

# Does Higher Education Influence on Women Empowerment? A Perceptual Study

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DoI: 10.23862/kiit-parikalpana/2023/v19/i1/220827

Date submitted: 07.09.2022; Revised: 4.5.2023

## Abstract

In today's world higher education is crucial not only as a source of knowledge but also as a means to increase one's employability. Even though this statement holds good for both men and women, higher education has a more predominant role in the life of woman because higher education not only promotes the financial stability of women but also boost self-confidence and independence in her personality. In order to understand to what extent higher education influences the various aspects of women empowerment namely Social, Psychological, Economic, Political and Educational, a perceptual study of women with higher education has been undertaken in Karnataka. A multiple regression analysis was used to check the influence of higher education on women empowerment and depicted the path analysis using Structured Equation Model. The study revealed that higher education significantly influences the overall empowerment of women and it also exhibited that there is no association between women's perception on overall empowerment among demographic parameter except monthly income.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Women Empowerment, Perception

## 1. Introduction

Mishra & Sam, (2016) has stated that empowerment is a process of change by which individuals or groups with little or no power attain the ability to make choices which affect their life. Women empowerment has gaining significance in discussion with reference to development and economies (Barra & Barra, 2019; Shiraz, 2016).women empowerment is a process by which women redefine what it is that they can be and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Higher education is the sum of systematized knowledge and practical skills that will help to solve problems utilizing the modern achievements of science, technology and culture (de Loenzien et al., 2021; Sudha et al., 2011).Higher education results in better utilization of human resources which archives quality of life A quality higher education especially for women can enhance many of the socio-economic indicators namely low birth rate, low infant mortality rate and higher life expectancy. Murtaza, (2012) found that higher education among young women drastically abridged the gender gap in employment and earnings.

## 2. Objective of the study

To know the impact of Higher education on women empowerment and also to know how Higher education influences the various components of women empowerment.

## 3. Review of Literature

### 3.0 Women Empowerment

As India's economy develops, more emphasis is being placed on social and human growth, particularly women's empowerment. Women's empowerment is indeed a key component of ensuring gender equality, in which men and women have equal access to schooling, childcare, economic activity, and self-improvement. Women empowerment can be measured in following aspects,

#### 3.1 Educational empowerment

Education can be a path breaker in women's liberation because it enables them to adapt to demands, confront their conventional roles, and transform their lives. Schooling is the most important method for transforming society's position since it eliminates inequality and serves as a way of strengthening their status with their families (Yadav et al., 2011).When Woman has higher education, she will acquire greater access to employment opportunities and enhance her capabilities to attain her own financial resources (Malik & Courtney, 2011)

#### 3.2 Economic empowerment

Women's status is inferior to that of men. Furthermore, it has been discovered that literacy is the single most significant element in educating women and paving the way for economic equality, which will boost women's status (Junussova et al., 2019).It's observed the fact women are capable to indulge themselves in

meaningful activity that will permit them financial freedom to some extent though it is difficult to attain in the initial stage (Lavanya & Ahmed, 2018).

### 3.3 Political empowerment

West, (2006) came out with the fact that women with education or sufficiently informed about their rights provided by the law and how to exercise them and thus be more active politically and take part equally in social and political decision-making processes. It is also observed that the development of the women witnessed a replication in the constitution of the India were in laws were enacted to exterminate the social evil of inequality, government sponsored programmes like Rural Mahila Mandals and local self-government and the demand for reservation in political institutions (Liu, 2017).

### 3.4 Psychological empowerment

Wayack Pambè et al., (2014) recognized that detriments of women freedom in India is a better educated woman who has higher bargaining power which is measured by physical mobility, a voice in household resource allocation through the channel of increased information.

### 3.5 Social empowerment

R. ganeshan & G.Anbalagan, (2018), identified that early marriage declines as girls obtain education and female education results in the decreases of infant and child mortality rates. The local sex ratio works through the spousal age ratio which influences marriage markets

and also household bargaining power (Neelakantan & Tertilt, 2008) Women's social inclusion and standing in society would increase if they receive a higher standard of education. Education teaches strong decision-making skills and management tools (Stark et al., 2018)

