Factors of Empowerment among Women Domestic Workers in Kerala, India: Using Cumulative Empowerment Index and Multiple Regression Model

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Abstract: Women domestic workers are one of the most invisible divisions of workers in the unorganized sector. They are facing adverse social domination and economic discrimination in society. The present study intends to analyze the extent of empowerment take place among the women domestic workers in the study area. The paper evaluated the 200 women domestic workers who living in the two taluk namely Kottayam taluk and Kanjirappally Taluk in Kottayam district, Kerala. Data collected with the help of well-structured interview schedule during a period of 5 months from July 2019 to November 2019. According to the census 2010, this district is the one of the district in Kerala in terms of high number of unorganized sector workers in Kerala. The study explores the different dimensions of empowering factors for women domestic workers, which include (i) social decision, (ii) household decision, (iii) financial decision and (iv) workplace situation. Study used Cumulative Empowerment Index and Multiple Regression Model to analyze the Women domestic workers. Results shows husband seeking domestic workers earns and lack of ownership of permanent assets indicates their subordination in the household hierarchy and highlight that women are partially asserting influence over household properties. Factors like less workplace problems, decision on children's education and less restriction to visit relatives or friends were greatly influenced their level of empowerment. The index estimates that the majority of the women domestic worker's level of empowerment is moderate to average.

Keywords: Women domestic workers, Empowerment, Cumulative Empowerment Index, Regression Model.

1. Introduction

Women in India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in spite of many efforts undertaken by government. Kantor explained that Discussion on women empowerment progresses from its beginning from the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) as well as Human Development Report 2000 shows that the participation of women in economic activities remains one of the prime objectives in the scope of women empowerment process to fill the gap between gender disparities **(Kantor.2005)**. Women empowerment means the capacity of a woman to positively participate in society which helps to better socio-economic attainment in the future **(Helling. et al., 2005)**. "In India, women constitute a significant proportion of the population. With economic development and gender promotional activities in India, women today

have more prominence and ability to speak than they had a few years ago But till date, women empowerment is a much-debated issue and gender discrimination against girls exists in investment so on education, the formation of skills, health issues and so on"**(Sanghita & Goswami. 2020)**. Bardhan revealed that economic independence of women can be achieved though participation in the labour market and this is not the adequate state to ensure a raise in the bargaining power, women restricting on decision-making role in their family, by economic independence leads to women empowerment which is again leads to economic development in various ways **(Bardhan. 1985)**.

There was a drastic increase in the number of domestic workers in India. Uneducated and unskilled women workers share a significant part in this field. As a result in the field of domestic worker, majority of the workers were part- time domestic work. At the same time this types of workers were most invisible and exploited type of workers in unorganized sector workers. They were collecting their wage daily or weekly basis, they earn less than the full time or live in domestic workers in the same field. As there earns is substantial for the family financial condition, they were continue their work. In this study, women domestic workers were evaluated with the objective to explore the influencing factors and extend of empowerment level of women domestic workers.

2. Study area and method of data analysis

According to the census, 2010, the Kottayam district is the one of the district in Kerala in terms of high number of unorganized sector workers in Kerala, India. The Kottayam district is divided into five taluks, among them two taluks were selected randomly they are Kottayam taluk to represent urban area and Kanjirappally Taluk to represent rural area. The data were collected from 200 women domestic workers through a well-structured interview schedule during a period of 5 months from July 2019 to November 2019. Limited studies were taken placed among the domestic workers in the district; it shows the importance of the study. The data were collected with the help of well structured and an extensive field survey for a five months. This study lights up the realities in the field of domestic work.

3. Conceptual Explanation

The study was used set of conceptualized variables such as social decision, Household decision; financial decision and workplace situations. These variables are dynamic in nature, it is inter-linked and which is directly influence women empowerment in various ways. These variables are explained below:

(1) **Social Decision**: it includes factors like (i) she enjoys the freedom to visit friends and relatives without permission; (ii) she is a member of some local body/group.

(2) **Household Decision**: represents decision like (i) she hires service of someone to do household chores, (ii) she is a decision-maker in decision on Family expenditure, (iii) Decision on sending children to school.

(3) **Financial decision**: include (i) she operates her bank account, (ii) she lends money to her husband without physical abuse, (iii) she owns a house, (iv) she has ownership of durable assets and (v) she is a primary insurance account holder.

(4) **Workplace situation**: covers (i) she has no restriction in workplace; (ii) she is not physically assaulted or restrains physical violence in her workplace.

Based on the above mentioned indicators, Composition of Empowerment Index (CEI) for women Domestic Workers were evaluated separately. The values given the respondents were summed up to get the

value of the indicators. "The analysis the indicators under workplace situations are standardized to arrive at the final value of the index. The value ranges from 0–12, where 0 indicates no empowerment and 12 indicates high empowerment. For an absolute comparison of women empowerment, the values have been classified into four categories namely high (10–12), average (7–9), moderate (4–6) and low (0–3) empowerment" **(Sanghita & Goswami. 2020)**.

