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## Empowering Women: Strategies for Advancing Gender Equality

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### Abstract:

This research article explores various strategies aimed at empowering women and advancing gender equality. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of gender disparities, the study examines key interventions and policies implemented globally to promote women's empowerment. It analyses the impact of education, economic opportunities, political participation, and social reforms on enhancing women's agency and reducing gender inequalities. The article also discusses challenges and barriers that hinder progress towards gender parity, emphasizing the importance of inclusive policies and societal support systems. Through a comprehensive review of literature and case studies, the research offers insights into effective strategies for achieving sustainable gender equality and fostering inclusive development.

**Key Words:** Policy interventions, Inclusive development, Gender disparities

### INTRODUCTION

Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women empowerment involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a woman in a traditionally male dominated structure. Women constitute almost 50% of the world's population but India has shown disproportionate sex ratio whereby female's population has been comparatively lower than males. As far as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places. In the Western societies, the women have got equal right and status with men in all walks of life. But gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society and country. Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skill and self-confidence necessary to fully participate in the development process. Education of women is helpful in eradicating many social evils such as dowry problem, unemployment problems etc. Social peace can also be easily established. If women are uneducated, the future generations will be uneducated. For this reason, the Greek warrior Napoleon once said, "Give me a few educated mothers, I shall give you a heroic race." In the recent years, various constitutional and legal rights have been implemented by the Government of India in order to eliminate ill practices and gender discrimination against women. There is a list of safety laws for women in India working in the field to provide safety to the women from all types of crimes against women. Women's rights are human rights. They cover every aspect of life-health, education, political participation, economic well-being and freedom from violence, among many others. Women are entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of all forms of discrimination this is fundamental to achieve human rights, peace and security and sustainable development. Various NGOs play important role for women empowerment.

## Review of Literature

**Chaudhary and Geeta (2009)** studied Empowerment of Women \_A Sociological Inquiry. Primary data was collected with the help of interviews and quasi-participant observation from 200 respondents. Secondary data was collected with the help of books, journals, Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers and other historical records etc. Data was analysed with the help of association and co-relation. It was found that parents become unhappy at the birth of a girl child in rural areas than in urban areas. Further findings indicate that urban respondents have more autonomy in spending their income, going to market and in family planning. Moreover, Vote participation and political awareness is also higher among them. Whereas, cases of wife-battering and sexual violence are higher in rural areas.

**Nayagi and P Meenakshi (2012)** studied Empowerment of women through legal profession in Chennai. Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire from 606 women lawyers. Secondary data was collected with the help of journals, magazines, publications, reports, books, dailies, periodicals, articles, research papers, websites, etc. Data was analysed with the help of mean, percentage, standard deviation, chi-square test, t-test, Anova, Multiple Regression Analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis. It was found that most of the women lawyers do not have financial and economic freedom in decision making. Whereas other are in the opinion that their lawyer professions are named as positive attitudes. They want to be ambitious lawyers. Moreover, they are socially and legally empowered.

**Anita Devi (2015)** studied Women empowerment in politics a study of Haryana. Primary data was collected questionnaire from 279 women respondents from three districts namely Jind, Jhajjar and Sonapat. Secondary data was collected with the help of journals, statistical abstract of Haryana, related dissertation, rules and by laws, census of India, internet, related books, newspapers, economic survey of Haryana as well as India, Women commission, Department of child and women welfare, Election Commission, Department of Panchayati Raj, Municipal Committees, magazine, related journals, thesis & websites etc. Data was analysed with the help of ratio, average, chi square, percentage etc. It was found that the representation of women in all the political and administrative activities is very low. Moreover, lack of knowledge and awareness of work, less willing power, lack of motivation and apathy interest in politics, absence of decision-making capacity among women are quite rampant. The truth is that the participation of women in the political process at any level is closely related to their level of awareness.

**Jisha S and Kumar (2017)** studied Women empowerment \_ a study of the role of self-help groups. Primary data was collected with the help of pre-structured interview from 900 women members. Secondary data was collected with the help of Kadambas're mission Offices, Community Development Societies (CDS), Reports of National Rural Livelihood Mission Projects, Reports of Planning Commission, Budgets of Central Government, Reports of NABARD, voluntary agencies. Annual Reports, Census Reports, Journals, and from relevant websites. Data was analysed with the help of Multi stage stratified random sampling technique. It was found that women financial sustainability, saving habits, standard of living has increased with self-help groups. Further findings indicate that active participation of women in the community helped to improve their commitment to undertake general purpose tasks. Moreover, Participation in social activities and social functions, attending marriage ceremonies etc. had aided in awarding women with elevated status quo.

**Chanth, R (2018)** studied Women empowerment through local self-governments in Kerala. Primary data was collected from women beneficiaries of identified schemes of Panchayat Raj institutions by means of structured interview schedule from 450 respondents. The secondary data was collected from Panchayat guide, planning reports issued by Planning Board, official websites of Local Self-government, Ministry of Women and Child development, National Sample Survey Organization etc. Data was analysed with the help of Statistical tools like ANOVA, MANOVA, paired ranking method, one sample t test and Multiple Classification Analysis were used for analysis and interpretation of data. It was found that the most frequently attained dimension of empowerment was economic empowerment followed by political and educational empowerment. Social empowerment was attained only at an average level and the attainment of psychological and legal empowerment was below average.

**Panwar and Shradha (2020)** studied Empowerment of Women through Entrepreneurship in Garhwal Region. Primary data was collected with the help of Semi structured questionnaire from 390 respondents. The secondary data was collected from published annual reports for the period 2010-2011 to 2019-2020 from its respective official websites. Data was analysed with the help of Statistical tools like Exploratory Factor

Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Paired Sample t-test, One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc Test and Welch's test. It was found that there is a necessity for speedy change, notably a transformation in structural and functional levels. The need of the hour is to implement such planning models that defy the patriarchal system, a system that subordinates, discriminates and is oppressive to women. So, the first step for realizing women's development is to create gender awareness over.

Existing studies focus on individual sectors such as education, economic opportunities, or political participation without sufficiently addressing the intersecting identities and multiple forms of discrimination that women face, such as race, ethnicity, class, disability, and sexual orientation. There is limited research that integrates these intersectional perspectives to understand how various dimensions of identity interact and influence women's experiences of empowerment differently. And a notable research gap emerges concerning the comprehensive evaluation of intersectional approaches to women's empowerment. Present study is an effort in this direction.

### Objective of the study

To examine and evaluate diverse strategies, policies, and interventions aimed at empowering women and advancing gender equality across educational, economic, political, and social domains.

