

CHAPTER-7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The problem

The Sustainable Development Goals of Oslo (2015) have highlighted the importance of women empowerment as a critical pre-condition for achieving sustainable development in all nations. The UNDP (2010) report thumbnails the crucial impact that education has on income earnings and employment status of females. The Constitution mandates equal pay for equal work for men and women yet wage disparities for equal work on account of gender differences persist and cannot be overlooked or ignored any longer. Constant suppression of women in the Indian context from the later Vedic period till the present times has taken a heavy toll on the status of women and their contribution to nation building in terms of productivity, employment, contribution to the GDP and over all development of the country.

With the passage of time and continuous subordination, women have become voiceless, powerless and underprivileged and therefore, socially demeaned. In the process of generations of discrimination, suppression and deprivation, women are seen to lose their sense of identity. They identify themselves with their husband or father and are expected to even change their maiden name after marriage. They lack confidence to voice their rights. They suffer from low self-esteem and often refrain from expressing their choices or assess their inner capabilities.

It is seen that the impact of formal education on economic empowerment of women is significant as it enhances their income, employability and access to resources based on various cross country and micro analysis. Education level impacts earnings of women and reduces their dependence on male members for finance. There exists a positive and direct relationship between level of education and employment of women. Contribution of education to social empowerment is perceptible in developing countries. Most significant findings include: mother's education having a very positive impact on daughter's education. Increased education has a positive and significant influence on health and hygiene. Higher education increases the age at marriage and thereby reduces fertility and lowers birth rate. Higher levels of education beyond

primary schooling improve empowerment among women especially in developing countries. Education has thus a positive impact on the self-esteem and efficacy of women in developing economies such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sub-Saharan Africa and Sri Lanka, where the culture is orthodox and rigid as compared to developed countries. Educated mothers show greater self-confidence and efficiency thereby improving their psychological state of mind. Educated women exhibit lesser chances of depression and have lower body mass index (BMI) due to greater health awareness. Women with formal education exhibit positive attitude and are more aware about the surroundings. They make an effort to set right the systemic and structural flaws in the society.

In Odisha, women constitute half the total population of the state. But unfortunately they have not been participating or contributing towards development of the state to the same manner as their male counterparts. They suffer from multifarious disadvantages as compared to men in matters of literacy, labour participation rates, earnings and ownership of property. Social-economic and psychological empowerment of women can be emphasized as one of the surest ways of ensuring women to be 'equal partners in the process of development' through personal assertion, improved self-esteem, and confidence, economic security and independence, ownership of productive assets and leadership. To realise these goals education is the most appropriate tool. It is an effective mechanism or strategy for gender mainstreaming.

The state of Odisha reflects fairly respectable HDI score of .546 according to India Development Report 2016-17,despite disparities in spatial and temporal dimensions of gender, social groups and region. Female literacy in the state has shown an increasing trend since the implementation of RTE 2005, through which universal education was guaranteed by the Constitution. Odisha is a state which is educationally backward and industrially underdeveloped, leading to low levels of socio-economic development, more so amongst women. Being primarily an agricultural economy, the rural population is far higher than the urban population. The rural population in Odisha is 83.31% and Urban Population 16.68%.The study was conducted in the district of Khordha which boasts of being the most literate urban district, to explore if women have attained empowerment in this district along the dimensions chosen.

The Study

Empowerment is about giving women equal opportunities, challenges, facilities to nurture their talents and skills that would give them equal status in the family and society as a whole. It includes the psychological elements and cognitive skills such that the woman has the understanding of her condition of subordination and the factors leading to such a state.

The study has made an attempt to discuss the socio-economic condition of women in the studied blocks in terms of distance from the district headquarters. It further uses primary data to assess the differential impact of rural/urban location on the social and economic empowerment of women in the context of the selected district of Khordha. In this work there is a linkage between educations of women with their different empowerment levels explained through an empowerment model. The model has used SEM for developing different measurement scales for the assigned constructs and thereafter validating the fitness of the model. Finally the study highlights the impact of formal education on different dimensions of empowerment of women. The last phase of the study analyses several threats faced by girls and women in educational attainment and empowerment. The research comes up with some suggestions and policy measures to bring about changes in the institutional and systemic reforms to create quality education for women and empower them consequentially.

