

**REAL CONTRIBUTION OF AUTONOMOUS FACTORS
OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Women's autonomy is instrumentally important for achieving positive development outcomes and well-being of life which lies in the doing and being what one value and have reason to value i.e. agency. National Family and Health Survey-3, 2005-06 of India found that only 11 to 13 percent of women directly empowered while nearly 80 percent of women indirectly empowered in India and the rest of all are fully dependent upon spouses or other family members to take partially decision to control their life. This study tries to examine various conceptions of these ideas to clearly mark the overlapping zones and distinguishing features of respective concepts of women's autonomy in India. These variables are use as an autonomous factor of women's empowerment in India. By using Binary Logistic Regression analysis study investigates to correlates of empowerment based on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics like residence, religion, caste, current age, age of marriage and number of living children. Findings of the study shows that the female living in urban areas has more freedom of movement and control over resources and decision making power as compared to women those living in rural areas. Demographic characteristic such as age of women, age at marriage and number of living children are positively associated with women's autonomy. The social characteristics like religion and caste are importance factors, So late marriage of women and less number of children can be play a role to make women more empowered. Overall this study can be helpful for policy maker and demographer to understand main factors of women's

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autonomy and it can be utilised to implement new programs in respect of women health benefit and life.

KEYWORD: Autonomous Factor of Women's Empowerment (AFWE), National Family and Health Survey (NFHS), Binary Logistic Regression (BLR), Odds Ratio (OR), Standard Error (SE),

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing." Swami Vivekananda

INTRODUCTION

In Copenhagen summit in 1993 and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo 1994 Governments committed themselves to the empowerment of women. This commitment was operationalised and formulated into a clear action plan at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 where Governments committed themselves to the "empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations." What is women's empowerment? Women's empowerment has basic components as: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just demographic, social and economic orders, nationally and internationally.

So many literatures on women's empowerment suggest a broad view the condition of female in the society. Women's autonomy in decision making is positively associated with their age, employment and number of living children (Dev R Acharya, 2010). Autonomy is an increasing trend with the educational level of women (Reddy, 2009). Education and wage-work status are also significant determinants of the autonomy index, residence, have a more powerful effect on women's autonomy, education (even a primary education) plays a well-known role in enhancing almost every dimension of autonomy; wage work has a positive but less consistent effect

(Shireen J. Jejeebhoy, December-2001). Higher ages at marriage for girls, greater levels of schooling and better employment opportunities for women may indeed contribute to women's empowerment (Karen Oppenheim Mason, 2 January 2003).

The household standard of living has a negative relation with domestic violence this increases women's autonomy. Autonomy plays a role in determining patterns of attitude towards girls' education and future fertility preference (Saraswati, 2007). The relationship between female education, access to economic resources as a means of furthering empowerment of women especially in terms of their reproductive behaviour and increased access to resources is a major factor toward ensuring the much desired empowerment, (Oluwole Odutolu, Dec-2003).

Women's empowerment opens the door for the women's international health movement to influence country-level policies, which seek to implement recommendations from Cairo, (Neidell, 1998). There are many studies ongoing in the field of women's empowerment from time to time. On looking the various dimension of empowerment for human life mainly for female, these are described as a direct indicator for women's empowerment based on decision making power, access to resources & freedom of movement and indirect indicator for women's empowerment based on education, occupation, gender role, mass-media exposure, contraceptive & violence.

Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today Gender roles, relationships and power differentials between husband and wife significantly affect women's health, morbidity and therefore access to service (Pachauri, 1988). Women in India enjoy a unique status of equality with the men as per constitutional and legal provision. But the Indian women have come a long way to achieve the present positions. People who are able to make strategic life choices, but who were never disempowered, are merely powerful, not empowered (Kabeer N., 2005). Many researches supports the view that low socio-economic and demographic status of women characterized by limited mobility; weak decision making autonomy; and restricted access to resources significantly influences However, most of the empirical research in this area has

concentrated on the influences of women's status on fertility, morbidity and mortality. Empirical studies of women's status in South Asia support this multidimensionality and demonstrate that various aspects of women's status have different determinants and little correlation with each other (Balk 1994; Jejeebhoy 1996; Kazi and Sathar 1996; Mason 1998).

