

Assessment of Women's Socio-Economic Status and Attainments: A Case Study of District Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a complex societal process aimed at enabling individuals to gain control over their lives. This process involves enhancing their social status and granting them authority over their inherent rights, including those that pertain to the community and society. Moreover, empowerment is a consequence of being engaged in decision-making. Women's empowerment, specifically, pertains to the journey through which women attain equal recognition with men, enabling them to actively contribute to society's progress. This involvement spans various realms, encompassing political engagement, education, industrial employment, and notably, significant contributions to the corporate sector. This transformation has liberated women from antiquated roles, elevating their standing and influence across all facets of life. The historical perception of women as domestic and laborious entities has evolved, leading to a more optimistic and progressive global perspective that champions their cause. They have broken free from the confines of traditional roles, as the world now wholeheartedly acknowledges their skills and contributions across diverse domains. This study aims to delve into the current status and accomplishments of women in various sectors within the Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir, shedding light on their remarkable progress.

Keywords: Empowerment, social status, development, participation, fields

Introduction:

The principle of gender equality is firmly embedded within the Indian constitution, evident in its prelude, fundamental rights, essential duties, and guiding principles. The constitution not only ensures equality for women but also empowers the state to implement measures that positively discriminate in favor of women. Empowerment encompasses a multifaceted societal progression that imbues individuals with authority for personal use, community engagement, and broader societal impact. Women's empowerment involves the process through which women achieve parity with men, enabling them to actively contribute to societal progress by participating in domains such as politics, education,

industries, and various fields. In earlier eras, women were confined by male-dominated societal norms and relegated to domestic roles. The enactment of the 73rd constitutional amendment allowed them to voice their concerns and partake in local-level decision-making. The introduction of the 73rd and 74th amendments (1993) to India's constitution reserved seats for women in local governance bodies such as panchayats and municipalities. A significant shift in perspective occurred during the fifth five-year plan (1974-78), transitioning from a welfare-based approach to women's issues to a developmental one. The establishment of the National Commission for Women by a parliamentary act in 1990 aimed to safeguard women's rights and legal entitlements.

Objectives of the study:

The main focus of this research is to examine the current socio-economic situation and accomplishments of women in the Pulwama district. The secondary aim is to analyze how women engage in and make decisions within the social, political, and economic aspects of their lives.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Following the common practice in social science research, this study employs a combination of primary and secondary data sources for data collection. The primary data is directly gathered from respondents, while the secondary data is acquired from textbooks, newspapers, periodicals, publications, websites, and journals. Various research designs are available for conducting research on specific issues, such as experimental, exploratory, and descriptive research designs. In this study, the descriptive research design has been adopted.

The research methodology involves sampling techniques and the utilization of an interview schedule. The interview schedule serves as a tool for collecting primary data in this research. The current investigation is centered on the theme of "Women Empowerment: An Inspiring Change," with a specific focus on the Pulwama district in Jammu and Kashmir. The research is conducted across different blocks within the Pulwama district.

Sampling procedure:

To gather data and information, a sample of one hundred (100) respondents was chosen from the specific fieldwork region within District Pulwama. The sample was drawn from diverse geographical regions within the district, encompassing the east, west, north, south, and central parts. This selection process involved the identification of two blocks in alignment with these regions. Subsequently, five villages were chosen from each block, and within each village, ten households were selected. This

cumulative effort resulted in a sample size of approximately 100 respondents.

The selection of samples from the various blocks of District Pulwama was carried out through a random approach. The primary data collection technique employed in this research is based on the use of an interview schedule.

Demography:

Situated centrally within the Kashmir valley, the Pulwama District's economy predominantly relies on the agricultural sector, with a notable emphasis on rice production. Internationally acclaimed, the district boasts quality saffron production and holds the title of being a significant contributor to milk production, earning it the moniker "Anand of Kashmir."

The census of 2011 indicates that the Pulwama District encompasses a total of 327 census villages, out of which 8 remain uninhabited. These villages are categorized into 8 Tehsils: Pulwama, Awantipora, Tral, Pampore, Kakapora, Aripal, Rajpora, and Litter. Additionally, there are 11 CD Blocks, namely Tral, Aripal, Dadsara, Awantipora, Pampore, Kakapora, Pulwama, Shadimarg, Achgoze, Lassipora, and Newa. The District also comprises five Municipal Councils: Tral, Pampore, Khrew, Awantipora, and Pulwama. The population of the district totals 560,000 according to the 2011 census. The geographical expanse of the district spans 1090 square kilometers, and its administrative hub is located in Pulwama, situated 31 kilometers from Srinagar. The distribution of residents indicates that 85.65% reside in rural areas, while 14.35% are based in urban regions.

