

Women Empowerment and the Role of Women in Purchase Decision-Making: Exploring Linkages Through Systematic Review Of Literature

Sakshi Verma*

Research Scholar

Department of Commerce

Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi

Dr Soma Sengupta

Professor

Kamala Nehru College

University of Delhi

*Corresponding author- Address: C 151, First Floor, Dayanand Colony, Lajpat Nagar-4, New Delhi

Abstract

Nurturer, homemakers, CEOs and mothers. Multi-tasking and balancing their professional and personal lives, women across the world are gaining greater participation in all the spheres. Gender inequality is however still a reality both in developed and developing nations. Social, economic, technology and cultural factors have impact on the role played by women in public and private spheres. All these factors are also included in measuring women empowerment. Talking about the complex and dynamic area of empowerment, most of the studies links empowerment to financial independence. Very few studies explore the notion of women empowerment at individual level. Investigating the role played by women at household level is important to understand the power relations between men and women. Participation in decision-making is an important dimension for measuring empowerment. Examining the role played by women in their own household is helpful for businesses too as they will be able to identify the target market once they know who has the decision-making authority. This paper aims to study the available literature in the field of women empowerment and role of women in purchase decision-making. Systematic literature review is conducted using Scopus database and after screening 24 papers were selected out of 11998 papers. The study is limited to Indian households. After analysis we found that very few studies have researched about the household participation. A lot of scope exists to understand the role women play in purchase decision-making in their household and whether it leads to empowerment or not.

Keywords: Empowerment, Purchase decision-making, Systematic Literature Review, Women Empowerment

Date of Submission: 02-12-2022

Date of Acceptance: 14-12-2022

I. Introduction

Gender equality is an important goal not only for developing countries but for the entire globe. It finds its slot in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals too. Women constitute about half of world's population but are not blessed to receive equal opportunities for various reasons. Starting from literacy, school enrolment, pay, participation in decision-making, there are numerous indicators highlighting gender inequality.

There is a lot to discuss in respect of gender inequality, women empowerment, and their role in decision-making in public and private sphere. This paper aims to conduct systematic literature review to explore the work done in the field of women empowerment and the role of women in purchase decision-making in the households. For marketers, the first critical step is to identify the target market. With women controlling the domestic sphere they are expected to be the decision-makers for household purchases too. But do they really control the decision-making process? Or are the men the ultimate decision-makers in our patriarchal society? Decision-making is an important aspect of empowerment. Simplest way to understand empowerment is having the freedom to make life choices and take actions to pursue them. And hence we have explored the work done in the field of women empowerment to find out the studies linking it to decision-making in household.

OBJECTIVES

Systematic literature review is undertaken to identify and discuss research key contributions in a field and acts as guide for further research. The current study aims to review the work done in the field of women empowerment and the role of women in purchase decision-making with respect to Indian households. We then summarize the work done in this field and find gaps for future research.

RATIONALE

Women make up 49.5 per cent of the world's population but are left behind in most of the aspects of their life. If we assume equal participation and rights, no business can ignore such a huge segment. Literature shows that several researches have been conducted with respect to women covering in different aspects, across various cultures and during different time zones. Many of them give contrary findings and consensus is not found. For example, some reports suggest that the women drive the global economy and control around \$20 trillion consumer spendings annually. And on other hand, we have researches showing that women are responsible for majority of family duties but are not empowered to participate in decision-making. Some studies even state that women were supposed to do domestic work and just to look after children and had no participation in decision-making. (Baba, Zain, Idris, & Sanni, 2015; Singh, 2014). Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes (2007) concluded that women throughout the world face many social and cultural constraints, and many are discouraged from engaging in public decision-making processes altogether. The area is complex as it is dynamic, and the status of women is changing across the globe. Marketers cannot ignore this fact and thus is it necessary to understand the role played by women in the purchase decision-making in households. Since this could differ from culture to culture, we limit our study to India for concrete conclusions.

