

(RE) MAPPING EMPOWERMENT OUTCOMES AMONG MARRIED WOMEN IN RURAL INDIA: A PANEL DATA STUDY

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This paper endeavours to re-examine the socio-economic factors influencing empowerment among married women in rural India over two points of time, 2005 and 2012. It examines the interplay of the work status of rural married women and the poverty status of their household in influencing empowerment.

Methodology: The study uses the nationally representative multi-topic India Human Development Survey (IHDS). IHDS panel data has been utilized to assess the entry and exit from a workforce of rural married women, to define the components of empowerment among rural married women and analyze the socio-economic factors influencing the empowerment among rural married women.

Main Findings: The outcomes show the increase in the overall empowerment rates in spite of their mobility constraints seem to have badly risen during the period 2005-2012, especially in the context of deteriorating work input among rural women. Moreover, working rural married women from BPL (Below Poverty Line) rural households are less likely to be empowered as compared to working rural married women from APL (Above Poverty Line) households.

Applications of this study: The rural female work participation rate is declining in the phase of rising economic growth and education. In this context, their empowerment would not only benefit their personal lives but also impact their economic lives, thus contribute to the country's GDP. This makes it vital to analyze as to what comprises their empowerment in the first place so that it can be promoted through various schemes.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Women's economic empowerment and their participation in work are essential to bringing in the fullest demographic dividend for inclusive economic escalation and sustainable development in India. Thus, empowerment which may not necessarily be implied by employment is conditioned upon the poverty status of the household. However, the empowerment of rural married women is facilitated by higher education of self, husband and other family members.

Keywords: Empowerment, Rural Married Women, Binary Logistic Regression, Panel data.

INTRODUCTION

Global Gender Gap Report (2017) released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked India at a low of 108 out of 144 countries on the gender equality scale. It has been pushed further down from 87 in 2016. Women's economic empowerment currently faces many challenges like few opportunities for a paid job, jobs mostly concentrated in the informal economy which is characterized by low pay, poor working conditions, and low-value addition, etc. (Krogh et al., 2009).

It has been estimated that India can boost its GDP by \$700 billion in 2025, amounting to 1.4% per year of incremental GDP growth, by raising the female labor-force participation (FLFP) rate by mere 10% points. However, this requires us to bring in 68 million more women into the workforce (Arora, 2017). India has one of the lowest work participation rates for women in South Asia. However, at the same time, it has one of the highest growth rates in the world. In this phase of rising economic growth and globalization, the declining FLFP is puzzling. To reap India's demographic dividend to its full potential, promote inclusive growth and sustainable development, efforts towards enhancing women's empowerment and their labor market participation are crucial.

"Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women, is at a great disadvantage in the modern world"
~ (Tian Wei)

Despite policies like 'Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao'¹, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Mandatory Maternity Leave and numerous other programmes and laws to prevent female foeticide and promote gender equality, the IHDS-II (second wave in 2012) data shows that in rural areas, 82% of the husbands desire to have at least 1 boy child and only 50% of the husbands desire to have at least 1 girl child in 2012 when asked for preference about the sex of the child if they wished to have children. The preference for a girl child looks bleak in the Indian society and their future also could be equally grim, if immediate

¹The Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao campaign launched on 15 January 2015 from Panipat in Haryana. The campaign is aimed at stopping female foeticide and improving the status of women in Indian society by giving her opportunities for education (Economic Survey of India, 2015-16)

actions aren't taken to bring about a change in attitudes towards gender equality and taking steps to ensure women's equal participation at all fronts of life at the individual level, community and society. Moreover, institutional interventions could play a major role in influencing individual, social, structural and material factors preventing or sustaining change in the society ([Heise & Manji, 2016](#)).