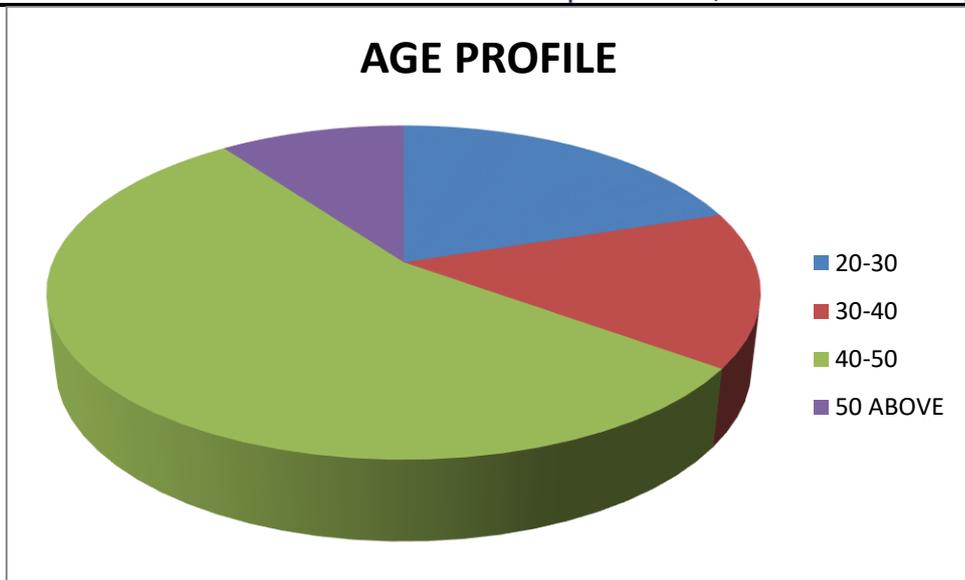
### Research Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to assess the empowerment level of married women with the help of different parameters. Present study was conducted in Chandigarh and Mohali with a total sample of 100 Married Women consisting of 40 married women from Chandigarh and 60 married women from Mohali. Data was collected with the help of both primary as well as secondary sources. In order to get primary data, structured questionnaire cum interview schedule was used. Information collected through questionnaire was tabulated by classifying it according to the nature of answers given by the respondents to each question. Respondents were coded and presented in tables accordingly. Quantitative analysis was done by grouping the data in terms of the study variables namely the level of education, age of respondents etc. The sources of collection of secondary data included books, journals, magazines, various websites, libraries of universities etc. Percentage analysis was employed to examine the distribution of responses among different demographic groups regarding attitudes towards gender equality. Percentages were calculated based on the total sample size of 100 participants. The formula used for percentage calculation was  $(\text{Frequency of a category} / \text{Total responses}) \times 100$ . Results were presented in tables to illustrate variations in attitudes across gender and age groups. The method allowed for a quantitative assessment of participant perspectives, providing a clear overview of prevalent attitudes towards gender equality.

### Analysis and Interpretation

#### Age profile of respondents

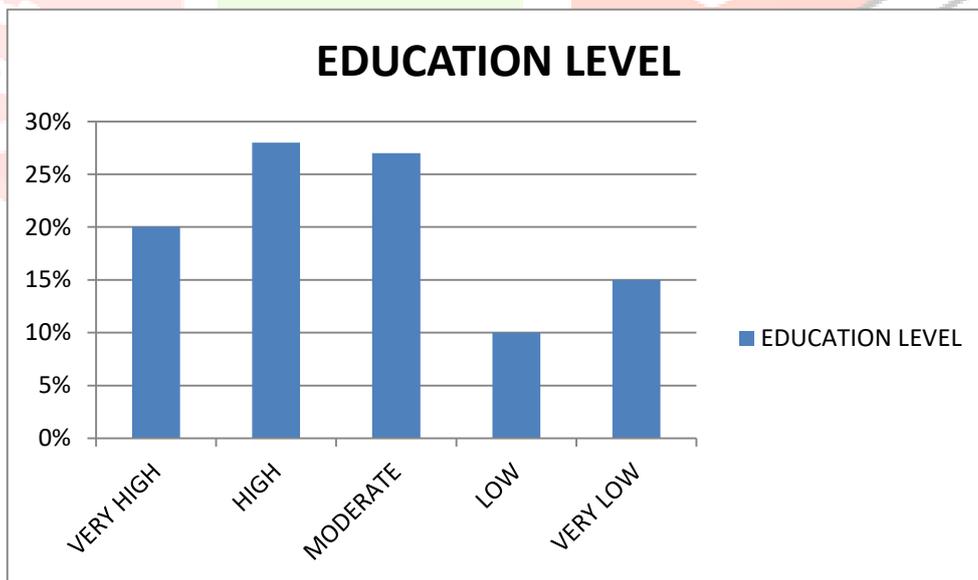
AGE PROFILE		
AGE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
20-30	20	20%
30-40	15	15%
40-50	55	55%
ABOVE 50	10	10%



As per the survey, 20% of women fall in the age category of 20-30, 15% in the category of 30-40, 55% in the category of 40-50, only 10% of the respondents were above 50 years.

### Education level of women

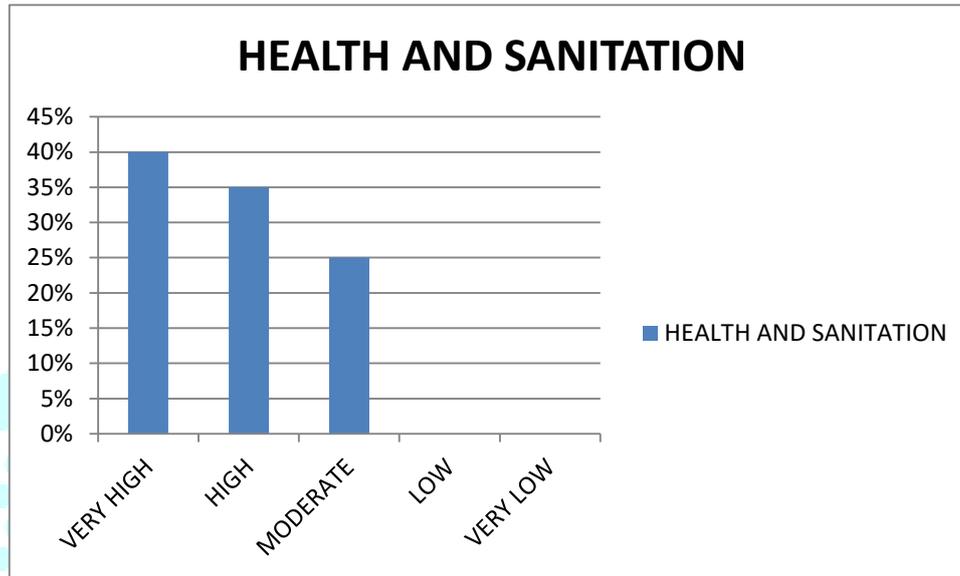
EDU LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	20	20%
HIGH	28	28%
MODERATE	27	27%
LOW	10	10%
VERY LOW	15	15%



Education systems vary in administration, curriculum and personnel, but all have an influence on the students that they serve. As women have gained rights, formal education has become a symbol of progress and a step toward gender equity. The discussion of women’s education as solutions for eliminating violence against women and economic dependence on men can sometimes take dominance and result in the suppression of understanding how context, history and other factors affect women. 20% of women respondents show that educational level of women was very high which shows that women’s were highly qualified and they were holding different degrees in different fields. 28% data shows that educational level was high where respondents were graduate in different fields. 27% data shows that educational level was moderate where respondents were under graduate. 10% data shows that educational level was low and 15% data shows that education level was very low and many of them were not having the basic education.

