



IS IT AN ILLUSION OR REALITY? WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN 2020-AN EXPLORTIVE STUDY IN THE URBAN SET UP OF KERALA

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Abstract

Great advances had been happening in many parts of India for women in relation to health, education, employment, quality of work life, quality of family life, work life balance and so many over the past decades. However, in some cases activities against women are increasing. Women exempted from decision making in all areas at all levels, the discriminatory laws governing marriage, land, property and inheritance issues are widely prevalent in India. In addition, women empowerment and gender equality has seen many transformations in the past decade, such as addressing HIV/AIDS, trafficking in women and girls, making the new information and communication technologies (ICT) reachable for women to empower them. However, there is still room for improvement in various areas in India. This study measures the working women professional's empowerment in urban Ernakulam district. Kerala is empowered in critical areas like education, economic opportunity, health and wellbeing, decision making, sexual harassment and abuse and autonomy. The research methodology adopts a descriptive and explanatory empirical design by collecting data from around hundred working professionals in academics and industries in both public and private sector.

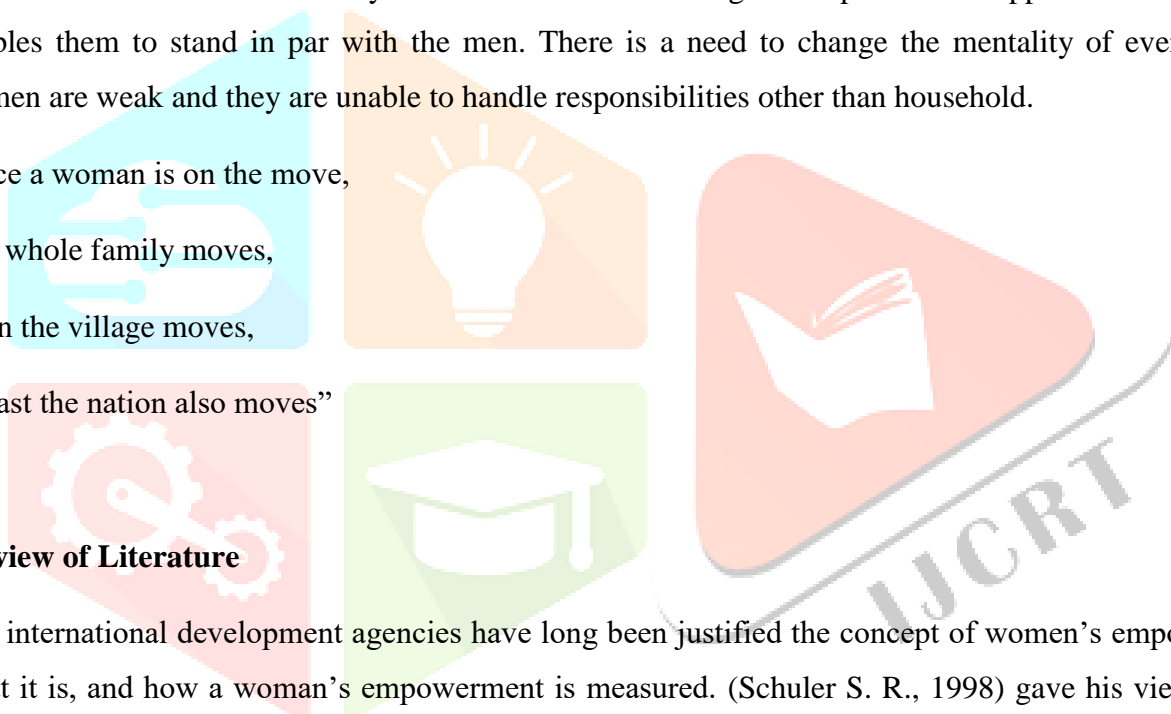
Key Words: *Women empowerment, freedom, life choices, decision making.*

Introduction

Almost every country, no matter how progressive has a history of ill-treating women. It can be noted that this situation still continues in some of the countries. In India women empowerment is needed more than ever. Many factors like education, freedom, domestic violence, gender inequality etc contributes towards this context. Empowerment of women means making them politically, economically, psychologically and intellectually active and enabling them to make decisions in matters that affect their lives. It refers to making women powerful to make them capable of deciding for themselves. India is a developing country and men are the half power of the country. They are ignorant that women are the rest half power and when combined the both, India would be the most powerful country in the world. When both these powers start to work together, no other country would be more powerful than India.

