

Gender Equality and the Role of Women in Decision-Making: An Analysis with Special Reference to Mysore City

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Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between gender equality and women's participation in decision-making, both at home and in workplaces. Gender equality ensures equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, while inequality arises from unfair treatment based on gender. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized women's education, recognizing men and women as integral to societal progress. Educating women not only fosters individual empowerment but also ensures a better-educated future generation, improving socio-economic conditions.

UNICEF defines gender equality as equal rights, resources, and opportunities for all, without necessarily implying identical treatment. Economic empowerment, a key facet of equality, enables women to control resources and assert their rights, contributing significantly to societal growth. Enhanced gender equality boosts education, empowerment, and economic well-being, positively influencing national development. By ensuring equal opportunities and fostering self-reliance, gender equality drives individual contributions to a nation's progress, making it a cornerstone of human development.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Decision-Making, Empowerment, Economic Opportunity, Social Justice

Introduction

Gender equality enables women to gain greater control over material and intellectual resources, fostering self-reliance and empowering them to assert their independent rights. Economic empowerment plays a crucial role in this

process, as it allows women to access equal economic opportunities, social equity, and personal rights. This comprehensive framework is often referred to as **gender equality**. Empowerment, in essence, is the process

Please cite this article as: Venkatalakshmi M N. (2024). Gender Equality and the Role of Women in Decision-Making: An Analysis with Special Reference to Mysore City. *SRUJANI: Indian Journal of Innovative Research and Development* 3(5), 16-26

of ensuring equal rights, justice, opportunities, and responsibilities for women within the society they live in, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to all aspects of life.

Gender equality, as a critical issue, has significant linkages with various socio-economic factors. Currently, women's health conditions and overall well-being are largely influenced by the extent of gender equality achieved within a nation. This is because advancements in gender equality are often accompanied by improvements in education, empowerment, and economic well-being. Consequently, it is rightly observed that individuals with equal opportunities and rights are better equipped to contribute meaningfully to a country's economic growth and human development.

The link between Education, Empowerment and Gender Equality can be pronounced by quoting the words of **Mahatma Gandhi**, *"You educate a man, you educate an individual, educate a woman you educate a family. Hence, education has been considered as the crucial factor in achieving equality, dignity and justice. It is also true that, access of education for women determines their role in the economy and their freedom in most of the matters."*

As of 2017, **gender equality** is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations. Gender inequality is measured annually by the UNDP and published in the Human

Development Report. The vision emphasizes treating men and women equally in social, economic, and all other aspects of society, without discrimination based on gender.

Gender equality is also a key objective of the **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, with world bodies defining it as a fundamental aspect of human rights, particularly focusing on women's rights.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report highlights the goal of "achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women." Despite ongoing economic struggles in developing countries, the United Nations remains committed to promoting gender equality and fostering sustainable living environments across all its member nations.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) which was introduced in 2010 by UNDP in the Human Development Report of 20th anniversary edition is an index for measurement of gender disparity. According to the UNDP, this index is a composite measure to quantify the loss of achievement within a country due to Gender Inequality. It uses three dimensions to measure opportunity cost, namely; Reproductive Health, Empowerment and Labour Market Participation. The new index was introduced as an experimental measure to remedy the shortcomings of the previous indicators such as, **Gender Development**

Index (GDI) and the **Gender Empowerment Measure** (GEM), both of which were introduced in the 1995 Human Development Report.

Factors necessitating the Gender equality and women participation in Decision making

Several factors highlight the need for gender equality and increased participation of women in decision-making processes. Key issues such as financial dependence, poor literacy rates among women, negligence of women's health, atrocities against women, their low status in society, and the prevailing low morale and attitudes of men towards women have become critical areas of concern.

These challenges have drawn the attention of policymakers and administrators, prompting the implementation of various programs and schemes in India to address these disparities. The aim is to empower women, enhance their role in society, and ensure their active participation in decision-making at both personal and societal levels.

