



**An Empirical Investigation of The Factors Affecting Women's
Empowerment in The Karur District**

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ABSTRACT

"Women Empowerment" is currently all the rage in a lot of countries. The concepts of "equality of women and men" and "women empowerment" are timeless and applicable everywhere. What we mean when we speak about empowering women is building a society where they have more say in important decisions. They make their own decisions while keeping societal and individual interests in mind. This topic is highly significant to the development agenda, as highlighted by a Millennium Development Goal that aims to advance gender parity and women's empowerment (UN 2002). Emancipation can be understood from a variety of perspectives. The term "empowerment" describes the process of giving people more agency in the many spheres of society, including but not limited to: politics, education, religion, and culture, as well as in negotiating with and gaining access to these institutions. This intervention's major research foci were female empowerment and the factors that determine it.

Keywords: Women's empowerment, political engagement, mobility, gender equality, women's perspective, and the social and economic context.



Introduction

Empowering women is popular because women are often denied resources, expertise, and freedom, even though they must care for their families' basic needs. They make up half the world's population and do 60% of its work. Unfortunately, women own 1% of land and earn 10% of the world's revenue. They are also marginalised in patriarchal societies despite their contributions to the nation. Empowering women means expanding their choices in four areas.

These include information availability, inclusion and involvement, accountability, and local organisation function. Women benefit from this process. People want "power" by owning more things that can be used, people and their knowledge, like information, ideas, and conversations, money, like information about how much they make and where they borrow it, and the ability to make decisions at home, in their community, in society, and across the country.

Several pieces work together to empower. The first is economic freedom, or control over output and resources. Secondly, knowledge and consciousness, then self-image, and finally autonomy. Powering women raises awareness of their health, education, and careers.

This is crucial to sustainable growth (Meenakshi Joshi, 2004). Empowering Indian Women: In some states, the State Commission for Women is called Rashtriya Mahila Kosh or Indira. The Mahila Yojana, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, and the reservation of a third of Panchayat and local body seats improved women's life and gave them more political, economic, and social influence.

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

A limited number of criteria have probably been utilised by researchers in a variety of regions across the globe, including India, in order to evaluate women's empowerment in all of its variations. More research has to be done on the differences that exist between. Additionally, there are extremely uncommon instances of someone gaining power. As a result of the widespread belief that when women are supported and empowered, it results in healthier families, higher rates of school attendance, improved agricultural productivity, higher incomes, and overall societal benefits, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive and comparative study of women's empowerment in both rural and urban areas. In order to achieve this goal, the research has utilised eight distinct domains, each of which has its own distinctive collection of measurable indicators, in an effort to evaluate the degree to which women are empowered. 1. Communication that prioritises one gender above another 2. To flow Third, Participating in the Community A. Participating in political activities 5. The ability to administer assets The quality of being determined Sixth, liberty 7. Criminal



offences committed against female inmates Fertility and family planning are the eighth factor to take into consideration.

Objectives of the study

- Assess the level of women's empowerment at a micro level in rural and urban locations.
- Examine the socio-economic and demographic variances between rural and urban areas, and the variables influencing women's empowerment in both contexts.
- To provide effective measures and strategies to improve women's empowerment in rural and urban areas.

Sampling

The Karur region of Tamil Nadu was the site of the research. We chose married women with a history of childbearing as our sample group since this is one of the eight elements of women's empowerment that we're examining in this research. People could only participate in the study if they were between the ages of 15 and 29, as that is the window of opportunity for most women to conceive. Married women aged 15–29 made up the bulk of the study's participants. There was at least one living child among them when the interview took place.

Sample Size

From the city of Karur, it was decided to pick a sample size of two hundred respondents. The questionnaire was given to each and every one of the respondents on the survey.

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

Of the 200 women who participated in the study, half lived in rural areas and the other half in urban areas; the table displays their socioeconomic and demographic features. Of the entire female population, 47.2% were between the ages of 25 and 29, 46.2% were between the ages of 20 and 24, and 6.5% were 19 or younger. The average age of the ladies was 25.12 years with a standard deviation of 2.9. For women residing in urban areas, it was 24.86 ± 2.8 years, while for those in rural regions, it was 25.4 ± 2.93 years. The percentage of rural areas with a husband-wife age gap of five years or fewer was 44.5%, while the urban areas had 45.8%. Out of the total population, just 13.9% were illiterate. Neither rural nor urban women differed significantly in the proportion of illiterates. In rural areas, it was 13.5%, while in urban areas, it was 14.2%. Fifteen and a half percent of rural women and nine percent of urban women had husbands who were illiterate. While 21.0% of urban husbands had completed secondary education or above, just 11.5% of rural husbands did so. Respondents from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes made up around twenty-one percent of the overall sample. In rural areas, the proportion of SC/ST women was much greater than in urban areas, at 25.2% compared to 17.0%. Women made up 27.1% of the workforce in this sample. While just 18.0% of women in urban regions had jobs, 36.2% of women in rural areas did. The amenities and possession of specified household items were used to determine each woman's Socio-Economic Status



(SES). In terms of socioeconomic status, 41.1% of women were considered to be low-income, 31.1% to be medium-income, and 27.8% to be high-income. More than twice as many women in urban regions (38.0%) as in rural areas (17.5%) had a high socioeconomic status. In terms of marital status, 11.8% of rural women and 9.2% of urban women were married for love. The percentage of women who were married for love was 10.5% overall. Based on the breakdown of respondents by family type, we know that 59.6% were nuclear families and the other respondents were joint families. More people living in rural areas (60.2%) belonged to nuclear families than in urban areas (53.1%), according to a survey of 47 people. Results show that overall, 5.6% of women had no exposure to media, 70.6% had low exposure, and 23.8% had excessive exposure.

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
	$\chi^2=5.26$		$P=0.072$		$\chi^2=15.9$		$P=0.452$	

In traditional family settings, women are typically responsible for serving dinner to all family members before they eat themselves. An assessment is conducted to see if the women have meals with other family members. The data analysis from the table showed that a significantly larger percentage of rural women (86.8 percent) have meals 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 study of the data presented in the table revealed that a significantly higher number of rural women (92.6 percent) take food along with other educational levels than urban women (48.3 percent). Overall, the findings revealed that rural women are more empowered than urban women in the practice of sharing food with other family members, regardless of their background characteristics, implying that women are considered equal in status and given equal importance in practice, which cuts across all societal taboos in villages and is a good sign for both family and national prosperity. In metropolitan regions, women's education has a considerable favorable effect on their empowerment indicator when it comes to eating with other family members.

Conclusion

To better understand women's empowerment in both urban and rural settings, studies using logistic regression, micro-level analysis, and domain-level data produced significant results. This study found that in both urban and rural regions, women aged 25 to 29 displayed more authority than younger women. The poll found that women's agency grew as they got older. In both urban and rural areas, women's empowerment was hindered by the prevalence of



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husbands with a high school diploma or equivalent. In order to achieve women's emancipation, it is often acknowledged that the husband's support was crucial. This is why husbands, in order to help women feel more empowered, should change the way they think and act. The researchers set out to see whether there was a correlation between women's empowerment and their involvement in online communities and other forms of group activity. The preceding data demonstrated that women's empowerment will rise in direct correlation to their level of economic future certainty. Women in rural areas were shown to have more agency when they were involved in political processes, the study found. It was decided that women will gain more influence in politics as their interests grow and the political climate improves. Economic independence, awareness, group efforts, and supportive social surrounds were determined to be the most significant characteristics influencing women's empowerment, according to the research.



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