

Empowerment of Rural Women in Agriculture: A Socio-psychological Analysis

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ABSTRACT Empowerment in woman's development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in her life through which she increases her ability to shape her life. The active, multi-dimensional processes enable them to realize full identity and power in all spheres of life. Rural women play a crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. However without their total intellectual and physical participation in these activities, it is not possible to achieve the goals of rural uplift. In the present study an attempt has been made to analyze the present status of women empowerment in different caste categories in Sultanpur district of Uttar Pradesh by examining pivotal socio-psychological factors of empowerment such as autonomy vs. dependency, self-esteem vs. self-depreciation and reflective vs. repetitive behavior of women. The results showed that majority of the women had medium or low level of empowerment. Further women who were illiterate/less educated were less empowered and generally belong to the scheduled caste category. In overall terms, the researchers would argue that the broad based approach is one of the best approaches to guarantee gender equity and to empower rural women, and that this approach should be considered in the formulation of rural policies and the creation and implementation of agricultural and rural development programmes and projects.

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment strategy nowadays have emerged as a unique Indian response to the challenge of gender equity and development. For women empowerment, it is essential to provide them access to information, knowledge, resources and power to make decisions. Empowering women at all sphere of life plays a vital role and is crucial in sustainable development of the nation. The analysis of conditions leading to their powerlessness, need implementation of suitable managerial skill trainings, motivation to decision-making with persistence for accomplishing basic objectives will lead them empowered women in agriculture (Sharma 2011). The process of empowerment will not only be able to improve their skills and access to productive resources, but also succeed in enhancing quality, dignity and work in the society status. The effect of empowerment of women creates a powerful influence on the norms, values and finally the laws that govern these communities (Cheryl 1999; Czuba 1999; Nanette 1999; Page 1999). They, thus, move away from being ineffective subordinate in the decision-making with improvement in managing their

lives. Empowerment includes cognitive and psychological elements, such as a women's understanding of her condition of subordination and the causes of such conditions. This requires an understanding the self and the cultural and social expectations, which may be activated by education. According to Stromquist (1995), women's empowerment is a socio-political concept that involves cognitive, psychological, economic and political dimensions. The reasons for empowerment often arise when an individual or group of individuals are unable or prevented from actualizing their potentials due to barriers created by individuals or other people within the environment. In order to understand women empowerment, it is necessary to look into various socio-psychological factors which affect the process of empowerment. Keeping the above background in mind an attempt was made to analyze the socio-psychological traits of women empowerment in agriculture with the following objectives:

- 1) To study the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
- 2) To study the respondents in relation to their various socio-psychological traits of empowerment, and
- 3) Factors affecting to empowerment of the respondents.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in two blocks viz., Dhanpatganj and Baidirai of Sultanpur district, Uttar Pradesh. The sampling frame which includes list of villages in both Community Development blocks was prepared and then ten per cent villages were selected randomly. At the second stage of sampling, a list of women in different caste categories viz. Schedule Caste (SC), Other Backward Caste (OBC) and General Caste, those participating in farm activities were prepared. A sample of 200 women respondents comprising of SC (91), OBC (54) and General Category (55), were selected by using stratified random sampling technique and selection of the respondents in each category was proportionate to their size of population. In present study, personal efficacy or empowerment was measured through assessment of one's dominant thought and tendencies. For this an inventory of thoughts and tendencies consisting of appropriate statements prepared by Singh (1997) was used. This inventory consisted of 15 statements, five each for three major dimensions of empowerment, that is, Autonomy vs. Dependence, Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation, and Reflective vs. Repetitive behavior. Finally scoring was done using following steps:

1. Response for each statement was given on a five point scale of agreement – disagreement. Scoring for 6 items was reversed that is strongly agree here is scored as 5 instead of 1 and strongly disagree was assigned 1 instead of 5. The rest of the items were scored as given, that is, 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).
2. As there were five items each for three major dimensions, that is, autonomy, vs. dependence, self-esteem vs. self depreciation and reflection vs. repetition, each dimension gets a total score from 0-25. Higher the score, greater the positive tendency and lower the score, greater the opposite tendency.
3. Then three total scores were combined to get final score on efficacy vs. powerlessness, higher the score, greater the tendency towards self -efficacy and lower the score, greater the tendency towards a sense of powerlessness. Sense of efficacy indicates a sense of psychological empowerment.