Gender equality is the stepping stone to women empowerment in India. There is a mentality among the men that women can handle only the household work. But given exposure and opportunities to women enables them to stand in par with the men. There is a need to change the mentality of everyone that women are weak and they are unable to handle responsibilities other than household.

“once a woman is on the move,
The whole family moves,
Then the village moves,
At last the nation also moves”



Review of Literature

The international development agencies have long been justified the concept of women's empowerment, what it is, and how a woman's empowerment is measured. (Schuler S. R., 1998) gave his viewpoint on the topic by stating various ways through which empowerment can be measured. The most often used Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is made up of major elements such as power over economic resources, political participation and decision making, and economic participation and decision making. It does not measure empowerment on an individual basis since it is an aggregate index. The two dimensions which it is made up of are economic participation and decision making and, political participation and decision making. for our study GEM does not incorporate the multidimensional view of women's empowerment. The various studies (Malhotra, 1997, December) (Kishor, 2000, March) (Schuler S. H., 1996) (Beegle, 2001) have shown that women's empowerment can be done on a particular area of life. (Schuler S. R., 1998) shows the eight indicators included in comparative components of women empowerment. Political empowerment, familial, economic, and personal are various other factors laid down by other scholars which measures women empowerment. The factors contribute to women's disempowerment in India are household and interfamilial relations. Women's

empowerment also includes women's participation in various political actions (Batliwala, 1995, September).

Women empowerment is a major theme of discussion and debate prevailing for a long time in and out of the country. It is been discussed in various platforms with the roots getting down to different factors. According to (Page & Czuba, 1999) Empowerment is a multidimensional social process that foster power in the lives of people, communities, and society. The meaning of empowerment has been the subject for great debate and remains, at present, as a poorly defined concept (Cunningham 1996). The situation in which women are given the opportunity to participate in various social, political and economic spheres of life has been termed as women empowerment in the research paper contributed by (S.Sushma, 1998). (Bisnath, 1999) opined that Women's Empowerment is a process in which women gain greater control over all resources like human, financial, intellectual, technological and to gain power. Discrimination against women is one of the factors still prevailing in most of the societies which is why this topic has become a matter of prime importance to be taken further more beyond mere discussions. (Hazarika, 2011) is of the opinion that women empowerment is a much debatable topic then and now as in the earlier times they were at par in status with men but the women fraternity have faced a lot of discrimination throughout for a continuous period of time. The study is of the viewpoint that even though women in the modern times have acquired decent positions and respectable designations in the society discrimination has not yet come down but it is still travelling in a parallel pace. The research paper brings its focus to the need of the hour that every individual in the society is equally responsible to promote equal rights for women in the modern world. Irrespective of the continuous talks regarding women empowerment the change in the direction of thought still has a lot to travel in the minds of the people as the right meaning of this complex topic still needs clarity and conviction to many. Surprisingly, the empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world, not just in India. Another important aspect a woman faces is the fact that they are not considered for any proprietary ownership or its rights. There are other laws pertaining to the rights of inheritance of a daughter to the rights over land ownership. (Kapoor, 2011) in his paper highlights the fact that daughters are deprived of proprietary rights under various laws around the country. He puts forward the recognition that daughters are not considered and are deprived of the succession of the ancestral property under various personal laws and focuses on the point that the provisions in association with inheritance are still continuing with discrimination against women. Another issue faced by women is because of gender bias a potential woman is not able to achieve the optimal success in her career just like how a man achieves them in life. The higher she goes up the ladder, either she is pushed down or is retrained to take further steps. The research paper of (Ghosh, 2013) identifies that emergence of Information Technology has opened doors of opportunities for women hood and has ultimately resulted in the coming of women empowerment. No matter how insisting people are on equalizing the rights of women in the society, a cloud of suspicion and undervaluing their strength is still picking up its thread currently. Their rights over many essential needs continues to be at stake and farfetched. The paper of (Hazra) observed that women are still likely to be poor, malnourished and illiterate and have limited

