

Antecedents of Women Empowerment in Rural India



P.Shalini, S.Sudha

Abstract— *Women empowerment is one of the most important millennium development goals to reduce discrimination in developing countries. This paper attempts to explore the antecedents that has an influence on women empowerment in India. The sample consist of 277 rural women from various districts of Tamilnadu. The empirical results showed that the education, social and cultural issues, media and poverty are the antecedents for the women empowerment. Women having assets and bank account are also taken into consideration for the study. Finally we can conclude that the above factors need to be given importance to enhance the women role in the society and to reduce discrimination.*

Index terms: *Women empowerment, education, poverty, social and cultural issues and media.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The women community of a nation play a key role in the growth of the country.

The economy of a nation and composition of the country's population is shaped by human behaviour of the country's inhabitants.

The literacy rate is a predominant indicator of how well a country is developed. The literacy rate of the country's women population is a even more important determinant that indicates the progress of a nation. Women literacy rate shapes the economic and social conditions in which the country's people live. Government have various undertakings for the enrichment of the country such as population control, health and hygiene, employment of weaker societies etc. Women's literacy rate plays a dominant role for all these development activities to result in social upliftment swiftly.

Poverty Reduction is crucial to any country's development. When a country gives importance to women empowerment at policy level, and if the country makes sure the policies are executed properly poverty reduction in the nation can be achieved quickly. Involvement of women in economic activities results in economic and social growth of a nation.

Women Empowerment increases in participation of women in economic activities, that improves the nation's economy.

Women's economic participation is often categorized as formal and informal sector. Women's participation in industries and agricultural sector which come under formal sector can be assessed, while the participation in informal sector is not assessed. Women contribute to half of economically active population, still their contribution to the nation's economy improvement is very low. This has resulted in the government identifying women as underutilized potential. This potential has to be put to use so that the country can achieve its Millennium development goal.

The literacy rate in India has steadily increased from 18.32% in 1951 to 72.98% in 2011 and the increase in literacy rates for females and males were from 8.86% and 27.15% to 64.63% and 80.9% respectively according to the population censuses.

The participation of women in labor force has reduced from 35% to 29% in 2004. Half of the women in India are doing unpaid, informal and unprotected work. They are not represented well in all sectors. Women at leadership positions are also very less.

Agriculture employs 40% of women labor, but only 9% of women control land in India. Only 50% of women in India have access to formal banking system and have bank accounts. Around 60% of women do not possess any assets, more than 50% do not have cell phones. It is quite discouraging to know that around 80% of women do not use internet. The contribution of women to India's GDP is only 17% compared to the global average of 37%.

Facilitating the contribution of women in economic activity will increase our GDP by US\$700 billion by 2025. IMF has forecasted that with reduction of gender gap India can increase its GDP by 27%. Worldwide women influence 80% of buying decisions and control US\$ 20 trillion in spending.

The social benefits of empowering women are healthier, educated children which in turn raises human development levels.

In developing countries one in three business leaders have stated that empowering women has increased their profits.

MUDRA scheme of the Indian Government supports small and medium scale enterprises, this scheme is empowering women entrepreneurs, it is nice to know that around 78% of the borrowers under this scheme are women.

In our country private sectors play a vital role in narrowing down the gap between skill set and available jobs, this has empowered a lot of women.

A lot women can have a potential to become entrepreneurs if they are given proper vocational training and financial literacy.

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Private sector participation can help women improve in these aspects. Goods and services manufactured by women can be invested upon by private firms. They can also help in improving women's access to internet and connect women to better opportunities to monetize their products and services.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women Empowerment

With women empowerment we can create a self-empowered women who are free to make choices (Sisodia & Singh, 2009). The factors like women's age, education, decision making, paid work results in empowerment and poverty reduction (Izhar Ahmad Khan, Babar Shahbaz,*, Madiha Naz, Salma Umer and R. M. Amir, 2017). The empowerment is closely connected with household decision making authority of the women. This largely means that paid jobs of the women lead to spending of the money on children's welfare (Izhar Ahmad Khan, Babar Shahbaz,*, Madiha Naz, Salma Umer and R. M. Amir, 2017). Women empowerment is substantially affected by the variable poverty (Bushra a, Nasra Wajaha, 2015)

Social and cultural factors: The cultural and social norms to a large extent determines the quality of life of the women in rural areas (Mosavi et al. (2011). The availability of the microfinance to assist women in their endeavors is a positive indicator of women empowerment. The various financial schemes of our government is empowering women of weaker sections. The micro finance provided by the financial institutions has really impacted the livelihood of the women (Rahman, Mohammad Mafizur; Khanam, Rasheda; Nghiem, Son, 2017). The mobility of women in rural areas are restricted which impedes the idea of women empowerment (Izhar Ahmad Khan, Babar Shahbaz,*, Madiha Naz, Salma Umer and R. M. Amir, 2017)