II. Methodology

We have used a three-phase methodology for the systematic review- A key-term search, title screen review and content review (Toles et al., 1993). The study focus is on India hence the search includes the research conducted on Indian households. We have used SCOPUS database to find the relevant articles. The studies published till 4 Jan 2022 are included. The detailed process of selection is shown in figure below:

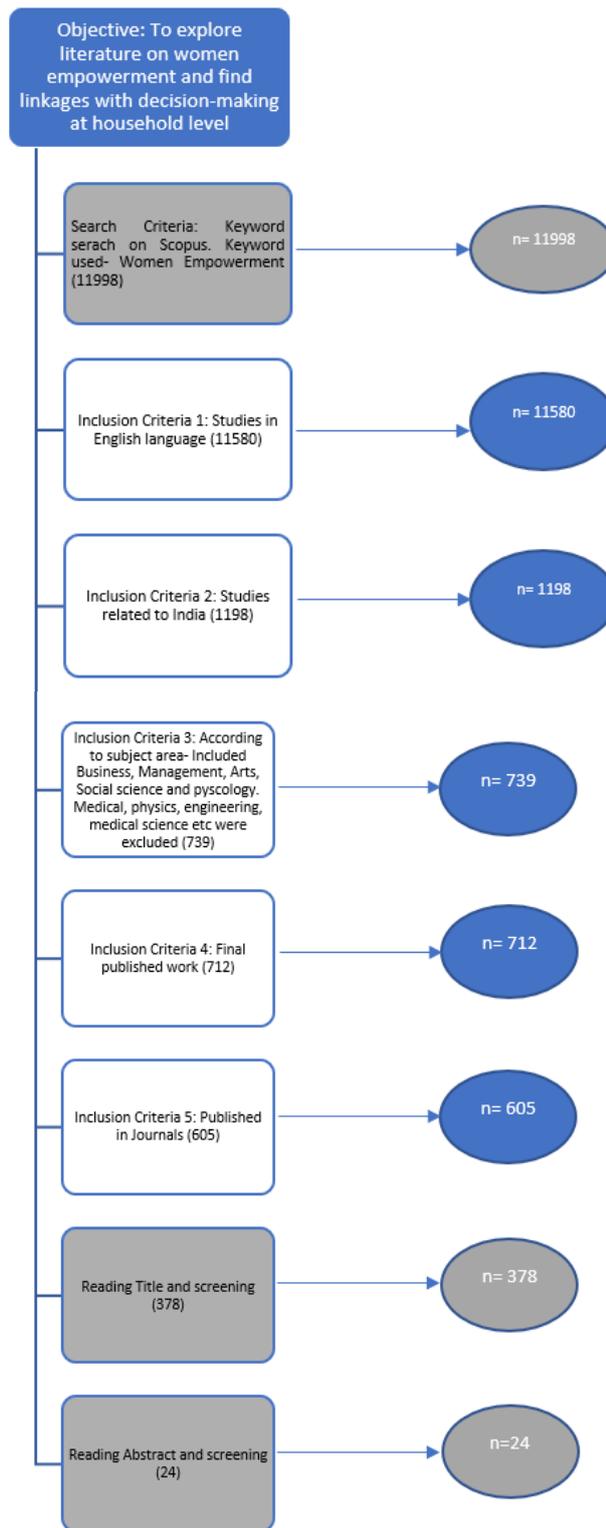


Figure 1: SLR Methodology- Women Empowerment

Figure 1: SLR Methodology- Women Empowerment

After the detailed screening, 24 papers were included for in-depth analysis. These studies included women empowerment in context of management in general.

III. Findings

Empowerment is generally linked to financial empowerment and a lot of studies hence focus on studying the impact of policies on women empowerment. Banerjee & Gosh (2012) have studied the impact of access to finance through Self-help Groups on women empowerment. They conducted a survey twice from women of SHG residing in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. Their findings are in line with previous studies in the area and concludes that access to financial services is crucial for economic productivity and the social well-being of the poor women, but it doesn't lead to empowerment automatically. Bonin et. al. (2021) have carried in-depth interview with rural women across 6 Indian states who were the beneficiaries of a woman empowerment intervention program. All the women respondents were engaged in traditional farming activities and had belonged to different social classes. The in-depth interviews helped them in developing an understanding regarding empowerment and factors contributing to it. The respondents revealed that the intervention gave them new insights and led to achievements, appreciation and in turn increased their happiness. Similarly Tagat (2020) concluded that MGNREGS had positive impact on the female decision-making in their households. This was on the basis micro level-data of 5 Indian states and was limited to rural households.