access to medical care, property ownership, training and employment irrespective of the various initiatives that are insisted on women's rights. Women are vulnerable to domestic violence and are dormant to political activities. His paper reflects that women should be given equal rights with men as it makes it their fundamental right and brings prosperity to the country as a whole. According to (Robeyns, 2003) women's development can be attained by improving her status and by bargaining power in the economy. (Nussbaum, 1995) states that by outlining the mechanisms and tools that influence the empowerment, the strategies and approaches for women empowerment could be possible. According to (Srivastava, 2001) the social empowerment of women addresses areas of gender inequalities in the society. The economic empowerment of women refers to enabling women to become the 'bread winners' (Elliot, 2008). (Rajput, Women's political participation in India: An agenda for environment., 2001) states that political empowerment of women is the process of advancing women's political interest. The psychological empowerment refers to increment in women's motivation, self-interests and morale (Rajput, Empowering the Indian women, 2001). Thus, there are different ways to measure women's empowerment and their social development.

Objectives

- To identify the underlying factors in women empowerment.
- To examine the differences across ages of women with the factor of women empowerment.
- To examine the differences across marital status with the factors of women empowerment.
- To examine the differences across profession with the factors of women empowerment.
- To examine the differences across educational qualifications with the factors of women empowerment.
- To examine the difference between private and government women employees with the factors of women empowerment.

Hypothesis

- There is significant difference across the age of women with the factors of women empowerment.
- There is significant difference across marital status with the factors of women empowerment.
- There is significant difference across profession with the factors of women empowerment.
- There is significant difference across the educational qualifications with the factors of women empowerment.

Research methodology

A study was conducted in Ernakulam Kerala, India to study women empowerment among working women. Kerala leads the nation in most social indicators, is undergoing a silent revolution. In God's Own Country, women are being empowered both economically and psychologically. Kerala has created congenial atmosphere for the emergence of women empowerment.

To assess the level of women empowerment, the data were collected from 350 working women. The questionnaire was a structured questionnaire which had the items in connection with women empowerment and personal data. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely personal details (age, marital status, education, employment) and a 5-point scale for assessing the empowerment status through 35 statements. The questionnaire was administered on a sample of 98 working women, working in academia, banking sectors, IT sectors and women entrepreneurs. The response rate was 95%. This is an explorative and descriptive study design.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Frequency distribution showing the age of respondents

Age				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	20-30	200	57.1	57.1	57.1
	30-40	98	28.6	28.6	85.7
	40-50	46	13.3	13.3	99.0
	above 50	6	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 explains the age group of the respondents. It shows that 57.1% belong to 20-30 age group, 28.6% belong to 30-40 group, 13.3% belong to 40-50 group and 1% are above 50.

Table 2: Frequency distribution showing the marital Status

Marital Status				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	married	189	54.1	54.1	54.1
	unmarried	158	44.9	44.9	99.0
	others	3	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 explains the marital status of respondents. It shows that 54.1% of respondents are married, 44.9% are unmarried and 1% belong to another category.

Table 3: Frequency distribution showing the profession

Profession					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	academia	123	35.7	35.7	35.7
	industry	224	63.3	63.3	99.0
	entrepreneur	3	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 explains the profession of the respondents. It shows that 35.7% are from academia, 63.3% are from industry and 1% are entrepreneur.

Table 4: Frequency distribution showing the type of organization

Type of organisation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	private	87	88.8	88.8	88.8
	government	8	8.2	8.2	96.9
	3.00	3	3.1	3.1	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 explains the type of organization the respondents work. It shows that 88.8% belongs to private company and 8.2% belongs to government company.

Table 5: Frequency distribution showing the educational qualification

Educational qualification					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Up to 12th	3	1.0	1.0	1.0
	ug	137	38.8	38.8	39.8
	pg	193	55.1	55.1	94.9
	more than pg	17	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	350	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 explains the educational qualification of the respondents. 1% have qualification up to 12th class, 38.8% have ug qualification, 55.1% have pg qualification and 5.1% have qualification more than pg.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis explores the underlying factors in the facet of women empowerment in our study.