Need for women empowerment in India: Human development encompasses elements that contribute critical issues of gender and development. The dignity and culture of a society can be detected from the status of women in that society. According to Rameshwari Pandya (2008) Empowerment has become the key solution to many social problems. Empowerment of women is empowerment of family/household and in turn development of a nation of a country. Empowerment of women leads to benefit not only to the individual woman and to women groups, but also to the families and community as a whole through collective action for development.

In spite of the various measures taken up by the government after Independence and even during British rule the Women haven't been fully empowered. We may be proud of women in India occupying highest offices of President, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of the Opposition or women occupying highest positions in the Corporate Sector but the fact remains that we still witness dowry deaths, domestic violence and exploitation of women. The female foeticide is not an uncommon phenomenon. The male female ratio though improved over last few years is still far from satisfactory. It is 940 women per 1000 men for India in some states it is as much lower as 877. In spite of reservation being granted to women in Panchayats elections after 73rd and 74th Constitution amendment, in many Panchayats the male Chauvinism does not allow them to function independently.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

India is very vast country with all type diversity across the states in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. If we see overall development of the country, India is far behind especially in women's empowerment, there is many study about women's empowerment, which explained their demographic and socio-economic importance in the society. On looking various literature, there are individually many study those elaborate the status of women in the family. This study is an attempt to identify women's empowerment, which is based on direct and indirect indicators of female autonomy.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives of the study:

- [1]. To investigate the relative importance of various factors contributing to women's empowerment in India.
- [2]. To examine the status of women according to ten autonomous factor of women empowerment (AFWE) and their importance in India.

SOURCE OF DATA

The data from National Family and Health Survey-3 (NFHS) conducted by International Institute for Population Sciences during the period 2005-06 has been used for study purpose. This is a large sample survey sponsored by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India with the technical assistance of ORC Macro, Calverton, Maryland, USA. The information collected from currently married women of age 15-49 years has been used. Out of total 124,385 women only 87,925 women are currently married; this is nearly 71 percent of the women in the age group 15-49. The key variables of the study are related to women's empowerment in three dimensions for decision making.

METHODOLOGY

All above direct and indirect indicator can be organised into ten specified group called as autonomous factor of women's empowerment (AFWE). These autonomous factors are described by their relevant criteria which explained as,

- [1]. **AFWE_I:** A woman has freedom of movement as she is alone allowed to go-to market, to take the health facility & to go places outside their village or/and community.
- [2]. **AFWE_II:** A woman has decision making power as she finally says on making the decision for small/large household's purchases, resource allocation and financial decision on daily needs and deciding what to do with money earned by their husband/household income.
- [3]. **AFWE_III:** A woman has access of resources as she has any money of her own that she alone can decide how to use, whether she has a bank/savings account and she given a loan program.

- [4]. **AFWE_VI:** A woman believes that it is not justify to the husband to beat him if she goes outside without telling to husband, neglects the children, unfaithful, disrespectful to in-laws, argues with him or refuses to have sex with him.
- [5]. **AFWE_V:** A woman believes that it is right to refusing her husband sex if either she knows her husband has sexually transmitted diseases, her husband has sex with other woman or she is tired or not in the mood.
- [6]. **AFWE_VI:** A woman is employed in any field (professional, technical, clerical, salesman, agriculture-employee, private/government services, skilled/unskilled worker, etc) and having decision how to spend money earning from her which is earned either in the form of cash or in the form of a kind.
- [7]. **AFWE_VII:** A woman is either using any contraceptive method or services sought just like antenatal care, delivery care and postnatal care in her the reproductive age.
- [8]. **AFWE_VIII:** A woman is not illiterate i.e. she went to school at least for one or more year.
- [9]. **AFWE_IX:** A woman is using any mass-media like radio, TV or newspaper at-least once in a week.
- [10]. **AFWE_X:** A woman is never experienced any emotional, severe and sexual violence.