It was noted that formal education has a direct impact on socio-economic empowerment of women. It was also seen that with formal education women get economic independence and it brings about psychological empowerment as well. The distance of villages from district headquarters has an impact on the level of empowerment of women. The level of empowerment is different in rural and urban areas with relation to the level of education attained.

The study has been developed using both secondary and primary sources of data. For analysis of the levels of education and empowerment of women in the study areas at the micro level the primary data collected has been extensively used. It gave a clear picture of the pattern of education, the demographic profiles of the sample, the causes and constraints in attaining education and being empowered. For the primary data a sample consisting of 446 respondents were selected who were adult women in the age group of 18 to 50 years using multistage purposive sampling method. Khordha

district was selected to be the area under study as this district is blessed with highest urban population of 83% compared to other districts of Odisha. It also has the highest urban literacy rate of 92.05%. The male and female literacy rates are also fairly impressive (92.55% and 82.06% respectively). The respondents were selected on a convenience basis. The responses of the samples were recorded and observation was also done regarding the behavioural pattern and mannerisms of the samples.

The first stage involved purposive sampling in selecting the district of Khordha on the basis of certain specific parameters. The second stage consisted of selection of four different wards in the urban areas of Bhubaneswar and four different wards in the urban area of Khordha town. Similarly two blocks were selected from Khordha district which were completely rural in nature. The two selected blocks were Begunia and Bolagada. The third stage of sampling procedure constituted selection of three Gram Panchayats from each block. On the whole six GPs were selected on the basis of distance from block headquarters. In the fourth stage four villages from each GP were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. Therefore, a total of 24 villages were selected. The names and profile of the Block, GP, Village and Households have been presented in detail in the third chapter. In the final stage households were selected for interview through structured interview schedules. A total of 315 rural households were chosen to be interviewed out of which 160 households were chosen from Begunia block and 155 from Bolagada block on the basis of convenience sampling.

Data Collection

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary Data was collected using structured schedules through direct personal interview. A pilot study regarding clarity and appropriateness of the questions was done in both the rural and urban study areas. The samples were given clear instructions and all their queries were clarified. The significance of the study in policy formulation and implementation was also explained to them in detail. The different concepts used in the schedule were also clearly explained to the samples. Secondary data was taken to get a clearer picture of the trends and traces of the subject of the study which would facilitate and serve as a bench mark. The sources of secondary data were journals of national and international repute, research works, official and nonofficial documents and published sources and unpublished sources of data.

Analytical tools

The various tools used for analysis of primary and secondary data can be enumerated as simple tabular analyses, percentages, ratios, correlation, structural equation modelling using exploratory factor analyses and confirmatory factor analyses. Different graphs such as bar graphs, pie charts, line graphs and time series analysis have been used wherever necessary.

Measuring the women empowerment index is cumbersome and not uniform for all nations. Though UNDP (2012) suggested the gap between males and females on certain generalised parameters like mean years of schooling, political representation and labour force participation rates as the common measure, other studies have developed qualitative parameters to calculate empowerment. In this study we develop about a model to assess empowerment when education has been attained. Proxy for education being the years of educational attainment

Major Findings & Result of the study

The rural-urban disparity in the district is quite obvious. Khordha is a district which is a conglomeration of completely ruralized economies like Begunia and Bologada block that are by far wholly dependent on agriculture as their chief source of livelihood & mainstay. The urban area of Bhubaneswar has minimal opportunities for agriculture and rather depends on industry and the services sector or unorganized/informal sector for employment. The results and major findings of the study have been categorised into three sections.

