Impact of Socio-economic Status on Different Indicators of Empowerment

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Abstract

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action and work in an autonomous way. It is the process by which one can gain control over one’s destiny and the circumstances of their lives. The present research work is designed to study the adolescent girls empowerment regarding seven indicators that are power and entitlements, autonomy and self-reliance, decision making, participation of social activities, capacity building, social, political and legal awareness, and exposure to information. This study is an attempt to find out the relationship of socio-economic status with different indicators of empowerment of adolescent girls studying in government and non-government senior secondary schools. A sample of 150 girls studying at senior secondary schools aged 16 to 18 years were selected randomly from rural and urban areas of Sonipat dist., Haryana state. ‘Adolescent girls empowerment scale’ developed by Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia and Dr. Alpana Singh and Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Dr. Ashok K. Kalia and Dr. Sudhir Sahu were used as measuring instruments. The findings of the study were that the empowerment of adolescent girls studying in government and non-government schools in rural and urban areas positively correlated with socio-economic status on four dimensions out of the seven and on rest of the dimensions they depicted negative correlation.

Introduction

Empowerment 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. Empowerment has been defined as to infuse people with power (Narayana, 2002, World Development Report, 2002/2000) i.e. access to resources, as expansion in individual’s agency (Kishore, 2002), as power of decision making i.e. autonomy (Jojeebboy, 1995). Women Empowerment is most vital system to strengthen the future of women in India. It is a systematic approach which needs to develop more seriously in India. In the Indian situation, this would mean helping women to enjoy their constitutional and legal rights to equality though men and women are declared to be equal before the law. Women make up 52% of our country’s population. Hence there can be no progress unless their needs and interests are fully met. Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are made strong, alert and aware of their equal status in the society. Though discrimination on the basis of sex is forbidden by the constitution. It is common knowledge that women are still at a disadvantage in India in many areas of life. Most of the girls experience some degree of psychological and emotional isolation. Everywhere in the world, girls face discrimination simply because they are female. Many girls do not even enjoy basic rights: to be free from exploitation and violence, to education, to decide when and whether to marry, to inherit land and many others. Especially in Indian society, social cultural and economic barriers place girls at the very bottom of the social
hierarchy. Marriage in adolescence remains a widespread practice affecting 44.5 per cent of adolescent girls, and is a consequence of the broader social norms that encourage parents to marry their daughters off early (Mathur et al. 2003; International Institute for Population Sciences 2007). And this significantly affects on women’s empowerment. At this early stage in their life-cycle, married adolescent girls are the least empowered members in their marital homes and the most at-risk nutritionally. Despite their numbers, the 113 million adolescent girls in India are largely invisible and vulnerable group. India is the home to the largest population of child brides. Out of 3 million sex workers, 60 percent are young girls, 95 percent girls drop out of school by age, 15 in leading states and over 50 percent girls face domestic violence, claimed the media release Dasra (CB Bureau, New Delhi November 18, 2013).

Women’s empowerment is conceptualized as a function of women’s access to and control over resources, which extends to their decision-making capabilities regarding household decisions, employment, income, household assets and expenditure, fertility, sexuality, and freedom of movement (physical mobility) and their control over material and intangible resources such as property, information and time; their position within the household vis-à-vis other male and female household members; their experience of domestic violence; and their education (Gurumurthy 1998; Dyson and Moore 1983). For most women in South Asia, gaining control over resources, in addition to gaining access to resources, is essential (Gurumurthy 1998). Many authors conceptualize empowerment less as an outcome and more as a process, i.e. a progress from the state of gender inequality to the state of gender equality. As such, empowerment is composed of elements that enable or limit it (CuevaBeteta 2006; Kabeer 1999, 2005; Kishor 2000). One definition is that of Kabeer (1999, 2005), who depicts women’s empowerment as “the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability.” According to Kishor (2000), indicators of women’s empowerment as agency or end-result, i.e. evidence, should directly measure women’s control over their lives or environment, while indicators of process should document the existence or absence of an appropriate setting for empowerment and women’s access to different sources of empowerment. Women empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that include geographical location (rural/urban), educational status, social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on women empowerment exist at national, state and local levels in many sectors including health, education, economic opportunities, gender based violence and political participation. Despite repeated claims of progress by the Government, there was no significant improvement in access to health care and education. According to the latest statistics released by World Economic Forum (2012) indicate that the current situation of gender gaps is alarming and India ranks after our neighbor country. The Global Gender Gap Index (2012) observed that India is simply not doing enough for its women.