## Health and sanitation level of women

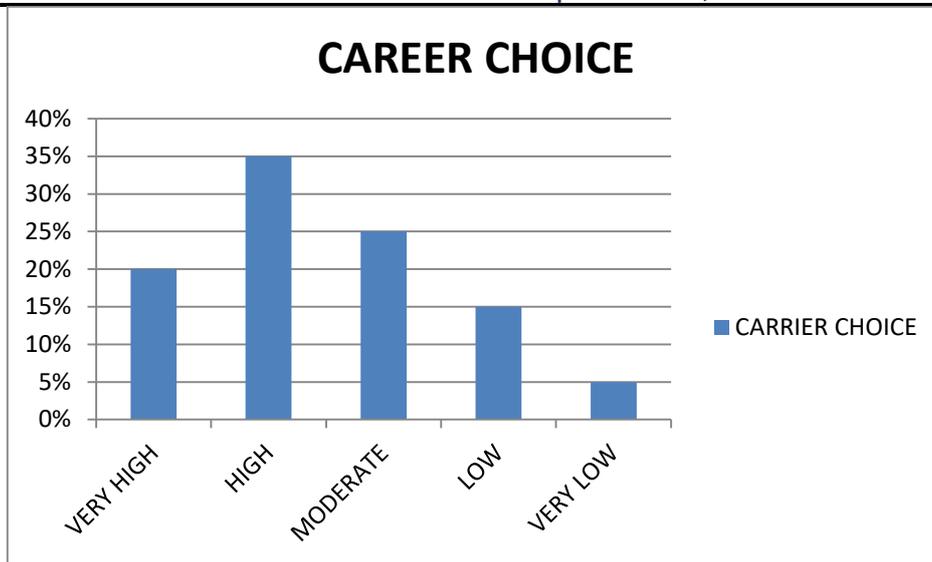
HEATH AND SANITATION LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	40	40%
HIGH	35	35%
MODERATE	25	25%
LOW	0	0%
VERY LOW	0	0%



Currently, women in India face a multitude of health problems, which ultimately affect the aggregate economy's output. Addressing the gender, class or ethnic disparities that exist in healthcare and improving the health outcomes can contribute to economic gain through the creation of quality human capital and increased levels of savings and investment. Survey shows that the health and sanitation level in women was very high which is 40% of total women respondents and they were aware of various health schemes and the sanitation level too where as 35% respondents health level was high which is again a very good sign. 25% respondents' health level was moderate and low and very low level of health and sanitation indicate no percentage which means that the women were aware about their health and there is not even a single woman who were not aware about their health and sanitation level.

## Career choice of women

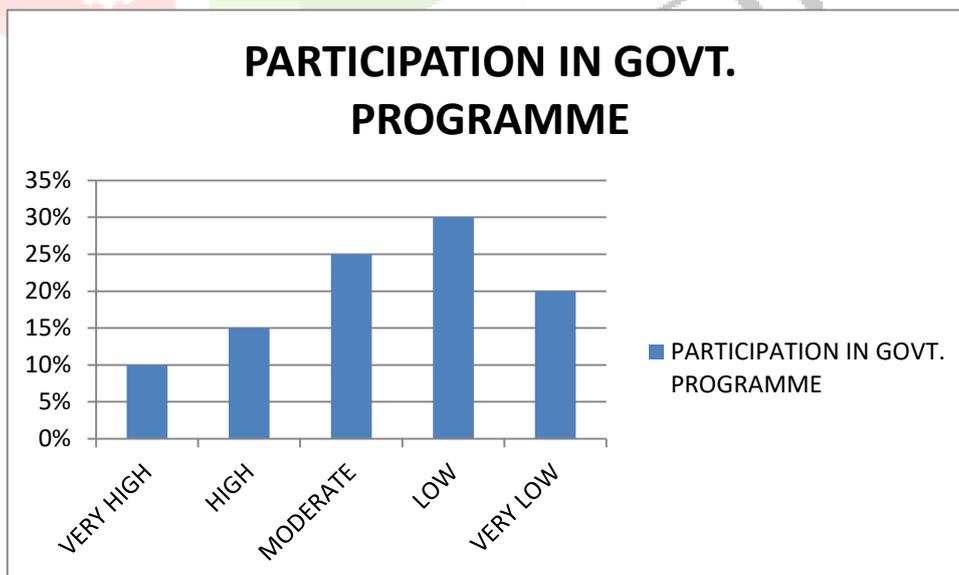
CAREER CHOICE LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	20	20%
HIGH	35	35%
MODERATE	25	25%
LOW	15	15%
VERY LOW	5	5%



A career focussed woman is known as a woman whose main priority in life is achieving success in her career and profession. These women can also be described as more interested in her career than in being married and having children. According to the survey 20% respondents shows a very high level in their career choice which means that 20% of respondents were very positive in making their career and profession whereas 35% respondents career choice is high in making their career and settling themselves in different fields. 15% and 5% respondents indicate a low and very low career choice which means that women were not interested in making their career and they were more interested in being married and having children.

**Participation level in government programmes**

PARTICIPATION LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	10	10%
HIGH	15	15%
MODERATE	25	25%
LOW	30	30%
VERY LOW	20	20%

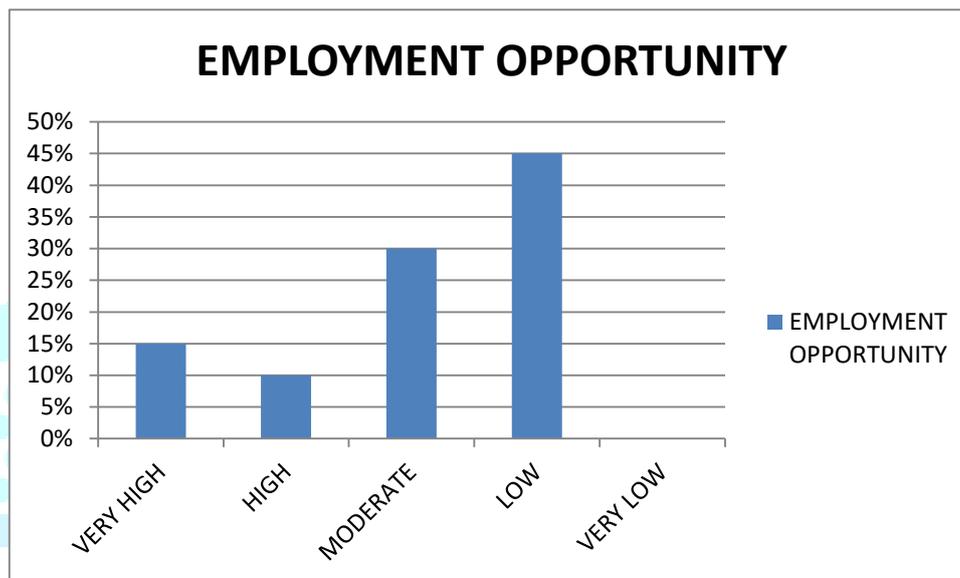


Women were entering the public sector in greater number today; however, they are conspicuous in their absence at the executive and managerial positions within the public administration. Survey indicates that only 10% respondents rate of participation in government programme was very high which shows that 10% respondents actively participate in various govt. programme whereas 15% respondents rate of participation in government programme was high. 30% and 20% respondents show low and very low participation in

government programmes which shows that they were not aware about it or they don't want to participate in any programme.

