
Assessing Women Empowerment Through Law And Enforcement Agencies: A Concrptual Framework

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Abstract

Empowerment of women is one of the topics covered in this research. In order to raise women's economic and social status in society, it is clear that their empowerment is vital. Government policy, non-governmental advocacy, and academic research have all recently elevated the issue of women's empowerment to a prominent position. There has been an ocean shift in pondering turn of events and administration as of late. In order to empower and engage people in development and governance, it is essential to implement democratic decentralisation, cooperate with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), empower community-based organisations, practise participatory development, and ensure sustainable growth and equity.

Key words:- Empowerment, Women and Programmes for Women Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

There are many different aspects, dimensions, and layers to empowerment. When women are empowered, they are able to take charge of their lives and the lives of their families, communities, and nations in all spheres of influence, including economics, politics, law, and human and intellectual capital. That "empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power" is what the Indian Country Report gets at. Global recognition of the role of female entrepreneurs in driving economic development dates back to the 1990s. various governments increasingly acknowledge the importance of women entrepreneurs and various sectors of employment value their contributions [1]. Additionally, the United Nations study indicated a correlation between economic development and women's advancement. Where women have made significant strides, economies have flourished. There is no economic growth in countries that restrict women's rights. Despite several international treaties affirming women's human rights, they continue to face worse odds of poverty and lack of education compared to men. Compared to men, they often have less access to services and resources. Domestic violence is more common against women, and they are less likely to participate in politics and the economy than males[2].

There are several domains that use the term "empowerment," including but not limited to the areas of philosophy and psychology, the ever-growing self-help industry, and motivational sciences. Disability, racism, ethnicity, religion, and gender are some of the socially excluded groups that sociologists seek to empower. There is a common association between feminism and empowerment. Governments often push some populations to the margins, whether they intend to do so or not. School and public place segregation based on race was outlawed by this law. Enacting equal opportunity legislation is a powerful tool in the battle against marginalisation. Additionally, they show that minority and female lobbying groups are becoming more powerful. Those on the margins depend on charity and handouts since they lack the means to support themselves. They don't believe in themselves since they can't support themselves[3]. As an added downside, they will never know the joy of achievement that others may have as a result of their chance. This might lead to problems with mental health, social functioning, and psychology.

So, empowerment is when people on the margins get these crucial opportunities, either on their own or via other people who aren't on the margins and help them out. Involuntary prevention of denying them opportunities is also a part of it.

Part of empowering a group is helping its members become economically independent so that they no longer require handouts or charity. It could be challenging to start and carry out this process. Because no one outside of the marginalised group can possibly understand their needs, one way to empower them is to provide them with the resources they need to found their own nonprofit organisation [4]. Structured improvements aimed at reducing dependence could be pursued by nonprofits. Factors including age, societal position (station and class), training level, and area influence ladies' strengthening in India. Policies aimed at empowering women exist on many levels, including the federal, state, and Panchayat levels. These policies include topics such as healthcare, education, economic opportunities, political participation, and violence against women. Yet, there is a huge chasm between legislative progress and community practice.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Empowerment" means what?

Malhotra, Schuler, et al. (2002), Mosedale (2005), Ibrahim & Alkire (2007), pp.7-8, and Richardson (2017) all state that mainstream development groups, feminist authors, and feminists do not agree on what empowerment means. Empowerment has been used differently by different authors in different professions. Several fields use the term, including sociology, development, brain science, and training. The term has been associated with various concepts such as the following: self-assurance, liberation, the capacity to advocate for one's privileges (Narayan, 2005, p.3), power redistribution or changes in power relations (Batliwala, 1994; Rowlands, 1997), household decision-making autonomy (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007, pp.19-20), agency (the ability to make effective choices when such choices were previously denied; Kabeer, 1999, p.435), and "the extent to which other scholars argue that empowerment may be granted or externally decided" (World Bank, 2001, 2006, 2011). The World Bank Institute provided a definition of empowerment as the capacity to make meaningful choices for people or communities in 2007 (p.6). According to Alsop and Heinsohn (2005), it's all about helping individuals or groups make better decisions and see those decisions through to the outcomes they want. Development agencies seem to take it for granted that empowerment is something that should be given or received, similar to social or credit systems, based on the definitions. The term "empowerment" is used interchangeably in feminist and critical theory to describe agency and agency at the individual, group, and community levels. The literature on women's empowerment is shaped by these empowerment perspectives.

