

Awareness and Knowledge Regarding Women Empowerment Among Rural Women in Gurugram, Haryana

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Abstract

Background: Women's empowerment is a key determinant of social and economic development. Despite several governmental initiatives, rural women in India continue to face challenges related to awareness of their rights, legal provisions, and participation in decision-making. This study assessed the level of awareness and knowledge regarding women's empowerment among rural women in Gurugram, Haryana, and examined its association with socio-demographic factors.

Methods: A community-based cross-sectional study was conducted among 250 women aged 18–60 years residing in five randomly selected villages of Farrukhnagar block, Gurugram, Haryana. Participants were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews using a pre-tested structured questionnaire covering socio-demographic characteristics, awareness of women's rights, political participation, and empowerment indicators. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square test, with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant.

Results: Among the participants, 73.6% had heard about women's empowerment, 82.4% were aware of equal property inheritance rights, and 58.4% knew the legal age of marriage for girls. However, awareness of women's helpline numbers (11.6%), reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions (3.6%), and government schemes for girls (45.2%) was low. Although 83.6% possessed voter identity cards and 81.2% had exercised their voting rights, only 8.4% had participated in political rallies. Overall, 67.2% of participants demonstrated inadequate awareness, while none achieved an adequate awareness score. Educational status showed a statistically significant association with knowledge regarding women's empowerment ($\chi^2 = 63.349$, $p < 0.01$), whereas age, marital status, family type, family income, family size, and number of children were not significantly associated.

Conclusion: Awareness regarding women's empowerment among rural women remains inadequate despite satisfactory electoral participation. Educational attainment emerged as the strongest determinant of awareness. Strengthening female education and implementing targeted community-based awareness programmes on legal rights, government welfare schemes, and political participation are essential to improve women's empowerment in rural Haryana.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Awareness, Rural women, Knowledge, Education, Political participation, Haryana, Community-based study.

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Introduction

The status of women in society has always been a subject for great change in India. Women used to enjoy equal rights and freedom as men in the early Vedic period. Same goes with Rig Veda and Upanishad; later the status of women started to deteriorate approximately from 500 BC. And the situation got even worse from the emperor of the Mughals.¹

Empowerment is a word which means the ones without power to get greater opportunities and get control over their lives which include control on ideology, material assets and intellectual resources.

Another definition of empowerment is a process of awareness and constellations like greater participation leading to effective decision making.² The women empowerment is a process in which women become able to increase their own self sufficient to make their independent decisions and control over elements which eliminate their own inferiority.² The need for this empowerment was felt a long time back in the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Education, religion and social reform enormous effort to diffuse rituals like Sati. Many Bengali champions like Ishwar Chandra uplifted the level of women after Mahatma Gandhi announced

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the establishment of a political society which will provide equal opportunity for women as men.¹ Empowering women also leads women to live in dignity and in freedom. Empowerment is mainly associated with feminist and empowerment does not mean power it mainly mean improvement of a standard, knowledge and condition.³ Quantitative indicator mainly includes demographic change like girl child life expectancy at birth average, marriage age, fertility rate, sex ratio, maternal mortality ratio etc. Other quantitative indicators are change in nutritional status and change in literacy enrollment, change in participation level of women in politics, numerical data of women participation in different programmes. The main objective of women empowerment is equal opportunity as compared to men in all directions like health, political participation, decision making and violence etc.⁴

Material and Methods

Study Design and Setting

A community-based cross-sectional study was conducted under the aegis of Shree Guru Gobind Singh Tricentenary (SGT) University, Budhera, Gurugram, Haryana, India. SGT University is located on Badli Road in the rural area of Gurugram district. Among the four rural blocks of Gurugram district (Pataudi, Sohna, Gurugram, and Farrukhnagar), Farrukhnagar block was selected for convenience due to its proximity to the university. The block has a population of 188,660 and comprises 49 villages. Five villages were selected randomly for the study. Health services in the block are provided through a Community Health Centre (CHC) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs). The study was conducted in the selected villages under CHC Farrukhnagar.

Study Population and Sample Size

The study population included married, divorced, and widowed women aged 18–60 years residing in the selected villages. The sample size was calculated using the prevalence (17%) of rural women who worked in the last 12 months and were paid in cash, as reported in the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) Haryana data.

The sample size was estimated using the formula:

$$N = Z^2pq / d^2$$

Where:

- N = Sample size
- Z = 1.65

- p = Prevalence (17%)
- q = 1 – p
- d = Absolute error (5%)

The calculated sample size was 226. To improve representativeness, a total of 250 women were included in the study.

Sampling Technique

Five villages were selected through simple random sampling from the 49 villages of Farrukhnagar block. From each selected village, 50 eligible women were recruited using random sampling techniques, resulting in a total sample of 250 participants.

Study Tool and Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews using a pre-designed and pre-tested interview schedule. The questionnaire included information on socio-demographic characteristics and various dimensions of women's empowerment. Prior permission was obtained from the university authorities and local village panchayat leaders before commencement of the study.