### Getting employment opportunity from government

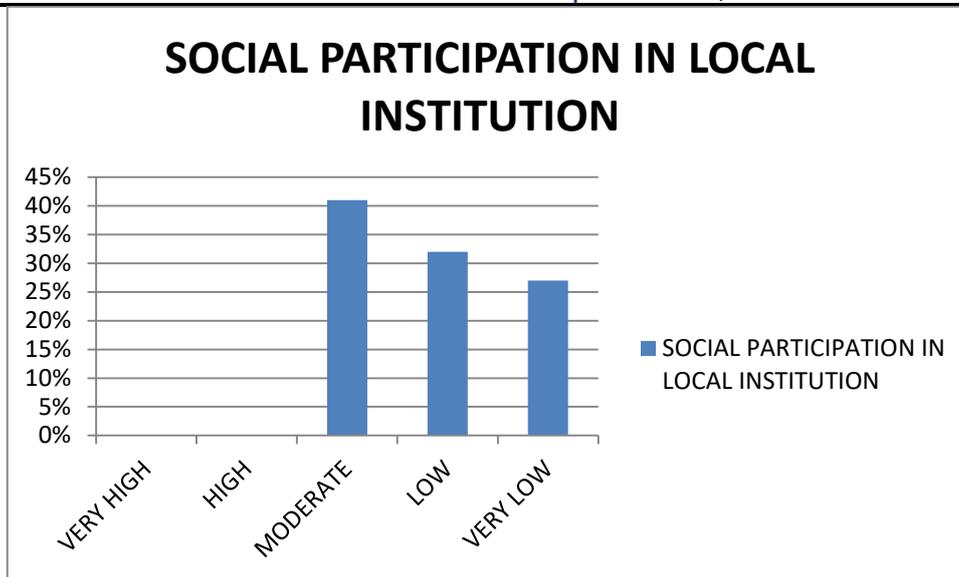
EMPLOYMENT LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	15	15%
HIGH	10	10%
MODERATE	30	30%
LOW	45	45%
VERY LOW	0	0%



Getting employment opportunities from government for women empowerment plays a significance role in empowering women. Data shows that 15% and 10% respondents' rate in getting employment opportunities was very high and high which shows that they receive number of good employment opportunities and they work for the same where as 30% data shows moderate level of getting employment opportunity from government. 45% data shows a low level of getting employment opportunity which indicate that government should provide more and more opportunities to women according to their educational level so that this ratio can be decreased and further very low rate of getting employment opportunities was zero.

### Social participation of women in local institution

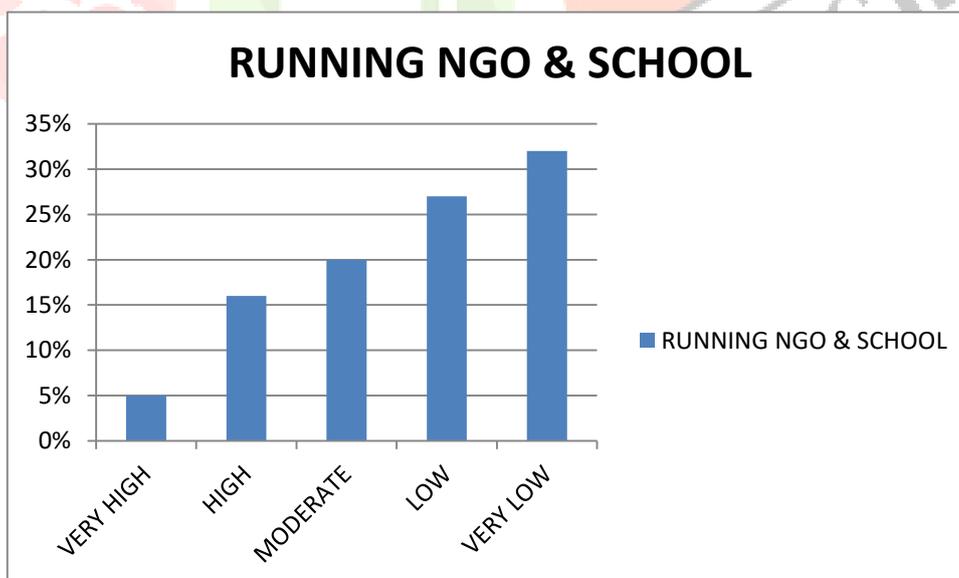
PARTICIPATION LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	0	0%
HIGH	0	0%
MODERATE	41	41%
LOW	32	32%
VERY LOW	27	27%



Survey indicates that participation in local institution among women were not high, Data shows that very high and high level was 0% where women participate in local institution. 41% data shows moderate level of participation where as low and very low level was 32% and 27% which is not a good sign for empowerment of women.

#### Running social development institutions like NGO, School by women

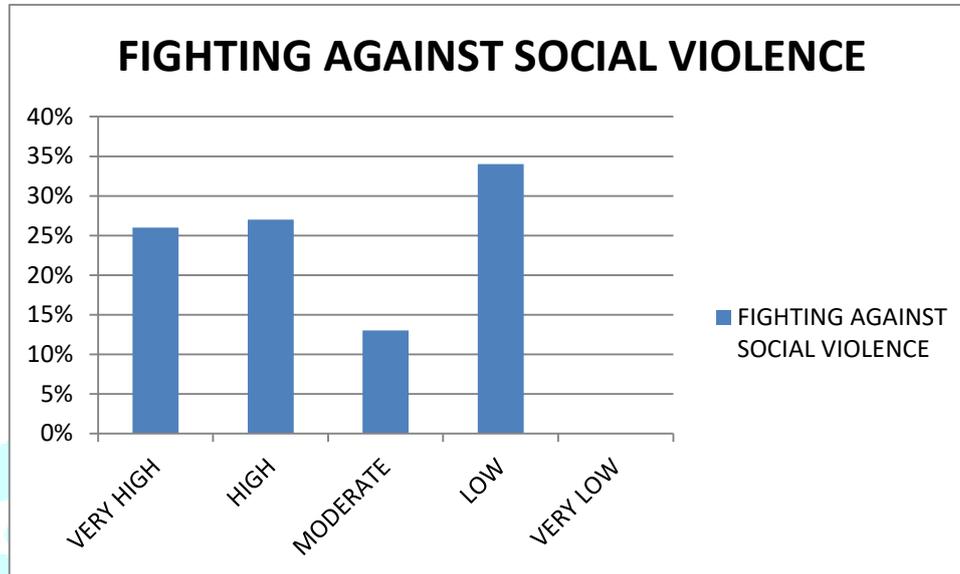
DEVELOPING INSTITUTION LEVEL	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	5	5%
HIGH	16	16%
MODERATE	20	20%
LOW	27	27%
VERY LOW	32	32%



Survey indicates that very high level for running NGO and school by women was only 5%, it means that only 5% women in developing institution level was very high whereas 16% women were running this institution was high, they were running their own charitable schools where free education and other activities were carried by them. Whereas moderate level was 20% and low and very low level was very high which is 27% and 32% which means that these percent women were not aware about it and they were not running any type of NGO's and schools.