All above the factors are either directly (AFWE_I:AFWE_3) factors or indirectly factors (AFWE_4:AFWE_10) associated with autonomy of women. The status of women in society is also associated along with above factor. A large number of AFWE factor in favour to a woman is improving the life quality of the woman. Women have a positive view about all above factor showing their autonomous status is good.

Binary Logistic Regression

Binary Logistic Regression (BLR) is used to estimate the differentials among currently married women those having their autonomy in all cases of direct autonomy and at least three cases of indirect autonomy. The dichotomous dependent variable for the model having women empowerment with value 1 if yes and 0 otherwise, which is a dummy variable (coded 0, 1). The independent variables are residence, religion, caste, current age, age at marriage and the total number of living children. This model commonly estimated by maximum likelihood function. For each selected variables, logistic model takes the following general form

$$\text{Logit } P = \ln(p/(1-p)) = b_0 + b_1 * x_1 + b_2 * x_2 + b_3 * x_3 + \dots + b_i * x_i + \dots + b_n * x_n$$

Where, p is the probability that a woman is under the condition of autonomous

$X(x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n)$ is a vector of independent variables, and $B(b_1, b_2, b_3, \dots, b_n)$ is the vector of regression coefficients.

More than one Independent variable

Dichotomes, ordinal, nominal, continuous ...

Interprétation of b_i

Incérasse in log-odds for a one unit incérasse in x_i with all the other x_i s constant

Mmeasures association between x_i and log-odds adjusted for all other x_i

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table-1 depicts about the autonomous factor of women’s empowerment (AFWE) indicator as the first indicator of AFWE is only 40.71 percent (35,796 out of 87,925), this is a worse condition for a female as more than half of women have not freedom of movement as they are not alone allowed to go-to market, to take health facility & to go places outside their village or/and community.

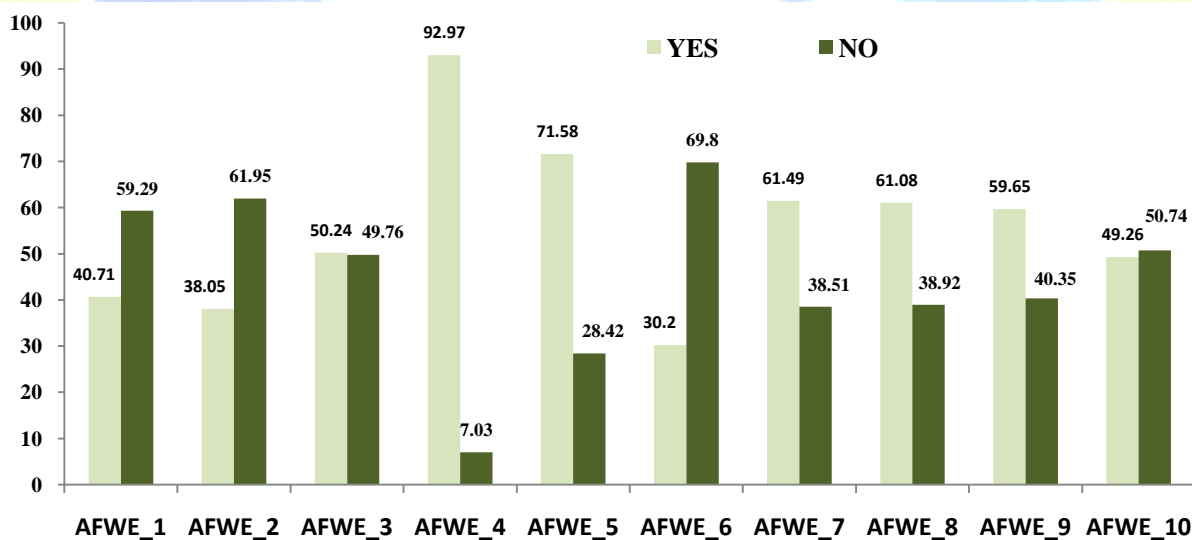


Figure -1: Ten Autonomous factors of women’s empowerment (AFWE) in India

In India, as AFWE-II indicated that only 38.05 percent of women have decision making power as they finally say on making the decision for small/large households purchases, resource allocation and financial decision on daily needs and deciding what to do with money earned by their husband/household income, this implies that mostly women are only for the serve to

