

Empowerment Appraisal of Rural Women in Marathwada Region of Maharashtra State

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control and to transformative action. A study was undertaken on different aspects of women empowerment i.e. psychological, cultural, social, economical and political empowerment. The results of this study highlights that psychological empowerment are majority of women have self confidence but minimum in career ambition. In cultural empowerment, highest beneficiary women had freedom for deciding (food) menu and very less women had freedom wearing a kind of dress. In social empowerment, majority women had freedom to mix in women friends and minimum in to visit the hospitals. In economic empowerment, majority of women were empowered on all the items of economic empowerment except employing labourers, decision about marketing of produce and savings in fixed deposits. The political empowerment in different point was very low because they are not aware about their rights.

Keywords: *Women empowerment; Political empowerment;*

Women are the builder and moulder of the nation's destiny. Women empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision – making power and control and to transformative action. It is increasing self-reliance of poor people and especially poor women. It means that the women live their own life in a way that they think appropriate on the basis of their condition of family circumstances, qualities and capabilities of which they themselves are the best judges. Empowerment as a concept encompasses their social upliftment, political decision-making and economic independence. Thus, the process of empowerment of women enables them to realize the full potential and empower them in all spheres of life. Keeping this in view a study was conducted with the specific objective to appraise the extent of rural women empowerment in Marathwada region.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in randomly selected three districts viz. Parbhani, Hingoli and Nanded district in Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. From each district, two development blocks were randomly

selected. From each of the development blocks, two villages were randomly selected. Out of these villages those beneficiaries who were receiving benefits through women development programmes were selected. The list of women beneficiaries was obtained from the ICDS office in each Panchayat Samiti. Thus, twelve villages, having the highest number of women beneficiaries of developmental programmes, were selected. From each village, 10 beneficiary women were selected among the total beneficiaries in the village. Thus, the final study sample comprised of 120 beneficiaries. Women Empowerment Scale developed by *Tayde and Chole (2006)* was used to measure empowerment of women. The data were collected by personally interviewing the respondents and suitable statistical tools were used for analysis of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was observed that majority (65.00 %) of respondent belonged to medium empowerment category. The percentage of respondents belonging to low empowerment category was 20.00 per cent. As much as 15.00 per cent of respondents were found in

high empowerment category in the village community. None of the beneficiaries were found to belong to very low and very high category of women-empowerment. It could be concluded that majority of the respondents had medium category of women empowerment.

Application of the women-empowerment scale

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by women-empowerment scale

S. No.	Empowerment categories	N	% age
1.	Very Low (upto 54)	00	0.00
2.	Low (55 to 62)	24	20.00
2.	Medium(63 to 70)	78	65.00
3.	High (71 to 78)	18	15.00
4.	Very High (Above 78)	00	0.00
	Total	120	100.00
	Mean	70.04	
	S.D.	16.23	

Table 2. Distribution of respondents of each of the sub-items in women-empowerment

S. No.	Indicators	N	% age
A)	<i>Psychological empowerment</i>		
1.	Self confidence	96	80.00
2.	Courage	65	54.16
3.	Self reliance	74	61.67
4.	Feeling of security in family	120	100.00
5.	Career ambition	60	50.00
6.	Self image	78	65.00
B)	<i>Cultural empowerment</i>		
1.	Freedom to interact with male outside family	92	76.67
2.	Freedom for taking a kind of food	75	62.50
3.	Actual participation in festivals	78	65.00
4.	Freedom for performing festival ceremonies	110	91.66
5.	Freedom for wearing a kind of dress	36	30.00
6.	Freedom for attending pilgrim / religious place	76	63.33
7.	Freedom for deciding (food) menu	112	93.33
8.	Liberty for attending marriage ceremony	86	71.66
C)	<i>Social empowerment</i>		
1.	Self education	70	58.33
2.	Freedom to work		

	outside family	75	62.50
3.	Freedom to visit hospital/ doctor	60	50.00
4.	Freedom for adopting practices for maintaining health	68	56.66
5.	Participation in decision about family planning	96	80.00
6.	Participation in community action	72	60.00
7.	Feeling of social security	108	90.00
8.	Participation in decision about education of children	110	91.66
9.	Participation in decision about girls marriage	84	70.00
10.	Possessing desired social status	84	70.00
11.	Healthy social environment	90	75.00
12.	Appreciation by family members for significant contribution	96	80.00
13.	Access to modern technology	60	50.00
14.	Freedom to mix with (women) friends	112	93.33
15.	Access to water	72	60.00
16.	Access to fuel/energy	72	60.00
D)	<i>Economic empowerment</i>		
1.	Opportunity for economic development	94	78.33
2.	Freedom for selection of job	86	71.66
3.	Personal saving in form of fixed deposit	68	56.66
4.	Operating personal account in bank	32	26.66
5.	Participation in decision about adoption of modern technology in home/enterprise	84	70.00
6.	Participation in decision about purchasing building/ house	92	76.67
7.	Participation in decision about marketing of produce	35	29.16
8.	Participation in purchase of input for family enterprise	78	65.00
9.	Authority to employ laborers	42	35.00
10.	Freedom for spending on entertainment of guest	96	80.00
11.	Freedom for offering presents		

	to relatives	94	78.33
E)	<i>Political empowerment</i>		
1.	Holding a political position at present	5	4.16
2.	Freedom for participation in active politics	30	25.00
3.	Awareness of human rights	56	46.67
4.	Awareness of legislation for women	32	26.66
5.	Awareness of political institution	8	6.66

Psychological empowerment : Data given in Table 2 showed that cent per cent women were feeling secured in their family, followed by items of psychological empowerment in following descending order: self confidence (80.00%), self image (65.00 %), self reliance (61.67%), courage (54.16%), and career ambition (50.00 %).

