

A STUDY OF EMPOWERMENT AMONG SCHOOL GOING GIRL ADOLESCENTS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH IN RELATION TO LOCATION AND STREAM

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ABSTRACT

In this research, the status of empowerment among school going girl adolescents of Himachal Pradesh was studied in relation to location and stream. The descriptive method of research was followed by selecting a sample of 120 plus two girl adolescents from Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh using empowerment scale (Sisodia and Singh, 2009) exploring seven dimensions i.e., power and entitlements, autonomy and self-reliance, decision making, participation, capacity building, social, political and legal awareness and exposure to information media. The ANOVA results revealed that rural science stream girl adolescents have shown significantly better levels of empowerment in terms of power and entitlements, decision making and participation (social and development activities) dimension of empowerment as compared to their rural arts counterparts. The rural girl adolescents have significantly higher levels of empowerment in terms of capacity building and exposure to information media than urban girl adolescents markedly in science stream. However, there was no significant difference in overall level of empowerment of school going girl adolescents across location and stream of study. These results showing above average level of empowerment among school going girl adolescents are an indication of good sign of social and educational status of girls and gender parity in social and economic developmental processes.

Keywords: Empowerment, School going girl adolescents, Location, Stream

Women constitute half of the world's population. Her position almost everywhere in society and around the globe and in every sphere of life is not equal to men. Their sufferings are almost similar across different cultures, regions, religions, cast, and races. They have been victims of different forms of harassment abuse, molestation, violence, rape, poverty, malnutrition in this world of inequality. Even in this 21st century, women are deprived of education; they are beaten, considered witches; victims of cyberbullying and bullying for presenting their opinions; also tortured and raped while the main perpetrators move freely without any punishment; discouraged from

participating in political activity; limited freedom in terms of marriage and reproduction. Because of the profoundly ingrained patriarchal beliefs, customs, social norms, and social institutions, their social and economic outcomes may suffer unfavorable effects (UNICEF and Breakthrough, 2016). Equal chances must be given to this half of the population in the areas of economics, society, politics, education, religion, and the law. The issue of gender parity stands in sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 by all nations.

Women empowerment' is now a global phenomenon and tops the global agenda. Empowerment is crucial for the inclusive and

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holistic development of society and the nation as a whole. The United Nations (2001) defines empowerment as the “processes by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices.” According to Page and Czuba (1999), empowerment is a multifaceted social process that gives people authority over their own lives. It is a method that empowers individuals to take action on issues they deem significant in their own lives, communities, and society. The adolescent phase in one’s life is the most ideal stage where one masticates past learning, redesigns new strategies, and carries forward the consolidations into the future. Adolescence is therefore a critical time in a person’s life. One’s physical, mental, moral, emotional, social, and sexual characteristics all undergo fast changes throughout this time. During this time of fears and anxieties, the human psyche takes on new dimensions. Although both males and girls are considered adolescents, their experiences throughout their formative years differ greatly in India. In India, being a girl growing up is associated with a lower social standing and fewer rights than a boy. Girls tend to face a range of social risks and restrictions, including restricted mobility and limited or no involvement in decisions about their education or life choices. Compared to their male counterparts, teenage girls are more susceptible to violence, early or forced marriage, and school dropout (Blum, Mmari and Moreau, 2017; Nanda, Gautam, Verma, Khanna, Khan, Brahme, Boyle and Kumar, 2014; Pandita, 2015).

Empowerment of adolescent girls ensures social justice and recognises their rights. It serves as an entry point for promoting civic participation and also enables them to take control over their own life, by reshaping and restoring themselves. Empowered adolescents

are in a better position to direct themselves in all domains of life (PAHO, 2010). Enhancing self-perception and self-assurance, developing the ability to think critically about surroundings, and building both individual and group resources are all components of empowerment (Kieffer, 1984). It is also understood as the process of enhancing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that people, families, and communities can take action to improve their circumstances. This includes increased self-sufficiency, a developed group consciousness, a decrease in self-blame in the face of difficulties, and the capacity to take personal responsibility for change (Gutierrez, 1994). In order to study, build relationships, develop their identities, and gain the social and practical skills necessary to become engaged and successful adults, adolescent girls and boys must overcome many obstacles. Additionally, it is morally and legally required of adults, parents, decision-makers, and the global community to protect adolescents’ rights and foster their strengths in a safe, nurturing environment (UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, 2003).