Renowned for its picturesque landscapes, the district's inviting climate, abundant springs, streams, waterfalls, aromatic flowers, and delectable fruits contribute to its reputation as a charming destination. Notably, Pulwama is internationally recognized for its saffron cultivation, primarily thriving in the Karewa lands of Pampore, Kakapora, and Pulwama blocks. The district encompasses around 191 villages in total.

Profile of Respondents:

Table-01

Selected Villages of the district	Marital Status		Educational Status		Age Status		
	Ma	Um	Lit.	Illit.	18-28	29-39	40-above
Achan	06	04	09	01	05	03	02
Lajora	05	05	08	02	06	03	01

Bara Pora	04	06	07	03	07	02	01
Drasu	04	06	09	01	06	02	02
Hawal	08	02	06	04	05	03	02
Gusu	07	03	08	02	07	02	01
Kawni	05	05	08	02	07	01	02
Laro	03	07	09	01	06	03	01
Niwah	07	03	07	03	06	02	02
Wagam	05	05	09	01	05	02	03
Total	52	48	80	20	60	23	17

Note:Ma=Married,Um=Unmarried, Lit=Literate,Ilit=Illiterate,18-28,29-39,40above AgeGroup.

The data in the provided Table 1 guided the selection of respondents for this study. Specifically, participants were chosen from ten villages within the Pulwama district. In each village, a group of 10 respondents was selected, resulting in a total of 100 respondents. Notably, all the respondents in this study are female, aligning with the research's focus on women's perspectives.

Examining marital status among the 100 respondents, 52 are married, while 48 remain unmarried. Further analysis based on educational background reveals that 80 of the respondents are literate, while the remaining 20 are illiterate.

Additionally, the graphical representation above Table 1 illustrates the age distribution of the respondents. Among the 100 participants, 60 fall within the 18-28 age bracket, 23 belong to the 29-39 age range, and the remaining 17 are in the 40 and above age category.

Analysis:

Women and decision-making:

Table-02

Women in decision making Process	Frequency	Percentage
No	12	12
Sometimes	28	28
Yes	60	60
Total	100	100

It is crucial to emphasize that women's participation spans across all aspects of life, encompassing diverse fields and decision-making realms, whether within the family, workplace, society, or their personal lives. Presently, women are not confined by limitations; they engage actively in a wide range of

activities, and their involvement in decision-making processes has expanded significantly. They contribute to various activities at all tiers, furthering the cause of empowerment.

Surveying the respondents, 60 percent of them affirmed that they actively partake in decision-making processes, demonstrating their active involvement. An additional 28 percent indicated that they sometimes engage in decision-making, highlighting their variable engagement based on context. Conversely, the smallest percentage of respondents, constituting 12 percent, responded negatively to this notion. It is evident that efforts are being made to ensure that women gain equal access to and complete participation in decision-making bodies across diverse levels, encompassing legislative, judicial, corporate, family, societal, educational, and even personal decisions. This inclusive approach seeks to uphold women's rights to contribute meaningfully to the decisions that shape their lives.

Women and politics:

Table3:

Women interested in politics	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	55	55
To some extent	26	26
No	19	19
Total	100	100

The amendments made in the Indian Constitution through the 73rd and 74th amendments (1993) have introduced reserved seats for women in local governing bodies, encompassing panchayats and municipalities. A significant shift in the approach to women's issues has transpired since the fifth five-year plan (1974-78), with a notable transition from a welfare-based focus to a developmental perspective. In the Kashmir valley, women express a keen interest in participating in political activities and exercising their voting rights. However, due to prevailing unrest and socio-political disruptions, women often face challenges that hinder their ability to actively engage and advocate for their interests.

Analyzing the collected data, the table reveals that 55 percent of respondents exhibit an interest in politics. An additional 26 percent hold a more tempered perspective, indicating a partial interest. Conversely, 19 percent of respondents are less inclined, expressing a lack of interest in political engagement. This data illustrates the range of attitudes women hold regarding their involvement in politics, highlighting the nuanced impact of regional circumstances on their participation.

