



ROLE OF SOCIO ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Back Ground: Women empowerment is always considered as the key aspect of social and economic development and it is also essential for the achievement of sustainable development throughout the world. Kerala, which went through many social revolutions in the last century, is now witnessing another important gain in the empowerment of women which in turn lead them to have the power of self-efficacy. There are many studies conducted in Kerala that measuring the empowerment of women in general aspects but studies which focus on their determinants are very few.

Objectives: This paper tries to measure the level of women empowerment in Kerala and to find out the role of socio economic determinants in women empowerment

Data and Methodology: Using the National level data from National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4, 2015-16). The three main dimensions of women empowerment considered in this study are the decision making power, economic freedom and freedom of movement of women in Kerala. To create an Aggregate Index of Women Empowerment (AIWE) we used their Economic Autonomy Index, Household decision making Index and Freedom of Movement Index. The socio economic backgrounds of the respondents were explained through contingency tables. Both Bivariate and multivariate analysis were used to identify the associated factors of women empowerment.

Results: The study resulted that a majority of women enjoys the empowerment in all the three dimensions we considered in this study. Women who are more empowered are independent of economic constraints and they enjoy better freedom of movement and have more decision making power.

KEY WORDS: *Empowerment, Economic Autonomy, Freedom for decision making, Freedom of Movement, Aggregate Index of Women Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of women empowerment within the broader spectrum of gender equality has been the primary focus of countries across the world. It has widely recognized and accepted mainly because, the countries socio-economic growth and development cannot be achieved in its true sense, if we do not simultaneously concentrate on gender equality. But in reality, it has been noticed that even on a global level, there is no country where women enjoy equal rights as men. It is a widely accepted the fact that women assume a multiple role in society: such as breadwinner, decision-maker, child raiser, homemaker, caregivers etc. So that she is constantly strive to maintain a balance with these responsibilities and wage work outside the home. Everything has got transformation

under the development process except her duties and responsibilities.

Several studies from different countries have shown that mother work longer hours, consume less and devote more of their resources to their children (Dwyer \$ bruce, 1998, Sen, 1983). More over the communities that women make to mother hood reduce their earnings, labour market experience, promotional prospects and general potential for economic independence (Folbre 1991). In most cases they are denied the basic economic, social and even legal rights that their male counterparts enjoy (Sivaraman, 2017). In addition to that they are suffer from high level of material deprivation, limited job opportunities, employment restriction, immobility as compared with their male counter parts. By keeping all these

issues in back ground this study focuses on the women empowerment in Kerala, through its socio economic perspectives.

Empowerment is expressed as the expansion of freedom of choice and action (Narayan, 2002). United Nation (2001) defined empowerment as the process by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices which often linked to positive outcomes for their families and societies in many ways (Presser & Sen, 2000). Various studies have investigated the factors associated to women's empowerment worldwide. Gupta and Yesudian (2006) conducted a study in India, using multiple logistic analysis, and found that women's educational level, media exposure and age are important predictors of their empowerment. Rahman et al (2009) also found the same result and investigated that their education and age have significant impact on women's empowerment among microcredit borrowers in Bangladesh. In advanced countries like US, UK and other western society's women's wage level and employment, are playing a significant role in the empowerment of women. Here, women may not prefer to stay in problematic marriages, because of their decision making capacity and financial security. Kerala has been an exception to the general trend in terms of women development. It has brought most of its people up to the level of the first world in case of literacy, life expectancy, and infant mortality. Kerala's achievements have largely transcended, cast class rural urban and gender limitation. It's been one of the Indian state, which defied national trends and provided a model of development that is more open and inclusive of women.

