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### Empowerment through employment: Self-perception of employed women

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#### Abstract

The study was conducted to enquire about the employed women's self perception about empowerment due to employment in Sabour block in Bhagalpur district of Bihar by interviewing 100 married employed women from different government sectors. It revealed that majority of respondents had medium level of overall perception about empowerment (68.00 per cent). Under the first indicator *i.e.* perception about status change found that majority of respondents perceived that they had become more confident (Rank I, Mean =2.77), the second indicator of perception *i.e.* empowerment at workplace found that they get similar increment in the salary as that of their male counterpart (Rank I, Mean =2.72) and the third *i.e.* empowerment at community level perceived that they had got increased their recognition in the society due to employment (Rank I, Mean = 2.80). It shows that living condition of women has improved. Women are more organised, self confident and powerful. The fact which, has been revealed in the study is that women have been freed from the chain of their traditional in family.

**Keywords:** Employed women, empowerment, employment, self perception and indicator

#### Introduction

Where women are generally denied the ownership of property and control over assets, the ability to earn outside income can become an important instrument for the transformation of gender relations and challenge many traditional modes of social and economic relations. A study about immigration and women's empowerment of Salvadorans in Los Angeles described that immigrant women's perception of self-empowerment results from their experiences and other factors such as work, family, and the larger social, cultural, and spatial environments that they negotiate on a daily basis which again can be true for any person in this regard. As women's empowerment is subject to a fundamental shift in perceptions it should have its root from below. In other words, it should be claimed by the women who want to empower themselves (Zentgraf, 2002) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Therefore, Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. It increases women's access to economic resources and opportunity including jobs,

financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. It is about creating just and equitable societies, because women often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as ethnicity or caste.

Self perception of employed women reflected no definite relationship between realization of higher education by respondents and their empowerment level but results also shown greater level of empowerment where husband were equally educated. (Tandley, 2005) <sup>[13]</sup>. Women have average level of life satisfaction at all age levels. It was found that with an increase in age, the overall life satisfaction decrease; whereas, with an increase in personal income, the over all life satisfaction increase. Moreover, with an increase in family income, the overall life satisfaction of women also increase (Jan and Massod, 2008) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Women in the workforce earning wages or a salary are part of a modern phenomenon, one that developed at the same time as the growth of paid employment for men; yet women have been challenged by inequality in the workforce (Andal, 2002) <sup>[9]</sup>. A woman is a social animal. To keep her in

captivity, without access to work or finance or interaction with the outside world, is less than fair (Eisenhower, 2002) [10]. Economic, social and political empowerment of women is essential for the development of any society. Employed women are essential for the development of the society, so empowerment of women is important to the process of upliftment of economic, social, political status of women.

### Methodology

The study was carried out in Sabour block of Bhagalpur district of Bihar in the year of 2017. The main objective of the study was to enquire about the married employed women's self perception about empowerment due to employment. The random sampling procedure was adopted to select the respondents for the study. A sampling frame of married employed women was prepared by visiting the different government sectors (*i.e.* schools, colleges, banks and a hospital) of employed women. A sample of 100 married employed women was selected randomly. The age range of the selected sample was from 18 to 65. Data were collected from the married employed women by using face to face interview methods. The interview schedule were pre tested in the Sabour block with a random sample of 20 respondents other than the main sample, in order to verify its suitability related with the objective of the study. The schedule was filled up by the investigator herself. It was analysed in terms of three indicators *i.e.* perception of status change, empowerment at work place and empowerment at

community level.

To assess the perception of employed women about empowerment, a list of statements under three indicators was prepared; responses of the respondents were obtained under three categories. The scores of all three columns were summed up and these were ranking on the basis of mean score.

### Results and Discussion

Women perception about empowerment due to employment was assessed in terms of three indicators *i.e.* perception about status change, empowerment at workplace and at community level.

#### Perception of the respondents about status change

The results in the Table 1 indicated that majority of the respondents perceived that due to employment they had become more confident (mean 2.77, I rank) and their awareness about women rights increased (mean 2.72, II rank) and gained new skills (mean 2.66, III rank). It was followed by increased self-esteem (mean 2.65, IV rank), more progressive (mean 2.61, V rank), increased knowledge (mean 2.57, VI rank), gain visibility and voice in the home (mean 2.32, VII rank). But as per their perception, the aspects which were adversely affected were performance of multiple roles at home and at workplace (mean 2.14, VIII rank) and their health status (mean 1.77, IX rank).

**Table 1:** Perception of the respondents about status change Total (n = 100)

Sr. No.	Aspects	Mean	Rank
1.	More confident	2.77	I
2.	Increased awareness about women rights	2.72	II
3.	Gained new skills	2.66	III
4.	Increased self-esteem	2.65	IV
5.	More progressive	2.61	V
6.	Increased knowledge	2.57	VI
7.	Gain visibility and voice in the home	2.32	VII
8.	Satisfied with performance of multiple roles at home and at workplace	2.14	VIII
9.	Improved health status	1.77	IX

These findings were partly similar to the findings reported by Milind (2003) [12], who reported that being overburdened due to employment around 60 per cent of employed women reported health problems; the most notable being backache and body ache. Similar results were also reported by Krishnan *et al.* (2010) [8] and Siddiqi (2005) [3] indicated that majority of women perceived multiple benefits to being

employed, including income as well as enhanced self-esteem and social support, having voice in the household and mobility and safety in public spaces.