The Conceptualization of Women's Empowerment

➤ *Firstly, the empowerment of women as an ongoing process:-*

Feminists see emancipation more as a journey than an endpoint [5]. The capacity to choose or make good judgements is an important part of empowerment, as does personal development (Batliwala, 1994). According to Kabeer, women's choice is associated with autonomy, achievement, and resources. When women have access to resources like financial, educational, and social capital, they are able to work more independently. Women encounter several obstacles to these opportunities as a result of male centric society and other socio-social variables. So, money can only help women if they are free to pursue their dreams to the fullest. Obtaining resources from outside sources is not the same as empowering someone; it is just one aspect of it. Nevertheless, agency entails exercising control over one's own life by making strategic judgements and directing one's own resources [7]. According to this theory, when women take charge of their own lives, they open up a world of possibilities and power. Furthermore, the ability to make decisions inside one's own home is usually associated with agency. Many people consider women's decision-making ability in the house as an indicator of their empowerment [8]. To achieve economic, social, and political gender equality, it is believed that women need more agency or decision-making authority. Gender equality and more influence in family decision-making may be achieved, according to liberal feminists and development organisations, via programmes that raise women's financial resources. The question of whether women's status and decision-making abilities are automatically enhanced by financial benefits is an open one. The idea of empowerment that is prompted by outside sources is backed[9].

According to Batliwala (1994), women can only make well-informed decisions when faced with alternatives that are already known or experienced. Therefore, there has to be a framework that expands information, knowledge, and analysis of available options. Women need to be given new options and chances as a result of this strategy. Batliwala (1994) elaborates by saying that empowerment is like a snowball effect: it starts with more awareness, then moves on to problem identification, action for change, analysis, which brings more awareness, and finally, better methods. It follows that the person, the change specialist, the group, and the climate are all affected by the empowerment spiral, albeit to varying degrees and speeds. This would imply that women should be free to pursue their own interests and make their own decisions. In order to empower women, a paradigm shift is required, and one step towards that shift is altering the power relations and institutions that limit women's agency in many spheres of life [10]. The shift from gender inequality to balanced gender representation. Changes in gender roles and relationships are gradual and sometimes delayed, as Khan (1999) noted.

No one, not even women, can be empowered. They ought to be empowered by women. For a change to be considered significant, it must include women. If the intervening process hadn't included women as changemakers, not only recipients of gender equality indices, empowerment would not have occurred.

➤ ***Secondly, any shift in power dynamics or the empowerment of women:-***

The notion of power brings an additional dimension to the idea of empowerment. There is a heavy focus on power, both physical and figurative, in the concept of empowerment. yet the very definition of power is controversial. Often called "power connections," this concept recognises the link between people and electricity [11]. Most types of force are perceived in the writing. Rowlands identifies four sorts of "force," each of which affects women's agency and their capacity to effect change at the individual and societal levels in unique ways: (1997, page 13). One might use the words "power over," "power within," "power to," and "power with" to express the many forms of power dynamics.

➤ ***Thirdly, the empowerment of women as a result:-***

Any shift in power dynamics or empowerment will be ineffective in the absence of corresponding shifts in the political, social, and economic spheres. Agency or goal realisation are defined as successes by Kabeer (1999)[12]. The level of women's empowerment is determined by the extent to which their potential and agency are realised. Accomplishments could include things like getting a degree and finding a job. Among these, there is a decline in domestic violence, improved mobility, property rights, health care, and consumption (Alsop & Heinsohn, 2005); command of one's own financial situation (Buvinic, 2017; Golla, Malhotra, et al., 2018); independence and decision-making authority (Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007); and command of one's own household budget and reality (Buvinic, 2017; Golla, Malhotra, et al., 2018). Success that fosters autonomy, as opposed to just meeting basic requirements, is more likely to inspire empowerment[13].

