



REALITY AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA (A CASE STUDY OF RAJASTHAN STATE)

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ABSTRACT Women's empowerment is very essential for the development of society. The Indian women have cast of their age-old shackles of serfdom and male domination. She has come to her own and started scaling the ladders of social advance with proud and dignity. Women in India are now uplifted and emancipated and granted equal status with men in all walks of life-political, social, domestic and educational. But still women are facing problems in every sphere of life whether employment, health facilities, physical security or property rights. Women empowerment is still a distant dream. The present research paper attempts to peep into the reality and challenges of women empowerment in India. It is a descriptive study of 300 women's taken from three districts of Rajasthan.

KEYWORDS : Women Empowerment, Self-Help Group, Social Transformation, Domestic Violence.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens the innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power and experience (Hashemi Schuler and Riley, 1996). It is the process by which one can gain control over one's destiny and the circumstances of one's lives. Empowerment includes control over resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). (Baltiwala, 1994). Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The paradoxical situation has such that she was sometimes concerned as Goddess and at other times merely as slave.

In order to revive the past glory of women many groups around the world choose different themes each year relevant to global and local gender issues. The UN declared an International Women's Day theme for 2013 and it is "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women".

Women empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities of women. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (urban / rural) educational status social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on Women's empowerment exist at the national, state and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, and gender based violence and political participation. However there are significant gap between policy advancements and actual practice at the community level.

Review of Literature

H. Subrahmanyam (2011) compares women education in India at present and Past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empowers means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women. M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011) has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them. Duffo E. (2011) Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge The study argues that the inter relationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self-sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equally for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women. Venkata Ravi and Venkatraman (2005) focused on the effects of SHG on women participation and exercising control over decision making both in family matters and in

group activities.

Statement of Problem

Women empowerment in India is not possible unless violence against women is eradicated from the society. Women's rights and issues have always been a subject of serious concern of academicians, intelligentsia and policy makers. The literature survey indicates that there have been various studies on the women empowerment but there are very little empirical studies have been made in India especially in Rajasthan State on reality and challenges of women empowerment. Therefore, the study was undertaken in some selected districts of Rajasthan to judge the reality and challenges of women empowerment in India.

Objectives of the study

The present study was undertaken to meet the following objectives:

1. To know the need of Women Empowerment.
2. To analyze the Economic, social, legal and political factors influencing the Women Empowerment.
3. To study the Challenges in the way of Women Empowerment.

Research Methodology

Sources of Information: Primary as well as secondary data sources were used to generate evidence to supplement the research design. The primary data was collected from the respondents which included the rural, sub urban and urban women of Rajasthan State only. Secondary sources comprised books, journals, web-sites, news-papers and other documents published by the Government from time to time.

Type of Research: This research is basically descriptive and analytical in nature.

Sampling Plan

Sample Design: The respondents were the women who have been involved in organised, un-organised sectors and Self-Help Group. The sample was selected on the basis of convenience sampling by the researcher.

Sample Size: The sample size undertaken includes 300 women distributed equally (100 from each district) in five districts of Rajasthan. The samples of women are taken from Ajmer, Jodhpur, and Jaipur districts.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship of economic, social, legal and political factors on women empowerment.

H₀₂: The demographic variable i.e. age, education of the women does not have any influence on economic, social, legal and political empowerment of Women.

H₀₃: The Challenges faced by Women do not have any impact on women empowerment.

Analysis of Data and Discussions

The primary objective of the study is to analyse the reality and challenges of Women Empowerment in four dimensions of

empowerment i.e. economic, social, legal and political.

Measurement of Reality and Challenges Women Empowerment

An instrument was developed in the questionnaire consisting of 34 statements to measure the Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment. The responses on a five point Likert type rating scale have been used to compute a quantitative measure named as Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Scores (RCWES) for the purpose of analysis. The scores of all the statements have been added to calculate aggregate Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Score for each respondent. These scores have been used to analyze the impact of demographic factors on these scores. The scores of individual statements have been used to identify the factors using multivariate technique of factor analysis.

Identification of Factors for Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment

To eliminate the problems in analyzing large number of variables i.e. 34, closely related variables have been clubbed using factor analysis. A sixteen factor solution was sought from factor analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The principle component analysis method of extraction and varimax method of rotation has been used. Before using factor techniques, the appropriateness of data set for factor model was tested using Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO). The value of KMO statistic 0.503 was found which is greater than the desirable value 0.5. Thus the correlation between the pairs of variables is explained by other variables and hence factor analysis was found to be an appropriate analysis technique. Bartel's-test of sphericity was used to test the null hypothesis that variables are uncorrelated, thus the correlation matrix is identity matrix. As it can be seen from the table below that this null hypothesis is rejected as the appropriate chi-square statistic is significant at 0.05 levels. The appropriateness of factor analysis is thus automatically proved.

