

Social and household Women Empowerment Index in India

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Abstract

Empowerment is a multidimensional process which works at various levels. Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels as individual, household, community and societal and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors and removing inhibiting factors and institutional biases against women. Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behaves, take action and control work in an autonomous way. It is the state of feelings of self-empowered to take control of one's own destiny. The social mobilisation of women from household to the community level is very critical for the process of empowerment.

Key words: Empowerment, Autonomy, Freedom, Bargaining power and social exclusion.

Objective, Methods and Sources

The basic objective of this paper is to analysis of different terms and concepts in which empowerment has been conceptualized and defined. The Composite Women Index will be constructed through the response variable regarding the social and household empowerment of the women. These indices will measure the empowerment of the women at the social and household level. Secondary data collected from internet, Government documents and report (like nfhs-3) newspapers, published papers, books and paper published by various intellectuals and academicians in various conferences and seminars at the national and international level. The statistical methods have been analysed by the statistical computer programme as Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Programme for the Social Science (SPSS-18).

Introduction:

Empowerment can take place at a hierarchy of different levels i.e. individual, household, community and societal. The empowerment can be occurred at household or individual level, at community or intermediate level and at aggregate or regional/national level. Women Empowerment Index Should be Constructed for measuring empowerment at the social and household level. In construction of the women empowerment index it must noted that this should properly addressed to the each and every dimension of the empowerment. A proper care must be taken for each dimension by assessing identified indicators on four main criteria: measurement, data accuracy, data reliability, and effectiveness at measuring women's empowerment. Moreover, in recommending indicators, consideration is given to standardization and comparability across states as well as the usefulness of such indicators. As women's empowerment is a vast field with a myriad of indicators, we focus on its prominent dimensions as autonomy, freedom, choice, safety and women position in the society.

Since empowerment is multidimensional, dynamic and complex process and same times it can take place at a hierarchy of different levels as individual, household, community and societal. So scholars and academicians have uses different set of indicators for measurement of empowerment at different levels. Maximum numbers empirical studies of women's empowerment are heavily concentrated at the individual and household level (Malhotra, 2002). According to the Malhotra (2002), commonly used dimensions of empowerment and potential operationalization in the household, community, and broader arenas. In this paper will measure the empowerment at the aggregate (macro) level i.e. at the state level as well as National level and .

Social exclusion and empowerment:

Bennett (2002) has developed a framework in which "empowerment" and "social inclusion" are closely related but separate concepts. Bennett describes empowerment as "the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them." Social inclusion is defined as "the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to assets and development opportunities." The empowerment process, as she characterizes it, operates "from below" and involves agency, as exercised by

individuals and groups. Social inclusion, in contrast, requires systemic change which may be initiated “from above.” But the first change of this social inclusion is reflected at the household and the community level.

Variables for social and household Index:

The Index first sub index of the Women Empowerment Index is social and household Index. This sub Index is constructed by using various social and house hold related variables. These variables are explained as below:

- **The rate of crime Committed against women:** This variable shows how much societies are safe for women and law and order position especially for the protection of women’s rights. In the present study researcher has taken the rate of crime Committed against women in the various States.
- **The incidence of violence faced by ever married women:** The National Family Health Survey III, 2006 found that a substantial proportion of women face spousal violence at home, a supposedly safe domain for women. Spousal Violence can be form of Emotional or Physical or Sexual Violence. In the present study researcher has taken the state wise data for percentage of married women who have ever experienced spousal violence.
- **Incidence of Early Marriage:** This variable explained that still in large percentage of women in India are getting married at very early age. Marriage in an early age shows that there is a little choice for Indian women as far as their future is concern. In the present study researcher has taken the state wise data for percentage of women getting early married.
- **Sex ratio:** Sex ratio is a fundamental indicator of gender inequality in India, and arguably, one of the most powerful, is a preference for sons so strong that it is manifested as limiting the birth and survival of girls. This variable aims specifically to capture the phenomenon of “missing women” prevalent in many countries with a strong son preference.
- **Freedom and autonomy:** Family is the basic unit of the society and if women are participating or has a greater say in the family matters .Percentage of women who usually participate in the house hold decisions making process like Decisions about major household purchases, purchases for daily household needs, visits to the wife’s family or relatives and how many children to have. In the present study we have taken the state wise data for percentage of married women who have substantial amount of freedom and autonomy in the domestic matters.
- **Women preference for girl child:** In The country like India where sex ratios of girls are declining and girl child is discriminated in the all section of the society. Percentage of Married women which are showing their preference for girl child can be important variable for the analysis of women empowerment.