The Rural Urban issues:

On bringing about a comparison in the rural area and urban area it was seen that literacy level in urban samples are slightly better than the rural samples. Women in urban area of Bhubaneswar and Khordha having less opportunity cost and no or minimal involvement in agricultural activities have engaged in attaining education better than rural women. Overall the literacy levels of the two study area show high female literacy. The income of rural and urban areas was also reflective of high income groups in both categories. Income and expenditure of the high income group were found to be better in both rural and urban area. This high income at high education levels exhibit greater expenses on nondurables such as cell phones, TV, AC, fridge & motorbike. With the introduction of 'Jan Dhan Yojana' in an effort for financial

inclusion of women opening of bank account was seen to have increased and especially among women account holders. Both in rural and urban areas the high literacy category of females have more bank accounts than the less literates. However, the operation of these accounts is done by others (comprising of husband, son, brother in law, brother) usually some male member. Such practices have been found to be less in the urban areas. Women operate bank account themselves and are more aware of their balances than their rural sisters. The housing condition in terms of living in ‘pucca’ houses with toilets and separate place for live-stock was found to be better in urban area than rural. Among the low literates most respondents lived in ‘Kutcha’ houses. Electrification was 100% in the urban areas. The access to education, power, drinking water and financial activities was seen to be good in both rural and urban areas. Though toilets were present in every household barring a few, the women in the villages went for open defecation due to shortage of water for cleaning purposes in the houses. They have been habituated with this system of going to the open fields for defecation and do not find it inappropriate or unhealthy. Further they did not know the repercussion of such a practice and considered it normal, common and convenient. This feature is not seen in urban area. In most houses toilets are within the houses used by the respondents. Source of drinking water for the households is largely from tube wells and next open wells. It becomes the duty and job of the females in the houses to collect water for drinking, cooking and cleaning purposes. This demands much of the time and effort of the female which binds them to the house and household chores further.

The Centre Periphery Issues:

The second section of the finding is based on Gunnar Myrdal’s Centre-Periphery growth model of 1962. The theory describes the economic, political and cultural power is distributed spatially between the dominant core area and the dependent periphery regions. A developed core is surrounded by an under developed periphery. The less developed countries are characterised by such discrepant structures. This theory can be applied at different scales. As one region (the state headquarters in this case) expands and develops due to economic growth it is the ‘core’, the area of high growth and urbanisation. The surrounding or neighbouring area is the ‘periphery’. They can be cities, towns, states or countries. There exists a confirmed interdependence in the development & economic prosperity between the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’.

The core is the district headquarters at Khordha town, an urban and developed town. The two blocks of Begunia and Bolagada are the periphery. Begunia is closer than the other block named Bolagada which is farther away and almost bordering on the neighbouring district of Nayagarh. On comparing the economic, social conditions of the respondents in the villagers of these two blocks the major finding were not in complete sync with model of Myrdal.

Literacy level of respondents residing in the block closer to the ‘core’ was found to be higher at the primary and higher education levels. It is because of better accessibility to education institutions of the girls who are still studying in colleges and technical education. They enjoy the advantage of being closer to the urban area and have better access to higher educational institutions, better conveyance facilities and access to coaching. The number of primary schools is higher in Begunia block than Bolagada hence more women are educated in this block.

The income & expenditure levels however show that the block at the periphery, Bolagada, is at an advantage. More households with high income of above one lakh a year reside in the Bolagada block. Begunia block has more household who belong to middle income categories. Similarly expenditure reflects the economic status and standard of living of a family. Expenditure incurred on food items and non-food items is a clear measure of the economic condition of the household. Food items are of two kinds, cereals and high value food like meat, milk fruits and eggs. It was seen that expenditure on food items was primarily on such high value food and lentils rather than on staple food. With the implementation of the Food Security Act, families with low levels of income have greater access to rice being distributed through the PDS which more than suffices the daily family consumption requirement. The income earned by women samples were mostly spent on children and their daily requirement of non-durable goods.

The housing condition relating to the quality and durability of the houses was seen to be better among the high literates and better in the periphery than in the semi periphery. Drinking water conditions and electricity were similar in both the areas. Overall it can be concluded that the periphery of Bolagada has better economic conditions than Begunia. This is a significant finding as Begunia is closer to the core yet has remained less developed despite showing better educational attainment.