PAHO (2010) discussed some important points related to the empowerment of adolescent girls which are also fundamental for human development. These include social justice and acknowledging their rights, identifying a way to encourage civic engagement, empowering adolescent girls to take charge of their own lives, redefining and reshaping gender roles, regaining a sense of empowerment, ending the cycle of poverty, helping to lower high rates of fertility and STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and crucially achieving the development goals. Additionally, there is a close relationship between economic progress and women’s empowerment. According to Duflo (2012), although women’s empowerment results from development itself, decision-making alters as

a result of women's empowerment. Economic empowerment of women is a necessary condition for pro-poor growth and sustainable development. Robust public policies with holistic strategy, sustained dedication, and gender-specific viewpoints in policies are necessary, as is more equitable access to resources and services; infrastructure projects should be planned to help the impoverished, both men and women and job opportunities should be enhanced while acknowledging the enormous amount of unpaid labour performed by women (Modhiya, 2016).

Education plays an essential role in raising awareness and developing practical livelihood and leadership skills, which are essential for the empowerment, agency, and transformation of girls. Since empowerment cannot be achieved via education alone, a sustained governmental commitment to gender equity is essential. Patriarchal systems are preventing females from reaching their full potential in many emerging nations. To bring change and achieve gender parity, girls start to question such beliefs using their voices and education (Kober, 2016). There is proof that teenage girls from joint families have greater levels of empowerment than those from nuclear families and that girls from metropolitan communities have greater levels of empowerment than those from rural ones. (Dhankar and Gaur, 2017; Singh and Sultana, 2020; Gautam, 2019).

From the above discussion it seems that women empowerment both among adults and adolescents has been the focus of researchers for the last three or four decades to evolve linkage of community, socially women folk with national development. Hence, it was thought worthwhile to explore empowerment among girl adolescents of Himachal Pradesh.

Objective

1. To study and compare school-going girl adolescents' empowerment dimensional as well as total across location and stream.
2. To find the interaction effect of location and stream on the school-going girl adolescents' empowerment dimensional as well as total.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis

H_{10} : There will be no significant mean difference in empowerment of rural and urban school-going girl adolescents across the arts and science stream.

H_{1a} : There will be a significant mean difference in empowerment of rural and urban school-going girl adolescents across the arts and science stream.

H_{20} : There will be no significant interaction of location and stream on the school-going girl adolescents' empowerment—dimensional as well as total.

H_{2a} : There will be no significant interaction of location and stream on the school-going girl adolescents' empowerment—dimensional as well as total.

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was used in the study.

Sample: A sample of 120 senior secondary girl adolescents was drawn using random sampling method from four senior secondary schools, out of which two were selected from rural areas and two from urban areas of district Shimla in Himachal Pradesh.

Tool used

Adolescent Girls Empowerment Scale (AGES) developed by Sisodia and Singh (2009) was used, which consisted of 49 items distributed

over seven sections power and entitlement, autonomy and self-reliance, decision making, capacity building, participation, social-political and legal awareness and exposure to information media.

Analysis of Data

The two-way Analysis of Variance with location (rural and urban) and stream of study

(science and arts) to find out their main and interaction effect on empowerment was used.

Results

The means of dimensional scores obtained on empowerment for school going girl adolescents in 'Stream x Location' factorial design is reported in table 1.

Table 1
Means of Dimensional scores on empowerment among girl adolescents in (Stream x Location) factorial design

S.No.	Dimensions of Empowerment	Stream			
		Rural		Urban	
		Science	Arts	Science	Arts
1	Power and Entitlements	25.96	23.06	23.96	24.36
2	Autonomy and Self-reliance	27.00	23.60	24.60	25.20
3	Decision Making	26.03	22.16	24.23	24.50
4	Participation	27.20	22.40	24.26	23.66
5	Capacity Building	24.06	22.53	19.73	21.00
6	Social, political and Legal awareness	26.50	24.53	24.96	25.10
7	Exposure to Information Media	25.63	22.30	22.93	24.43
Total		182.38	164.67	160.58	168.25
Overall mean of sample		168.97 (49-245)			

Table 1

The complete summary of Analysis of Variance for seven dimensions of empowerment for school going girl adolescents is reported in table 2.

S. No.	Dimensions of Empowerment	Source of variation										
		Location (A) (Df=1)			Stream (B) (Df=1)			A x B (Df=1)			Error (Df=116)	
		SS	MS	F	SS	MS	F	SS	MS	F	SS	MS
1	Power and Entitlements	4.04	4.04	.35	61.63	61.63	5.43	114.70	114.70	10.09	1318	11.36
2	Autonomy and Self-reliance	3.67	3.67	.21	46.87	46.87	2.62	81.46	81.46	4.56	20.73	17.87
3	Decision Making	2.14	2.14	.12	97.20	97.20	5.43	126.13	126.13	7.04	2078	17.91