Similarly, in terms of literacy, life expectancy and mean age at marriage, women in Kerala have had a higher score when compared with women in the rest of the country. Thus historically too, a favourable ground was set for Kerala women while most of the Indian states were deplorably poor in this regard. Perhaps this paved the way for the outstanding achievement of Kerala in terms of women's development, and as a result, the increase in the overall human development. The matrilineal system in Kerala appears to have developed around the eleventh century. It brought several changes in the position of women in Kerala. One of the major benefits of the matrilineal system was that it allowed the free movement of girls and women in the society.

OBJECTIVES

The relationship between women empowerment and economic development of society becomes successful only when a vicious circle is formed with one following the other. Even when economic independence make effect in the empowerment of women but, economic development in itself as mentioned above cannot help raise the status of women. With this back drop in this study we attempt to find out the role of socio economic determinants in the empowerment of women in Kerala. In this regard the main objectives of this study are:

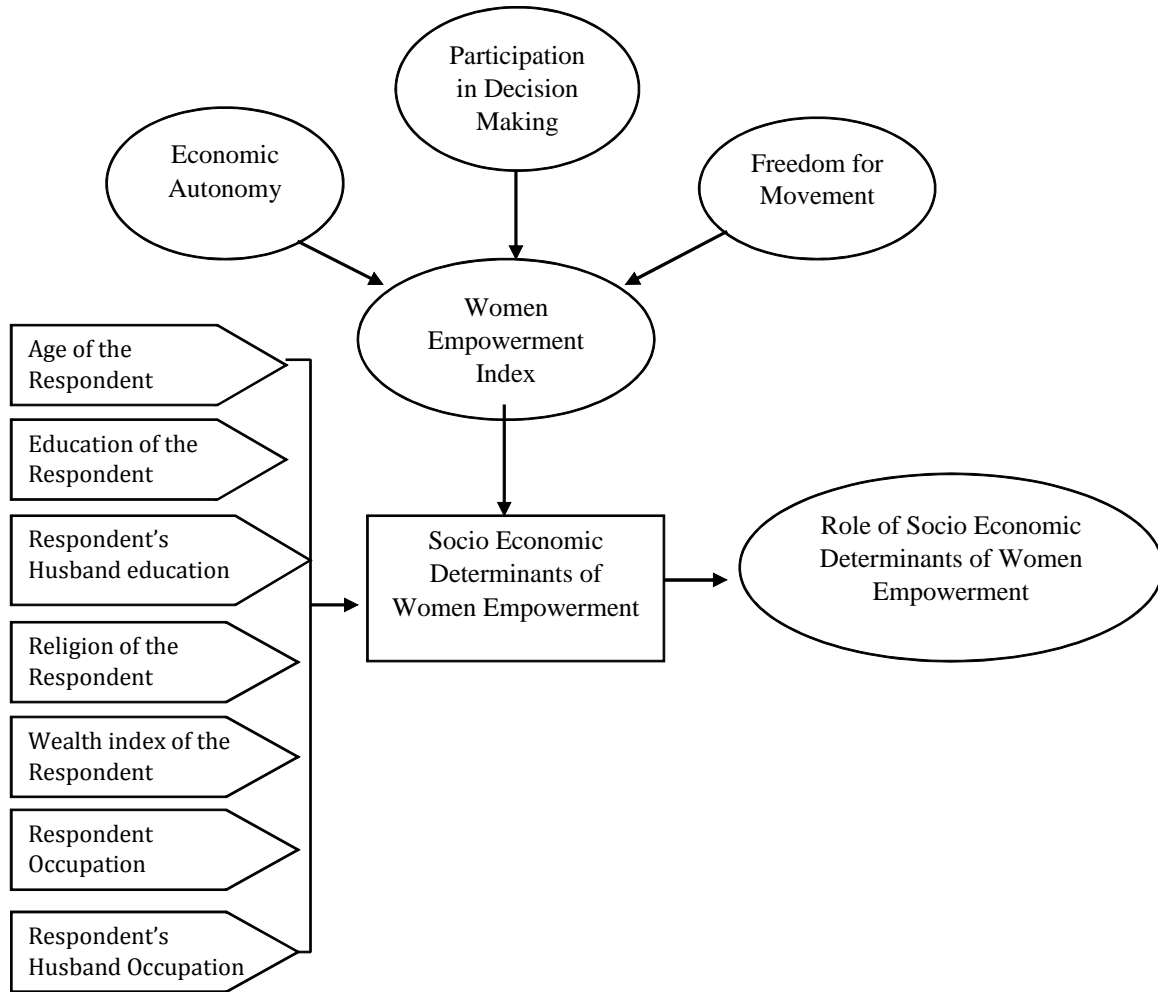
- To Measure the level of Women Empowerment In Kerala, in terms of Economic Freedom, Freedom for Decision Making and Freedom of Movement

