



DIGITAL THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Present paper aims to highlight the psychological aspects of women empowerment. Mental well-being and women empowerment are the two essential components in the lives of the women. Women empowerment is all about having a indistinguishable rights that are embodied in her through the Constitution of the country and also through the ongoing projects and steps taken by the respective Government organs for the implementation of various development programs for empowering of the women's in several ways. It always includes accepting women's viewpoint, making continuous endeavor to achieve them and also raising the status of women through literacy, awareness and education. In the present paper, attempt is made to elucidate on the psychological well-being, self-esteem, role clarity, gender equality and also happiness which plays an important role in the psychological empowerment of women. The paper also concludes with some suggestions so that awareness be created and proper attention be paid to the psychological aspect in empowering the women.

Keywords: - Mental well-being, psychological empowerment, Constitution, literacy, development programs, self-esteem, gender equality.

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INTRODUCTION:

“When Women take care of their health, they become their best friend”-Maya Angelou (Poet).

Women empowerment is the most talked about subject in the recent years, but we fail to note that this empowerment mostly revolves around the fields of economy, society, politics, education etc., we tend to forget that the empowerment of women is also necessary and of utmost importance psychologically (Zens,2008). Empowerment can be termed as people having power and control over their own lives. Empowerment is when people are treated equally and are respected and feel more confident amongst themselves. Empowerment helps in continuous growth in life, aligning the vision on the goals and

achieving them gracefully. It is a pure validation in which one recognizes and celebrate their own or someone else's potential. (Kabeer,2001). Psychological empowerment of women is the manifestation of the internal motivation with respect to various factors which are faced by women in their day to day lives. It tends to emphasize on the importance of psychological measures that can enhance the inner strength of women such that her mental setup is such that even though she is in a patriarchal environment she does not feel that she is lagging behind in any domain of her life. A psychologically distressed women would never be able to stand firm against the outlash of difficulties at home or at work place because of low self-esteem



and high stress levels. Let's embark the journey with defining empowerment and then proceeds to its psychological aspects.

EMPOWERMENT:

Empowerment is a term that people are aware about but not a skill that many people have been able to master. The dictionary meaning of empowerment is 'to enable' (oxford dictionary ,265). Empowerment involves the right of person to decision making and power of autonomy. When an individual is able to decide for their own life as per the situation then it is said that the person has been empowered. It is very subjective in nature. It literally means making someone more powerful, to help someone to be more assertive or self-confident, to enable someone to confront injustice and oppression and to support someone to fight for their own rights. Empowerment means a cognitive understanding of an individuals control or influence on the social factors, political powers and also legal rights. (Sahay,1998). When a person is empowered with certain responsibilities and task, they need full knowledge/access about the subject in hand. They must be fully prepared about the possible outcomes and ready to face any consequences. Empowerment means responding in a timely and effective manner. Communication is the key factor for maintaining the empowered person more useful for any organization. Empowerment always means both diversity and commonality and focusses more on gaining power and control over decisions and resources that determines the quality of life and decisions, while some other also considers structural inequalities that affect entire social groups rather than focus only on individual characteristics.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT:

Psychological empowerment is defined as "intrinsic

task motivation reflecting a sense of self-control in relation to one's work and an active involvement with one's work role" (in "Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological and Team Empowerment in Organizations. Competence refers to self-efficacy specific to one's work, a belief in one's capability to perform work activities with skill. Self-determination is a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's actions. Self-determination reflects autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behaviour and processes. Finally, the impact is the degree to which one can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work. Besides these, in the psychological perspective, a sense of perceived control over one's environment and others is considered one of the primary psychological states fundamental to the experience of empowerment (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990).

Psychological empowerment seems to reflect what Rowlands (1997) called personal empowerment. Rowlands (1997) defined personal empowerment as something internal that one can develop and strengthen and is not dependent on others. Rowlands (1997) identified self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of agency, sense of 'self' in a wider context and 'dignity' as the core set of elements that formed the basis of transformation processes that led to empowerment. An essential element of the personal 'core' is the ability of an individual to move out of one's culture or context specific gender roles. Rowlands (1997) opined that there was a need to distinguish between the core of the empowerment process and the circumstances that appear to encourage or inhibit the process. The core of empowerment process is the transformation of the



individual or the group that is the 'key' that will undo the 'locks' to the door of empowerment. These are the circumstances that appear to encourage or inhibit the process. She also argues that empowerment can be experienced and exercised in three different dimensions: primarily at the personal level; secondly in close relationships; and finally within a group. Psychological empowerment as an individual's ability to make decisions and have control over his or her personal life and characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence and goal internalization. It combines personal efficacy and competence, a sense of mastery and control, and a process of participation to influence decisions and institutions.