The present study is focused on gender related issue in a particular state of India that is Haryana. The Indian girls because of their secondary status in the society may have low self-esteem and poor psychological well-being. Although the problem of neglecting of adolescent girl child is a global phenomenon but Haryana is facing many social problems related to girl child such as female feticide, violence against women, early marriages, dowry and lack of education. Although, there has been development in many fields in NCR region but the development of women and their rights is always
overlooked. The girls who are in their adolescent age are not safe in the region like where KhapPanchayattake unbearable decisions. The crime and violence are increasing day by day. A girl is not even safe at her own house and with her near ones. It is really surprising that this is a hotly topic to be discussed everywhere but with no real solution. This put a tremendous burden on programmes for development of women and children and hampers the process of empowering women. Haryana Government launched many incentive programmes for girls like ApniBetiApnaDhan, Ladli and Haryana Integrated Women’s Empowerment and Development Project. Government has several plans in process for adolescent girls, for instance, facilities for educational loans, free of cost cycles to scheduled castes girls and Kishori Shakti Yojna and many other, with the objectives to empower and the objectives to empower and strengthen women and girls. But even than Haryana lagged far behind in overall development/ position of adolescent girls in the society. It is necessary to study women’s empowerment from the perspective of women’s socioeconomic characteristics, as women are divided by heterogeneous categories based on class, life cycle, or ethnicity. Scholars also point out the need to consider the intersectional ties of women’s empowerment—that is, how social, economic, cultural, and other categories related to gender relations interact with each other in such a way that they create inequalities among women (Calvès 2009; Charmes and Wieringa 2003). This is an important issue to tackle if the policies that promote gender equity are not to benefit only privileged groups of women, while leaving disadvantaged groups voiceless (Calvès 2009). Research on women’s empowerment supports the view that it is a multidimensional, complex and context-specific issue (Charmes and Wieringa 2003; Kabeer 2005; Malhotra and Mather 1997). Therefore, what is valid in one region may not be valid for other regions, while socio-cultural systems vary considerably from one setting to another, and even within the same country. This paper thus raises the question as to how socioeconomic status related to different indicators of empowerment in reference to adolescent girls.

Objectives

1. Are there any relation between socioeconomic status and seven dimensions of empowerment of adolescent girls studying in non-government senior secondary schools.
2. Are there any relation between socioeconomic status and seven dimensions of empowerment of adolescent girls studying in government secondary schools.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and seven dimensions of empowerment of adolescent girls studying in non-government senior secondary schools.
2. There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and seven dimensions of empowerment of adolescent girls studying in government secondary schools.

Methodology

Sample of the study

Sample of the present study consisted of 150 adolescent girls of the age group 16 to 18 years, studying in Senior Secondary Schools, selected randomly from six Schools of District Sonipat, Haryana (80 girls from government schools and 70 from non-government schools).
Tools

Following scales have been used to collect the data related to Adolescent Girls’ Empowerment and Socio- Economic Status:

1. For assessing the adolescent girls empowerment, ‘Adolescent Girls’ Empowerment Scale’ developed by Dr. Devender Singh Sisodia and Dr. Alpana Singh has been used by the investigator. The scale is divided in seven sections, which are related to empowerment. These are power and entitlements, Autonomy and Self-reliance, Decision Making, Participation in Social and Developmental activities, Capacity Building, Social, Political and Legal Awareness and Exposure to Information Media.