**Fighting against social violence through women's forum**

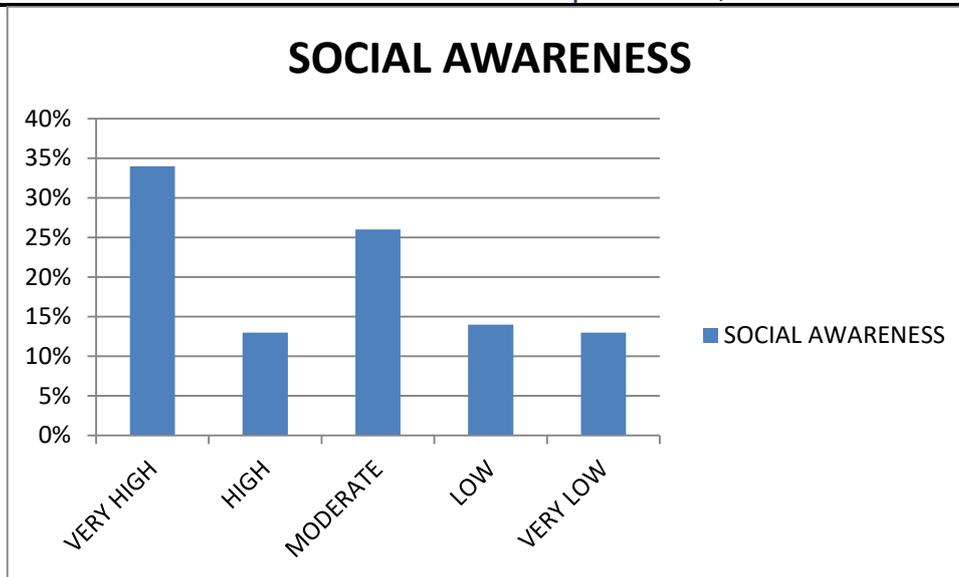
LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	26	26%
HIGH	27	27%
MODERATE	13	13%
LOW	34	34%
VERY LOW	0	0%



The violation of women's fundamental rights through physical, mental, emotional, and sexual violence against women has become almost commonplace, Violence against women has taken particularly acute forms therefore women's forum took place to solve these crimes. Survey shows that fighting against social violence through women's forum was very high which is 26%, which shows that 26% women were actively participating in fighting against social violence where as 27% women were also fighting against any violence through forum's was also high. 13% data shows moderate level of participation where as 34% data shows low level of participation which is not a good sign for women empowerment and 0% indicate very low level.

**Creating social awareness like Aids, Sanitation, Education by women**

AWARENESS LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	34	34%
HIGH	13	13%
MODERATE	26	26%
LOW	14	14%
VERY LOW	13	13%



Survey shows that women took actively part in creating social awareness, therefore very high and high rate was also very high which are 34% and 13% where as 26% level was moderate and low and very low data was also high which are 14% and 13% which means that women should be educated so that they can further create social awareness related to different aspects.

### Receiving legal rights by women

The legal rights of women refer to the social and human rights of women. For monetary matters, women's and men's rights were almost exactly equal. A woman was entitled to her own private property, including land, livestock, slaves, and servants. A woman could likewise bequeath her belongings to others as a death gift. A woman could sue in court and did not need a male to represent her.

LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	28	28%
HIGH	16	16%
MODERATE	32	32%
LOW	13	13%
VERY LOW	11	11%

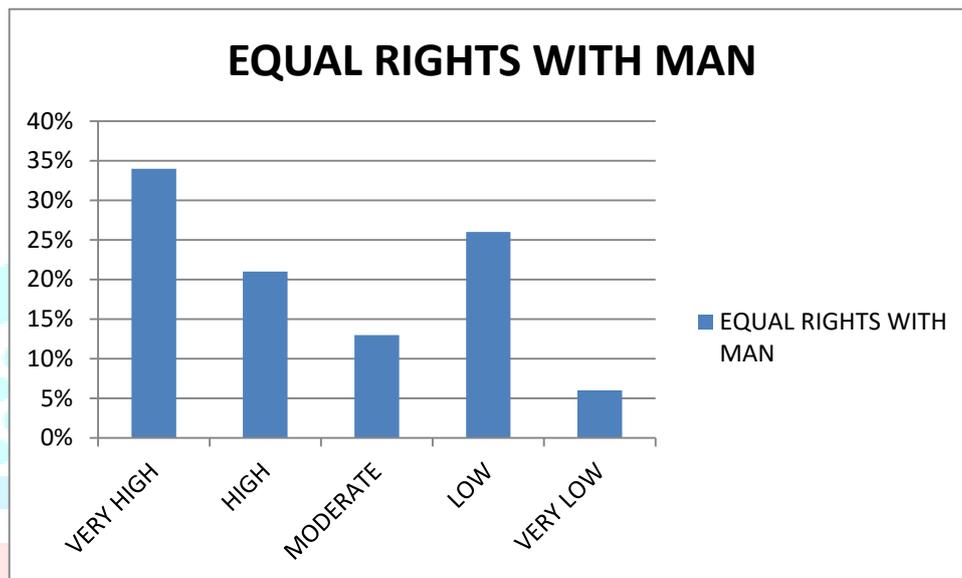


Table shows that very high level of receiving legal rights was 28% which shows that mostly women were aware about their rights and they were getting it too, whereas high level was 16% only. Moderate level was 32% which shows that many women were not aware about their rights because of their illiteracy this

percentage is high. Further low and very low level was 13% and 11% which means that there is need to provide them education and knowledge so that they must know about their legal rights equal with men.

