

Identifying the Key Determinants of Women Empowerment (WoE): A Perception Survey on Academicians in Tertiary Education

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Abstract— The purpose of this research work is to figure out the key determinants of women empowerment(WoE) from the perspective of key persons in academia. The first phase of the study deals with secondary data to clarify the multi-faceted aspects of women empowerment. The second phase intends to identify the most crucial determinants of WoE and find out the nature & degree of casual relationship and interlinkages among the prioritized key determinants. To accomplish the second phase, primary data is collected using a perception survey questionnaire conducted in an academic institution where policy makers had participated. For qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were also conducted so that respondents can provide an in-depth explanation regarding their perception. To identify the key determinat of women empowerment , 5-points likert type of questionnaire has developed for data collection. For analysis the data the tool SPSS has used. From this study it can be assume that education keep lead role in ensuring WoE .The implication of present analysis unearths education as the prime determinant for women empowerment which not only triggers & facilitates other determinants but also unlocks the latent potentials of social, political, cultural and economic empowerment of women in a true sense.

Index Terms— WoE, perception,determinants, education,academia,factor,tertiary education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Academicians are divided in their opinion when it comes to define women empowerment (WoE) due to the complex and dynamic nature of the phrase. A variety of understandings exists of the term “empowerment” due to its extensive usage. Empowerment is inevitably bound up with the situation of enslavement and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. Women empowerment (WoE) ensure decision making power in personal life as well as family life[1]. Gender discrimination has considered one of the barriers of being empowered economically [2]. Educated spouses are more important to ensure empowerment than average level of education [3]

To know the issues of being empowerment, one must identify the proper meaning of empowerment. According to Sustainable development goal [4], the fifth goal is – “gender equality”. Gender inequality is the first barrier of women empowerment. In this twenty first century, still now women become victim of socially, economically and psychologically deprived from different activities of

society [5]. Education can play the key role to remove gender inequality which is the main obstacle to being empowered. The main goal of this paper is to identify the key indicators of women empowerment (WoE) according to the key persons’ perception in academia. A society as well as a country cannot progress without the development of women. Hence, the endeavor of this paper is to explore and identify the key determinants of women empowerment according to the key persons’ perception in academia. The core objectives of this study are: (1) identify the prime determinants of women empowerment (WoE); (2) prioritize among diverse determinants of women empowerment (WoE) from the perception of policy-makers; and (3) figure-out the nature & degree of correlation among different factors facilitating women empowerment (WoE).

2 LITURE REVIEW

Education is a key instrument in empowering women because it helps them gain a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities and work as a primary confidence booster [6] especially in developing world. A literature review of 60 studies regarding women empowerment (WoE) [7] demonstrated that women’s education is a marker of numerous influences and processes which many researchers used as a proxy for women’s empowerment. Regardless of the nature of

education (formal or informal), it is expected that the light of education is supposed to trigger latent faculties in a woman which in turn can make her more assertive and oriented to future. Furthermore, education paves the way to next domain of women’s empowerment i.e. mobility & visibility expressed through her activities outside the home & increased interaction with their male counterparts. A study [8] conducted in 21 states of India has found a positive correlation between the female literacy rate and positive shift in the marriageable age which in turn reduce total fertility. The reduction in crude birth rate led to improvement in the mental and physical health condition of women which is an impetus for women empowerment. Moreover, a higher educated woman has more probability to get a better job than a woman with no or little education. However, women's education has a positive effect on borrowing money and no effect of education is observed regarding the use of savings. [9]. On the other hand, education proved to be an influential determinant in household decision-making in an empirical study [10] conducted in 31 European countries which concluded that in relation to major purchases, better-educated wives were more likely to make decisions jointly with their husbands. This is consistent with other research which demonstrated education plays a decisive role in household decision making of married women in Bangladesh [11]. Economic security is one of the key aspects of women empowerment which is primarily determined by property ownership and increased income level. Women with a high enough income tend to see a boost in their power to negotiate which in turn increases their decision-making authority [12]. However, researchers have found that women do at least twice as much unpaid care work as men – sometimes 10 times as much, often on top of their paid work [13]. This includes tasks such as cooking, cleaning and looking after children and other family members, including people who are sick or elderly [14]. Women who are economically independent are more ensure empowerment than who are not economically inactive [15]