Conversion of negative variable in to positive variable:

For the Construction of a Empowerment Index There is need of positive variable in this study .Positive variable are those which has a positive relationship with the women empowerment or are enhance the enabling factors in the process of empowerment like freedom, autonomy and their decision making capacity. Whereas negative variable are those which can affect the enabling factor for the women’s empowerment in a negative direction. These negative variables are subtracted from “Hundred” and then we gets the positive orientation from these variables. In this paper the negative variables are mentioned as below:

- Rate of crime committed against women;
- Incidence of early marriage;
- The incidence of violence faced by ever married women.

Conversion into standard scale:

The variable chosen for working out composite Indices are measured in different units and in general, not directly additive and comparable. So it is necessary to convert them to some standard ‘units’ so that the initial scale chosen for measuring the variables do not bias the results. It is; however, true that any method of scale conversion involves implicit weighting and the selection of a standard scale is never a value free judgement. Standardization methods can improve the indicator and increase comparability of results across the state. Standardization makes variables scale free and remove the biasness. Standard scale conversion can be done by Ranking method, Stanardization, Dvision by mean ,standard deviation or by any ideal number. For the construction of the Women Empowerment Index ‘**National Average**’ is chosen for the purpose of making

variables scale free. This method not only convert the variable into the standard scale but also very useful in doing comparable analysis of each state's Index in terms of National Average.

Calculation of weight and index Scores:

Once the bias of unit of measurement is removed from the observation, the next step in the process involves calculating the weighted average of the variables within each index to create the index scores. There are various methods used in social research for calculation of weight. Selection of These methods depends upon the nature of the variables and the objectives of the study.

This paper has used the method for the calculation of weight similar to the method used by World Economic Forum in the construction of the Global Gender Gap Index in its Global Gender Gap Report in 2011. Averaging the different variables would implicitly give more weight to the measure that exhibits the smallest variability or standard deviation. First step in this paper is to convert the variables in to the standard scale by division of series by the National Average. Then determine what a 1% point change would translate to in terms of standard deviations by dividing 0.01 by the standard deviation for each variable.

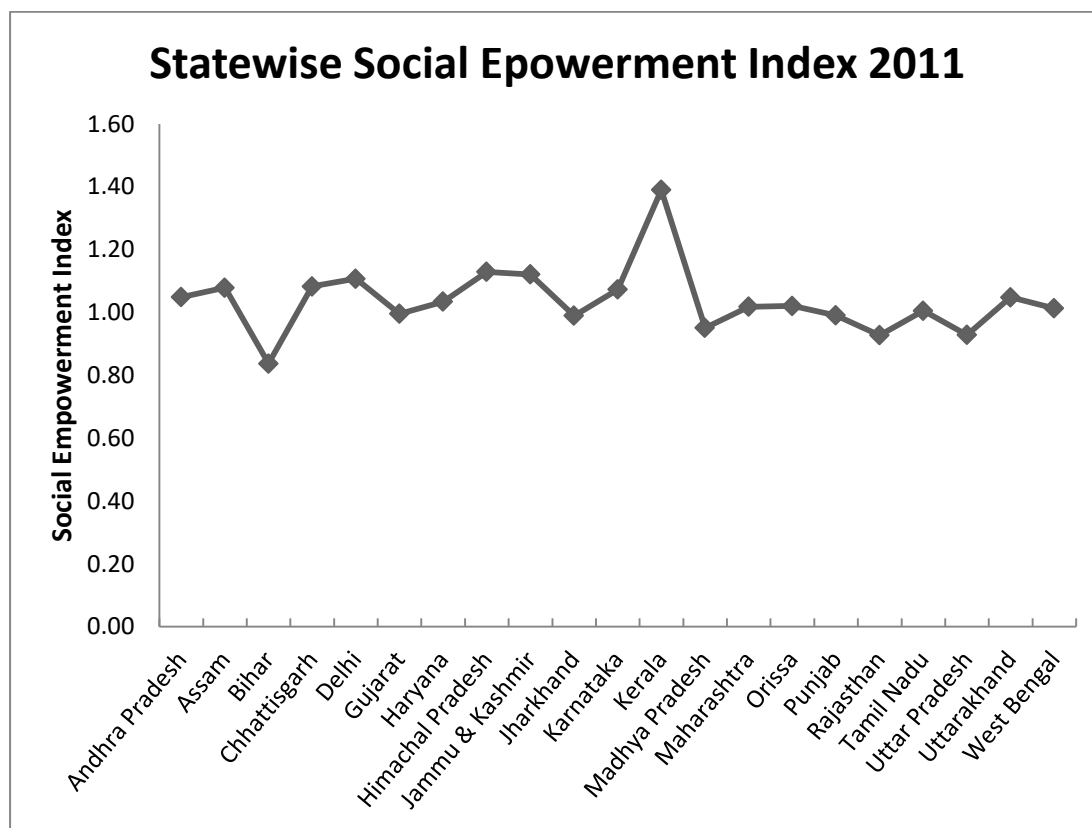
Table Number 1
Calculation of weight for Social Index