Increase in rural exodus and lack of employment opportunities due to structural bottlenecks have led to less developed people living in those areas of implementation of various programs and policies in the Begunia block was noted to be faulty and lopsided which is not the case in Bolagada. In addition to this the attitude of the people was orthodox and traditional, women were not allowed to step out of the houses to do any kind of work other than those related to the house and family. The samples constituted of educated women but sadly they did not have the opportunity to utilize their learning productively. Family disapproval and inflated male ego, that they were unable to provide adequately for their family result in women stepping out of their homes to work, led to their confinement. Most samples were seen to be languishing in deprivation and had to succumb to poverty due to social and attitudinal imperfections despite education. The situation however looked a little better in Bolagada block as family incomes were higher and women enjoyed some freedom and mobility.

The Empowerment model

The development of a women empowerment model and validation of the model through Structural equation modelling was based on the relationship established between education and empowerment as drawn from the study. Formal education whose proxy is years of schooling or education have different influence on the three dimensions of empowerment. Empowerment in the economic aspect has been calculated using the income, employment, savings, expenditure and assets drawn from the primary data. The values are loaded against these relevant factors and it was seen that education significantly influences income earnings of females & improves their employment status. Women in the urban areas were seen to be employed in the unorganized sector which pays them lesser than what they deserve to receive. Moreover, the informal sector provides no job security and has no provision for compensation of any kind of mishap or accidents faced by the workers during the working hours. Some of the women were employed on account of rehabilitation programs of the Govt. in lieu of the husband's death. Some other samples in urban areas were seen to be working as part-timer workers.

Overall the employment of women is not at par with the educational attainment. They were underpaid due to low bargaining power in the labour market. On analysing the employment sector in the rural areas for women it is but obvious that most women

are either occupied in the household chores and domestic work. Women assist men in the agricultural work in the fields in measurement, transplantation, harvesting, storage etc. for which they are paid much less in comparison to the male workers or most often are unpaid. The applicability of gainful employment is fairly limited in case of women here. Land holding of the family in hectares shows the dependence in agriculture of the households for income and livelihood. High literates display greater inclinations for land holdings.

Education enhances the economic condition of the women. It was noted that only 17.71% samples had 0-3 yrs of schooling. Attainment of education was seen to be better in the area under study but as women are either engaged in unpaid or low paid labour their work is not valued in the household or the community. Higher education ensures improved employability opportunities that add to the economic empowerment of females in both rural & urban areas. The social empowerment of women in the study area was assessed on the parameters of Decision making and social awareness and social perception.

Social awareness scale was placed on four critical factors of casteism in education, casteism in profession, child birth & social justice. The factor loadings for each item were satisfactory though not very high some of the items relating to castesism did not give correct result on repetition and therefore were discarded. The samples disclosed their opinion about the caste systems, reservations for backward classes in educational institutions & professional fields. Most responses were against the reservation policy among the high literates. However, the illiterate & less literates favoured the reservation policy in both education & profession. Child birth is the prerogative of the mother but it was seen that family pressure for a male child often dominated the decision for child birth. Most samples in both blocks felt that decision of child birth should be taken by the parents in view of the health condition & family income.

It was interesting to note opinions of the samples were different for themselves & different for the society. Caste system was considered to be unethical but when asked about inter caste marriage in the family there was vehement disapproval. Such reactions are normal as they evidently highlight the inherent inconsistencies of female outlook regarding the social tradition & culture. Even though education empowers socially,

broadens their perception & awareness, the impact of culture, caste, tradition & ethnicity overrides the influence of education.

The other scale developed to assess social empowerment was decision making rights of women. Decision making rights of women are seen to be influenced by education & economic sustainability of women. Economic independence improves social empowerment of women as proved in the model developed in the study. Samples with more education had better decision making rights in the dyadic, family & societal levels. At the dyadic level decision are taken by both husband & wife on matters like children's schooling, girls' education & immunization of children. At the family level decisions on matters like purchase of durable assets, family routine health check-up, daily household decisions, social functions, construction and repair of house were taken more actively by the lady of the house and more effectively if respondent was better educated & contributed to family income. Decision at societal level involved age of marriage of children, approval of female employment, factor relating to saving & investment options, decision regarding travel, vacations and political favouritism. The measurement of all these items displayed decision making right of women which they may or may not exercise. The confirmatory factor analysis conducted on these responses through the scale developed show high factor loading with significant reliability of .90 & cumulative % of 63.72.

