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A study on parental perceptions and attitudes towards empowerment of tribal adolescent girls

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Abstract

Parents play an important role in the development of adolescent girl's identity in the family and society. Adolescence is an ideal phase of life for reshaping gender roles and restoring a sense of empowerment. Empowerment is defined as the capacity to gain power and control over one's decisions and resources that affect one's life (Shah, 2011) [2]. Perceptions and attitudes of the parents influence the empowerment status of adolescent. The aim of the present study was to know the parental perceptions and attitudes of empowerment among tribal adolescent girls in Adilabad and Komaram Bheem district of Telangana state. The size of the sample was 160 parents of tribal adolescent's girls in the age range of 17-21 years were selected using purposive random sampling method. Self-developed parental perceptions and attitudes on empowerment open-ended check list is used and results of the study revealed that nearly eighty per cent of the parents found in lower category. Hence, there is a great need to enhance their empowerment through intervention programmes.

Keywords: empowerment, decisions, resources, economic participation, parents, tribal adolescent girls, perceptions and attitudes

Introduction

Parents play an important role in shaping the adolescent's girls being empowered. Empowerment of adolescent girls is indispensable for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs under goal 5). Adolescence is an ideal phase of life for reshaping gender roles and restoring a sense of empowerment. Generally, adolescents enter the labour force to help support their families financially. Moreover, empowered adolescent girls will become adult women who are involved in different spheres of decision making at the local and national levels and who contribute toward the achievement of gender parity in representation. Empowerment addresses the capacity to gain power and control over one's decisions and resources that affect one's life (Shah, 2011) [2]. Empowerment of adolescent girls promotes and recognizes the strengths, interests, abilities and rights of adolescent girls to contribute to their individual development and that of their families and societies.

Parents influence their children in aspect of their lives particularly in adolescence period. Their perceptions and attitudes play a major role in empowerment of their adolescent girls in tribal areas. In present times they are considered as key assets to increase information, knowledge and attention on empowerment among tribal adolescent's girls.

About 8 per cent of the Indian population belongs to a category listed as "Scheduled Tribes". The tribal people are the original inhabitants of India and constitute a significant part of the nation. They have been dwelling in the forests for a long period of time and their social structure, culture and language are quite different from that of general population of India. But due to economic development, strict laws regarding hunting, felling of trees etc. created a situation for them to come out and get involved in the mainstream population. Studies on them would help policy makers and individuals working with them to plan programmes effectively in order to help them. Shabana *et al.* (2014) [1] conducted a study on adolescent girl's empowerment and revealed that rural government schools adolescent girls are less empowered than their counterparts in urban government schools in almost all the dimensions of empowerment. Were found in poor attendances, high dropout rates, and low socio economic status compels them to work and help their parents instead of going to school.

Moreover, rural adolescent girls were following the traditional beliefs and taboos, such as early marriages, poor infrastructure in government school and poor school environment restricts them to be empowered. Majority of the studies were conducted on rural and urban adolescents when compared to tribal adolescents.

Therefore, it is very much appropriate and necessary to conduct a research study parental perceptions and attitudes towards empowerment of tribal adolescent girls in Adilabad and Komaram Bheem districts. Motivated by the above considerations and by the importance of empowerment of tribal adolescent’s girls the present study was taken.

Methodology

Based on the nature of the research problem of the present study, Ex-post facto research design was used. 160 parents of tribal adolescent’s girls who were in the age range of 17-21 years were purposively selected. Open ended checklist was developed and used to know perceptions and attitudes on empowerment of tribal adolescent’s girls. Typically, each item is answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. Each item score ranges from 5 to 1. Scores were calculated, perceptions and attitudes of parents was assessed.

Results And Discussion

The data given in Table 1 revealed that, out of 160 parents, nearly half (46%) of them were not agreed, that empowerment would help their adolescent girls to have awareness about self and the thing around them.

With regards to independent, only (30%) of the parents were agreed that empowerment would help tribal adolescent girls to

be independent. This could be that tribal adolescent’s girls enter into the labor force to help support their families financially and therefore, it is neither realistic nor desirable to isolate girls from their social fabric and expect them to be financially independent.

With regards to equal rights and access to resources, (79%) of the parents were disagreed that empowerment would not them to have equal rights and usage of resources available to them.

With regards to individual decisions, (88%) of the parents were not agreed. The reasons behind this could be adolescent girls in developing countries who are the most marginalized face a triple handicap from the start: being female, being poor, and living in remote rural areas (Winthrop and Givney 2016) [4].

With regards to economic participation, half (50%) of the parents were not agreed that being empowered would increases economic participation of the tribal adolescent girls.

With regards to plan for the future, only (12%) of the parents were agreed that tribal adolescent girls with empowerment would help them to and have better plans for the future.

With regards to leadership of tribal adolescent girls, (79%) of the parents were strongly disagreed that empowerment would not increases leadership in home and outside of the family.