At last the scores assigned to all three dimensions of empowerment were summed up and overall mean and S.D. were calculated and classified into three categories on the basis of total scores as follows:

Low= below (Mean – S.D.), Medium= in between (Mean $\pm$ S.D.), High= above (Mean + S.D.)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

The findings depicted that maximum percentage of the respondents were found in middle age group (80.50%), scheduled caste (45.50%), illiterate (62.50%), joint family (67%) having above nine members in their families (36%), agriculture as main occupation (51.66%), brick wall tiled (52.50%) houses, non- participation in socio- politico organization (63.82%). Majority of the respondents were found in medium level of socio- economic status (57.50%) having land holding category of marginal farmers (72.50%), medium level of value orientation (67%), respectively. These facts clearly indicate poor socio-economic condition of the respondent.

Further the women empowerment was measured through assessment of one's dominant thoughts and tendencies on the basis of three major dimensions of empowerment such as Autonomy vs. Dependency; Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation; Reflective vs. Repetitive behaviors. The combination of all these dimensions named as Empowerment. The findings are described on the basis of these three dimensions and overall women empowerment as follows-

a) Autonomy vs. Dependency: Autonomy includes initiative, hope of success and problem solving while dependency includes fear of failure, problem avoiding and conformity.

It was revealed from the results given in Table 1 that the majority of respondents (72%) were observed in medium category of Autonomy vs. Dependency followed by low (23.50%) and high (4.50%) categories, respectively. The overall mean of scores was observed to be 12.607 and S.D. 2.316 with a range of minimum 7 and maximum 17 scores. It is further revealed from the table that the respondents' scores decreased from medium level to low level in all three caste categories. It implies that the respondents are low empowered in relation to autonomy vs.

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to autonomy vs. dependency (n=200)

Categories	SC (f)		OBC (f)		General (f)		Total (f)	
Low	25	(27.47)	11	(20.37)	11	(20.00)	47	(23.50)
Medium	60	(65.93)	41	(75.93)	43	(78.18)	144	(72.00)
High	6	(6.60)	2	(3.70)	1	(1.82)	9	(4.50)
Total	91	(100.00)	54	(100.00)	55	(100.00)	200	(100.00)
Mean	12.78		12.7090		12.8571		12.607	
S.D.	1.9338		3.1603		2.8248		2.316	

Range: Minimum = 7, Maximum = 17

Figure in parentheses indicates percentage of total.

dependency. The observed mean score in general category of respondent is slightly higher (12.8571) than the SC (12.78) and OBC (12.7090). It can be concluded that maximum respondents had fear of failure and less hope of success because of illiteracy and no knowledge about various things related to farm and other home management activities.

(b) Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation: Self-esteem includes innovativeness and creativity while self-depreciation includes safe playing and security.

It was observed from Table 2 that the majority of the respondents (80.50%) were in medium category of Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation followed by low (15%) and high (4.50%) categories, respectively. The mean of score was found 16.2836 and S.D. 2.0574 and scores ranges from minimum 10 to maximum 22. The majority of respondents of all three caste categories had medium level of self-esteem vs. self-depreciation followed by low level and high level of self-esteem vs. self-depreciation, respectively. It shows that women empowerment in relation to level of self-esteem vs. self-depreciation, inclined towards low level from medium level. The reasons may be due to male dominancy and fear of older persons in the family and society that what they would say. In a study conducted by Agarwal (2010), women were given a place

in a forest conservation group. Not only did this drive up the efficiency of the group, but the women gained incredible self-esteem while others, including men, viewed them with more respect.

(c) Reflective vs. Repetitive Behavior: Reflective behavior included actor role, challenge and quality seeking, while repetitive behavior includes pawn-role, psychological stimulation, that is, laboring mechanically and tendency for routine performance. The results for this dimension are presented in Table 3.

It was observed from Table 3 that 68 percent respondents were in the category of medium level of reflective vs. repetitive behavior followed by 22.50 per cent low level and 9.50 per cent high level of reflective vs. repetitive behavior in all three caste categories. The observed mean score was 14.0249 and S.D. 2.5283 with a range of minimum 9 and maximum 22 scores. The respondents were found in medium category followed by low category in relation to reflective vs. repetitive behavior. These results indicate that the women were involved in doing the repetitive and routine work. This may be due to dependency of women on husband or in-laws of the family.