**Equal rights with Men**

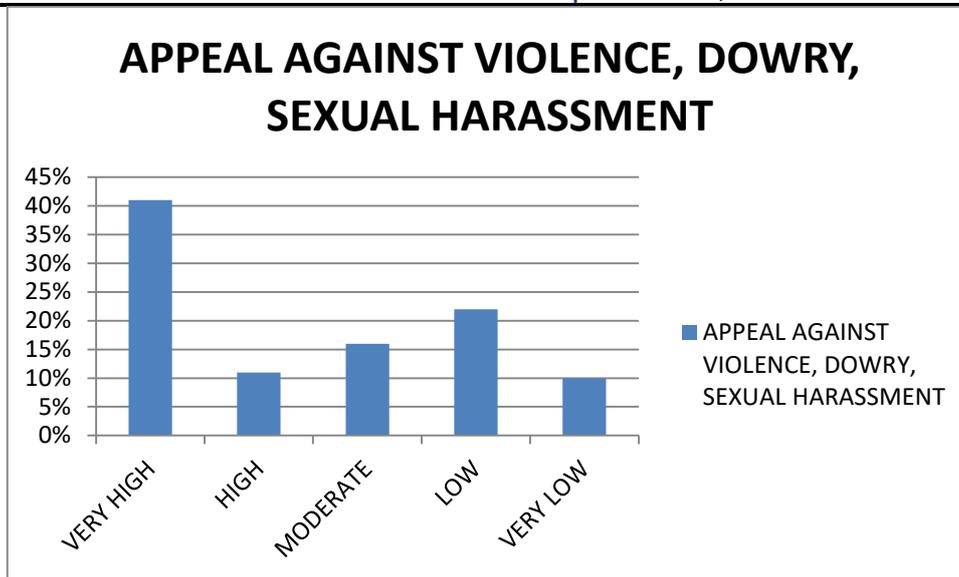
EQUAL RIGHTS LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	34	34%
HIGH	21	21%
MODERATE	13	13%
LOW	26	26%
VERY LOW	6	6%



Survey indicates that some women feel that they were having equal rights with men’s where as some women’s feel that they were not having equal rights. Table shows that 34% women feel that receiving equal rights with men were very high where as 21% data shows high level of receiving rights. Moderate level of 13% indicate that there were some women those feel that they were not getting same rights as men have or they were getting comparatively less rights. Further low and very low level was 26% and 6% which again shows that some women feel that they were not getting equal rights with men.

**Appeal against violence, dowry, sexual harassment by women**

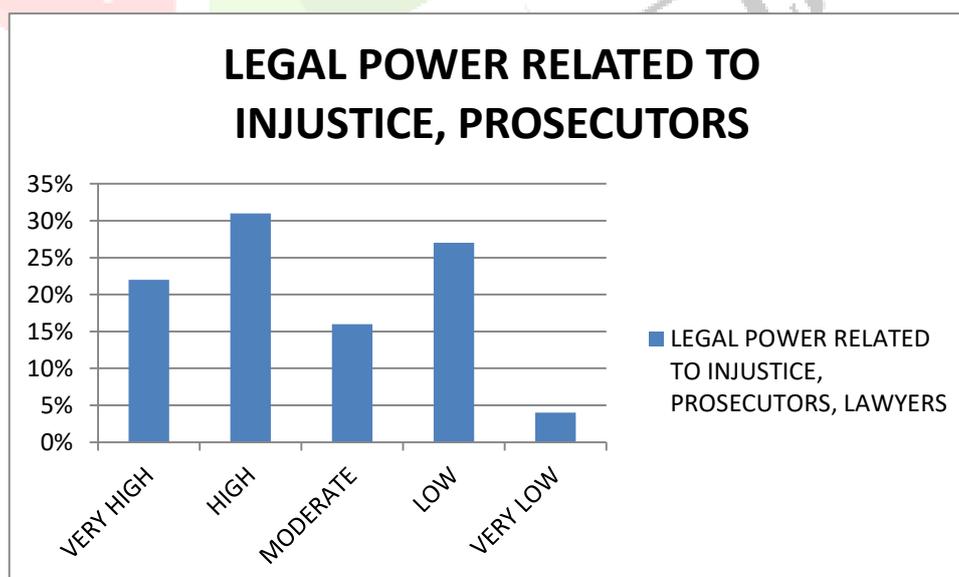
APPEAL LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	41	41%
HIGH	11	11%
MODERATE	16	16%
LOW	22	22%
VERY LOW	10	10%



In this age of internet, the effective use of the technology was important to tackle the menace of increasing crimes against women. It was important to make it convenient for the aggrieved to register complaint or to seek help from the concerned authorities. Our survey shows that appeal level was very high i.e. 41% which shows that women were aware about their rights and were appealing against violence, dowry, sexual harassment further 11% data shows high rate, moderate level shows 16% and low and very low level was 22% and 10% which indicate that still there were some women those don't appeal against any crime.

#### Legal power related to injustice, prosecutors

LEGAL POWER LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	22	22%
HIGH	31	31%
MODERATE	16	16%
LOW	27	27%
VERY LOW	4	4%

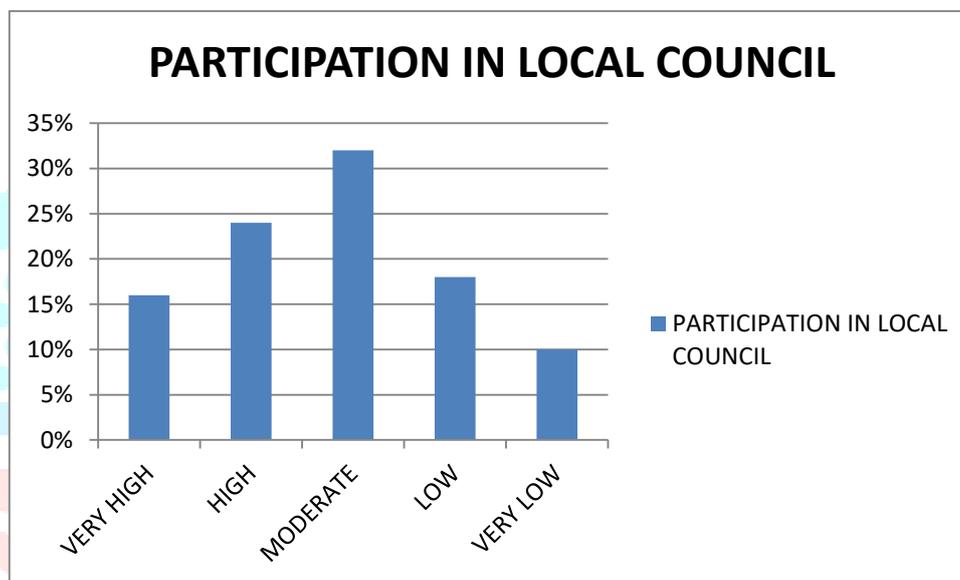


Survey indicates that there were 22% women respondents those show very high level of legal power where as 31% shows high legal power. Similarly moderate level was 16% and low and very low level was 27% and 4%. Different respondents show different level of legal power related to injustice, prosecutors, etc.