## 4. Research Methodology

Present study is descriptive in nature and it examined the impact of higher education on different level of women empowerment. The study conducted by taking higher educated women of Karnataka and in the study area (Karnataka) around 773561 women enrolled for higher education (UGC, 2018-19). Taro Yamune (1967) formula used to determine sample size and finalized with Sample size of 384 with 0.05 error. This study measured different level of measurement Such as Social Empowerment (SE), Economic Empowerment (EC), Political Empowerment (PE), Educational Empowerment (ED) and Psychological Empowerment (PS). Questionnaire developed in two-part, first part asking demographic details and second part asking questions related to empowerment. Each level of empowerment measured separately by asking questions with five-point Likert scale, five being Strongly Agree and 1 being Strongly Disagree. Questionnaire constructed with help of literature, where some of the statements are directly adapted (Yamuna,2013) and some with little modification. After

developing questionnaire, data were collected from five highly populated districts, namely Dakshina Kannada, Bangalore, Mysore, Dharwad and Gulbarga as a representative of entire Karnataka population. Questionnaire distributed randomly through google form in email, WhatsApp and personally (with help of friends and colleagues in each districts). Totally 435 responses are

collected and after data cleaning process researcher retained only 384 responses to analyze the data. After data cleaning and screening process, the responses are entered in SPSS 20 version. Before conducting descriptive analysis and inference analysis, researcher carried out Cronbach Alpha test to know the reliability of the data. The result of reliability test showed in Table No.1.

**Table No.1: Reliability Analysis**

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach Alpha Value
Social Empowerment	5	0.761
Economic Empowerment	5	0.805
Political Empowerment	4	0.811
Educational Empowerment	3	0.783
Psychological Empowerment	4	0.843
Overall Empowerment)	21	0.910

The table No.1 revealed that Social Empowerment (I=0.761), Economic Empowerment (I=0.805), Political Empowerment (I=0.811), Educational Empowerment (I=0.783), Psychological Empowerment (I=0.843) and Overall Empowerment (I=0.910), Since Cronbach Alpha value is more than 0.6 therefore, we can conclude that the opinion given by respondents are reliable.

#### 4.0 Data Analysis and Interpretation

##### 4.1 Demographic Profile of the respondents:

The demographic details help the reader to understand the nature of respondents and distribution of respondents based on age, educational qualifications, employment of the respondents,

employment status, marital status and monthly income. The researcher collected responses from all groups of respondents and precautions were taken while selecting sample units. The demographic details of the respondents were given in Table No.2.

**Table No.2: Demographic details of respondents**

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-square Value or fisher's exact value	P value
Age	20-29	185	48.18	95.220	.151
	30-39	120	31.25		
	Above 40	79	20.57		
Educational Qualification	UG	203	52.86	148.736	.057
	PG	150	39.06		
	M.Phil. or Ph.D.	20	5.21		
	Other	11	2.86		
Employment Status	Government Employed	21	5.468	190.752	.075
	Private Employed	151	39.32		
	Self Employed	43	11.20		
	Unemployed	139	36.20		
	Other	30	7.81		
Marital Status	Married	182	47.39	101.131	.075
	Single	198	51.56		
	Divorced or Separated	4	1.04		
Monthly Income	No Income	145	37.76	208.589	.000
	Below Rs.10000	92	23.96		
	Rs.10001-25000	82	21.35		
	Rs.25001-Rs.50000	42	10.94		
	Above Rs.50000	23	5.98		

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The Table No.1 exhibits that majority of the respondents (48.18%) are between age group of 20-29, followed by age group of 30-39 (31.25%). Table showed that 52.86% of the respondents completed their graduation and 39.06%

of the women completed their post-graduation. Majority of the higher educated women (39.32%) working in private sector organization and only 5.46% of the higher educated women working in the government sector.

The table exhibits that majority of the higher educated women (37.76%) are not earning any income and 23.96% of the respondents are earning less than Rs.10000 per month. The table also examined the association between higher educated women's perception on overall empowerment among demographic parameters. It revealed that there is no significant association between perception on overall empowerment among demographic parameter ( $P>0.05$ ) except monthly Income. The mean and standard deviation among groups showed that low-income women

(Below Rs.10000) are strongly agree that higher education helps to overall empowerment of the women.

#### 4.2 Perception on Social Empowerment

Social empowerment of women means strengthening women's social relationships and her position in the society. The researcher is interested to know the opinion of women about impact of higher education on social empowerment and result depicted in Table No.3.