(d) Empowerment of Women: The empowerment of women was measured by combining Autonomy vs. Dependency, Self-esteem vs. Self-

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to self-esteem vs. self-depreciation (n=200)

Categories	SC (f)		OBC (f)		General (f)		Total (f)	
Low	16	(17.58)	6	(11.11)	8	(14.55)	30	(15.00)
Medium	70	(76.92)	47	(87.04)	44	(80.00)	161	(80.50)
High	5	(5.50)	1	(1.85)	3	(5.45)	9	(4.50)
Total	91	(100.00)	54	(100.00)	55	(100.00)	200	(100.00)
Mean	16.3750		16.0909		16.5714		16.2836	
S.D.	1.5986		2.8311		2.5061		2.0574	

Range: Minimum = 10, Maximum = 22

Figure in parentheses indicates percentage of total.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to their reflective vs. repetitive behavior (n=200)

Categories	SC (f)	OBC (f)	General (f)	Total (f)
Low	31 (34.07)	4 (7.41)	10 (18.18)	45 (22.50)
Medium	44 (48.35)	49 (90.74)	43 (78.18)	136 (68.00)
High	16 (17.58)	1 (1.85)	2 (3.64)	19 (9.50)
Total	91 (100.00)	54 (100.00)	55 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
Mean	13.500	14.472	14.75	14.0249
S.D.	1.963	3.044	3.072	2.5283

Range: Minimum = 9, Maximum = 22

Figure in parentheses indicates percentage of total.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to empowerment of women (n=200)

Categories	SC (f)	OBC (f)	General (f)	Total (f)
Low	1213.19	611.11	712.73	2512.50
Medium	7076.92	4481.48	4378.18	15778.50
High	99.89	47.41	59.09	189.00
Total	91 (100.00)	54 (100.00)	55 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
Mean	42.660	42.218	43.142	42.627
S.D.	3.269	4.405	2.984	3.468

Range: Minimum = 28, Maximum = 52

Figure in parentheses indicates percentage.

depreciation and Reflective vs. Repetitive behavior and the results are presented in Table 4.

The majority of the respondents (78.50%) were observed in medium category of empowerment followed by low (12.50%) and high (9.00%) categories of empowerment with a mean score of 42.627 and S.D. 3.468, respectively. The range was observed minimum 28 and maximum 52 scores. The results further revealed that the respondents were found in medium level of empowerment followed by low level in all three castes. It shows that the empowerment of women decreases towards higher to lower category. This may be due to illiteracy and unawareness about their facts and role of rural women and male dominance in society. It is indicated by the mean score that level of women empowerment is slightly better in case of general caste (43.142) and schedule caste (42.660) than the OBC (42.218).

(3) Factors Affecting Empowerment of the Respondents

For identifying the factors which are responsible for women empowerment, correlation coefficient between selected independent variables and empowerment of the women was calculated and results are presented in Table 5.

It was revealed from Table 5 that, the correlation coefficients between empowerment of

Table 5: Correlation between selected independent variables and empowerment of the women (n=200)

S. No.	Selected independent variables	Correlation coefficient (r)
1.	Age (X_1)	0.040 ^{NS}
2.	Caste (X_2)	0.094 ^{NS}
3.	Education (X_3)	0.198*
4.	Marital status (X_4)	0.078 ^{NS}
5.	Family type (X_5)	0.069 ^{NS}
6.	Family size (X_6)	0.013 ^{NS}
7.	Land holding (X_7)	0.195*
8.	Material possession (X_8)	0.099 ^{NS}
9.	Housing pattern (X_9)	0.048 ^{NS}
10.	Position in the family (X_{10})	0.201*
11.	Socio-political participation (X_{11})	0.199*
12.	Socio-economic status (X_{12})	0.197*
13.	Occupation (X_{13})	0.196*
14.	Annual family income (X_{14})	0.059 ^{NS}
15.	Sources of information utilized (X_{15})	0.194*
16.	Marketing facilities (X_{16})	0.093 ^{NS}
17.	Value orientation (X_{17})	0.195*
18.	Ability to coordinate farming activities (X_{18})	0.202*
19.	Farm activities performed by women (X_{19})	0.195*
20.	Decision making pattern (X_{20})	0.207*
21.	Entrepreneurial behaviour (X_{21})	0.197*

* Significant at 0.05 level of significance;

