

## Research Paper

## A STUDY ON THE STATUS OF EMPOWERMENT OF WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN IN CHENNAI CITY

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**ABSTRACT**

*The present investigation attempts to study on the status of empowerment of working and non-working women in Chennai city. The study was carried out in various schools, colleges and hostel. The sample consisted of 100 working and 100 non-working women, out of 100 women in each category 50 women were unmarried and 50 women were married. Out of the 50 women who were unmarried, 25 women were living with parents and 25 women were staying in hostel. Similarly, with reference to married women, 25 women were living with in-laws and 25 living as nuclear family. The questionnaire on women empowerment was administered. The collected data was tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis using Mean, Standard Deviation and "t" test. The results of the present investigation revealed that no significant difference existed on empowerment between working and non-working mothers.*

No difference was observed on empowerment between unmarried working and unmarried non-working women living with parents. With regard to married working and married non-working women living with inlaws no difference existed on empowerment. Again no significant difference was observed on empowerment among unmarried women living with parents and staying with inlaws. Lastly, no significant difference was seen on empowerment between married and unmarried women.

**Introduction**

In India, since long back, women were considered as an oppressed section of the society and they were neglected for centuries. In Vedic age, the women were declared to be innately unfit for independence. Since time immemorial, they have been subject to torture, mal-treatment and all sorts of misbehavior. Western impact influenced the Indian social-system and era of social reforms began during the 19- century.

Education started and in the eyes of law women were provided equal status. While in pre-independence India, education among women was slow and limited to upper strata of society it tremendously increased in independent India.(1).

The term empowerment has different meanings in different sociocultural and political contexts, and does not translate easily into all languages. An exploration of local terms associated with empowerment around the world always leads to lively discussion. These terms include self-strength, control, self-power, self-reliance, own choice, life of dignity in accordance with one's values, capable of fighting for one's rights, independence, own decision making, being free, awakening, and capability—to mention only a few. These definitions are embedded in local value and belief systems (2).

Empowerment is of intrinsic value; it also has instrumental value. Empowerment is relevant at the individual and collective level, and can be economic, social, or political. The term can be used to characterize relations within households or between poor people and other actors at the global level. There are important gender differences in the causes, forms, and consequences of empowerment or disempowerment. Hence, there are obviously many possible definitions of empowerment, including rights-based definitions.

Some characterizations of empowerment have included an additional component, which refers to as "achievements" and Longwe as "welfare." And, in international policy processes, women's empowerment is implicitly equated with specific (usually national level) achievements such as political participation, legal reform, and economic security. In the context of evaluation, achievements are best treated as outcomes of empowerment, not as empowerment per se (just as resources may be more usefully construed as enabling factors or catalysts for empowerment). Granted, one might question whether agency really amounts to empowerment if there is no meaningful result in terms of women's status, strategic position or welfare. But whether any empowerment indicator or form of agency (such as exercising control over decisions or resources) really amounts to empowerment in a particular context will always be an empirical question.(3)

Empowerment in the workplace is regarded by critics as more a pseudo-empowerment exercise, the idea of which is to change the attitudes of workers, so as to make them work harder rather than giving them any real power, and Wilkinson (1998) refers to this as "attitudinal shaping". However, recent research suggests that the opportunity to exercise personal discretion/choice (and complete meaningful work) is an important element contributing to employee engagement and well-being. There is evidence that initiative and motivation are increased when people have a more positive attributional style. This influences self-belief, resilience when faced with setbacks, and the ability to visualize one overcoming problems. The implication is that 'empowerment' suits some more than others, and should be positioned in the broader and wider context of an 'enabling' work environment.

Empowerment to employees in the work place provides them with opportunities to make their own decisions with

regards to their tasks. Now-a-days more and more bosses and managers are practicing the concept of empowerment among their subordinates to provide them with better opportunities. The three keys are that managers must use to empower their employees are: share information with everyone, create autonomy through boundaries and replace the old hierarchy with self-managed teams.(6)

“Sustainability” is an indefinite term. In simple terms it defines a human role in rethinking and remaking of natural world. The revolution described here is not simply about making ourselves physically sustainable but transforming into a fullest being capable of bringing a revolution of charity, magnanimity and spirit. It has profound effect on all facets of society thus shaping and moulding the living and working philosophies and the endeavours man pursue as individuals and as communities.(5)

#### Methodology

##### Sample

The present study was conducted on a total sample of 200 working and non-working women. Among the 100 working women, 50 women were unmarried and 50 women were married. Of the 50 unmarried women, 25 women were living with parents and 25 women were staying in hostel. Similarly, with married women, 25 women were living with in-laws and 25 living as nuclear family. Similarly, non- working women were divided in the same way as working women.

