

An Empirical Study of Major Determinants of Gender Equality and Its Role in Indian Society

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Abstract

There are a variety of understandings of the term empowerment due to its widespread use. **So when** empowerment is **seen** in terms of **the** ability to make **decisions**, disempowerment **means denying the** choice and opinion. **The term** empowerment is that it is **inevitably tied to** the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make **decisions** acquire **that** ability. **This** paper is an attempt to develop conceptual clarity of the term empowerment, **delimiting it from** several other overlapping concepts of gender equality, social inclusion, power, etc., and **proposing** and **advocating** an **integrative** approach to policy **action**, with planners **taking the work** towards an empowerment approach, develop ways **that** enable women to critically review their own situation and **to** participate in **the** creation and shaping of society as agents of change themselves. Present paper studies opinion of 500 housewives and working women from Ahmedabad with reference to their perception of gender equality

Key Words: Gender Equality, Gender Justice, Economic Security, Social Freedom

[1] Introduction

Women Empowerment refers to strengthening the social, economic and educational powers of women. It refers to an environment where there is no gender bias and has equal rights in community, society and workplaces.

According to United Nations "Empowering women is to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities"

1.1 Women Empowerment in India

In the Indian society the status of women has changed from time to time. In ancient period women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life. In medieval period, the status of women went down considerably. The woman was considered to be inferior to man. During the Muslim period of history they were deprived of their rights of equality with men. In the modern period, due to movement against women's subjugation to men and British influence on Indian culture and civilization, the position of women has once again undergone a change. Women's position in modern India has changed considerably. Their position in modern Indian society is equal to that of men, socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally. Their sufferings from sati, child marriage, institution of temple prostitution do not longer exist. Now they have right to receive education, inherit and own property, participate in public life and political life of nation. They have become economically independent. They can seek employment anywhere and remain not domestic slaves. So, they have certainly enjoying the equal status with Men in all respects.

For this change in the status of women, several factors like women's education, reform movements by many social reformers, women participation in politics and numerous social legislations are held responsible. Women's bill which passed in Rajya Sabha will definitely improve the participation of women in Government. It is not to deny the fact that women in India have made a considerable progress in the last sixty years, yet they have to struggle against many handicaps, social evils and discrimination in the male dominated society. In contemporary India, women occupy a paradoxical status. On the other, some wives are burnt because they did not bring enough dowries. In this context, empowerment of women becomes a very important issue for the policy makers, intellectuals, social activists, etc.

1.2 Indicators of Women Empowerment

(1) Education

Women's education is extremely important intrinsically as it is their human right and required for the flourishing of many of their capacities. It is, however, noticed that most programmes for education of girls and women in India have reinforced Gender roles specially motherhood in curriculum as well as impact evaluation. The huge study of nearly 94% of India's population done by Dreze and others looks at female literacy and its negative and statistically significant impact on child mortality. The questions of power are interlinked and we understand that what is necessary is both objective power in terms of economic resources, laws, institutional roles and norms held by others as well as subjective power in terms of self efficacy and entitlements. Empowerment of women is closely related to formal and informal sources of education.

(2) Health

Women's health is of crucial importance, which is greatly affected by the ways in which they are treated and the status they are given in the society as a whole. In present scenario, until the policy makers take a focused and long term interest in the advancement of women by ensuring reproductive rights and quality health care services, it will not achieve a breakthrough on the process of women empowerment. Women need to become empowered to ensure equal opportunities for training and promotion and equal wages for equal status. By providing better health services we can improve the quality of life of woman which in turn helps in empowering the woman

(3) Political Participation

Women's political participation has been considered a major measure of women's empowerment. Globally, through histories of the world we have records of very few regents, sovereigns, and active agents in nobility who were women. Champions of liberalism like John Stuart Mill had advocated women's participation in governance by the struggle for women suffrage in the self-avowed liberal west very well illustrates the entrenched nature of Patriarchal resistance to women's empowerment.