Education

The educated women has more power to take her own decisions regarding household (Bushra a, Nasra Wajaha, 2015). The women can decide the number of children she wants to have if she has economic, educational and social empowerment. Education and control over their own income are two critical empowerment factors for Guatemalan women (Poelker, Katelyn E.; Gibbons, Judith L, 2018). The non-formal education programs like home based livelihood, parenting, leadership, priority setting, character building aimed at poverty reduction has resulted in empowerment of women and youth (Edralin, Divina M.; Tibon, Maria Victoria P.; Tugas, Florenz C 2015). The level of education of both husband and wife results democratic decision making in three areas of expenditure like daily shopping, consumer durables purchase, spending on children. The increase in women's education has shown some interesting positive results towards borrowing funds and had no effect on savings of the household (Cecilia Albert and Josep-Oriol Escardibul 2016). The female education has an impact on the gender system in families. i.e both gender are equally treated with reference to their education and work (Ghazala Noureen, 2015). The education of the women has led to giving

importance to their health, their participation in household decision making, usage of contraceptives (Riaz, Sofia; Pervaiz, Zahid, 2018).

Poverty

In urban areas the working women due to their employment in other cities move out and live as nuclear families and are more empowered (Preeti S Rawat 2014). The indicator of women empowerment are education either formal or non-formal, having a bank account, economic participation (Bushra a, Nasra Wajaha, 2015). The children's health status measured in terms of height and weight are result of mothers education (Yacob A. Zereyesus, Vincent Amanor-Boadu, Kara L. Ross, Aleksan Shanoyan, 2017).

Research gap (Media):

The impact of television, radio and newspaper (vernacular) on women empowerment was the research gap which is included in this study. The study considered how media helps women in their jobs, to develop their skills, keeps them of the political situation, help their children in their education or is it used for their entertainment. For future study we can consider the internet connectivity and social media effect on the rural women empowerment.

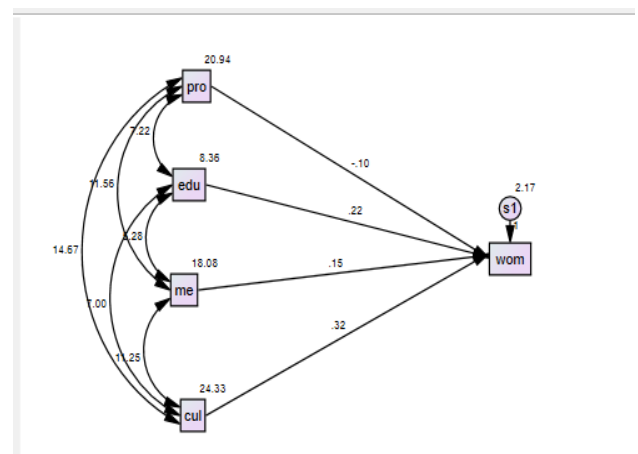
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

Women empowerment is taken as the dependent variable while education of the mother, social and cultural norms, poverty and media are the independent factors which determines the empowerment factor of women. A sample size of 277 was taken from villages in Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram District. Random sampling methodology was used.

Ho: There is no relationship between poverty, education of mother, social and cultural norms and women empowerment.

The analysis is done using the structural equation modelling.

PATH



Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	L a b e l
wom	<---	pov	-.100	.029	-3.456	***	
wom	<---	edu	.220	.038	5.829	***	
wom	<---	me	.153	.027	5.682	***	
wom	<---	cul	.318	.025	12.774	***	

The above table shows that all the factors are showing a significant value with P value less than .05.

CONCLUSION

Women empowerment is associated to the independent variables poverty, education of the women respondent, media, social and cultural factors. To improve women empowerment in Tamilnadu the above mentioned factors are very important. When women take up paid jobs outside the household poverty of the household can be alleviated. The money earned can be spent on their children and improve the savings of the household. Women will be given the control to spend the money freely. Empowered women can raise children who can lead a life in dignity and spend their earnings in educating their children. A educated women will ultimately give importance to educating her children. Media is another variable that is used to create awareness for women. Television and radio are generally used by women for improving their political awareness, entertainment, and training programs and opportunities given by the government and private sectors. Women empowerment is a consequence of cultural and social norms. Empowered women have the confidence to take decisions and self esteem. Social change can be driven only by women empowerment.

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