#### Perception of the respondents about empowerment at workplace

**Table 2:** Perception of the respondents about empowerment at workplace Total (n = 100)

Sr. No.	Aspects	Mean	Rank
1.	Similar increment in the salary as that of men	2.72	I
2.	Positive impact on your life	2.62	II
3.	Equal chance of professional training	2.56	III
4.	Similar respect to that of male counterparts	2.41	IV
5.	Similar chance of promotion as compare to men	2.36	V
6.	Consulting at workplace for important decisions	2.14	VI
7.	Salary according to work	1.99	VII
8.	Autonomy at workplace	1.83	VIII

The data presented in Table 2 give a clear indication about the perception of the respondents about their empowerment

at workplace. It was found from the results that majority of the employed women perceived that they get similar

increment in the salary as that of men (mean 2.72, I rank), job has made positive impact on their life (mean 2.62, II rank). Further they perceived that they get equal chance of professional training (mean 2.56, III rank), similar respect to that of male counterparts (mean 2.41, IV rank), similar chance of promotion as compare to men, consulting at

workplace for important decisions, salary according to work, autonomy at workplace (V, VI, VII and VIII respectively).

### Perception of the respondents about empowerment at community level

**Table 3:** Perception of respondents at community level Total (n = 100)

Sr. No.	Aspects	Mean	Rank
1.	Increased recognition in the society	2.80	I
2.	Reduction of gender biasness	2.12	II
3.	Increased participation in social activities	2.09	III
4.	Decision are accepted at the community level	2.07	IV
5.	Feel free to participate in the communities activities	1.01	V

The data presented in Table 3 give a clear indication about the perception of the respondents about their empowerment at the community level. It is apparent from the results that majority of employed women perceived that they increased their recognition in the society (mean 2.80, I rank), reduction of gender biasness (mean 2.12, II rank), increased participation in social activities (mean 2.09, III rank), decision are accepted at the community level (mean 2.07, IV rank) and feel free to participate in the community activities (mean 1.01, V rank).

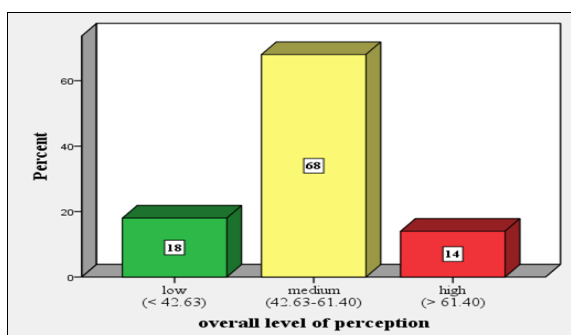
### Level of perception about empowerment of the respondents due to employment

Overall level of perception of the respondents about empowerment due to employment was analyzed in terms of status change, empowerment at workplace and at community level on the basis of Mean  $\pm$  S.D in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Overall perception of the respondents about empowerment Total (n = 100)

Sr. No.	Category	Per cent
1	Low (< 42.63)	18
2	Medium (42.63-61.40)	68
3	High (> 61.40)	14
Mean = 52.02 S.D = 9.38		

The results revealed that 68.00 per cent of the respondents had medium level of perception followed by 18.00 per cent of the respondents had low level of perception and 14.00 per cent respondents had high level of perception about empowerment due to employment. It was also pictorially clear from Fig no.1.



**Fig 1:** Overall level of perception of respondents about empowerment

These findings were similar to the findings of Kabeer *et al.* (2011) [6], who concluded that employed women are confident about their future and have authority over their own lives. They meet their own and family needs and also provide support to their old parents. Education provides them about their women rights, household decision making, self-confidence, respect for others' advice and information and freedom in voting. But others studies found that drastic change in women empowerment as a result of employment is limited. In case of employed Bengali women in India, majority perceived that husbands still maintain the final say in major domestic decisions (Dutta, 2002) [11].

Being employed is probably not enough to ensure women empowerment because employment does not necessarily allow women to challenge the power structures that prevent their agency and full participation in society (Kabeer, 1997) [5], (Kanton, 2003) [7] and (Pearson, 2004) [11].

In spite of improvement in women empowerment from employment, a number of structural barriers limit the extent of the effect of employment on empowerment (Salway, 2005) [12].

### Conclusion

Majority of respondents had medium level of overall perception about empowerment. Under the first indicator of self perception majority of respondents perceived that they had become more confident was ranked first, majority of respondents perceived that they get similar increment in the salary as that of their male counterpart was ranked first under the second indicator of perception *i.e.* empowerment at workplace. Again, majority of respondents perceived that they had got increased their recognition in the society was ranked first under the third indicator of perception *i.e.* empowerment at community level. These findings highlight key areas where women perceive their empowerment, from personal growth to workplace equality and societal recognition and these results demonstrate that empowerment is being experienced across various dimensions, emphasizing the positive impact on both personal and professional lives.

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