Scope of the Study

The main aim of the study is to examine and analyse the relation between Gender Equality and role of Women in Decision making. Therefore, an attempt has been made to investigate, whether Equalities in Gender will promote Empowerment and enable their participation in Decision making process. Thus, in the course of the study, we confine ourselves to aspects which are

directly related to Gender equalities, Empowerment and Decision Making power of women in the society.

Objectives of the study

1. To Examine the Relation between Gender Equalities and Decision Making power
2. To analyse the Relation between Gender Equalities and socio-Economic Empowerment of women
3. To analyse the role of education in the enhancement of Gender Equalities.

Hypothesis of the study

1. There is a close relation between Education, Empowerment and Gender Equality,
2. Higher the rate of Gender Equality, better is the participation in the decision making
3. Higher the rate of empowerment, lesser is the Gender inequality.

Methodology

The present study depends on both primary and secondary data. Information relating to progress in Gender Equalities and increase in the rate of participation in decision making have been collected from human development reports of UNDP and the human development reports published by National and State governments.

The study also relies on various books and articles for obtaining data and other information. This study is based on a simple random sample survey method where in, a sample of 100 female population has been taken and they have been classified in to two different groups

based on their educational and employment status, namely;

Educated employed female and Uneducated employed female

In each category there are 50 females.

Tools of the study

The primary data was collected through the questionnaire schedule by the investigator. The data collected have been classified and analysed with the help of computer software technology called MS Excel-SPSS. The questionnaire was designed in such a way to elicit the information on a few basic indicators of education, Empowerment and Gender Equality.

Analysis and Interpretation of the data

Today, women play the leading role in developing the society. Society cannot be grown without the active contribution of women. In India women do not use their rights and neither are considered

independent to take any decisions. In order to provide equal status in the society women need to be empowered. Women's empowerment in India is heavily dependent on many different variables that includes geographical location (urban/rural), Educational, Economic & Social status (caste and class), and age other related aspects

Policies on Gender Equalities exist at the national, state, and local (Panchayat) levels in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence, and political participation. However, there are significant gaps between policy formation and actual implementation at the community level. Women can be empowered only when they are literate and educated. Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom for their development.

Table 1: Educational level of the Respondents and their Family Members

Group (Educated employed)	Illiterates		Primary		High School		PUC		Degree		PG & above	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Respondent	-	-	-	-	19	38	15	30	13	26	3	6
Husband	1	2	1	2	7	14	10	20	29	38	6	12
Father	9	18	5	10	4	8	3	6	2	4	1	2
Mother	21	42	1	2	3	6	1	2	1	2	-	-
Brother	-	-	-	-	2	2	11	22	12	24	-	-
Sister	1	2	1	2	2	4	4	8	6	12	2	4
Children	-	-	9	18	4	8	7	14	15	30	2	4

Source: Field survey

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the educational levels of the respondents and their family members. It highlights the education levels of the respondents (educated employed) as well as their husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and children, categorizing them into six groups: Illiterates, Primary, High School, PUC (Pre-University Course), Degree, and PG & above (Postgraduate and higher). The table reveals that most respondents have completed high school (38%), followed by PUC (30%) and degree-level education (26%), with only 6% having attained postgraduate qualifications. The educational status of the husbands shows a higher proportion holding degrees (38%), with smaller percentages in other categories, including high school (14%) and postgraduate education (12%). The fathers of the respondents primarily fall into the illiterate (18%) and primary

education categories (10%), with a small percentage holding degrees. Mothers, on the other hand, show a high illiteracy rate (42%) and have minimal representation in higher educational levels. Regarding siblings, brothers have notable educational attainment, with 22% having completed PUC and 24% holding degrees, while sisters show more even distribution, with 12% holding a degree and 4% with postgraduate qualifications. The children of the respondents show significant educational improvements, with 18% having completed primary education, 14% at the PUC level, and 30% having earned degrees, suggesting a positive trend in education across generations. This table emphasizes the progress in educational attainment within the family, particularly among the younger generation, while also highlighting areas that require further attention to achieve broader gender equality and empowerment.

