

Assessing Empowerment: An Analysis of Minority Girls 'Perceptions in West Bengal

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Abstract:

The minority women might face challenges in Minority groups often experience social, economic, and political disparities compared to the minority male, which can lead to marginalization and discrimination. Their rights and opportunities may be limited, and they might face challenges in accessing resources, education, healthcare, employment, and representation in decision-making processes. They are deprived as well as exploited in their families. In reality they face multiple challenges like discrimination, disparities, domestic violence, cultural and social barriers etc. From our observations they are backward in the society due to the socio-economic factors. We have identified these factors. Our realisation is that Empowerment is necessary to establish in the nation. Therefore, in this article we have emphasised the empowerment of minority women is a critical issue that requires some attention and action. This may cause the development of nation

Introduction:

The minority women might face challenges in Minority groups often experience social, economic, and political disparities compared to the minority male, which can lead to marginalization and discrimination. Their rights and opportunities may be limited, and they might face challenges in accessing resources, education, healthcare, employment, and representation in decision-making processes. They are deprived as well as exploited in their families. Our observations are they are backward in the society due to the

Socio-economic factors. We have identified these factors. Our realisation is that Empowerment is necessary to establish in the nation.

Empowerment of minority women is a critical issue that requires some attention and action. In reality they face multiple challenges like discrimination, disparities, domestic violence, cultural and social barriers etc. In our study we have tried to show the empowerment of women might be change the society and economy. This may cause the development of nation.

According to the Oxford American Dictionary, empowerment refers to the process of making someone stronger and more confident, particularly by enabling them to take control of their life and assert their rights. It includes enhancing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities.

Empowerment of minority girls in India is the multidimensional process of enhancing their capabilities, agency, and access to resources, enabling them to make informed choices and participate fully in social, educational, economic, and political spheres. It involves dismantling structural barriers linked to gender, religion, caste, and socio-economic disadvantage, with the goal of fostering autonomy, equity, and inclusion.

Their empowerment also is a critical dimension of sustainable development. However, most frameworks emphasize access to education, health, or income, often overlooking the foundational role of voice and opinion. This research explores how opinion about social aspects, cultural norms, political freedom and educational access of them can descend the actual gap of their level of empowerment.

Reviewed Literature:

Several studies have examined the multidimensional nature of women's empowerment in India, particularly in the context of marginalized communities.

➤ Batliwala (1993) offers a foundational framework for understanding women's empowerment in South Asia, emphasizing structural change, grassroots mobilization, and transformation of power relations. Her work underlines that empowerment goes beyond individual capacity-building and is inherently linked to collective action and social justice, which is especially relevant for marginalized communities.

- Beaman et al. (2012) demonstrate through a natural experiment in rural India that political representation of women can reshape gender norms. Exposure to female village leaders significantly increased aspirations and educational attainment among girls, indicating the powerful role of role models in altering societal expectations within patriarchal setups.
- Basu and Misra (2017) apply an intersectional lens to the empowerment of Dalit women, highlighting that caste and gender-based discrimination cannot be addressed in isolation. Their critical analysis underscores how mainstream feminist discourses often exclude the lived experiences of Dalit women, thereby calling for a more inclusive and caste-aware framework of empowerment. Ghosh (2024) constructs a multidimensional empowerment index using large-scale data from India, identifying key determinants such as education, employment, media exposure, and decision-making autonomy. The study offers a quantitative approach to understanding variations in empowerment across regions and social groups, including minority populations.
- Rahman (2021) focuses on Muslim minority girls in rural Assam, revealing that while educational access is increasing, deep-rooted socio-cultural constraints still hinder their full participation and voice. The study emphasizes the need for targeted policy interventions that recognize the intersecting challenges of religion, gender, and geography.
- Sarin and Gupta (2024) explore the complex relationship between women's income and empowerment. While financial earnings enhance autonomy and social recognition, the study also points to unintended tensions within households. The findings highlight the need for holistic empowerment strategies that balance economic independence with supportive social structures.
- Waghamode and Kalyan (2014) analyze the prevalence and drivers of gender-based violence against girls, including child marriage, female foeticide, and child trafficking. They argue that legal measures alone are insufficient without community-level change and empowerment of girls to recognize and assert their rights.

