

**FACTORS AFFECTING EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN GARHWAL  
HIMALAYA**

**(A CASE STUDY OF PAURI GARHWAL)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The term empower according to lexicon means to make or cause power, to give power or authority to someone, to provide ability or to enable. Hence meaning refer to power as given granted or permitted. The main point behind empowerment is that, it seeks to change society through a rearrangement of power. Empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be translated; nor alms to be given away. Power has to be acquired and once acquired; it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved. Denmark and Norway are considered the happiest nation of the world is because of the equal status enjoyed by the women and also by improved access and control of resources by women.*

*The main objective of research study is to know the status of women's empowerment and their socio-economic status in Pauri Garhwal district in the background of various socio-economic and cultural variables. Women empowerment mostly depends upon their education and decision making. Factors affecting the empowerment of women are also shown in this paper. It is observed that women empowerment depends on their present age. Education of women is an important factor which affects the empowerment of women in the society.*

*Key words: Rearrangement, socio-economic status, women welfare, gender justice, self-reliance*

**Introduction:**

*“Woman is the builder and moulder of nation's destiny. Though delicate and soft as lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than of man... she is supreme inspiration of man's onward march”*

*- Rabindranath Tagore.*

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable woman or a group of women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life (Surekharao and Rajamanamma, 1999). It consists of greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making to enable them, to have greater ability to plan their lives, or to have greater control over the circumstances that influence their lives and free from shocks imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Generally development with justice is expected to generate the forces that lead to empowerment of various sections of population in a country and to raise their status especially in case of women.

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In the present century, the terms women empowerment, women welfare, gender justice have come to light in the social, economic and political development perspective of both developed and developing nations. Traditionally, women in almost every society have remained a second grade citizen. Hence, neither they are allowed to get themselves educated nor they are given legal rights in the property, government and in administration.

“Empowerment comes from Women’s groups who seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. They have right to determine their own choices in life. They also seek to gain control and access to resources”. Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one’s goals (Indiresan, 1999).

Women’s empowerment denotes the process of gaining power or developing one’s power or even to take or seize power. The concept of empowerment was introduced by women from south in International women’s conference in Nairobi 1985, as a counter project to the integration project for the advancement of women. The empowerment concept makes clear the political and economic gap between men and women. It aims at redistribution of social power and control over resources in favour of women based on development strategy. The World Bank suggested that empowerment of women is the key agent of sustainable development.

### **Indicators of Women Empowerment**

1. Increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence;
2. Increase in articulation, knowledge and awareness on health, nutrition reproductive rights, law and literacy;
3. Change in roles and responsibility in family & community;
4. Visible increase on decrease in violence on women and girls;
5. Responses to, changes in social customs like child marriage, dowry, discrimination against widows;
6. Visible changes in women's participation level attending meeting, participating and demanding participation;
7. Increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the collective;
8. Increase access to and ability to gather information;
9. Formation of women collectives;

10. Positive changes in social attitudes;

11. Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household;

12. Women' decision-making over her work and income.

Women's empowerment perspective is a political project. The key factor is women's say in decision making process and participation in domestic as well as community power structure. Women empowerment is both the objective and the process of obtaining the objective. The Hard ward framework for women's empowerment entails five levels of gender equality namely:

a) Welfare b) Access c) Concretization d) Participation and e) Control. This framework covers social, economic, psychological and political dimensions. While welfare signifies social dimension, access to resources refers to economic dimension, concretization implies psychological and participation and control political dimension. Access denotes access to resources such as educational of critical awareness about the structural discrimination, exploitation and oppression in which one is placed. In the first instance it involves awareness generation among women about gender gaps in respect to material welfare, access to resources, participation in decision making process and control over resources. The second aspect of concretization involves sensitization that the gender gaps are not God given or natural. They are men made and hence subject to alteration. The third aspect is organizing women to achieve the goal of gender equality. Participation implies women's participation in decision making process within the family, community and society at large including political parties. Control implies power over their lives, labor, income and choices. Empowering women is prerequisite for creating a good nation as their thoughts and value system leads the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation moreover, there is a need to bring about total change.