**Table No.3: Descriptive Analysis of Social Empowerment**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Higher education helps to attain Social Status	384	4.48	.733	39.474	.000
Higher educated women get respect from family	384	3.86	.897	18.767	.000
Higher educated women can influence to eradicate social evils like eve-testing, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc	384	3.74	.932	15.653	.000
Higher educated women question the domestic violence	384	4.16	.798	28.516	.000
High educated women actively involved in Social activities.	384	4.26	.754	32.741	.000
Overall Social Empowerment	384	4.1005	.59114	36.481	.000

Source: Field Survey,2021

Table No.3 revealed that respondents strongly agree that higher education helps them in getting good status in society ( $4.48\pm 0.733$ ) and they agree that it also help them to get respect from their family members ( $3.86\pm 0.897$ ). The

respondents agreed that higher education to women helps to eliminate social evils ( $3.74\pm 0.932$ ) and respondents strongly agree that higher education gives courage to question domestic violence ( $4.16\pm 0.798$ ).The respondents strongly

agree that women with higher education involve more in social activities than other literate women ( $4.26 \pm 0.754$ ) and the overall mean and standard deviation are  $4.10 \pm 0.59$  which indicates that the respondents strongly agree that higher education helps them to attain social empowerment. The Table No.3 also exhibits one sample t test to know the mean of opinion given by respondents which significantly differ from population mean (3 for five-point Likert scale), which showed that all statements significantly differ from mean. So we can conclude that the opinion given by respondents are statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### 4.3 Perception on Economic Empowerment

Anne Mariegolla (2011) stated that economic empowerment of women means that they realize their rights and achieve broader development goals and financial independence. With this intention researcher is interested to know whether women from Karnataka have the same opinion. Therefore, researcher asked questions related to economic empowerment and their responses are tabulated in Table No.4.

**Table No.4: Descriptive Analysis of Economic Empowerment**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Women who have higher education earn income through business, Job or any other source.	384	4.55	.594	51.027	.000
Higher educated females have financial freedom than other literate women	384	4.06	.835	24.827	.000
Higher educated can understand and perform banking transaction than other women.	384	4.39	.746	36.507	.000
Higher educated women are much aware of various investment avenues	384	4.25	.769	31.919	.000
Higher educated women understand and access easily various loan schemes	384	4.16	.738	30.700	.000
Overall Economic Empowerment	384	4.2807	.55491	45.227	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table No.4 revealed that respondents are strongly agree that women with higher education earn own income through perusing a job, running a

business or any other sources than other women ( $4.55 \pm 0.594$ ) and they opined that higher educated women are more independent financially than other



women ( $4.06 \pm 0.835$ ). The respondents strongly agree that higher educated women perform and understand banking transaction better than other women ( $4.39 \pm 0.746$ ) and they opined that women with higher educated women have more knowledge about savings and investment avenues than other women ( $4.25 \pm 0.769$ ). The respondents also strongly agree that higher educated women understand the procedure of accessing loan and they get loan easily when compared to other women ( $4.16 \pm 0.738$ ) and the overall mean and standard deviation of  $4.28 \pm 0.55$  explains that respondents strongly agree that economic empowerment of women is facilitated through higher education. The one sample t test result showed that all opinions given by respondents significantly differ from

mean, therefore we can conclude that respondents' perception about economic empowerment is statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

#### 4.4 Perception on Political Empowerment

Political empowerment of women means the existence of a political system which favors the participation and control by the women in political decision making and also in governance. Women's participation in political events has increased in recent days and women are understand their rights in society. In order to know whether higher education aids them to attain political empowerment, researcher asked respondents about the same and the results have been exhibited in Table No.4.

**Table No.4: Descriptive Analysis of Political Empowerment**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Higher educated register their name for election and lead political parties	384	3.98	.830	23.238	.000
Higher educated women are competent leader and committed in political field	384	4.10	.760	28.414	.000
Higher educated women understand legal laws very easily	384	3.99	.901	21.465	.000
Higher educated women actively involve political campaign for social cause	384	3.73	.905	15.853	.000
Total Political Empowerment	384	3.9512	.67961	27.42	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2021



Table No.4 explains respondents agree that higher educated women register more to compete as candidates in election and can lead political parties ( $3.98 \pm 0.930$ ) and they strongly believe that higher educated women are competent and work committedly in political field ( $4.10 \pm 0.760$ ). The respondents agree that they understand legal proceedings very easily ( $3.99 \pm 0.901$ ) and take active participation in political campaign ( $3.73 \pm 0.905$ ). The overall mean and standard deviation are  $3.95 \pm 0.67$ , which indicates that respondents agree that higher education helps them to achieve political empowerment. The result of one sample t test showed that

all opinions given to all statements significantly differ from mean. Since p value is less than 0.01. So the opinion of respondents is statistically significant.