## Participation in local council by women

Women's political and socio-economic status improves when women become more involved in decision making and policy development at all levels of governance. Through their active involvement in community work and women's movements, local women politicians are fully aware of issues faced by women in their communities and are uniquely positioned to address them. The role of women in decision making has been addressed by various international agreements and conventions, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)

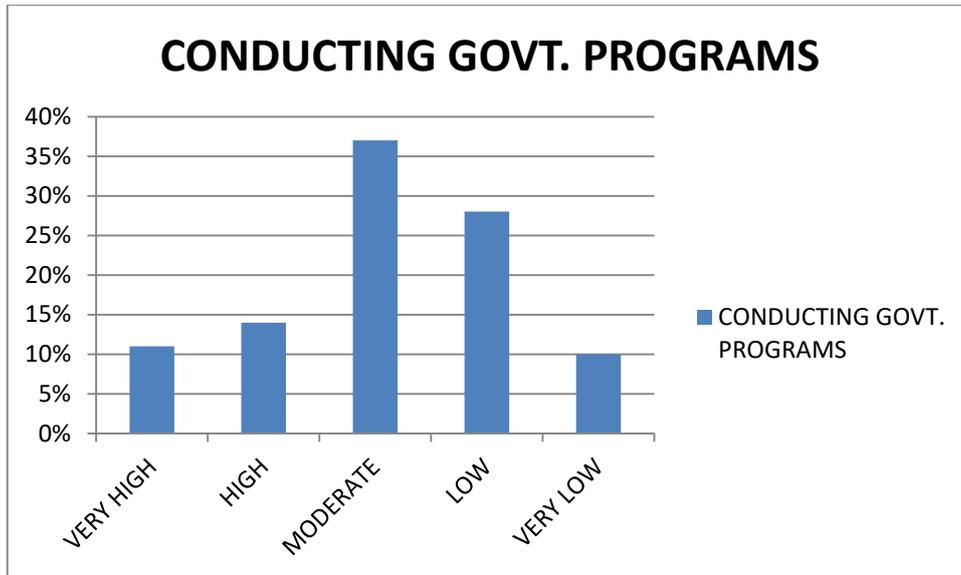
LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	16	16%
HIGH	24	24%
MODERATE	32	32%
LOW	18	18%
VERY LOW	10	10%



Survey shows that very high participation rate among women in local council is 16% where as 24% show high participation level. Moderate level was 32% which shows that level of participation by women in local council was that that much which is required for their empowerment level further low and very low level was restricted to 18% and 10%.

## Conducting govt. programs by women

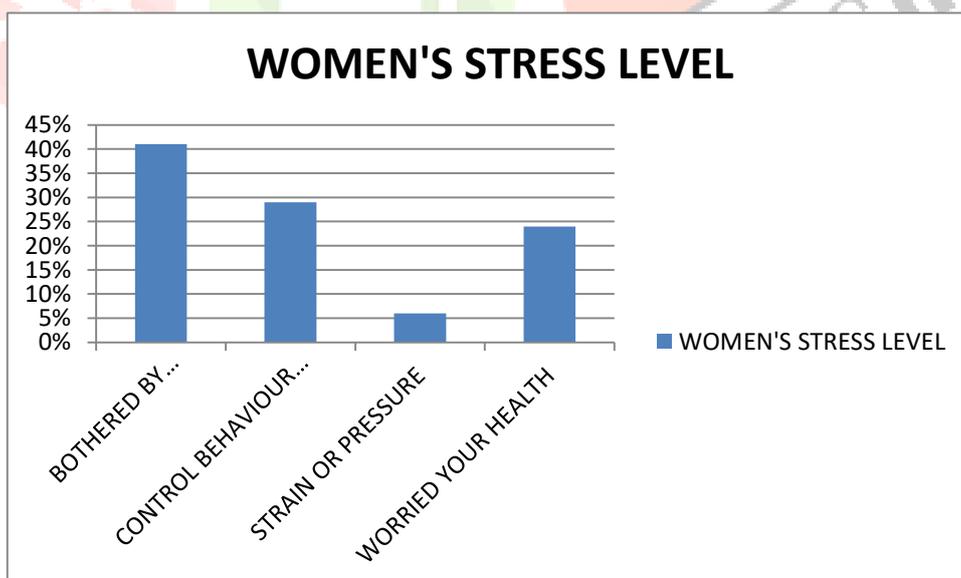
LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH	11	11%
HIGH	14	14%
MODERATE	37	37%
LOW	28	28%
VERY LOW	10	10%



Survey shows that women’s respondents rate conducting govt. programmes was not that much, low and very low level i.e. 28% and 10% shows that the conducting level by women was very low whereas very high and high i.e. 11% and 14% women shows that only this much women were involved in conducting various programs the percentage was very low. further 37% women conduct programmes at moderate level.

**Women’s stress level**

STRESS LEVEL	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
BOTHERED BY NERVOUSNESS	41	41%
CONTROL BEHAVIOUR THOUGHTS	29	29%
STRAIN OR PRESSURE	6	6%
WORRIED YOUR HEALTH	24	24%

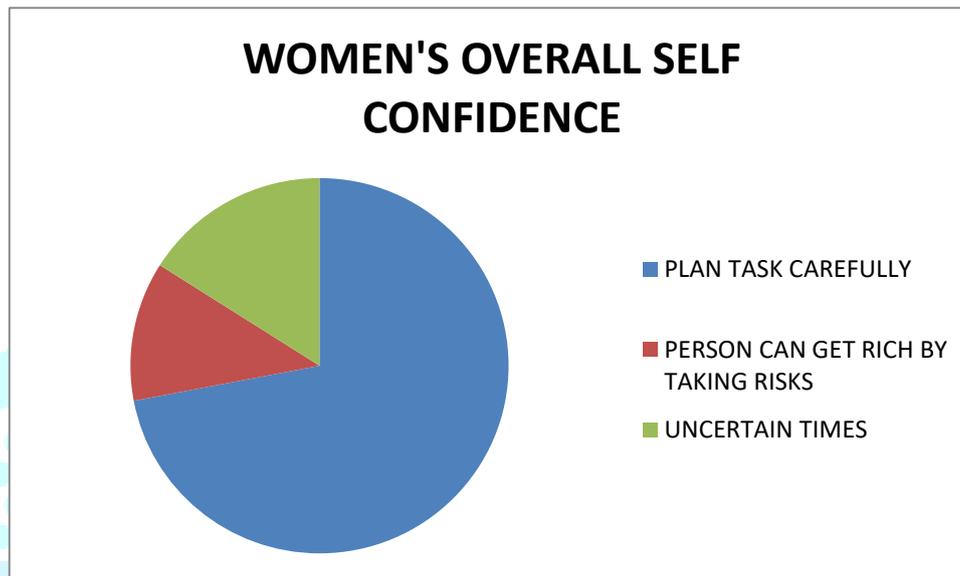


Women suffer considerably higher levels of work-related stress, anxiety and depression than men, with workplace sexism and familial responsibilities providing additional career pressures, a leading psychiatrist has said. It is seen that stress occurs because of many reasons. Survey shows that 41% women respondents were bothered by their nervousness level which is the main reason for their stress level, 29% don’t know how to control their behaviour thoughts action in different situation which again took a matter of stress. Further strain or pressure level was seen 6% among women’s which means that they have less pressure of doing any

type of work and 24% women were actually worried about their health related to different health issues among them. All these elements cause the high stress level among the women.