Gupta & Yesudian (2016) have constructed 4 indices using the data from Indian DHS Survey covering 90,303 married women from all the states of India. The four indices are for household autonomy, mobility, attitude towards gender and attitude towards domestic violence. These 4 indices are taken to measure different dimensions of empowerment. Also, studies measuring empowerment consider several elements but when it comes to measuring decision-making in household, the participation is judged by considering who is the head of the family. For example, the study of Kher et. al. (2017) have constructed a composite index to explore the status of men and women in India. They have included various components like HDI, GDI, GGI, GII, GEI, education index, health index, economic index to build their composite index. This study also represented decision-making in household only by taking into consideration who is heading the family. This may not reflect the role women play in household decision-making.

Many studies explore the impact of demographics on empowerment. Study of Visarai (2012) presents data from 14 countries of Asia Pacific region. Broadly it concluded that condition of women has improved significantly in context of literacy, enrolment rates, education, participation in formal economic activities. However, this analysis is at macro level, and it doesn't take into account the real situation of women at grassroot level. Singh et. al. (2018) have studied the impact of ICT on women empowerment. Based on their survey involving 643 females across 6 states, it was found that ICT helped women to exercise better control over their lives and hence they felt more independent. Touching the legal aspects, Dev & Kamath (2016) have discussed the relevance and flaws of the legal system in empowering women. They suggested that laws act as mean to bring social change, however, to establish gender justice, attack on gender stereotypes is needed.

IV. Conclusions

As we explore the available pool of literature, we see that women empowerment has different connotations. Household autonomy, attitude towards domestic violence, freedom to movement and participation in decision-making are the included in measuring empowerment. At macro level, financial independence is synonymous to empowerment. Hence most studies focus on studying linkages and impact of micro-finance and SHGs on empowerment. Only a few studies explore the role of women in the household's decisions. For example, Singh & Kaur (2004) in their study have emphasised not only on the participation of women but also to what extent their opinion is implemented or not. Their study included 100 farm households and explored the participation of women in farm and non-farm activities. Demographic factors such as age, job status of husband, economic condition of parental family and education. They found that cultural norms have significant impact on the level of participation and in most of the cases, collective decisions mean the women have supportive role while male takes the final call. The study also found that education, nuclear family set up and working women had greater influence. Such studies act as reality check and reflect the actual condition of women and their role in the households. Empowerment involves changes at community level too. This in turn requires mindset changes for both men and women. Not many studies talk about the men. A handful of them like Chowdhury & Patnaik (2010) have focussed on the importance of empowering men to achieve gender equality. To conclude, we found that empowerment and financial independence is a common area of research. Such studies conducted at macro-level fail to capture several other dimensions of empowerment. The studies exploring impact of institutional policies ignores the role of individual traits in the process of empowerment. Few studies also emphasized on the role of education and empowerment. We selected the articles related to empowerment in general and those related to household participation. No study was found which explored the role of women in purchase decision-making and women empowerment specifically. After in-depth analysis of the selected papers, we understand that decision-making in household is a complex area and has a lot of scope for researchers.