(4) Decision Making

In terms of decision-making NFHS II had reported in the rural areas women take 71% decisions regarding "what items to cook" 26% decisions regarding obtaining health care for herself 10% in purchasing jewellery or other major household items. 12% decisions were taken by women with reference to staying with their parents or siblings and 37% about how to spend money, which they had earned. In the urban areas these figures were 71%, 35%, 13%, 18% and 57% respectively. Women between ages 15 to 19 nearly 24% are not involved in any kind of decision-making only. 14% do not ask permission to go to the market. In rural sector 10% are involved with any decision-making and 74% need permission for going to the market. In urban sector however only 7% are not involved with any decision making and 53% need permission for going to the market. Survey reports that of the 52% illiterate women 74% of urban resident and 55% of rural resident have access to money.

(5) Career Development

Women's work is statistically less visible non-monetized and relegated to subsistence production and domestic side this accounts for 60% of unpaid family work and 98% of domestic work. The non-paid work includes domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, child care and care for the elderly and the handicapped-traditionally understood as women's work. Subsistence activities like pitches gardening post-harvest processing, feeding farm hands, livestock maintenance, gathering of fuel, forest produce, unpaid family labour in family farm or enterprise are done by women who are reported to be non-working

housewives Census estimates 51.93% men & 25% women workers while NSS estimates 52.7 male and 25.68 female workers. Most men are in stable employment.

[2] Literature Review

The chapter of literature review is broadly divided into two categories. First part of the chapter discuss about literatures focusing on women empowerment in general and the second phase of the chapter talks about various factors/ determinants of women empowerment.

Surekharao and Rajamanamma (1999) Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable women or group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.

Indiresan (1999) has said that Empowerment comes from Women's groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources.

Amin, Becker and Bayes (1998) split the concept of women's empowerment into three components each measured separately: Inter-spouse consultation index, which seeks to represent the extent to which husbands consult their wives in household affairs; Individual autonomy indexes which represents women's self-reported autonomy of physical movement outside the house and in matters of spending money; and the Authority index, which reports on actual decision-making power.

Kishor (2000) in his study used the variables of financial autonomy, participation in the modern sector, life time exposure to employment, sharing of roles and decision making ,family structure amenable to employment, equality in marriage, devaluation of women, women's emancipation, marital advantage and traditional marriage to determine empowerment. Jejeebhoy (1995) has used Knowledge autonomy, decision making autonomy, physical autonomy, emotional autonomy and economic and social autonomy and self-reliance etc variables used by him in his attempt to measure women empowerment.

Duvvury and Allendorf (2001) in "Domestic Violence in India: The Roles of Education and Empowerment" come with the finding that educated women are educating the uneducated women about their rights and privileges.

Sengupta (2003) in her study Women Leadership in Organizations: Sociocultural Determinants argues that, sex stereotypes are culturally based beliefs prescribing appropriate and inappropriate behaviours for the two genders.

Tapen (1998) Need for Women Empowerment opines that education provides formulation about health and nutrition, reproductive and sexual rights, family planning, seclusion, gender equality, environmental awareness, religious objectives, Political consciousness, economic opportunities, women rights and legal provision and consumption patterns etc which differently empower women in a complete sense.

Sundaram (2000) in his study Growth of Work Opportunities in India argues that rural women should be given an opportunity to learn while working.

Kothari (2014) has said that formulating a feminist agenda to empower women living in highly patriarchal and traditional surroundings with several obstacles. The 'agenda' is based on the premises that no doubt efficient policing, stringent punishments and legal measures would reduce the incidences of crime against women but these cannot eliminate growing gender inequality in India unless and until the mindset of the society is changed.

Hina Shah (2013) has carried out with the aim to identify strategies and policies which could create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs and/or would-be entrepreneurs in India. It aims to provide a set of practical and policy-worthy recommendations to promote the healthy growth of entrepreneurial activities and enterprises owned by women.

Fatima Bi (2016) has said that Women empowerment refers to increasing the economic, political, social, educational or spiritual strength of an entity or entities. Women employment is the key and the most essential element which directly influences a women's empowerment.

Kabutiei (2012) Women's participation in micro-finance activities as well as women's groups, generally, puts them in precarious positions where they are able to access credit. With access to great increasing, the women get empowered economically to the extent that they are able to make decisions on the use of the credit thus building on their capacities to make decisions at higher echelons such as on reproductive issues, cultural issues in the society as well as socio-economic spheres of their life. When women have the freedom to move interact with each other and the public, they get opportunities to learn from each other through cross-cultural and cross-boundary platforms. Such spaces empower women to the extent that they become more knowledgeable about the roles they need to play both at the family level and in the larger society, albeit getting influenced by those who already have such capacities.