Female employment is significant for the economy not merely because it has a positive effect on women's quality of life, but it also improves the living standard of the entire household ([Subbarao & Raney, 1993](#); [Drèze & Sen, 1989](#)). In particular, low² female LFPR is a drag on gross domestic product (GDP) growth and an obstacle towards reaching a higher growth path ([Dwivedi, 2017](#)). Empowerment acts as a catalyst to ensure greater economic participation among women. Further, their paid work reinforces their empowerment within the household and community by enhancing their bargaining power.

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance" ~ (Kofi Annan)

This study aims to investigate the socio-economic factors influencing empowerment among rural married women. As we know, the rural female work participation rate is declining in the phase of rising economic growth and education. In this context, their empowerment would not only benefit their personal lives but also impact their economic lives, thus contribute to the country's GDP. This makes it vital to analyze as to what comprises their empowerment in the first place so that it can be promoted through various schemes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's empowerment is defined as the degree to which they can control material resources (including food, income, different forms of wealth) and social resources (including knowledge, power, and prestige) within the family, community and the society at large ([Desai & Johnson, 2005](#); [Cornwall, 2016](#)). The pathway towards women's empowerment is a multi-dimensional process ([Aslam, 2013](#)). It unfolds in different ways to different women. Empowerment has been commonly measured using dimensions like mobility, control over resources, and decision-making power in the household ([Kishor & Subaiya, 2005](#); [Bloom et al., 2001](#); [Govindasamy & Malhotra, 1996](#); [Jejeebhoy, 2000](#)).

Empowerment and work participation of women influence each other. However, the impact of paid work on the empowerment of women depends on the degree of regularity, visibility, social benefit, type of work undertaken and the financial condition of the respective household ([Kabeer et al., 2011](#)). Further, it has been observed that women's role in household decision-making, financial control in households and other important household matters is a function of the family structure ([Malhotra & Mather, 1997](#)). It is argued that women's greater participation in the outside world and their earnings from paid work, increase their bargaining capacity within the household ([Agarwal, 1997](#)). Involvement of women in more productive roles rather than being confined solely to reproductive roles and household activities has shown to raise their social mobility and freedom ([Boserup, 1970](#); [Raju, 2010](#); [Mehra, 1997](#); [Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001](#); [Jose, 2007](#); [Sundaram & Vanneman, 2008](#)).

Education and employment have a major role in promoting empowerment. Additionally, [Arora \(2017\)](#) found women's educational levels, media exposure, and age as important explanatory variables for women empowerment. Further, [Assaad et al. \(2014\)](#) claims that age, education, employment, poverty status, number of children, having an adult son in addition to a woman's husband and her father's characteristics turn out to be significant determinants in defining the concept of empowerment in terms of the decision-making and the mobility aspects of Egyptian women. In yet another study, [Mason and Smith \(2003\)](#) show that the community strongly influences women's empowerment than individual traits. Their study shows that 'empowerment' is a multidimensional phenomenon, with women relatively empowered in some spheres but not in others. The community does play a role in shaping personal beliefs³ and provides a platform to encourage women's social and economic participation in various ways.

However, under some circumstances, it is argued that women's employment may not be enough to ensure women's empowerment because working does not necessarily allow women to challenge the power structures that prevent their agency and full participation in society ([Kabeer, 1997](#); [Kantor, 2003](#); [Sen, 1999](#); [Pearson, 2004](#)). Moreover, work participation could also be 'need-based' or 'forced' participation especially for rural women belonging to BPL families.

RESEARCH GAP AND OBJECTIVES

Linkages of empowerment and work of women have been analyzed in many cross-section studies in India. However, in this study, we use panel data to analyze the interaction of poverty and employment of rural married women as a factor to

²China has 64% of its women working, one of the highest rates in the world. In the US, it is over 56%. In the subcontinent, Nepal and Bangladesh do much better than India; only Pakistan has a lower work-participation rate ([Dwivedi, 2017](#)).