Table 2: Educational level of the Respondents and their Family Members

Group II (Uneducated Employed)	Illiterates		Primary		High School		PUC		Degree		PG & above	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Respondent	-	-	-	-	2	4	8	15	14	27	27	54
Hus band	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	19	15	29	15	29
Father	3	6	1	2	-	-	14	27	5	10	5	10
Mother	8	15	9	17	10	19	3	6	2	4	-	-
Brother	-	-	-	-	1	2	5	9	8	15	8	16
Sister	-	-	1	2	1	2	6	11	14	27	6	11
Children	-	-	12	23	5	10	4	8	8	15	3	5

Source: Field survey

Table 2 presents the educational levels of respondents and their family members in Group II, consisting of uneducated but employed individuals. The table categorizes the educational attainment of respondents and their family members into six groups: Illiterates, Primary, High School, PUC (Pre-University Course), Degree, and PG & above (Postgraduate and higher).

Among the respondents, the majority have completed a degree (54%), followed by postgraduate education (27%), and a smaller percentage have completed high school (15%). Only 4% of respondents have completed PUC. This suggests that, despite being employed, many respondents have attained significant educational qualifications. The husbands of the respondents show a relatively lower educational level, with the largest proportion (29%) having a degree, followed by those with postgraduate qualifications (29%) and high school education (19%).

The fathers of the respondents show a mixed educational profile, with 27% having completed PUC, and 10% holding degrees or postgraduate qualifications. The mothers have a notably high illiteracy rate (15%), but 17% have completed primary education, and a smaller portion (6%) have completed high school. Among siblings, brothers show a higher level of education with 15% holding degrees and 16% having completed postgraduate

education. Sisters have more variation in their educational levels, with 27% having completed a degree and 11% having postgraduate qualifications.

Regarding children, a significant number (23%) have completed primary education, followed by 15% having completed a degree, and 10% having completed high school, indicating a trend of improving educational outcomes for the next generation.

This table highlights the educational progress within families, especially in terms of degree and postgraduate education, and underscores the ongoing challenges in increasing literacy and educational attainment, particularly for mothers and younger generations.

Table 3 clearly depicts the financial as well debt position of the households coming under different groups. As such, the number of women, having bank accounts is more in the group I i.e. 72% compared to group II, which consists of uneducated employed females, relatively a small percentage of women (56%) are reported to have accounts in banks.

The facts that emerge from the data are as follows;

In majority of the cases, women of group II have resorted to borrowings from relatives and friends. While, only in-group I, around 28% of women has borrowed loans, the rest are free from loan obligations. Specially, uneducated employed women have availed substantial

amount of loan for meeting the expenses another important point, which is found of education, health, marriage etc. is from this survey.

Table 3: Financial Conditions of the Respondents

Financial position		Group-I (N=50)		Group-III (N=50)	
		F	%	F	%
Bank Account Holders		18	72	28	56
Nature of Account	SB	11	44	18	36
	FD	10	40	30	60
Loan availed		9	28	30	60
Source of Borrowing	Relatives and friends	6	12	17	34
	Cooperative banks	2	4	8	16
	Nationalized banks	5	10	6	12
	Not applicable	36	72	19	38
Purpose of Borrowing	Education	6	12	6	12
	Health	2	4	6	12
	Marriage	-	-	6	12
	Clear old loans	3	6	9	18
	House construction	2	4	5	10

Source: Field survey

Table 4: Importance of Women in Decision-making

Decision making		Group-I (N=50)		Group-II (N=50)	
		F	%	F	%
Acceptance level of suggestions	Always	22	44	24	47
	Quiet often	25	50	17	33
	Very rarely	3	6	5	10
	Never	-	-	4	8
Suggestions taken for issues of	Finance	36	62	41	82
	Education	33	66	29	58
	Marriage	23	46	38	76
	Others	24	48	30	60

Source: Field survey

Our main aim is to know how far these women enjoy their freedom in giving suggestions. The data related to the same has been given in the Table 1.4. The above table points out that 44% of the total sample women in group I enjoy maximum amount of freedom in the decisions related to education and marriage aspects etc. 50% of the respondents in the same group has

revealed that their suggestions are accepted more frequently in various important matters. Only 6% in the group feel that their suggestions are hardly considered by the families. Unfortunately, only in-group II sample respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the acceptance of their suggestions by the household members. their percentage is less in this respect.