It is termed as a multi- faceted construct reflecting the different dimensions of being psychologically enabled, and was conceived as a positive integrate of perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life, and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment, which was rooted firmly in a social action framework that includes community change, capacity building, and collectively. Self-esteem is very important and an influential aspect of the self-concept, and essentially an evaluative dimension of the self-concept. Most people think well of themselves and desire to increase their esteem and desire to avoid loss of esteem. High self-esteem denotes thinking well of oneself which includes healthy self-confidence and proper appreciation of one's genuine accomplishment and abilities. Low self-esteem means that the individual is having a negative and unflattering view of the self. People with high self-esteem have clear, consistent and definite idea about themselves. Low self-esteem can be marked by self-

concept confusion (Chamberlin, 1997). The construct of self-efficacy is distinct from self-esteem in its conceptualization. Theorists conceptualize self-esteem as a person's beliefs about self-worth and self-acceptance; self-efficacy is conceptualized as a person's beliefs about their ability to perform successfully (Harter, 1999).

Psychological empowerment is highly related with happiness of the individual. Happiness is a scientifically unwieldy term and that its study involves dissolving the term into at least three distinct and better-defined routes to "happiness": the pleasant life, the engaged life and the meaningful life (Seligman, 2002). Engaging one in the organization for empowerment can lead to happiness once they are able to engage themselves, find pleasure in the activities engaged and thereby experience meaning in life. Huppert (2009) on the basis of review of different studies concluded that psychological well-being is associated with exiled and creative thinking, pro-social behaviour, and good physical health. An individual's level of mental capital and psychological well-being is powerfully influenced by her/his early environment. Though external circumstances affect well-being, but actions and attitudes may have a greater influence. Interventions which encourage positive actions and attitudes have an important role to play in enhancing the well-being. For the individuals, empowerment is concerned with the transformation of individuals' lives in achieving goals and reaching targets, which they had thought impossible (i. e. to gain authority, skills, status, self-belief and image, progressing to greater things and increasing rewards).

This highlights the importance of psychological empowerment in the empowerment process. A



person cannot be empowered unless the belief that one can change the situation of one's own and will be willing to engage in activities that are geared towards changing ones situation. It is clear that lack of psychological empowerment will render all other forms of empowerment ineffective. Psychologically empowered women will have the necessary motivation to pursue things on their own and this may be critical in their integral development.

WOMENS EMPOWERMENT:

Women empowerment means making women more powerful to make them capable to take decision for themselves. Women have suffered a lot in their lives .In earlier days they were treated as materials ,in this patriarchal society. According to Sarah Mosedale (2005), there are four basic assumptions which seem to be generally accepted in the literature on women's empowerment. In order to be empowered, an individual must have been disempowered. In this respect, women empowerment is important because women have been disempowered especially when compared to men. Secondly, empowerment cannot be provided by a third party, but they may be able to create conditions favourable to empowerment. Thirdly, the definitions of empowerment usually include a sense of people making decision on matters which are important in their lives. Fourthly, empowerment is an ongoing process (Mosedale, 2005). Women empowerment can be defined as all those processes where women take control and ownership of their lives. Control and ownership require an array of opportunities to choose among and this understanding of empowerment overlaps with the concept of human development. The architects of the Indian constitution were conscious of the problem of women empowerment and hence

they ensured the Principle of Gender Equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental duties and Directive Principles.

Almost every country, no matter how progressive has a history of ill-treating women. In other words, women from all over the world have been rebellious to reach the status they have today. While the western countries are still making progress, third world countries like India still lack behind in Women Empowerment. India is amongst the countries which are not safe for women. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, women in India are in danger of honour killings. Their family thinks its right to take their lives if they bring shame to the reputation of their legacy. In India empowerment is more needed than anything else.

UNICEF's (1993) woman empowerment framework argued that women's development can be viewed in terms of equality at five levels: welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control, of which empowerment an essential element. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) includes acquiring understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations can be changed, developing a sense of self- worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's own life, gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power, developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change to create a more just, social and economic order, nationally and internationally as dimensions of empowerment (Derbyshire, 2002). The issue of women empowerment has been mainly approached from the economic and political angles and seems to neglect an influential factor necessary for successful empowerment, namely, psychological



empowerment. According to Nelly Stromquist (1988), women's empowerment is a socio-political concept that involves cognitive, psychological, economic and political dimensions. The cognitive components involve women's understanding of the causes of their subordination and magnetizations and appreciating the need to make choices that may go against cultural or social expectations. The psychological component includes women believing that they can act at personal and social levels to improve their condition. The political component includes the ability to imagine one's situation and mobilize for social change. The justification for empowerment often arises when an individual or group of individuals are incapable of or prevented from actualizing their potentials due to barriers created by individuals or other people within the environment. The individual's assessment of the situation and impetus to change the situation, therefore, is fundamental in empowerment process. Oladipo (2009) argued that when people are psychologically empowered there will be a change in attitude, cognition and behaviour, which most assuredly will lead to a positive change in value orientation, increased patriotic actions, ability to postpone gratification of one's desires, improved self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-consciousness as well as better psychological well-being which will culminate in a peaceful and developing society.

