

## **WOMEN'S SECURITY: NEED FOR EMPOWERING TO WOMEN**

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### **Abstract**

*Women have remained the pillar of society since the emergence of civilization. They constitute half the world's population. The role and contribution played by women in a particular society are incredible. She is the backbone of family, nation and society, as the structure, values and norms of any society are nurtured by women. Despite this, she always has been treated as a secondary citizen in the male-dominated social order. In Indian society also the picture is very unpleasant. Discrimination, oppression, suppression, harassment, humiliation leading to physical and psychological violence has been accepted as a part of patriarchal society. Violence against women on a gender basis is the worst manifestation of this discrimination. Violence against women may vary from time to time, place to place. The type, intensity and frequency may also differ but no society can claim to be free from this evil. The problem of discrimination and deprivation of women exists everywhere. Women's safety and security is a global issue of concern and it's become a challenge for national and international agencies how to provide security to women. Discrimination in form of insecurity starts from their birth or even before it and continues till their death. She is unsafe and insecure in her family, school, playground, school bus, college, hostel, in-laws house, and workplace; there is no corner that is safe for them.*

*In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognizes as the central issue in determining the status of women. Empowerment is the prime objective of all development programs and policies. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control and to transformative action There is a hypothetical issue that women's insecurity and unsafety affect the process of women empowerment, it blocks the passage of women's empowerment. Highly educated and employed women are unsafe and insecure towards the realization of freedom and liberty.*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

**Received: 24.11.2021**

**Approved: 15.12.2021**

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*RJPSSs 2021, Vol. XLVII,  
No. 2, pp.297-306  
Article No.39*

**Online available at:**

<http://rjpss.anubooks.com>  
<https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2021v47i01.39>

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*Thus the prime objective of this article is to analyze how and how much women's security or insecurity shapes the process of women's empowerment in terms of cognitive, economic, political, psychological and physical dimensions.*

**Keywords**

*women's empowerment, women's security, violence against women*

Indian constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. The State has passed many legislations and made many other efforts for the development of women. During the data collection of my Ph. D. thesis, (Empowerment of women: A sociological Inquiry) and Minor Research Project entitled as (Empowerment of women through Education), I have observed that women's security issue is an important factor that shapes the process of women's empowerment. However research works were not focused on women's security, but there are many narratives that reveal that if we can't measure the process of women's empowerment without focusing on the issue of women's security. However both the issues are connected to women's development and women's status, and there are many studies that are focused on women's empowerment and on women's security. But there is a large gap to highlight the relationship between the two. Thus a hypothetical issue is emerged that insecurity prevents women from gaining power over their lives. Thus the prime objective of this article is to analyze how and how much women's security or insecurity shapes the process of women's empowerment.

**Women's Security and Women's Empowerment**

Antrobus (1989) states that "empowerment is a process that enables a powerless woman to develop autonomy, self-control and confidence and, with a group of women and men, a sense of collective influence over oppressive social conditions. J.S. Apte 1995, states that 'power' is the keyword of the term 'Empowerment' which means 'control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established of any type-physical, human, financial, such as land, water, forests, people's bodies and agencies, labor, money and access to many. Knowledge, information, ideas can be included in intellectual resources. Jaya Kothani Pillai (1995) "empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted, nor can it be given away as aims. Power has to be acquired and once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved" empowerment is a process and is not therefore something that can be given to people. All of the above definitions and discussion indicate that there are two components first is objective and the second is subjective and these

dimensions are interrelated. There are many areas where women are getting positions but due to lack of security and awareness they are not justifying with their role or we can say perform their duties attached to that position in a very effective manner, for instance in Panchayati Raj Institution there are many women who occupied positions but they are aware of their role and responsibilities and act just like a dummy, actual power are in their male family members. So a new concept is emerging in terms of Pradhan- Pati or Sarpanch- Pradhan etc.

Thus women's security has emerged as a global issue, all over the world, various agencies working for improving women's status has observed and recognized it as a basic rights issue and elimination from all kind of violence has been seen as central in development. As a near-universal phenomenon, gender-based violence threatens the well-being, rights and dignity of women (Fishback, 1997). In the present paper, the term insecurity is used for freedom from fear or violence, it does not include any form of material insecurities like economic, poverty, or food, etc.