References

- [1]. Banerjee (Chatterjee), T., & Ghosh, C. (2012). What factors play a role in empowering women? A study of SHG members from India. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 16(3), 329-355. doi:10.1177/0971852412459431
- [2]. Bhatt, E. (1989). Toward empowerment. *World Development*, 17(7), 1059-1065. doi:10.1016/0305-750X(89)90168-X
- [3]. Biswas, C. S. (2008). Can employment empower women more at the household level in India? *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 3(7), 43-51. doi:10.18848/1833-1882/cgp/v03i07/52667
- [4]. Bonin, S., Ramesh, R., & Mohan, R. (2021). De-confining women! mental models pertaining to empowerment. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the International Conference on Gender Research, 71-78. doi:10.34190/IGR.21.084 Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [5]. Chakrabarti, S., & Biswas, C. S. (2012). An exploratory analysis of women's empowerment in India: A structural equation modelling approach. *Journal of Development Studies*, 48(1), 164-180. doi:10.1080/00220388.2011.615920
- [6]. Chowdhury, A., & Patnaik, M. M. (2010). Empowering boys and men to achieve gender equality in India. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 26(4), 455-471. doi:10.1177/0169796X1002600403
- [7]. Dev, S., & Kamath, V. (2016). Gender justice and women empowerment: Legal measures in India. *Journal of Dharma*, 41(2), 139-156. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [8]. Dhanamalar, M., Preethi, S., & Yuvashree, S. (2020). Impact of digitization on women's empowerment: A study of rural and urban regions in india. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(5), 107-112. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [9]. Gaba, A. K. (2011). Women empowerment through professional and technical programmes: A case study of IGNOU. *Distances Et Savoirs*, 9(1), 41-52. doi:10.3166/ds.9.41-52
- [10]. Gupta, K., & Yesudian, P. P. (2006). Evidence of women's empowerment in india: A study of socio-spatial disparities. *GeoJournal*, 65(4), 365-380. doi:10.1007/s10708-006-7556-z
- [11]. Kher, J., Aggarwal, S., & Punhani, G. (2017). Quantifying status of women and men in india at the subnational level. *Indian Journal of Human Development*, 11(3), 335-355. doi:10.1177/0973703018758411
- [12]. Lahiri, D., & Mitra, S. (2002). Who will empower the better half? social dynamics in operation. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 4(1), 43-65. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [13]. Menon, S., Ranjitha, M., & Sharma, S. (2020). A study on the status of women's empowerment in urban bangalore, india. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(5), 54-64. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [14]. Priyadarshini, A., Thiyagarajan, R., Kumar, V., & Radhu, T. (2017). Women empowerment towards developing india. Paper presented at the IEEE Region 10 Humanitarian Technology Conference 2016, R10-HTC 2016 - Proceedings, doi:10.1109/R10-HTC.2016.7906859 Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [15]. Roy, O., & Banerjee, J. (2017). Women labour force participation in indian patriarchal society: An empirical study of the behavioural, demographic, socio-cultural, economic and cyclical factors. *Man in India*, 97(2), 561-588. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [16]. Shalini, P., & Sudha, S. (2019). Antecedents of women empowerment in rural India. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, 8(3), 4503-4506. doi:10.35940/ijrte.C6812.098319
- [17]. Sharma, E., & Das, S. (2021). Integrated model for women empowerment in rural India. *Journal of International Development*, 33(3), 594-611. doi:10.1002/jid.3539
- [18]. Singh, B., & Kaur, L. (2004). Quantifying the extent and determinants of women's say in decision-making: A study in Amritsar district, Punjab. *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 59(1 SUPPL.), 54-60. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [19]. Singh, P. (2014). Empowerment of women in India: A multi-criteria decision making approach. *International Journal of Information and Decision Sciences*, 6(3), 293-314. doi:10.1504/IJIDS.2014.064442
- [20]. Singh, S., Singh, S., & Kumar, A. (2018). Women and ICT: A study on access and perceptions in north India. *Indian Journal of Human Development*, 12(3), 401-419. doi:10.1177/0973703018818588
- [21]. Singhal, D. (2014). Women empowerment through social initiatives: An Indian story. *DLSU Business and Economics Review*, 24(1), 35-44. Retrieved from www.scopus.com
- [22]. Tagat, A. (2020). Female matters: Impact of a workfare program on intra-household female decision-making in rural india. *World Development Perspectives*, 20 doi:10.1016/j.wdp.2020.100246
- [23]. Varghese, N., & Kumar, N. (2020). Femvertising as a media strategy to increase self-esteem of adolescents: An experiment in India. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 113 doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104965
- [24]. Visaria, L. (2012). Empowerment of women and its impact on population. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 27(1), 33-59. doi:10.18356/65b7f1c3-en

Sakshi Verma*, et. al. "Women Empowerment and the Role of Women in Purchase Decision-Making: Exploring Linkages Through Systematic Review Of Literature." *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 24(12), 2022, pp. 31-35.