### Women's overall self-confidence

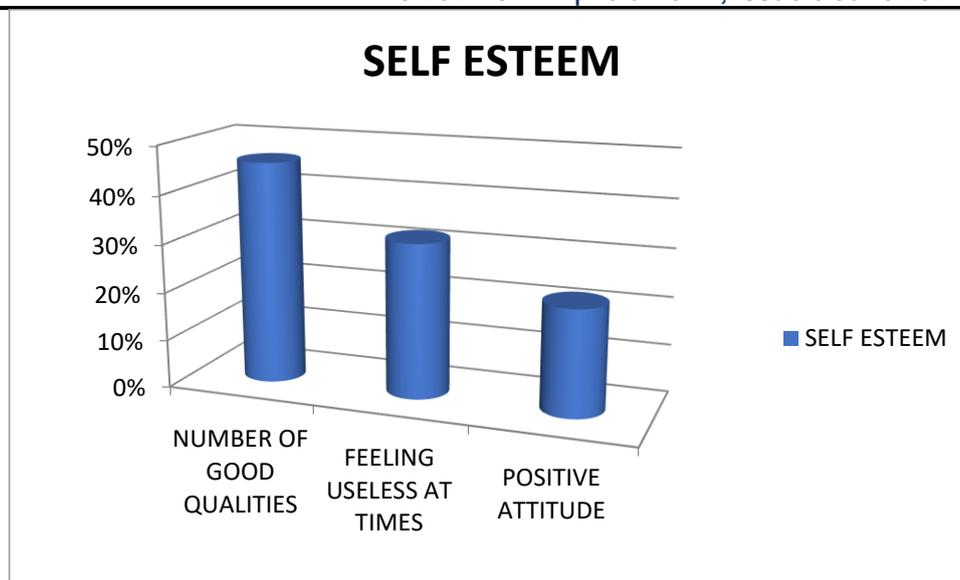
WOMENS SELF CONFIDENCE	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
PLAN TASK CAREFULLY	72	72%
PERSON CAN GET RICH BY TAKING RISKS	12	12%
IN UNCERTAIN TIMES USUALLY FEEL THE BEST	16	16%



Survey shows that 72% women respondents feel that they plan task carefully which boost up to their self-confidence level. 12% respondents feel that a person can get rich by taking risks whereas 16% women respondents feel best in uncertain times all these elements shows their overall self-confidence.

### Women's self esteem

SELF- ESTEEM	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
NUMBER OF GOOD QUALITIES	46	46%
FEELING USELESS AT TIMES	32	32%
POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THEMSELVES	22	22%



Self-esteem comes from the inside out. It means that a woman is not dependent upon anyone else to make her feel good about herself, because she already knows she's fine just the way she is. She is confident and aware of her strengths and abilities. She wants to share them with others. This does not mean she is conceited. She is also aware of areas needing work and growth. Survey shows that 46% women respondents have number of good qualities, 32% feel useless at different times and 22% women's show positive attitude towards themselves.

### Findings of the Study

The main findings of the study have been summarized as under –

1. The maximum numbers of respondents were in the age group of 40 -50 years which is a welcoming feature as it reveals that they are mature enough to take independent decision. This age group also realizes its responsibility towards family and society. Moreover, relatively more women perceived education as the most important motivational factor. This was mainly because education gives way to employment which enhances their status within family and outside family. This finding confirms that "Education enhances status and is a major step for empowerment of women".

2. Inadequate access to sanitation and hygiene disproportionately affects poor women as they are often faced with additional challenges related to menstrual hygiene, personal safety, sexual harassments and violence. Data revealed that the relatively more women were aware about their health and sanitation which is the most important motivational factor. This was mainly because health and sanitation play a key role in the effectiveness of prevention, disaster relief, reconstruction and transformation.

3. Women tend to choose different career paths than men. They're more likely to major in the humanities, which pay less than math and engineering degrees. Women are also less inclined to pick occupations with a high risk of workplace injuries. Data revealed that nearly 80% women were aware about their career and they were doing jobs in different fields which is a very good sign in development of the economy. However, their participation in voting, run for public offices and political parties was very low some of the respondents showed their interest in this otherwise all the women had shown disinterest in this field.

4. Data revealed that mostly all respondents receive good employment opportunities from government. there were very few respondents those were not getting good opportunities. It is also seen that the respondents those were employed have received the employment it is according to their educational level and they were not participating in any social programme nor any institution. Hardly 5% respondents used to participate in local institution rest of the respondents were not showing any interest in this filed. Moreover, no adequate response has been seen in running any type of institution like NGO and any school by women.

5. Majority of respondents fight against social violence through women forum and their percentage was also high as well as they have appealed against violence, dowry and sexual harassment, now the women are very much conscious about their rights against any crime and they were also reporting towards it.

6. Survey shows that 41% women respondents were bothered by their nervousness level which is the main reason for their stress level, 29% don't know how to control their behaviour thoughts action in different situation which again took a matter of stress. Further strain or pressure level was seen 6% among women which means that they have less pressure of doing any type of work and 24% women were actually worried about their health related to different health issues among them.

7. Results of present study reveal that overall 65 Percent of women were able to take decisions in their families regarding their family mailers, household budgeting, purchase of property etc. However, 35 percent women were not involved in decision making process. However, they have very good qualities but still they feel useless at different times and were not able to take decisions.

## Conclusion

Women Empowerment is not merely a slogan but a prerequisite for an optimal capacity for overall development of a family, society, nation and a sustainable world. The study has covered women education and their participation in different fields that how much they were involved in government functions receiving different employment opportunities from them and their social participation as well. Improvement has been reflected in achieving gender parity in the category of educational attainment, also showing improvement in social participation but showing a declining trend in political participation and opportunity as well as in health and survival segment. The results of the research indicates that access to employment of women have a positive impact on decision making power of women, access to and control over money and freedom of movement. Employment has been found to be the most important indicator of women empowerment in the study. However, it has also been found in the study that women were getting low employment opportunities from government which means that the employment which they were getting doesn't match their qualification or considerably they receive less opportunities this can be the reason. Further study shows the violation of women's fundamental rights through physical, mental, emotional, and sexual violence against women has become very common. Violence against women has taken particularly acute forms therefore women's forum has become active to solve these crimes. Survey shows that fighting against social violence through women's forum was very high. There is urgent need of reassessing the weak indicators, giving fresh impetus on empowering girls and women not only through conventional education but also hand holding for skill acquisition and providing them with equitable economic opportunity and also providing them with required medical and healthcare. The findings open up several avenues for policy discussion and intervention towards women empowerment.

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