³Individuals may also hold factual beliefs about reality and the physical world that may or may not be true ([Heise & Manji, 2016](#)). Those whose opinions are important and can influence a person (even though the person may not personally believe in them, but believes for societal approval) are called the "reference group."

explain women's level of empowerment. The panel nature of IHDS data enables us to add new variables to rural married women's empowerment analysis like changes in the poverty status of the household, changes in the work status of the household and changes in the income level of the household. In this context objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the components that define empowerment among rural married women over two points of time, 2005 and 2012.
2. To analyze the socio-economic factors influencing the empowerment of rural married women in 2012.
3. To examine the interplay of the work status of rural married women and the poverty status of their household in influencing empowerment.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data Source

The data support for the study comes mainly from the nationally representative multi-topic India Human Development Survey (IHDS). The survey has mainly two waves, IHDS-I (2004-05) and IHDS-II (2011-12). IHDS panel data has been utilized to assess the entry and exit from the workforce of rural married women, to define the components of empowerment among rural married women and analyze the socio-economic factors influencing the empowerment among rural married women.

The eligible women data has been merged with individual-level data to merge the work variables and empowerment variables. In IHDS-I (2004-05), 15-49 age group of eligible women are chosen and in IHDS-II (2011-12), 15 to 56 age-group of eligible women are taken into consideration.

Defining empowerment among rural married women

The following factors were taken into consideration to identify the major factors defining empowerment through Factor Analysis Method.

1. **Work:** The variable takes value 1, when women have most say in decisions with respect to her work, or when women who are currently not working are willing and allowed to work if a suitable job is made available to them. Else, it takes the value 0. This variable information is present only for the second round of IHDS in 2012.
2. **Personal mobility:** The variable takes value 1 if the women don't need permission to travel to nearby health centers/ go to relative's or friend's place/ travel a short distance by bus or train/visit a Kirana shop, else the variable takes the value 0.
3. **The decision regarding how many children to have:** This variable takes the value 1 when rural married women have most say in the decisions regarding how many children to have.
4. **Household expenditure:** The variable takes the value 1 if the woman has most say in the decision with respect to the expenditure on buying land/property, expenditure on an expensive item, expenditure on social functions, else, takes the value 0.
5. **Member of an organization:** It takes the value 1, if a woman is a member of Mahila Mandal, Self-help group, credit saving group or a political organization, or if the women have attended a public meeting/ gram sabha called by Panchayat/Nagar Palika/ward, else takes the value 0. This variable is available only for the second wave of panel data in 2012.
6. **Financial autonomy:** This variable takes the value 1 if the woman has cash in hand to spend on household expenditure, or if the woman has a bank account open in her name, or if the woman has her name in the property papers, else takes the value 0.
7. **Woman's own attitudes⁴ towards gender equality:** This variable takes the value 1, if the woman doesn't practice customs like wearing 'Ghungat', or if everyone at home eats meals together, or when woman discusses with her husband about things in the community like politics/work/expenditure, else, it takes the value 0.

Determinants of empowerment for rural married women in 2012 using a panel dataset

Binary Logistic regression was run with the dependent variable as rural married women who were empowered in 2012. The major two indicators identified by the factor analysis will constitute the empowerment variable for 2012. The

⁴An attitude is an individual construct. It is an individually held belief that has an evaluative component. It depends on their perception that something is good, bad, exciting, boring, disgusting, etc (Heise & Manji, 2016).

explanatory variables include variables at a point of time as well as change in variables over time utilising the panel nature of the dataset. The dependent variable is a categorical variable that takes value 1 if rural married women are empowered in 2012, else zero.

The independent variables were taken as follows in separate regressions. Age of the rural married women in 2005⁵, Age (squared) of the rural married women in 2005, Area⁶ of residence in 2012, Education Attainment⁷ of rural married women in 2012, Changes in education attainment⁸ level, Highest education attainment⁹ in the family in 2012, Income Quintile¹⁰ in 2005, Changes in Income Quintile¹¹, Number of children¹² in the household in 2005, Changes in poverty status¹³ of rural household, Poverty status¹⁴ of the rural household, Work status in 2012 of rural married women, Days worked¹⁵ (labor supplied) in 2012, Socio-religious¹⁶ category of the household, Exposure to media¹⁷ (2005), Education level¹⁸ of husband in 2012, Type of work¹⁹ in 2012, Change in work status²⁰, Work and poverty interaction²¹, Social network²² (2012).