The Sixteen factor solution given by SPSS has explained 61.571 % variance. These factors were extracted by using rotated component matrix and were identified according to largest loading values in a particular factor. The variables clubbed and factors identified were named on the basis of commonality among them. A list of factors identified is mentioned in table.

Table 1: Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Factors

S. No.	Name of the Factors	Eigenvalues
1	Regular Participation in Social Activities	4.320
2	Discrimination with girl child/adult	4.135
3	Harmonious Relationship with External Organizations	3.927
4	Discrimination with Men in the Society and work place	3.992
5	Effective Economic Progress	3.894
6	Respectable Position in the Group	3.733
7	Increase in physical and intellectual assets	3.747
8	Reduction in Social Independence	3.616
9	Cooperation	3.621
10	Soundness in Financial Status	3.715
11	Enhancement in Credibility	3.658
12	Awareness of Health	3.833
13	Betterment in Self Confidence	4.095
14	Family Responsibility	3.850
15	Sexual and other Exploitation	3.758
16	Demand of Money	3.680

On the basis of above factors, there are three most dominant components viz. Regular Participation in Social Activities with eigenvalue of 4.320, Discrimination with girl child/adult with eigenvalue of 4.135 and Harmonious Relationship with External Organizations with eigenvalue of 3.927. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship of economic, social, legal and political factors on women empowerment is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. It can be said that the reality of women empowerment is there but still the women have to face challenges in some aspect of their life.

Measuring the impact of Challenges on Women Empowerment

In this the attempt is made by using the Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Scores (RCWES) as a composite score of 34 statements. These scores of individual statements have been added and

averaged to determine aggregate Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Scores (RCWES). The ten statements relating with family responsibility, demand of money, discrimination with girl child, discrimination with men, discrimination at work place, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, health issues, dependency of education and financial independence have been added and averaged to determine the aggregate of challenging score of women empowered and One-way ANOVA is applied.

Table: 2

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.323	20	.266	11.212	.000
Within Groups	6.623	279	.024		
Total	11.946	299			

In the above table, the p value is 0.0 which is greater than .05 hence there is significant difference hence the null hypothesis that the challenges do not have an impact on women empowerment is accepted and alternate hypothesis is rejected. Thus it can be said that the challenges would not have any impact on the women empowerment.

Influence of Age on Women Empowerment

As it has been discussed earlier that Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment was measured by an instrument consisting of 34 statements. The scores of individual statements have been used in earlier section for factor analysis. These scores of individual statements have been added to determine aggregate Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Scores (RCWES). This score has been used for analyzing the Influence of Age on Women Empowerment.

Table: 3

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.264	5	.053	1.10	.382
Within Groups	1.292	27	.048		
Total	1.556	32			

The p value is 0.382 which is greater than .05 hence there is not any significant difference hence the alternate hypothesis is accepted. The statistical significance of the differences between each pair of groups is provided in the Multiple Comparisons, which gives the results of the post-hoc tests but it can be applied only if significant difference exist which is not in this case.

Effect of Education on Social Capital Building and Women Empowerment

As stated earlier that the scores of individual statements have been added to determine aggregate Reality and Challenges of Women Empowerment Scores (RCWES). This score has been used to measure the effect of education on Women Empowerment.

Table: 4
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.246	3	.082	2.071	.104
Within Groups	11.700	296	.040		
Total	11.946	299			

In the above table, the p value is 0.104 which is greater than .05 hence there is not any significant difference hence the null hypothesis that the education does not have effect on women empowerment is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Challenges

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structure in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of the norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child which in present in almost all societies and communities. The society is more biased in favour of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception of Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural thus inflicting an injustice upon them. Poverty is the

reality of life for the vast majority women in India. It is another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. There are several challenges that are plaguing the issues of women's right in India. Targeting these issues will directly benefit the empowerment of women in India. These are related with education, poverty, health and safety, professional inequality, mortality and inequality and household inequality etc.

CONCLUSION

The popular UNESCO slogan should come in handy: **“educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family.”** Thus, the attainment in the field of income / employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor. The need of the hour is to identify those loopholes or limitations which are observing the realization of empowerment of women and this initiative must be started from the women folk itself as well as more importantly policy initiative taken by the state and society. Let us take the oath that we want an egalitarian society where everybody whether men or women get the equal opportunity to express and uplift one's well being and well being of the society as whole.

Women represent half the world's population and gender inequality exists in every nation on the planet. Until women are given the same opportunities that men are, entire societies will be destined to perform below their true potentials. The greatest need of the hour is change of social attitude to women. “When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”. It is essential as their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development.

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