

# **Women empowerment level in agriculture: A Study in Odisha, India**

***Abstract:** Women are not given the due record of credit for most of the work they do in agriculture and allied sector as per the present scenario. But according to global institutional study reports, empowering women in agriculture and providing economic gains to them can lead to a more equitable future for all. A study was conducted to ascertain the extent of empowerment of farm women in Odisha. Three districts of Odisha (Puri, Gajapati and Debagarh) were selected representing the three administrative zones (Northern, Southern and Central zone) with 100 women respondents from each district with a total of 300 sample size. Women empowerment has been assessed through their level of cosmopolitaness, access to information, mobility, media exposure, ownership of resources, access to technology etc. Index values have been calculated for each parameter and the average index has also been calculated. Besides, Mean, standard deviation, correlation and regression method were also applied for generalization of collected data. Results of the study indicated that the overall distribution of the sample regarding cosmopolitaness, mobility and media exposure was within medium to high level. Almost all the members found to have high level of access to information. But unfortunately, the distribution of sample regarding access to technology, ownership, membership and leadership was found at low level. The results also showed that selected socio-economic variables of the respondents had notable association with different parameters of empowerment.*

Key words: Farm women, empowerment, index value, association, variables

## **Introduction:**

In India, despite of considerable progress in the policy and legislative levels, women still remain significantly less politically, economically and socially empowered than men. Most of the work that women perform, such as working in the crop field for various activities, fodder and water, collecting fuel, growing vegetables and livestock maintenance etc. go unrecorded in the census of the country. According to Mukherji (1963) Manning (1968) , Singh (1999) Women have always involved in multiple roles both at farm and home with little help available from male counter parts. If we think about empowering women both financial and personal level empowerment is needed. It includes collective efficacy, proactive attitude and self-esteem.

Empowerment means the redistribution of power which has challenged the incumbent existence of the weaker section. This is a process of enabling women

to gain access to and control of, material as well as informational resources. Gaur (2004) stated that women's empowerment status is assessed by their economic, educational and health status, participation in household decision-making process, political awareness and psychological strength. Education with employment makes women significantly effective in respect to social awareness, independence and decision-making.

In such a context, a study was conducted, intending to assess the empowerment level of farm women involved in agriculture and allied activities taking into account of some important indicators those influence the level of empowerment. Wilkening (1959), Shoemaker (1963), Kaur (1990) Mohapatra (2009), Mohanty & Srichandan (2016) emphasized on decision making ability of farm women as an important aspect of their study on extent of empowerment. Kumari and Ratnakar (1993) reported that ownership of resources and self-employment leads to empowerment as perceived by most of the women on their study. Sultana (1990) revealed, autonomy, leadership ability and having a voice to raise over concerns may be considered as signs of empowerment.

### **Materials and Methodology:**

The study was conducted in three districts of Odisha (Puri, Gajapati and Debagarh), representing the three administrative zones (Northern, Southern and Central zone) with 100 women respondents from each district with a total of 300 sample size. At first, basing on the objectives appropriate variables were decided. For measuring and quantitative analysis of those variables under study, a suitable interview schedule was prepared through vigorous review of literature and rectification with the supervisor. As data collection is an important phase of social research, needful action was taken for proper empirical research. The method employed for data collection was through focus group discussion and one to one personal interview method. Suitable coding of the collected data was

done for preparing the final data for analysis purpose. Regarding the indicators, Women empowerment has been assessed through their level of cosmopolitanism, access to information, mobility, media exposure, ownership of resources, access to technology etc. Index values have been calculated for each parameter and the average index has also been calculated. Besides, Mean, standard deviation, correlation and regression method were also applied for generalization of collected data. We have considered here 10 independent variables under the Empowerment indicators which is a dependent variable as we have to determine the level of empowerment according to our specific objective. Empowerment variable is a progressive indicator for development of farmwomen in our study. Therefore, scoring was done with mostly positive numbers and higher the accumulated score indicated better empowerment overall. The frequency of the variables was measured using 4 point continuum i.e. most often (3), often (2), sometimes (1) and never (0) with individual scores of 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively and the accumulated score was used for index development for each respondent. Then from the total number of respondents, population distribution range were sorted for five ranges like -25 to -1 = very low range, 0 to 25 = Low, 26 to 50 = Semi-Medium, 51 to 75 = Medium and 76 - 100 = High range and the population percentage for each range has been recorded.

### **Result and Discussion:**

The population distribution under different range for individual variables were summarized in table-1 while the major range distribution for an overall depiction of data have been summarized in the table -2.

