

## Empowerment of Rural Women: An Analysis of Constraints

Manmeet Kaur<sup>1</sup>, B.Mishra<sup>2</sup>, Prakash Singh<sup>3</sup>, Archana Singh<sup>4</sup> and Surya Rathore<sup>5</sup>

1. Ph. D Scholar, 5 Asso. Prof. (Agril. Communication), G.B.P.U.A & T, Pantnagar, 2. Prof. & Head,  
3. Asso. Prof. (Ext. Edu.), 4. Trg. Asso. ( KVK Masodha) NDUAT, Faizabad

### ABSTRACT

*Empowerment is an active process, which enables women to realize their identity and power in all aspects of life. It enables women to have more access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their times, free them from the clutches of irrelevant customs built and practices. This study was conducted in one of the development blocks of Faizabad district i.e. Masodha block on 100 women respondents (the wives of household heads) selected from 4 villages of Masodha block on the basis of proportionate random sampling technique. A semi-structured schedule was used to collect the data from rural women. Various constraints, which were observed in empowerment of rural women, were social constraints, political constraints, economic constraints and psychological constraints. The main reason for poor empowerment of rural women was noted as 'lack of knowledge about new technology'.*

**Key words:** Constraint; Analysis; Empowerment

**E**mpowerment is a term widely used in the context of women who are equal partners in development of the society and the nation. Women as a significant human resource can play their role effectively if they are provided equal opportunities and status as those of the men. They need to be enabled to use improved technology in their daily activities for which relevant education and training are to be imparted to them in the same measures, as they are available to men. However, equal opportunities and status are only two dimensions of empowerment which is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in one's life through which an individual increases one's ability to shape up her life and environment. Women are the vital human infrastructure and their empowerment economic, educational, social and political would hasten the pace of social development. Investing in women's "capabilities" and empowering them to achieve their "choices" and "opportunities" is the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development. (Pattanaik, 2000) Empowerment goes beyond socio-economic or political attributes and essentially refers to a process of becoming psychologically empowered. Poverty inflicts deep-rooted wounds on the psyche of individuals. If they cease to be oppressed, their first task would be to psychologically empower themselves. In this context, empowerment would mean increasing one's capacity to define, analyse and act upon one's own problem. (Sengupta, 1998) The major constraints for participation of women in agriculture are (i) Discrimination in wages, low wages for women, (ii) Gender based technology, training and extension services, (iii) women

have limited access to modern technical viz., credit, training and to other facilities, (iv) Due to women, illiteracy their exposure to outside world is less and productivity is less (v) Due to migration of men, women have to bear the entire family responsibility and hence they prefer to work at their house, (vi) Job security and availability is less due to seasonal nature of agricultural production. (Rath, M.C., 2007). The present study on constraints in empowerment of rural women was undertaken keeping in view the following objectives:

1. To study the socio economic profile of rural women.
2. To find out the constraints faced by rural women
3. To identify the correlation coefficient (r) between different variables and overall constraints about empowerment of rural women

### METHODOLOGY

Masodha block of district Faizabad, U. P. was selected for the present study. In the Masodha block four villages were selected randomly. Proportionate random sampling technique was used for selection of respondents and total samples selected for the study were 100 (the wives of household heads). The semi-structured schedule was used to collect the data from rural women. Data was analysed in terms of percentage, mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of contingency.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Brief socio-personal profile of rural women:* The results of the study depicted that the maximum number of the respondents (64%) were found in age group of 38-57

years belonging to backward caste (59%). Joint families (63%) were observed maximum with agriculture as their main occupation (82%). Mixed type of houses were 59 per cent and 71 per cent earned the annual income of up to Rs. 30,000. The maximum percentage of respondents (67%) was observed who have agricultural experience of medium category 11 to 39 years. The Gram Pradhan (0.83) and co-operative society (0.63) were among the formal sources of information whereas family members (6.93) and neighbours (6.84) were among informal sources of information and as regards mass media sources, radio (5.95) and television (0.52) were main sources of information. The economic motivation (45%), risk orientation (54%), value orientation (66%) and scientific orientation (51%) were observed to be of medium level.