##### Tools used

Questionnaire on women's empowerment developed by Latter (2009) was used to determine how a woman describes themselves in working place and their view points towards their living status.(4)

##### Procedure

Latter, 2009 Questionnaire on women empowerment will be used in the present investigation to determine how they describe themselves and what their view points towards their living environment are. The questionnaire on women environment is designed to measure the women power at home, freedom of life choice and empowerment at work place. The questionnaire consists of series of statement and the respondent is asked to give his rates on the Likert Scale rating to indicate how agreeable/disagreeable each item is as a descriptive of them. The collected data were tabulated and scored. Then they were subjected to statistical analysis using Mean, Standard Deviation and “t” test.

##### Results and discussion

The following Table I shows the result of the t-test, computed to compare the empowerment between working and non-working women.

Table I: Table showing the comparison of the empowerment between working and non-working women.

| Variable    | Working status | N   | Mean   | Standard Deviation | 't' value | Level of Significance |
|-------------|----------------|-----|--------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Empowerment | Working        | 100 | 211.98 | 33.28              | 0.26      | NS                    |
|             | non-working    | 100 | 213.26 | 36.31              |           |                       |

NOTE: NS- Not-significant

From the above Table I, it is observed that there was no significant difference on the empowerment between working and non-working women. The mean values were 211.98 and 213.26 as the calculated 't' value (t=0.260) was lesser than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it was not significant.

This finding is contradictory to a study which indicated that working women had higher self-efficacy compared to non-working women.

The following Table II shows the result of the t-test, computed to compare empowerment between unmarried working and unmarried non-working women living with parents.

Table II: Table showing the comparison of empowerment between unmarried working and unmarried non-working women.

| Variable    | Working women | N  | Mean   | Standard. Deviation | 't' value | Level of Significance |
|-------------|---------------|----|--------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Empowerment | Working       | 50 | 213.98 | 32.55               | 1.67      | NS                    |
|             | non-working   | 50 | 224.36 | 29.47               |           |                       |

NOTE: NS- Not-significant

From Table II, it is observed that there was no significant difference existed on the empowerment between unmarried working and unmarried non-working women. The mean values were 216.98 and 224.36 as the calculated 't' value (t=1.67) was lesser than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it was not significant.

It is apparent from the findings that empowerment is same for unmarried working and non-working women living with parents.

The following Table III shows the result of the t-test, computed to compare empowerment between married working and married non-working women living with in-laws.

Table III: Table showing the comparison of empowerment between married working and married non-working women.

| Variable    | Working status | N  | Mean   | Standard. Deviation | 't' value | Level of Significance |
|-------------|----------------|----|--------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Empowerment | Working        | 25 | 217.16 | 20.35               | 0.94      | NS                    |
|             | non-working    | 25 | 224.12 | 30.92               |           |                       |

NOTE: NS- Not-significant

From the above Table III, it is observed that there was no significant difference on the empowerment between married working and married non-working women living with in-laws, The mean values were 217.16 and 224.12 respectively. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=0.94$ ) was greater than the table value 1.96 at 5% level of significance, hence it was not significant.

The following Table IV shows the result of the t-test, computed to compare empowerment between unmarried working women living with parents and staying in hostel.

Table IV: Table showing the comparison of empowerment between unmarried working women living with parents and staying in hostel.

| Variable    | Living status | N  | Mean   | Standard. Deviation | 't' value | Level of Significance |
|-------------|---------------|----|--------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Empowerment | Unmarried     | 25 | 217.16 | 20.35               | 0.68      | NS                    |
|             | Working       | 25 | 210.80 | 41.57               |           |                       |

NOTE: NS- Not-significant

From the above Table IV, it is observed that there was no significant difference on the empowerment between unmarried working women living with parents and staying in hostel. The mean value were 217.16 and 210.80. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=0.68$ ) was lesser than the table value 1.96, hence it was not significant.

The following Table V shows the result of the t-test, computed to compare empowerment between married and unmarried women.

Table V: Table showing the comparison of empowerment between married and unmarried women.

| Variable    | Marital status | N   | Mean   | Standard. Deviation | 't' value | Level of Significance |
|-------------|----------------|-----|--------|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Empowerment | Married        | 100 | 206.07 | 36.86               | 2.70      | 0.01                  |
|             | Unmarried      | 100 | 219.17 | 31.33               |           |                       |

From the above Table V, it is observed that there was a significant difference on the empowerment between married and unmarried women. The mean values were 206.07 and 219.17 respectively. As the calculated 't' value ( $t=2.70$ ) was greater than the table value 2.58 at 1% level of significance hence it was significant.

It is interesting to note from the findings that unmarried women were empowered than the married women.

#### Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the result is that no significant difference existed on empowerment between working and non-working mothers. No difference was observed on empowerment between unmarried working and un-married non-working women living with parents. Again married working women and married non-working women living with in-laws showed no difference on empowerment. With regard to living status no significant difference existed on empowerment among unmarried working women living with parents and staying in hostel. Whereas there was a significant difference on empowerment between married and unmarried women.

#### References

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