



**An Empirical Investigation on The Factors That Impact Women's
Empowerment in Karur District**

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ABSTRACT

"Women Empowerment" is a trending subject in many parts of the globe. The ideas of "women empowerment" and "equality of women and men" are universal. Creating a society where women have more agency in decision-making is what we mean when we talk about women's empowerment. They act independently, considering not only their personal interests but also those of society at large. A Millennium Development Goal focusing on advancing gender parity and women's empowerment shows that this issue is very important to the development agenda (UN 2002). There are numerous angles, sides, and levels to the idea of empowerment. Empowerment refers to the process of providing individuals with greater means and abilities to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and gain access to a wide range of social, political, educational, religious, and cultural organizations that shape their lives. Female empowerment and its determinants were the primary research foci of this intervention.

Key Words: The empowerment of women, political participation, mobility, gender equality, the perspective of women, and the social and economic environment.



Introduction

The idea of empowering women has become popular because women are routinely and systematically denied access to resources, knowledge, and freedom, even though they are usually the ones who have to take care of their families' basic needs. They do about 60% of the work in the world and make up half of the world's people. Sad to say, women only own 1% of land and only make 10% of the world's income. In a patriarchal society, they are also not treated equally; even though they have helped the country move forward, they are not recognized or counted. Increasing women's freedom of choice in four major areas is called women's empowerment.

These areas are information access, inclusion and involvement, accountability, and the ability of local organizations to do their jobs. This process is good for women. people want to gain "power" by owning more of i) things that can be used; ii) people and their knowledge, like information, ideas, and conversations; iii) money, like information about how much money they make and where they borrow it; and iv) the ability to make decisions at home, in their community, in society, and across the country.

The process of empowerment includes several parts that work together to make it happen. The first is economic freedom, which means having access to and control over production and resources. The second is knowledge and awareness empowerment, the third is self-image empowerment, and the last is autonomy. Giving women more power brings attention to their health, schooling, and jobs.

It's an important part of sustainable growth (Meenakshi Joshi, 2004). Empowering Women from an Indian Point of View: In a number of states, the State Commission for Women is called Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Indira The Mahila Yojana, the Mahila Samridhi Yojana, and the reservation of a third of the places in Panchayats and local bodies are all important steps that were taken to improve the lives of women and give them more power in the political, economic, and social spheres.



Review of literature

In this sense, Kabeer (2001) defined empowerment more accurately as an increase in people's ability to make strategic life decisions in situations where this ability has previously been denied. She proposed three connected aspects to achieve these nine options. These elements were resources, agency, and achievement. Resources refer to the circumstances in which decisions are made. There are two kinds of resources.

First, there are material resources, such as land and property. Second, non-material resources include relationships, networks, rules, conventions, and practices. The second facet of empowerment is agency, which relates to the process. It is the ability to determine goals, motivation, and efforts. The combination of resource and agency makes choices possible. The third dimension, achievement, relates to the potential created by the preceding dimensions. Failure to recognize the potential results in incompetence and disempowerment. Women's empowerment includes welfare, access to resources, raising awareness, and exercising control (UNICEF 1994).

Welfare refers to material benefits without the active participation of women, access to resources refers to the ease with which resources are available, awareness refers to a growing awareness of the importance of achieving gender equality, and control refers to the ultimate level of gender equality and female empowerment. Bennett (2002) coined the term 'social inclusion' alongside empowerment. Bennett described empowerment as "enrichment of assets and capabilities," and social inclusion as "removal of institutional barriers and enhancement of incentives for access to assets and development opportunity." All of the frameworks for women's empowerment take nearly identical approaches to conceptualizing women's empowerment. However, studying these frameworks gives a foundation for a thorough knowledge of the theoretical concept of women's empowerment. The combination of the aforementioned frameworks leads to the conclusion that empowerment is essentially the growth of confidence inside an individual or group to generate competency, strength, and collective control over their surroundings.



According to Malhotra et al. (2002), the vast majority of investigations employed quantitative methods. In the majority of these research, women's empowerment was viewed as an outcome of interest. In certain research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies (triangulation) was used. However, few of these research investigated household well-being. Furthermore, some of the research examined women's empowerment as a multidimensional notion. In this context, various dimensions were employed to assess women's empowerment.

A description of some of these dimensions is provided below: Steele et al. (1998) studied the multidimensional idea of women's empowerment and classified it into four aspects. These included women's mobility, involvement in home decision making, husband's attitude, her attitude toward her children's education, and age at marriage.