➤ ***The fourth aspect is the multi-faceted idea of women's empowerment:-***

The personal, relational, micro, meso, and macro dimensions may all be influenced by an individual's level of empowerment. A person's sense of self-worth, self-efficacy, beliefs, actions, and agency are all parts of the personal empowerment component. The focus of relational empowerment is on the connections that women have with their families, communities, and partners [14]. One may see individual empowerment on the micro level, interpersonal empowerment on the meso level, and society empowerment on the macro level [15].

Significantly, empowerment may have both short-term and long-term goals, as well as be both practical and strategic (Mahmud, 2003, p.587). Achieving a more equitable income and better home life for women is a tangible achievement [16]. Some academics argue that women may gain financial independence, lessen their dependence on men, and divide up household tasks after experiencing certain life events, such as self-employment via credit. Academics and critical feminists disagree on whether or not resources help women in these crucial areas [17].

But for women to really be empowered, they must first be aware of where they are in life, what obstacles they face, what resources they need, how to connect with others, and how to overcome these obstacles. Institutions and resources that can help women make this choice are crucial to their empowerment when they come to this realisation. How can empowerment be assessed if it is not contingent on external factors or the availability of resources? What exactly would a definition of empowerment measurement be? Women may get insight into their own empowerment and stakeholders can choose the appropriate level of support with the use of empowerment assessment tools. Like its concept, empowerment measurement is contentious[18].

ESTIMATES FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Chart 1:- Various Views on the Advancement of Women.

Project Objective	Ideas surrounding the idea of a solution	Category of Issue	Programmes for Child Development, Social Security, Women's Hardship, Unique Requirements for Women
Child Development Programs	Women's lower socioeconomic level, vulnerability as a group	Providing health, nutrition, and child care support services	Establish a network of health centres offering prenatal care, vaccinations, health education, and nutrition programs
Social Security	-	-	Financial independence for women, dispelling stereotypes, providing skills and business support

Women's Hardship	Lower socioeconomic status, vulnerability as a group	Establishing a network of health centres, financial independence initiatives	Opportunities for women to earn through women's organizations, soap production, and school uniform making
Equal Access to Education	Institutionalized prejudice, gender bias in the classroom, limited access to credit	Equal educational opportunities, equal access to production elements	Redesign development strategies to include women as full participants and beneficiaries; affirmative action for increased access
Women's Empowerment	Unequal gender power dynamics, gender inequality, anti-patriarchal movements	Acknowledgment, engagement, unity, concerted effort	Grassroots organizing, empowering women for collective action, initiatives addressing democratization and political engagement

Source: *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), citing Moser in ICECD (Developing Gender Sensitive Development: A Trainer's Guide), Allahabad: ICECD.*

Due to their subordination by men, colonialism, and neocolonialism, women must learn to rely only on themselves. Increasing social and economic capabilities and achieving comprehensive development are the primary goals. As the government looks for partnerships, non-governmental groups play a crucial role in making sure development and governance are decentralised, focused on people, and sustainable [19]. Protests against government policies and projects that cause relocation, loss of livelihood, and natural resources have resulted from environmental deterioration, which has led to the widespread recognition that women's engagement in environmental programmes may support sustainable development.

Women are seen as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves, under the dominant model of women's empowerment. The gender and development paradigm acknowledges women's roles in reproduction, production, and community management. It argues that development processes should incorporate women for their benefit. In this setting, development programmes seek to (i) increase financial resources, (ii) inform women of their legal protections and entitlements, and (iii) strengthen their ability to advocate for themselves and their communities [20].

In order to empower women, the gender and development approach prioritises gender research and strategic gender needs. Gender inequality slows down economic progress. A growing body of research indicates that economic progress and the well-being of men, women, and children are hindered by gender relations, the gender-based division of labour, power and resource inequities, and gender biases in rights and entitlements⁹. Investing in women's health and education is thought to boost family incomes because well-informed women are better able to take care of themselves, embrace change, and weather economic storms [21].