Objectives:

Broadly this research would like to assess the multidimensional opinion-based empowerment (social, economic, educational, technological) of minority girls (aged 18- 25) in West Bengal. Therefore, the steps of core research initiatives are -

- To analyze the demographic profiles of the target population
- To investigate the association between level of education and empowerment of minority girls
- To examine the correlations and predictive relationships between different dimensions of empowerment

Methodology:

The respondents are basically minority girls who are 18-25 ages. The researchers have considered the demographic profile as education, family type, marital status etc. They have also gathered about the occupation and income of the respondents. The survey is conducted by the method of personal interview. The researchers have collected 464 samples of the minority women with 24 opinion-based questions using liker-scale from the several districts like Howrah, East Midnapur, Hooghly, Murshidabad, North 24 Pargana, South 24 Pargana and also Kolkata.

Results and Findings:

Education:

Education				
	Percentiles	Smallest		
1%	1	1		
5%	1	1		
10%	2	1	Obs	464
25%	2	1	Sum of Wgt.	464
50%	3		Mean	2.931034
		Largest	Std. Dev.	1.306069
75%	4	6		
90%	5	6	Variance	1.705817
95%	6	6	Skewness	.8264242
99%	6	6	Kurtosis	3.157213

(Source: Primary data)

- Most respondents have upper primary education (**mean: 2.93**, SD: 1.31)
- Since the education values range from **1 to 6**, a standard deviation of 1.3 is **moderate** — not too tight, not too spread out.
- Skewness value (**0.83**) indicates more minority girls with lower education levels
- Median value **3** confirms most girls are at upper primary level
- 25% have secondary education and above; top 1% have higher education

Marital Status:

married/unmarried/divorced				
	Percentiles	Smallest		
1%	0	0		
5%	0	0		
10%	0	0	Obs	464
25%	0	0	Sum of Wgt.	464
50%	1		Mean	.6551724
		Largest	Std. Dev.	.5066034
75%	1	2		
90%	1	2	Variance	.2566471
95%	1	2	Skewness	-.3001642
99%	2	2	Kurtosis	1.898302
—more—				

(Source: Primary data)

- Most are married (mean: 0.655, SD: 0.506)
- The SD of ~0.51 shows that most values are close to the mean, which is around 0.66, i.e., closer to 1 (Married).
- slightly negative skewed (-0.30) reflects that the bulk of responses are just below the mean (close to 1, or 'married'), with a small tail on the lower end (more 0s than 2s, but not extremely so).

Family Type:

family type					
	Percentiles	Smallest			
1%	1	1			
5%	1	1			
10%	1	1	Obs		464
25%	1	1	Sum of Wgt.		464
50%	1		Mean		1.286638
		Largest	Std. Dev.		.6110522
75%	1	3			
90%	2	3	Variance		.3733848
95%	3	3	Skewness		1.965571
99%	3	3	Kurtosis		5.477905

(Source: Primary data)

- The mean value, 1.29, represents that most of the respondents belong to joint/extended family (code 1).
- The variation is quite low, 0.61.
- Skewness value, 1.97, suggests a strong positive skewed distribution, indicating most are in lower-coded categories (mostly code 1).
- Kurtosis value, 5.48, reflects Leptokurtic—highly peaked, suggesting concentration around joint families.