Statistical Analysis

Data collected from the field were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data. The Chi-square test was applied to determine associations between socio-demographic variables and indicators of women's empowerment. A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

The study was conducted in field practice area under the SGT university of Gurugram district. A total of 250 women's in the age group of 18-51 above year were included in the study using simple random sampling technique. Participant interviewing was taken into consideration.

Table.1. Socio-demographic variable(N=250)			
	Variable	Frequency	Percent age
Age	20-30	95	38 %
	31-40	89	35.6 %
	41-50	37	14.8 %
	51 above	29	11.6 %
Religion	Hindu	250	100 %
	Muslim	0	0 %
	Sikh	0	0 %

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Table.2. Level of Awareness (Knowledge)(N=250)	Yes	No
CM of Haryana	40.8%	59.2%
President of India	13.6%	86.4%
Knowledge regarding Women Empowerment	73.6%	26.4%
Reservation of seats for women in Panchayat raj	3.6%	96.4%
Girls Legal age of marriage	58.4%	41.6%
Government scheme for Girls	45.2%	54.8%
Know the location of police station	68.4%	31.6%
Action taken if any women being harassed for dowry	46.4%	53.6%
Aware of Any helpline number	11.6%	88.4%
Transfer of property to male and female of female equally	82.4%	17.6%

	Christian	0	0 %
	Others	0	0 %
Marital status	Widow	23	9.2 %
	Divorcee	2	0.8 %
	Husband alive	225	90 %
Type of family	Nuclear	65	26%
	Joint	185	74%
	Others	0	0%
Total family member	Below 5	51	20.4%
	05-10.00	168	67.2%
	above 10	31	12.4%
No. of child	No child	16	6.4%
	one child	56	22.4%
	two child	81	32.4%
	more than two child	97	38.8%
Family income	Below 1.8 lakh /annum	136	54.4%
	1.8-2.5 lakh /annum	93	37.2%
	2.5lakh-5lakh /annum	17	6.8%
	above 5 lakh /annum	4	1.6%
Educ ation	Illiterate	45	18%
	Literate	10	4%
	Primary (Up to 5)	32	12.8%

	Secondary (upto10	83	33.2%
	Higher secondary(upto12)	47	18.8%
	Graduate and above	33	13.2%

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the 250 study participants. Most women were aged 20–30 years (38.0%), followed by 31–40 years (35.6%). All participants were Hindu. The majority had living husbands (90.0%), while 9.2% were widows and 0.8% were divorced.

Nearly three-fourths of the women belonged to joint families (74.0%), and most households had 5–10 family members (67.2%). More than one-third of the participants (38.8%) had more than two children, whereas only 6.4% had no children.

Over half of the respondents (54.4%) reported an annual family income below ₹1.8 lakh, indicating a predominantly low-income population. Regarding education, secondary schooling was the most common educational level (33.2%), while 18.0% of women were illiterate and 13.2% had attained graduation or higher education.

Table 2 depicts the level of awareness among the study participants regarding women's rights and

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empowerment. Nearly three-fourths of the women (73.6%) had heard about women empowerment, while 82.4% were aware that property should be equally inherited by male and female children. Knowledge regarding the legal age of marriage for girls was reported by 58.4% of respondents.

Awareness of support systems and government initiatives was comparatively lower. Less than half of the participants knew about government schemes for girls (45.2%) or the appropriate action to be taken in cases of dowry harassment (46.4%). Although 68.4% knew the location of the nearest police station, only 11.6% were aware of women's helpline numbers.

Knowledge of political and governance-related issues was particularly poor, with only 40.8% knowing the Chief Minister of Haryana, 13.6% identifying the President of India, and merely 3.6% being aware of reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj institutions.

Table.3. Voting Rights(N=250)		
Political	Frequency	Percentage
Ever participated in political rally		
Yes	21	8.4%
No	229	91.6%
Ever participated in Community meeting		
Yes	190	76%
No	60	24%
Have voter ID		
Yes	209	83.6%
No	41	16.4%
Ever Voted		
Yes	203	81.2%
No	47	18.8%

Table 3 highlights the political participation of the study participants. A large majority of women possessed a voter ID card (83.6%) and had exercised their voting rights at least once (81.2%), indicating good electoral participation. Furthermore, more than three-fourths (76.0%) had participated in community meetings.

However, active involvement in political activities remained limited, with only 8.4% of women reporting participation in political rallies. These findings suggest that while electoral engagement among women was high, their direct involvement in political processes and leadership activities was comparatively low.

Table.4. Scoring of Awareness, Social Status and Personnel Status of Study Participants (N=250)		
Score	Frequency	Percentage
Knowledge/Awareness		
Adequate	0	0%
Moderate	82	32.80%
Inadequate	168	67%
Social Status		
Higher social status	1	0.4%
Medium social status	73	29.2%
Low social status	176	70.4%
Personnel		
Adequate	214	85.6%
Moderate	35	14%
Inadequate	1	0.4%

Table 4 presents the composite scores for awareness, social status, and personal status among the study participants. More than two-thirds of the women (67.2%) demonstrated inadequate awareness regarding women's empowerment, while 32.8% had a moderate level of awareness. None of the participants achieved an adequate awareness score.