The following form of logistic regression on panel data is used when two time period is involved:

The term logit means log of odds which can be expressed as $\ln \left[\frac{p}{1-p} \right]$.

Thus, $\ln \left[\frac{pt}{1-pt} \right] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot x_{it} + \beta_2 \cdot x_{i(t-1)} + \beta_3 \cdot \Delta x_t + \dots$, the function of p is a linear function of the explanatory variables.

- i. Where p indicates the probability that the rural married women is empowered in 2012 (based on factors identified through factor analysis in 2012).
- ii. Where t refers to IHDS round II(2011-2012) and $t-1$ refers to IHDS round I(2004-05).
- iii. Where, $\Delta x_t = x_t - x_{t-1}$. Δx_t denotes the change in the continuous variable over the two rounds.
- iv. Where, $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$ observations.
- v. Where X refers to the independent variables.

Instead of the log of odds, Average Marginal effects have been estimated. A ME [marginal effect] or partial effect measures the effect on the conditional mean of y of a change in one of the regressors, say X_k . With Average Marginal Effects (AMEs), a marginal effect is computed for each case, and the effects are then averaged.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Factor Analysis: Defining Empowerment among rural married woman in India

⁵It is taken as a continuous variable

⁶It is taken as a categorical variable. Rural area is divided into more developed and less developed villages. More developed village is taken as the reference category

⁷It is taken as a categorical variable with illiterate rural married women as the reference category

⁸It is taken as a categorical variable with reference group as rural married women who 'remain illiterate'

⁹It is taken as a continuous variable. The reference category is taken as 'illiterate'

¹⁰It is taken as a categorical variable. The reference category is taken as the lowest income quintile

¹¹It is a categorical variable with rural married women who remain in the lowest quintile (poorest) in both rounds as the reference category

¹²It is taken as a continuous variable.

¹³It is taken as a categorical variable. Reference category is taken as rural households which remain BPL over the two rounds.

¹⁴It is a categorical variable which takes the value 1, if the rural household is BPL in 2012, else takes the value 0.

¹⁵It is taken as a continuous variable

¹⁶It is taken as a categorical variable. The forward caste is taken as the reference category,

¹⁷It is taken as a categorical variable. It takes the value 1, if women in the household has some or regular exposure to T.V, radio or newspaper, else takes the value 0.

¹⁸It is taken as a categorical variable with reference variable as illiterate husband.

¹⁹It is taken as a categorical variable with own farm (family farm) work as reference variable.

²⁰It is taken as a categorical variable with reference category as those rural married women who remain in workforce in both the rounds.

²¹It is taken as a categorical variable. With reference category as poor rural married women who are working.

²²It is a categorical variable which can be described as when the rural household is acquainted with some sort of social network in the form of connections with a government official, a teacher or school staff, or a medical official. It takes the value 1 if social network is within community, takes the value 2 if social network is outside community, and value 3 if there is no social network.

Using factor analysis methodology on IHDS-I (2004-2005) data (Table 1, 2, 3 & 4), the following observations were made. According to Kaiser Criterion (Toress, n.d.), factors with Eigen values equal to or higher than one have been to be retained. Hence, only the major factor (Factor 1) is retained (Table 1). As can be seen from Table 1, this factor explains 65% of the variation. Since only factor 1 is relevant to our calculation, it has been observed that factor one is mainly explained by having most say in the decision regarding how many children to have and most say in the decision regarding household expenses (Table 4). Thus, empowerment among rural women in 2005 is defined by these two dimensions defining factor 1. On the other hand, irrespective of which dimensions define empowerment among rural women in 2012, we have taken the same factors that define empowerment among rural women in 2005 for the year 2012 as well, for comparative analysis (tabulations to analyze the change in empowerment status overtime).