society, and all major decisions are taken by men. According to autonomous factor of women's empowerment (AFWE-III) only half of the female population either have money for their own that they alone can decide to use, or they have bank/savings account for their self use.

Table 1: percentage distribution of autonomous factors of woman empowerment indicator of women age 15-49, by ten autonomous factors in India.

AUTONOMY INDICATOR	FREQUENCY (N=87,925)		PERCENTAGE (100%)	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
AFWE_1	35796	52129	40.71	59.29
AFWE_2	33453	54472	38.05	61.95
AFWE_3	44174	43751	50.24	49.76
AFWE_4	81744	6181	92.97	7.03
AFWE_5	62935	24990	71.58	28.42
AFWE_6	26552	61373	30.20	69.80
AFWE_7	54064	33861	61.49	38.51
AFWE_8	53701	34224	61.08	38.92
AFWE_9	52447	35478	59.65	40.35
AFWE_10	43312	44613	49.26	50.74

The indicator autonomous factor of women's empowerment (AFWE_IV) show, nearly 93 percent woman believes that its not justified for a husband to beat his wife if she goes outside without telling her husband; neglects her children and unfaithful; disrespectful to in-laws, argues with him and refuses to have sex with him. AFWE_V represents that 71.58 percent of women believe that it is right to refusing their husband sex if either they know their husband has a STD, her husband has sex with other woman, they are tired or not in the mood. As sixth indicator of AFWE represents more than two third of women are unemployed and seventh indicator of AFWE represents that nearly 61 percent of women are either using any contraceptive method or services sought like antenatal care, delivery care and postnatal care in her reproductive age.

According to autonomous factor of women's empowerment (AFWE_VIII) less than half of the female population are literate in the common sense that they went to school at least for one or more year. AFWE_IX represents that nearly 60 percent of women are using any mass-media like radio, TV or newspaper at-least once in a week, and AFWE_X represents that more than half of women are even experienced by any emotional, severe and sexual violence. When we talk about direct autonomy and indirect autonomy, we look on the AFWE indicator for strength of autonomy as women with more number of AFWE indicators is much empowered than other.

Table: 2 show that only 13 percent of women with all AFWE indicator of direct autonomy and nearly 90 percent of women with more than two AFWE indicator of indirect autonomy. Overall situation of women empowerment is described as less than 14 percent of women in the better condition while nearly 15 percent of women are living with poor autonomy. Total 72 percent of women in their moderate situation those are compromise with partner, family and their society.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the total number of AFWE indicator for currently married women to age group 15-49 year in India, (NFHS-III).

No. of AFWE factors	Frequency (N=87,925)			Percentage (100%)		
	Direct	Indirect	All	Direct	Indirect	All
0	20858	176	88	23.72	0.20	0.10
1	31387	1785	835	35.70	2.03	0.95
2	25004	6936	3240	28.44	7.89	3.68
3	10676	15224	7679	12.14	17.31	8.73
4		23267	13055		26.46	14.85
5		25264	17483		28.73	19.88

Table-4: Logistic Regression Results, Odds Ratio of women's autonomy by their Background characteristics in India, 2005-06

6		12873	18075		14.64	20.56
7		2400	14693		2.73	16.71
8			8737			9.94
9			3406			3.87

Autonomy Indicator	Frequency		Percentage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
A) Direct	10676	77249	12.14	87.86
B) Indirect	79028	8897	89.88	10.12
C) Either A or B	79476	8449	90.39	9.61
D) A & B	10228	77697	11.63	88.37
10		634		0.72

From table 3: we conclude that more than 90 percent of women are directly or indirectly contribute to empowerment, but less than 12 percent of women control their own life with all AFWE's indicator.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of direct and indirect indicator of autonomy for currently married women to age group 15-49 year in India, (NFHS-III).