- To find the role of socio economic determinants in the empowerment of women in Kerala

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was extracted from the fourth phase of National Family Health Survey (2015-16). The methodology used in this study are described in details. Measuring women's empowerment at the household level is a complex phenomenon, and it has multi-dimensional effects. In the present study, women's empowerment was measured focusing on three dimensions: Women's economic autonomy, decision-making power and Women's freedom of movement. An aggregate index of Women empowerment was the outcome variable in our study. After reviewing some studies related women's empowerment, we selected the covariates which were included in our study. Both univariate and multivariate analysis were used to analyse the data. Indices are formed based on the three dimensions of women empowerment and the aggregate index was used as the dependent variable in the multivariate analysis. In multivariate analysis we used Ordered Logit Regression model. In statistics, the ordered logit model (also ordered logistic regression or proportional odds model), is an ordinal regression model—that is, a regression model for ordinal dependent variables—first considered by Peter McCullagh. As our dependent variable is in ordered form, in this study we used ordinal logistic regression for analyzing the role of socioeconomic factors on Empowerment of women in Kerala. Univariate Index enables several variables to be represented by a single source that reduce the complexity of the data and make the analysis easier. Index provides quantitative measures that are amenable to greater precision and statistical manipulation. First we selected the appropriate variables for index and each variable were given values according to their importance. Total score for each respondent is calculated by adding the value of each variable and place the source in an array usually from the lowest score were taken and total score value of all respondents were classified into three categories: low, medium and high based on the mean and standard deviation. Score up to mean value coded as Low, Mean to (Mean + SD) coded as Medium and score above (Mean + SD) is coded as High Empowerment. Thus one aggregate index constructed namely Aggregate Index of Women Empowerment (AIWE) with the help of Indices of Economic Autonomy, Freedom for Decision Making and Freedom of Movement. Finally, the AIWE with three categories is our desired outcome variable. So the outcome variable women's empowerment has three ordered categories: Low, Medium and High. We selected some socio economic variables which are available from the data set, to find out the relationship with women empowerment. Finally using ordered regression analysis we examined the role of socio economic determinates on the empowerment of women in Kerala

Conceptual Frame work that shows the Women Empowerment and its Determinants



1. WOMEN’S ECONOMIC AUTONOMY

The table 1.1 shows the percentage distribution of women by the indicators of economic autonomy. From the sample 71 percent of the women have bank account for their own use and among them 52 percent have the power that

alone to decide how to use money. But most of them does not have any partnership in the ownership of house and ownership of land independently.

Table 1.1 Percentage Distributions of Women by the Indicators of Economic Autonomy

Indicators of Economic Autonomy		Percentage
Has bank account that respondent uses	Yes	71.0
	No	29.0
Has money that respondent alone can decide how to use	Yes	56.2
	No	43.8
Partnership in the ownership of house	Alone only	11.0
	Jointly only	14.1
	Both alone and jointly	7.4
	Does not own	67.5
Partnership in the ownership of Land	Alone only	9.9
	Jointly only	11.2
	Both alone and jointly	5.1
	Does not own	73.8

2. WOMEN’S FREEDOM FOR DECISION MAKING

Among the total sample only 15 percent of the respondents alone take decision about their own health. About 8.6 percent of the respondents alone decide about the large household purchase. Only a few percent of women have the

freedom for to decide what to do with husband earned money. Among the sample 40 percent of the respondents scored the low value in the freedom for independent decision making index. The independent decision of women about their own health, large household purchase, visit family relatives and the usage of husband earned money is comparatively very

low. So that, it may be the reason for higher percentage of low value scored in the freedom for decision making index of women in Kerala.