#### 4.5 Perception on Educational Empowerment

Educational empowerment means enabling women to attain the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to increase their employability and participate in the development process. To understand the perception of women on educational empowerment and the influence of higher education to attain it, researcher gathered opinions and represented in Table No.5

**Table No.5: Descriptive Analysis of Educational Empowerment**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Providing higher education to women helps in building nation	384	4.13	.834	26.625	.000
Educated women show more self-assurance and social endorsement in the progress of community	384	4.25	.725	33.700	.000
Higher education brings environmental awareness and protection among women	384	4.23	.767	31.339	.000
Overall Educational Empowerment	384	4.2023	.64850	36.329	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table No.5 showed that respondents strongly agree that providing higher education to women helps in building nation ( $4.13 \pm 0.834$ ) and also in building self-confidence and social endorsement in the progress of community ( $4.25 \pm 0.725$ ). The respondents strongly agree that

higher education brings environment awareness among women ( $4.23 \pm 0.767$ ) and the overall mean and standard deviation are  $4.20 \pm 0.65$  which indicates that respondents strongly agree that higher education helps to education empowerment of women and the result

of one sample t test proved opinions are statistically significant.

#### 4.6 Perception on Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment means women attaining qualities like self-

motivation, self-confidence and drive for achievement which can bring about growth in their personality. In order to know whether higher education strengthen mental ability of women, researcher asked question to respondents and results are depicted in Table No.6.

**Table No.6: Descriptive Analysis on Psychological Empowerment**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Higher education has made women to be more confident to vocalize their problems to the concerned authority	384	4.27	.712	35.036	.000
Obligation and capability are high among the higher educated women	384	4.13	.757	29.256	.000
Higher educated women have significant autonomy in decision making at home and workplace	384	4.08	.811	26.063	.000
Higher education trained women to face crisis management	384	4.07	.792	26.418	.000
Total Psychological Empowerment	384	4.137	.63398	35.155	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table no.5 exhibits that respondents strongly agree that higher educated women raise voice for their problem and do not hesitate to complain about the same to the concerned department ( $4.27 \pm 0.712$ ) and they have high obligation and capability ( $4.13 \pm 0.757$ ). It showed that higher educated women take decision independently both in home and at workplace ( $4.08 \pm 0.811$ ) and they are mentally trained to face crisis management ( $4.07 \pm 0.792$ ). The overall mean and standard deviation are  $4.137 \pm 0.633$  which explains that

respondents strongly agree that higher education facilitate psychological empowerment and the result of one sample t test confirmed statistical significance.

#### 4.8 Structural Equation Model for Impact of Higher Education on Women Empowerment

Structured equation model helps to confirm the theories with empirical data and it evaluates the validity of theories. SEM shows relationship between independent variable and dependents

variable by following confirmatory approach. The figure no.1 shows proposed model of relationship between different levels of empowerment and the outcome of women empowerment.

Multiple regression analysis conducted to check impact and tried to fit the model. The figure No.1 shows path analysis and confirmatory factor analysis.

