



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract:

This paper highlights the psychological aspects of women empowerment. In India various empowerment programs were carried out but the expected outcomes were not seen because the psychological aspects were either missing or not much importance was given to it. The specific objective of this paper is to discover the importance of psychological dimension of empowerment with special reference to working women of India. The paper also discusses about the various psychological bottlenecks of women psychological empowerment. In this paper, attempt is being made to throw a light on psychological well-being, role clarity, self esteem, and happiness, which is crucial to psychological empowerment of working women. The paper thus concludes with some suggestions so that proper attention must be paid to the psychological aspect which plays a very critical role in empowering the working women. This paper broadens the conceptual understanding of psychological empowerment.

Key Words: Psychological Empowerment, Obstacles, Aspects, Wellbeing & Happiness

Introduction:

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. 'Empowerment' may be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them. Present article discusses about various initiatives taken by Government of India for empowering women by analyzing position of India in Gender Inequality Index and Global Gender Gap Index of United Nations. Article concludes with the note that due recognition must be given to women and society should come forward to ensure equal status for women in all spheres of life.

'Empowerment' may be described as a process which helps people to assert their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them.¹ Women empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International women Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women.²

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam "Empowering woman is a prerequisite for creating a good Nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation".

Empowerment is a process of awareness and conscientization of capacity building leading to greater participation, effective decision-making power and control leading to transformative action. This involves ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. With reference to women the power relation that has to be involved includes their lives at multiple levels, family, community, market and the state.

Empowerment is not giving people power; people already have plenty of power, in the wealth of their knowledge and motivation, to do their job magnificently. Empowerment is defined as letting this power out.³ The person, who is highly educated, employed and doing well in his/her respective areas is not always belongs to empowered class. The term empowers according to Kabear's (2001) simple & illustrative definition is "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Empowerment has 6 components: Cognitive, Economic, Legal, Psychological, Political, and Social.⁴ There are ample of research and studies available that have emphasized on all the five component of empowerment but only handful of studies are at hand on psychological facet of empowerment specially women. In this paper emphasis is being made on psychological component of women empowerment at workplace. The psychological component would include the "development of feelings that women can act upon to improve their condition. This means formation of the belief that they can succeed in change efforts".⁵

The psychological empowerment is a blend of self esteem, self efficacy, self determination, self confidence, self awareness, positive thinking and it ultimately leads to wellbeing and happiness of women. A

woman who is psychologically empowered has a capacity to increase self image and conquer stigma. Empowering women means enabling women to access skill and knowledge and cope with the stress and trauma of present as well as future.

Using the four cognitions of Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) model, Spreitzer developed and empirically validated a multidimensional measure of psychological empowerment in the workplace. He defines empowerment as intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role. The four cognitions are meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. Meaning refers to a sense of purpose or personal connection to work.⁶ Empowered people feel that their work is important to them and they care about what they are doing. Competence reflects individuals' beliefs that they have the necessary skills and abilities to perform their work well. Self-determination refers to a sense of freedom about how individuals do their work. Impact describes a belief that individuals can influence the system in which they are embedded. Quinn and Spreitzer state that impact is the accomplishment one feels in achieving goals. Employees fear and tend to avoid situations that they believe exceed their skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave confidently when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating. The four dimensions of empowerment could help people to feel more in control. Psychological empowerment has been positively correlated with managerial effectiveness, increased levels of job satisfaction and decreased level of job strain.⁷ Wang and Zhang in their study among teachers found a statistically significant difference in the level of psychological empowerment based on gender.⁸ Women empowerment at workplace is essential for sustainable development and growth.

Scope of the Study:

- ✓ To study about the empowerment and its methods.
- ✓ To learn the importance of women empowerment.
- ✓ To know about the psychological component of empowerment.

Objectives of the Study:

- ✓ To study the need and analyze the importance of psychological empowerment at workplace.
- ✓ To study the indicators of psychological empowerment.
- ✓ To assess the awareness of psychological empowerment of working women.
- ✓ To identify the barriers in Psychological empowerment of working women.

Research Methodology:

This paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the psychological empowerment of women at workplace in India. The secondary sources are used in the paper for study.