SELF HELP IN PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:

Even though women have the potential to contribute to household finances, they often do not have the agency to participate in decisions related to avenues of income generation, thus many a time pushing their families to the brink of poverty. In a country that is

at the cusp of a rapid transformation in terms of evolving employment opportunities, urbanization and innovation, female participation in the economy remains crucial to where India stands globally. Even though working women account for approximately 432 million, about 343 million are not in paid formal job roles or work. An estimated 324 millions of them are not in the labour force; and another 19 million are part of the labour force but not employed. Hence, the nature of employment among women is either not accounted for in the formal economy, or women end up not having access to formal jobs due to existent socio-cultural complexities. As a society with deep-rooted patriarchy, even if women want to attain employment, the dominant tradition of female domestic responsibility coupled with social stigma limits their economic advancement and access to opportunities in comparison with their male equivalents. To overcome social stigmas around employment and give women the agency to break out of the shackles of subordination, entrepreneurship is an innovative and simple tool. To boost the participation of women in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, the government has introduced a plethora of schemes, such as the Mudra Yojana, Udyogini Scheme, Annapurna Scheme and Stand Up India.

However, despite efforts to create a better environment for women entrepreneurs in India, the arranging of finances remains the single biggest challenge. While the family may have expendable income, its dominant members often refrain from contributing to a woman's dream of financial independence. Moreover, even if women manage to apply for loans, the collateral against which these are offered, such as property, is often held in their



spouse's name, which further acts as a deterrent to start an enterprise. Coupled with social stigmas, no financial access results in unfulfilled ambitions of women, while limiting their opportunities to become self-reliant by gaining agency or mobility in the social sphere.

In such a scenario, self-help groups (SHG) can act as a bridge between women entrepreneurs who have the will to begin an enterprise but do not have the resources to fulfil their dream, and the finances needed for it. An SHG comprises a small group of women who come together to make regular monetary contributions. Emerging as important micro-finance systems, SHGs work as platforms that promote solidarity among women, bringing them together on issues of health, nutrition, gender parity and gender justice. SHGs have already made a significant contribution in developing entrepreneurship aptitudes among rural women by enhancing their skills and giving them a chance to engage in various entrepreneurial activities. SHGs provide women entrepreneurs with micro-loans to sustain their businesses, while also creating an environment for them to develop greater agency and decision-making skills.

In Maharashtra, specifically, the concept of SHGs goes way back to 1947, when a few women of Amravati district established an SHG with just 25 paise. Today, apart from being a conduit for credit in the state, SHGs also deliver services ranging from entrepreneurial training, livelihood promotion and community development for women entrepreneurs. SHGs such as Mahila Arthik Vikas MahilaMandal, UMED Abhiyan under Maharashtra's department of rural development's State Rural Livelihood Mission, and government schemes such as Tejaswani, etc,

have proven beneficial in the development of women entrepreneurship for the cause of women's empowerment. A study conducted by Ashwini Deshpande and Shantanu Khanna in 2020 reported that SHGs in Maharashtra have had a strong impact on a range of indicators related to women's empowerment in the state, including political participation, knowledge of administration, financial literacy, mobility and decision-making. In Maharashtra alone, 527,000 SHGs have had a role to play in accounting for over 50% of all women-led small-scale industrial units in India, which shows that SHGs can lead to the holistic development of women entrepreneurship.

Self-help groups are exceedingly relevant today because their provision of micro-loans helps overcome regional imbalances as well as information asymmetries, thus offering a level playing field in terms of access to resources for women. The multi-faceted IFMR study conducted by the ministry of rural development evaluated the impact that SHGs have had on livelihoods, and thereby on consumption, expenditure and savings patterns in households whose women are part of it. The study found that women aided by SHGs were 10% more likely to save on a regular basis, resulting in economic empowerment, while working towards a better future for the next generation.

CONCLUSION:

Empowerment has been designed as a transformative process that capacitate the individual to obtain the endowments and entitlements offered as citizens of a country. This is realized through the control of an individual over the personal and societal life an individual achieved in the living situations. Psychological empowerment, one of the



crucial dimensions of empowerment consists of various dimensions, especially self-esteem, self-confidence, psychological well-being and happiness, plays a pivotal role in the woman empowerment process. Though micro-credit and thrift centred activities were able to generate women empowerment (Kabeer, 2001) psychological empowerment has not been a point of discussion in understanding empowerment as a total concept.

Psychological empowerment is possible when targeted interventions facilitated by activities initiated by the leadership in a personalised manner. For psychological empowerment as a construct integrates perceptions of personal control, a proactive approach to life and a critical understanding of the socio-political environment.

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