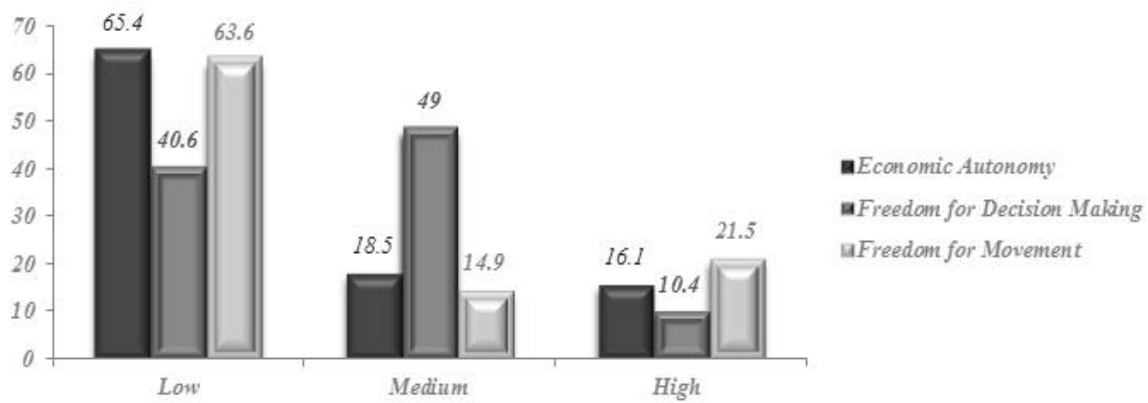
3. WOMEN'S FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

To measure the women freedom for mobility index we use three variables from the dataset, such as respondent husband usually allow the go alone to the market, health facility and outside the village. Among the sample 32 percent of the respondent have the freedom to go alone to the market, 26 percent and 19 percent of the respondent have the freedom to go alone to the health facility and outside the village respectively.

4. WOMEN ECONOMIC AUTONOMY INDEX, FREEDOM FOR DECISION MAKING INDEX AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT INDEX

The fig. 4.1 shows the comparisons between the levels of various indices of women empowerment. Among the sample about 65 percent of the women in Kerala scored low value for both Economic Autonomy Index and Freedom for Movement Index respectively. While considering the low scores in the AIWE, the main contribution is of economic autonomy followed by freedom of movement. But women with medium level of empowerment confirms the influence of independent decision making power. When it comes to the higher level of empowerment, the major contribution is of freedom of movement than other factors of women.

Fig.4.1 Distribution of the women according to their level of empowerment and Economic Autonomy Index, Freedom for Decision Making Index and Freedom of Movement Index



5. AGGREGATE INDEX OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

We combined the various indices such as Economic Autonomy, Freedom for Decision Making and Freedom of Movement, to construct the Aggregate Index of Women Empowerment. Among the sample 52 percent of the women in the sample scored low value, 34 percent scored medium value and only 13.8 percent scored high value for Women Empowerment Index.

6. SOCIO ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The table 6.1 shows the distribution of the relationship between women empowerment and socio economic determinants. Among the Kerala women there have a significantly positive relationship between age and women empowerment. As age increases the empowerment also increase. Illiterate women suffers with low empowerment score value, at the same time educated women enjoys comparatively high empowerment. In the case of religion, higher women empowerment index values obtained for Hindu and Christians, but the Muslim women have scored comparatively very low empowerment index values.

