

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN MUSLIMS.

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### ABSTRACT

*For the last more than two decades people are talking about women empowerment but the scenario has not been changed significantly till date because of peoples' perception towards women and the women's towards themselves too. It is pertinent to mention here that sense of empowerment is the most important phenomenon which has always been prevalent even in the present day modern world for all, irrespective of gender differences because without such feeling, nothing can be done confidently and effectively. The present empirical study is the outcome of the realization of the importance of empowerment especially among women. For this purpose working women and non-working women comprising n=100 each totaling N=200 were taken for the study. A questionnaire for this purpose was developed by the present author for measuring women empowerment undertaking its numerous dimensions viz., Family, Educational, Financial, Social and Psychological empowerment which contained in all 25 items. After ascertaining the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was administered on chosen sample. The results of this study have clearly shown that the sense and experience of women empowerment was significantly high on most of the dimensions of empowerment among working compared to non-working women. The findings have been interpreted keeping in view the socio-cultural milieu of present Indian Muslim women.*

Key Word: Empowerment

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### Introduction

In the present century the question of women empowerment has come to the fore front as everyone today is talking about women empowerment. It is witnessed that there is a very slow transition of Indian Muslim women from four walls of the house to the job market. The basic reason rests in the psyche of Indian Muslims - both men and women. Keeping in view such the situation, it was aimed to study the sense of women empowerment among working and non-working Muslim women. Since, women empowerment has been the focal term in the main study so it is warranted discuss it in detail, hence, it is being discuss below.

Empowerment is an old terminology that exist since 17<sup>th</sup> century but today it is an important rather a significant key quality which is instrumental in development of individual personality, group, society and nation at large. Empowerment often refers to one's confidence with which he/she is able to master the environment. Empowerment means helping someone in realizing their abilities, potential, skill, talents, confidence, adjustment capability or an overall development at large.

Development of any group, family, community and nation at large is largely in the hands of women as the first school starts from the lap of mother and on the other hand it's an old saying that behind every successful man there is a women who is an actual force leading to success, so women are the real Architects of society. Hence, it's a pressing need to talk about women empowerment. As according to **Diane Mariechild**

“A woman is the Full circle, within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.”

Women empowerment actually refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their personal benefits as well as for the society. It actually increases and improves social, economic, political and legal strength of the women, to ensure equal right to women, and to make them confident enough to claim their rights such as freely live their life with a sense of self worth, respect and dignity, have complete control of their own life, enjoy equal social status, to make their own choices, have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities, enjoy equal social and economic justice, determine economic and social choices, enjoy equal educational and employment opportunity, have safe and comfortable working environment etc, but for all this the first thing that we have to do is reshape our own perception of how we view our selves. We have to initiate our own initiative and take lead, then next is to change the view/perception of others at larger level which is not a difficult mission as **Margaret Thatcher said**

“If you want something to be said, ask a man; if you really want something done, ask a woman”.

So, it's really important that every woman must have sense of empowerment as empowerment is a fuel for individual growth and development. And for this mastery in one must to be fully potential and have that confidence to alter the situation as per their requisite/demand/wish and desire in all walks of life. To have command and control in family life, financial matter, social settings and educational field is only possible if one has the sense of empowerment with the growing level of mastery and confidence in oneself.

There have been the paucity of similar studies in the area of empowerment, although, a lot of write ups and theoretical literature are available on empowerment. But to the present author empirical evidences are much more important. Here, to quote a few recent studies seems to be very relevant. Wattoo, et. al. (2015) in their study on the role of micro financing in providing empowerment and equality to women in Pakistan, they found that after receiving loans, women experienced increase in their household income level so women had the increased sense of their economic, social, political, and household wellbeing. In view of this study it seems that financial empowerment specially for women is very important, hence, working women may have the greater sense of empowerment compared to non-working women. Similar to the above one another study done by Kato & Kratzer (2013), reported that women members of micro finance institutions are more empowered compared to non-member.

A study on psychological empowerment of women conducted by Valarmathi and Hepsipa (2014), reported that empowerment is one of the key factors in determining the success of development.

Having quoted a few studies, above, the author in the light of the available literature, discussion with intellectuals and serious thinking over the issue, conceived the following dimensions of empowerment which seem to be the important areas of empowerment.