4. Empowerment and the Women

In this analysis empowerment were analysed with the help of four major variables they are social decision, household decision, financial decision and workplace situation. These factors visualise the level of empowerment on women in the field of domestic work. Bhattacharya et al. measured the empowerment among the women domestic workers at individual level; where empowerment is measured with the help of basic capabilities especially entitled health, knowledge and autonomy related variables. The features of women domestic workers in study showed that the respondents were experiences positive, personal as well as social changes with her income by doing domestic work and it is positively influence the family financial stability too **(Bhattacharya. Et al., 2013)**. This influence significantly influence on the dimensions of empowerment in the factors like health, education, outside-home mobility and thereby improving their position in their society and well as in their household. For the example the Education, it ensures every woman to independent and improves control over available resources and capabilities on decision-making **(Datta & Gailey. 2012)**. The age and the experiences plays an important role to gained and look forward with empowerment. In the work bank speech 2013 by United Nations Secretary- General, Ban Ki-Moon said that "women's health and girls' education is the like giving them the tools to shape their own future has an incredible multiplier effect on economic growth. It leads to increased prosperity not just for individuals but for their communities and their societies. It provides returns to decades" **(World Bank Report. 2013)**.

In this study the data were analysed with help of binary categories for better valuation of the objectives of the study. The each indicator were analysed by summing up the results under different aspects of dimensions. In a past study found that the tendencies of the each variable were inter-correlated to bring about the empowerment among the respondents **(Rai & Ravi. 2011)**.

5. Composition of Empowerment Index for women Domestic Workers

The study used four dimensions to measure the women empowerment at the individual/household level used by the Sanghita and Goswami in 2020."there are four factors they are (i) social decision, (ii) household decision, (iii) financial decision and (iv) workplace situation in the respondent's life. The dimensions covered a range of indicators. The weights attached for each indicator is assumed to be equal and summed up to unity. The indicators are supposed to be binary, where '1' stands for empowerment and '0' for no empowerment. The individual empowerment score for each indicator, therefore, lies between '0' and '1'. The cumulative empowerment index (CEI) is composite developed by adding the scores of 12 empowerment indicators" **(Sanghita & Goswami. 2020)**.

Table 1. Cumulative Empowerment Index

Sl.No	Categories	Indicator	Weight
Social Dimensions			
1	Decision on Visiting friends/relatives	$I_{1,1}$	W_1

2	Membership and participation in local bodies/groups	$I_{1,2}$	W_2
Household Decision-making			
3	Hiring service to do household works	$I_{2,1}$	W_3
4	Decision on Family expenditure	$I_{2,2}$	W_4
5	Decision on Sending children to school	$I_{2,3}$	W_5
Financial Decision			
6	Maintaining and usage of bank account	$I_{3,1}$	W_6
7	Husband seeking money	$I_{3,2}$	W_7
8	Ownership of house	$I_{3,3}$	W_8
9	Ownership of durable assets	$I_{3,4}$	W_9
10	Primary insurance holder	$I_{3,5}$	W_{10}
Workplace Situation			
11	Restrict in the workplace	$I_{4,1}$	W_{11}
12	Physical assault in the workplace	$I_{4,2}$	W_{12}

Source: used the format of (Sanghita & Goswami, 2020)

5.1 Cumulative Empowerment Index:

$I_{1,1}$ indicates that if she enjoys the freedom to visit friends and relatives without permission

$I_{1,2}$ shows that if she is a member of some local body/group

$I_{2,1}$ point out that if she hires service of someone to do household chores

$I_{2,2}$ specifies that if she is a making decision on decision on Family expenditure

$I_{2,3}$ indicate that if she sends her children to school

$I_{3,1}$ shows that if she operates her bank account without any problem

$I_{3,2}$ point out that if husband seek the money that she earned as a domestic worker

$I_{3,3}$ shows that if she owns a house to understand her worth fullness in the family

$I_{3,4}$ indicate that if she has owners of durable assets her home

$I_{3,4}$ point out that if she is a primary insurance account holder

$I_{4,1}$ specifies that if she has no restriction in the workplace

$I_{4,2}$ point out that if she is not physically assaulted in workplace.

The 12 indicators used to standardized and evaluate the level of empowerment among the respondents in the study area. Each indicator analysed with values lies in between 0 to 12, where 0 shows that there is no empowerment and on the other hand 12 showed a high level empowerment taken place. Based on the indicators in the CEI for each women domestic worker in Kottayam district Kerala were analysed. The ranges were classified into four categories they are:

- ➢ 0–3 shows a low empowerment level of empowerment.
- ➢ 4–6 shows a moderate level of empowerment.
- ➢ 7–9 shows a average level of empowerment.
- ➢ 10-12 shows a high level of empowerment.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) on Women empowerment

In this session analysed the empowerment among the domestic workers in the study area. Under the four categories there were 12 variables were analysed. They were evaluated in the table 2.