Cultural empowerment : It is evident from Table 2 that items of cultural empowerment were in following descending order: freedom for deciding (food) menu (93.33 %), freedom for performing festival ceremonies (91.66 %), freedom to interact with male outside family (76.67%), liberty for attending marriage ceremony (71.66%), actual participation in festivals (65 %), freedom for attending pilgrim /religious place (63.33 %), freedom for taking a kind of food (62.50 %) and freedom for wearing kind of dress (30.00 %). Thus, a high majority of women were culturally not empowered to wear the dresses of their choice. The cultural empowerment index was 82.00.

Social empowerment : A look at Table 2 reveals that items of social empowerment in descending order: freedom to mix with women friends (93.33 %), participation in decision about education of children (91.66 %), feeling of social security (90.00 %), participation in decision about family planning welfare (80.00 %), healthy social environment (75.00 %), participation in decision about girls marriage and possessing desired social status were 70.00 per cent, Freedom to work outside family (62.50 %), access to fuel / energy, access to water and participation in community action were 60.00 per cent, self education 58.33 per cent, freedom for adopting practices for maintaining health 56.66 per cent, freedom to visit hospital/doctor 50.00 per cent. The social empowerment index was 80.88.

Economic empowerment : It is noticed from Table 2

that items of economic empowerment in descending order were, Freedom for spending on entertainment of guest (80.00 per cent), opportunity for economic development and freedom for offering presents to relative were (78.33 per cent), participation in decision about purchasing house /building (76.67 per cent), freedom for selection of job (71.66 per cent), participation in decision about adoption of modern technology in home/enterprise (70.00 per cent), operating personal account in bank (56.66 per cent), authority to employ labourers (35.00 per cent), participation in decision about marketing of produce (29.16 per cent), personal saving in form of fixed deposit (26.66 per cent). The economic index was found to be very high i.e. 84.48 per cent.

Political empowerment : It was observed from Table 2 that, 46.67 per cent, 26.66 per cent, 25.00 per cent, 6.66 per cent and 4.16 per cent of them had low political empowerment about awareness of human rights, awareness of legislation for women, freedom for participation in active politics, holding a political position at present and awareness of political institution, respectively.

Table 3. Empowerment of women on main indicators:

S.No.	Main indicators	Index	Rank
1.	Psychological empowerment	74.42	IV
2.	Cultural	82.00	II
3.	Social	80.88	III
4.	Economical	84.48	I
5.	Political empowerment	58.68	V

Table 4. Relationship of the personal and socio-economical characteristics with Women-empowerment

S. No.	Characters	Coefficient of correlation
1.	Age	-0.26**
2.	Education	0.295**
3.	Caste	-0.065
4.	Marital status	0.211*
5.	Type o family	0.010
6.	Occupation	0.208*
7.	Land holding	0.221*
8.	Annual income	0.199*
9.	Social participation	0.265**
10.	Cosmopolitaness	0.306**
11.	Use of source's of information	0.436**

* = Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** = Significant at 0.01 level of probability

Table 5. Multiple regression of the personal and socio-economic characteristics with empowerment

S. No.	Variables	B (i)	S.E.	't' value
1.	Age	-0.380	0.286	-1.331
2.	Education	1.461	1.917	7.620**
3.	Caste	-1.075	1.891	5.689**
4.	Marital status	1.196	8.402	1.424
5.	Type o family	1.933	4.717	4.099**
6.	Occupation	2.611	1.114	2.342*
7.	Land holding	-0.604	0.175	3.424**
8.	Annual income	2.795	3.759	7.435**
9.	Social participation	0.439	2.121	2.071*
10.	Cosmopoliteness	3.720	2.728	3.633**
11.	Use of source's of information	2.915	8.415	3.464**

$R^2 = 0.736$

F = value = 7.96

* = Significant at 0.05 level of probability

** = Significant at 0.01 level of probability

Comparative empowerment on components of scale:

In Table 3 different indices for different main indicators of empowerment are given. It is observed that major indicator was economical empowerment as it got the 'I' rank. Then cultural empowerment occurred II rank, social empowerment III, psychological empowerment IV and political empowerment got last rank i.e. V. Thus, there was the highest empowerment in case of economic and the lowest in political component.

Relational Analysis: A cursory look at Table 4 indicates that almost the independent variables like age (-0.26), education (0.295), social participation (0.268), cosmopoliteness (0.306) and use of sources of information (0.436) were positively and significantly related with empowerment at 0.01 level of probability. While marital status (0.211), occupation (0.208), land

Indian Res. J. Ext. Edu. 10 (1), January, 2010

holding (0.221) and annual income (0.199) was positively and significantly related with empowerment at 0.05 level of probability. However, variables viz. caste and type of family could not establish any relationship with the empowerment of women empowerment programmes.

It is revealed from Table 5 that the 'F' value was 7.96 which is significant and coefficient of determination was 0.736 meaning that 73.60 per cent variation in the empowerment was explained by the set of selected eleven independent variables. The unexplained variation of 26.40 per cent may be attributed to the factors not included in the study. Further, it is concluded that out of eleven variables, nine variables, nine variables viz. education, caste, type of family, occupation, land holding, annual income, social participation, cosmopoliteness and sources of information were significant positive contribution to empowerment. The results of this study are inline with the findings of Kala (2004), Pinto(1995)and Hossain (2005).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study concludes that high empowerment of beneficiary women could take place in economic, cultural, social and psychological walk of life. There was no adequate political empowerment among women beneficiary of development programmes.

The empowerment of beneficiary women was quite high and it cannot be generalized for general masses of rural women. It implies that active participation and deriving benefits of various development programmes is necessary for bringing about empowerment among rural women. The development departments and extension agencies should therefore involve women in development programmes with a purpose to take benefits to them.

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