Further, using factor analysis methodology (Table 5, 6, 7 & 8) on IHDS-II (2011-12) the following observations were made. Factor 1 explains 84% of the variation. Secondly, according to the Kaiser criterion, only the first factor is retained as it has value more than 1 (Table 5). Factor 1 is mainly explained by rural women’s own attitudes towards gender equality and having financial autonomy based on the factor loadings (Table 8). Thus, empowerment among rural women in 2012 is defined by these two dimensions defining factor 1. This empowerment definition is used as the dependent variable in binary logistic regression to analyze the socio-economic factors influencing the empowerment of rural married women in 2012.

Logistic Regression

Binary Logistic regressions to analyze the socio-economic factors that impact the empowerment of rural married women in 2012 (Table 9) can be interpreted as follows. With respect to the area of residence, it was observed that rural married women from less developed areas were less likely to be empowered. Further, with respect to household structure, it was observed that the higher the number of children in the household, the lesser was the likelihood for rural married women to be empowered. This is mainly due to the care work, household responsibilities and reproductive role allocated to women. Christians, Muslims, Sikh and Jain rural married women were likely to be more empowered than rural married women who belong to forward caste. With respect to the education effect, we observe the following. Those rural married woman with middle education and above were more likely to be empowered than who were less educated. Further, rural married women whose husband’s education attainment was up to the primary²³ level were likely to be more empowered than those who had an illiterate husband. Further, rural married women from families that were found to have the highest education attainment up to the primary level were more empowered than illiterate families.

With respect to the changes in the level of income, rural women from households that shifted from middle income to higher income levels were likely to be more empowered as compared to those from households remaining poor in both rounds. Further, those rural married women from households in higher-income quintiles were more likely to be empowered in 2012 as compared to those from the lowest quintile. The higher standard of living ensures access to higher education and employment opportunities which promotes empowerment among women. With respect to employment, being in work increases the likelihood to be empowered. Higher the number of days of work, larger was the likelihood to be empowered. With respect to the type of work, it was observed that rural married women engaged in salaried jobs were more likely to be empowered than those engaged in family farm work. It was also found that those rural married women who were found entering into labor market were less likely to be empowered. This may be true in the case of rural married women who entered the workforce due to financial compulsion.

Further, rural married women with exposure to media were more likely to be empowered. Media acts as an important tool to spread awareness and information regarding employment and educations prospects. With respect to the interaction effects of poverty and work status, we observe that the working rural married women from APL rural households were more likely to be empowered as compared to working rural married women from BPL households. Therefore, we observe that work doesn’t always imply empowerment as it is conditioned upon the poverty status of the household. Along with work, household economic well-being and education contribute to women’s empowerment.

Table 1: Un-Rotated Iterated Principal Factors for 2005

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor 1	1.46	0.68	0.65	0.65
Factor 2	0.77	0.74	0.35	1.00
Factor 3	0.04	0.04	0.02	1.02
Factor 4	0.00	0.03	0.00	1.02
Factor 5	-0.03	.	-0.02	1.00
Number of obs	19753			
Retained factors	2			

²³Results corrected with robustness check

Number of parameters	9
Prob>chi2	0

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-I (2004-05)

Table 2: Factor loadings²⁴ and unique variances for 2005

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness ²⁵
Number of children to have for a rural married couple	0.99	-0.19	-0.02
Attitudes of the rural married woman towards gender equality	0.26	0.82	0.26
Financial Autonomy	0.15	0.20	0.94
Permission for the mobility of rural married woman outside the house	0.12	0.11	0.97
Decision making in household expenditures	0.60	-0.13	0.63

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-I(2004-05)

Table 3: Rotated iterated principal factors for 2005

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	1.42	0.61	0.64	0.64
Factor2	0.81	.	0.36	1.00

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-I (2004-05)