DEMAND FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IS PRESENT

Empowerment is a primary objective of development. The majority of people think that women should have more agency so that they can help advance our country. Empowerment of women cannot be universally defined due to the fact that power is socially relative. Given the complexity of the topic, any attempt to define women's empowerment is likely to leave out some important details [22]. A prominent indicator in the literature is that women's empowerment is characterised by their capacity to make decisions.

The country places a premium on empowering women. Among the many initiatives aimed at empowering women in India are those that provide financial aid, help rescued women find employment, promote safe parenting, and more. Government and mainstream development agencies throughout the globe have taken notice of the correlation between poverty and women's limited access to resources and decision-making power. Women might make money willingly via various income-generating activities. Through IGAs, IG Programmes provide rural women a chance to earn money. Economic and social empowerment are the goals of the IG Programmes. Participation in educational, capacity-building, and income-generating activities is promoted among rural women via the formation of organisations through social mobilisation [23]. Job creation, raising awareness, promoting micro-businesses, women's cooperatives, credit and savings organisations, skill-based training, awareness-raising, resource mobilisation, and market links are all part of inclusive growth agreements (IGAs). Women may gain financial independence, get experience in group leadership, and improve their communities via IG initiatives. On the basis of the assumption that women benefit, non-governmental organisations and development groups have maintained their provision of IG Programmes [24].

Families also have a role in shaping women's choices. Due to patriarchal households, female participants' position may be worsened by programmes that provide credit but provide nothing in the way of training or other support services. Conventional income-generating schemes aim to help low-income women, but many of them lack the household power to make good use of their loans and control their own income. In most cases, women will attribute a success to their male relatives or husbands [25]. This places an extra burden of dependence and stress on women since they often have little choice but to ask their husbands or male relatives to pay back the loans. It is difficult for low-income women to start enterprises since the government does not assist them much. The regulations do not differentiate between individual and business assets, and they also place limits on their working hours, health insurance, and other perks. These challenges make it hard for low-income women to maintain their standard of living. When it comes to starting their own businesses, the majority of low-income women just don't have what it takes.

SHE ACHIEVEMENTS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

The emancipation of women is not a universally applicable topic. Problems and needs differ on a worldwide scale [26]. We need to realise that empowering women isn't like a highway where traditional fast-track plans will provide instant results. Educating women about the issue and increasing their influence within existing structures will not solve it. Since bigotry and injustice are systemic, taking a myopic view of the issue would not help women throughout the globe [27]. The anti-women mechanisms in our culture need fundamental changes.

Globally, women's empowerment is becoming recognised as a powerful social movement that promotes gender equality via the creation of gender-neutral systems and practices [28]. When it comes to empowering women, it's no longer enough to just provide small-scale project finance or support small-scale enterprises so that women may access capital and its power. Because prejudice and hostility against women are deeply ingrained in our society and cannot be eradicated via monetary means, we must change our mindsets [29].

When poverty is eliminated, women's empowerment will continue. Keep in mind that it is just one of the primary objectives. Yet the real question is whether the empowerment of women on a worldwide scale has altered the oppressive systems that support gender discrimination and prejudice in our social norms, institutions, and interpersonal interactions. Since the empowerment development model does not address this problem, it is more accurate to see it as a tool than the starting point or final destination of empowerment. It is critical that women everywhere realise their inherent strength right now [30]. If we want to make a difference in the world, we need to tap into this latent talent, and not only in capitalist or sexist societies. Agents of change will emerge from this reawakening of personal power and consciousness of the need of creative and generative action. These agents of change have the potential to actually transform society for women and all humans via a variety of means and approaches [31].

Although progress is gradual at first, the fire will eventually catch and produce outcomes. The liberation of women everywhere is an ideal, and we must accept this. To close the gap between women's empowerment as a goal and gender inequality and discrimination as a reality, we need regional and international initiatives. In order for women to be more active in local decision-making bodies, they need to engage more at the grassroots level. The economic participation, possibilities, and social, economic, and political empowerment of women will all rise as a result of this. When a local grassroots movement takes root and grows, it will inevitably lead to better educational opportunities, health, and nutrition for women [32].