Table 5: Opinion of Respondents' on Equality and Freedom aspects

Equality and freedom Components		Group-I (N=50)		Group-II (N=50)	
		No	%	No	%
Treated equally with men		37	74	42	84
Freedom to express opinion in	Family	46	92	33	65
	Work place	35	70	10	20
	Both	40	80	12	24
	No where	3	6	5	10
Freedom to travel within	City limits	36	62	35	69
	State	15	30	15	29
	Country	3	6	1	2
	Abroad	1	2	-	-
Freedom to participate in political activities		23	46	19	37
Participation in political meetings / processions		11	22	5	10
Freedom to vote		43	86	39	73

Source: Field Survey

Along with social and economic participation, women's participation in the political process is an affirmation of social justice and human rights in the society. It gives due recognition to the potentialities of women capability and contributions for

the human development of the country. Of course, political participation of women depends upon the political awareness and freedom of the individual.

Table 1.5 provides information about the representation of women in political

activities. From this table, it is found that 46 and 37% of sample respondent women in-group I and II respectively, have freedom to participate in political activities.

In this study, it was found that women who have education are involved with the political activities. Representation by uneducated women is less in political activities. As far as freedom to vote is concerned there are differentials among various groups of respondents. Accordingly, 86% from group I and 73% from group II enjoy the freedom to vote in the city.

As far as employment status and working conditions of women, are concerned, 45% of women are working on permanent basis and the rest is having job insecurity. Coming to the awareness of labor laws, it was observed that the level of awareness among educated class is sufficiently high when compared to uneducated group. As far as degree of harassment factors is concerned it was found that educated ladies are slightly better in comparison with the latter.

Important findings of the study

- Table 1.1 clearly depicts the *Gender Disparity* between men and women in the matter of educational attainment. Despite the changing socio-economic environment in the city, sex inequality still continues to exist in different parts.
- As far as the social position of women in Mysuru, today, is

concerned, two views have come to the forefront. The one that emerges from the study is that though woman plays an important role in her family, she finds herself next to her husband in the domestic economy. Hence, majority of women are not the heads of their families. It is clear from Table 1.1.

- Another finding is that marriage is an obligatory and compulsory custom on the part of women in every society. This has been proved by the data presented in Table 1.1&1.2. Where more than 75% of women are married and the rest are unmarried and widow, whose percentage falls between 10 to 25.
- An interesting finding is that the sample respondents of group I are fully satisfied with the level of freedom they enjoy in their domestic chores and outside. Whereas, the respondents coming under the second group have expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the acceptance of their suggestions by the house hold members.
- The extent of violence and gender discrimination among the women of different groups have been assessed successfully from the data presented in the table. The resultant finding is that the presence of violence has been felt by the sample respondents of group II, while the magnitude and extent of violence has been found to

be less among women, belonging to group I.

Conclusions

This study was carried out mainly to examine and analyse the relation between Gender Equality and role of Women in Decision making. Based on the results of the study, one can easily establish positive and direct relationship between the above two concepts. Thus, it leads to the conclusion that, many decades of planned efforts, heavy doses of public investment on social sector and active participation in the economic functioning have yielded the desired results only in the industrialized and developed countries.

Across India gender inequality results in unequal opportunities, and while it impacts on the lives of both genders, statistically it is girls that are the most disadvantaged. Chhattisgarh has been declared the top-performing state in India on the gender equality parameter of the Sustainable Development Goals, according to the NITI Aayog's SDG India Index report 2020-21.

The Right to Education (RTE) Act, introduced in 2009 making elementary education free and compulsory in the country, has been a shot in the arm for many. Nevertheless, statistics reveal the dismal gap between states – while states like Kerala paint a rosy picture of women's education in India with 92.07 percent female literacy, relatively backward states such as Bihar with 51.5 percent female literacy rate highlight the

importance of sustained campaign in favor of women's education in India.

However, in my study, it was found that there is a definite link between Education, Empowerment and Gender Equality, at the same time the findings show that it is educated and employed women who enjoy economic independence and freedom especially in the decision making process in their families as well as in the working places.

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