4	Participation	21	21	1.80	219	219	18.21	131	131	11.25	1526	11.64
5	Capacity Building	258.13	258.13	13.60	.54	.54	.03	58	58	3.05	2202	18.98
6	Social, political and Legal awareness	7	7	.76	25.20	25.20	2.75	31.72	31.72	3.47	1060	9.14
7	Exposure to Information Media	3	3	1.7	25	25	1.4	174	174	10.5	2008	17.31

(*p< 0.05; **p< 0.01)

Table 2

The F value for the main effect of Location on the dimensions of empowerment viz. power and entitlement (F=0.35), autonomy and self-reliance (F=0.21), decision making (F=0.12), participation (1.80), social-political and legal awareness (0.76), exposure to information media (1.7) came out to be non-significant and F value for the main effect of Location on the dimension capacity building (F=13.60, p<0.01) turned out to be significant, thereby indicating that rural and urban school going girl adolescents differ significantly on capacity building dimension of empowerment.

It may also be observed from table 2 that the F value for the main effect of stream on the dimensions of empowerment viz. power and entitlement (F=5.43), autonomy and self-reliance (2.62), decision making (5.43), capacity building (.03), social-political and legal awareness (2.75), exposure to information media (1.40) came out to be non-significant and F value for the main effect of stream on the dimension participation (F=18.81; p<0.01) turned out to be significant, thereby indicating that arts and science stream school going girl adolescents differ significantly on participation dimension of the empowerment.

The F value for the interaction of location and stream on the dimensions of empowerment

viz. autonomy and self-reliance (F=4.56), capacity building (F=3.05), social-political and legal awareness (F=3.47) school going girl adolescents turned out to be non-significant and F value for the interaction of location and stream on the dimensions of empowerment viz. power and entitlement (F=10.09), decision making (F=7.04), participation (F=11.25), exposure to information media (F=10.50) came out to be non-significant even at 0.01 level of significance, thereby indicating that there is significant interaction of location and stream on three dimensions of empowerment namely power and entitlement, decision making, participation and exposure to information media. In this case, hypothesis H_{2a} fails to reject and significant interaction is found.

Thus, the hypothesis 'There will be significant mean difference in empowerment of rural and urban school going girl adolescents across arts and science stream' may be partially rejected. On the basis of the result, it is concluded that

1. The rural and urban school going girl adolescents of Himachal Pradesh have significant differences in their empowerment status in the capacity building. Whereas, they have equal empowerment status in the areas like power and entitlement, autonomy and self-reliance, decision making, capacity

- building, social political and legal awareness and exposure to information media.
2. Also, science and arts stream school going girl adolescents of Himachal Pradesh have significant differences in their empowerment status of participation. Whereas, they have equal empowerment status in the areas like power and entitlement, Autonomy and self-reliance, Capacity building, Decision making and Social political and legal awareness.
 3. The rural science stream girl adolescents have shown significantly better levels of empowerment in terms of power and entitlements, decision making and participation dimension of empowerment as compared to their arts counterparts. The rural girl adolescents have a higher level of empowerment in terms of capacity building and exposure to information media than urban girl adolescents markedly in science stream.

Conclusion

From the results it is evident that school going girl adolescents of science stream exhibit significantly higher levels of participation (social and development activities) dimension of empowerment as compared to arts counterparts. Also, school going girl adolescents of rural location showed better performance on capacity building dimension of empowerment as compared to urban counterparts. However, there was no significant difference in overall level of empowerment of school going girl adolescents across location and stream of study.

The rural science stream girl adolescents have shown significantly better levels of empowerment in terms of power and entitlements, decision making and participation dimension of empowerment as compared to their arts counterparts. The rural girl adolescents

have a higher level of empowerment in terms of capacity building and exposure to information media than urban girl adolescents markedly in science stream. The overall results revealed that school going girl adolescents have exhibited appreciably good levels of empowerment, power and entitlement, autonomy and self-reliance, decision making, capacity building, participation, social-political and legal awareness and exposure to information media.

Implication

1. This status of empowerment is an indication of good sign of social and educational status of girls and gender parity in social and economic developmental processes of girl adolescents of Himachal Pradesh.
2. It is noteworthy that Himachal Pradesh has a high literacy rate both among male and female population groups across different sections of society. Though the hilly region has its own limitations, both the girls' participation in education and adult women's role in the economy are appreciable. The state policies on upliftment of ruralites including women folk are showing positive outcomes. It is the need of the hour that the employment of the educated women and their role in the political system both at grassroot level and at the state level—be encouraged and protected through socio-legal practices. Needless to mention gender equality, through women empowerment, as envisaged in the sustainable development goal (2015-2030) can be assured only through education.

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