2. ‘Socio-Economic Status Scale’ developed by Dr. Ashok K. Kalia and Dr. Sudhir Sahu has been used for assessing socio-economic status of adolescent girls.

Procedure

Descriptive survey method of research was employed for the present study. The tools employed in the study were administered on the secondary school students of the age group 16 to 18 years.

Data analysis and interpretation

The data received was analyzed by using the Pearson’s coefficient of correlation.

Table-1: Showing the values of correlation between various dimensions of empowerment with socioeconomic status of adolescent girls studying in Non-Government senior secondary schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Level of sig at .05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Power and Entitlements</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Autonomy and self-reliance</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>Not Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Decision Making</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Participation in social and developmental activities</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Capacity Building</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Social, Political and Legal awareness</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Exposure to information media</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>Not Sig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reference to the adolescent girls studying in non-government schools the coefficient of correlation between the socio-economic status and power and entitlements indicator of empowerment is 0.29. It is inferred that in this case socio-economic status and power and entitlement is significantly and positively correlated to each other.

The coefficient of correlations between the socio-economic status and autonomy and self-reliance, decision making, participation in social and developmental activities and exposure to information media dimensions of girls empowerment are 0.20, 0.15, 0.09 and 0.16 respectively. Result reveals that socio-economic status and these dimensions of empowerment are positively correlated but not significant.

In case of capacity building and social political and legal awareness indicators of empowerment regarding adolescent girls studying in non-government schools, table shows negative correlation (-0.02 and -0.21 respectively) with socio-economic status but not significant at 0.05 level of significant.
Table-2: Showing the values of correlation between various dimensions of girls’ empowerment and socioeconomic status of Government senior secondary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Level of sig at .05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Power and Entitlements</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Autonomy and self-reliance</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>Not Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Decision Making</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Participation in social and developmental activities</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Capacity Building</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>Not Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Social, Political and Legal awareness</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>Not Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Exposure to information media</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that socio-economic status of adolescent girls is significantly positively correlated with power and entitlements, decision making, participation in social and developmental activities and exposure to information media dimension of empowerment, having correlation coefficient 0.22, 0.22, 0.27 and 0.29 respectively.

Further it has been explored that socio-economic status of adolescent girls is also positively correlated with the dimension named autonomy and self-reliance but it is not significant whereas it is negatively correlated with capacity building and social, political and legal awareness dimensions of empowerment having correlation coefficient -0.19 and -0.17 respectively but not significant.

**Conclusion**

From the results given above, it can be concluded that in case of adolescent girls studying in non-government schools, socio-economic status is positively correlated with five dimensions of empowerment namely power and entitlements, Autonomy and Self-reliance, Decision Making, Participation in Social activities and Exposure to Information Media out of seven dimensions whereas another two dimensions of empowerment that are Capacity Building and Social, Political and Legal Awareness are not positively correlated with socio-economic status. Capacity building means capacity to undertake economic, social and political activities like ability to manage productive resources, ability to interact effectively in public sphere, agreeing on common issues etc. Political social and legal awareness means knowledge of ward members of the area, name of prime minister, drug addiction and registered marriage etc. Result of the study reveals that these issues are not correlated with socio-economic status of adolescent girls. Power is the most important element in the term empowerment. Power and entitlement dimension is significantly correlated which means high level of socio-economic status of girls give power and entitlement to the girls like to make decision at household level, power to choose appropriate occupation for self, control to resources, rights to equitable share of resources etc.

In case of adolescent girls studying in government schools, it can be stated that Capacity Building and Social, Political and Legal Awareness dimensions are negatively correlated but not significant. Autonomy and Self-reliance dimension of empowerment is positively correlated with socio-economic status of adolescent girls but it is not significant. Four dimensions that are power and entitlements, Decision Making, Participation in Social and developmental activities and Exposure to Information Media are positively correlated and these correlations are significant also. It can be concluded
that socio-economic status of government schoolgirls is strongly correlated with various forms of power, rights to equitable share of resources, decision making for important matters, participation in various programmes in society and exposure to information media like radio, television etc.

References