**Objectives:**

To study the status of empowerment of women in the study area

To study the association between empowerment & various socio-economic characteristics of rural women

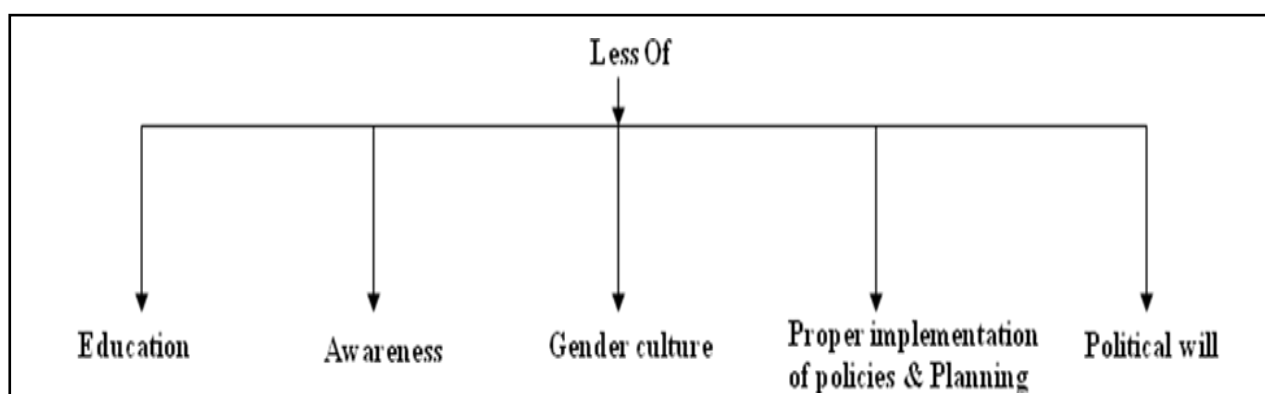
**Methodology:**

The study is based on the sample area by direct personal method through statistical sampling process. The district comprises of 15 blocks. A pre-tested questionnaire was prepared in

English (explain to women in Garhwali or Hindi) to obtain the information about them. Some of the questions were like; age of women, age at marriage, education, interaction with media, autonomy in decision making etc.

Women empowerment is divided using education, occupation and income of the family into three parts viz. low, medium and high. Villages are divided into three strata according to population i.e. Less than 50, 50-500 and above 500. 15 villages, 5 from each stratum selected at random and 10 household from each village are selected. Finally one woman is taken from each household. In this way 150 women are selected for the study.

### Responsible Factors for Less Empowerment



### Empowerment and Present Age

The distribution of women empowerment and their present age is shown in the given table. It is clear from the table that 40%, 44.7% and 15.3% women have Low, Medium and High empowerment respectively. Further 100%, 65.2%, 54.8%, 44%, 46.4%, 20% and 16.7% women of age group (15-19), (20-24), (25-29), (30-34), (35-39), (40-44) and (45-49) respectively have Medium empowerment.

### Distribution of women according to empowerment and age groups

Women empowerment	Age of women														Total
	15-19		20-24		25-29		30-34		35-39		40-44		45-49		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Low	-	-	3	13.	6	19.	1	40.	1	39.	1	80.	1	75.	60
Medium	4	10	1	65.	1	54.	1	44.	1	46.	3	20.	4	16.	67
High	-	-	5	21.	8	25.	4	16.	4	14.	-	-	2	8.3	23
Total	4	10	2	100	3	100	2	100	2	100	1	100	2	100	150

$$\chi^2 = 40.888, p < 0.0001$$

Further Chi-square test statistic ( $\chi^2 = 40.888, p < 0.0001$ ) shows that there is significant association between women empowerment and present age groups. It means women

empowerment also depends on the age of women. Young women have high capacity to fight for their position and empowerment in society.

### Empowerment and Education of Women

Women's education is extremely important, intrinsically as it is their human right and required for the flourishing of many of their capacities.

The table below gives the distribution of women according to empowerment and their education. The table reveals that 35 Illiterate women and 25 women with education level Literate up to 5 belong to Low empowerment while 67 women of education level 5 to 12 belong to Medium empowerment. 22 and 1 women with education level Graduate to Post graduate and Other higher education respectively are in the category of High empowerment. Education level is very important factor for women empowerment. Educated women are more empowered now a day.