Table 1. Degree of seriousness of social constraints N=100

S. No.	Social Constraints	Mean score values	Rank
1.	Lack of gender based academic institutions causes women illiteracy	4.99	I
2.	Dependable natures of women suppress them in their empowerment	4.79	II
3.	The right of free avenues of expression to women lacks	4.63	IV
4.	Social taboos, superstitions, unhealthy tradition and customs hinder in women empowerment.	4.64	III
5.	The family members unanimously oppose the gender to participate in social activities	4.61	V

*Constraints in empowerment of rural women:* Table 1 indicate that the social constraints viz., 'lack of gender based academic institutions causes women illiteracy' was ranked first (4.99) followed by 'dependable nature of women suppress them in their empowerment' which was ranked II (4.79), 'social taboos, superstitions, unhealthy tradition and customs hinder in women empowerment' was ranked III (4.64), 'the right of free avenues of expression to women lacks' was ranked IV (4.63) and 'the family members unanimously oppose the gender to participate in social activities' was ranked V (4.62), the mean score value of each constraint indicate the degree of seriousness which caused poor empowerment of rural women.

The Table 2. envisages that the rank order of economic constraints viz, 'the banks accounts of the family is often operated by males only' was ranked first (4.73) followed by 'ownership of family income and finance are generally in male hands' was ranked II (4.68), 'Hindrances in implementation of women rights for sharing in family property' was ranked III (4.67), 'lack of agro- based and rural industries for the income generation and employment to rural women' was ranked

IV (4.65) and 'the women of the family in service are not free to spend their income independently' was ranked V (4.56). The mean score value of each constraint indicate the degree of seriousness that caused poor empowerment of the rural women.

Table 2. Degree of seriousness of economic constraints N=100

S. No.	Economic Constraints	Mean score values	Rank
1.	Lack of Agro-based and rural industries for the income generation and employment to rural women	4.65	IV
2.	Hindrances in implementation of women rights for sharing in family property	4.67	III
3.	Ownership of family income and finance are generally in male hands	4.68	II
4.	Males often operate the bank accounts of the family only	4.73	I
5.	The women of the family in service are not free to spend their income independently	4.56	V

Table 3. Degree of seriousness of political constraints N=100

S. No.	Political Constraints	Mean score values	Rank
1.	Harassment and exploitation of women leaders by officials, leaders, social workers and others. Who dishearten them in their empowerment	4.79	II
2.	Women generally by nature avoid to lead the group organization and the society	4.60	IV
3.	The political provisions for gender leadership are either not implemented or encroached by men, if implement	4.65	III
4.	The ill motive people misguide the women leaders in their vested interest and thus weaken them	4.89	I
5.	The male dominated society does not digest the women coming forward to lead	4.62	IV

Table 3 envisages the rank order of political constraints viz. 'The ill motive people misguide the women leaders in their vested interest and thus weaken them' was ranked first, (4.89) followed by 'harassment and exploitation of women leaders by officials, leaders, social workers and others who dishearten them in their empowerment' was ranked II (4.79), 'the political provisions for gender leadership are either not implemented or encroached by men, if implemented' was ranked III (4.65), 'the man dominating society does not digest the women coming forward to lead' was ranked IV (4.62) and 'women generally by nature avoid to lead the group organization and the society' was ranked V (4.60). The mean score value of each constraint indicates the degree of seriousness that caused poor empowerment of rural women.

Table 4. Degree of seriousness of psychological constraints N=100

S. No.	Psychological Constraints	Mean score values	Rank
1.	Lack of knowledge about the women rights for their empowerment	4.51	VIII
2.	Motives from the inner and outside for their empowerment mostly lacks	4.66	II
3.	Shyness in women behaviour inhibit their exposure for empowerment	4.56	IV
4.	Fear regarding social security, domestic violence and abusive behaviour etc. is the barrier in women empowerment,	4.61	III
5.	Reward, appreciation and recognition of the contributions of women are generally overlooked which discourage them in their empowerment.	4.54	V
6.	Women are often ignored in taking the decisions for the betterment of society and family itself	4.70	I
7.	The women are emotionally exploited that hinder in the process of their empowerment	4.53	VI
8.	Unfavourable attitude of the patriarchal society towards the empowerment of women	4.52	VII

Table 4 depicts the rank order of psychological constraints viz., 'women are often ignored in taking the decisions for the betterment of society and family itself' was ranked first (4.70) followed by 'motives from the inner and outside for their empowerment mostly lacks' was ranked II (4.66), 'fear regarding social security, domestic violence and abusive behaviour etc. is the barrier in women empowerment' was ranked III (4.61), and so on for each constraints in descending order. The mean score value for each constraint indicate the degree of seriousness which caused poor empowerment of rural women.