6.1 Distribution of Socio-economic Determinants of Women Empowerment

Variable		Women Empowerment Index Value (%)		
		Low	Medium	High
Age***	15-19	93.3	6.7	0.0
	20-24	73.0	19.1	7.9
	25-29	53.3	35.9	10.6
	30-34	48.6	38.5	12.8
	35-39	50.0	36.3	13.7
	40-44	48.7	34.9	16.4
Education of the Respondent***	45-49	46.2	31.5	22.3
	No education	70.6	23.5	5.9
	Primary	53.3	26.7	20.0
	Secondary	56.8	31.5	11.8
Husband's education **	Higher	38.3	43.3	18.4
	No education	66.7	22.2	11.1
	Primary	58.3	29.1	12.6
	Secondary	54.5	32.8	12.7
Religion***	Higher	36.5	43.8	19.7
	Hindu	47.8	34.7	17.5
	Muslim	66.7	27.8	5.6
Respondent Occupation***	Christian	42.1	42.7	15.2
	Not working	57.8	31.0	11.2
	Professional	20.3	50.0	29.7
	Clerical	41.7	25.0	33.3
	Sales	27.6	51.7	20.7
	Agriculture	51.4	37.8	10.8
	Household Service	48.1	33.3	18.5
Husband Occupation**	Manuel skilled	37.0	45.7	17.3
	Not working	36.4	54.5	9.1
	Professional	34.9	41.5	23.6
	Clerical	34.5	49.1	16.4
	Sales	53.0	37.1	9.9
	Agriculture	59.6	29.4	11.0
	Service	53.0	31.8	15.2
Wealth Index*	Manuel Skilled	55.4	30.9	13.7
	Poor	61.5	28.2	10.3
	Middle	57.5	30.6	11.9
	Rich	50.5	35.1	14.4

*** p<0.001 significant at 1%, **p<0.05 significant at 5%, *p<0.01 significant at 10%

7. ROLE OF SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN KERALA

The table 7.1 shows the relationship between women empowerment and socio economic determinants. Here the variable Age:- is the ordered log-odds estimates of comparing the age group (45-49) years with other age groups in their level of women empowerment. As age increases, having higher empowerment is also increases. Here the ordered log – odds for age group (40-44) is being in the higher level of women empowerment is -0.213 less than the reference category when the other variables in the model are held constant. While considering education the comparison is done for higher education with other categories. The ordered log-odds for illiterate women having higher empowerment is -0.949 less than women who have higher education when other independent variable kept constant. In the case of occupation

of husbands when manual skilled are compared with professionals, clerks and sales men, women whose husbands are professionals enjoys 0.5 units higher empowerment than their counterparts. When we consider the respondent's occupation, as comparing manual skilled with other categories, women who are professionals enjoys 0.202 higher empowerment than manual skilled women. The result of the ordinal regression analysis showed a significant relationship between respondent's occupation and women empowerment. In the results of ordered logit regression analysis for all the independent variables revealed that few of them were extremely significant with women empowerment. The professionals and clerical women enjoys better empowerment than, the agricultural workers and household servants.