Table 2. Cumulative Empowerment Index of Women domestic workers

Sl.No	Categories	Responses in percentages	
		Yes	No
Social Dimensions			
1	Decision on Visiting friends/relatives	55	45
2	Membership and participation in local bodies/groups	44	56
Household Decision-making			
3	Hiring service to do household works	15	85
4	Decision on Family expenditure	45	55
5	Decision on Sending children to school	100	0
Financial Decision			
6	Maintaining and usage of bank account	89	11
7	Husband seeking money	85	15
8	Ownership of house	10	90
9	Ownership of durable assets	25	75
10	Primary insurance holder	15	85
Workplace Situation			
11	Restrict in the workplace	50	50
12	Physical assault in the workplace	5	95

Source: Primary Data

6.1.1. Social Dimensions

There were two factors were evaluated in social dimension. Visiting friends or relatives home reveals that, (55%) the respondents were need not seek to get permission from the spouse to visit friends or relatives home. A significant part (44%) of the respondents was part of member in local bodies and groups such as Kudumbhashree units. These indicators shows that compared with the past there was an improvement in the social dimension.

6.1.2 Household Decision-making

Women domestic workers play a significant role in the decision making factors like decision on sending the children to school. On the other hand other decision such as Family expenditure and Hiring service to do household works was taken by other family members in the family not controlled by respondents.

6.1.3 Financial Decision

In this part there was no much influence by the domestic worker except operating the bank account. Other variables have a small influence on impact of financial decision making.

6.1.4 Workplace Situation

Due to the unavailability of workers, the employers not putting much restriction in the workplace and also it were visible that Physical assault in the workplace also reduced.

6.2 Measurement of Empowerment among the domestic workers with CEI

The empowerment of women domestic workers were sum upped and shown in the table 3. Based in the four categories with 12 sub-variables results were concluded with four levels they are high, average, moderate and low empowerment among the women domestic workers in the study area.

Table 3. Measurement of Empowerment among the domestic workers with CEI

Categories	Number of responses	Percentage
High empowerment (9–12)	12	06
Average empowerment (6–9)	74	37
Moderate empowerment (3–6)	70	35
Low empowerment (0–3)	44	22
Total	200	100

Source: Primary Data

The study reveals that 37 per cent of the respondents have average empowerment, 35 per cent of the respondents have moderately empowered, 22 per cent of the respondents have Low empowerment and only six per cent are High empowerment. It is important to note that 72 per cent of the women domestic workers are averaged to moderate empowered with the help of their job. There job help to improvement in the family financial stability, children education, helping hand in any situations of family circumstances.

6.3 Results of Linear Regression Analysis

In the multiple regression analysis conducted to analyse effects of four independent variables on level of empowerment among the women domestic workers in Kottayam District, Kerala. The independent variables are:

(1) Social Dimensions (SD),

(2) Household Decision-making (HD),

(3) Financial Decision Making (FD) and

(4) Workplace Situation (WS).

The results were shown in the table 4.

6.3.1 MODEL for Explanatory variables for multiple regression as follows:

Model $= b_0 + b_1\,SD + b_2\,HD + b_3\,FD + b_4\,WS + U$

Table 4. Factors on empowerment of domestic workers

Independent Variables	Dependent variable: Cumulative Empowerment index	
	Estimated Coefficient	
	B	**sig**
Constant	-1.000	0.000
Social Dimensions	0.947	0.000
Household Decision-making	0.200	0.005
Financial Decision Making	0.053	0.264
Workplace Situation	0.800	0.000

Adjusted R^2	**.865**
R^2	**.860**
F-Statistics	**152.672**
N	**200**

Source: Primary Data

Notes: $p* < 5\%$. Figures in parenthesis denote *t*-statistic.

Social Dimensions is positively impacted in the Cumulative Empowerment Index. One per cent of age increase will tend to 0.947 per cent increment in the level of empowerment among the women domestic worker. So Social Dimensions is considered as positively influencing factor. Factors like Household decision making and financial decision making capability of the women domestic are found to have significant impact on level of empowerment among the women domestic worker. Results show that one per cent in increment in Household decision making capability and financial workplace situation of the women domestic tend to increase empowerment by more than 0.2 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively. On the other hand financial decision-making variable is not statistically significant indicator to influence the level of empowerment among the women domestic worker in the study area. The regression analysis conclude that, these four variables has 86.50 per cent influence on empowerment of women domestic workers in Kottayam District, Kerala.

7. Conclusion

The analysis unveiled the reality of the level of empowerment among 200 women domestic worker in Kottayam district, Kerala. The result shows that women domestic workers were average to moderately empower in the study area. Even after earning contributing to their family income, still they were not fully participating in the family financial decision making phases. They deserves a better value in the all the phases of the society. Most of them were invisible and vulnerable in nature. Formulation and usage of laws and social security measures can help to improve the importance of working women in the society. The government and NGO's should take appropriate initiatives to further improvement in the level of empowerment among the women domestic workers.

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