- **Family Empowerment:** A person is empowered when he or she has attributed changes in behavior to his or her own actions, in order to acquire the sense of control necessary to manage family affairs. It is an initiative to develop an attitude that will go for the positive and proactive interactions with families.
- **Financial Empowerment:** Finance is an important asset to deal and fulfill all needs and desires of life, hence, income is most important issue and everyone is running like anything in their life to manage this instrument for fulfillment of basic as well as other needs of life.
- **Social Empowerment:** Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships.
- **Psychological Empowerment:** Psychological empowerment refers to a set of psychological states that are necessary for individuals to feel a sense of control in relation to their various facets of life, developing a sense of being worthwhile and competent for any challenging and demanding situations. Psychological empowerment is not a fixed personality attribute. It consists of cognitions that are shaped by the environment.
- **Educational Empowerment:** Education- a pond of knowledge which harness our cognitive processes and equip one to potentially handle everything with high level of cognizance, so education is an instrument to shape humans as plant could grow through cultivation.

The above areas of empowerment seem to be very significant especially for Indian Muslim Women which have been the major source of majoring women empowerment for this purpose the following objective of the study was conceived for empirical investigation.

#### **Objective:**

Present investigation was undertaken to see the real picture of women empowerment which will actually help to build strategy to improve the quality of life of women to live a conducive independent life in the family, the society and the nation at large. For this purpose the following methodology were adopted for an empirical investigation.

#### **Methodology:**

Method is the back-bone of any scientific research which refers to a systematic procedure, technique, and mode of inquiry. Our study is an empirical one which requires certain process and steps. Since, the aim of the present investigation was to see the significance of difference between two groups of Indian Muslim women viz., working and non-working; hence, the following steps were taken in carrying out the investigation.

#### **Participants:**

Purposive sampling technique was used to identify and select N= 200 Muslim Women which were drawn from Delhi, India. The total sample were equally divided in 2 groups, i.e. Working Women (n=100) and Non-Working Women (n=100)

#### **Tool:**

Psychologists are not magicians, hence, in quest of objective assessment entire psychological endeavours are based on the efficacy of psychological tools which must have gone through standardization process. Therefore, keeping these in mind, following psychological tool was developed and used in this study. A bit detail of it is given below:

**Empowerment Scale:** Empowerment scale was developed by researcher herself which consists of 25 items based on five dimensions viz., Family, Financial, Social, Psychological and Educational empowerment. Reliability was established by Cronbach alpha which is found to be .84 which is quite high and face validity was ascertained by judges rating and items were retained on the basis of their consensus which exhibits the efficacy of items under each dimension of empowerment as well as women empowerment as a whole.

#### **Ethical Considerations:**

This is very important to get the real and correct information. So, for this purpose ethical consideration are very important to motivate the participants to cooperate with the researcher:

1. Participants were given the questionnaire only if they were willing to participate in the study.

2. Participants were informed that the participation is voluntary and they may not directly benefit from the study, but findings will be helpful for future research.
3. Confidentiality was assured and maintained.

**Statistics:**

Above mentioned scale was used to collect the data for investigating the significance of difference between two groups of women viz., working and non-working on various dimensions of empowerment and empowerment as a whole. Hence, keeping in view the objective of the study, t-test was used to see the difference between the two groups. t-test – a parametric statistics was used because the data obtained were fulfilling the conditions specially the normal distribution and homogeneity of the data. Therefore application of t-test seems to be quite reliable in the statistical treatment of the data for determining the significance of difference between the two groups.

**Result:**

Results obtained are shown in the Table. Table shows mean, std. deviation, and t values of the two groups of working and non working women. It is evident from the Table that there are significant variations in means of the two groups as in the area of Family – a facet of empowerment (mean for working women is  $\mu = 22.76$  and for non-working women  $\mu = 21.74$ ), on Financial facet of empowerment mean for working women is  $\mu = 19.27$  and for non-working women  $\mu = 18.16$ ; on Social facet of empowerment the mean for working women is found as  $\mu = 20.24$  and for non-working

**Table of Results**

**Showing Significance of Difference between Working and Non-Working Women on Various Dimensions of Empowerment and Empowerment as a whole.**

Group	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t	Sig.	
<b>Family</b>	working	100	22.76	1.596	4.776	.000
	non-working	100	21.74	1.419		
<b>Finance</b>	working	100	19.27	2.260	3.241	.001
	non-working	100	18.16	2.573		
<b>Social</b>	working	100	20.24	2.123	4.167	.000
	non-working	100	18.64	3.199		
<b>Psychological</b>	working	100	20.74	2.191	5.128	.000
	non-working	100	19.26	1.878		
<b>Education</b>	working	100	21.42	2.114	1.735	.084
	non-working	100	20.94	1.786		
<b>Total Empowerment</b>	working	100	104.4300	7.63333	5.743	.000
	non-working	100	98.7400	6.31756		

women  $\mu = 18.64$ ; whereas, for Psychological facets of empowerment, mean for working women is  $\mu = 20.74$  and for non-working women  $\mu = 19.26$ ; and for women empowerment as a whole the mean for working women is  $\mu = 104.4300$  and for non-working women  $\mu = 98.7400$ . But only in case of educational dimension of women empowerment the means for the two groups viz., for working women is found to be  $\mu + 21.42$  and for non-working women is  $\mu + 21.94$  in which the mean difference is found to be insignificant.