According to the results, the cosmopolitanism shows their connection with the outer world. cosmopolitanism in the sample population when considered about out of their village, city, district towns, sub-towns or distant places in a frequent manner. The study showed the cosmopolitanism of farm women was at almost

medium level (i.e. almost 56% women had medium range cosmopolitanness and 43% had semi-medium range cosmopolitanness according to the given situation) when calculated overall for all the three districts. The mobility index distribution range showed 47% in semi-medium range and 44% in low range distribution. Access to information deals with the frequency and medium of accessing information about important topics related to general health, health issue related to women reproductive issues, nutrition, agriculture, livestock, disaster awareness, important institutions, banking, entrepreneurship options, governance and politics, community awareness etc. Access to information was found to be very high with 75% of population with medium level and 25% with semi-medium level of access to information were recorded. When we consider about media exposure of the respondents it was not up to mark with only 37% in medium range and around 57% in semi-medium range of population distribution. Access to decision making, which may be considered as a very important variable according to reviews, showed unimpressive results with 69% under semi-medium and 31% under low range population for them. Access to credit was somewhat levelled as 49% were in semi-medium range and 40% in medium range population under study. And Ownership index was found to be really low as a concern for the society with 69% low range and 10% in very low range distribution. Access to technology had 47% range under semi-medium and 40% in medium range population. Now-a-days cell-phone, TV, radio, desktop etc are much accessible for all though, but the women were not much friendly in online activities. Regarding membership, 805 were in semi-medium range and 16% were in medium range as the women were mostly related to some self-help group while they were not much active regarding other social groups in the villages. Leadership index was found to be in satisfactory range with 48% in medium and 37% in semi-medium range population distribution.

<b>Table- 1.</b>										
<b>Population Distribution Range for Empowerment Indicator</b>										
Sl. No.	1		2		3		4		5	
Distribution Range	Cosmopolitaness		Mobility		Access To Information		Media Exposure		Household Decision Making	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
-50 to -25 (Extremely Low)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.6
-25 -1 (Very Low)	0	0	10	3.33	0	0	0	0	6	2
0-25 (Low)	0	0	133	44.33	0	0	9	3	82	27.33
26-50 (Semi-Medium)	129	43	143	47.66	75	25	172	57.3	161	55.07
51-75 (Medium)	169	56.33	14	4.68	222	75	119	39.6	45	15
76-100 (High)	02	0.77	00	0	3	1	00	0	4	1.98
Total	300	100	300	100	300	100	300	100	300	100
N= 300, F -Frequency, P – Percentage										

Table- 1. continued ...										
Population Distribution Range for Empowerment Indicator										
Indicator Sl. No.	6		7		8		9		10	
Distribution Range	Access to Credit		Ownership Index		Access to Technology		Membership Index		Leadership Index	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
-50 to -25 (Extremely Low)	0	0	4	1.33	0	0	0	0	2	0.6
-25 -1 (Very Low)	0	0	45	15	0	0	0	0	23	7.66
0-25 (Low)	25	8.33	166	55.33	19	6.33	48	16	109	36.33
26-50 Semi- Medium)	147	49	76	25.34	143	47.67	245	81.66	146	48.66
51-75 (Medium)	121	40.34	9	3	122	40.67	7	2.34	20	6.66
76-100 (High)	7	2.33	0	0	16	5.33	0	0	0	0
Total	300	100	300	100	300	100	300	100	300	100
N= 300, F -Frequency, P – Percentage										

**Table-2.**  
**Major ranges for Empowerment Indicators**

Variables	D1(Devagarh)		D2(Puri)		D3(Gajapati)		All	
	Major 1	Major 2	Major 1	Major 2	Major 1	Major 2	Major 1	Major 2
Cosmopolitaness	Semi-Medium	Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium
Media Exposure	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium
Mobility	Low	Semi-Medium	Semi-Medium	Low	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Low
Access to Information	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium
Access to Technology	Semi-Medium	Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium
Membership Index	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium
Leadership Index	Low	Semi-Medium	Semi-Medium	Low	Semi-Medium	Low	Semi-Medium	Low
Access to Credit	Semi-Medium	Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium	Semi-Medium	Medium	Medium	Semi-Medium
Access to Decision making	Semi-Medium	Low	Low	Semi-Medium	Semi-Medium	Low	Low	Semi-Medium
Ownership Index	Low	Semi-Medium	Low	Semi-Medium	Low	Semi-Medium	Low	Semi-Medium
Range of Indices	0 - 25 = Low		26-50=Semi-Medium		51 - 75 = Medium		76 - 100 = Ligh	

## **Conclusion:**

The result indicated that the overall empowerment level was found to be less than 50%, mostly hauling between 40 to 45% when all the three districts taken combined with all the empowerment indicators in consideration. Access to decision making and ownership index are found to be in low range indicating a concern over empowerment of farm women as both of the variables are considered very important according to review of literature while measuring the empowerment index. The level of cosmopolitaness, leadership, membership, mobility etc. can be considered satisfactory to some extent for the respondents under study.

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