NS = Non-significant

women and education, land holding, position in the family, socio-political participation, socio-economic status, occupation, sources of information utilized, value orientation, ability to coordinate farming activities, farm activities per-

formed by women, decision-making pattern and entrepreneurial behavior were positive and significant at 5% level of significance. This shows that these variables are closely associated with women empowerment. Whereas, correlation coefficients between empowerment of women and Age (X_1), Caste (X_2), Marital status (X_4), Family type (X_5), Family size (X_6), Material possession (X_8), Housing pattern (X_9), Annual family income (X_{14}) and Marketing facilities (X_{16}) were turned out insignificant. Similar findings were also reported by Kaushal and Singh (2010).

In order to predict the effect of all 21 independent variables namely age, caste, education, marital status, family type, family size, land holding, material possession, housing pattern, position in the family, socio-politico participation, socio-economic status, occupation, annual family income, sources of information utilized, marketing facilities, value orientation, ability to coordinate farming activities, farm activities performed by women, decision making pattern and entrepreneurial behaviour on dependent variables namely empowerment, multiple regressions analysis was performed and the results are presented in Table 6.

The regression coefficient between the selected independent variables and empowerment are presented in Table 6 indicates that the value of coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) with twenty one independent variables is 0.122. The value of F ratio is 3.4 and it is significant at 1 per cent level of significance. This revealed that the twenty one independent put together, contributed a significant amount of variation to a proportion of 12.20 % in the overall empowerment of the respondents. It was also revealed through the values of regression coefficients (b) that the variables namely family type, land holding, material possession, socio-politico participation and socio-economic status were highly significant at 1 per cent level of significance and family size, occupation, sources of information utilized, decision making pattern and entrepreneurial behaviour were significant at 5 per cent level of significance. Hence, it can be inferred from these results that these independent variables are important determinants of the empowerment of women.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed poor socio-economic conditions of the respondents. The

Table 6: Results of multiple regression analysis of independent variables with dependent variable empowerment of women (n=200)

S. No.	Independent variables	Regression coefficient ('b')	SE of 'b'	't' value
1.	Age	2.058	0.032	0.647 ^{NS}
2.	Caste	-0.118	0.402	-0.295 ^{NS}
3.	Education	-0.156	0.246	-0.633 ^{NS}
4.	Marital status	0.256	1.700	-1.51 ^{NS}
5.	Family type	2.064	0.854	2.597 ^{**}
6.	Family size	1.136	0.587	1.973 [*]
7.	Land holding	1.404	0.691	2.634 ^{**}
8.	Material possession	1.164	0.477	2.584 ^{**}
9.	Housing pattern	0.880	0.704	1.250 ^{NS}
10.	Position in the family	4.727	1.136	0.42 ^{NS}
11.	Socio-politico participation	1.988	0.878	2.582 ^{**}
12.	Socio-economic status	-1.185	0.477	2.588 ^{**}
13.	Occupation	0.136	0.110	1.986 [*]
14.	Annual income	-1.158	0.000	-0.278 ^{NS}
15.	Sources of information utilized	-0.212	0.192	1.964 [*]
16.	Marketing facilities	1.794	0.32	0.561 ^{NS}
17.	Value orientation	5.553	0.135	0.410 ^{NS}
18.	Ability to coordinate farming activities	7.368	0.150	0.492 ^{NS}
19.	Farm activities performed by women	-5.440	0.069	-0.786 ^{NS}
20.	Decision making pattern	-5.533	0.004	1.962 [*]
21.	Entrepreneurial behavior	-0.286	0.155	1.984 [*]
	R^2	0.122		
	F-value	3.400 ^{**}		
	d.f.	20 and 177		

* Significant at 5% level of significance; ** Significant at 1% level of significance

majority of respondents belonged to medium category of Autonomy vs. Dependency followed by low and high categories of Autonomy vs. Dependency, respectively. The majority of the respondents of all three caste categories had medium level of Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation followed by low level and high level of Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation, respectively. The respondents were found in medium category followed by low category in relation to Reflective vs. Repetitive behavior in all three caste categories. The empowerment of women decreases toward low level from medium level. Moreover, women who were illiterate/less educated were less empowered. Education plays an important role in bringing about awareness on women's rights. Education and employment are better described as "enabling factors" or "sources of empowerment". Hence, the education should be major motive for holistic empowerment of rural women.

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