In the above background the study has focused on the following questions:

### **Research Questions**

#### **1. What are the dimensions of empowerment of women?**

- (a.) Cognitive dimension of empowerment of women
- (b.) The economic dimension of empowerment of women
- (c.) The political dimension of empowerment of women
- (d.) The psychological dimension of empowerment of women
- (e.) The physical dimension of empowerment of women

#### **2. What is the relationship between women's security and different dimensions of empowerment of women?**

For understanding the first question, I tried to analyze the empowerment of women in different dimensions.

**(a.) Cognitive dimension** refers to women having an understanding of the condition and causes of their subordination at the micro and macro levels. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms. The present study highlights the how and how much women's insecurities shape the cognitive power of women and how it can become an obstacle in breaking the socio-cultural barrier of empowerment. **(b.) The economic component** requires that women have access to, and control over productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. Here an effort is made to examine the how women's insecurity becomes an obstacle in getting the occupation, in control over productive resources and use of these resources. **(c.) The political component** entails that women have the capability to analyze,

organize and mobilize for social change. **(d.) The psychological dimension** includes the belief that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their individual realities and the society in which they live. Hence it is necessary for women to have a subjective status or self-efficiency on power and rights use. They have not only become aware of their subordination but also have believed that gender roles are not fixed they can be changed by personal or collective efforts. Here the study tried to examine how far women's insecurity shapes the process of psychological empowerment **(e.) The physical component** has over one's body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence. Education can play an important role in promoting gender equality in sexual and reproductive health. Here the researcher tried to examine the women's insecurity in women's health-related issues.

For understanding the impact of women's security on the empowerment of women, the relationship between women's security and different dimensions of empowerment has been examined.

#### **Area of Study**

For the purpose of the present study, an urban area of Ghaziabad city of western U.P. nearby Capital Delhi has been selected as a specified focused area of study. It is an ancient city located on Grand Trunk Road 19 km east of New Delhi. As its boundary is adjacent to Delhi, it acts as the main entrance of U.P., and that is why it is also called Gateway of U.P. Ghaziabad is a growing industrial city, it becomes the industrial hub of UP as well as an educational hub of NCR.

#### **Methodology**

In the present research work, a total number of 200 respondents have been selected through purposive and stratified random sampling. Stratified sampling is a mixture of both random sampling and purposive sampling. Under this method, the whole population is first divided into number of strata then a certain number of the sample is taken from each stratum on a random basis. The universe is defined by only the Hindu population. Because if we took the Muslim population then it becomes more difficult and more complicated to measure the variations occurring due to this difference. Thereby the study has been limited to Hindu Women. In the present study interview schedule, case-study, quasi-participant observation, interviews have been used. Information related to Ghaziabad city was collected from a secondary source like Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers and Internet. Quasi-participation observation and methods were also used for collecting first-hand data. In the present study, two major methods were adapted to process and analyze the data methodically, quantitative and qualitative. Simple statistical techniques have been used to indicate the extent of the relationship between the variables.

## **Finding**

### **1.1. Cognitive Dimension of Empowerment of Women**

“The subjugation of women is ingrained in Indian society. It has been so much a part of ordinary reality that it is largely unseen and unquestioned. According to Stromquist “Cognitive dimension refers to women having an understanding of the condition and cause of their subordination at the micro and macro level. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms.” Through the cognitive dimension of women’s empowerment, we have tried to analyze women’s awareness about these gender inequalities described above. To measure the cognitive dimension, Many questions were asked to respondents, but here those questions are discussed that show relationship between women’s security and cognitive dimensions.

A large number of the segment also accept that they feel subordination in matter of education, of course, they feel subordination at a different level of education viz. primary, high school, graduation and technical level. There are (65.5%) respondents who accept that they feel subordination in marriage and spouse selection. Marriage to whom, age of marriage and other issues related to their marriage were discussed with respondents. There are (26.5%) respondents who think so that. A large number of the segment also reported that they feel subordination in doing and selection of job. Regarding to the question “do you feel subordination in movement outside to home”, majority of the respondents (68.5) say that they feel subordination. Here significant observation is that result is influenced by women’s insecurity. Due to an insecure environment, parents do not allow to girls to get an education, do not allow them to move alone outside of the home, do not allow them to do jobs or sometimes to choose a job of night shift, etc. Thus women’s insecurity slows the speed of women’s empowerment.

### **1.2. Economic Dimension of Empowerment of Women:**

Many of the most successful and stable organizations in the south-Asian regions have, over the years, come to the conclusion that promoting women’s empowerment in their economic lives is the best base for achieving overall empowerment (Carr et al. 1996). In this connection, many questions were asked to the respondents to measure the economic dimension of empowerment of women. But here only those questions are discussed that show the relationship between women’s security and the economic dimension of women’s empowerment.