*Correlation of background variables with constraints:* On perusal of the Table 5, it could be noticed that out of 47 variables studied, seven variables namely extent of contact with mass media, risk orientation, scientific orientation, social constraints, economic constraints, political constraints and psychological constraints had highly significant and positive correlation with overall constraints. The variable like family type, family size, income use pattern on children needs, income use pattern on husband need, income use pattern on household expenses, overall income use pattern, employment opportunities and family welfare facilities was found negatively and moderately significant correlated with overall constraints. The variable having non-significant positive relationship were age, caste, occupation, Housing pattern, annual family income, farm implements, household materials, communication

Table 5. Correlation coefficient (r) between different variables and overall constraints in empowerment of rural women

S. No	Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)
1.	Age	0.0194
2.	Caste	0.0552
3.	Family type	-0.1920
4.	Family size	-0.0130
5.	Occupation	0.1107
6.	Housing pattern	0.1802
7.	Annual Family Income	0.0424
8.	Farm Implements	0.0356
9.	Household materials	0.1312
10.	Transportation materials	0.0275
11.	Communication Media Possession	0.1127
12.	Overall material possession	0.0986
13.	Agricultural experience	0.1127
14.	Extent of contact with formal sources	0.190
15.	Extent of contact with informal sources	0.024
16.	Extent of contact with mass media	0.2748**
17.	Overall extent of contact with information sources	0.1717
18.	Economic Motivation	0.046
19.	Risk orientation	0.4054**
20.	Value orientation	0.134
21.	Scientific orientation	0.539**
22.	Education of the respondents	0.1285
23.	Family education	0.0587
24.	Income of the respondents	0.0189
25.	Income use pattern on own needs	0.0178
26.	Income use pattern on children needs	-0.065
27.	Income use pattern on husband need	-0.136
28.	Income use pattern on household expenses	-0.055
29.	Overall income use pattern	-0.058
30.	Holding	0.09
31.	Social participation	0.06
32.	Leadership	0.05
33.	Training	0.101
34.	Decision making right on family affairs	0.150
35.	Decision making right on agricultural matters	0.190
36.	Decision making right on occupational matters	0.009
37.	Overall decision making right	0.154
38.	Free avenues of expression	0.160
39.	Employment opportunities	-0.06
40.	Self-employment	0.014
41.	Health facilities	0.137
42.	Share in family property	0.06
43.	Family welfare	-0.02
44.	Social constraints	0.702**
45.	Economic constraints	0.750**
46.	Political constraints	0.820**
47.	Psychological constraints	0.897**

\* Significant at 0.05 probability level = 0.195

\*\* Significant at 0.01 probability level = 0.254

media possession, overall materiel possession, agricultural experience, extent of contact with informal sources, overall extent of contact with information sources, economic motivation, value orientation, education of the respondents, family education, income, income use pattern on own

needs, holding, social participation, leadership training, decision making right on family affairs, decision making right on occupational matters, overall decision making right, free avenues of expression, self-employment, health facilities and share in family property.

This led to the conclusion that out of 47 variables, if the values of seven variables namely extent of contact with mass media, risk orientation, economic constraints, political constraints and psychological constraints (which were highly significant and positive in nature) are increased, the seriousness of constraints will also be increased.

## CONCLUSION

The women under study reported a number of constraints which are given in the preceding paragraphs which could be encountered bravely by the women entrepreneurs only if certain measures were taken care of by the family, society, policy makers, legal institutions etc. They first of all wanted that support of family

members to women should be there in family life such as taking care of children, help in household work and they also wanted opportunities for more and more exposure to every sphere of life with more free avenues of expression. The women under study wanted that education to the girls should be provided free of cost and more and more educational institutions should be established in near by areas. Functional literacy to rural women should be provided. Strict Government and social compulsion should be there for educating the girls. Training to rural women about income generating enterprises so as to engage them in self-employment. Reservation of women or girls is necessary in every area of development. Provisions should be made for maintaining equal status of women with that of men in the society. There should be implementation of various programmes for empowering the women, both economically as well as socially. Strict law should be exercised against the injustice of women so that the women can feel safe, secured and self-dependent.

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