



Research Paper

Women Empowerment: -A Case Study of Rural Areas in Tehsil Bhandarwah.

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women empowerment in Bhandarwah Tehsil, using various indicators based on data from primary and secondary sources. The desire to empower others is both a human trait and multifaceted phenomena. Though political or development processes, it lets individuals or groups to participate and succeed in families, communities and countries. Many studies have linked empowerment to a variety of developmental outcomes. Woman has achieved great progress in several domains including health, education and work over the last few decades. However, as the population grows, violence against women is on the rise, as is women's underrepresentation in decision making. Women's rights or hampered by discriminatory laws controlling marriage, land, property and inheritance. Women's decision-making power in the home, financial autonomy, freedom of mobility and access to education was all highlighted as key indicators. According to data research, decision making power in women's households and freedom of travel vary greatly depending on their age, education and economic status. Only a small percentage of women had final choice over how their earnings were spent. The survey also found that while educational qualifications and access to jobs are important variables in promoting women's empowerments, the degree to which this goal is achieved is mostly determined by the mindset of the women.

Keywords: -Empowerment, Decision Making, Education, Gender Equality.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the last five decades, the concept of women empowerment has undergone a sea change from welfare-oriented approach to equity approach. It has been understood as the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. Empowerment particularly includes control over resources and ideology. According to Sen and Batliwala (2000) it leads to a growing intrinsic capability greater self-confidence, and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barrier. This view mainly emphasizes on two important aspects. Firstly, it is a power to achieve desired goals but not a power over others. Secondly, idea of empowerment is more applicable to those who are powerless-whether they are male or female, or group of individuals, class or caste. Though concept of empowerment is not specific to women, yet it is unique in that and it cuts across all types of class and caste and also within families and households (Malhotra et al, 2002). Women empowerment is also defined as a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz. health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities (viz. self-awareness and self-confidence) [Human Development in South Asia (2000) as quoted by Mathew (2003)].

UNDP (1990) for the first time introduced the concept of Human Development Index (HDI) that evolved initially as a broader measure of socio-economic progress of a nation but it became popular as a measure of average achievements in human development for both the sexes. Contrary to the general belief that development is gender-neutral, statistics show that women lag behind men all over the world including India in almost all aspects of life. It is for this reason that the focus on human development has been to highlight the gender dimension and continuing inequalities confronting women since 1995 (UNDP 1995). The Report noted

that without empowering women overall development of human beings is not possible. It further stressed that if development is not engendered, is endangered. To bring out the facts and figures relating to deprivation of women two indices, namely, Gender related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) were introduced. While GDI measures the achievements in the same dimensions and variables as the HDI, it also takes into account inequality in achievement between women and men (Anand and Sen, 1995). The greater the gender disparity in human development, the lower is country's GDI compared to its HDI. The GDI is the HDI adjusted downwards for gender inequality. On the other hand, GEM indicates whether women are able to actively participate in economic and political life. Theoretically, the index can take values between zero and infinity, with a value of unity reflecting an absolute equality in the respective attainments of males and females. A value higher than unity would imply that females have better attainments than males.

II. METHODOLOGY

A survey is conducted in the rural areas of Bhaderwah Tehsil, to study the status of empowerment among women. The level of women's empowerment was accessed using a structured questionnaire. The details like access to employment, access to education, role of women in family planning and participation of women in decision making process were collected and accessed. The questionnaire were administered on a sample of 100 women of 4 villages (4 from each village).

STUDY AREA

Bhaderwah is a beautiful small valley located in the North West Himalayas in the Jammu and Kashmir UT, around 220 kms from Jammu. The altitude of Bhaderwah varies from 5290 feet to 14500 feet due to its rugged nature, and its geographical coordinates are 32° 58' N latitude and 75° 42' E longitude. Summer temperatures range from 26 to 29 degrees Celsius, while winter temperatures range from 2 to 15 degrees Celsius. It is a mountainous valley with magnificent sceneries, surrounded by evergreen forests and snow-capped mountain peaks. Bhaderwah is known as Chhota (small) Kashmir because it has a lot of stunning tourist attractions with breath-taking natural beauty in the Bhaderwah valley, which is particularly popular during the summer season. Bhaderwah valley is drained by a little water stream known as the Neeru River, which adds to its picturesque charm. It shares a boundary with Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district on the south, district Kathua on the south, district Udhampur on the west, and Tehsil Gandoh on the north.