In this study, a model of women empowerment was developed and validated. The hypothesized relationships of this model were: i) education level of women would have direct influence on economic empowerment, social perception, decision making and psychological empowerment; ii) there also would be an indirect effect of education on social perception, decision making and psychological empowerment via economic empowerment. Path analysis results of the model revealed that it is a good fit model. Further it was observed that education did not have direct influence on decision making and psychological empowerment. It is only when women were economically empowered, their decision making right and psychological empowerment enhanced.

Constraints to Women Education and Empowerment

The enhancement of women empowerment clearly depends on various factors such as socio-economic, political, cultural & psychological. Female education in India has been an urgent need of the new era as women have been first teacher of their

teachers and future of the child depends on the love and care of the mother means a woman. A woman performs the role of many characters through-out her life such as a sister, mother, daughter and wife. Extensive illiteracy, lack of basic education, training and experience remain serious obstacles in women's empowerment. It can be said that women in India, through their unrelenting efforts and with the help of public policies, constitutional and other legal provisions and also with the aid of Government's various welfare schemes, are creating a niche for themselves to achieve their desired ambitions.

From the 'Womb to the Tomb' women face various issues and threats in the society in Odisha. The declining sex ratio in the districts of Nayagarh in Odisha and in the urban areas of Bhubaneswar in Khordha district speak volumes in terms of attitudinal issues of people not just men also among females. The literacy level among females in Khordha district is 82.06%. The sex ratio in the rural parts of Khordha district is 958 per 1000 male which is better than in urban sex ratio of 890 in census report 2011. Selective abortions, female foeticide are quite common in the state. Apart from this issues of dowry and bride killing, domestic violence, harassments, early marriages, inadequate nutritional status of widows are other issues pointed out by various researchers (Sen 1999; Agarwal et.al.2013,).

The pathetic state of affairs can be overcome with the expansion of educational attainment that would welcome the participation of women who have higher emotional quotient in handling problems in developmental progress of the economy. The study has identified certain factors that obstruct the growth of education in rural and urban parts of the selected district. Such factors can be classified as demand side factors and supply side factors.

Demand Side Factors: Poverty has been identified as the single most determining factor that stunts educational attainment of females in the area. Lack of affordability and low income of the parents are the two most discernible reasons behind low levels of education of girls. The Govt. provides for certain expenses of the children through the SSA and MDM provisions for the poor children. Unfortunately these provisions are limited to only primary schooling and not beyond. The school dropout rate has been seen to be the highest in the secondary and upper secondary levels for girls. Cost of education in terms of study materials, uniform, conveyance expenses becomes a burden for the poor parents and they restrict girls from going to school.

Most often, the maladies faced by the girls in rural and urban areas due to demographic issues such as large number of family members that accentuate the expenditure of a household. The social rigidities and cultural inconsistencies prevent girls of adolescent age groups to go out of the house for long hours to pursue education. Apart from these demographic reasons the opportunity cost of education are much higher when girls do not work or assist in household chores. The parents decide to discontinue their education so they can give a helping hand at home when necessary. In some cases when mother is less educated the daughters education is hampered but in the study area it was seen in most cases the illiterate mothers are aware of the importance of education and do not discourage their girls from going to school.

On the supply side: Educational institutions are public goods provided for the benefit of the people and is shared by all. It is meritorious for all social groups and more so for female groups. Despite high literacy in the district of Khordha there exists a gender gap in literacy which can be attributed to certain supply side obstructive factors such as geographical constraints in the form of distance between residence and school. It is particularly important in case of girls as they need special care and attention of physical privacy and protection. Girls and their parents are conscious about social reputation and exposure when the girls are adolescents. Geographical distance affects girl's enrollment, retention at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Education is ideally imparted in a clean, joyous and fun filled environment with all kinds of amenities for the comfort of the students. In a rigid and conservative society male, female interactions are not socially approved hence presence of female teachers adds to the rate of retention of girls in school rather than presence of male teachers. Moreover, physical infrastructure like transport system, toilets, drinking water facility, compound wall, canteen, teaching and learning material, etc. are most often missing in the rural areas in the district. This has direct and negative impact on both retention and enrolment of girl students.