In her study in rural Bangladesh, Parveen (2005) developed a composite index of women's empowerment based on six dimensions: economic contribution to the household; access to resources; asset ownership; participation in household decision making; perception of gender awareness; and capacity to cope with household stocks. This study included both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Regression analysis was used to generate a cumulative empowerment index across all categories and use it as the dependent variable. It is an excellent attempt to operationalize the multidimensional concept of women's empowerment because it addresses various elements of it. However, women's mobility, which is seen to be a significant aspect in defining women's empowerment, was not deemed the major dimension of women's empowerment.

Need for the study

Researchers in many parts of the world, including India, have likely used a small number of criteria to assess women's empowerment in all its facets. Further investigation on the disparities in women's There are also very rare cases of people being empowered. A comprehensive and comparative study of women's empowerment in rural and urban areas is required due to the strong belief that when women are supported and empowered, it leads to healthier families, higher rates of school attendance, improved agricultural productivity,



higher incomes, and overall societal benefits. To that end, the research has used eight different domains, each with its own set of measurable indicators, in an effort to assess the level of women's empowerment. 1. Communication that is based on gender 2. Flow 3. Taking Part in Community A. Engaging in political activities 5. Right to manage assets Determination 6. Liberty 7. Crimes perpetrated against females The ninth consideration is fertility and family planning.

Objectives of the study

- To determine the extent to which women are empowered on a micro level in both rural and urban areas
- To investigate the socio-economic and demographic differences that exist between rural and urban areas, as well as the factors that determine women's empowerment in both settings
- To propose suitable measures and appropriate strategies for enhancing women's empowerment in both rural and urban settings.

Sampling

The study took place in the Tamil Nadu area of Karur. Based on the fact that one of the eight domains (dimensions) of women's empowerment in this study is the level of involvement of women in the family building process, the sample group was made up of married women who have had children before. The people who could take part in the study had to be between the ages of 15 and 29, because that's when most women are fertile. So, the women who took part in the study are married and between the ages of 15 and 29. At the time of the interview, they had at least one living child.

Sample Size

The sample size of 200 respondents was selected from Karur city. All the respondents were administered of the questionnaire.



Data analysis and Interpretation

Percent distribution of women by selected background characteristics and area

Background characteristics	Rural N=100	Urban N=100	ALL N=200
Age			
<19	6.2	6.8	6.5
20-24	41.8	51.8	46.2
25-29	52.0	42.5	47.2
Mean	25.4	24.86	25.12
Husband Wife Age difference (years)			
<5	44.5	45.8	45.1
>5	55.5	54.2	54.9
Women Education			
Illiterate	13.5	14.2	13.9
Primary (1 - 5)	23.7	14.5	19.1
Middle (6 – 8)	27.0	29.3	28.1
High school (9 – 10)	26.8	23.2	25.0
Higher Secondary and above	9.0	18.0	11.0
Spouse Education			
Illiterate	15.2	9.0	12.1
Primary (1 - 5)	22.3	13.7	18.0
Middle (6 – 8)	22.0	23.3	22.6
High school (9 – 10)	29.0	31.0	30.0
Higher Secondary and above	11.5	23.0	17.2
Community			
SC/ST	25.2	17.0	21.1
Other caste	27.8	83.0	78.9
Women occupation			
Working	36.2	18.0	27.1



Non-Working	63.8	82.0	72.9
Socio economic status			
Low	54.5	27.8	41.1
Medium	28.0	34.2	31.1
High	17.7	238.0	27.8
Type of Marriage			
Love marriage	11.8	9.2	10.5
Arranged Marriage	88.2	90.8	89.5
Type of family			
Nuclear Family	60.2	53.0	59.6
Joint Family	39.8	47.0	43.4
Exposure to media			
No exposure	6.2	5.0	5.6
Low	68.8	72.5	70.6
High	25.0	22.5	23.8

The socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the women are presented in Table among the 200 women included in the survey, half of them were from rural and the remaining half from urban areas. In total, 47.2 percent of women were in the age group of 25-29 years, 46.2 percent were in the age group of 20-24 years and 6.5 percent were aged 19 years or less. The overall mean \pm sd age of the women was 25.12 ± 2.9 years. It was 25.4 ± 2.93 years for women in rural and 24.86 ± 2.8 years for women in urban areas. The husband wife age difference of less than or equal to five years was 44.5 percent in rural and it was 45.8 percent in urban area.