Findings on the economic dimension indicate that out of respondents, 52% respondents are working and 48% are housewives. The facts related to the question did they feel constraint in doing job, show that a large segment of the respondents accept that they felt. Most of the respondents faced constraints in doing the job

within in-laws families. Responses regarding the question indicate the reason for working, maximum number of the respondents reported that they are working for family needs, there are very few numbers said that they are working for self-existence. In the distribution of the respondents' response regarding to the question "do you have full autonomy in spending of your income", a large segment of the respondents accepted that they do not have. The question of decisions about education and admission of the children, shows that a very few only 2.5% respondents have decisions independently but there is a large number (66.5%) who participate in decision making with their husbands. There are no respondents who take the decision alone on marriage-related issues of the children, but there is very large number of the respondents who participate with their husbands. The majority of the respondents accepted that they observed that males get more salary than the female for the same job in all kinds of occupations. Findings on all of above the questions are directly or indirectly connected with women's insecurity.

### ***1.3. Political Dimension of Empowerment of Women***

To measure the political dimension of empowerment of women, the researcher raised a number of questions to measure the connection between women's security and empowerment of women.

The facts indicate that voting participation of the respondents' interest towards voting is not very satisfactory. There are minor differences between the frequency of the respondents who participated always and those who voted never. It reveals that respondents are not keen to vote. Facts also reveal that a large segment of the respondents does not have independence in voting-choice. There is a small segment who voted always and with their choice and do talk about politics regularly. There are very small numbers of the respondents who are the member of any political bodies and among them, only two respondents show their own interest in contesting elections. There are also a very high number of respondents who are not interested in contesting any election and they have no interest in political issues. Here a very significant finding of a case study indicates that she can't attend any meeting due to an insecure environment, always her husband goes with him.

### ***1.4. Psychological Dimension of Empowerment of Women***

A female in India faces a lifetime of subjugation and discrimination in their lives. Every phase of her life may be shaped by malnutrition, denial of selfhood and lack of voice in the decisions that affect her life. For most women, there is no way out. Subjugation and submission are a pervasive patterns, enforced by violence and the threat of violence throughout their lives. The subjugation cycle starts before the birth of a girl child and stops at her death. According to Stromquist : "The

psychological dimension includes the beliefs that woman can act at personal and societal level to improve their individual realities and that of the society in which they live.” The facts of this dimension reveal that nearly half of the respondents have freedom in expressing of personal desire and half of them are not. Responses related to the question that women should be treated equally as men; the majority expressed positive opinion towards it. The majority of the respondents also accepted that education and occupation help a girl in finding a suitable partner. Freedom of movement is an important factor of women’s empowerment, thus two questions were asked to the respondents to measure their freedom of movement. ‘Do you need permission to go to the market, there is a large segment that has the freedom to go to the market but a large number of respondents accepted that they do not have freedom in visiting their friends and relatives and need to take permission due to cause of women’s insecurity.

There are two important questions asked to the respondents to measure their psychological dimension of empowerment. ‘Do you think that women should take legal and strict actions against her husband if she is beaten by him, majority of the respondents are not in favor of taking strict or legal actions? Another question asked ‘Do you think that women should take legal action if her husband has extra marital relation’, majority of the respondents do not agree to take legal action on this issue.

#### **1.4. Physical Dimension of Empowerment of Women**

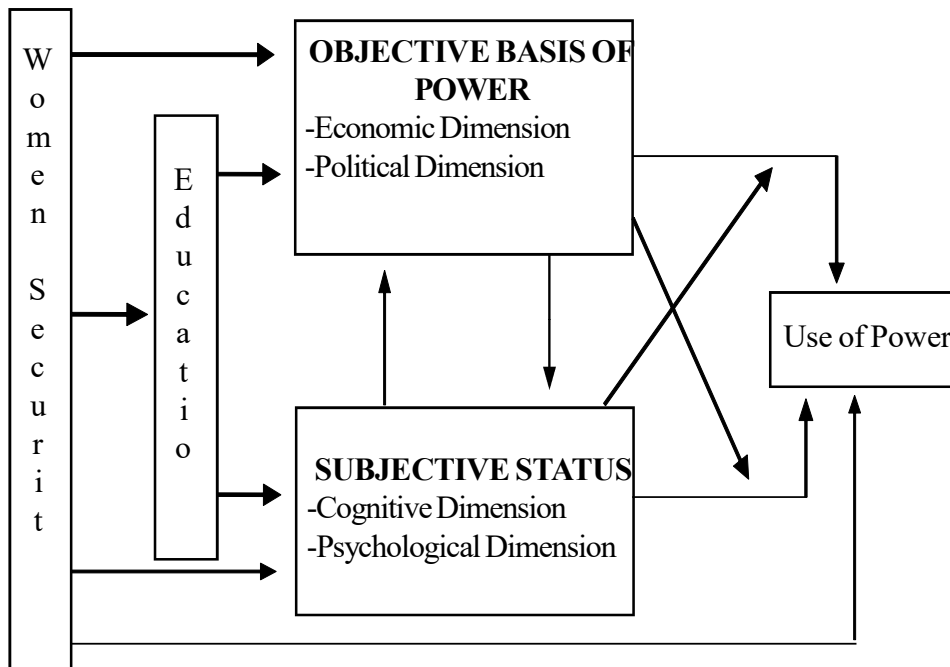
Physical dimension refers to having control over one’s body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence. It means this dimension is related to women’s health reproductive choice and sexual health and rights.