7.1 Ordered logit regression analysis on the role of socio economic determinants on empowerment of women in Kerala

Threshold	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
[Women Empowerment =Low]	-1.181	.365	10.48	1	.001	-1.897	-.466
[Women Empowerment = Medium]	.726	.365	3.96	1	.046	.011	1.441
Location							
[Age=15-19]	-2.492	1.059	5.54	1	.019	-4.567	-.417
[Age=20-24]	-1.189	.303	15.41	1	.000	-1.783	-.595
[Age=25-29]	-.634	.232	7.48	1	.006	-1.088	-.180
[Age=30-34]	-.322	.220	2.14	1	.143	-.754	.109
[Age=35-39]	-.288	.211	1.87	1	.171	-.701	.125
[Age=40-44]	-.213	.221	0.93	1	.336	-.646	.221
[Reference Age=45-49]							
[Education= Illiterate]	-.949	.597	2.53	1	.112	-2.118	.221
[Education= Primary]	.049	.322	0.02	1	.880	-.583	.680
[Education= Secondary]	-.273	.175	2.42	1	.120	-.616	.071
[Reference Education=Higher]							
[Religion=Hindu]	.036	.166	0.05	1	.826	-.289	.362
[Religion=Muslim]	-.596	.203	8.67	1	.003	-.993	-.199
[Reference Religion= Christian]							
[Husband's Education=Illiterate]	-.538	.569	0.89	1	.344	-1.653	.577
[Husband's Education=Primary]	-.332	.298	1.24	1	.265	-.915	.252
[Husband's Education=Secondar]	-.184	.202	0.83	1	.361	-.580	.211
[Reference Husband's education=Higher]							
[Husband's Occupation=Not Working]	.289	.593	0.24	1	.626	-.874	1.451
[Occupation=Professional]	.500	.237	4.44	1	.035	.035	.965
[Husband's Occupation=Clerical]	.461	.285	2.61	1	.106	-.098	1.019
[Husband's Occupation=Sales]	.234	.177	1.76	1	.185	-.112	.580
[Husband's Occupation=Agricultural]	-.127	.201	0.40	1	.526	-.520	.266
[Husband's Occupation=Services]	.111	.266	0.17	1	.676	-.411	.633
[Ref ; Husband's Occupation= Manuel Skilled]							
[Respondent's Occupation=Not working]	-.600	.229	6.87	1	.009	-1.049	-.151
[Respondent's Occupation=Professional]	.202	.329	0.38	1	.539	-.443	.847
[Respondent's Occupation=Clerical]	-.109	.447	0.06	1	.808	-.986	.768
[Respondent's Occupation=Sales]	.113	.412	0.08	1	.783	-.694	.920
[Respondent's Occupation=Agricultural]	-.515	.397	1.68	1	.194	-1.293	.263
[Respondent's Occupation=Household Service]	-.357	.429	0.69	1	.405	-1.198	.484
[Ref; Respondent's Occupation=Manuel Skilled]							

CONCLUSION

Traditionally, Kerala women have responsibilities in bringing up the children, managing household chores, and giving affection to all members of the family. But women also

provide an important source of labour in the economy. Socio-economic development of a nation cannot be attained without equal participation of women. Empowerment is essential for women to develop the family as well as the society. Our study concluded that the socio economic factors of women in

Kerala have a major role in the attainment of their empowerment. The results of ordered logit regression analysis for all the independent variables revealed that few of them were extremely significant with women empowerment. This results agrees the finding of many studies in the same aspect (Folbre 1991, Narayan, 2002, Rehman et al,2009).It was also observed that Muslim women have lower empowerment in the family compared to non-Muslim women. Working women are more likely to establish empowerment in the family. The results of this study indicate the importance of women empowerment trough enhancing their education, economic independency and participation in labour force. All the covariates included in the study were significantly associated with women's empowerment in the bivariate analysis. The result was consistent with the study of many authors. Suggestions go to the line with enhancing the economic opportunities for women through giving them better education. The education has a positive significant impact on women empowerment as the knowledge they get from educational institutions can pay a contribution towards their thinking ability to be empowered. Education is necessary but the relevance of education is highly important for the females to understand their position in the society. There have a significant relation obtained with husband education also. If husband is professionals; their wives enjoy comparatively higher empowerment than wives of those whose husbands working in agricultural and sales field. If females has skill and is able to utilize that skill to earn for herself, she feels authoritative and a financial support to the family. Economic participation for women empowerment is important. This means that if women are given some financial benefits or they are allowed to contribute financially they feel fewer barriers in their empowerment. From this study we can suggest that social and economic factors has a major role in the attainment of empowerment of women in Kerala.

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