Table 6

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.620
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1693.064
	Df	595
	Sig.	.000

Table 7

Total Variance Explained							
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	
1	6.530	18.658	18.658	6.530	18.658	18.658	
2	4.106	11.730	30.388	4.106	11.730	30.388	
3	2.899	8.282	38.669	2.899	8.282	38.669	
4	2.346	6.703	45.372	2.346	6.703	45.372	
5	1.812	5.178	50.550	1.812	5.178	50.550	
6	1.621	4.631	55.181				
7	1.412	4.033	59.214				
8	1.325	3.785	62.998				
9	1.189	3.398	66.397				
10	1.099	3.139	69.535				
11	1.059	3.026	72.562				
12	.861	2.461	75.023				
13	.821	2.346	77.369				
14	.749	2.140	79.509				
15	.732	2.092	81.601				
16	.670	1.915	83.516				
17	.633	1.809	85.325				

18	.567	1.619	86.943				
19	.537	1.535	88.478				
20	.429	1.226	89.704				
21	.407	1.162	90.866				
22	.375	1.072	91.938				
23	.363	1.036	92.975				
24	.331	.945	93.919				
25	.321	.918	94.837				
26	.295	.843	95.680				
27	.269	.768	96.448				
28	.248	.708	97.156				
29	.242	.692	97.848				
30	.179	.511	98.359				
31	.146	.418	98.778				
32	.146	.417	99.195				
33	.134	.384	99.579				
34	.102	.291	99.870				
35	.046	.130	100.000				

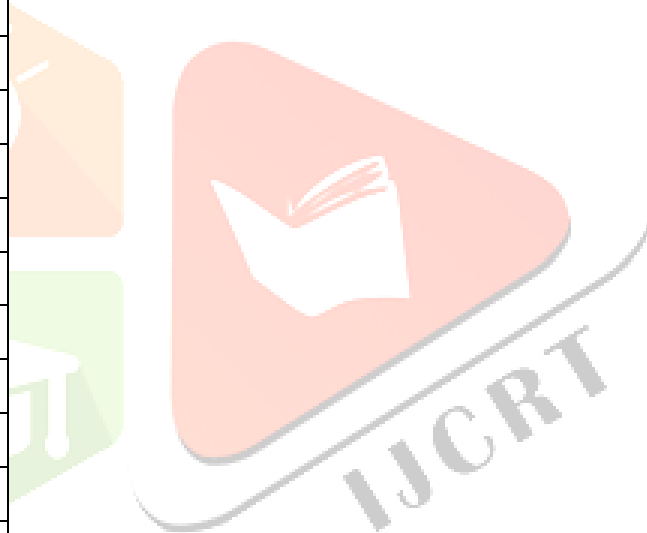
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.



Table 8

Rotated Component Matrix ^a					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
q33	.718				
q32	.707				
q34	.659				
q8	.627				
q25	.571				
q28	.552				
q26					
q35					
q22					
q9		.719			
q6		.707			
q1		.706			
q5		.635			
q12		.544			
q4		.528			
q27		-.504			
q11					
q24					
q13					
q15			.781		
q3			.770		
q7			.704		
q10			.669		
q14			.655		
q31					
q20				.793	
q19				.680	
q2				-.632	
q18				.581	
q17				.517	
q16					
q23					
q30					.726
q29					.705
q21					.573



Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Interpretation

The output of factor analysis is obtained using principle component analysis using varimax rotation. From KMO and Bartlers test (table 1) the measure of sampling adequacy is 0.62 greater than 0.5 is established and it is also significant at .001 level. Table 2 shows the total variance explained in the data. We find that five factors extracted together accounts for 50.5% of the total variance, hence we have reduced the number of variables from 35 to 5 underling factors.