Other factors that pose as threats to education of girls are fear of learning, fear of punishment, drab and monotonous curriculum that is not relevant for the present youth. Teacher absenteeism has been noted as a significant factor of student absenteeism and dropout.

Constraints to Empowerment

Education has been adjudged as a means and an end for empowering women globally. According to the UNDP report 2016-17 India ranks 131 out of 188 countries and is below Pakistan in its Gender Inequality Index. Several constraints to education have precipitated and perpetuated the gender disparity in the context area causing low levels of development and progress. Factors such as lack of knowledge, skill, technology and limited access to information about various aspects of the changing world lead to low empowerment in women. It is difficult to understand whether empowerment is a ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’ process. Whichever way it operates, it refers to the ‘capacity building’ of women in order to promote status-quo and thereby address equity issues and social justice. The Constraints to empowerment can be classified into economic constraints, social and psychological constraints.

Poverty is clearly the cause and effect of low empowerment among women. In order to consolidate the position of women, economic empowerment as an indicator needs to be enhanced. To come out of the web of poverty women essentially need to be employed productively. Low labor force participation among women in the organized sector and non-agricultural sector hampers their economic independence. It is evident from the Economic Survey 2016 and the district hand book 2015, that the participation of female workers in the ‘informal sector’ in urban areas is significant. Such jobs make women disadvantaged and disempowered with low negotiating powers, harmful and insecure working conditions. Though women represent 50% of the total population they contribute about 75% to the development of our society while men contribute only 25% (Desai 1995).

Enforcement of property rights due to patriarchal social structure restricts women’s access to ownership of productive resources and other assets. The constitutional provisions have given the right to inheritance to women in the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 but they are socially compelled to relinquish such rights in order to maintain good relations with the other members of the family. The economic significance of ‘Unpaid Care Work’ has not earned the importance it deserves due to lack of common measures and calculation tools. In global forum it is discussed that had the care work of women been included the value of GDP would rise substantially. Financial exclusion of women from the developmental mainstream has made them

economically dependent. It was observed that women's income and savings was spent on children. Shortage of resources causes absence of freedom to spend on self or children.

Constraints to social empowerment lie in the lack of awareness, alertness about health, hygiene, sanitation and child care. The decision making rights and social awareness of the samples in the study area have been taken as the measures of social empowerment. These dimensions have been restricted by poverty and lack of economic independence as the main deterring factors in education and empowerment.

Lack of decision making right in the family and society at large, opposition of family towards women participation also hinder the process of social empowerment.

Gender discrimination and social norms such as caste, class, race, ethnicity manifests in the subordination of women. The dependable nature of women on male members suppresses them in power.

Political Constraints comprise of lack of involvement in community activities, low participation in village level politics, lack of leadership quality, vulnerability of women in politics. Constraints in agricultural sectors towards empowerment of women persist in the form of low or no pay for work done in the agricultural sector, limited knowledge of modern technology, lack of training in extension service in agriculture, seasonal nature of agriculture prevents women from going for full time work .The structural and institutional bottlenecks in the rural parts of the study area restrict income earnings of women irrespective of their contribution to agriculture.

Constraints to psychological empowerment lie in the inability to enhance the self- esteem, self- worth, self- efficacy and recognition within the women. Such barriers to empowerment are ingrained in the traditional, conservative, superstitious, society prevailing in the study area where women are not considered worthy of taking decision for their own-self. Age old patriarchal society does not permit certain basic liberty to women. They have to seek permission and approval of the head of the family. Restrictions on mobility for education and profession also exist for women which limits their self-confidence. It was seen that women who were literate had better decision making rights at home. Lack of education and knowledge caused low self-esteem among women themselves. Lack of opportunity to channelize their talent and capabilities has contracted the psyche of the women in the areas under study.