With regard to social status, the majority of women (70.4%) belonged to the low social status category, whereas 29.2% had a medium social status. Only 0.4% of participants were classified as having a high social status.

In contrast, personal status scores were encouraging, with 85.6% of women demonstrating adequate personal status and only 0.4% falling into the inadequate category. These findings indicate that despite relatively positive personal status, substantial gaps persist in awareness and social empowerment among rural women.

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Table.5. Association between knowledge and socio economic and demographic variables (N=250)						
		Knowledge				
Socio - demographic variable		Inadequate	Moderate	Adequate	Chi-sq	P-value
Age	20-30	57	37	1	11.201	0.082
	30-40	57	28	4		
	40-50	30	6	1		
	50 above	23	6	0		
Marital Status	Widow	18	5	0	2.133	0.711
	Divorced	1	1	0		
	Husband live	148	71	6		
Type of Family	Nuclear	40	22	3	2.425	0.297
	Joint	127	55	3		
Total member	Below 5	31	18	2	4.099	0.393
	5-10	111	53	4		
	above 10	25	6	0		
No. of Child	Nil	13	3	0	7.629	0.297
	One	34	22	0		
	Two	50	28	3		
	Or more than 3	70	24	3		
Total family income	Below 1.8 lakh	99	35	2	8.775	0.187
	1.8-2.5 lakh	55	35	3		
	2.5 lakh-5 lakh	9	7	1		
	Above 5 lakh					

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Education	Illiterate	41	4	0
	Just literate	8	2	0
	Primary	28	4	0
	Secondary	56	27	0
	Higher secondary	25	21	1
	Graduate and above	9	19	5
63.349				
0.01*				

Table 5 shows the association between knowledge scores and socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Educational status was found to be significantly associated with knowledge regarding women's empowerment ($\chi^2 = 63.349$, $p < 0.01$). Women with higher educational attainment, particularly graduates and above, demonstrated better knowledge levels compared to those with lower educational qualifications.

No statistically significant association was observed between knowledge scores and age ($p = 0.082$), marital status ($p = 0.711$), type of family ($p = 0.297$), family size ($p = 0.393$), number of children ($p = 0.297$), or family income ($p = 0.187$).

These findings suggest that education is a key determinant of awareness and knowledge related to women's empowerment, while other socio-demographic factors showed no significant influence.

Table.6. Association between Education and knowledge(N=250)				
		Knowledge		
		Inadequate	Moderate	Adequate
Education	Illiterate	41	4	0
	Just literate	8	2	0
	Primary	28	4	0
	Secondary	56	27	0
	Higher secondary	25	21	1
	Graduate and above	9	19	5

Table 6 explains knowledge levels showed a significant positive trend with increasing educational attainment. Inadequate knowledge was highest among illiterate participants (41) and progressively decreased with higher education levels. Adequate knowledge was observed only among participants with higher secondary education (1) and graduate-level education or above (5), with graduates demonstrating the highest proportion of adequate knowledge. Moderate knowledge was also more prevalent among participants with higher educational qualifications. These findings suggest that educational status plays an important role in improving women's knowledge and awareness.

DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out to know the status and awareness of rural married women regarding women empowerment in district Gurugram, Haryana. Various variables (Political, Educational, Economical, Spouse violence, Decision making, Travel freedom, Owning of Property and Employment) were studied. Data thus obtained was analyzed, tabulated and presented in results.

The present study assessed awareness and empowerment-related knowledge among rural women and identified factors associated with their knowledge levels. The majority of participants were young adults, belonged to joint families, and had low annual family incomes, reflecting the socio-economic characteristics of rural communities. Although a considerable proportion of women had

heard about women's empowerment and were aware of inheritance rights and the legal age of marriage, awareness regarding government schemes, legal support mechanisms, women's helplines, and political reservations remained limited.

Political participation was encouraging in terms of voter registration and voting behavior; however, active involvement in political activities was low. Overall awareness scores revealed substantial knowledge gaps, with most women demonstrating inadequate awareness regarding women's empowerment. Educational status emerged as the only socio-demographic factor significantly associated with knowledge levels.

Women with higher educational attainment exhibited better awareness and understanding of empowerment-related issues, whereas inadequate knowledge was predominantly observed among illiterate participants. These findings highlight the crucial role of education in enhancing women's awareness and empowerment and emphasize the need for targeted educational and awareness programs in rural communities.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that awareness regarding women's empowerment among rural women was generally inadequate despite satisfactory participation in voting and community activities. Knowledge related to legal rights, government schemes, women's helplines, and political representation remained limited. Educational status was found to be the most significant factor influencing awareness levels, with higher education associated with better knowledge. But from the above observation and analysis it is obvious that women had less knowledge about their rights which leads to low political, educational knowledge and less participation in economical, decision making, travel activities. There is urgent need for employment opportunities for women particularly in rural areas. Although most women demonstrated adequate personal status, their social empowerment and overall awareness were comparatively low. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening educational opportunities and implementing focused awareness programs to enhance women's empowerment and promote informed participation in social and political decision-making.

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