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

S. No	Access To Employment	Village 01 Sungali	Village 02 Sartingal	Village 03 Dranga	Village 04 Gutasa
1	Women Do Household Chores by Themselves	100%	95%	98%	100%
2	Housewives	95%	92%	96%	98%
3	Women Do Work of Their Own Will	95%	90%	92%	95%
4	Women Who Want To Do Job	70%	75%	70%	65%

Table No:1

Source: Field Survey

INTERPRETATION

- In village 1 {Sungali} and village 4 {Gutasa} all women do their household chores by themselves and 5% of women in village 2 [Sartingal] and 2% women in village 3 [Dranga] do not do their household chores by themselves.
- Most of the women of village 4 [Gutasa] are housewives because the women of this village are not so educated and the area is also backward.
- 95% of women in villages 1 [Sungali] and 4 [Gutasa] do work of their household by their own will.

From the above data it is revealed that 65% to 75% of women in the study area wants to do job either in government or private sector.

PARTICIPATION IN HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING

S. No	Participation In Household Decision Making	Village 01 [Sungli]	Village 02 [Sartingal]	Village 03 [Dranga]	Village04 [Gutasa]
1	Women Takes Decision in Planning of Household	86%	92%	88%	85%
2	Women Makes Decision in Cooking	96%	98%	94%	90%
3	Participation In Expenditure of Household	85%	90%	85%	80%
4	Women Owner of Houses	40%	42%	40%	35%

Table No:02
Source: Field Survey

INTERPRETATION

- In planning and household 92% women in Sartingal village takes decision but this percentage is low in Gutasa as compared to other villages of study area because in this village women do not get so much priority.
- Above 94% of women in Sungli, Sartingal, and Drangacooks' food by their own choice but in Gutasa [village 4] 10% women cooks food by the choice of their family members.
- 90% women of Sartingal participates in household expenditure while this participation of women is lower in Gutasa.
- The ownership of houses of women is quite low in all the four villages of the study area i.e it ranges from 35% to 42% only. The reason behind this is thinking of peoples, they think that women are inferior as compared to men. According to the peoples of that village's women are ineligible in all the ways to be the owner of a house.

FAMILY PLANNING

S. No	Family Planning	Village 01 [Sungli]	Village 02 [Sartingal]	Village 03 [Dranga]	Village04 [Gutasa]
1	Women Have Exposure to Family Planning Information	80%	80%	85%	70%
2	Women Know About Any Modern Methods of Contraception	80%	80%	83%	70%
3	Women Know About S. T. D's (HIV/Aids)	90%	95%	90%	85%
4	Women Have Permission to Seek Medical Care for Herself	92%	96%	95%	90%

Table No:03
Source: Field Survey

INTERPRETATION

- In village Gutasa 30% of women does not have any exposure to family planning because women of that place are not so much aware about that.
- In Sartingal, Sungli and Dranga, above 80% women have knowledge about modern methods of contraception but in Gutasa only 70% women know about that.

- Above 90% women of first three villages of the study area know about S.T. D's [Sexually Transmitted Diseases] and 85% women of village 4 have awareness about sexually transmitted diseases like HIV AIDS.
- Above 90% women in all the villages of the study area have permission to seek medical care for themselves.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

S. No	Social And Cultural Norms	Village 01 [Sungli]	Village 02 [Sartingal]	Village 03 [Dranga]	Village04 [Gutasa]
1	Husband Beats Wife If She Goes Out Without Telling Him	30%	30%	35%	45%
2	Husband Beats Wife If She Neglects Children	50%	45%	45%	50%
3	Husband Beats Wife If She Argues with Him	70%	65%	70%	80%
4	Husband Beats Wife If She Makes Tasteless Food	20%	20%	25%	30%

Table No:04
Source: Field Survey

INTERPRETATION

- In village Sungli, Sartingal and Dranga 30% to 35% of women are beaten by their husband if she goes out without telling them and in Gutasa 45% of women are beaten by their husband.
- 45% of women in Sartingal and Dranga are beaten by their husband if they neglect their children and 50% of women in Sungli and Gutasa are beaten by their husband.
- It is seen that 70% women in Sungli and Dranga and 65% of women in Sartingal and 80% in Gutasa are beaten by their husband if they argue with them.
- It is found that 20% of women in Sungli and Sartingal and 25% to 30% in Dranga and Gutasa are beaten by their husband if they prepare tasteless food.

III. SUGGESTIONS

1. Awareness programs need to be organized for creating awareness among women especially belonging to weaker sections about their rights.
2. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grassroots problem. Hence, education for women has to be paid special attention.
3. Strict implementation of Programs and Acts should be there to curb the mal-practices prevalent in the society.
4. Women should be allowed to work and should be provided enough safety and support to work. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in the society.
5. Women should be allowed to take part in decision making process in respect of family planning, economic planning, and in all such decision-making processes.
6. Empowered women go on to empower others-so encourage the women around you, and make them feel special and strong.
7. Lift women up by taking a stance against negative comments online, at the office, in school, and wherever you go.
8. Stand up for women's rights, and be part of the process.

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