Whereas very few, (8%) of the parents were agreed that empowerment, could help these tribal adolescent girls were successful act effectively in the public space.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on the perceptions and attitudes towards empowerment

Statements	Number of respondents (N=160)				
	SA	A	U	D	S
Creates awareness about the things around them.	5(3.125)	7(4.35)	74(46.25)	74(46.25)	-
Scope for being independent.	12(7.5)	49(30.625)	-	81(50.625)	18(11.25)
Equal rights and access to resources.	12(7.5)	-	22(13.75)	126(78.75)	-
Opportunity to take individual decisions.	5(3.125)	7(4.35)	22(13.75)	88(55)	38(23.75)
Increases economic participation.	1(0.625)	11(6.875)	22(13.75)	81(50.625)	45(28.125)
Having chance to plan for the future.	1(0.625)	11(6.875)	22(13.75)	54(33.75)	72(45)
Increases leadership in home and outside of the family.	1(0.625)	11(6.875)	22(13.75)	-	126(78.75)
Ability to act effectively in the public space.	-	12(7.5)	22(13.75)	18(11.25)	108(67.5)
Participation in social mobility increases.	-	8(5)	44(27.5)	-	108(67.5)
Utilization of health and other services by the government for better growth and development.	-	1(0.625)	33(20.625)	27(16.875)	99(61.875)
Chances of increasing social change.	-	1(0.625)	33(20.625)	-	126(78.75)
To stop the ill practices and beliefs prevalent in tribal community.	-	1(0.625)	26	7(4.375)	126(78.75)

Note: Values are in percentages (SA: Strongly agree, A: Agree, U: Undecided, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly disagree)

Fig 1 shows that overall perceptions and attitudes towards the empowerment of parents of tribal adolescent girls. Self-developed parental perceptions and attitudes on empowerment open-ended check list is used to find out the perceptions and attitudes of the both the parents of their adolescent girl being empowered.

More than third fourth (79%) of the parents were in the lower category, followed by only (14%) of them were in average and very few (7%) of them were in higher category. This means they were unaware of benefits of empowerment.

This means tribes in Adilabad and Komaram Bheem districts are one of the diverse groups among the Indian population. They remain disadvantaged mostly as they are considered as

the lowest section since the ancient times. The tribes remain disadvantaged and marginalised due to the unemployment leads to various factors like geographical and cultural isolation, lack of proper health facilities, inability to satisfy basic needs, lack of control over resources and assets, lack of education and skills, malnutrition, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, lack of access to proper infrastructure facilities and technologies and lack of political freedom and voice. All these challenges can make the tribal adolescent girls to reduce or minimize their personal skills and hurdle for being empowered (Lakshmi and Paul, 2019) [3].

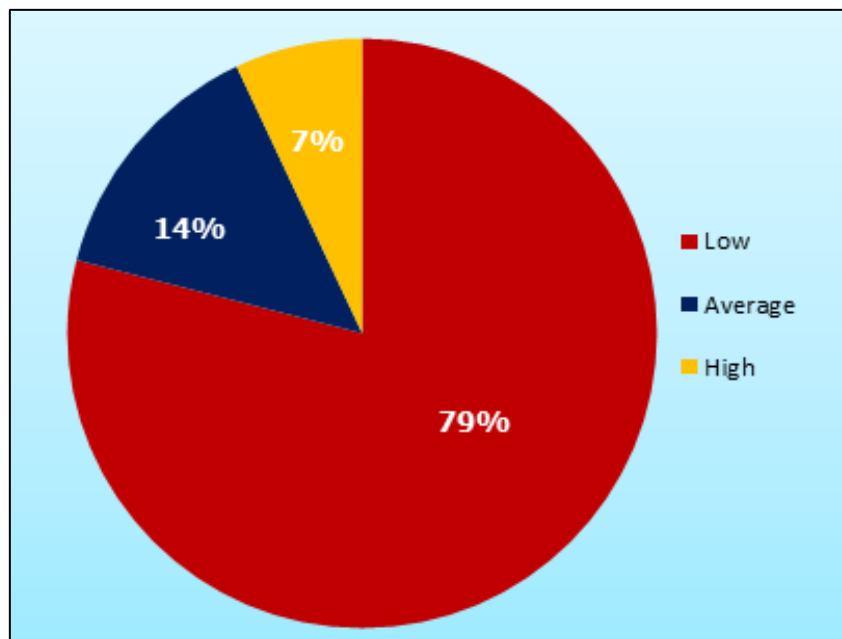


Fig 1: Parental perceptions and attitudes towards empowerment

Conclusion

The present study found that, in the parental perceptions and attitudes towards empowerment of their adolescent girls, out of 160 parents, (79%) of them had low perceptions and attitudes of empowerment. The reason might be the lack of awareness, being poor, being female, lack of confidence, low level of education, limited exposure and discrepancy in the family and community. They were not encouraged to take their own decision and participate in economic or social arenas because they had limited resources in their community. They were always worried about their family, were unable to think about the adolescent girls and their empowerment. It showed they had negative feelings about the empowerment which needs to be addressed to reduce or minimize their hurdle for being empowered. Moreover, empowered adolescent girls will become adult women who are involved in different spheres of decision making at the local and national levels and who contribute toward the achievement of gender parity in representation.

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