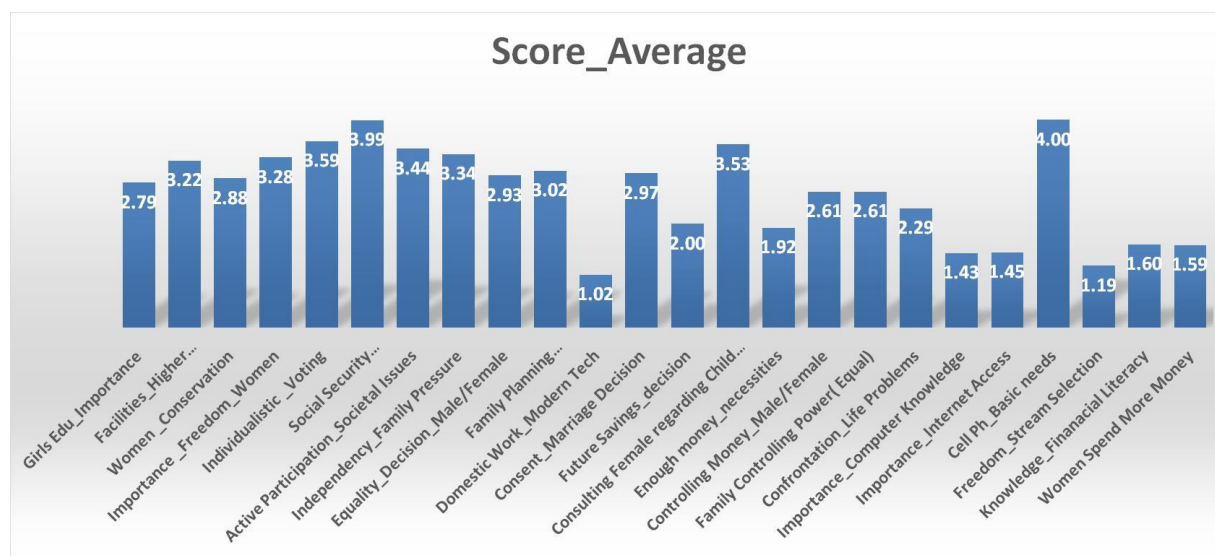
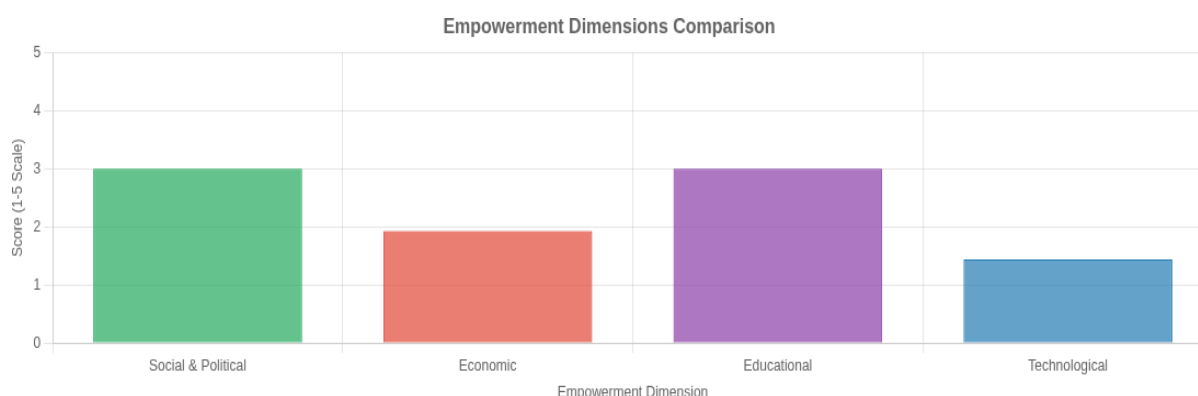
Average Income:

average income of the family					
	Percentiles	Smallest			
1%	1	1			
5%	1	1			
10%	1	1	Obs		464
25%	1	1	Sum of Wgt.		464
50%	1		Mean		1.336207
		Largest	Std. Dev.		.5207399
75%	2	3			
90%	2	3	Variance		.27117
95%	2	3	Skewness		1.19022
99%	3	3	Kurtosis		3.366967
.					

(Source: Primary data)

- Most of the minority girls fall into lower income group (<10,000).
- Std.Dev 0.52 infers moderate spread of the dataset.
- Skewness, 1.19, means positively skewed—fewer high-income families and most of them are from low-income families.
- Kurtosis value, 3.37, Slightly leptokurtic, indicating a sharper peak. There is a clear income disparity; very few families (1%) earn more than ₹20,000.

Empowerment level has been classified into four ends on the basis of questionnaire viz. Social and Cultural, Economical, Political as well as Technological. This is shown in the following figure.



(Source: Primary data)

From the above analysis we can say that

- Social and political empowerment levels (mean: 3.00) are relatively higher than other dimensions.
- Educational empowerment (mean: 3.00) shows more accessibility but with significant variability (SD: 1.45).

- Economic empowerment is consistently low (mean: 1.93), showing fundamental gaps in financial agency.
- Technological empowerment indicators (computer knowledge: 1.43, internet access: 1.45) reveal significant digital divide.

The results reflect about increasing awareness of women's involvement in family, society and basic technology (phones).

Conclusion:

The findings suggest that economic interventions alone are insufficient. Without addressing social inertia and cultural barriers, targeted programs may have limited effectiveness. True empowerment requires holistic approaches that acknowledge the interconnected nature of social, educational, economic, and technological dimensions.

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