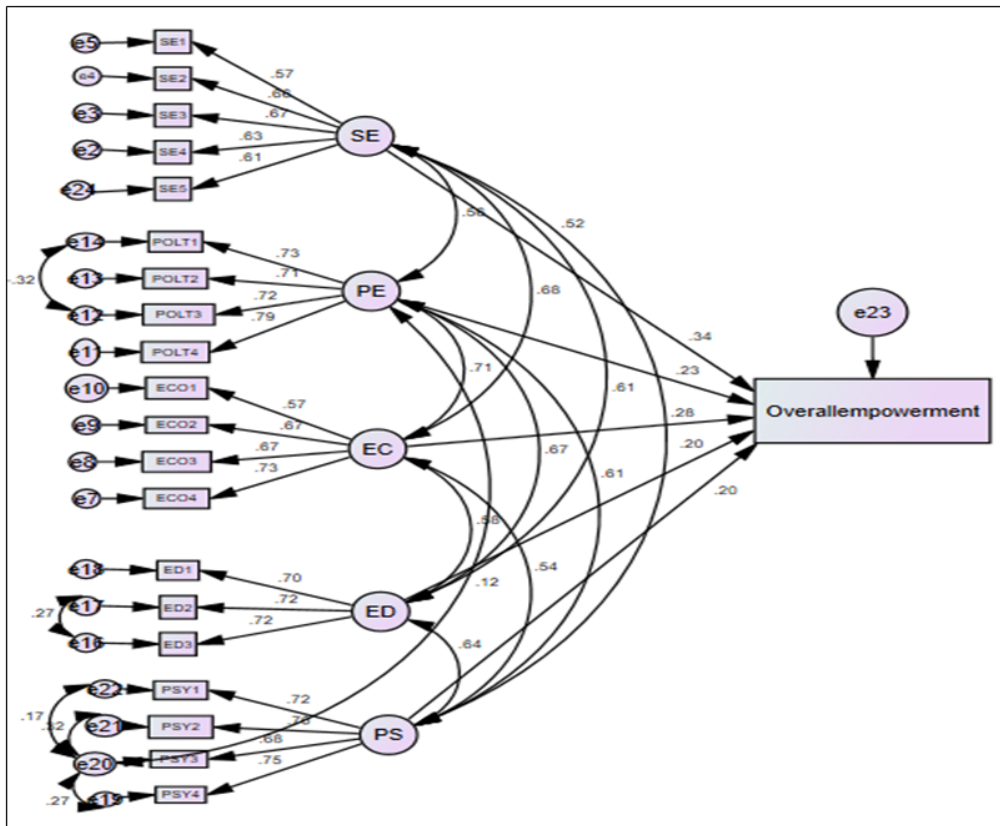


Figure No.1: Model to measure Influence of Higher education on Overall Empowerment

Firstly, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to know the loading of each statements on respective factors. In that process researcher choose to eliminate statements which load less than 0.5. Therefore researcher eliminated fifth statement in Political empowerment (POLT5) in PE factor. Then run analysis to fit the proposed model and result of model is given in Table No.8.

**Table No.8 Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)**

		Estimate	p
SE4	<---	SE	.627 ***
SE3	<---	SE	.666 ***
SE2	<---	SE	.659 ***
SE1	<---	SE	.568 ***
ECO4	<---	EC	.728 ***

			Estimate	p
ECO3	<---	EC	.668	***
ECO2	<---	EC	.674	***
ECO1	<---	EC	.569	***
POLT4	<---	PE	.792	***
POLT3	<---	PE	.719	***
POLT2	<---	PE	.712	***
POLT1	<---	PE	.732	***
ED3	<---	ED	.720	***
ED2	<---	ED	.722	***
ED1	<---	ED	.696	***
Overall empowerment	<---	SE	.344	***
Overall empowerment	<---	PE	.230	***
Overall empowerment	<---	EC	.280	***
Overall empowerment	<---	ED	.196	***
PSY4	<---	PS	.749	***
PSY3	<---	PS	.685	***
PSY2	<---	PS	.700	***
PSY1	<---	PS	.719	***
Overall empowerment	<---	PS	.197	***
SE5	<---	SE	.607	***

The table No.8 indicates standardized regression weights of each path, which revealed that Social empowerment through higher education significantly influence 34.4% on overall empowerment, Political empowerment

through higher education significantly influence 23% on overall empowerment, Economic empowerment significantly influence 28% on overall empowerment, Educational empowerment through higher education significantly influence 19.6% on overall empowerment and Psychological empowerment through higher education significantly influence 19.7% on overall empowerment. Since all standardized regression value statistically significant, it has been concluded that higher education influence women empowerment. This result also showed in path diagram and its goodness of fit measured with GFI (0.898), AGFI (0.860), CMIN/DF (2.747), CFI (0.945) and RMSEA (0.068). All these fit indices of model showed perfect for good model as stated by Browne and Cudeck (1992).

## 5. Conclusion

From the study it has been found out that higher education contributes to the various aspects of women empowerment. Therefore, it is suggested to the concerned policy makers to come up with necessary policies, which can ensure quality higher education to each and every woman of the country. A paradigm shift from the male dominated society to a society where there is gender parity can only promote the balanced and overall development of the nation.

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