Table 4: Rotated factor loadings and unique variances for 2005

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Number of children to have for a rural married couple	1.01	0.05	-0.02
Attitudes of the rural married woman towards gender equality	0.06	0.86	0.26
Financial Autonomy	0.10	0.23	0.94
Permission for the mobility of rural married woman outside the house	0.09	0.13	0.97
Decision making in household expenditures	0.61	0.02	0.63

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-I (2004-05)

Table 5: Un-Rotated Iterated Principal Factors for 2012

Factor	Eigenvalue	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor 1	3.36	2.69	0.84	0.84
Factor 2	0.66	0.49	0.16	1.00
Factor 3	0.17	0.10	0.04	1.04
Factor 4	0.08	0.05	0.02	1.06
Factor 5	0.03	0.04	0.01	1.07
Factor 6	-0.02	0.25	0.00	1.07
Factor 7	-0.27	.	-0.07	1.00

Number of obs	27843
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²⁴Higher the load of the variable, greater is its capability of explaining the dimensionality of the factor

²⁵Uniqueness is the variance that is 'unique' to the variable and not shared with other variables. Greater the value of uniqueness, lesser is its relevance to the factor model (Toress, PU).

Retained factors	2
Number of params	13
Prob>chi2	0

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-II (2011-12)

Table 6: Factor Loadings and Unique Variances for 2012

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Association in political and community space	0.49	-0.26	0.69
Number of children to have for a rural married couple	0.62	0.62	0.23
Attitudes of rural married woman towards gender equality	0.93	-0.23	0.09
Financial Autonomy	0.99	-0.21	-0.02
Decision regarding work outside home	0.63	-0.02	0.60
Permission for the mobility of rural married woman outside the house	0.43	-0.02	0.81
Decision making in household expenditures	0.55	0.34	0.58

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-II (2011-12)

Table 7: Rotated Iterated Principal Factors for 2012

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	2.82	1.62	0.70	0.70
Factor2	1.20	.	0.30	1.00

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-II (2011-12)

Table 8: Rotated Factor Loadings and Unique variances for 2012

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Uniqueness
Association in political and community space	0.56	-0.02	0.69
Number of children to have for a rural married couple	0.28	0.83	0.23
Attitudes of rural married woman towards gender equality	0.93	0.21	0.09
Financial Autonomy	0.98	0.25	-0.02
Decision regarding work outside home	0.58	0.27	0.60
Permission for the mobility of rural married woman outside the house	0.40	0.17	0.81
Decision making in household expenditures	0.34	0.55	0.58

Source: Author`s own calculation using IHDS-II (2011-12)

Table 9: Average Marginal effects of factors affecting the empowerment of rural married woman in 2012

Dependent variable: If a rural married woman is empowered in 2012	Coeff(Mod1)	Coeff (Mod2)	Coeff(mod3)	Coeff(mod4)
Independent Variables ↓				
age2005	-0.002	0.003		
age(sq) 2005	2.68E-05	-4E-05		

Change in education level (Ref: Remain illiterate)		NA
Remain up to the middle	0.03*	0.04*
Remain up to secondary	0.04*	0.06*
Secondary to graduate	-0.01	0.04
Remain, graduate,	0.03	0.06*
Up to middle to secondary	0.03	0.06*
Illiterate to middle	0.02	0.02*
Work type(Ref: farm work)		
Agriculture labor		0.03*
Nonfarm		0.03*
Salary		0.04*
Business		0.03*
Social network(ref: within the community)		
Outside community		0.007
No social network		0.02**
Change in work status (Ref: remain in the workforce)		
Entry		-0.01*
Exit		
Not in working in both rounds		
Work and poor interaction(Ref: Working poor)		
Poor but not in the workforce		-0.02
Above the poverty line & working		0.01*
Above the poverty line & not working		-0.009
Education of the spouse (Ref: illiterate)		
below primary	0.01	0.01*
primary	0.003	-0.004
Middle	0.006	-0.01
Secondary	0.002	-0.01
Higher sec	-0.04	-0.04*
graduate	-0.004	-0.015
post-grad	-0.04	-0.02
Exposure to media		
		0.03*
Change in level of income(Ref: Remain low)		
	NA	
Remain middle	-0.01	
Remain high	-0.02*	
Low to middle	-0.0003	
Middle to high	0.01	
Income quintile (Poorest)		
	NA	
2nd Quintile		0.003
Middle		0.007