The same Table also shows t values. It is witnessed that the two groups viz., working and non-working women are found to be significantly different on family, finance, social and Psychological dimensions of empowerment as their t- values  $t = 4.776$ ,  $t = 3.241$ ,  $t = 4.167$ , and  $t = 5.128$  respectively are found to be statistically significant far beyond .01 level of confidence. But in the Education dimension of empowerment the two groups are found to have obtained insignificant t-value i.e.,  $t = 1.735$ . However, overall or “Total empowerment” is witnessed to be significantly different as far as working and non-working women are concerned.

In the light of the description of the above results, it is important to mention that in the present century or present day scenario working women are found to have edge over non-working women in all areas of empowerment viz., Family, Finance, Social, Psychological and overall sense of empowerment except in the area of education where working and non-working women are found to have no significance of difference.

In case of Family dimension of empowerment, it is to impress upon the fact that working women are given weightage in the family compared to non-working women because working women bring money to their family and make the family financially strong. Therefore, working women have significantly greater sense of empowerment in the family.

So far as Financial dimension of empowerment is concerned it is obviously found important because working women as have been mentioned above, have the greater sense of financial empowerment compared to non working women who only look after the family but do not financially enrich the family.

The pattern of result with regard to Family and Financial dimensions of empowerment are almost in line with the findings of Kato and Kratzer (2013) and Wattoo et. al. (2015).

So far as Social dimension of empowerment is concerned working and non-working women significantly differ, it is because of the fact that in the present century working women has got on the nerves of poor men fellows who give weightage to working women than non-working women (house wives). All though, the new trend is coming where the people have started thinking that women as house wives are also the working women because she has to discharge all responsibilities at home. But this transition of thinking will take some time where both house wives and working women are considered equal or complimentary to each other. This dimension of empowerment has not directly been studied but indirectly the findings of Kato and Kratzer (2013) and Wattoo et. al. (2015) support to the findings obtained here.

Psychological dimension of empowerment which is the result of all other dimensions of empowerment viz., Family, Finance, Social, and Educational is found to be significantly higher among working women than non-working women. The findings of Psychological dimension of empowerment are partially supported by Valarmathi and Hepsisa (2014). Because working women are stronger in all the dimensions of empowerment. As given in the Table of Results specially one can witness their mean values.

It is interesting to note here that so far as Education dimension of empowerment is concerned both working and non-working women are almost equally educated, therefore, education dimension of empowerment failed to significantly discriminate between working and non-working women on the dimension of education empowerment.

As evident from the Table, so far as empowerment as whole is concerned it is more among working women compared to non-working women because working women have been found to have greater sense of empowerment on all dimensions of empowerment.

At length, it is to highlight that women should have the empowerment in all areas or walks of life to impress the society and the nation as a whole and thereby they can contribute in the development of family, group and the nation which is not only important for specially Muslim women but for all.

In the light of the above findings, it is suggested that Muslim women like women of other religious group should come out from the four walls of the house and should contribute something to the family, group and the nation at large for which they must get contemporary education. Education in the present modern age is considered to be the key for success which in turn may give rise to the sense of Psychological empowerment in all walks and facets of life.

All researches are not the end but pave the way for further research. There are may be a lot of limitation of the present study as the sample size is very small and have only covered the area of a metro police city, viz., Delhi which may have modern attitude and perception compared to those far flung and remote areas who may not have so liberal and modern attitude for women. So the study be conducted on a larger sample group undertaken from the various section of the group for greater generality.

At the end, it is to mention that our findings are not only applicable to Indian Muslims but it can be generalized over the women globally but specially for the women residing in the South East Asian countries. It is because of the reason that information technology has brought all women on almost on a single platform by changing values globally irrespective of West-East differences. Now women on the globe have similar sense of strength and weaknesses. Hence, empowerment for women is very necessary keeping in view of the limitations of the women feminism.

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