**Distribution of women according to empowerment and education**

Women empowerment	Education of women										Total
	Illiterate		Literate up to 5		5 to 12		Graduate to Post		Other higher		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
<b>Low</b>	35	100	25	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
<b>Medium</b>	-	-	-	-	67	100	-	-	-	-	67
<b>High</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	100	1	100	23
<b>Total</b>	35	100	25	100	67	100	22	100	1	100	150

$\chi^2 = 300, p < 0.0001$

The result of chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 300, p < 0.0001$ ) indicate that there is highly significant association between education and empowerment of women. Education gives them better opportunity to live in the society. It improves their empowerment too.

### Empowerment and Caste

Caste also plays an important role in women empowerment. The table shows the distribution of women according to empowerment and caste of household. The table concludes that 55.3%, 42.6% and 2.1% women of Scheduled caste have Low, Medium and High empowerment respectively while 33%, 43.2% and 23.9% women of General caste have Low, Medium and High empowerment respectively. For other caste, these percentages are 33.3%, 60% and 6.7% respectively.

**Distribution of women according to empowerment and caste**

Women empowerment	Caste of household						Total
	General		SC		Others		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Low	29	33.0	26	55.3	5	33.3	60(40.0)
Medium	38	43.2	20	42.6	9	60.0	67(44.7)
High	21	23.9	1	2.1	1	6.7	23(15.3)
Total	88	100	47	100	15	100	150 (100)

$$\chi^2 = 15.152, p = 0.0044$$

The Chi square test statistic ( $\chi^2 = 15.152, p = 0.0044$ ) gives the significant association between empowerment of women and caste of household. It means empowerment of women also depends on caste of household.

**Empowerment and Nature of the Family**

The table shows the distribution of women according to empowerment and nature of the family. The table reveals that 44.7%, 40% and 32.7% women of Nuclear, Extended and Joint families respectively have Low empowerment while 36.8%, 52% and 53.1% women in these family types have Medium empowerment. Only 18.4%, 8% and 14.3% women of above family types have High empowerment.

**Distribution of women according to empowerment and nature of the family**

Women empowerment	Nature of the family						Total
	Nuclear		Extended		Joint		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Low	34	44.7	10	40.0	16	32.7	60 (40.0)
Medium	28	36.8	13	52.0	26	53.1	67 (44.7)
High	14	18.4	2	8.0	7	14.3	23 (15.3)
Total	76	100	25	100	49	100	150 (100)

$$\chi^2 = 4.588, p = 0.3323$$

Further the Chi-square test statistic ( $\chi^2 = 4.588, p = 0.3323$ ) shows that there is insignificant association between women empowerment and nature of the family. It means women empowerment is free from the nature of family. Empowerment doesn't affect at all whether women belong to nuclear, extended or joint families.

**Empowerment and Income of the Family**

Women's empowerment also depends on income of the family. The next table shows the distribution of women according to empowerment and income of the family. The table

concludes that 100%, 48.8%, 34.7% and 32.1% women of monthly family income Below Rs. 1000, Rs. 1000 to 5000, Rs. 5000 to 10000 and Above Rs. 10000 respectively belong to Low empowerment, while 48.8%, 55.1% and 35.8% women of monthly family income between Rs. 1000 to 5000, Rs. 5000 to 10000 and Above Rs. 10000 respectively belong to Medium empowerment. 2.3%, 10.2% and 32.1% women of monthly family income Rs. 1000 to 5000, Rs. 5000 to 10000 and Above Rs. 10000 respectively belong to High empowerment.

**Distribution of women according to empowerment and income of the family**

Women empowerment	Total monthly income of the family								Total
	Below Rs 1000		Rs. 1000 to 5000		Rs. 5000 to 10000		Above Rs. 10000		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
<b>Low</b>	5	100	21	48.8	17	34.7	17	32.1	60 (40.0)
<b>Medium</b>	-	-	21	48.8	27	55.1	19	35.8	67 (44.7)
<b>High</b>	-	-	1	2.3	5	10.2	17	32.1	23 (15.3)
<b>Total</b>	5	100	43	100	49	100	53	100	150 (100)

$\chi^2 = 27.075, p = 0.0001$

Further the result of Chi-Square test statistic ( $\chi^2 = 27.075, p = 0.0001$ ) shows that the women empowerment and total monthly income of the family are significantly associated. It reveals that the women empowerment also depends on monthly income of the family in the study area. Women belonging to high income family have high empowerment also.