Need and Importance of Psychological Empowerment:

House suggested that gender issues in empowerment are relevant.⁹ Psychological empowerment is the need of an hour in this competitive world. Psychological empowerment is important to consider when dealing with changes at work and improving performance. Psychological empowerment increases employees' sense of personal control and motivates them to engage in work, which in turn results in positive managerial and organizational outcomes. There is need to address the component of Psychological empowerment so that women at workplace can take appropriate decisions and increase their self image. Psychological empowerment of women plays a significant role in their overall growth and development. It remarkably affects the organizational variables like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity etc.¹⁰ Psychological empowerment as motivational structure is an urgent need for autonomy or it is an opinion, or view in their individual effectiveness. Based on the concept of power, it plays an important role in the motivational readiness. Concerning to the pattern of Thomas and Velthouse, Spritzer defined the psychological empowerment as a motivational concept.¹¹ Fook and his fellow found a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and job motivation. Psychological empowerment theory suggested empowerment is related to but more encompassing than constructs such as self-esteem and competence. Women are at a greater risk for developing dependency on substances if they have a history of victimization, a partner or family member who abuses substances, and an affective, emotional, or other psychiatric disorder.¹² The psychological empowerment of women is also significant in the strategy of eradication the poverty. Nelson and Quick hold that empowerment gives a sense of belongingness and job enrichment to employees as well as an ability to take responsibilities over their tasks at work.¹³ Thus, empowerment gives employees a degree of control and authority. Psychological empowerment influences both job satisfaction and work effort but not creativity, whereas self-leadership influences work effort and creativity but not job satisfaction.¹⁴ Women workforce that is psychologically empowered is motivated and accelerated to participate in innovative strategies. Career satisfaction is also a product of psychological empowerment at workplace for human resource. Employees who are empowered perceive a sense of purpose in tasks performed and will positively value those experiences and be intrinsically motivated to engage in those tasks.¹⁵ Employees who are psychologically empowered are able to determine work roles, feel capable of accomplishing meaningful work-related tasks, and are able to influence the decision-making process in the workplace. Literature in psychological empowerment reveals that

organizations where employees are psychologically empowered shows increase in productivity, higher job satisfaction, high organizational commitment, lower burnout, reduced employee turnover intent and reduced strain.¹⁶

Indicators of Psychological Empowerment: Psychological empowerment indicators include: Intrapersonal empowerment, Interactional empowerment and Behavioral empowerment.

- ✓ Intrapersonal empowerment indicators includes: self, connected, safe and free.
- ✓ Interactional empowerment indicators includes: conscious, informed, understanding, solving, exploring.
- ✓ Behavioral empowerment indicators include: resist, prepare, engage, limit and pursue.

Specific indicators of psychological empowerment are:

- ✓ Supportive and cooperative management
- ✓ Emotional stimulation
- ✓ Access to resources
- ✓ Reward system
- ✓ Performance evaluation
- ✓ Independency at work
- ✓ Adequate information
- ✓ Job satisfaction
- ✓ Organizational Commitment
- ✓ Organizational effectiveness

Obstacles in Psychological Empowerment of Women:

There are various psychological obstacles that are creating hindrances in women empowerment. The locus of control of such barriers is both internal as well as external. Some of these psychological hindrances are fear, insecurity, risk, lack of self esteem, self confidence, fear of failure etc. In some of the organizations lack of information, lack of autonomy in decision making, lack of autonomy in work performance are the biggest barrier in psychological empowerment of women. Role ambiguity, job related stress is the major contributor as an obstacle in the path of psychological empowerment.

Suggestions:

The women have got a lot of awareness to start up their own business. The primary motive behind this is the 'chance to show their skills' and the urge to save money for future use. The organizations must provide trainings to their workforce that can increase employees' psychological empowerment. HRD professionals can increase employees' psychological empowerment by providing training and development to the employees. The women workforce of the organization can be psychological empowered by taking their inputs in the decision making process of the organization. Strong power of recommendations and appreciation by the organization can also empower the minds of the workforce.

Conclusion:

Empowerment is one of the key factors in determining the success of development in the status and position of women in the society. The women present in India are enjoying the social and economic status through starting their own business. It also can be said that meaning, self determination, self confidence, self efficacy, self esteem are the major contributors in psychological empowerment. Psychological Empowerment of employees also increases their job satisfaction. Work related stress of the employees is not positively related with psychological empowerment which means higher the psychological Empowerment lower the work related stress.

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