Factor one consists of items in connection with selecting the choice of life in different circumstance, there were six items having high loading hence factor one is named as **freedom to live**. In factor two we see items connected with gender equality, compensations, employee welfare at workplace having high loading. There are seven items which possessed high factor loadings and was named as **support at workplace**. Similarly factor three was interpreted as **support from organisation** which consists of five items. Factor four is interpreted as **freedom to approach judicial system** which consists of five items with high loadings. Factor five was interpreted as **empowerment in family decision making** which consists of three items with high factor loadings.

Table:9 Factors identified through factor analysis

Factors	Title
Factor one	Freedom to live
Factor two	Support at workplace
Factor three	Support from organisation
Factor four	Freedom to approach judicial system
Factor five	Empowerment in family decision making

Table 10

Group Statistics					
	type of company	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Freedom to live	Private	305	33.4828	4.20095	.45039
	Government	45	31.0000	3.07060	1.08562
Support at workplace	Private	305	19.0690	3.28773	.35248
	Government	45	21.0000	2.00000	.70711
Safety at home	Private	305	2.5747	1.07435	.11518
	Government	45	2.6250	1.18773	.41993
Freedom in political decision	Private	305	27.4253	3.28007	.35166
	Government	45	28.6250	2.26385	.80039
Freedom to approach judicial system	Private	305	8.9425	1.13462	.12164
	Government	45	9.3750	.74402	.26305

From table 11 we can understand that no factors of women empowerment are significant. Hence null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference on freedom to live, support at workplace, safety at home, freedom in political decision, freedom to approach judicial system of women empowerment between private and government sector.

Alternate hypothesis

There is significant difference on various factors of women empowerment with respect to age.

Table: 11 Analysis of variance on various factors of women empowerment according to age

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Freedom to live	Between Groups	144.661	3	48.220	2.961	.036
	Within Groups	1530.727	94	16.284		
	Total	1675.388	97			
Support at workplace	Between Groups	63.650	3	21.217	2.101	.105
	Within Groups	949.166	94	10.098		
	Total	1012.816	97			
Safety at home	Between Groups	1.583	3	.528	.457	.713
	Within Groups	108.549	94	1.155		
	Total	110.133	97			
Freedom in political decision	Between Groups	54.466	3	18.155	1.816	.150
	Within Groups	940.023	94	10.000		
	Total	994.490	97			
Freedom to approach judicial system	Between Groups	6.141	3	2.047	1.720	.168
	Within Groups	111.859	94	1.190		
	Total	118.000	97			

Freedom in life choices (factor 1) is significant at .05 level. The women's age group under study are (20-30), (30-40), (40-50), and above 50. The null hypothesis is rejected and we accept the alternate hypothesis. There is there is significant difference between the women of various age group on choosing choices in life. Support at workplace, Safety at home, Freedom in political decision, Freedom to approach judicial system of women empowerment are not significant.

Alternate hypothesis

There is significant difference on various factors of women empowerment according to marital status.

Table:12 Analysis of variance on various factors of women empowerment according to marital status

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Freedom to live	Between Groups	16.157	2	8.078	.463	.631
	Within Groups	1659.231	95	17.466		
	Total	1675.388	97			
Support at workplace	Between Groups	228.837	2	114.419	13.865	.000
	Within Groups	783.979	95	8.252		
	Total	1012.816	97			
Safety at home	Between Groups	2.946	2	1.473	1.306	.276
	Within Groups	107.187	95	1.128		
	Total	110.133	97			
Freedom in political decision	Between Groups	25.814	2	12.907	1.266	.287
	Within Groups	968.675	95	10.197		
	Total	994.490	97			
Freedom to approach judicial system	Between Groups	1.110	2	.555	.451	.638
	Within Groups	116.890	95	1.230		
	Total	118.000	97			

Support at workplace (factor 2) is significant at .001 level. Marital status of women under study are married, unmarried, and others. The null hypothesis is rejected, we accept the alternate hypothesis that there is significant difference among the married women, unmarried women and single women regarding support at workplace. Freedom to live, Safety at home, Freedom in political decision, Freedom to approach judicial system of women empowerment are not significant.

Alternate hypothesis

There is significant difference on various factors of women empowerment according to professions.