Social Index	Standard deviation	Standard deviation per 1% point change	Weight
No crime Rate	0.354	0.028	0.078
no early marriage	0.298	0.034	0.093
Females who want daughter freedom	0.429	0.023	0.065
Female who faces no violence	0.284	0.035	0.098
Female sex ratio	0.220	0.046	0.126
Total	0.051	0.195	0.540
	1.635	0.361	1.000

Women empowerment Index at aggregate level:

Index Number at the aggregate level means that the women empowerment index should be constructed at the national and state level. As women's empowerment is a vast field with a myriad of indicators, we focus on its prominent dimensions. This paper applied method given by the Global Gender Gap for calculating the weight for different variables. The calculation of weight and the score of the index indices for different states are given in the annexure I. In this indicator female sex ratio has been assigned maximum weight (54 percent). Performance of the different states can be analyzed by the help of the graph as below:

Graph Number 1



Kerala, Himachal and Jammu and Kashmir are the highest ranking states as far as this Index is concern. The values for this index for these states are respectively 1.39, 1.13 and 1.12. While the Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and the Bihar are the lowest performing states in terms of this social index. The values for this index for these states are respectively 0.94, 0.93 and 0.84. If we arrange these states in a series according to their respective social empowerment index score (in descending order), than we can trifurcate the series and classify these states in to three different categories as below:

Table Number 2

Social Empowerment Index			
Sr. no.	High index score	Medium index score	Low index score
1	Kerala	Andhra Pradesh	Gujarat(national average i.e. one)
2	Himachal Pradesh	Uttarakhand	Punjab
3	Jammu & Kashmir	Haryana	Jharkhand
4	Delhi	Orissa	Madhya Pradesh
5	Chhattisgarh	Maharashtra	Uttar Pradesh
6	Assam	West Bengal	Rajasthan
7	Karnataka	Tamil Nadu	Bihar

Conclusion and suggestions:

On the basis of the findings of the paper it can be concluded that;

The capacity to influence the decision making or to participate in the decision making process at the various level from households to the community is the important indicator of the women empowerment.

- There has been significant improvement in the capacity of women to participate or influence the decision making process at the various levels.
- Social and household variables have a strong relationship with those factors which affects the process of empowerment in the society as well as household level.
- In the construction of the social and household index the female sex ratio contributing most significantly i.e. more than fifty percent. The sex ratios of girls are declining and deteriorating very alarmingly. This clearly shows girl child is still discriminated and discarded in the all section of our society especially the condition of Punjab and Haryana is very pathetic.
- Violence related variables women also contributing in the process of empowerment. Crime in the society reflects not only the thinking and biases in the society but also gives the picture how much women are safe and secure in our society. Without providing them safety and security the aim of the empowerment cannot be achieved.
- Like the other concept freedom is also having close nexuses with the empowerment and this is one of the pre conditions for the purpose of the empowerment.
- Better bargaining power, autonomy and freedom enhances the status of women in the in the society and as well as at the household level. Greater incidence of early marriages clearly indicates about the choices and freedom that the female have in our society.

Empowerment is a multidimensional process which works at various levels and for the purpose of this empowerment should be done at the household, community and societal level and is facilitated by providing encouraging factors and removing inhibiting factors and institutional biases against women. The primary level of freedom, autonomy and decision making begins from the household and community level. This not only enhance women bargaining power at the various level but also made them confident and safe, which are essential feature for the women empowerment in our Country. For this purpose there is a need to create an enabling environment through adopting various policies and programmes for development of women, besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services and safety so as to enable them to realize their full potential.

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