ENCOURAGING PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN

Numerous programmes and policies aimed at empowering women in India have been in the works from the start of the planning era. Encouraging women to take the lead in driving social and economic change and development is central to a national policy for women's empowerment that was adopted in 2001. In order to empower women and promote human resource development, eliminate discrimination, and level the playing field, the national policy for women's empowerment lays the groundwork for a gender-just society [33]. Empowering women is a central tenet of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012) for women's development. A national plan has been proposed to empower women and girls and to abolish all types of prejudice against them. Achievements in economic growth, gender equality, and social empowerment are among the most important metrics. The National Policy for Women's Empowerment, which was established in 2001, followed a number of earlier initiatives.

These initiatives to empower women are carried out by the Ministry of Child and Women Development. A short discussion of a few of these techniques follows [34].

- **Swami Siddha:-** Through its network of self-help groups (SHGs), Swayamsidha promotes women's economic independence and personal development. Through raising awareness, providing economic empowerment, and coordinating many activities, it aims to empower women holistically. This initiative, which included both the Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) and the Mahila Sanidhi Yojana (MSY), was launched in 2000–01. It supplanted the earlier scheme with the same name. The ultimate goal of this strategy is to provide complete command and

ownership of all resources in the far future. A total of 68,575 women's self-help groups (SHGs) including 10 lakhs of women have been formed as a result of the initiative's existence. The initiative was completed in March of 2007.

- **Project Swa-Shakti:-** The Swa-shakti programme has changed its name from the Rural Women's Development and Empowerment programme in the past. The project was given the green light in October 1998 as a federally funded initiative that would span five years and 186 Crores in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, and Chattisgarh. The project's overarching goal is to increase women's access to resources so that their quality of life may be enhanced. While 1,600 self-help groups were intended to be established as a consequence of the project, 17,647 have been established so far. Help for the project is coming from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank.
- **Swalap bang:-** Training and skills provided by this programme will help women find jobs or start their own businesses more easily in the long run. A wide range of skills are taught, such as computer programming, medical transcription, electrical assembly, repairing consumer electronics (radios, TVs, computers), sewing, community health work, embroidery, and handloom weaving. The plan was turned up to the different state governments on April 1, 2006.
- **Worker-Friendly Hostel:-** There has been a plan in place to assist with the creation and expansion of hostels for working women since 1972. Building buildings for working women hostels is one of the many goals of the programme, which provides financial assistance to NGOs, cooperatives, and other groups concerned with women's social welfare. One thousand two hundred and fifty women reaped the benefits of thirteen new hostels authorised for the 2003–2004 fiscal year thanks to this initiative.
- **Swadhar:-** This plan was launched in 2001–2002 as a central sector initiative with the goal of providing women with integrated and comprehensive services for a range of ailments. This plan provides a wide range of services, including food, clothing, and shelter, as well as health counselling, legal assistance, and social and economic rehabilitation. Women who are going through tough times may call a help line that is part of the project. At this time, thirty-one initiatives are receiving financing from the programme.
- **The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh Institute:-** This policy goes by more than one name; the National Credit Fund for women is one of them. The goal of establishing a registered society on March 30, 1993, in compliance with the Societies Registration Act of 1860, was to provide low-income women a chance to start businesses that make money via micro-finance or credit support. Women may acquire loans via the initiative with reasonable interest rates, no security required, and no problems whatsoever.
- **SGSY stands for Swarnjayanti Gramme Swarozgar Yojana:-** In April of 1999, the Swarnjayanti Gramme Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was launched, after the restructuring of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and other associated programmes. For low-income rural residents, this is now the only self-employment programme available. By empowering swarozgaris with assets that may be financed via bank loans and subsidised by the government, the Swarozgari Social Security Scheme (SGSY) aims to lift those receiving assistance beyond the poverty line. Currently, the system is being put into action based on a cost-sharing structure where the federal government and the individual states each contribute 25%. Helped 93.21 lakh swarozgaris and 27.37 lakh SHGs were created as of the end of 2007 with a total cost of Rs. 19,340.32 crore.
- **Cluster Development Programme for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE-CDP):-** A group of companies that make the same or very similar products is called a cluster. Twenty or more of these types of enterprises usually form a cluster. The current Cluster Development Programme (CDP) aims to diagnose the chosen clusters of traditional skill-based MSEs, identify the appropriate technologies and vendors, and facilitate the beneficiaries' adoption of existing technology that is adapted to their specific needs. Cluster Development aims to accomplish several things, including increasing competitiveness, developing technology, selling products, creating jobs, and implementing the most efficient manufacturing techniques. Assistance with capacity development, shared facilities, marketing, and associated activities is available via the initiative. It also facilitates the transfer, integration, and distribution of acknowledged technology from its producers to the final consumer or group of small enterprises.
- **Exhibitions for women as part of the marketing support programme for micro and small businesses approved by CCEA:-** The Department of Commerce (MSME) has created a programme for female entrepreneurs to support small and micro manufacturing units that are owned by women in their pursuit of international markets, to encourage more participation of these units' representatives at international trade fairs and exhibitions under the SIDO banner, and to increase exports from these units. Encouraging female entrepreneurs to participate in a total of 25 international exhibitions during the 11th Plan is the goal of this campaign. Between January and March of