[3] Research Methodology

Research methodology is framework or blueprint of entire research. it provides guidelines to the researcher as how the entire research will be carried out with respect to plan to collection and interpretation of data to meet the research objectives.

3.1 Research Objectives

- 1) To study major determinants of Women's Equality in Society
- 2) To evaluate impact of various factors of determinants on Women's equality with reference to her counterpart
- 3) To analyse holistic impact of all the determining factors, when measured together on women's equality as a model framework

3.2 Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant impact of all the major factors of gender equality on women's empowerment

H1: There is significant impact of all the major factors of gender equality on women's empowerment

3.3 Data Collection Plan

Present research was conducted in the Ahmedabad city and non-working married women are taken as population frame for the study. Total sample of 500 housewives were taken for the study. Data collection was done with the help of structured closed ended questionnaire by doing personal interview as survey method.

[4] Data Analysis and Interpretation

Person correlation was performed first to make base for the multiple regression. Table provides the Coefficient of relation between all independent variables and dependent variable.

Correlation							
	Gender Equality	Mobility & Visibility	Sense of Self Vision	Economic Security	Status in Family	Interaction in public spheres	in Non family groupss
Gender Equality	1.000	.912	.894	.945	.886	.901	.873
Mobility & Visibility	.912	1.000	.938	.967	.982	.983	.967
Sense of Self Vision	.894	.938	1.000	.973	.986	.963	.979
Economic Security	.945	.967	.973	1.000	.977	.967	.966
Status in Family	.886	.982	.986	.977	1.000	.973	.965
Interaction in public spheres	.901	.983	.963	.967	.973	1.000	.985
Participation in Non family groups	.873	.967	.979	.966	.965	.985	1.000
N= 500, All Correlation are statistically significant at 5% level of significant							

Coefficient of correlation was positive for all the variables and varied between 0.963 to 0.986. All coefficient of correlation were statistically significant at 5% level of the significant. Correlation summary provides the good base for the multiple regression.

The model summary of Gender Equality and all six explored variables is given in Table and it shows the coefficient of determination (R^2) under model which is 0.977, which meant all six factors combine explained 97.7 percent of the variations in Gender Equality.

Model Summary ^b									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.987 ^a	.977	.956	.24958	.897	623.207	6	493	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Participation in Non family groups, Economic Security, Sense of Self Vision, Status in Family, Mobility & Visibility, Interaction in public spheres									
b. Dependent Variable: Gender Equality									

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	186.213	6	32.37	623.207	.000 ^b
	Residual	24.823	493	.062		
	Total	221.036	499			
a. Dependent Variable: Gender Equality						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Participation in Non family groups, Economic Security, Sense of Self Vision, Status in Family, Mobility & Visibility, Interaction in public spheres						

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.325	.065		-1.933	.000		
	Mobility & Visibility	.329	.019	.228	10.796	.000	.449	2.227
	Sense of Self Vision	.150	.017	.102	5.773	.000	.643	1.556
	Economic Security	.302	.015	.346	19.248	.000	.622	1.609
	Status in Family	.188	.013	.185	9.373	.000	.516	1.938
	Interaction in public spheres	.245	.017	.271	12.194	.000	.406	2.464
	Participation in Non family groups	.145	.019	.138	6.367	.000	.426	2.346
a. Dependent Variable: Gender Equality								

The ANOVA Table is used to assess the overall significance of the regression model. In Table, the F-value (623.207) and the p-value is 0.000. This meant that model is

significant as p-values less than 0.05 at $\alpha = 0.05$ level. It further said that explored six variables significantly contribute in the variation of the Gender Equality.

[5] Conclusion

The study provides the coefficient of the model. According to the table it can be said that all explored factors is significantly influence on the Gender Equality. All factors are statistically significant as the p value of all the factors are less than 0.05. Among all the factors Economic Securities, Interaction in public spheres and Mobility & Visibility are mainly contributors which influence mostly in the Gender Equality. Other factors are also statistically significant but the intensity of the influence is low compare to other factors.

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