Economic empowerment of women and economy:

Table04:

Present socio-economic conditions of women’s	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	38	38
Agree	26	26
Undecided	5	5
Strongly disagree	14	14
Disagree	17	17
Total	100	100

The transition from the pre-independence to the post-independence era has brought about significant changes in the socio-economic conditions of women. They have moved beyond dependence on the male-dominated society for their daily needs. Engaging in various professions alongside men, women have achieved a certain level of economic self-sufficiency. Within the present study area, 38 percent of respondents strongly agreed that women's current socio-economic conditions are satisfactory. An additional 26 percent agreed, while 5 percent remained undecided. On the contrary, 14 percent of respondents strongly disagreed, and 17 percent disagreed with the assertion, indicating a range of perspectives on the matter.

To bolster women's access to credit for both consumption and production purposes, the establishment of new microcredit mechanisms and the strengthening of existing microfinance institutions are being pursued. This initiative aims to broaden the reach of credit across established financial institutions and banks, thereby ensuring that all women falling below the poverty line can easily access credit. This endeavor seeks to empower women economically and foster greater financial independence.

Women and agriculture:

Table05:

Women in agricultural activities	Frequency	Percentage
Never	6	6
Rarely	8	8
Sometimes	17	17
Occasionally	28	28
Always	41	41
Total	100	100

In the rural areas of the Kashmir valley, women continue to hold faith in agriculture as a primary means of sustenance. The agriculture sector remains a fundamental source of income and employment for them. These women actively participate in agricultural and related activities, contributing to both their families' livelihoods and the broader socio-economic advancement of their households. Among the respondents, 41 percent consistently engage in these activities, while 28 percent do so on occasion. Additionally, 17 percent reported intermittent involvement, and 8 percent contributed infrequently. A smaller portion, 5 percent, indicated that they do not participate in their family's business activities.

Rural women in this context also possess valuable knowledge about essential agricultural aspects, such as the application of insecticides, pesticides, fertilizers, and seeds. Given this scenario, there is a pressing need for the government to implement programs aimed at training women. These training initiatives can significantly expand to benefit women working within the agriculture sector. Such efforts would not only empower women but also contribute to the growth and development of the agricultural industry.

Women and industry:

Table06:

Women doing jobs	Frequency	Percentage
No	21	21
Sometimes	27	27
Yes	52	52
Total	100	100

Decades ago, women were largely confined to their homes and were discouraged from actively contributing to the country's development. However, remarkable changes have since unfolded as women have valiantly challenged the male-dominated societal norms across education, economics, politics, and various industries, including private banks, educational institutions, and companies. Regarding the participation of women in industry jobs, 21 percent of respondents expressed disagreement, 27 percent noted intermittent involvement, while the majority, constituting 52 percent of respondents, concurred with the statement that women are indeed actively engaged in these sectors.

The role women play in fields such as electronics, information technology, food processing, agro-industry, and textiles has significantly contributed to the advancement of these sectors. Ensuring their meaningful participation, comprehensive support encompassing labor legislation, social security, and other auxiliary services will be provided to facilitate their engagement across diverse industries.

Presently, restrictions prevent women from working night shifts in factories, regardless of their preference. Measures will be undertaken to enable women to work night shifts in factories, complemented by government-backed support services encompassing security, transportation, and more. This comprehensive approach seeks to empower women and provide equal opportunities for their participation in various sectors.

Social empowerment of women:

Ensuring parity in educational opportunities for women and girls remains a paramount goal. Specific measures will be implemented to eradicate discrimination, promote universal education, eliminate illiteracy, and establish a gender-inclusive educational framework. This approach aims to enhance enrollment rates and elevate the quality of education, fostering lifelong learning and skill development for women across various fields, vocations, and technical domains.

Addressing the gender gap in secondary and higher education is of utmost importance, with a particular emphasis on girls and women hailing from marginalized sections of society. To combat gender bias, a gender-sensitive curriculum will be devised for all levels of the education system. This comprehensive strategy endeavors to rectify the causes of gender discrimination and promote a more equitable educational experience for all.

Women and Health:

Table 07:

Health services provided to women's	Frequency	Percentage
No	13	13
To some extent	48	48
Yes	39	39

A comprehensive approach to women's health, encompassing both nutrition and healthcare services, will be adopted. Particular emphasis will be placed on catering to the needs of women and girls across all stages of their life cycles. Recognizing the heightened risk of malnutrition that women face during infancy and childhood, adolescence, and the reproductive phase, it is imperative to prioritize the fulfillment of women's needs throughout their life journey. This is crucial not only for the well-being of women but also for understanding the interconnectedness between maternal health and child health.

When it comes to healthcare services, there is a lack of adequate attention from the government towards

the health problems and facilities provided to female patients, particularly pregnant women, in government hospitals. According to the data, 13 percent of respondents expressed disagreement with this observation. On-field observations indicate that rural areas often lack proper health facilities. Approximately 48 percent of respondents concurred to some extent, while 39 percent confirmed the presence of these issues.

