age group of 20 to 45 years was selected. The findings indicate that the employment of women has led to the women having a greater say in the decision-making process and thus, has lessened the degree of gender bias.

Kabeer (1999) has attempted to construct the indicators of the empowerment of women, by using three-dimensional conceptual framework: (a) the 'resources' as part of the pre-conditions of empowerment;(b) the 'agency' as an aspect of process; and lastly (c) the 'achievements' as a measure of outcomes. The study shows that the most probable indicators for empowerment of women are: family structure, marital advantage, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, and lifetime experience of employment participation in the modern sector.

The study by **Malhotra et al. (2002)** identifies the methodological approaches in measuring and analyzing the empowerment of women. The various indicators for measuring empowerment of women given in the study are: domestic decision-making; finance and resource allocation; social and domestic matters; child related issues; access to or control over resources; freedom of movement; and so on.

3. Women's rights and security in India

Policies relating to women's rights have had a positive trajectory in the past few decades with the central government articulating many progressive measures to advance gender equality in social,

economic, and political arenas. The Government of India (GoI) has two main bodies to advance gender equality: the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the National Commission for Women, which is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Both bodies work on national- and state-level legal and social policies to advance gender equality. The Ministry has widely implemented local-level micro-finance schemes to advance economic opportunities for rural women. The National Commission for Women has been instrumental in creating legislative changes, and has set up Complaint and Investigate Cells at the state level. The Grievance Cells receive complaints of gender-based violence and are mandated to investigate, provide referrals and counselling, and ultimately report on such cases. With a vibrant women's rights movement in India, there are continuous demands for better laws, provisions, and accountability for implementation. Most recent examples include the change in India's rape laws, where in 2006 marital rape was recognized. Currently, women's rights activists are demanding better provisions in Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code.

- India ranks 18th among the highest maternal mortality rates in the world with 540 deaths for every 100,000 births
- Only 48% of adult Indian women are literate.
- Among rural women, 36.1% have experienced physical violence in their adult lives.
- 66% of women who have experienced physical violence in their lifetimes are divorced, widowed, or deserted.
- Lower caste and tribal women are among those who experience the highest levels of physical violence.
- 85.3% of women reporting violence claimed that their current husbands were the Perpetrators.

According to the most recent Demographic and Health Survey analysis, only 43% of currently married women (between ages 15-49) are employed as The Women's Bill will also significantly change the demographics of class and caste among women politicians in leadership positions in the Indian political structure. It will create a path for women from lower classes and castes (who are currently confined to local-level governance) to enter state and national level governments. In addition to the existing reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, one third of the SC and ST candidates must be women. Other Backward Class (OBC) members are not included in the reservation due to the wide disagreement about who constitutes OBC and a lack of existing data on the OBC population. The two main arguments against the bill are that it will only benefit elite women (particularly in national level politics) and that there should be reservations for Dalit, minorities (particularly Muslim women), and OBCs. However, supporters of the bill do not agree with creating quotas within the existing 33% women quota in parliament, as SC and ST quotas already exist. The bill mandates that all political parties reserve one third of their electoral ticket for women, including in the already mandated reservations for SC and STs. This will inadvertently create spaces for lower caste and class women to enter state and national level politics. The passage and implementation of the Women's Bill, and its impact on the existing gender, class, and caste barriers, is yet to be realized, but one thing is clear: India's politics is moving closer to equitable inclusion than ever before.

4. Objectives

1. To study the perception of female students of higher secondary school towards women empowerment.
2. To study the perceptions of female students of higher secondary school towards women empowerment with reference to habitat of school.
3. To study the perceptions of female students of higher secondary school towards women empowerment with reference to category students.

5. Variables of the Study

Sr. No.	Name of Variable	Types of Variable	Level	Description of level	Source
1	Habitat	Dependent	2	1. Urban 2. Rural	Collected Information
2	Stream	Dependent	2	1. Arts 2. Science 3. Commerce	Collected Information
3	Caste	Dependent	2	1. Reserved caste 2. Unreserved caste	Collected Information
4	Women Empowerment	Independent			Prepared Investigator

6. Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There will be no significant difference between mean score of urban and rural female students of higher secondary school on women empowerment rating scale.
- H₀₂:** There will be no significant difference between stream-wise mean score of female students of higher secondary school on women empowerment rating scale.
- H₀₃:** There will be no significant difference between caste-wise mean score of female students of higher secondary school on women empowerment rating scale.

7. Research Design

To understand the strengths and weaknesses, analyze any particular research situation in the light of those strengths and weaknesses and select the approach, or combination of approaches, on the basis of that analysis. This notion further justifies the method selected for this study. A predominantly quantitative approach is appropriate for this kind of study, therefore it is the sole approach conducted for the study. Quantitative methods involving survey rating scale to collect the quantitative data. A study related to teachers' perceptions of their job inevitably results in some sensitive issues surfacing.

7.1 Sources of Data: Data collection remains an integral part of research design. There exists many ways in collecting data such as primary and secondary data. For the purpose of this study, primary and secondary data will be chosen as follows.

7.2 Primary Data: For the purpose of this study, rating scale and questionnaire will be prepared by the investigator and it will be used as the research instrument. Rating scale is a set of questions developed to gain necessary data to answer the problem of the study. The advantage of using rating scale is the fact that the researcher can collect all the completed responses within a short period of time. In addition to that, administering the rating scale to a large number of respondents is time efficient as well as less expensive.

7.3 Secondary Data: The secondary data will be obtained from secondary sources such as monthly publications, magazines, books, textbooks, articles, reports, as well as the Internet. In this study the data will be mainly taken from various publications related to education, textbooks, and journal articles as well as from websites, such as the official site of the Ministry of Education, the official site of the Education Department.

8. Population and Sample Size

In this present research all the female students of the higher secondary school of the Bareilly City from the Maharashtra State were considered as the population of the study, 300 female students as sample were selected randomly from a number of respondents from the selected lists of higher secondary schools from the Higher Secondary school sections of Bareilly City from the Maharashtra State. Female students of the higher secondary school of the Bareilly City from the Maharashtra State were selected by random sampling techniques by using lottery system for the present study.

9. Tools of the Study

In this present research rating scale and questionnaire were prepared and widely used to measure perception of female students of higher secondary school towards women empowerment and its educational implications. Women Empowerment Rating Scale were prepared by the positive and negative aspects and behavior of the female students of higher secondary school and in this concern perception of the students were measured with reference to research concern. In this instrument, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they are showing their response. The 5-point Likert-Scale would be used, which started with “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”.

10. Data Collection Procedure

The first procedure in conducting the data from the targeted organization by writing letters to the administration (headmasters) a week prior. Once the administrator of the schools approved, the researcher were contacted the representative in each schools and handed them the Women Empowerment Rating Scale and questionnaire.

11. Data Analysis Techniques

All the data collected from respondents were analyzed based on descriptive analysis by using the Statistical Method. The approach comprised descriptive analysis for all items; frequency analysis, internal consistency, t-Value applied to present collected data for the study.

12. Major findings of the study

From the above research it has been found that:

Mean score of urban habitat students were found higher than the and mean score of the rural habitat female students of higher secondary school on women empowerment rating scale.

Mean score of students of the science stream were found higher than the mean score of the arts and commerce female students of higher secondary school on women empowerment rating scale.

Mean score of unreserved caste students were found higher than the reserved caste students female students of higher secondary school on women empowerment rating scale.

13. Conclusion

From the above research it has been found that habitat, stream and caste of the female students of higher secondary school were found significant on women empowerment awareness responses.

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