	India		North (UP & BR)		South (KE & TN)	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Background characteristics						
Residence						
Rural ®						
Urban	2.096**	0.047	2.533**	0.166	1.332**	0.102
Religion						
Hindu ®						
Muslim	0.589**	0.022	0.752*	0.062	0.548**	0.081
Others	1.170**	0.037	1.374	0.304	1.219	0.144
Caste						
SC/ST ®						
Other Backward Caste	1.117**	0.034	0.9111	0.078	1.054	0.105
Others	1.305**	0.037	1.417**	0.129	0.798	0.103
Age group						
15-24 ®						
25-39	3.446**	0.146	4.344**	0.554	2.793**	0.427
40-49	4.937**	0.227	7.490**	1.021	3.483**	0.568
Age at marriage						
> Less than 18 ®						
18-24	1.203**	0.029	1.066	0.080	1.259	0.109
25 and above	1.493**	0.058	1.816	0.301	1.460*	0.187
No. of living children						
> Up to 2 ®						
3 and above	0.859**	0.029	1.074**	0.810	0.833*	0.079

*Note: Significant at, * $p < 0.01$ and ** $p < 0.001$, (®) Reference category, UP: Uttar Pradesh, BR: Bihar, KE: Kerala and TN: Tamil Nadu*

The effect of residence, religion, caste, current age, age at marriage and the total number of living children on the women empowerment are described in table: 4, by using the binary logistic regression. From table: 4, women living in urban areas are more likely empowered as women living in rural areas. In comparison to North India and South India, the effect of residence as rural-urban has more importance in the Northern region than southern region. Also, Women in Muslim community are less likely while women in other community are more empowered than women in Hindu community. Empowerment status of women in SC/ST community is less than to other communities. In comparison to Hindu both in northern and southern states, women in Muslim community having less empowerment and other communities are more likely empowered, but this is not statistically significant for North India. Similarly, in the North India women belong to general caste having much importance in their society than SC-ST women in South India; also this is not statistically significant.

Age of women have own importance in Indian society and women with higher age are more likely to control their own life than other. In North India, age affect to autonomy up to 4-7 times while in the South India, its only 2-3 in comparison to national as 3-4 times. Age at marriage, this is also important for controlling the fertility behaviour of individual, is also affecting the empowerment of woman. Overall to the country it is statistically significant but in the North India it is not. At last, the autonomy of women with more than 2 children is less likely empowered than women having fewer children, but the data shows, in North India women with a large number of are more autonomous than other in comparison to South India.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper explained ten AFWE indicator based on demographic, social and economic status of women in society. This paper examines the female living in urban areas is more likely to have freedom of movement, control over resources and decision making power in comparison to women living in rural areas. Women belong to Muslim community have less autonomy and women belong to other community have more autonomy than women those belongs to Hindu community. A demographic characteristic as age of women is positively associated with their autonomy. The social characteristic as caste, women in SC/ST caste having less likely empowered in comparison to women in other caste. Malhotra et al. note that measuring empowerment indicators in these various dimensions should happen at different levels of social aggregation, such as the household, community and broader areas (i.e. regional, national and global). Where there are different type of social, traditional, cultural and problem of religious factors influence. Some authors argue that the concept of empowerment can be problematic in developing countries, where relationships are strongly rooted in the family context for individual decision making (Basu, 1999). Since the concept of women's autonomy originates from the Western feminist movement and is largely based on an individualistic ideal, it may not be directly applicable in traditional societies, where women's agency is more strongly embedded in family and other social networks (Mumtaz & Salway, 2009).

In a patriarchal society men has supreme authority and traditional values influence in the root of empowerment of women like in India This should prevent us from a priori associating high levels of women's autonomy with modernity and the lack of it with traditionalism. So the traditional value does not matter if knowledge is important.

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