Table:13 Analysis of variance on various factors of women empowerment according to professions.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Freedom to live	Between Groups	8.368	2	4.184	.238	.788
	Within Groups	1667.019	95	17.548		
	Total	1675.388	97			
Support at workplace	Between Groups	143.034	2	71.517	7.811	.001
	Within Groups	869.782	95	9.156		
	Total	1012.816	97			
Safety at home	Between Groups	6.922	2	3.461	3.186	.046
	Within Groups	103.211	95	1.086		
	Total	110.133	97			
Freedom in political decision	Between Groups	7.362	2	3.681	.354	.703
	Within Groups	987.128	95	10.391		
	Total	994.490	97			
Freedom to approach judicial system	Between Groups	1.130	2	.565	.459	.633
	Within Groups	116.870	95	1.230		
	Total	118.000	97			

Support at workplace (factor 2) is significant at .001 level and safety at home (factor 3) is significant at .046 level. Professions of women under study are academia, industry and other professions. The null hypothesis is rejected, we accept the alternate hypothesis that is there is significant difference between the women of various professions regarding support at workplace and safety at home. Freedom to live, Freedom in political decision, Freedom to approach judicial system of women empowerment are not significant.

Alternate hypothesis

There is significant difference on various factors of women empowerment according to education.

Table:14 Analysis of variance on various factors of women empowerment according to education.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Freedom to live	Between Groups	33.012	3	11.004	.630	.598
	Within Groups	1642.375	94	17.472		
	Total	1675.388	97			
Support at workplace	Between Groups	108.189	3	36.063	3.747	.014
	Within Groups	904.628	94	9.624		
	Total	1012.816	97			
Safety at home	Between Groups	1.326	3	.442	.382	.766
	Within Groups	108.807	94	1.158		
	Total	110.133	97			
Freedom in political decision	Between Groups	9.875	3	3.292	.314	.815
	Within Groups	984.615	94	10.475		
	Total	994.490	97			
Freedom to approach judicial system	Between Groups	.179	3	.060	.048	.986
	Within Groups	117.821	94	1.253		
	Total	118.000	97			

Support at workplace (factor 2) is significant at .014 level. Educational qualification of women under study are upto 12th, UG, PG, and more than PG. The null hypothesis is rejected, we accept the alternate hypothesis that there is significant difference between the women of various educational qualification regarding support at workplace. Freedom to live, Safety at home, Freedom in political decision, Freedom to approach judicial system of women empowerment are not significant.

Discussion

Factor analysis explored the five underlying factors in the Urban Women in Ernakulam district. The extracted factors are freedom to live, support at workplace, safety at home, freedom in political decision, freedom to approach judicial system. This explains the important underlying factors which are perceived and executed by women at different facets of life.

The analysis of variance results is found to be that there is significant difference between the women of various age group on choosing choices in life. There is significant difference between the women of various marital status group regarding support at workplace. There is significant difference between the women of various professions regarding support at workplace and safety at home. There is significant difference between the women of various educational qualification regarding support at workplace.

From this study we arrive at the following findings. It is seen that the lifestyle and empowerment of working women in Ernakulam, Kerala has undergone a dramatic change in the past few years. The women in Kerala have the freedom to live and feel safe against domestic violence at home. The women are getting maximum support at the work place. The women are so empowered that they feel free to take political decision and feel confidence and have knowledge in approaching the judicial system.

Conclusion

It is confirmed that there has been an improvement in the condition of women not only in the fields of education, but also in decision making, freedom to cast vote, knowledge to approach judicial system, solve problem legally and above all, women are empowered to become entrepreneurs. Workplace violence, safety issues is a high concern in India and 75% of women have agreed it. The various crimes against women like gang-rapes, sexual harassment of young girls, kidnapping, molesting and murders are common headlines seen in newspapers and television programs. However, above all these concerns, women in India are becoming more empowered day by day. The percentage of working women has increased at an enormous rate in the past decades.

The conditions of girl child and women in India are improving. The government of India has introduced many schemes in favor of protecting girl child. One such scheme is the free education for girl child till high school. Society needs to change the way it thinks. The urban India has already adopted the change and is in the process.

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