2008, five worldwide shows will be held, and a large number of well-known women entrepreneur organisations have been requested to sponsor their members' participation in these displays. It is anticipated that these exhibits will be held during the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The daily newspaper has also published an ad about this subject. The following has been decided upon in an attempt to bring attention to the significance of female entrepreneurs participating in international exhibitions:

- a) Give away exhibition space for free.
- b) Pay for one representative's economy class plane ticket in full..
- c) Up to Rs.15,000/-can be refunded for shipping costs. The total limit, nevertheless, is Rs. 1.25 lac.

A STANDARD FOR EVALUATING THE ECONOMIC EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

Considering that empowerment is an internal process that cannot be adequately measured empirically due to its intangible nature, this paper introduces a new way to assess economic empowerment [35]. Unlike other commonly used frameworks, it does not assess women's use of externally available resources or initiatives in order to empower them. Rather, it looks for signs of agency, control, or purpose in the correlation of purpose data collected before resources are used with the actual use of those resources [36]. To what extent women are able to make decisions about how to acquire and use resources related to the broader body of knowledge at their disposal, their degree of education, and other variables determines the degree to which women are empowered. A reasonable structure of ladies' financial strengthening ought to mirror the accompanying, as per this review:

When women are economically empowered, it means they have a say in how their home is run and what resources are available to them.

Personal empowerment, also known as choice, agency, or power, or the extent to which people select how to access resources, is the first economic empowerment indicator examined by the paradigm [37]. Capital consists of physical assets, social capital in the form of networks and mentors, and human capital in the form of education, skills, and training. It is empowering for women when they are able to make this choice free from patriarchal and institutional constraints [38]. Access to resources, rather than consumption or control, is where empowerment begins, contrary to what previous frameworks and research have stressed [39]. This idea suggests that, in contrast to previous studies, the decision-maker may control resource utilisation or management, which means that the original choice to acquire resources will not be lowered [40]. Second, the framework assesses the extent to which individuals have agency over the management and utilisation of institutional resources (such as micro-credit or loans), as well as their ability to direct the expenditure of household funds or the strength of their relationships. Finally, it assesses empowerment in relation to household financial realities, such as whether they are oppressed, disadvantaged, or have a heavier financial load as a consequence of accessing resources like micro-credit from banks [41]. Therefore, women gain power when they have agency over their own knowledge, resources, and choices. When things at home are going well, women feel powerful. When things aren't, they feel powerless.

CONCLUSION

It is far from a picnic for women to dive headfirst into the corporate world. As a complement to the income they earn for their families, women in developing countries like India participate in a broad range of economic activities, which helps the economy grow. Women are facing increasing challenges in completing tasks in small firms and industries. Efforts are being made on a worldwide and economic scale to boost the participation of women from Scheduled Castes in the business sector, and the number of women overall is increasing rapidly in this field. Research shows many SC women don't understand what an entrepreneur does or why it's important for their financial independence.

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