The facts indicate that majority of the respondents reported that their husbands never forced them for sexual relations, but some of them accepted that it happens. There is very large number of the respondents accepted that they had faced eve-teasing or sexual harassment in their life and it is noticeable that among them there is majority who did not take action against the accused and their decisions were affected by the variable of women’ insecurity. Respondents’ awareness on laws against sexual harassment, only 20.5% respondents have a high level of awareness, 34.5% respondents have a little bit and 45% respondents don’t have any awareness. Question related to respondents’ autonomy for having a child, nearly half (46.5%) of the respondents have autonomy in having a child and half of them are not. There are a large number of segments (60.5%) who took decisions about family planning with their husbands; only (14.5%) respondents took decisions alone. There are also a large number of segments (81.5%) who discussed about their health. Generally,

women take care of all the members of the family and don't have **time** for themselves, so a very significant question "do you discuss about your health, was asked, a very large number of (81.5%) accepted that they discussed. Another an important question "do you face wife- battering', there are (4.5%) respondents who accepted that they are beating regularly and (23%) say sometimes and (5.5%) say once a while, whereas there are large segment (67%) respondents that they did not face wife- battering.

### Conclusion

In all dimensions, highlighted question indicates that how women's security or insecurity shapes the process of women's empowerment. Parents and daughters are interesting to get an education but due to the problem of their insecurity, they are not ready. Girls are getting an education but due to the fear of communal riots, they stopped their education and send them to a safe place. A city Mayer well educated and occupied renowned position goes in party meeting with their husband and gunners, and not to able to make any decisions. Girls are not ready to attend the period after 2:00 clock due to their unsafety. Girls don't choose the occupation of their choice because of their insecurity. Women don't raise her voice against her injustice because of economic insecurity.





### **The interrelationship between factors and dimensions of empowerment of women.**

Education is a potent tool in process of empowerment of women. It influences economic, political and physical dimensions. Simultaneously it also influences to cognitive and psychological dimensions. But gaining of education is also affected by the women's security, and these variables also influence economic, political, physical dimensions as well as to cognitive and psychological dimensions.

Thus education is positively related to each dimension of empowerment. Education enables women to gain more knowledge about the cause and condition of their subordination, helps them to get status, self-image and self-confidence. It confirms that education is the basic step in women's equality. It also enables them to achieve jobs and supplements for caring for the family. It enhances women's decision-making in the family and outside to the family. But all the measures of women's empowerment depend on women's security and even the ultimate measure 'use of power' is also influenced by women's security.

Thus we can say journey of women's empowerment is very difficult because State gives them equal right but enable them to provide a safe environment where they can enjoy their liberty and rights. The government open school, college, universities for girls but a large segment are not getting their schooling and getting higher education just because of their insecurity. They have the right to choose occupations and places where they want to do their job but they couldn't due to insecurity. Either in an interior village or in Metro they are not safe. No doubt education and occupation give rise to a new consciousness among women and accelerate the process but the gaining of education is affected by women's insecurity. The good news about women is that we have a long way and not only a great deal of awareness but also action is taking place in the area of engendering women and creating A 'gender just' society. The bad news is that we are still far away from reaching the goal of gender equality where women's insecurity slows the speed of the women's empowerment. Therefore it can be concluded that women's security and women's empowerment are interrelated issues and women's insecurity threat the process of women's empowerment. Therefore there is an urgent need for the state to think about the problem seriously and try to tackle the problems.

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