The amount of time & effort required for those tasks restricts women from engaging high income generating activities. Access to financial services such as microcredit can and does make vital contributions to the economic productivity and social well being of poor women. But a study [16] found that in two-thirds of the loans in their study, men either significantly or partially controlled the credit women brought into the household. As a result, many women remain financially dependent on their husbands as they lack the bargaining power to make decisions at home. Several studies [17] [18] have demonstrated that microcredit programs do not ‘automatically’ empower women. Household decision-

making domain was one of the earliest ways of operational zing women’s empowerment [19].

3 METHODOLOGY

A baseline survey was conducted on WoE in the authors’ university. The participants were all the key persons in a university organogram. Stratified sampling method was adopted to reach potential respondents. In total 50 respondents filled-out a pre-defined structured questionnaire for quantitative data. Based on their responses semi-structured interviews were conducted to get in-depth qualitative data. Participants were given a brief verbal explanation regarding these key factors mentioned in the questionnaire before starting answering: education, economical in-dependency, decision making power (professional and personal), financial support to family, position holding (in profession and society) and. self awareness. These factors were ranked under the scale of most important, very important, moderately important etc. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw, asked to read the instructions carefully and to complete the questionnaire at their own pace.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULT

A questionnaire survey has been conducted on those who are involved in policy making and execution in an educational organization. Based on 50 respondents’ opinion, demonstrated in Table1, education is perceived to play the key role in determining women empowerment (WoE). Among other factors, education has considered the most important and leading factors in women empowerment. 54% people ranked education plays most important role in women empowerment (WoE), 30% people considered it as very important and 14% respondent consider it as moderate important determinant of women empowerment(WoE).

TABLE 1Frequency table of education

Factors rating	Frequency	Percent
Most important	27	54.0
Very important	15	30.0
Moderately important	7	14.0
Partially important	1	2.0
Total	50	100.0

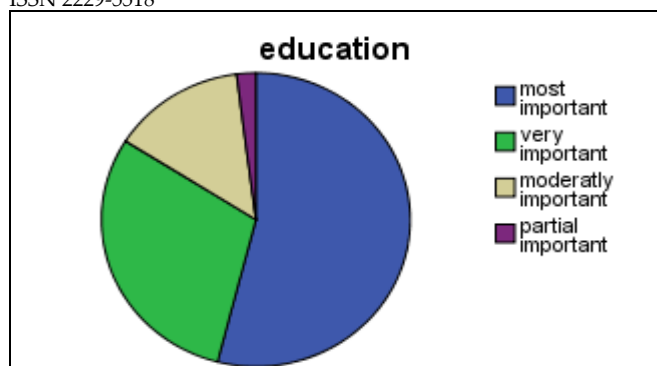


Fig 1. Education cited as the most important determinant at various degrees

From Figure1, it has clearly shown that a significant majority (54%) of respondents are under the impression that education plays the most crucial role in empowering women.

TABLE 2. Frequency table of Self awareness

Factors rating	Frequency	Percent
Most important	15	30
Very important	11	22
Moderately important	9	18
Partially important	7	14
important	5	10
Less important	1	2
Total	48	96
Missing	2	4
Total	50	100

The factor self-awareness has considered the second important factor that drives a woman to be empowered. 30% people said, self-awareness is most important. According to analysis, by achieving 20% opinion for economic independence, it has considered as the third most important factor that impels a woman for empowerment. Meanwhile, decision making in own sectors has considered as forth important factors in women empowerment. 10% respondents consider the power of decision making in personal region enact most important role.