Addressing the challenge of macro and micronutrient deficiencies, especially among pregnant women, demands specialized efforts. These deficiencies can lead to various health complications and disabilities, underscoring the importance of implementing strategies to combat these issues effectively.

Women and science technology:

Table08:

TakingpartinScienceandtechnology	Frequency	Percentage
No	11	11
Some times	23	23
Yes	66	66
Total	100	100

In addition to their roles in social, economic, and political spheres, women have also made significant strides in the field of science and technology. Science and technology have played a pivotal role in promoting self-reliance and contributing to the country's development. A majority of respondents, comprising 66 percent, acknowledge the importance of science and technology, actively participating in these domains. A smaller portion, 23 percent, concurred to some extent, while 11 percent expressed disagreement.

To further empower women in science and technology, concerted efforts will be made to enhance their participation. These initiatives will encompass motivating girls to pursue science and technology education at higher levels. Additionally, endeavors will be made to ensure that development projects involving scientific and technical components integrate women's full engagement. Specialized training will be provided in areas where women exhibit distinct skills, such as communication and information technology. Prioritizing women's needs, efforts will be directed towards developing technologies that cater to those needs and minimizing their challenges. These efforts reflect a commitment to empowering women in science and technology while also leveraging these fields for societal and economic progress.

Violence against women:**Table09:**

Violenceagainstwomen	Frequency	Percentage
No	17	17
Can'tsay	61	61
Yes	22	22
Total	100	100

Violence against women stands as a significant global challenge. In the present world, women encounter numerous obstacles including violence, harassment, and trafficking. However, from my interactions in the field, it was evident that women may hesitate to openly discuss the extent of violence they experience due to feelings of embarrassment and a decline in their sense of self-esteem.

In the gathered data, 61 percent of respondents expressed agreement with this observation, indicating the prevalence of this phenomenon. The remaining respondents were divided between those who disagreed (17 percent) and those who agreed (22 percent) with the statement.

Efforts must be directed towards addressing all forms of violence against women, encompassing both physical and mental abuse, whether it occurs within the domestic or societal realms. Customary practices that perpetuate such violence must also be effectively countered. To this end, institutions and mechanisms should be established to prevent violence, including sexual harassment in workplaces, as well as customs like dowry. Furthermore, there should be provisions for the rehabilitation of victims and for taking decisive action against perpetrators of violence. Special attention will also be given to initiatives aimed at combatting the trafficking of women and girls. These comprehensive efforts reflect a commitment to ensuring the safety, dignity, and rights of women in society.

Mass media and women:**Table10:**

Womenandmassmedia	Frequency	Percentage
No	18	18
Tosomeextent	29	29
Yes	53	53
Total	100	100

Media is recognized as a crucial tool in the effort to reduce gender discrimination and violence against women across all levels of society. As women become more actively engaged in mass media, they gain the means to shed light on issues related to women's discrimination, not only at the local and national levels but also on the international stage. According to the data collected, 53 percent of respondents take part in mass media activities. An additional 29 percent responded that they participate to some extent, while a smaller proportion, 18 percent, do not partake in mass media activities.

Media possesses the influential capacity to bring attention to matters concerning discrimination and harassment against women, whether these issues occur at the local, national, or international level. To facilitate a balanced and equitable media environment for both women and men, media outlets should be encouraged to establish codes of conduct, professional guidelines, and other self-regulatory mechanisms. These initiatives are aimed at addressing and rectifying gender-based disparities within the media industry, fostering a more inclusive representation of women's voices and concerns.

CONCLUSION

It's important to highlight the remarkable transformations that have unfolded in women's status and their dynamic engagement across various domains. Their presence in parliamentary roles and the emergence of the first female chief minister in Jammu and Kashmir serve as prominent examples of women's assertiveness and empowerment. This transformation is intrinsically linked to their active involvement in decision-making processes. Women have attained recognition comparable to men, enabling them to contribute to societal development through participation in politics, education, industries, and notably, in influential roles within the corporate world.

Gone are the days when women were relegated to stereotypes and exclusion. In the present era, they have garnered newfound prestige, respect, and status across all dimensions of life. The past perception of women as domestic and subservient has been replaced by a positive and progressive outlook, both within society and globally. Freed from the constraints of traditional domestic roles, women are now embracing diverse opportunities. Their talents are being enthusiastically acknowledged by the global community across various spheres. This evolution underscores the value of women's participation and contributions, demonstrating the immense potential they bring to every facet of life.

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