4th quintile	0.017*			
Richest	0.0004			
Highest Education Attainment in the household (Ref: illiterates)				
Primary	0.022*	0.02*		
Middle	-0.004	-0.01		
Secondary	0.007	-2.5E-05		
Higher Secondary	0.005	-0.002		
Graduate	0.012	-0.012		
Education Attainment of the rural married women(Ref: illiterates)				
Primary	0.02**			
Middle	-0.0002			
Secondary	0.010732			
Higher Secondary	0.03*			
Graduate	0.03*			
Status of Poverty (Reference: Above NA Poverty Line)				
Below Poverty line household	0.004			
Change in status of poverty of the household (Remain Below Poverty Line)				
Remain in Above Poverty Line	-0.011	0.01		
Fall into poverty	-0.003	0.007		
Escape out of poverty	-0.021*	-0.003		
Number of children in the household				
	-0.007*	-0.009*		
Number of adult sons in the household				
	-0.012*	-0.008*		
Socio-Religious category (Ref: Forward caste)				
OBC	0.004	-0.003	-0.004	0.004
Dalit	0.004	0.01	-0.007	0.008
Adivasi	0.002	0.01	-0.001	0.007
Muslim	0.026*	0.02*	0.01	0.01
Christian, Sikh, Jain	0.031	0.04*	0.04*	0.04*
Number of days worked				
	0.0001*	NA		
Work status (Reference: Not working)				
	NA	0.01*		
Area of residence (reference: more developed village)				
Less developed village	-0.01	-0.01*	-0.012*	-0.01*
Number of obs				
	6252	16694	8673	8112
Wald chi2(29)				
	166.19	306.78	184.41	129.19
Prob > chi2				
	0	0	0	0
Pseudo R2				
	0.059	0.0412	0.0458	0.0399

Log pseudo-likelihood	-1174.58	-3397.8307	-1743.47	-1661.11
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Source: Author's own calculation using IHDS-I (2005) & IHDS-II (2012)

CONCLUSION

The major factors determining the empowerment among rural married women were identified as most say in decision making regarding the number of children to have, most say in the decision regarding household expenditure, having financial autonomy and attitudes of rural women towards gender equality. The overall empowerment rates have slightly risen overtime for rural married women. Merely working doesn't ensure empowerment among women but the household poverty status also plays an important role. Higher household income ensures better education and employment opportunities among rural women to enhance their empowerment at an aggregate level. So, the education of rural women plays an important role in promoting their empowerment. Rural women from socially and economically weaker sections were found to do better in having a say in the number of children and have more mobility as they have economic compulsions to step out of the house and work. Empowering women is surely the way forward for women's economic and personal well being, household poverty reduction & well-being, inclusive economic growth and economic development of the country.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER SCOPE

The present study is limited only to map out the empowerment outcomes among married women in rural India through a panel data analysis. It is quite evident in reality that rising income may aggravate the patriarchal controls on women through denial of economic resources and opportunities. Social norms, which gain strength as household income rises, restrict them to the household realm, as a symbol of household status. The study leads to the future scope of inquiry that education and awareness programs should be targeted not just for women but individuals from all age-group and across gender. We require immediate measures to provide women access to education, skill training and flexible jobs with social security and decent pay. Although several schemes are in place, yet institutional support and awareness programs are required to bring about a change in existing social norms, perceptions and mindset of women and their peer groups, especially the male members. Efforts to improve multimedia access which is a powerful tool to promote awareness, communicate change, and can help change the existing norms to a great extent in rural areas.

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