**Empowerment and Interaction with Media**

The table shows the relationship between women empowerment and their interaction with media. Media plays an important role to improve the status and empowerment of women. It helps women to know about their rights and values in the society and family.

The table reveals that 19.7%, 59.2% and 21.1% women with Middle interaction with media have Low, Medium and High empowerment respectively while 67.7%, 32.3% women with Low interaction with media have Low and Medium women empowerment respectively. 11.1%, 11.1% and 77.8% women with High interaction with media have Low, Medium and High empowerment respectively.



**Distribution of women according to empowerment and interaction with media**

Women empowerment	Interaction with media						Total
	Low		Middle		High		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
<b>Low</b>	44	67.7	15	19.7	1	11.1	60 (40.0)
<b>Medium</b>	21	32.3	45	59.2	1	11.1	67 (44.7)
<b>High</b>	-	-	16	21.1	7	77.8	23 (15.3)
<b>Total</b>	65	100	76	100	9	100	150 (100)

$$\chi^2 = 64.706, p < 0.0001$$

Further Chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 64.706, p < 0.0001$ ) results that there is significant association between women empowerment and interaction with media. It reveals that interaction with media is one of the factors which affect the women empowerment in study area.

**Empowerment and Autonomy in Decision Making**

The women empowerment also varies with their autonomy in decision making. As their autonomy in decision making increase, their empowerment also increases with it. Now the next table shows the distribution of women according to empowerment and autonomy in decision making. The table results that 23.3%, 52.5% and 36.8% women of Low, Middle and High autonomy in decision making respectively have Medium empowerment. 76.7%, 30.7% and 31.6% women of Low, Middle and High autonomy in decision making respectively have Low empowerment. Only 16.8% and 31.6% women with Middle and High autonomy in decision making respectively have High empowerment.

**Distribution of women according to empowerment and autonomy in decision making**

Women empowerment	Autonomy in decision making						Total
	Low		Middle		High		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
<b>Low</b>	23	76.7	31	30.7	6	31.6	60 (40.0)
<b>Medium</b>	7	23.3	53	52.5	7	36.8	67 (44.7)
<b>High</b>	-	-	17	16.8	6	31.6	23 (15.3)
<b>Total</b>	30	100	101	100	19	100	150 (100)

$$\chi^2 = 25.321, p < 0.0001$$

The Chi-square test statistic ( $\chi^2 = 25.321, p < 0.0001$ ) shows the significant association ship between women empowerment and their autonomy in decision making. It means the women

empowerment depends on women's autonomy in decision making about them and household affairs in the study area.

### **Conclusion**

We study the different indicators of women's empowerment. Women empowerment mostly depends upon their education and decision making. These two factors represent the women empowerment. It is observed that women empowerment depends on their present age. Education of women is an important factor which affects the empowerment of women in the society. Statistically significant association is found between women empowerment and caste of the household while it doesn't depend on nature of the family. On the other hand it is found that women empowerment is significantly associated with the income of household. To know about women empowerment, women's autonomy in decision making and their interaction with media are also studied and it shows that women empowerment depends on interaction with media and their autonomy in decision making both.

### **Suggestions and Policy Planning**

After studying in depths regarding women's empowerment in the society, one thing comes first and foremost that is to improve the educational level of girls so that they could play a more active role in society. Educational and job opportunities should be created for women. These two factors alone may play a major role in increasing the empowerment of women. Women's empowerment in the era of globalization cannot be imposed from top, rather it is essentially a bottom up process as women must empower themselves. However, they need assistance and facilitation from above. It promotes women's inherent strength and positive image which enables them to face any difficult situation and encourage them to think independently.

India needs to reengineer its policies so that more opportunities are opened up for the female folk. Even though, the government at different levels should formulate many policies and programmes for the development of women, responsibility in decision taking processes should also be given to women. Women also have to respond positively to these government policies and plans.

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