In all, only 13.9 percent were illiterates. The proportion of Illiterates did not vary much among women in rural and urban areas. It was 13.5 percent in rural and 14.2 percent in urban areas. The proportion of women who had illiterate husband was 15.2 percent in rural and 9.0 percent in urban areas. The proportion of husband studied higher secondary and above was 11.5 percent in rural and 23.0 percent in urban areas. Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe



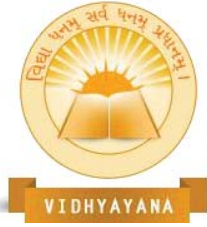
respondents together constituted about one-fifth (21.1 percent) of the total sample. The proportion of SC/ST women was substantially higher in rural (25.2 percent) than in urban areas (17.0 percent). The proportion of women working was 27.1 percent of the total sample. In rural areas proportion of women working was 36.2 percent whereas in urban areas He was 18.0 percent.

The Socio-Economic Status (SES) of each woman was assessed based on the household amenities and possession of selected household items. It is observed that overall 41.1 percent of women had a low SES, 31.1 percent had a medium and 27.8 percent had a high SES. The proportion of women who had a high SES was more than double in urban (38.0 percent) than in rural areas (17.5 percent). Regarding type of marriage, 11.8 percent of women had love marriage in rural and 9.2 percent women had love marriage in urban areas. In total, 10.5 percent of women had love marriage.

The distribution of the respondents by type of family revealed that 59.6 percent belonged to nuclear family and the rest belonged to joint family. The proportion of 47 respondents belonged to nuclear family was higher (60.2 percent) in rural than in urban areas (53.0 percent). It is found that overall 5.6 percent of women had no exposure, 70.6 percent had low exposure to media and 23.8 percent had high exposure to media.

The percentage distribution of women based on specific background traits and their meal-sharing practices with family members.

Background Characteristics	Rural				Urban			
	N	Take lastly	Depends	Take together	N	Take lastly	Depends	Take together
Age								
<19	6	12.0	16.0	72.0	7	14.8	40.7	44.4
20-24	42	6.6	6.6	86.8	51	7.9	48.3	43.4
25-29	52	5.3	6.2	88.5	43	7.1	55.3	37.6
	$\chi^2=5.26$		P=0.072		$\chi^2=15.9$		P=0.452	



Traditionally, a woman in the family has to serve food to all other family members and take her food only at the end. Hence, an assessment is made to observe whether the women take food along with other members in the family. The results of the analysis of data presented in the table revealed that substantially higher proportion of rural women (86.8 percent) take food together with other family members compared to urban women (44.4 percent).

The percentage distribution of women based on specific background traits and their meal-sharing practices with family members.

Background Characteristics	Rural				Urban			
	N	Take lastly	Depends	Take together	N	Take lastly	Depends	Take together
Illiterate	14	3.7	3.7	92.6	14	17.5	64.9	17.5
Primary	24	10.5	5.3	84.2	15	5.2	46.6	48.3
Middle	26	8.3	8.3	83.3	29	11.1	42.7	46.2
High school and above	36	2.8	8.4	88.8	42	3.6	53.0	43.5
	$\chi^2=$ 3.762		P=0.288		$\chi^2=$ 15.897		P=0.001	

The results of the analysis of data presented in the table revealed that substantially higher proportion of rural women (92.6 percent) take food together with other educational level is compared to urban women (48.3 percent).

Overall, the results showed that rural women are more empowered than urban women in the practice of taking food together with other family members in the family irrespective of their background characteristics which implies that women are considered equal in status and given equal importance in practice which is cutting across all the societal taboos in villages is a good sign for both family and national prosperity. In urban areas education of women have significantly positive effect on women empowerment indicator on taking food with other family members.



Conclusion

Significant results were derived from micro-level, domain-level, and logistic regression studies to enhance comprehension of women's empowerment in rural and urban contexts. Women aged 25 to 29 exhibited more authority than younger women in both urban and rural areas, as indicated by this study. The survey indicated that women's empowerment increased with age.

The presence of spouses who had completed at least their high school education resulted in a detrimental effect on the empowerment of women in both rural and urban settings. It is generally agreed upon that the assistance of the husband was essential in the process of achieving women's empowerment. For this reason, husbands need to adopt a different perspective and attitude in order to strengthen the empowerment of women. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the connection between women's participation in social networking or group activities and their level of empowerment. It was established, on the basis of the data that was shown earlier, that the empowerment of women would increase in proportion to the certainty that they would have in their economic future. According to the findings of the study, women's participation in political processes led to an increase in their level of empowerment in rural areas. A conclusion was reached that as the political interests of women continue to expand, the political landscape will improve, which will result in women gaining more influence. In the conclusion, the research concluded that the most significant variables that influence women's empowerment are their economic independence, awareness, the efforts of groups, and social surroundings that are supportive.



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