Table 3. Frequency table of five most important determinants in women empowerment

Factors rating	Self-awareness	Economic independence	Decision making in own sectors	Decision making in personal region	Financial independence
Most important	27	15	10	5	4
Very important	10	15	11	8	3
Moderately important	9	8	15	8	4
Partial important	2	6	4	6	3

From TABLE3, it is evident that those leading five determinants with their frequencies of ranking perceived to be most important for empowering women.

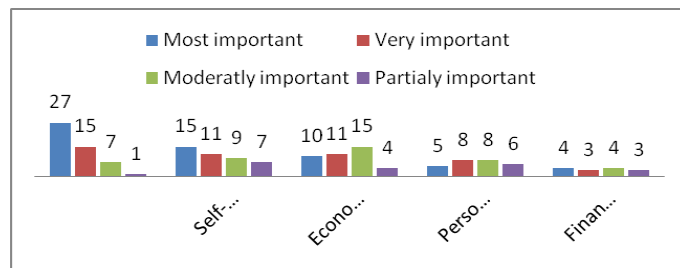


Fig2. Top five determinants of women empowerment

Figure 2 demonstrates the various degree of importance regarding the five most important factors for ensuring women empowerment according to the respondents.

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Education was identified as a pre-requisite for women empowerment(WoE) since education has inherent properties to facilitate a host of determinants for women empowerment. Apart from the bookish knowledge provided in formal educational institutions, education can be acquired from diverse unstructured and non-formal sources. Regardless of its nature: formal or non-formal, education provides the ground for enhanced self-awareness which in turn can trigger a positive change in women’s outlook regarding her surroundings. An educated woman has more social acceptability in the eyes of others than an illiterate woman. Education makes a person more eager and competent for rational decision-making through enhanced analytical ability & critical reasoning which unlocks the true potential of a woman through better social recognition. Given the inherent catalytic ability of education, it will not be considered as an overstatement if one says, “An educated woman is an empowered woman.” Women who enjoy full ownership of their income are more empowered than those who do not. A financially dependent woman has no choice but to obey the bread earner of her family. On the other hand, a working woman has more social mobility which gives her access to better socio-economic opportunities to become empowered in her community. But economic independence can produce mixed results in women empowerment as not all women have control over the expenditure decisions of their own income & assets. Financial contribution carries weight and can be one of the core deciding factors in women empowerment since it raises social status in the larger context as well as augments their household decision-making authority.

Such positive externalities such as education, self-awareness, economic independency may also articulate an impetus for boosting her confidence to engage in household decision-making authority. On the other hand, working-women enjoy more empowered in their workplace through their professional decision-making but most of them face the constant challenge of balancing their personal life with their professional life. Since working women need to devote a significant portion of their time & energy in their workplace, which in-turn creates a lack of interaction with their family members hampers their decision-making authority over them.

6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limited scope of this study can be attributable to insufficient fund and time constraints which may pave to simplified overgeneralization and restrain the justification. A more diverse and representative sample consisting of respondents from various professions would certainly enhance the validity and acceptability of such explorative study. In addition, the study examined the perception of the respondents who are prone to their own personal biases and preconceived notions.

7 RECOMONDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study could be a yardstick for further work regarding the dynamic and multifaceted role education in women

empowerment. Additional studies can be conducted to explore the nature & degree of interlinkages among the prime determinants behind empowered women. A similar type of study can be conducted exclusively on already established and empowered women(WoE) and cross-refer the findings with this study to check whether there is any deviation in perception. Both quantitative and qualitative empirical findings to investigate the complex spectrum of women empowerment.

8 CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to dig out the most crucial determinants for women empowerment(WoE) in the perspective of crucial policy makers of an educational institution. As they directly involve with policy making, their opinion keep imperative role to justify the determinants that keep most important role in women empowerment. In conclusion, we can say that the ramification of the analysis shows convincing quantified factor distribution with inter connection that indicates successful accomplishment of this work. The previous literature on women empowerment is divided into different opinions for prioritizing factor in determining women empowerment(WoE). The present work shows that education is the prime factor which not only works as an impetus which facilitates other determinants but also unlocks the latent potentials of social, political, cultural and economic empowerment of women in a true sense.

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