Policy recommendations

Though the scenario is improving every year with larger literacy among women, social and political awareness among the young girls, there is still a lurking fear in the environment regarding safety of women, their empowerment in the form of provision of choice and opportunities to shape their own lives. As developed in the thesis here education is an important determinant of empowerment. Though the quantitative improvement in female literacy is attained, the qualitative aspects of education are not adequate in converting education into employability especially in case of girls and women in the state. Employment of rural women with skill under the MNREGA would be an appreciated endeavor to provide productive work to women at their doorstep. Introduction of rural industries, cottage industries and startups in rural areas and that would engage more of female workers need to be pursued by the Govt. for improving the work opportunities. Adoption of Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode in providing education for girls as well as employment opportunities thereafter in both rural and urban areas would reduce the gender gap. Pure economic benefits of education are uncontroversial however there is noted variability between studies as regards social benefits. Legal and Constitutional provisions could contribute by forming laws to empower women.

Implication of the Study

The trends in empowerment require a paradigm shift in policy formulations and more importantly implementation through prioritising the relevant areas. It is pertinent to understand the elements of social awareness that needs to be imbibed in women. Educated women lack the social skills and competencies expected of them in the present times. Empowering the rural and urban women who are already literate would accelerate the growth parameters of the state.

Educated women can be encouraged to participate in many community activities, solving problems faced by the community. There should be sensitisation programmes to make women realise their valued contribution as home makers and thereby boost their self-esteem.

Limitations of the Study

The study was based on sample survey the respondents were mostly adults and the interview was conducted in their houses. The information collected from them may

be inconsistent due to the presence of other family members which might have affected their spontaneities. However, any inaccuracy of data was rectified through repetitive dialogue and validation. The personality traits, birth order and cultural background can also have an impact on their empowerment apart from education. The study is more or less localised to one district which is high in education attainment to get a more objective analysis. A comparison with a less developed district could have improved the applicability of the model. It may be noted that the interviewer did not collect information about the personal health status and individual income of the respondents. It is a regional study that can be generalised for area specific features.

The Way Forward

Though the study is urban centric in character, with high literacy levels, it still buttresses the concern about the lack of social improvement of women in rural areas, despite high education and financial security which the family members enormously value. It is, therefore, likely that a more broad based study or a rural centric study would demonstrate more starkly the higher degree of deprivation and emasculation of self-respect that a patriarchal society and male centric mind-set can lead to for girl child and women on an All India basis. While industrialisation, economic liberalisation and universalization in education have significantly improved access of education for the girl child and job opportunities for the women, their social status and dignity as women remain a troubled script in India. Mere achievement of equity and access to education in developing economies will lead to improvement in their social status at par with men in the process of national building. The Preamble to Constitution promises to all its citizens “Justice, social, economic and political”. Women in India have achieved political justice in terms of their equal rights to exercise political franchise. The reservation of women in Panchayats is also a step in the direction towards greater political empowerment. But unless women reservation both at the state and central level are provided it will not realize the full potential of political empowerment. While equal opportunity for employment remains a constitutional obligation, there are overt and covert mechanisms at work, which stymie the process of equality in treatment, despite their parity and superiority in terms of educational attainment. But what remains a completely unfinished agenda is the dimension of social justice, psychological and social empowerment for women in India. The Gender Inequality Index which takes into account maternal health, employment opportunity and

parliamentary representation must also encapsulate in its matrix by pioneering unpaid effort towards prosperity of the household by women at home. The study is unique by having the rigour of economic measurement with the dynamics of sociological and psychological dimension that determines women's true empowerment. As Robert Frost wrote, "We have miles to go before we sleep" to achieve empowerment dimension of the women. A further study should be done that determines many more dimensions of social empowerment of women. Serious researchers in women studies will profit from such an insight cutting across the states and transcending rural, urban barriers. We must remove the cobwebs that obfuscate our attitude towards women empowerment and promote and equitable just and gender sensitive society.

